

promoting  
international friendship  
through bonsai



# bc*i*

# Bonsai & Stone Appreciation

2016 Q4

**ON EXHIBIT** Penjing, Bonsai and Viewing stones

**Enhancing the Stone, Part Two:  
Sakurai Toshio, Japan's Leading Professional Stone Carver**

**Unveiling the Spirit of Cooperation and Friendship  
in China Through Bonsai**

**How to Accurately Recess a Stone in a Wood Base**

**Friends, Creativity & a Mighty Yew**

**Refining a Red Pine**

**2nd China Bonsai Making Games**

**Annual Meeting & Exhibition  
of Bonsai Club Germany and  
German Suiseki Society**

**Société de bonsai et de  
penjing de Montréal  
Annual Show**

**Rocky Mountain  
Bonsai Society  
Annual Show**



*Murraya exotica* on exhibit at  
the 9th China National  
Penjing Exhibition &  
1st Penjing Exhibition  
of BCI-China Committee.  
Photo by Lindsay Bebb

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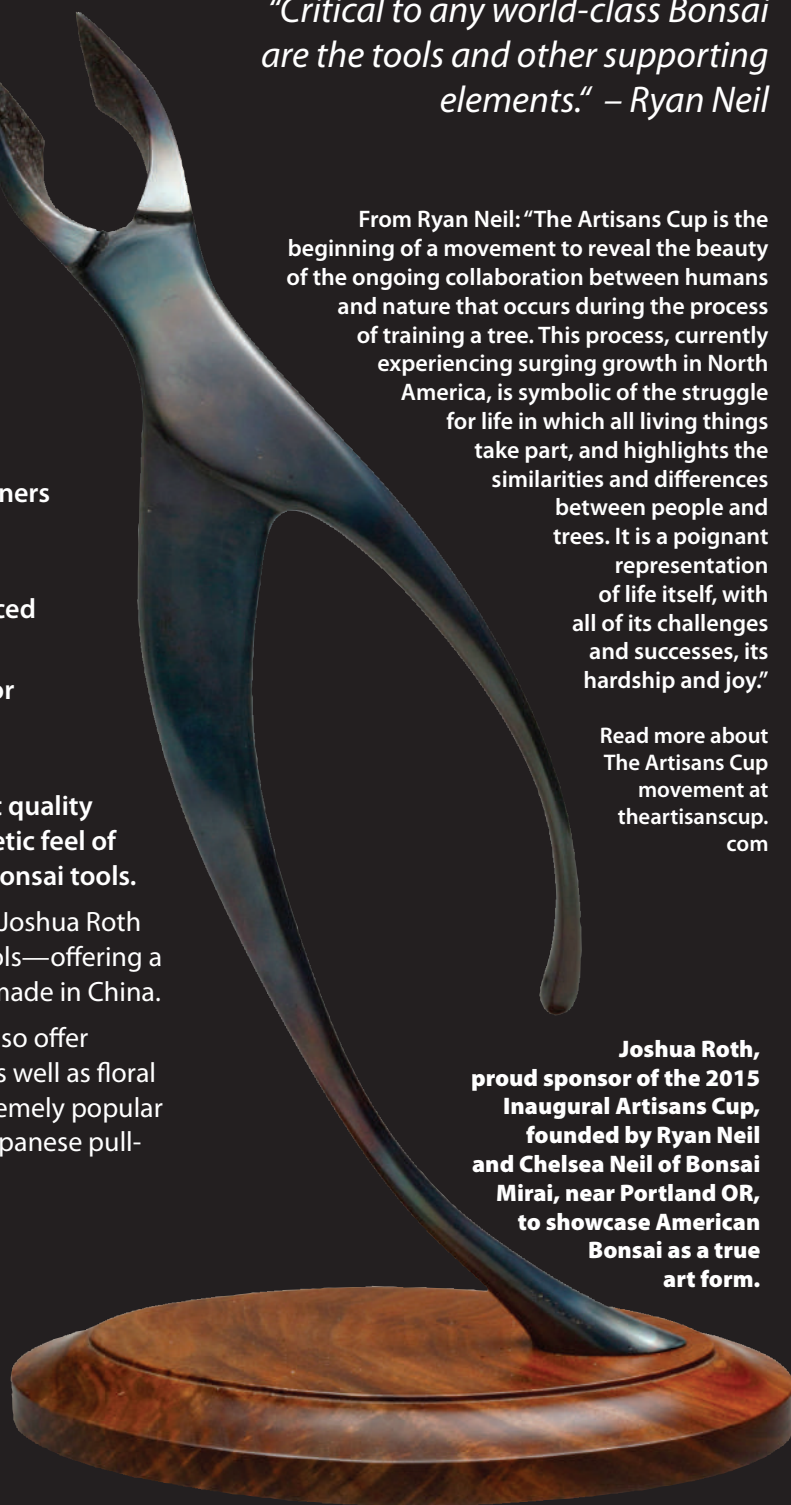
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## President's Message

**A**s I start to write this message I have been travelling for several weeks and am now in China meeting up with most of the BCI board tomorrow.

We went to a family reunion in England and then spent several days touring in Wales with Kath and Malcolm Hughes, and then attending Lindsay's son's wedding in Ireland, followed by a long-planned cruise.

My husband Lindsay also served on the BCI board for several years. At the start of his term BCI magazine was just a Bonsai magazine. When it was initially suggested that stones be included in the magazine, Lindsay very strongly opposed this move.

Fast forward 25 years. How things have changed.

Our base in Wales was a lovely spot on the Conwy River. The river was fast flowing and Lindsay, who is now a passionate stone collector couldn't wait to explore the river. He collected several very nice stones, one of which was very large. We got the stone back to Kath and Malcolm's home and cleaned and culled them out. The large one was a keeper!

It wasn't possible to send the stone home by post as it exceeded the International postage limit of 20 kg. This stone and a couple of smaller ones travelled with us for the next four adventurous weeks. The large stone is the subject of a fun article by Kath Hughes which may appear in a future edition of the magazine.

Malcolm was very sceptical about the airline allowing us to travel with the stones when he dropped us at the airport on route to Ireland. No major problem, we made our 60 kg baggage allowance with 1 kg spare! I might add I left home with 15 kg of baggage. I mentioned to Lindsay at this point how opposed he was to stones back in the mid eighties!

Stone and Bonsai collecting are both addictive. I don't know anyone who has just one of either. All of you bonsai lovers who are not interested in stones, I warn you, wait until you get your first as a gift or you find one in the wild, and you will be hooked.

You might be interested to know that the largest room in our home is now dedicated to displaying stones and our 30-foot shed is full of daiza making machinery. Yes, things have changed. Lindsay shares one of his daiza-making techniques in this issue.

The purpose of BCI board members going to China was at the generosity of Mr. Chen Chang. The board was invited to participate in the opening of three additional BCI Bonsai Co-operation Centres. In Rugau, Jiangsu; MuYang, Jiangsu; and Kunming, Yunnan. I met up with the group in Guangzhou where we participated in the opening of the 9th China National Bonsai Exhibition and the 1st BCI China Committee Exhibition. Around 800 bonsai and over 200 stones were exhibited. We feature trees and stones from this exhibition along with other events in which the board participated, in this issue. The Chinese are very proactive in promoting bonsai through these Co-operation Centres, of which we now have nine. They are also conducting workshops for kids, teaching the next generation the art of bonsai. During the opening ceremony of the exhibition we signed the contract for the BCI 2019 Convention.

BCI tours are very popular and we have two more planned in 2018. In April, BCI Director I.S. Ng is hosting 2018 Malaysia - BCI International Friendship Tour and Exhibition, featuring Bonsai, Stones and Wood. This tour will also include sightseeing. BCI Vice President and Chair of BCI Convention Committee, Helen Su, is coordinating a four- or five-day tour in conjunction with the BCI Convention



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in Mulhouse, France in October, 2018. We will keep you posted as information is available.

BCI Business Manager Larry Stephan represented BCI at the National Exhibition in Rochester hosted by Bill Valavanis. By all accounts this was once again a great success and we congratulate Bill and thank him for the invite. These exhibitions are held biannually in Rochester, New York, the next one is scheduled for September, 2018 and Lindsay and I have both been invited to attend.

Our Tech Guru Bonnie Moore has been working on some changes to the Website. These should be up and running soon.

We have launched a campaign to encourage lapsed members to rejoin BCI. Those whose membership expired in 2016 were offered a bonus issue if they rejoin before the mail out of this issue. They were also invited to let us know why, if they are not renewing. We hope this information will help us improve our services.

Also in this issue we are featuring the second part of an article by Tom Elias and Hiromi Nakaoji on cut stones. The first part sure provoked some debate. Hope you enjoy the second part.

Our last event for the year is the BCI Regional Convention in Mysore, India, December 19th to 22nd. It is not too late to register and you can find a link on the BCI website: [www.bonsai-bci.com](http://www.bonsai-bci.com) under conventions.

As we draw to the end of 2016 I would like to thank the BCI Directors, Contractors, Authors and Contributors, and especially our BCI Editor Joe Grande, for their support and dedication to BCI.

We at BCI, wish you all a Happy Holiday season and a Healthy and Prosperous New Year. 🌸

Cheers from Down Under,  
Glenis Bebb

*You are invited to be a part of the BCI Vision.*

**We are raising funds for the future of BCI!  
Any donation you can make, will help.**

*Remember BCI in your will, your trust, your future!*

For more information contact:

Glenis Bebb, [president@bonsai-bci.com](mailto:president@bonsai-bci.com)



## MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

This issue marks the 20th quarterly publication I have edited and designed over the last five years. Five years worth of information and knowledge on bonsai, stones, people, events and many related subjects has passed through my hands. The know-how and insights I have gained from the articles and their authors have enriched my bonsai practice and inspired me to start a stone collection. The process of turning text and photos into a narrative that supports the author's intention is a lengthy and detailed one where I am obliged to ponder and scrutinize every detail. The result is that with each issue, I learn something new from the writers, photographers and artists presented in this magazine that helps me enjoy bonsai and stone collecting even more. This issue is no different.

Nikunj and Jyoti Parekh and Sujata Bhat report on a fascinating trip to China, the opening of three more BCI Cooperation Centers and a major exhibition in Guangzhou. The article features a gallery of penjing, bonsai and viewing stones that is sure to inspire readers. From drilling small holes part way into a branch a few centimeters apart to creating an oval-shaped hole in a branch, both Budi Sulisty and Massimo Bandera reveal unique techniques for bending heavy branches. Massimo also applies propolis to the bark and deadwood before wrapping the branch with raffia. This is a first for me. Propolis or bee glue is a natural sealant that helps prevent dehydration in live wood. Larry Stephan attended the 2nd Bonsai Making Games in Shuyang, China and describes how the Chinese methods are different and diverse from the familiar methods and tools used in Japan.

Have you ever found a stone in nature that would make a good viewing stone but left it behind because it would be impossible to present it in a base? In part two of Enhancing the Stone, Tom Elias and Hiromi Nakaoji interview one of the last stone carvers in Japan and describe his processes and techniques for working a stone to create a work of art. Lindsay Bebb presents a detailed how-to article that explains step by step how to recess a stone into a wooden base and get a perfect fit.

A new generation is discovering bonsai and some are taking it very seriously. Alessandro Bonardo has been interested in bonsai since he was eight years old. Now, in his late teens, he writes about realizing his dream of studying bonsai in Japan with the great master, Masahiko Kimura. We will follow his six-year apprenticeship and report on his progress and experience in Japan periodically.

Gudrun Benz, Joan Greenway and Tom Anglewicz report on club shows in Leipzig, Montreal and Colorado, proof that bonsai is improving all over the world. Montreal has the distinction of promoting both bonsai and penjing to their members. Clubs are a great way to engage with fellow bonsai or stone enthusiasts. In an article in the News section, two clubs in Colorado and Portland offer a program to that will look after a member's bonsai trees while they are away or in an emergency, confirming that there is strength in numbers and joining a club is a good thing to do.

—Joe Grande, Canada ([bcieditor@grandesign.net](mailto:bcieditor@grandesign.net))

## MISSION STATEMENT

### BONSAI CLUBS INTERNATIONAL

Bonsai Clubs International, a not-for-profit educational organization, advances the ancient and living art of bonsai and related arts through the global sharing of knowledge. We educate while promoting international friendship and solidify world relationships through cooperation with individuals and organizations whose purpose is consistent with ours.

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Digital images must be provided at 300 dpi resolution for an 8 x 5 inch size minimum.

Authors are requested not to submit articles simultaneously to another publication.

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Q3	J/A/S	May 1
Q4	O/N/D	August 1



# Bonsai & Stone Appreciation

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ON OUR COVER: BCI member Lindsay Bebb commented on a tree he photographed at 9th China National Penjing Exhibition & 1st Penjing Exhibition of BCI-China Committee. "The *Murraya exotica* made an instant impression on me as an excellent bonsai; nice balance and movement of the multiple trunks; nice taper right through to the tops of each line; just the right amount of visibility of trunk and branching structure through the foliage; good trunk spread at the base line; very calming, I thought."

# Unveiling the Spirit of Cooperation and Friendship in China Through Bonsai

By Nikunj Parekh, Jyoti Parekh and Sujata Bhat, India

Photos by Gudrun Benz, Sujata Bhat, Bonnie Moore, Jyoti Parekh, Larry Stephan and Budi Sulisty





**BCI officially opened three cooperation centers in Rugao, Shuyang and Kunming, the board members attended the Grand 9th China National Penjing Exhibition and the 1st Penjing Exhibition of BCI-China Committee, and officially signed contracts for BCI/China International Bonsai & Suiseki Convention in 2019.**

**W**hat a marvelous trip it was to travel to the fascinating country which gave the world 'Penjing'!

It all began with the magnanimous invitation extended to all BCI Directors and their spouses by Mr. Chen Chan, the chairman and CEO of Panyu Chu Kong Steel Pipe Co. Ltd. to visit China from September 22 to October 1.

The BCI Board team arrived at Shanghai and all were individually welcomed at Shanghai Pudong Airport. BCI Board members Helen Su, Nikunj Parekh, Les Dowdell, Frank Mihalic, Ing Suan Ng, Budi Sulistyو and Bonnie Moore were accompanied by their spouses, along with Sujata Bhat, Gudrun Benz and Larry Stephan. Mr. Min Hsuan Lo from Taiwan was accompanied by his young son Andrew. Later, Glenis Bebb, BCI President and Vic Ceballos and their spouses joined the group at Panyu near Guangzhou.

BCI officially opened three cooperation centers in Rugao, Shuyang and Kunming in China and the board members witnessed the Grand 9th China National Penjing Exhibition and the 1st Penjing Exhibition of BCI-China Committee at Panyu Square, and as a finale, officially signed contracts for BCI/China International Bonsai & Suiseki Convention in 2019.

### **Unveiling the BCI Cooperation Center in the city of Rugao**

BCI Board members were accorded a warm welcome on reaching the Jindu Jindiang Bonsai Museum, the venue of the Unveiling Ceremony of the Cooperation Club of BCI in the city of Rugao. The unveiling Ceremony commenced with speeches from eminent officials of the Rugao government which included the Vice Mayor Mr. Du Yonghong and officials of Rugao, China CP Committee. The ceremony was attended by a large number of active bonsai growers.

In the absence of BCI President, Glenis Bebb, Nikunj Parekh as 2nd Vice President gave the unveiling ceremony speech below:

"BCI - Bonsai Clubs International was incorporated as a non-profit organization way back in 1962. For 54 years BCI has been involved in planning numerous bonsai events and has a very talented team who share their knowledge and resources with fullest energy.

BCI held its first China Convention in 2006. One of the keen supporters of BCI is none other than Mr.



*Facing Page;* School children participating in a Bonsai Making competition at the Grand 9th China National Penjing Exhibition and the 1st Penjing Exhibition of BCI-China Committee in Panyu Square.

*This Page, Top to Bottom;*

The BCI delegation with the plaque unveiling the BCI-China Cooperation Center in Rugao.

Unveiling of the BCI - China Cooperation Center in Shuyang by Mr. I. C. Su, a Shuyang official and Mr. Chen Chan speaking about the mandate of the center.

Ribbon cutting ceremony in Shuyang by Helen Su, BCI Vice-president, and others.

Mr. Zhao and Mr. Lee Ke Wen with Nikunj Parekh at the unveiling of the plaque for the BCI - China Cooperation Center in Kunming.

BCI President Glenis Bebb giving the Inaugural speech in Panyu.





*Top left;* "Giant Dragon Passing Cloud," more than 1,000 years old in Shuihui Park in Rugao.

*Top right;* A tree listed as 500 years old.

*Middle right;* A tree listed as 1,000 years old.

*Bottom;* An interesting water feature incorporating a unique way of presenting trees in Shuihui Park in Rugao.



Chen Chan, under whose leadership a great Bonsai and Stone Event is in store for the world by way of a BCI Convention in China in 2019.

We are all happy to witness the grand opening of the BCI cooperation centre at Rugao. We are thankful to the Rugao Government Team and Mr. Chen Chang for their willingness to share the knowledge of Penjing and build goodwill, peace and friendship among the people of the world.

Rugao, I understand, is a world famous longevity city. Longevity and greenery, wisdom of seniors and energy of the young, education and prosperity go hand in hand. The Rugao team is on the right path of fulfillment of their goals."

Mr. Parekh then presented to the Vice Mayor Mr. Du Yonghong the BCI certificate granting official status to







Top left and right; Women gathering fallen chestnuts in the Old Chestnut Wood grove in Shandang Village with more than thousand Chestnut trees, many of them over a 100 years old. The trees were laden with healthy chestnuts and the locals offered us fresh chestnuts to eat.

Middle and Bottom; Unveiling Ceremony of the BCI Cooperation Center at Shuyang included a beautiful display of western style flower arrangement and ikebana. The highlight was the display of bonsai of all types including trees laden with fruits of all kinds.

Rugao Cooperation Centre. This was followed by the ceremonious unveiling of the BCI-Rugao Cooperation Center plaque by the Vice Mayor of Rugao and BCI 1st Vice President Mrs. Helen Su and Mr. I. C. Su amidst thunderous applause.

The BCI visitors were also taken on a sightseeing trip in Rugao to see the Shuihui Park, China Rugao International Horticulture Town, Guzhu Ecological park and Rugao Green Park followed by a banquet at the Business Club of Rugao Green Park.

### Unveiling the BCI Cooperation Center in the city of Shuyang

Next on our schedule was a visit to the Town of Flowers at Shuyang in Jiangsu province. Dubbed “the land of flowers and trees”, Shuyang county has a history of more than 2,000 years in horticultural tradition since Qing Dynasty and it has reclaimed this title since 1980s.

Shuyang county has 480 thousand measured unit areas under horticultural development. The prosperity of this area is clearly visible. Backed by government support the horticulture industry in Shuyang lays emphasis on greenery, water conservation methods, use of scientific technology and marketing services. The total greenery sales volume exceeds RMB 8.5 billion nearly half of it from e-commerce. With five large flower and bonsai markets and 53 privately owned bonsai gardens provide employment to 250,000 people.

On arrival at Shuyang, the BCI team was put up at the Huifeng Hotel. First on the agenda in Shuyang was a visit to the Gardening Center at the International Flower and Seedling Mall where we witnessed the ‘Second Bonsai Making Games’ (see page 24) where many hugely talented penjing amateur artists





*This page and following two pages;* The highlight of Unveiling Ceremony of the BCI Cooperation Center at Shuyang was the display of bonsai of all types including a section with trees laden with fruits, which was very appealing and drew the attention of the large number of visitors.

displayed their skill and artistry in creating fabulous single tree bonsai, rock penjings and suihan penjings.

We were later taken to the famous Yuji Cultural Garden. It is an open air garden with a museum which depicts selected ancient scholar's poems written for Yuji, a legendary beauty and concubine of Xiangyu, the King of the Western Chu Kingdom. We also visited the Shuyang Art Museum. The final destination of our sightseeing trip was an Old Chestnut Wood grove in



Shandang Village with more than thousand really old Chestnut trees, many of them over a 100 years old. The trees were laden with healthy chestnuts and the locals offered us fresh chestnuts to eat.

On the final day of our stay in Shuyang we were witness to the Unveiling Ceremony of the BCI Cooperation Center at Shuyang, an event conducted with great fanfare. The inaugural area included a section with a beautiful display of western style flower arrangement and ikebana as well as a succulent plants display area. The highlight was the display of bonsai of all types and designs including a section with trees laden with fruits of all kinds and colors which was very appealing and drew the attention of the large number of visitors.





The Reception Committee for the inauguration included Mr. Hu Jianjun, Secretary Shuyang Committee of CPC and other officials of the Shuyang government. The inaugural was unique with young girls carrying attractive floral bouquets walking past the stage like in a fashion parade.

On behalf of BCI, Nikunj Parekh thanked Shuyang Government, County officials and bonsai growers for their warm welcome and the opportunity to see the successful development of the region.





## Unveiling the BCI Cooperation Center in the city Kunming

Our next destination was Kunming. We travelled by bus from Shuyang to Nanjing and then flew to Kunming. We were welcomed and accompanied by Mr. Zhou, whose ancestral business was Tea and is now one of the largest growers of Bonsai in the region.

Kunming in Yunnan province of China is famous for Landscape Architecture. Home to 26 of China's 55 national minorities, Yunnan is a gold mine of diversity and tradition. Kunming is ideal for growth of temperate and sub-tropical bonsai trees due to its hilly elevated areas.

BCI's 3rd Cooperation Center in Kunming will offer cooperation and encouragement for the development of bonsai and horticulture. The unveiling ceremony was arranged in a hotel with all bonsai growers from the area present. The plaque unveiling was done by Mr. I.C. Su, BCI Honorary Chairman and Mr. Lee Ke Wen, Vice Chairman of the China Bonsai Association. The board members were later entertained with a demonstration of their traditional and elaborate tea ceremony.

In the afternoon we were taken to the World Horti-Expo Garden, a botanical garden center. It played host to the October 1999 Kunming International Horticulture Exposition. As an international botanical garden, the Expo Garden has become a significant Kunming landmark and covers an area of 218 hectares. We were driven around in a special cart past beautifully designed and maintained gardens of various provinces of



*This page;* The World Horti-Expo Garden, an international botanical garden that has become a significant Kunming landmark and covers an area of 218 hectares.





*This page;* The BCI group went on a day tour of the world famous Stone Forest, It is dotted with huge stones which emerged from the seas some millions of years ago, almost at the same time the Himalayas rose up.



China as well as International gardens representing many different countries of the world.

The BCI group went on a day tour of the world famous Stone Forest, which has been granted Heritage status by the United Nations. The Stone Forest is dotted with huge stones which emerged from the seas some millions of years ago, almost at the same time the Himalayas rose up. In the evening we were taken for a very traditional Kunming style dinner which gave us an insight into the flavor and culture which is an integral part of the ethnic minority tribes of the region.

We ended our tour of Kunming with a visit to the private garden and bonsai collection of Mr. Zhou and his family members who welcomed us with great warmth and hospitality.





On our last lap of our stay in China we flew from Kunming to Guangzhou which is the gateway for economic and trade activities in China. From the airport we all drove down to Panyu city for the 9th China National Penjing Exhibition & 1st Penjing Exhibition of BCI-China Committee.

### 9th China National Penjing Exhibition & 1st Penjing Exhibition of BCI-China Committee

The venue of one of the largest Bonsai Exhibitions was in Panyu City Square, right opposite our Hotel. The bonsai exhibit area was beautifully laid out with around 800 exquisite Penjing, Shohin and Suihan Penjing of renowned national artists and brought to the venue from all across the country. A special area displayed the best suiseiki of the country.

The inaugural ceremony was held in a covered area of the square and commenced with a highly entertaining exhibition of the beating of drums to music by young girls dressed in traditional outfits. BCI President Glenis Bebb spoke on BCI activities and Mr. Chen Chan's contribution to BCI. Mr. Chen Chan gave the inaugural speech followed by speeches by officials of the Panyu Government and Chinese Bonsai

personalities. Gold, Silver and Bronze Certificates for the best bonsai entries at the exhibition were awarded. Famous Chinese bonsai masters were also honoured for their contribution to the art of Bonsai.

The contract for BCI-China International Bonsai & Suiseiki Convention 2019 was signed by BCI President Glenis Bebb, Helen Su and Chinese Officials.

Mrs. Helen Su and Mr. I.C. Su coordinated the whole event and made each of the BCI team member comfortable.

Our perception of Bonsai in China: In the last two decades a remarkable change in Chinese Bonsai scene has become evident. In spite of having over a 1000 year old Bonsai tradition and a typical style of Bonsai



*Inset;* Mr. Chen Chan, the main organizer of Bonsai Exhibition at Panyu, welcoming the delegates to the 9th China National Penjing Exhibition & 1st Penjing Exhibition of BCI-China Committee.

*Bottom;* Panorama of the exterior exhibit space in Panyu Square..





Top; The contract for BCI-China International Bonsai & Suiseki Convention 2019 was signed by BCI President Glenis Bebb, Mr. I.C. Su, Mr. Chen Chan and Chinese Officials.

Middle; Local school children sketching the Bonsai exhibits.

Bottom; The miniature bonsai exhibited on ornate stands fascinated visitors at the exhibit.



making, Chinese artists have shown a willingness to adopt newer techniques, design capabilities and have improved on their wiring skills. They have begun accepting and working on wider varieties of trees of temperate, sub-temperate, sub-tropical and tropical regions. What was heartening to note was that the

...the bonsai displayed at the exhibitions did not only depict the Chinese method of styling bonsai, but reflected an acceptance as well as adaptation of all other styles prevalent in different parts of the world clearly denoting the globalization of the art of bonsai.

bonsai displayed at the exhibitions did not depict only the Chinese method of styling bonsai, but reflected an acceptance as well as adaptation of all other styles prevalent in different parts of the world clearly denoting the globalization of the art of bonsai.

More than anything else, what appealed most was the development of skills of farmers to grow potensai, and then offering it to village or town level artists to work on them. Simultaneous development of tools, accessories, containers and above all exporting them world-wide has given a boost to the economic prosperity of mainland China. Along with economic progress, the art of Penjing has percolated to inner areas of China and has improved the quality of the art as well as the lifestyles of the people.

In this endeavor, the government policies, active help and assistance of officials, education with improved techniques and communication and a growing awareness of greenery, environment and mutual trust of the private enterprises has played a major role. The huge internal market and external trade possibilities makes China a leader in Penjing Art.

Our group is grateful to all the organizers of the trip for their hospitality and for giving us opportunities to witness the progress and the culture of different regions. Further, we were presented with mementos to take back with us to perpetually remind us of a trip well organized and truly memorable. 🇨🇳





# Penjing, Bonsai and Viewing stones

## ON EXHIBIT

9th China National Penjing Exhibition & 1st Penjing Exhibition of BCI-China Committee



Graceful Juniper penjing with deadwood features in the Literati style.



*Facing Page:*

*Top left;* "Howling wind from the night before", Creation of Mr. Ng Shing Fat, Bougainvillea glabra, 100 x 120 x 55 cm

*Top right;* A sinuous tree clinging to a rock face, sheltered by the overhang.

*Bottom;* The size of the mountains, trees and buildings are in perfect scale in this large landscape composition depicting a coastal scene.

*This Page:*

*Top;* Semi-cascade style with a dramatic trunk line

*Bottom;* multiple trunk



*This Page:*

*Top;* Small-leaf podocarpus

*Middle inset;* Penjing in Yangzhou style – only 2 penjings could be seen in this style at the exhibition

*Bottom;* Semi Cascade Juniper



*Facing Page:*

*Top left;* Juniper with flat cloud-shaped branches

*Top right;* Cascading Juniper with extreme deadwood

*Bottom left;* Dahua stones, Guangxi province, China

*Bottom right;* Semi Cascade Juniper







*This Page:*

*Top left;* Juniper

*Top right;* Human-shaped stone, Guangxi province, China

*Bottom;* Raft style

*Facing Page:*

*Top left and right;* Wax stones, Guangdong province, China

*Middle right;* "Toad on a Lotus plant", animal-shaped stone

*Bottom;* Pine, cascade style









*Facing Page:*

*Top left;* This Dahua stone from Guangxi province, China was featured at the entrance to the stone exhibit.

*Top right;* "Treasure" stone  
*Bottom;* *Juniperus chinensis*

*This Page:*

*Top left;* Striking combination of live and deadwood

*Middle right;* Dahua stone, Guangxi

*Bottom;* Podocarpus





## DIVERSITY OF METHODS IN SHUYANG 2nd China Bonsai Making Games

By Larry Stephan, USA

In North America we think of Bonsai creation in a somewhat structured form, influenced in large measure by Japanese style and processes. For example, to create a Bonsai you need all the appropriate tools. These may include a wide variety of cutters, scissors, pliers, tweezers, picks, rakes and saws just to mention a few. Usually the tools are specialty items made just for work on Bonsai projects. Soils should be particle based such as Akadama, pumice or Turface with leaf mold. Potting of a tree is started with numerous wires secured to the bottom of the pot in order to wire the tree. You can throw out these concepts when it comes to a Chinese Bonsai competition.

At the 4th Shuyang Flower and Seedling Festival events were started with an all day China Bonsai Making Games. 75 bonsai artists from all over China competed in the morning for 3 1/2 hours followed by 75 more in the afternoon. Participants traveled to Shuyang from Wuhan in Hubei province, with others coming from Anhui, Guangdong and Hunan. Each artist brought their own un-styled material with them. Awards were given to the top 8 artists in each group.

What amazed me were the differences in the Bonsai creation process. Most artists did not use wires to secure the trees in the pots. Generally the soil being used was a mixture of what in the US we call potting soil and top soil. The tools were a surprise as well. The number of tools being used was about 1/4 of what you would expect to see in a US or Japanese Bonsai demonstration. Hammers, chisels and garden type saws were common. Chisels were often used instead of our variety of cutters. While most of the artists were men of various ages there were several young women competing, at least one of whom won an award for her tree.



## What amazed me were the differences in the Bonsai creation process.

Of course being Chinese Bonsai there were a number of Chinese landscape creations using rocks, multiple trees, tiny boats, houses and landscape items. Watching the creation of these landscapes was another eye opener. Fine cement was in liberal use in tying the rocks together and in securing them to the pots. When the planting was done the signs of cement were covered up with moss. Even the pots were outside my experience. Many landscapes were created on large oval white marble slabs. The slabs were very heavy and did not have any drainage holes.

But, when the time was up the results were beautiful. Even with a time deadline the artists did fine work. Every tree or planting was not a masterpiece but more than a few achieved excellent results. It was an honor to observe the diversity in methods of creating a Bonsai work. I now understand that Bonsai is not a fixed process but is flexible throughout the world. 🌳



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Bonnie Moore photographed a Chinese master styling a very unique specimen. This Trident maple, *Acer buergerianum*, is transformed, mostly through selective branch pruning, from an unruly and vigorous bush into a stately ancient bonsai to reveal its immense flared roots and multiple trunks.



# REFINING A RED PINE

By Budi Sulisty, Indonesia

One of the main attractions in Shuyang was the artists competition on bonsai making. In total there were 150 artists in the competition. It was really a big event to observe. All of them had their own materials and doing various styles.

During this event, I paid attention to one candidate that was doing a mature red pine. The material had a curve already. But it was considered not enough to get the optimum beauty.



①② He drilled several holes on the left and right of the curving portion of the trunk around two centimeters apart. The holes were drilled half way to remove some part of the wood to make the bending easier. That was what I thought. A good innovation and a clever way for the bending process.

③ He then put double thick wire outside the bending portion to give strength to the wood, so that it would not crack during the bending process.

④ He tied jute rope to cover all the trunk that he intended to bend. Jute rope was substituted for raffia that usually is used to wrap the trunk for bending purpose. The jute rope will prevent the bark from cracking during the bending process.

⑤⑥ To do the bending he used a special lever that he probably made by himself. He turned the handle of the lever, so that bit by bit, the trunk will get more and more bending.





7



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⑦ For other thick branches that would be bent, he also wrapped those branches with jute rope and then wired the branch.

⑧ I had a chance to see closely on the lever. A simple innovation that can work well.

The process of bending was done in several steps. After bending some time, he stopped and then ten or twenty minutes later, he turned the lever again to bend some more. It seemed that he gave time for the trunk to tolerate the bending process and to avoid cracks on the trunk. We can also see that for the thick branch, double wires were used.

⑨ When the bending was considered enough, the lever was opened and taken away, leaving anchor wires on both sides of the trunk to keep the bend in place.

⑩ He then peeled the bark of the up-growing branch making it a jin.

⑪ Here is the jin obtained.

⑫ The thinner branches were then arranged so that the harmony could be achieved.

⑬ Taking the tree out of the pot to prepare for repotting.

⑭⑮ Out of the pot and cutting the roots.

⑯⑰ Reducing the roots so that the tree will fit into the new, smaller pot.

⑱ Refining session and final adjustments.

⑲ Proudly with the new bonsai. 🌲



# Enhancing *the* **STONE** PART TWO

## Sakurai Toshio, Japan's Leading Professional Stone Carver

By Thomas Elias and Hiromi Nakaoji, USA

In Part One of this two-part article, we established that cutting and carving stones, specifically for *bonseki* and *suseki*, was a well-established component of stone appreciation in Japan. These practices have been clearly documented in numerous Japanese publications. Enhanced stones have been readily accepted as *suseki* and included into recognized exhibitions and numerous books. In this part, by sharing information we gathered from interviewing one of Japan's leading and most successful *suseki* carvers and manufacturers, we will show that enhancing and manufacturing stones to make *suseki* has continued from the 1960s to the present.







Several years ago, we visited a stone carver and his shop located on the Ibi River, but that visit was brief and our limited time did not permit us to document the extent of the stone carving at this location. Over several intervening years, we became personally acquainted with each of the stone vendors at the Kokufu-ten and Taikan-ten exhibitions. We learned that some of these dealers were also stone carvers, but one of them—Sakurai Toshio—was considered to be the last of the major Japanese stone carvers making *suiseki* in Japan. We knew that many of the stones he sells have been partially or totally made, but we did not know how he made them. Sakurai invited us to visit his home and his shop in Yaizu in central Shizuoka Prefecture. Our first visit with him was on November 10, 2015 and then we spent two more days with him in his home and immediate area in March 22nd and 23rd, 2016.

Our two-hour ride by bullet train (Shinkansen) southwest from Tokyo to Yaizu gave us time to review our questions for Sakurai. Sakurai met us at the Yaizu train station and took us directly to his shop. On both visits, we sat and talked in his stone showroom before touring his facility. We soon learned that he had been buying, enhancing and selling stones for just over forty years, and that he was friends with many stones dealers in Shizuoka and nearby Gifu Prefectures and in Tokyo. Now in his early 80s, he is considering closing his business at the end of this year due to health issues. His shop area, large by Japanese standards, consists of two parallel buildings and extensive open-air bench

systems between and around the two buildings and along the rear of his property, a driveway and parking area. It is large enough for several cars to park inside the property. The extensive outdoor bench system is for cultivated stones or *yoseki*, the Japanese practice of cultivating stones outdoors.

Sakurai was born in 1935 in the Ochiai family that ran a small family sake brewery. Toshio married into the Sakurai family and assumed the Sakurai family name, a tradition in Japan when a family only has daughters. Toshio first became interested in stones from the Yoshima River as a young adult around the time his father died. He started working as a taxi driver in the 1950s since he had his own car. Whenever he drove to nearby Yoshima, he would purchase several boxes of attractive Yoshima stones from farmers and then take them to Tokyo to sell to Mr. Kasahara, owner of Sansui-en, a nice stone shop in the Nerima region. Sakurai was able to sell them for ten times what he paid. He was aware that buying and selling stones were a good business.

These transactions occurred at the beginning of Japan's biggest boom in *suiseki* appreciation. Japan was occupied by American military responsible for the reconstruction of Japan was administered by them until the treaty of San Francisco in 1951 when Japan was turned back over to Japanese leaders. This was followed by a period of steady growth and prosperity. A plethora of new books were published for *suiseki* hobbyists throughout the 1960s and 1970s, and *suiseki's* appeal expanded from the pre-war

*Top;* The first major or rough cuts have been made by Sakurai to form a single peak mountain stone. These first cuts (lighter colored areas) were made with his large circular saw. Later cuts, to make the mountain stone more realistic, will be made with the power circular grinding tools and the hand-held pneumatic chisel. After the final shaping has been completed, it may be subjected to sandblasting to minimize the smooth cut surfaces and then acid washed for a short time to darken the stone. Sakurai can make an attractive landscape stone in four to six hours.

*Facing page;* Two examples of stones in the process of being carved.



Top left; Mr. Sakurai Toshio has been one of Japan's foremost stone carvers and a leading supplier of enhanced stones in Japan for over 40 years. One of his specialties is the manufacturer of hut stones. He is also a stone dealer at the major events each year in Tokyo and Kyoto. Now 81 years old, he is preparing to close his business.



Middle left; This building is his show room filled with hundreds of different types of stones for sale.

Bottom left; This building is his workshop where he manufactures suiseki ranging from small hut stones to large scenic landscape stones.

literati to the general population. This can be called the “period of popularizing *suiseki*.” Several journals were started for the growing number of stone clubs throughout Japan. Many of these clubs held their own local or regional exhibitions and some participated in the annual major exhibition—*Meihen-ten*—held annually at the Meiji Shrine in Tokyo starting in 1961. This period was also a time of major economic expansion as Japan was investing heavily in their industries and infrastructure.

Sakurai's showroom, a large rectangular-shaped building, contains shelves lined with different examples of natural and enhanced *suiseki*. These stones are available for sale to individual domestic and international collectors. Sakurai is a major wholesaler who also supplies other dealers with quality landscape, waterfall, hut stones, and other Japanese stones. Sakurai has been making various sizes of hut stones to sell directly to the public and also to sell to dealers. He has been doing this for approximately four decades. It was then that we realized that we were talking with the person who made the first Japanese stone we ever purchased, a small hut stone, approximately twenty years ago. Many of the stones on display have been enhanced in one way or another by Sakurai. Some were completely manufactured, others have been cleaned and polished by sand blasting, and others have been carved or shaped by removing portions of the rock to create a scenic stone.

As we sat on two old couches drinking tea and talking, Sakurai talked about his life and his role in Japanese stone appreciation. He was open, detailed, and we believe, honest. Sakurai was more relaxed on our second visit and eager to answer a long list of questions. When he first began buying and selling stones, he would occasionally take a stone to someone else to have the bottom cut. He found this to be expensive and decided to buy his own cutting equipment. He was familiar with several others who were buying stones and making *suiseki*. He quit his

taxi business and devoted full time to being a stone dealer and a stone carver. Sakurai worked primarily with stones from the Abegawa, Ibigawa, and Sagigawa Rivers, all located in the same general region of Japan. He told us that there were twenty professional stone cutters working in this region in the 1960s and 1970s. At that time, the raw material was abundant and inexpensive. Today, Sakurai is the last of the major professional stone cutters. There is another smaller carving operation on the Ibi River which specializes in making waterfall stones, and one other dealer who hand makes a few mainly landscape type stones for his retail sales table.

Sakurai told us that he has a sales booth each year at the Kokufu-ten's Green Club in Tokyo in February and then at the Taikan-ten in Kyoto in November. These are his primary venues for retail sales to individual collectors. He maintains a "don't ask, don't tell" policy regarding his stones. He doesn't talk about working the stones he has for sale unless someone specifically asks. He also has some completely natural stones for sale at his booth.

To learn how he enhances stones, we walked across to the other parallel building to begin our lessons. The first area was enclosed on three sides and held a large sink, cabinets full of tools and stones, and a large electric grinding machine on the floor. The large sink was used to determine where to cut stones. This was accomplished by placing a stone where it could rest on other stones that were slightly below the waterline. Sakurai adjusted the stone up or down to obtain the desired line to cut to have a good hut stone. The cut line was then marked on the stone and it was taken to the next room for cutting. Sakurai sits on a chair in this first room and uses a series of hand chisels to rough out a hut stone.

Small stones, mainly from the Ibi River, are suitable for making hut stones with a layer of white stone alternating with darker layers. After obtaining the shape with cold chisels, he uses an electric grinding tool to refine the shape. A little polishing and further refinement, if needed, yields an attractive hut stone in fifteen to twenty minutes. Because small hut-shaped stones are easily recognized, attractive, and not too expensive, they have been popular with foreign visitors or with Japanese who are new to the art of stone appreciation.

We took a medium-sized black rock into the next room where Sakurai had a fairly sophisticated large circular bladed electric saw for cutting even large boulders. The blade is diamond coated and running water cools the blade and stone during the cutting process. He showed us how his equipment can cut through a medium-sized rock in a few minutes, a bit longer for larger stones. Often, he just makes a bottom cut, but sometimes he makes a series of shallow to deep cuts as his first steps in making nice single-peak or multiple-peak mountain stones. After the initial cut, he further works the stone with hand-held cutting and shaping tools. He had a sizeable pile of rocks that



had already been cut in preparation for turning them into landscape stones. We examined these "landscape stones in progress" and brought one back with us as a souvenir.

Sakurai's sand blasting equipment sat nearby at the other end of the same room. This consisted of a large air compressor with thick rubber tubing connected to a large box shaped structure. A large metal tubular bin, which held the etching sand, sat above the compressor on a heavy metal stand. The actual sandblasting occurs inside the box. An exhaust and recycling system protects the user from fine sand, rock and dust. The box is also equipped with lights and blocks to hold a stone in a particular position while it is being sand blasted. The sequence is this: Sakurai places a stone inside the box in the correct position, closes the side door, then sits in front of the box and looks inside the box through a strong flexible plastic window. A hole in the plastic window allows him to insert the heavy tubing through which high volume compressed air and sand make contact with the stone. He can move the hose and nozzle to any position he wants. A series of different-sized nozzles allow him to select the

*Above; Sakurai's showroom with various types of stones he sells. He has partially, and in many cases totally enhanced the stones. He is a major supplier of suiseki to several dealers who in turn supply stone collectors in Japan and internationally.*



*Top row and middle right;* This is one of Sakurai's work areas where he begins the process of making suiseki. He places a stone in a water filled sink to determine where to cut it. The stone on the middle right has been marked for a basal cut. Removing a thick layer of stone at the bottom will result in an attractive mountain stone.

*Middle row;* Sitting in his workshop Sakurai uses small hand held cold chisels and a hammer to shape small hut and other types of small stones. Typically, a hut stone can be made in twenty minutes; a small scenic stone takes a little longer.

*Bottom row;* Power tools used in the manufacture of suiseki include different sized circular grinders used to remove smaller pieces of stone and refine the shape. At right is a pneumatic hand-held chisel used to remove pieces of stone. The entire back or upper part of this stone was shaped using this tool.



type of etching he finds appropriate. A wider nozzle would cover a broader area than a narrow one which is more typically used to remove stone from a very specific area.

Sakurai uses his sand blasting equipment to roughen and make bottom cuts of stones look natural. He sometimes uses this technique to work freshly cut areas on the top portion of the stone to obtain a texture close to the texture and roughness of the original surface. A third use of this equipment is for cleaning newly collected stones from rivers. Sakurai informed us that this was a common method for cleaning larger stones in the 1960s and 1970s. At that time, he had four or five people each day bring stones they had collected in different rivers for him to clean by sand blasting. Many of the Seta River Tiger Striped stones that are occasionally seen in exhibition were cleaned in this manner. After sandblasting, they were polished using fine sand paper and water. Today, many of the

owners of these stones are likely unaware that their stones were cleaned in this manner.

Sakurai also uses smaller hand held power tools to make or modify stones to form suitable *suiseki*. Different sized circular grinding tools allow him to make small to medium-sized alterations including smoothing over cuts in the stone. These are used in the final shaping of landscape stones. Variable speed tools allow him to make more detailed changes that can only be obtained with a slower speed machine. High speed grinding can cause the rock to split into two pieces.

Another tool in his arsenal is a hand-held pneumatic drill. This is used to remove small pieces of stone to improve its overall shape. This piece of equipment is used to remove unwanted knobs, protrusions, and other similar parts. When a stone needs a major reshaping, Sakurai would soak it for ten minutes in a hydrochloric acid solution to soften the stone making it easier to remove smaller pieces using the small

*Top left and right;* Sakurai's large circular saw is capable of cutting both small and large stones quickly and efficiently. He can also make the partial cuts needed to make mountain-shaped stones. The water cooled diamond bladed saw can cut through a stone in just a few minutes.

*Middle left;* His sandblasting equipment consists of a cone-shaped bin containing special etching material with a large air compressor beneath. The stone to be altered is placed inside the large box with a heavy duty plastic viewing cover. Hoses carrying high pressure air and sand are inserted through the arm hole ports on the front.

Top; Many Seta River Tiger Striped stones, including this one, have been cleaned and polished by Sakurai using this equipment.

Middle; This is a Narai stone and a fine example of one of Sakurai manufactured landscape suiseki using a variety of tools and a short hydrochloric acid bath to darken the color of this stone.

Bottom; An Akadama mountain-shaped stone from Sado Island. This is a completely manufactured suiseki. Most Akadama landscape stones have been altered to improve their appearance.



**We have consistently heard from Western students of Japanese suiseki, that Japanese stones are never treated with oils or waxes and that they are always natural and aged with the process of *yoseki*. However, we learned several years ago that some Japanese stones, especially those coming from the earth, that the final stage of cleaning involves the use of a soft pliant wax from the Ibotia beetle.**

pneumatic drill. On the middle left is an example of a stone made in this manner. The entire back portion and some of the slopes of this stone was shaped using this method. Once a stone has been cut, altered and polished, it was often placed in hydrochloric acid for a few minutes to darken the stone. Buyer's preferences for dark or black landscape stones were driving this process.

Sakurai has been actively practicing *yoseki*, a Japanese practice of cultivating stones outdoors and by regularly watering them. Over the course of forty years he has placed thousands of stones on benches at his workshop and at his home. The stones are also exposed to rain and snow. While this is not suitable for all stones—Furuya, for example, should not be subjected to *yoseki* practices—many other stones will develop a patina that gives the stone a feeling of oldness, serenity, or quietness. This is likely a slow oxidation process. Sakurai uses this process for stones that have been cut and worked. Many years of this practice will erase all signs that a stone was cut and worked. This is never mentioned in books on *suiseki* in Japan.



Top and bottom; The Japanese practice of cultivating stones outdoors or *yoseki* will develop a nice patina on some types of stones, but not all stones. It is also an effective method of eliminating signs where a stone has been worked.



We have consistently heard from Western students of Japanese *suiseki*, that Japanese stones are never treated with oils or waxes and that they are always natural and aged with the process of *yoseki*. However, we learned several years ago that some Japanese stones, especially those coming from the earth, that the final stage of cleaning involves the use of a soft pliant wax from the Ibota beetle. This is placed in a soft cotton cloth and then rubbed on the surface of the stone. When we ask Mr. Sakurai if he ever used oils or waxes, he responded by saying that he does apply natural oil to many of his dark stones and then leaves them outdoors for at least one month before he will sell it.

We asked one final question. Why did you do this? The driving motivation for Sakurai was financial. It was a very profitable business. He was probably the most financially successful of all the professional stone

carvers. For a period of several years, he could not manufacture enough *suiseki* to meet the demand. One day he sold over 300 stones to an engineer working on the construction of the Narita airport in the early 1970s.

Sakurai continues to make *suiseki* today even though the peak of *suiseki* popularity has long passed. He saw several of his stone carving friends close their businesses as demand dropped sharply and the supply of inexpensive suitable stones became difficult to obtain.

It is time to dispense with the myth that Japanese *suiseki* are all natural and recognize that a significant number of the stones held in collections and shown in exhibitions have been worked to some degree. Despite that, a carefully worked stone can have all the attributes sought after in a fine *suiseki* and can be appreciated as much as a natural stone. 🍷



# Friends, Creativity

## An Interview with Massimo Bandera, Italy, on

By Joe Grande, Canada

Top row; Drawing showing the potential for the design of this *Taxus cuspidata*, that features its magnificent deadwood.

Massimo being assisted by Antonio Jesús and observed by Gigi, co-owner of the tree.

Massimo estimates the age of this tree to be around 500 years.

Bottom left and right; Front and back views of the tree before styling work.

**A**lthough many recognize nine species of yews, all yews are closely related to the generic *Taxus baccata*. One of its distinctive features is that all parts of the yew, but the berries, are toxic to humans and animals. However, the seeds are as poisonous as the rest of the tree. The yew's bark is used to create an effective cancer-fighting drug which has led to the overharvesting of this unique organism that can live more than a thousand years. It is listed among 400 species of plants at risk of extinction because of their medicinal value. The yew's importance to humans is epic. Before the invention of gunpowder, its strength and hardness made the yew as valuable as steel when it came to making instruments for war, defense and hunting. Parishes in medieval England were required to grow yews, contained within fenced churchyards because of their toxic properties, to provide material for making long bows. Stiff and strong, the yew is the time-honored wood for making bows. Its springy sapwood made the iconic English long bow a powerful weapon that guaranteed military supremacy in the middle ages. Even the Chalcolithic mummy, a well-preserved natural mummy of a man who lived around 3,300 BCE, found in 1991 in the Italian alps, carried an unfinished bow







# & a Mighty Yew

## his recent work on a yew called il Nettuno

made of yew wood. In North America, indigenous people made strong and long-lasting canoe paddles from the mighty yew.

The yew in this article is a *Taxus cuspidata*, Japanese yew or spreading yew, native to Japan, Korea, northeast China and the extreme southeast of Russia. Individual trees from Sikhote-Alin, a mountain range in Russia that is home to brown bears, reindeer and Siberian tigers, are known to be 1,000 years old.

BCI Director and noted bonsai artist and teacher Massimo Bandera recently worked on a yew, and had to bend a heavy branch to realize the tree's full aesthetic

potential. After he sent me the photos showing the work on this exceptional specimen, I interviewed him by e-mail. Here is our conversation about this singular bonsai tree which he calls il Nettuno (Neptune).

**What is this tree's story? How long have you cultivated it?**

For some time I followed the collection of a dear friend, the collector Antonio Villena della Spagna. In 2011 told me about an old *Taxus* he was thinking of acquiring. The trunk shows an incredible age which I estimate between 500 and 600 years. After Antonio purchased it, I cultivated the tree for three years.

*Top row;* Massimo applies a lime sulphur solution to the deadwood.

*Example of treated deadwood in the crown of the tree.*

Calm and composed, Antonio and Gigi's pet dog Haiko helped set the mood for this creative afternoon that was made warmer with friendship.

*Bottom left;* The branch that will be hollowed out and bent to lessen its angle.

*Bottom right;* Reducing the girth of a branch to create better taper by stripping fibres in the direction of the veins to create more natural-looking deadwood.



Top; A powerful grinder and a carbide tip at 27000 rpm efficiently carves the hard deadwood.

Middle left and right; The branch to be bent has been hollowed out, creating a hole and thus weakening the branch so it can be bent.

Bottom left; The subject branch is carefully wrapped with wet raffia to protect the live bark during the bending process.

Bottom right; With the branch protected with raffia, it is now ready to be wrapped with thick copper wires.

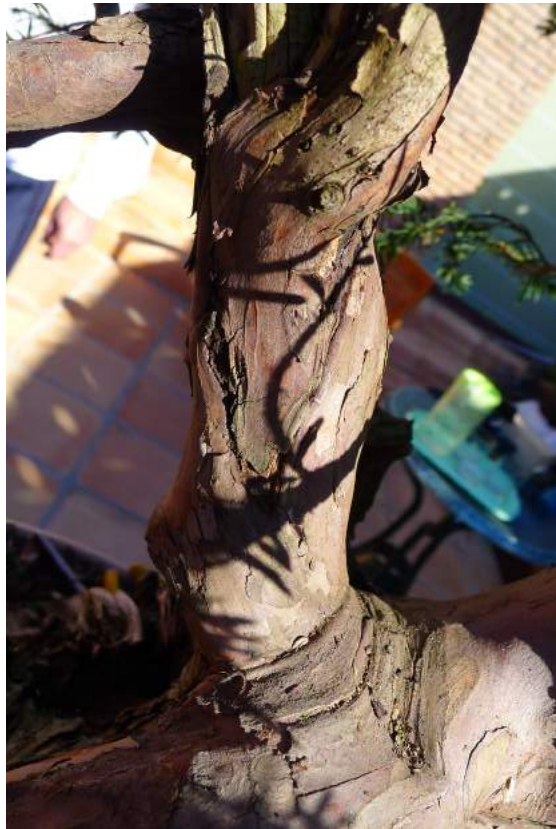


What role did Antonio Villena della Spagna play in this project?

He and his wife Gigi gave me the honor of styling this tree. Sometimes even in bonsai art, a person who plays the role of patron of the arts is very important because it provides an opportunity for authors to create many works. Also this bonsai is an example of collaboration and cooperation. With the help of my students Antonio Jesús, and Pedro Gracia, I was able to achieve a better outcome. In the pictures you can feel the climate of understanding and vivacity that has



**Sometimes even in bonsai art, a person who plays the role of patron of the arts is very important because it provides an opportunity for authors to create many works.**



been created among the people who attended, dogs included. Their names are Haiko and Takumi. Antonio and his wife Gigi have been able to create ideal conditions in which the we were able to express ourselves to the maximum.

**Is it necessary to have an assistant for this work?**

Of course it is! Not only does it take an assistant because alone it is difficult to have enough strength, but it also takes a good understanding between people. Antonio Jesús is a student of mine with whom I have a great artistic rapport, comparable to the best Japanese tradition.

**What are the characteristics of the Taxus species that make it good material for bonsai and how does this tree compare to this ideal?**

The yew along with juniper are the two really sculptural conifers of the bonsai world, with their unique aesthetic and their artistic potential: the simple and dynamic movement of the juniper, the strong and austere yew, as is shown by this specimen. Il Nettuno also has a fantastic group of natural Jin that create an impressive sculptural effect evocative of the trident associated with Neptune, god of the sea.

**Are there any aspects of a yew that make it difficult to grow as bonsai?**

I would say no, it is a species that lives thousands of years in nature and is very resistant to everything!

**What made you decide it was time to work on this tree now?**

I realized that the tree had sufficient vigor when I saw that the annual growth was 20 cm long, a lot for a yew confined to a pot, then I gave it a special plant-based nutrition program.

**Do you consider this heavy branch bending technique routine or is it to be used when there are no other options for the design of the tree?**

This bending technique is certainly not easy, but if done correctly on vigorous specimens, it is a safe option to be applied if it is really necessary in terms of aesthetics.

**What is the best season for this work?**

Heavy branch bending can be carried out from November to April.

**How do you prepare for this work? Which tools and materials do you use?**

I always have all the possible tools, even for collecting yamadori ... I have an adoration for the tools of the noble arts, even as objects, and I collect everything, both hand tools and electrical tools. In this case I used a powerful grinder with tungsten carbide saw blades, among my favorite tools.

**Tell us about the electric grinder and the special bit that you use for hollowing out the branch.**

I used a powerful grinder and a carbide tip at 27000 rpm. The important thing is to reach at least 22 thousand, but when I carve deadwood on a bonsai usually work with a 34000 rpm machine.



*Top;* It takes considerable strength to bend the branch into the desired position.  
*Middle;* A guy wire is used to keep the branch in the desired position. The tree is now ready for more detailed wiring.  
*Bottom;* Detail of the heavy copper wires.



I see in this case, you chose to create a hole in the branch instead of a deep groove, usually reinforced with a spline of thick wire.

It is an invention of mine for very hard woods such as yew and olive. In this case, the branch to be bent was very thick, Yew wood is very hard and stiff, and the deadwood adds to its strength. I opted for my master's technique which is to clear wood from the interior part of the branch. Masahiko Kimura taught me this technique, which for me is unsurpassed, but I also made an oval hole that reduces and weakens the fiber even more.

**What measures do you take to protect the live portion of the branch?**

The bark and deadwood is first treated with propolis to help with dehydration. Then I wrap raffia around and through the branch and apply thick, 5 mm copper wire around the branch. I use natural raffia and not synthetic tape, so the bark can continue to exchange gasses with the environment.

**What is propolis and how is it applied?**

Propolis or bee glue, is a resin made by bees with antibiotic insecticide and fungicide activity used as a sealant. It helps prevent dehydration of the live branch.

Propolis is brushed on to the bark and deadwood creating a natural second skin for the tree. Raffia is then applied as usual. Propolis is not known in Japan but in Europe it was once used as a filler, mixed with wax for tree surgery on monumental trees. It was expensive so it fell into disuse with the advent of chemistry; Now it is coming back due to the organic movement. For me it is very valid and we use it a lot in Italy.

**Why is raffia necessary and is it the best material for this technique?**

The raffia adheres tightly to the bark but allows it to breathe. It also protects the bark from damage by allowing the wire spirals to slide during the bending.

**After the branch is protected with raffia and you are ready to bend the branch, what are your thinking about as you perform the bend?**

I prefer to bend by hand. In this way I "feel" the bend and realize how far I can go. It's a feeling... and I'm not afraid because I have never had a branch break with this technique.

With a lever and the help of my assistants, I forcefully bent the branch until it is in the desired position. The technique allows bends otherwise impossible for such a large, thick branch and distributes the forces evenly so as not to break, preventing the loss of the branch. It is a difficult task that pushes the limit of possibilities, therefore it should be performed only on very vigorous specimens.

**Do you try to bend the branch all at once? Are there times when a branch is bent a little at a time?**

Some do it a little at a time, but I think it's better to bend all at once. I believe bending a little at a time is too stressful for the plant.



*Top and Middle;* The detailed wiring proceeds until all the branches and sub branches are wired and positioned.

*Lower Middle;* This container was chosen for il Nettuno.

*Bottom;* The proud collectors, Antonio Villena della Spagna, wife Gigi and the newly potted il Nettuno.



**How much deadwood do you remove to make the branch easy to bend? How do you know it is enough to bend the branch?**

Difficult to answer because it is very variable. I would say in general two-thirds needs to be removed, but by bending and feeling the tension, I discern if it is sufficient.



The finished tree viewed from the front and back. The bent branch is now in harmony with the composition of the tree that will be allowed to grow in full vigor after this invasive styling session.

**What is the aftercare for a tree after a heavy branch has been bent?**

For me it is essential the cultivation comes before the technique, vigor before stress. It's a bit like an athlete before her race, who comes very well prepared so as not to get injured during the race! My bonsai are allowed to grow in full vigor at least 4 to 5 years after these invasive styling sessions.

**How long does it take for Taxus branches to set before the wire can be removed?**

After a year I take off all the wires. For the Taxus it is sufficient to first carry out one major wiring, after which only minor adjustments, wiring only what is strictly necessary.

**Do you have any practical advice for bonsaists who wish to master this technique? What is the best way to practice?**

For me, bonsai cannot be self-taught, it is too complex and long, the choice of a good teacher is actually the best way to learn this ancient art correctly, a wonderful experience that I recommend to everyone. 🌲



# How to Accurately Recess a Stone in a Wood Base

By Lindsay Bebb, Australia



*Top;* The stone that we are recessing into a wood base is a stone from the Mary River in Queensland with a very uneven bottom.

*Top inset;* Use a wood strip to determine the top level of the daiza and how deep the stone will be recessed.

One of the most difficult parts of creating a *daiza* or base for a viewing stone is the setting of the stone into the wood base. Many articles and books have described the process using photos but most skip over the detail or use mostly stones with flat bases. If you have ever tried to make a *daiza*, you will probably know what I am talking about—professionals excluded!

This easy-to-follow photographic article details how you can go about the process of recessing the stone into the wood with great accuracy and I hope it removes any frustrations you may have encountered with this task, or encourages you to have a go.

I have selected a simple stone with an uneven base. The general process is the same regardless of the complexity of the base of the stone, however one change needs to be made if the base is complex and I will identify that toward the end of the article. This is what I do...



1 Prop the stone on plasticine or putty and get it sitting the way you would like, looking at the front of the stone. Check side and top views.

2 Select a plastic container large enough to hold the stone without it touching the sides. Place the stone in the container, with its plasticine props, to check. Mark a pencil or chalk line on the stone to indicate how deep you want the stone to sit in the wood base. Coat the inside of the plastic tray and the base of the stone with baby oil or similar. This is to allow good release of the stone from the mold and the mold from the plastic container.

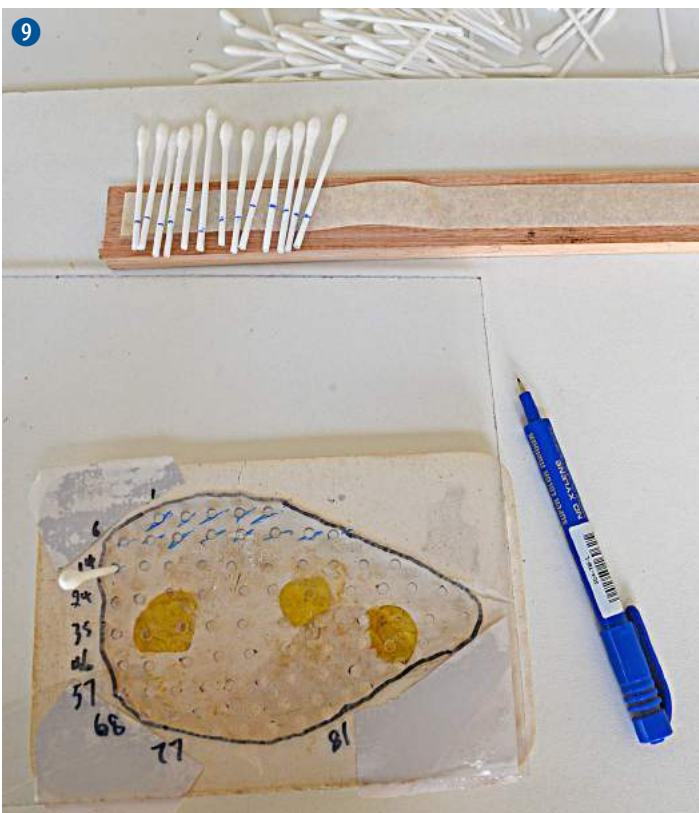
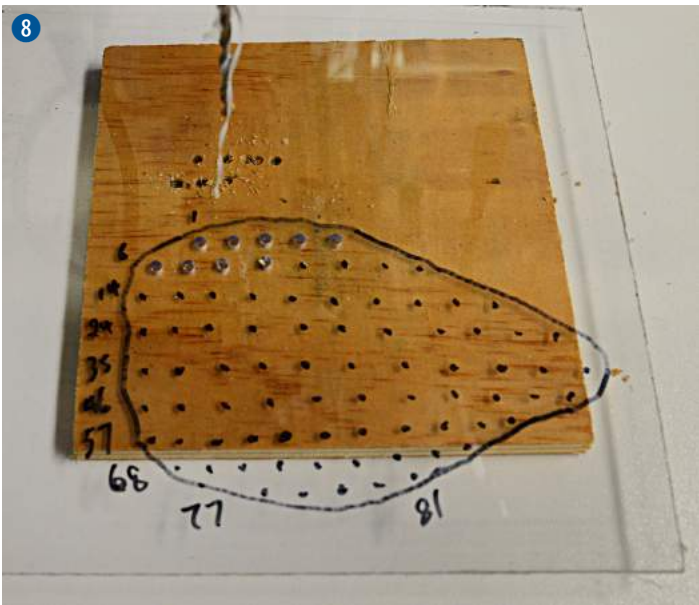
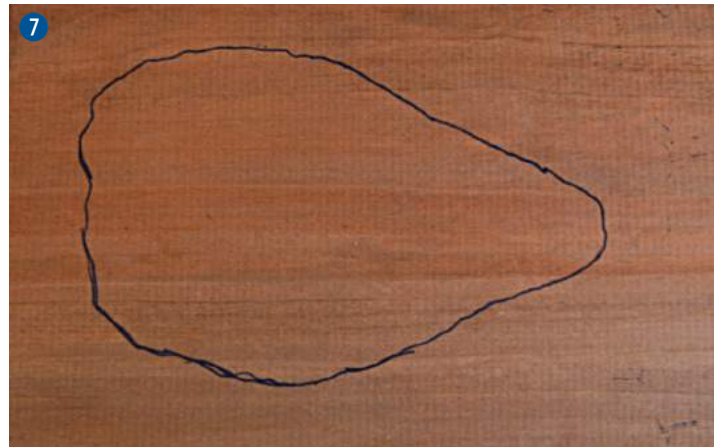
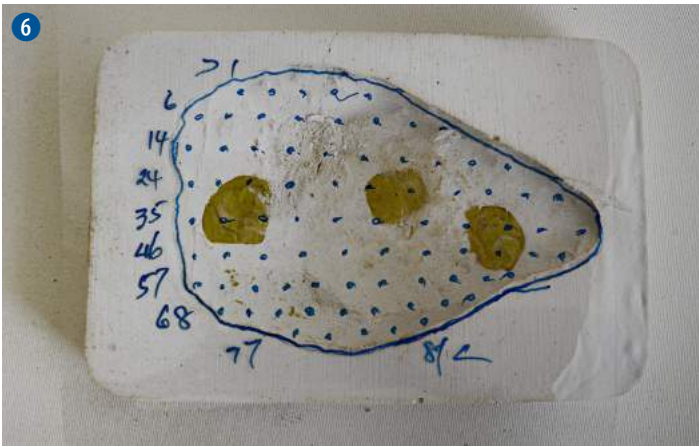
3 To create a Plaster of Paris mold, mix the plaster and water to the recommended consistency by following the package directions; pour it into the plastic container, tamp down to level the plaster and then slowly lower the stone together with its props into the plaster. The props are there to make sure you have the stone angle right and to allow the plaster to flow under the stone. Best if the stone does not touch the plastic tray. You only want enough Plaster of Paris in the tray to come up the stone to a little above where you want the top of the daiza to be. Later, the extra plaster will be sanded to the desired level.

4 When the plaster is set, remove the whole thing from the plastic container and then carefully separate the stone from the mold. I do this by first trimming around the base of the stone with a sharp knife to clean up any unwanted plaster adhering up the side of the stone, then gently tapping around the sides of the mold with a piece of timber to dislodge the stone from the mold. If the mold breaks you might be able to glue it back together to be able to get your stone outline.



5 When you have the stone out of the mold, using a belt sander, sand back the top of the mold to a flat surface with sharp edges around the inside of the mold at the level you want the daiza to be.





**6** Place a sheet of thin, transparent plastic or film over the mold and trace the stone outline with a thin pointed permanent marker. Then you need to mark depth points on this same piece of film that will accurately reflect the shape of the base of the mold. I have 81 marker points for this small, 13 cm x 8 cm stone. To make sure the film does not move while you are making your marks, you can fix it to the mold with double-sided tape.

**7** Trace the outline of the stone on the block of wood for the base by using carbon paper under the film outline and a pen or a stylus with a hard tip. Set aside.

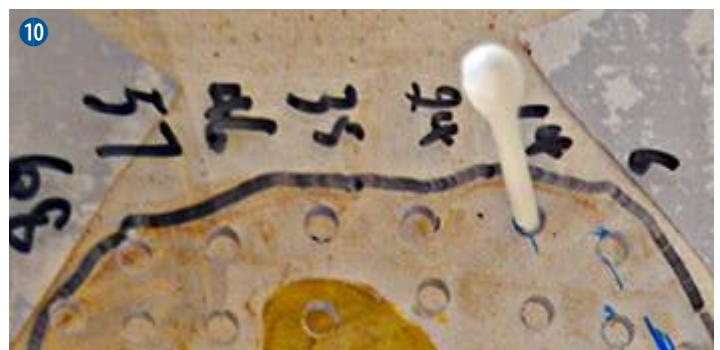
**8** Then place a piece of rigid Perspex\* about 3 mm thick over your film and mark both the stone outline and the depth mark points onto the Perspex, again using a thin pointed permanent marker.

**9** For my depth markers, I use cotton tips with one end cut off, so select a thin drill bit of equal thickness as the cotton tips and drill holes at every marker point you have indicated on the Perspex.

Now place the Perspex on top of the mold and line it up as accurately as you can with the stone outline. Again, holding it in place with double-sided tape so it will not move would be good.

**10** With a bit of practice you will get this next bit done successfully! Take a cotton tip with one end cut off and place it in the first hole so that it is vertical and touching the base of the mold. Mark the cotton tip at the point where it meets the top of the Perspex. Set the cotton tip aside in some way that you can place each successive tip in order for the next part of the process. To keep track of mine, I use a piece of tape, sticky side up, on a thin strip of timber and press each cotton tip onto it in sequence.

If you look at the photo of the Perspex tracing you can see that I have placed my depth marker points in rows and numbered the starting point of each row. This allows me to keep track of the markers, in this example, 81 of them.





11 The marks on the cotton tips show the depth variations for the bottom of this stone.

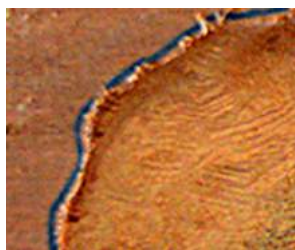
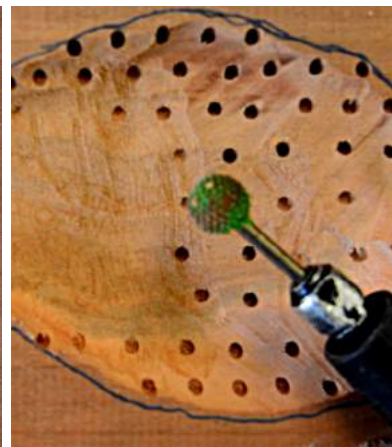
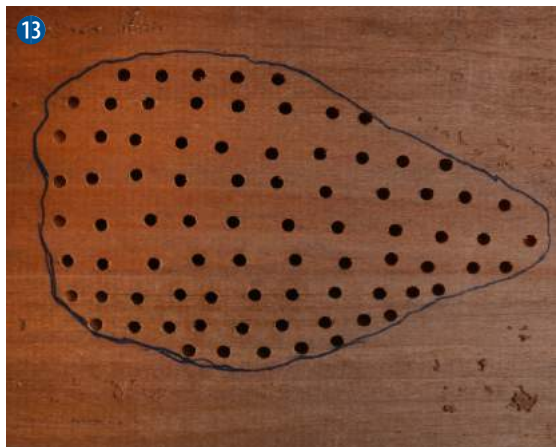
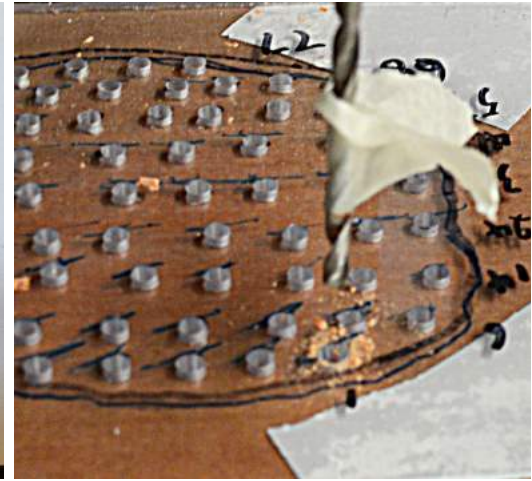
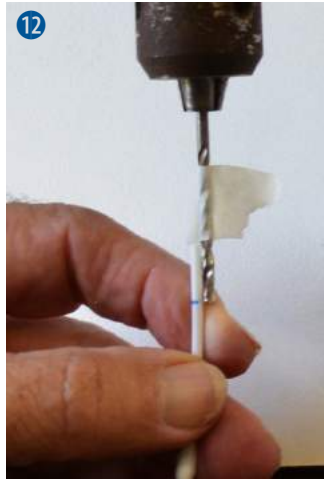
When all the cotton tips are depth marked, place the Perspex over the top of the timber for the daiza and line it up accurately with the stone outline previously marked. I use double-sided carpet tape to stick the Perspex firmly to the wood.

12 Now, using a drill press with the same thin drill bit as previously, and starting with cotton tip No. 1 transfer the depth of the marker to the drill bit with a piece of thin masking tape, and then drill through hole No. 1 into the wood until the masking tape grazes the Perspex surface. Then proceed to cotton tip No. 2 and do the same thing. You can keep reusing the piece of masking tape for as long as it holds up to the task.

With this process you are accurately drilling down to the base line of the stone, according to each original depth marking you plotted.

13 When all the depth markers are drilled you then don't have to think too much about the internal shape of the daiza. You just carve away everything down to the depth of each drilled hole. I use the heaviest carving tool that the wood will reasonably take until I get down near the base of the holes then switch to a finer tool. I leave at least the full thickness of the ink outline of the stone at this stage, refining gradually for the final fitting.

14 Having finished all this, you can now proceed to shape the outer parts of the daiza—feet and sides—to your desired design.



Detail above; Leave at least the full thickness of the ink outline of the stone at this stage, refining gradually for the final fitting.

Bottom right; This stone is from the Mary River in Queensland and the finished daiza is Tasmanian Myrtle.

...another method is necessary if the base of the stone has a complex shape, for example, indents, crevices or holes.



15 I mentioned at the start of the article that another method is necessary if the base of the stone has a complex shape, for example, indents, crevices or holes. With such a base, the plaster would flow into these areas and simply grip the stone in a way that you could not remove it from the mold. In simple cases, you could fill the holes or indents in the bottom of the stone with plasticine so that the plaster will not flow into those parts, but another good way to get your indented impression is to use florist foam.

16 Press the base of the stone firmly into the foam block down as far as you would like the recess to be and then very carefully remove it to reveal the complex shape. Be careful not to break away the edges of the foam when removing the stone. You want to preserve the sharp edges for your outline.

Using foam is a little more difficult because of the softness of the material when taking markings and especially when inserting the cotton tip markers into the foam mold, however, it is an accurate way to get your recess if you are careful.

Whichever method you use to create a mold of the stone's bottom, if you have been accurate with your outline and depth markings, you should finish up with a perfect, or near perfect recess for your stone. If you make any small errors with the internal carving you can always use a little wood filler to make corrections. 🛠️

\* Perspex is a trade name for Acrylic or acrylic glass, a transparent thermoplastic that goes by other trade names; Plexiglas, Acrylite, Lucite, and several others.



# A Premonition of Bonsai

## A Dream Set in Motion

By Alessandro Bonardo, Italy

Photos by Marco Bonardo and Massimo Bandera, Italy



*"When a resolute young fellow steps up to the great bully, the world, and takes him boldly by the beard, he is often surprised to find it comes off in his hand, and that it was only tied on to scare away the timid adventurers."*

*- Ralph Waldo Emerson*

my age on my fingers; while hiking near Vinadio, in Colle della Lombardia and Colle Maladecia in particular, I was fascinated by the very old forms of larch and stone pine.

In bonsai, I first glimpsed the possibility of transferring the emotion of those places to a balcony in my house.

I was eight or nine years old when I applied for registration to the Scuola d'Arte Bonsai, but the response was anything but pleasant, "bonsai is not for children, wait until you are at least twelve years old."

So I did, but did I not take it well.

While waiting I began to acquire a taste for miniature trees from various catalogs, the most significant of which, was "Bonsai Masterpieces" a publication of the Nippon Bonsai Association.

It was on April 11, 2010, the day when for the first time, I put my hands on a bonsai.

It was a very ordinary basic course in which they taught how to care for the small plants from the market, which other than the label, had nothing to do with bonsai or Japan.

Sure it may sound strange, but even then I realized that the bonsai was much more than just a hobby.

The interest for this art began when I could still count

*Previous page, left;* Alessandro works on a juniper at Massimo Bandera's studio.

*Previous page, right;* The black pine is Alessandro's tree and he is working on it at Massimo's school.

*This page, top left;* Alessandro with his Japanese language teachers, Sawa Nakamura and Yukiko Deangelis,

*Middle left;* Massimo Bandera and Alessandro at Kokufu-ten bonsai exhibit in Japan.

*Bottom left;* Alessandro with his father Marco at Omiya Bonsai Village.



Since 2010, I took courses for a couple of years the Scuola d'Arte Bonsai, then the courses were interrupted and I found myself at a point of departure with a few little plants to look after.

In 2013 Massimo Bandera held bonsai classes in Alba; I was aware of his works from various publications. Of these, I was fascinated with those created by processes that involved a lot of manipulation, because as we know, there is no art without the work of man.

The first lesson was interesting: in addition to having worked on a nice Kuromatsu, originally more than a meter high, an Easter gift from my parents, I was

fascinated by videos and information on the great avant-garde master, Masahiko Kimura.

His sublime works, with a perfect combination of strength of the trunks and the delicacy of the crown, they appear like something completely new, never seen in the environment of classic bonsai.

The lesson ended with the ironic joke by our teacher, Bandera, when in front of the astonished faces of his students said, "If you want to study from the Great Master you must know how to speak Japanese and be willing to learn from him for six years."

I did not tell Massimo, but I immediately began to study Japanese, taking lessons from a translator in my city.

A year later I made him aware of my ambitious intentions and to which he reacted in disbelief: "If you want to experience Japan is not necessary to only study from Kimura, but you must know Japanese, and you study with him for at least ..." "six years!" I interrupted, "...and I'm already studying Japanese!"

Given the quickness of my reply, the discussion became more serious. On the advice of Massimo, I continued language studies with unparalleled teachers, Sawa Nakamura and Yukiko Deangelis, multiplying the speed of learning.

Then came the time to also acquaint the Great Master of my intentions, having read the experience of Ryan Neil, where he wrote to him every month for many, many months, I imagined that the procedures would take place at a slow pace. In the summer of 2015 we sent the first letter to the master.

Incredibly two months later, I received the answer: the teacher wanted to meet me.

Obviously the merit of such a timely manner must be attributed to Massimo and Professor Nakamura.

In February of the following year, not to be labelled a slacker at school, I was time to take a nice vacation for my first trip to Japan. Massimo Bandera, Professor Sawa Nakamura and my father, Marco Bonardo, accompanied me.

It was a climb towards the best, starting from the visit to Kokufu-ten bonsai exhibit, and on to the gardens of Kobayashi and Kimura.

The latter seemed an unprecedented perfection, every single blade of grass was in the right place and it was a perfect fit in size and color.

The masterpieces from the entrance sparkled in their green tones and in the midst of these excelled Toryuunomai, a tree of a matchless harmony among whose branches are hidden the most profound essence of nature and art, so you can stand there and watch, perceiving that wonderful silence that embraces the alpine landscapes.

I hesitated a moment before crossing the threshold, the master was not there, and so, we began to admire the work, caressing the thick foliage with our eyes.

On his arrival we formed ourselves in a row, standing like soldiers, to do our respectful bow.

We talked for over an hour with the teacher who, despite the bus loads of tourists and customers, seemed to care only for us that day.

He warmly offered tea, Japanese sweets and delicious mandarins from his garden.

He explained on a scale of seven items, based on rarity, what is it to a man to become great in his field.

Commitment is the foundation, without which, learning is below zero; This, together with the will to become greater and the desire to grow, are part of those qualities you can influence through self control.

Then comes creativity and ideas that increase with experience.

Talent, and even more, sensitivity, are absolute characteristics, dormant in some individuals that can be awakened if properly stimulated.

During the interview the teacher was pretty amazed that I spoke in Japanese, but to tell the truth, I expected a better performance from myself.

On the way back I felt really blessed, I thought of the bonsai which had impressed me the most and the meeting with the teacher.

Now, after a few months, stronger with much more in-depth study of the language, I am about to leave for this fantastic adventure to learn about traditional Japan, which in some ways, is not much different from the teaching method of great artists of Italy.

And of course my heartfelt thanks goes to Massimo Bandera, Sawa Nakamura, Yukiko Deangelis, and my family for indulging in a dream that can be called unusual, eccentric and idealistic, but that relies on the passion for beauty in general and love of Nature, towards which everyone should experience a strong tie.



*Top and middle;* The great master, Masahiko Kimura, warmly offered tea, Japanese sweets and delicious mandarins from his garden.



I want to thank Mr. Marco Invernizzi to helped me with my studies at the Istituto Superiore Umberto Primo di Alba, better known to students as the Wine School, where I gained the remarkable botanical knowledge that is always helpful in the field of bonsai.

If you ask me what I think is the meaning of doing bonsai, I reply that it is personal growth and it is equivalent to condensing a part of yourself, which are ideas, that before the creative process exist solely in the mind of the author and soon after, are given to others as emotions contained in a form. 🌲

*Bottom;* Alessandro, Professor Sawa Nakamura and Masahiko Kimura.



# Bonsai in Leipzig

City of trade, music, art and culture.



**2016 Annual Meeting  
& Exhibition of  
Bonsai Club Germany and  
German Suiseki Society**



*Top;* Monument of Johann Sebastian Bach and St. Thomas' Church where the great composer once worked, and which is also famous for the St. Thomas' Boys Choir, founded in 1212!

*Inset;* "Madonna", 13 cm h, place of origin: China, collection René Alber

*Bottom;* Pinus mugo, 3<sup>rd</sup> prize of category over 45 cm, ca. 150 years, of Mr. Rainer Wolf, pot: China





By Gudrun Benz, Germany

Photos by Gudrun Benz

**T**he Saxon city of Leipzig is a place with a great history where tradition meets dynamism. Stately homes, historic arcades, Gothic, Renaissance, Wilhelminian and modern buildings tell more than 1,000 years of history in the square of just one square kilometer of the city centre. It is a city of trade, of music, of art, of culture. Famous composers such as Johann Sebastian Bach, Felix Mendelsohn Bartholdy, Richard Wagner, Robert Schumann, Edvard Grieg, Albert Lortzing, Gustav Mahler lived and worked here. Leipzig's Gewandhaus Orchestra, the Opera and St. Thomas Boys Choir are one of the world's top ensembles and boast a rich history. The famous poet Goethe studied at the University of Leipzig, founded in 1409 and therefore one of the oldest universities in Europe. Art and culture, with lots of museums and art galleries, blend with high-tech business. Leipzig was, and even is today, a city of trade fairs (book fair, Automobile International, Games Convention...). Therefore Leipzig is always worth a visit.

This year's exhibition of the Bonsai Club Germany and the German Suiseki Society added an attraction to the city's activities for the first time and gave evidence of the fast growing bonsai culture and art in the former communist state in East Germany in the last 25 years. More than 100 bonsai and about 20 suiseki were on display. Although the exhibition area was located a little bit outside of the city centre it was well attended, mainly on Saturday. Visitors enjoyed the beautifully



*Top left; View into the exhibition*

*Upper inset; Old City Hall – a most impressive Renaissance building, built in 1556/57.*

*Lower inset; St. Nikolai Church – famous for the slogan "We are the people" and "No violence" which was chanted by 70,000 demonstrators in the streets in 1989 for freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of travel.*

The four participants of the New Talent Contest (NTC) 2016

*Middle left; Michael Raab,*

*Bottom left; Achim Hochstein,*

*Middle right; Manuel Flammann,*

*Bottom right; The winner, René Alber, will take part in the next year's European NTC during the Noelanders Trophy in Belgium at the beginning of February 2017.*



**BONSAI DEMONSTRATIONS**

*Top left;* Valentin Brose, Germany

*Top center;* Daniel Tischoff, Germany

*Top right;* Mr. Karpicek, Czech Republic

*Middle left and right;* Przybylski, Germany

*Bottom left and right;* Vaclav Novak, Czech Republic

**EXHIBIT**

*Facing Page: Top left;* "Sea-horse", measurement: 18 x 7 x 29 cm, place of origin: Alps, Germany, collection Harald Spiegel

*Facing Page: Top right;* *Juniperus sabina*, prize of the Jury, ca. 120 years, of Mr. Markus Staudenmeier, pot: China

*Facing Page: Middle left;* Plateau stone, place of origin: Dahua, China, collection Uwe Schild

*Facing Page: Middle right;* *Pinus thunbergii*, first prize of category 20 – 45 cm, ca. 40 years of Mr. Joachim Sichma, pot: Japan

*Facing Page: Bottom left;* Plateau stone, place of origin: Kifune, Japan, collection Harald Lehner

*Facing Page: Bottom right;* *Pinus mugo*, prize of the Jury, of Mr. Helfried Rapp



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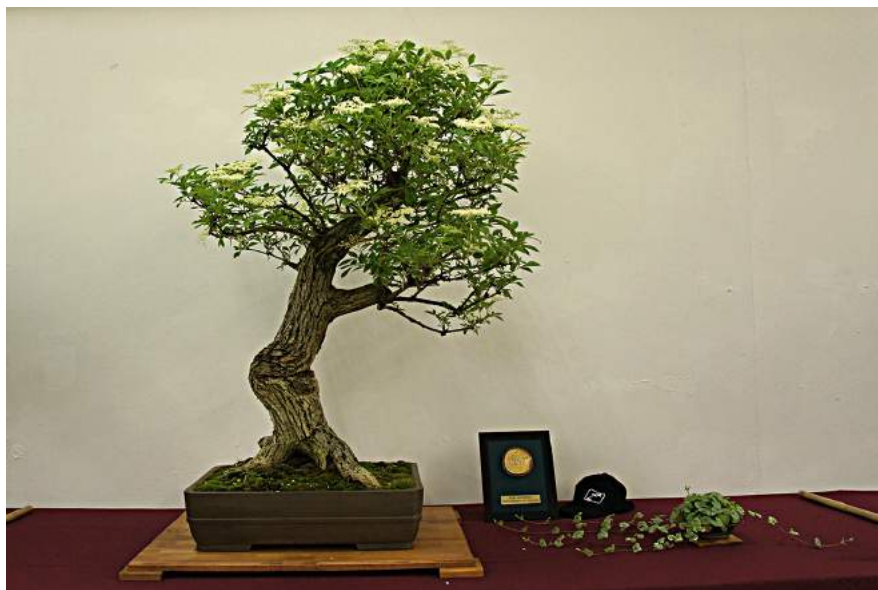
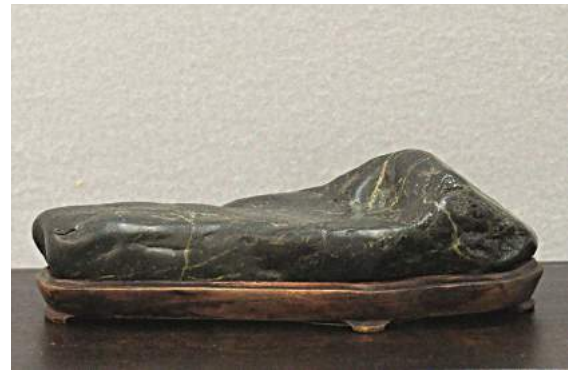


Top left; *Rhododendron indicum*, prize of the Jury, ca. 75 years, of Mrs. Bettina Hinke, pot: China

Top right; Plateau stone, place of origin: Japan, collection Gudrun Benz

Middle; *Juniperus chinensis* 'Itoigawa', EBA Award of Merit, ca. 35 years of Mr. Uwe Hanstein, pot: China

Bottom; *Sambucus nigra*, Award of CBA (Czech Bonsai Association), ca. 35 years, of Mr. Thomas Nägele



displayed bonsai and stones as well as simultaneous bonsai demonstrations, Suiseki and bonsai lectures on the stage of the same hall. Three smaller halls were occupied by traders who offered all kind of bonsai related items. As always the New Talent Contest (NTC) was conducted during the event. The winner, René Alber, will take part in the next year's European NTC during the Noelanders Trophy in Belgium at the beginning of February 2017. A jury selected the best bonsai in competition (see sidebar on right). Awards were presented at the diner on Saturday evening.

The next year's national bonsai and suiseki meeting will be held in the small, but beautiful city of Hameln at the end of October. 🌳

## BONSAI AWARD WINNERS

### Category *Shohin* (up to 20 cm)

1st prize: Hannelore Bünger

2nd prize: Ursula Funke

### Category 20 to 45 cm

1st prize: *Pinus thunbergii* of Joachim Sichma

2nd prize: *Myrtus communis* of German Gomez

3rd prize: *Parthenocissus tricuspidata* of Christian Przybylski

### Category over 45 cm

1st prize: *Rhododendron indicum* 'Asahi no hikari' of Hartmut Münchenbach

2nd prize: *Olea europaea sylvestris* of German Gomez

3rd prize: *Larix decidua* of Helfried Rapp

*Pinus mugo* of Rainer Wolf

### Awards of the Jury

*Pinus mugo* of Helfried Rapp

*Taxus cuspidata* of Jörg Derlien

*Tsuga* of Harald Lehner

*Pinus sylvestris* of Gil Marriner

*Styrax* of Harald Lehner

*Taxus cuspidata* of Michael Herrlinger

*Rhododendron indicum* of Bettina Hinke

*Juniperus sabina* of Markus Staudenmeier

*Olea europaea* of Silvia Kadasch and Kersten Lochner

### Willi Benz Memorial Award

*Rhododendron indicum* 'Asahi no hikari' of Hartmut Münchenbach

### Award of Bonsai Museum Düsseldorf

*Pinus sylvestris* of Gil Marriner

### Award of Bonsai Club Germany

*Pinus mugo uncinata* of Vaclav Novak



*Top left; "Bear", place of origin: China, collection Uwe Schild*

*Top right; Olea europaea sylvestris, 2<sup>nd</sup> prize of category over 45 cm, of Mr. German Gomez, pot: Tokoname*

*Middle left; "Wave", measurement: 25 x 13 x 18 cm, place of origin: China, collection Silvia Kadasch*

*Bottom; Rhododendron indicum 'Asahi no hikari', first prize of category over 45 cm, Willi Benz Memorial Award, of Mr. Hartmut Münchenbach. Photo by Hans Kastner*

*Inset; Same tree in flowers one week later, photo by H. Münchenbach*



# Bonsai in La Belle Province

Société de bonsai  
et de penjing de  
Montréal  
**Annual Show**

By Joan Greenway, Canada

Photos by Brian Greenway

From August 26th to 28th 2016, the Société de bonsaï et de penjing de Montréal (SBPM) Annual Show was held at the Montreal Botanical Garden. It was a small exquisite show with warm and friendly club members taking their time to make over 2200 visitors welcome.

This juried show revealed 42 of the best bonsai from three groups, beginner, intermediate and expert trees. It also had 4 “guest bonsai” from previous shows that had been donated by the society to the Montreal Botanical Garden years ago. These particular trees are like old friends to the more long-time members as they are the result of visiting bonsai masters who have given workshops to the Société.

The judging process is quite vigorous since there are almost 400 members in this society from all over Quebec and nearby provinces.

Vice president, Isabelle Harvey, explained that the society works hard to maintain the interest of members who are at all levels of knowledge in the SBPM. Several things are done. At a typical meeting about 100 people attend, questions are encouraged. There is a focus on one species; how to keep it healthy and with styling tips for that particular tree led by a presenter. Detailed presentations are recorded which are projected onto the screen above the audience so that all are able to see. Interestingly, the presentation is then made available for sale. As follow up, a weekend workshop is held where a Saturday morning is devoted to beginners, the afternoon for the intermediates and the Sunday morning for the most experienced.



Facing page; *Ulmus parvifolia* from the Montréal Botanical Garden, Penjing Collection.

This page:

Top; Entrance to the Montréal Botanical Garden, Penjing Collection.

Middle left; Montréal Botanical Garden Conservatory, Penjing Collection.

Middle right; Outdoor exhibit space.

Bottom left; Club member Linda Chicoine is working on her *Thuja occidentalis* (Yamadori) for show visitors.

Bottom right; Club member Marie-Claude Tessier working on a *Thuja occidentalis*.

Top; *Acer palmatum* from the Montréal Botanical Garden, Japanese Bonsai Collection.

Bottom; *Ginkgo biloba* forest from the Montréal Botanical Garden, Penjing Collection.

Facing page:

Top left; *Ulmus parvifolia* in the Lingnan style from the Montréal Botanical Garden, Penjing Collection.

Top right; *Lagerstroemia* from the Montréal Botanical Garden, Penjing Collection.

Bottom left; *Ginkgo biloba chi chi*, from the Montréal Botanical Garden, Japanese Bonsai Collection.

Bottom right; *Acer buergerianum*, Root over rock, by Brian Donnelly from SBPM show.







Top left; *Acer palmatum atropurpureum*, from the Montréal Botanical Garden, Penjing Collection.

Top right; *Carissa grandiflora* by Daniel Gagnon from SBPM show.

Bottom; *Larix laricina* by David Easterbrook from SBPM show.



There is a variety of longer term workshops, spanning over two or three years by invited artists such as François Jeker, Suthin Sulkosolvisit and David Easterbrook. Invited artists return to the same group with the same trees to develop the bonsai over several years.

A wonderful support for the SBPM is the ongoing relationship with the Montréal Botanical Garden and its former curator, David Easterbrook, who critiqued the bonsai at this weekend's show. The great gardens, the library, the summer garden tents, and the assistance of the garden's staff are quite a unique "bonus" to the Société over other clubs in Canada.

The Botanical Garden, especially during the SBPM's annual show, had much to offer. At the entrance was tropical bonsai on display from the American collections of Dr. Quoc Kiet Tang and George LeBolt. Across from the show is the Japanese bonsai garden, and down the path is the Tree House which holds North American bonsai. The garden's greenhouses also offer a large penjing display in a beautiful setting. A fully renovated Chinese garden and penjing display will be completed by early next year.







A trip to the Montreal Botanical Garden, especially during the Société de bonsai et de penjing de Montréal Annual Show, is a grand day out for any bonsai enthusiast. 🌲



Top left ; *Larix laricina* by Serge Robidoux from SBPM show.  
 Top right; *Grewia occidentalis* from the Montréal Botanical Garden, Penjing Collection.  
 Middle left; *Juniperus chinensis* "San Jose" by Benjamino Conte from SBPM show.  
 Bottom; *Acer buergerianum forsanum*, from the Montréal Botanical Garden, Penjing Collection.

# Bonsai at the heart of the Gardens

## Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society Annual Show, 2016

*Top;* This year's expanded venue, a much larger tent, measuring 40 x 160 feet, and located at the heart of the Denver Botanic Gardens.

*Inset;* Artist of the year award - Tom Anglewicz, *Pinus ponderosa*, Ponderosa Pine





By Tom Anglewicz, USA

Photos by Stephen Lee, USA and Erin Raney, USA

**O**n the weekend of September 10th and 11th, the Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society (RMBS) staged its 47th annual show at the Denver Botanic Gardens (DBG). RMBS has enjoyed a long-standing relationship with the Gardens, and our annual show has been presented there in all previous years.

**This year's exhibit was a significant departure in two ways:**

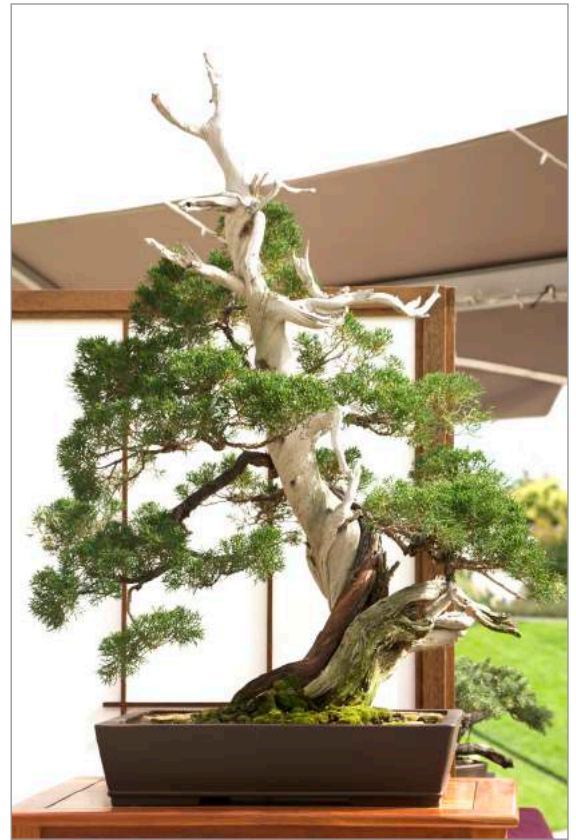
Traditionally, the show has been held on the Father's Day weekend in June, but it was moved to the early fall dates in order to take advantage of a new and expanded venue. That change of venue enabled us to stage the exhibit for the first time in a much larger tent, measuring 40 x 160 feet, and located at the heart of the Gardens adjacent to its central grass amphitheater where concerts are staged throughout the summer months. The central location encouraged virtually everyone who visited the DBG on a beautiful, warm September weekend to experience the bonsai show.

Annual show chair, Larry Jackel, took full advantage of the expanded venue to envision a unique exhibit design that departed from the usual rows of display tables, utilizing instead a series of freestanding exhibit "islands," with shoji screen backdrops, organized in a chevron pattern with a wide central aisle. Attendees were

*Top; Rocky Mountain Juniper Juniperus Scopulorum, Todd Schlafer*



Top left; Colorado Blue Spruce, *Picea pungens*, Tom Anglewicz;  
 Top right; Chinese Juniper, *Juniperus chinensis*, Allan Hills;  
 Middle left; Boxwood, *Buxus Microphylla koreana*, Terril Samuelson;  
 Bottom left; Elephant Bush, *Portulacaria afra*, Lou DeHerrera  
 Bottom right; Colorado Blue Spruce, *Picea pungens*, Adam Johnson;



Facing Page: Top left; Azalea, *Rhododendron "Girard's Hot Shot"*, Mike Horine  
 Facing Page: Top right; Contorted Filbert "Harry Lauder's Walking Stick", *Corylus avellana 'Contorta'*, Les Siroky  
 Facing Page: Middle; Chinese Elm, *Ulmus parvifolia*, Walter Buck  
 Facing Page: Bottom; Ponderosa Pine, *Pinus ponderosa*, Tom Anglewicz





free to circulate around the islands, each of which accommodated up to eight trees. In addition, there were also a series of draped circular tables to accommodate single trees that were visible from all sides.

The net impact of the design was that of a contemporary art installation, in which attendees could view the trees in whatever sequence they chose. In spite of the generous floor area dedicated to circulation, the exhibit was able to comfortably accommodate over 90 trees. The change in show dates had the additional benefit of providing more time for coniferous bonsai to develop during the summer, thus presenting in their best form.

As current RMBS president, I am probably biased, but I think that this show presented the highest quality of bonsai that I have seen our club produce. I believe that there are several reasons for this:

### Senior bonsai artists

First, we obviously have a number of senior bonsai artists who have honed their skills and their creativity over the years. These members not only have some great trees to exhibit, they now also function as mentors to newer members.

### Priority on education

Second, we place a high priority on education, both through formal classes such as our Bonsai Basics program, and through presentations by our accomplished members at our monthly meetings and informal Saturday workshops that are targeted to specific topics or tree species.

### Yamadori in our back yard

Third, we are extremely fortunate, in Colorado, to have access to some of the most fantastic yamadori available anywhere in the world. And we have club members who are skilled at successfully collecting these trees from the mountains and keeping them alive.



Top left; Natal Plum, *Carissa macrocarpa*, Walter Buck

Top right; Colorado Blue Spruce, *Picea pungens*, Will Kerns

Middle left; Tsukomo Cypress, *Chamaecyparis psifera*, Charlie and Judy Sisk

Bottom left; Blue Atlas Cedar, *Cedrus atlantica 'Glauca'*, Mark Mills

Bottom right; Dwarf Scots Pine, *Pinus sylvestris*, Walter Buck



Facing Page: Top left; Colorado Blue Spruce, *Picea pungens*, Todd Schlafer

Facing Page: Top right; Ponderosa Pine, *Pinus ponderosa*, Larry Jackel

Facing Page: Middle; Rocky Mountain Juniper, *Juniperus scopulorum*, Todd Schlafer

Facing Page: Bottom left; Douglas Fir, *Pseudotsuga menziesii*, Todd Schlafer

Facing Page: Bottom right; Satsuki Azalea, *Rhododendron indicum*, Mark Mills



### Visiting guest artist programs

Fourth, I believe that we have greatly benefited from our visiting guest artist programs. Generally, we attempt to bring three to four guest artists per year to our club. We ask each of them to present to our members at a regular monthly meeting, and we now purposefully avoid the traditional “demo” format in favor of a tree critique. Members bring one or more trees to the meeting, and our guest addresses as many as he or she can during a two-hour meeting, identifying opportunities and constraints afforded by a tree and suggesting a basic design direction for it. We find that members learn much more from this process, and they take away observations that they can actually use on a given bonsai.

In addition, each time a guest bonsai artist visits, we also schedule an all-day workshop with him or her in which members can receive hands-on direction and assistance in styling one or more trees. Workshops are limited to no more than eight members, each of whom pay a nominal fee, and we also encourage new members, many of whom are novices, to attend as silent observers—another great way to learn.



### Formal studies

Finally, the quality of our trees has been greatly enhanced by the fact that a number of our members have made the commitment to invest in the process of studying formally with internationally recognized bonsai teachers here in the U.S. For many, these studies have significantly expanded their understanding and appreciation of what it takes to create top quality bonsai. 🌲





## Clubs Band Together to Create a Bonsai Garden in Western Canada

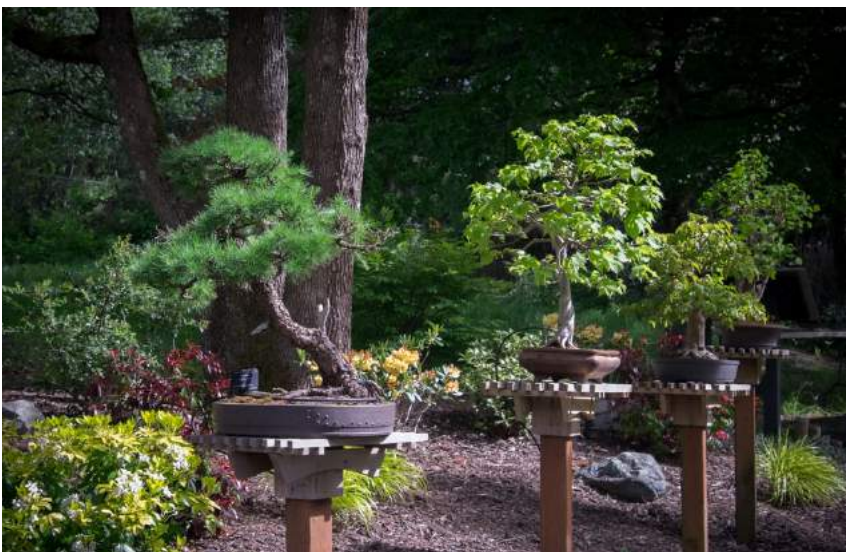
By Joan Greenway, Canada, photos courtesy Brian Greenway.

Bonsai clubs on Vancouver Island have partnered with the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific to create the first Bonsai Garden in Western Canada and the second one in all of Canada. It is used as a display and learning garden.

Visitors are greeted with bonsai at the entrance to the HCP Garden, then have to follow path through the Tanaka Japanese Garden, past a zen garden with more bonsai specimens, to the top of a hill to view a collection of 60 bonsai.

Members of the Vancouver Island clubs have loaned or donated their bonsai and are also responsible for ongoing care and maintenance of the trees. This bonsai garden has been planned, built and maintained with many hours by Vancouver Island's Bonsai clubs' volunteers and their partners since 2012. Their creation is a bonsai artist's joy and rewards any visitor to Victoria.

Congratulations Vancouver Island bonsai clubs. 🌲





## A vital program that helps safeguard bonsai in an emergency or while you are away.

By Joe Grande, Canada

The Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society recently announced the RMBS Heritage Program for their members. This program will provide care for members' bonsai in the event of an emergency, sickness, age deterioration, or death. On occasion this service is also provided for non-members for a fee.

To participate in the program, members can register to receive the service, or volunteer to be on the committee that delivers the service on behalf of the club. A member in need (or their designated representative) contacts the committee to work out a plan specific to their situation and requirements. Once an agreement is reached, the Heritage Program committee will carry out the plan, whether it calls for caring for the bonsai for a few weeks or selling the trees by auction.

This is a well designed program that anticipates the complexities of bonsai care and clearly defines the role and responsibilities of the club, its program committee, the individuals on the committee and the member receiving the service. The RMBS Heritage Program will also help attract new commers to bonsai, and to the club, who want to start

a bonsai collection but routinely spend time away from home and their trees.

RMBS president Tom Anglewicz learned about this program at a bonsai convention when he was trading notes on bonsai club governance with Lee Cheatle, president of the Bonsai Society of Portland (BSOP). The BSOP is a large club, large enough to need a Heritage Program and resourceful enough to design and deliver the program with its group of enterprising volunteers thanks to the initiative of Bob Laws, past president and outstanding bonsai artist. Now in its 8th year at BSOP, the program provides peace of mind for treasured bonsai and is one of many good reasons why we join clubs. With the generosity usually associated with those who practice bonsai, the presidents of both clubs are willing to share their experiences and knowledge to help your club start a similar program. The clubs can be contacted through their respective websites. 🌳



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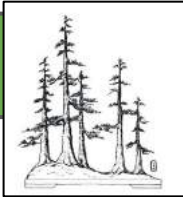


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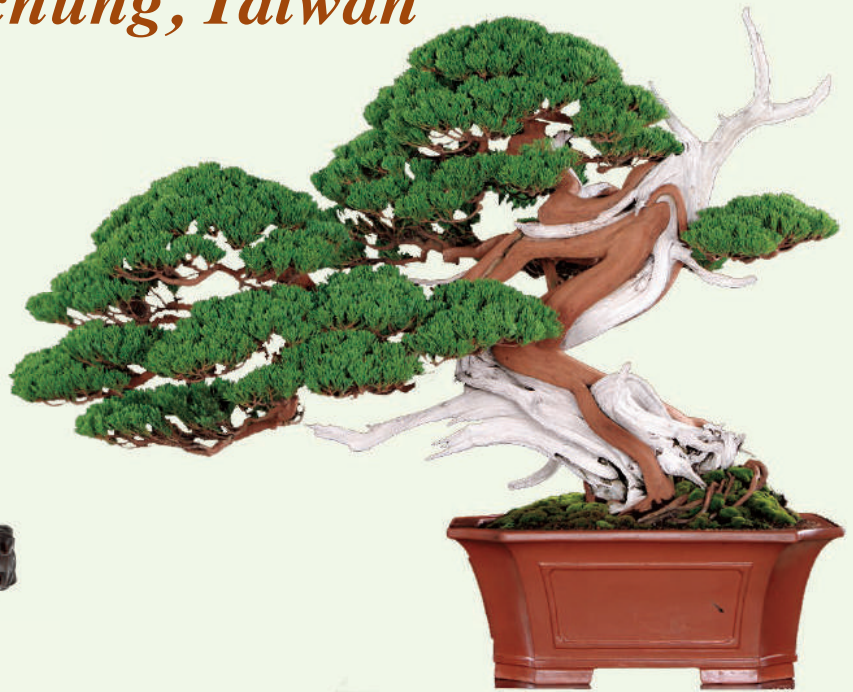
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*Below; A limited number of prints selected from the finalists of viewing stones and bonsai trees from all over the world were debuted at the grand BCI Convention in Guangzhou, China in 2015.*

