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international friendship
through bonsai



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Bonsai & Stone Appreciation

2018

Q2

Best Bonsai of the Show,
Noelanders Trophy XIX,
category Conifers: *Picea abies*,
by Donato Danisi, Italy.



The XIX Noelanders Trophy
A New View on Old Pots
**Kasahara Manabu and the
Modern Age of Suiseki in Japan**
A bunjin called *il Pellegrino*
Juniper Bonsai in the Tropics
Root-Over-Rock Bonsai
Bonsai Wall Mural
Previews of the BCI 2018 Convention
Winter Olympics World Bonsai Festival
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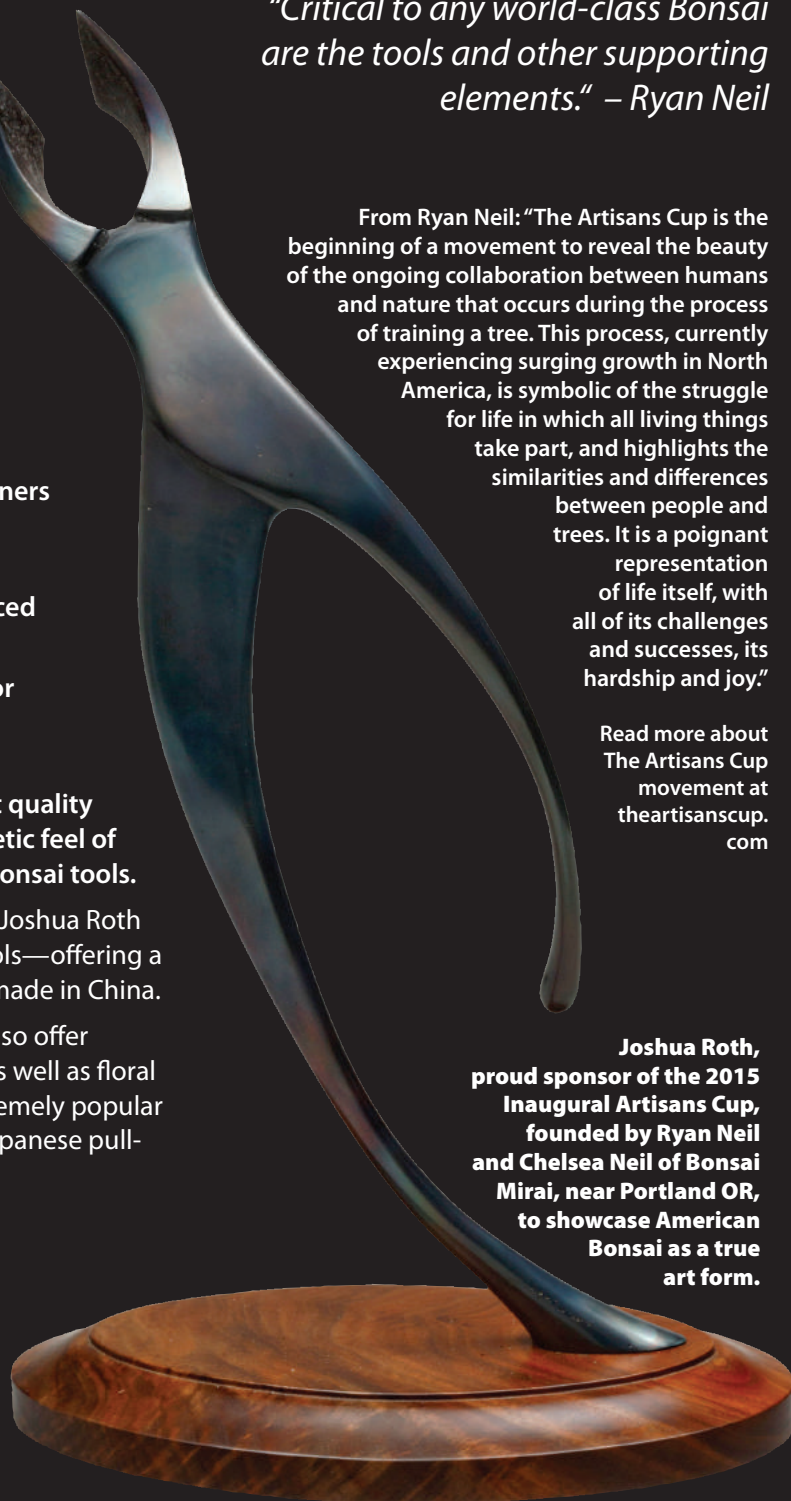
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“Critical to any world-class Bonsai are the tools and other supporting elements.” – Ryan Neil

From Ryan Neil: “The Artisans Cup is the beginning of a movement to reveal the beauty of the ongoing collaboration between humans and nature that occurs during the process of training a tree. This process, currently experiencing surging growth in North America, is symbolic of the struggle for life in which all living things take part, and highlights the similarities and differences between people and trees. It is a poignant representation of life itself, with all of its challenges and successes, its hardship and joy.”

Read more about
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President's Message

One of the wonderful things about sharing an interest in bonsai and stones with like-minded people is the friendships we make along the way. I treasure the time that I get to spend with my bonsai and stone friends.

Lindsay and I were fortunate to be invited by Kim Sae Won, President of ABFF (Asia-Pacific Bonsai Friendship Federation) along with a small International group of delegates to attend The World Bonsai Festival Exhibition in Gangneung, South Korea, commemorating the Winter Olympics. Our group including Michael Grace, Karen Harkaway, President of ABS (American Bonsai Society) and Frank Mihalic BCI Director from USA; Jorg Derlien and Herbert Obermyer from Germany; Peter Czeniachowski and his wife Małgorzatae from Poland; and Willy Evenepoel from Belgium. We traveled together for four days visiting bonsai collections, gardens and others sights and enjoying new food and drink experiences. The camaraderie was very special. I've written a report in this issue.

Another long time friend, Bradley Barlow, shares his vast knowledge of old pots in this issue. Spending a day with Brad and his wife Jen is always a great experience. Brad is always happy to share a new "find" which may be an antique pot, stand, woodblock print or other Asian artefact, or his latest virtual bonsai that he has hand made. As well as a talented and award winning Bonsai artist, Brad is a "collector." He has a vast collection of Viewing Stones, antique pots, stands and other related art pieces. His collection is now housed in a newly constructed museum. We recently visited the museum. Seeing so many pots, stands, and other accessories on display in his museum is overwhelming.

Our Annual Convention is fast approaching and Convention Chair François Jeker gives an

update in this issue on what you can expect. Until I read François' report I was not aware that John Naka's famous group Goshin, which is housed in the US National Collection in Washington, was not the only one he created. He actually created three! Whilst one is no longer around, the other one is in Europe and will be exhibited at the BCI Convention in Mulhouse, France 12-14 October. I can't wait to see it! For stone lovers, stones from the collection of the late Willi Benz and his wife Gudrun will also be displayed. I know that François and his team have put a lot of work into this event, paying a lot of attention to every detail.

Ken Carlson from Joshua Roth Tools, a long-time BCI advertiser, has donated a tool kit for the tree and stone of the month competition. This will be the prize, along with a certificate, for the tree winner. The stone winner will receive a certificate and a display stand. The competition is open for all BCI Members and I encourage you all to participate. Members will vote on the monthly finalists. Check it out on the BCI website bonsai-bci.com

A new feature recently added to the BCI website is that you can now not only view the BCI magazine online, you can download the magazine to view off line. This facility is also available for back issues of the Magazine

Unfortunately due to illness, BCI Director, IS Ng had to cancel the Malaysian Exhibition and Tour scheduled in April. Our prayers are with him for a speedy and full recovery. We apologize for any inconvenience this has caused. 🙏

Cheers from Down Under,
Glenis Bebb



Our Annual Convention is fast approaching and Convention Chair François Jeker gives an update in this issue on what you can expect. Until I read François' report I was not aware that John Naka's famous group Goshin, which is housed in the US National Collection in Washington, was not the only one he created.

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



MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

A topic of discussion in many bonsai circles is how to successfully promote bonsai as an art form. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy defines art as “artifacts or performances, intentionally endowed by their makers with a significant degree of aesthetic interest, often surpassing that of most everyday objects.” In this regard, bonsai definitely qualifies, but for bonsai to be treated as fine art, it has to be supported by diverse groups; from individuals who create the art, to organizations and institutions that provide venues for exhibits, events and competitions.

Fortunately there are many individuals and organizations that can provide role models. They are able to elevate bonsai from a horticultural curiosity associated with the gardening world, to works of art that can be appreciated for their beauty and emotional power. In this issue there are great examples of such people and organizations.

The Bonsai Association Belgium has been very influential in showcasing bonsai as art, and the 19th edition of the Noelanders Trophy is no exception. The extraordinary trees and stones are supported by a beautiful venue, contemporary staging and professional photography. Another group to provide a wonderful convergence of bonsai, stones and art, is the host of BCI's 2018 Convention, the Fédération Française de Bonsai, organized by bonsai artist François Jeker.

Bonsai's pan-cultural appreciation is affirmed by reports on bonsai in Bali, where artists are creating superb bonsai from native trees, and on South Korea, where bonsai exhibits complemented the Winter Olympics.

Tom Elias' article on the modern age of Suiseki in Japan provides interesting historical context for this contemporary art form, as does Bradley Barlow's commentary on pots: A presentation of bonsai-related artifacts that can attain the level of art.

Philosophy, history, creativity and collaboration come together to show how Massimo Bandera, Masihiko Kimura and Alessandro Bonardo transform a beautiful and exceptional *bunjin* into a contemporary masterpiece. BCI member and artist Rudi Julianto shows how he works with nursery grown junipers to create amazing bonsai, like the yamadori from nature.

Every artist needs raw material to transform into art. Danilo Scursatone provides a detailed and efficient process for creating a root-over-rock planting. Jyoti and Nikunj Parekh show us another way to bring nature and art into our life with a creative variation on Saikei, or tray landscape.

Artists actively participate in their communities and look for inspiration everywhere they go, seeking to improve their work. Stu Innes shares his strategies for mixing his bonsai interests with family vacations.

Is your club creating bonsai art? BCI would love to see your photos. 🌳

—Joe Grande, Canada (editor@bonsai-bci.com)

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.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Glenis Bebb, President
Queensland, Australia
president@bonsai-bci.com

Helen Su, 1st Vice President
Taiwan, R.O.C.
bcivp@bonsai-bci.com

Nikunj Parekh, 2nd Vice President
Mumbai, India
nikunjyo@gmail.com

David DeGroot, Secretary
Washington, USA
degroot@comcast.net

Roger Snipes, Treasurer
Washington, USA
treasurer@bonsai-bci.com

DIRECTORS

Massimo Bandera, Italy
mb@massimobandera.it

Gudrun Benz, Germany
Benz-W@t-online.de

Sujata Bhat, India
sbhat@hotmail.com

Enrique Castaño, Mexico
ecs7768@yahoo.com

Vic Ceballos, Philippines
chilloutprof@yahoo.com

Chen Chan, China
chairman@pck.com.cn

Les Dowdell, Canada
hokkoku@telusplanet.net

Min Hsuan Lo, Taiwan
bonsailo@mail2000.com.tw

Frank Mihalic, USA
mihalicf@yahoo.com

Ing Suan Ng, Malaysia
isng1818@gmail.com

Budi Sulistyono, Indonesia
budisulistyo22@gmail.com

BCI BUSINESS OFFICE

Larry Stephan, Business Manager
PO Box 639, Prospect Heights,
IL 60070-0639, USA
office@bonsai-bci.com

WEB SITE MAINTENANCE

Bonnie Moore, Canada
neveryonas@shaw.ca

WEB SITE EDITOR

Joe Grande, Canada
editor@bonsai-bci.com

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www.bonsai-bci.com,
office@bonsai-bci.com,
phone 847-612-5133,

PO Box 639,
Prospect Heights,
IL 60070-0639, USA.

EDITOR

Joe Grande: editor@bonsai-bci.com
Box 85, Group 20, RR2
Ste. Anne, MB Canada R5H 1R2

MAGAZINE ADVERTISING

Please visit www.bonsai-bci.com/advertise or contact the editor or the BCI Business Office.

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Massimo Bandera, Italy & Spain
Gudrun Benz, Germany
Michael Collins-McIntyre, Canada
Thomas S. Elias, USA
Min Hsuan Lo, Taiwan
Danilo Scursatone, Italy
Budi Sulisty, Indonesia

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The Magazine reserves the right to edit all materials accepted for publication. Articles requiring extensive editing will be returned to the author with suggestions from the editorial staff. Manuscripts, drawings & photographs, with clear identification for captions, should be provided in digital format, on disk, or by e-mail or internet.

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
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The Evolution of The Trophy

The XIX Noelanders Trophy

By Joe Grande, compiled from notes by Christian Vos, Public Relations, Bonsai Association Belgium

Photos courtesy Bonsai Association Belgium. Studio photography by Willy Evenepoel. Photos of demonstrations by Marc De Beule and Jörg Derlien



“More and more people throughout the world have gained an appreciation of the art of bonsai and suiseki. They are moved by its artistic and moral sense. As a result its intrinsic value has increased and made it an acceptable form of art to those who want to promote world peace.

In this instance, Bonsai Association Belgium (BAB) should take pride in the contribution they make to the art of bonsai and to the world by organizing every year the Noelanders Trophy.”

So begins the introductory letter by Marc Noelanders leading up to the 19th Noelanders Trophy held for the 3rd time in a row, in Genk, in the northeastern Belgian province of Limburg this past February. This would be the last time Noelanders’ name would be associated with this event. Marc Noelanders recently stepped down as president of the Bonsai Association Belgium to assume the role of president of the European Bonsai Association, so next year, on the twentieth anniversary of this influential bonsai exhibit, BAB will retire the current name and launch a new one.

For this year, the 19th Noelanders Trophy lived up to its reputation for attracting the best in bonsai and suiseki. The Limburghal in Genk opened its doors to a record number of bonsai enthusiasts and professionals from all over the world.

The large area featuring more than 90 international traders offered bonsai professionals and amateurs a wide range of all bonsai related articles. It was a real bonsai super market.

Over 4,000 visitors—a never before seen number—came to enjoy the beauty of 115 high quality bonsai from 14 different countries of Europe. Ms. Gudrun Benz was in charge of the suiseki exhibition and selected about 30 beautiful suiseki. Mr. Kunio Kobayashi brought one his excellent suiseki to the show.

There is always excitement and anticipation about the new offering of trees at each edition of the Trophy. As a condition of the selection process, a bonsai can only be entered in the competition once every three years. This ensures that BAB can offer a completely new exhibition with different bonsai on display every year.

Throughout the exhibition, on both Saturday and Sunday, four masters gave simultaneous demonstrations: Kunio Kobayashi from Japan; Bjorn Bjorholm from the USA; Milan Karpisek from the Czech Republic; and Giacomo Pappalardo from Italy. The auditorium with a capacity of 650 seats was too small to fit all the visitors that wanted to attend the demonstrations.

Facing page, background; View of main exhibit space.

Inset; Best Bonsai of the Show, category Conifers: Picea abies, by Donato Danisi. This tree is on the cover of this issue.

Bottom; BCI Award of Excellence for Suiseki: Enzo Ferrari: a river stone from Liguria, Dove si specchiano le stelle. (Where the stars are mirrored).

This page, top; Best Bonsai of a Member of BAB: Olea europaea, by Christian Vos

This page, bottom; Sonderpreis Bonsai Art: Hornbeam Forest (Yose-ue) Carpinus betulus by Jürg Stähel from a yamadori collected in 1986. The other trees are cuttings and air layering from the “mother tree”





Top; 2nd Prize, Conifers, and the BCI Award of Excellence: *Juniperus chinensis* 'Itoigawa', by David Benavente

Bottom left; 3rd Prize, Conifers: *Pinus Sylvestris*, by Andres Alvarez Iglesias

Bottom right; 4th Prize, Conifers: *Juniperus chinensis* 'Itoigawa', by Frédéric Chenal

Facing page

Top; Best Bonsai of the Show, category Deciduous: *Olea europaea*, by Christian Przybylski

Bottom; 2nd Prize, Deciduous: *Prunus cerasifera*, by Andrija & Marija Zokic-Hajdic



On Saturday evening, while bonsai friends from around the world enjoyed a delicious meal at the gala dinner, awards were presented to the winning trees. The trophy for the best bonsai was chosen by a jury consisting of all the demonstrators, Kunio Kobayashi, Bjorn Bjorholm, Giacomo Pappalardo and Milan Karpíšek. For the Trophy, the *Olea europaea* were classified in the deciduous bonsai category.

The Trophies and Awards:

- **Best Bonsai of the Show**, category Conifers: *Picea abies*, by Donato Danisi
- **Best Bonsai of the Show**, category Deciduous: *Olea europaea*, by Christian Przybylski
- **Best Kifu**: *Olea europaea*, by Germán Gómez Soler
- **Best Bonsai of a Member of BAB**: *Olea europaea*, from Christian Vos
- **BCI Award of Excellence**: Enzo Ferrari: river stone from Liguria, “*Dove si specchiano le stelle*”
- **Sonderpreis Bonsai Art**: Hornbeam Forest, *Carpinus betulus* by Jürg Stähel

Nominations, Conifers:

- **2nd Prize and the BCI Award of Excellence**: *Juniperus chinensis* ‘Itoigawa’, by David Benavente
- **3rd Prize**: *Pinus Sylvestris*, by Andres Alvarez Iglesias
- **4th Prize**: *Juniperus chinensis* ‘Itoigawa’, by Frédéric Chenal

Nominations, Deciduous trees:

- **2nd Prize**: *Prunus cerasifera*, by Andrija & Marija Zokic-Hajdic
- **3rd Prize**: *Acer palmatum* ‘Shishigashira’, by Wilfried Nieswandt
- **4th Prize**: *Olea europaea*, by Erasmo Garcia Fernandez

Nominations, Kifu:

- **2nd Prize**: *Acer buergerianum*, by Guido Pozzoli
- **3rd Prize**: *Juniperus chinensis* ‘Itoigawa’, by Mathias Deininger
- **4th Prize**: *Myrtus communis*, by Germán Gómez Soler

Nominations, Suiseki:

- **2nd Prize**: Mountain stone, *Kamogawa ishi* from Japan, 36 x 18 x 12 cm, by Harald Lehner

Over the last 19 years BAB has shown that there is a tremendous fascination in the world for dwarfed trees. Their shows have attracted the best bonsai professionals from around the world and have been widely appreciated by large numbers of young and old alike.

The Bonsai Association Belgium is confident that they can successfully re brand their event. The



Top left; 3rd Prize, Deciduous:
Acer palmatum 'Shishigashira',
by Wilfried Nieswandt

Top right; 4th Prize, Deciduous:
Olea europaea, by Erasmo
Garcia Fernandez

Bottom; Best Kifu: *Olea
europaea*, by Germán Gómez
Soler

Facing page

Top; 2nd Prize, Kifu: *Acer
buergerianum*, by Guido
Pozzoli

Bottom left; 3rd Prize, Kifu:
Juniperus chinensis 'Itoigawa',
by Mathias Deininger

Bottom right; 4th Prize, Kifu:
Myrtus communis, by Germán
Gómez Soler





Top: This mountain stone, a *Kamogawa ishi* from Japan, 36 cm W x 18 cm D x 12 cm H, of Harald Lehner from Germany received a Nomination.

Middle: Andrea Melloni
Bottom: Bonsai Zentrum,
Heidelberg

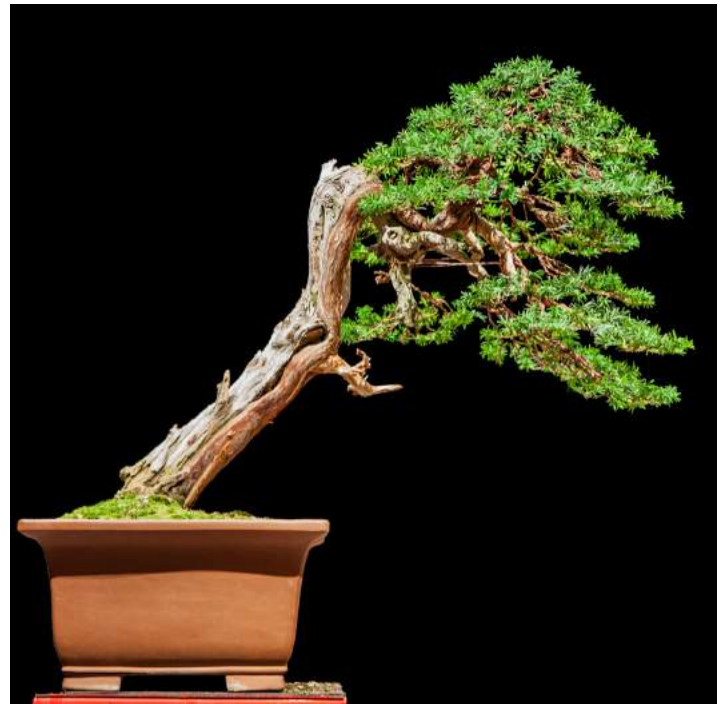
Facing page: Daan Giphart





Left column, top to bottom;
Bjorn Bjorholm from the USA
dramatically changed the front
of this *Pinus sylvestris* to create
a distinctive and unique design.

Right column, top to bottom;
Milan Karpisek from the Czech
Republic also changed the
front and tamed the lush
foliage mass into an elegant
and classic design.



same team that has organized past events is still in place, eager to expand and improve what is arguably the premier bonsai event in Europe. It is this same team that is consulting and collaborating with the organizers of the 2018 BCI International Convention in Mulhouse, France, to help make this event the best it can be. “We have entered into a partnership with the

(Belgian) team. We will work together, exchange information and promote each other... to develop together the art of bonsai,” said François Jeker, organizer for the BCI Convention.

The next BAB event will be called “The Best of 20 Years Trophy” and will take place on February 8-10 in the same venue, the Limburghal in Genk. Plans



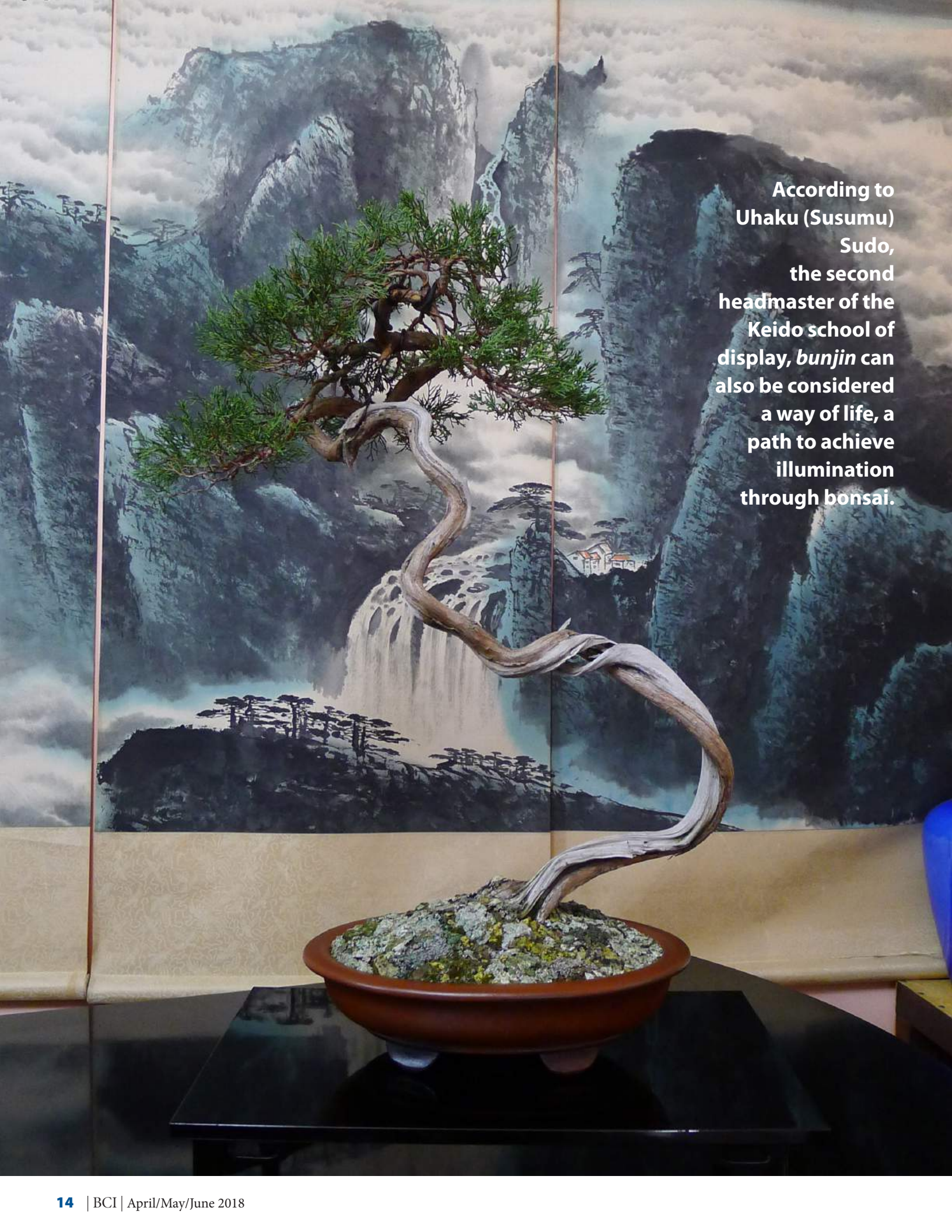
Left column, top to bottom;
In another dramatic transformation, Kunio Kobayashi from Japan expertly turned an informal upright into a semi cascade.

Right column, top to bottom;
Giacomo Pappalardo from Italy took on the task of refining, reorienting and compacting a beautiful specimen into a striking cascade.



for this event include 6 demonstrators from Korea, Ryan Neil from the USA, Masayuki Fukiyawa from Japan, Vaclav Novák from the Czech Republic and Gabriel Romero from Spain. A Shohin category will be added to the bonsai exhibition and a bonsai pot exhibition will be featured along with a new Suiseki exhibition.

The Bonsai Association Belgium and all its organizers and volunteers are looking forwards to meeting you all again next year when they present another ambitious event full of creative ideas, and celebrating twenty years successfully promoting the art of bonsai. 🌲



According to
Uhaku (Susumu)
Sudo,
the second
headmaster of the
Keido school of
display, *bunjin* can
also be considered
a way of life, a
path to achieve
illumination
through bonsai.

A bunjin called *il Pellegrino*

The ABCs of Bonsai and the Literati Style

By Massimo Bandera, Italy

Photos by Massimo Bandera

Translation by Joe Grande



"Gathering of the literati" (Wenyuan tu), believed to have been a work by Zhou Wengui of the Five Dynasties period, 907-960.

Facing page; This bunjin, a *Juniperus sabina* was harvested in the Alps in 2002.

Bunjin, in its most correct meaning should not be considered a real style, but a way of making bonsai of any kind and of any form. Some Japanese believe there is a difference between "true bunjin" and "bunjin style." Other Japanese consider *bunjin* the only true bonsai, truly a progeny of Zen aesthetics.

Spirituality becomes the key element in the interpretation of the bunjin style. The "refined preciousness" of Chinese origin and the imperial and military formalities of the Japanese world are therefore avoided. Bunjin is the representative style of bonsai, it is the essence of bonsai.

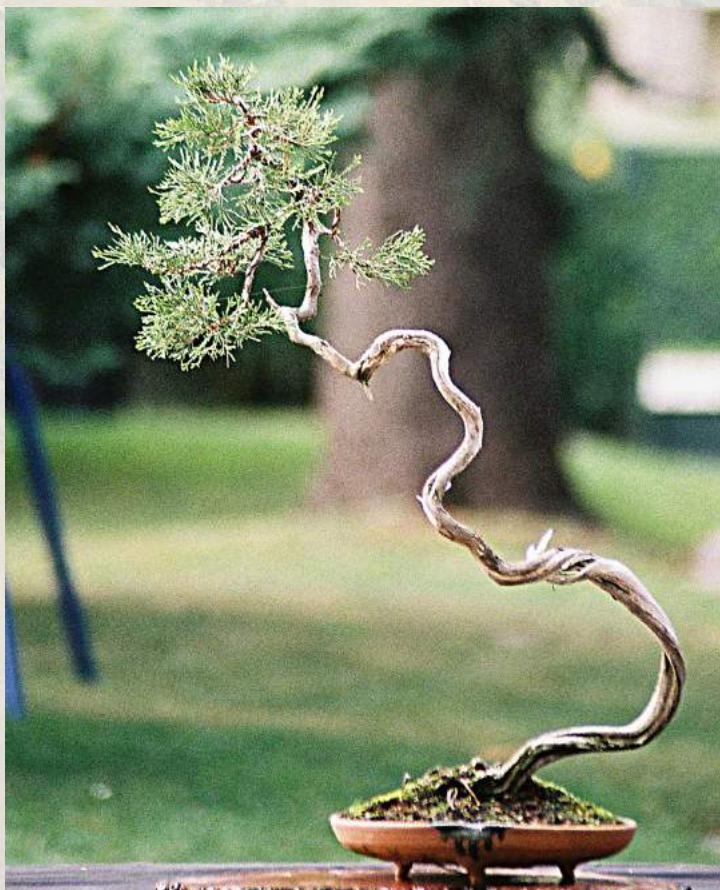
Bunjin spirit and philosophy

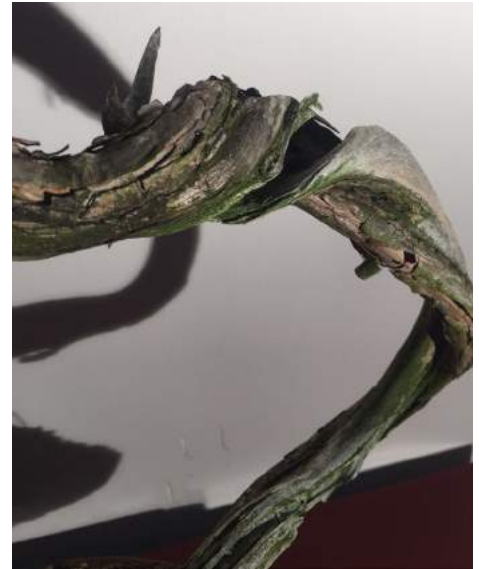
The spirit that underlies bunjin is attributable to Lao Tse (Chinese Taoist) born in 2500 BC. Then in 600 AD, the bunjin spirit arrives in Japan, but only after 1200 A.D. does it spread and evolve.

Bunjin is a translation of the Chinese *Wenjen*, the word used in Chinese to denote those scholars who were practiced in the arts. These Chinese intellectuals rejected glory, social position and wealth. They devoted themselves to the study of man and often lived as hermits. To be *bunjin*, bonsai must reflect this sensibility: Not flashy but noble of soul, minimal materially but spiritually high. In Japan, bunjin is enriched by simple beauty.

A bunjin must find space in the void but does not fill it, it must suggest but not tell.

This *Juniperus sabina* was harvested in the Alps in 2002. The earliest photo of this tree is from 2010. Then it was worked in small steps for 12 years until the Rome exhibition in 2014 where you see it in a tokonoma.



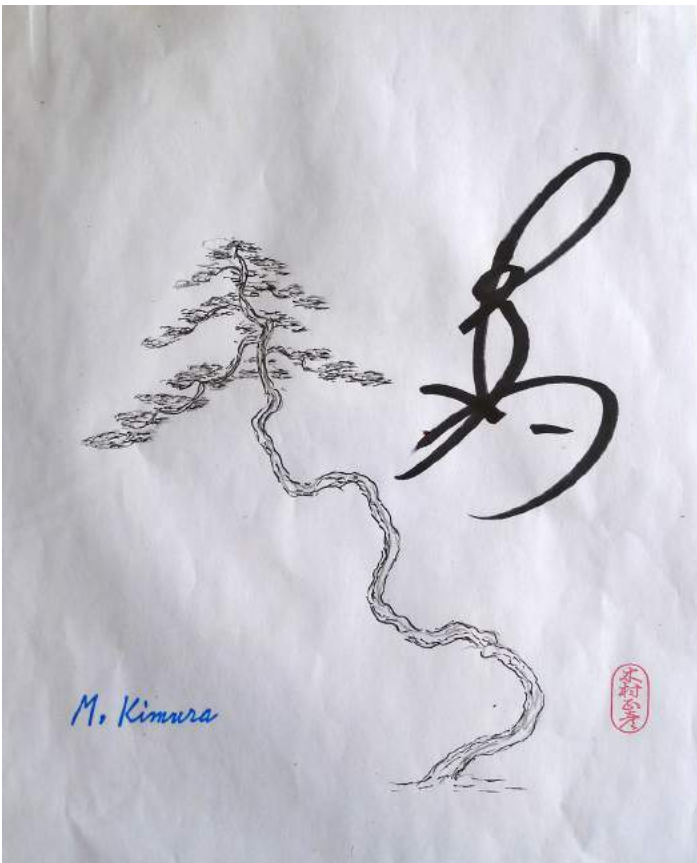


The concept of bunjin is very deep and it is very difficult, but it is to be studied because it represents a very useful philosophy. Its history originates in China from the Lao Tse Taoist philosophy. The literati practicing the tea ceremony began to deal with it, then the bunjin became a way of thinking, and today it is wrong to consider it only a style. We can consider bonsai art as well as other Japanese arts in three main styles: *shin*, *gyoo*, and *soo*. In the *shin* style the taste is rigid, we are in formality and the corresponding bonsai style is the *chokkan*. The *gyoo* style, is soft of character, is considered of higher class, and from the bonsai point of view, it is represented by the *moyogi* and

the *sakkan*. The *soo* style is the freest and is characterized by elegant and refined lines; the *bunjin* belongs to it. This way of classifying is based on personality, strength, softness and taste. Bunjin must therefore be light, slim, soft, not perfect, not apparent, but must conceal the invisible and mystical force, the power of nature—life. This force is not seen, it is not explicit but it is the foundation of nature. An example that clarifies this concept is the following: “...a field in winter is covered with snow, everything is frozen and motionless, the gray and white makes you shiver, everything looks dead. But actually, under the snow, in the earth, there is a seed and it is life!”

Top; Two views of *il Pellegrino* before the work, and a close up of the very old and interesting trunk line where the live vein turns 5 times around the trunk.

Bottom left and right; Masahiko Kimura made two drawings, one a typical bunjin, the other very special, saying that for him it would be the best solution, a design suitable for such a special bunjin.



Top left and right; When I showed the photos to Masahiko Kimura in 2017, the master found it an exceptional piece, just because of the nature of the trunk, so thin and refined, that he did a drawing and he explained to Alessandro Bonardo how to do it. Alessandro is in his second year of apprenticeship with Kimura, and executed these changes with me in August 2017..



Middle; Alessandro made a perfect job based on the master's drawing, which Kimura greatly appreciated.

The word *bunjin* derives from the environment of warriors, who in China were normally dignitaries, landowners and government bureaucrats (9th century AD). To be considered *bunjin* they had to know seven arts: To play the harp, play chess, compose poetry, be able to read and write, use calligraphy, paint, and write books. They were people of great possibilities who did not stain themselves with worldliness, but preferred to live as hermits. In China the golden age of this way of being goes from the tenth to the twelfth century. (Sung dynasty).

The history of Japanese *bunjin* begins after the end of the Kamakura period (XIII century). In this period were born several *bunjin* painters who lived frugally. In order to understand the taste of *bunjin*, one must practice the most regular form and on the basis of this, one understands the soft character that is agile, easy, witty, elegant and not caring, so as to reach the climax to understand the true *bunjin* soul, the fifth essence of passion.

The *bunjin* tree should be elegant, casual and full of poetry and have a slender trunk, but not young. Technically there is no longer the concept of branches,

but it is the whole that matters and that is why it is the most difficult to do. Even its container and table must be very refined, evocative and delicate. For bunjin, the Japanese began using the lids from *namban* jars, which were very poor in appearance.

The ideal image sought by the Chinese derives from the Taoist philosophy, and is not exactly the same as the concept of WABI-SABI from which the Japanese aesthetic of beauty emerges. Moreover, in Japan there are also two main currents, the first around the tea ceremony and the second linked to the spirit of Zen. The search for the beauty of emptiness, that is simplification, is the bunjin beauty that is typical of Japan, it belongs to the Zen taste and culminates in making this characteristic in the shape of the bonsai. In this sense the beauty of Japanese culture is a beauty of taking away. In China, in the Ming dynasty, we meet the pinnacle of the intellectual maturation of these sublime men: refined, intelligent people, lovers of reading and culture, painters, calligraphers, masters of the good taste, lovers of eremitical life. They are people



Top; Class A bonsai are rare, such as the Tooryuunomai Dragon by Masahiko Kimura, which is immeasurable, that is to say the maximum of aesthetic possibilities, a real rarity.

Bottom; After the work by Alessandro Bonardo based on a drawing by Masahiko Kimura.



The genius of the design in the second drawing that he advised be performed—even if unusual and difficult to accept—is precisely the exaltation of the wabi-sabi aspect of the bonsai.

Kimura thinks *il Pellegrino* is my most beautiful bonsai!



Above; Three details. The top dressing is “white moss,” lichens that are fruticose, foliose, moss-like and lichenized fungi. This special Japanese preparation aesthetically enhances the value of SABI, with its antique appearance and timeless patina.

who understand the passion for nature and have a poetic feeling. They are collectors of stones, objects of art to display in tokonomas, ceramics, and antiques in general. The Chinese bunjin is still present in Chinese Penjing, and is very refined and even more minimalist than the Japanese one.

Even *ikebana* was much loved especially in antiquity, in styles that recall free-form painting. The bunjin spirit is also seen in the way of doing *ikebana* and enjoying the beauty of flowers, indifferent to worldly things; this is why *ikebana* is free and non-formal, sometimes even without technique. Sometimes, a composition with rare or extravagant flowers, provides forms rich in formality.

The bunjin tree should be a work that best expresses Japanese beauty. According to Uhaku (Susumu) Sudo, the second headmaster of the keido school of display, and the first disciple of the grand master Katayama, *bunjin* can also be considered a way of life, a path to achieve illumination through bonsai. He concludes that we can make bonsai by thanking to be alive and respecting life and nature. Bunjin is not an art form because it is alive, changeable in time, fleeting. In order to realize a bunjin it is important to know the concept of beauty of the void. Emptiness is beautiful because it unlimitedly accepts everything in the universe; in the void, everyone can express what is heartfelt. The bunjin must find space in the void but does not fill it, it must suggest but not tell.

A *Juniperus sabina* called *il Pellegrino*

The subject of this article is called *il Pellegrino*. It is a *Juniperus sabina* harvested in the Alps in 2002. The earliest photo of this tree is from 2010. Then I worked it in small steps for 12 years until the Rome exhibition in 2014 where you see it in a tokonoma.

I showed the photos to Masahiko Kimura in 2017, through Alessandro Bonardo, an apprentice that I introduced to Kimura in 2016. The master found it an exceptional piece, just because of the nature of the trunk, so thin and refined, that he made a drawing for me and he explained to Alessandro how to do it, who then executed these changes with me in August 2017. The master made two drawings, one normal, that is of the typical bunjin, the other very special, saying that for him it would be the best solution, a design suitable for such a special bunjin. In the first drawing Kimura proposed the classic interpretation of a Bunjin, that is, what all the masters would do, with the slender figure of 80 cm, the crown at the top and the cascading *Ochi-eda* branch: a beautiful shape. However, for him the exceptional material deserved a unique styling, with a unique design, never seen before. The genius of the design in the second drawing that he advised be performed—even if unusual and difficult to accept—is precisely the exaltation of the wabi-sabi aspect of the bonsai, a contained and discrete attitude while at the forefront of a unique solution. Veiled and in the true beauty of the void, it is very contemporary at the same time.

As you know, the beauty of junipers is in the movement of the live vein even more than the sculptural quality of the shari, especially if it twists repeatedly in the trunk. Nursery materials for admission to Kokufu-ten must have at least three turns of the trunk. In yamadori material, it is a characteristic difficult and rare to find. This bunjin has a very thin vein, and although it is yamadori, it turns 5 times around the trunk!

Alessandro, who is in his second year of apprenticeship with Kimura, made a perfect job based on the master’s drawing, which Kimura greatly appreciated. Kimura thinks *il Pellegrino* is my most beautiful bonsai!

The ABCs of bonsai

Il Pellegrino was Class B material, but with Kimura’s design, although physically executed by Alessandro, became a Class A tree. Class A bonsai are rare, such

as the Tooryuunomai Dragon, which is immeasurable, that is to say the maximum of aesthetic possibilities, a real rarity. Class B bonsai are the Kokufu prizes, masterpieces with great potential. As they get older, they can become Class A if you can really eliminate all the faults. Class C bonsai are those that can go into big shows, subjects of great work over many years, but they are not so beautiful that they can win first prizes and they can not become Class B bonsai.

To understand the ABCs of bonsai, Japanese bonsai can be grouped into three periods.

1) **The classic bonsai**, the old one, feudal and especially of the EDO period that lasted more than half a millennium, today survive only in the imperial collections. Here the protagonists are the trunk and the branches, technically they were mostly from yamadori where the concept was to collect a good material and keep it with minimal wiring and pruning, the result is a sparse shape, with beautiful branches. Actually seen live are wonderful!

2) **Modern bonsai**, of the 1900s, where the trunk and the foliage are the protagonists. Here the wiring is total and the shape is perfect, the flat branch pads are covered by foliage, even if the branches are not perfect. It is a period from the early 1900s to the post-war period, about a half a century long, a line of perfectionism that begins with the SORERU wiring technique, perfect and total, of the mansei-en of Saburo Kato. This line continues to evolve in authors such as Stemberger and Bjorholm.

3) **The avant-garde bonsai** that begins in the years of Hamano, and then, Kimura and Suzuki, where on the one hand there is a look to the future for techniques (e.g. wood fiber stripping, incredible grafts, extreme bends, advanced carving, etc.), and on the other hand, a return to the past with regard to the refined beauty of the branches of ancient bonsai, those of Sumi-e paintings. Here the protagonists are again the trunk and the branches, they exalt the beautiful branches, often raising them and not completely wired. The result is the maximum because they are bonsai that have a contemporary beauty and the refinement of antique bonsai. This is the context for the categorization of Class A and B bonsai mentioned by Kimura. The authors are Kimura with his 14 disciples, and Shinji Suzuki.

To complete the presentation of this Class A bonsai, *il Pellegrino* was placed in a Chinese Kowatari Toukadei container and displayed on a Japanese table made of *urushi* lacquered Persimmon wood (*Diospyros kaki*) with feet capped in silver. The top dressing is HI-Goke™ white moss, with lichens of the genera *Cetraria*, *Parmelia*, *Cetrelia*, *Hypogymnia*, *Candelariella*, *Cladonia*, *Stereocaulon*, and *Heterodermia*.

The white moss, in reality comprises lichens that are fruticose, foliose, and moss-like. This Japanese preparation aesthetically enhances the value of SABI, with its particularly antique appearance and timeless patina.

Then in 2017, *il Pellegrino* was ready to exhibit at the Crespi Cup. 🌲



To complete the presentation of this Class A bonsai, *il Pellegrino* was placed in a Chinese Kowatari Toukadei container and displayed on a Japanese table made of *urushi* lacquered Persimmon wood (*Diospyros kaki*) with feet capped in silver. The top dressing is HI-Goke™ white moss, with lichens of the genera *Cetraria*, *Parmelia*, *Cetrelia*, *Hypogymnia*, *Candelariella*, *Cladonia*, *Stereocaulon*, and *Heterodermia*.



A New View on Old Pots

By Bradley Barlow, Australia

Photos by Bradley Barlow

Top; Figure 1 – Late Edo Period, *Saikō-Kutani Yaki*, *Akaji Kinrande* gold over red glaze in *Eiraku* style, from the former Kaga Province, from 1804 onwards. Round drained pot with hand drawn *servant presenting food*, 22cm wide x 17cm high, in a very rare pair, one shown here.

While a small number of people outside of Japan in the 21st century know the specific Japanese bonsai potting styles from the 17th to the early 20th century, even fewer know the history of the sensational and surprising pots used during that time. Far fewer have ever seen authentic examples in context, let alone experienced the ultimate pleasure of owning any of these elusive antique pots that belong to a lost period of Japanese bonsai. (Figure 1)

Feudal Japan during the Edo Period (1603-1868), under the supreme reign of the Tokugawa Shogunate

and the dominant ruling landlords or *daimyo*, had a very distinctive manner for planting, displaying and appreciating early bonsai trees. While bonsai trees of the time were more likely limited to the ruling and wealthy classes, much of the antique ceramic remnants of this period are critically limited and scarcely seen in the modern era of bonsai and, even more, especially outside of Japan. (Figure 2)

However, for enthusiasts of classical Japanese bonsai in the 21st century, surely an understanding and awareness of the unique history of potting bonsai trees in Japan should be a mandatory quest. Unfortunately, for those who cannot read Japanese, access to factual



Top; Figure 2 – Late Edo Period, *Zuishi Yaki* *Rushiba* blue-green transparent celadon glaze, from the Tokugawa Kiln Wakayama, Japan 1796-1874. Hexagonal drained pot with auspicious Japanese *Kirin* dragon-unicorns, 23cm wide x 15cm high.

information is limited and this can lead to uncertain interpretation and mythical appreciation rather than the truth. (Figure 3)

This article is an attempt to open eyes, minds and to stimulate the conversation about antique Japanese bonsai pots. More specifically, its aim is to propose a more accurate truth of the following myths and misconceptions.

Myth One: The best Japanese bonsai trees are always potted into antique Chinese bonsai pots.

This is certainly a fact if the trees represented in Japan's National Exhibition, Kokufu Ten, are to be relied upon as a guide to determine everyday potting of Japanese bonsai trees. The first Kokufu Ten Exhibition was held in Tokyo in 1934. This was only six years after the very first public exhibition of bonsai was recorded in Japan in 1928, decades after global exposure at major world events from 1876 at the Universal Exhibition of Paris, to later exhibitions in 1889 and 1900, and the first major bonsai exhibit held in London in 1909. The spectacular public display of trees and the annual pictorial albums of Kokufu now provide a wonderful historical legacy; however, very little formal pictorial evidence of bonsai trees on display from earlier times in Japan was recorded or still exists.

Japan had a long tradition of importing Chinese ceramics for use with bonsai, including the now documented collection eras of Kowatari (Old Crossing or 17 and 18th C) and Nakawatari (Middle Crossing or 19th C) bonsai pots. There are, however, almost no pictorial records available of Japanese bonsai ever planted or displayed in these vessels prior to the 20th century. (Figure 4)

Fortunately, however, a vast range of acknowledged, period specific, Japanese wood block prints or ukiyo-e, by many famous artists and some fewer photographs clearly, even if unintentionally, demonstrate the preferred potting of Japanese bonsai during



Middle; Figure 3 – Early Meiji Period, *Imari Yaki* in blue overglaze in the style of Korean, *Shoki Imari* but from former Hizen Province, Japan from 1616. Rare square drained pot with hand painted oriental scene, 15cm wide x 12cm high.

Bottom; Figure 4 – Qing Dynasty, Jingdezhen Kilns, Yongzheng Period 1723-1735 then produced until the 19th century Kowatari Chinese. *Lu Jun*-Chinese or *Rokinyu*-Japanese Robin's Egg blue speckled glaze. Rectangular drained pot with nail carved decoration, 12cm wide x 9.5cm deep x 6 cm high.



Top left; Figure 5 – Original Ukiyo-e by Yoshitoshi 1839-1892. In this composition 1880, 2 P.M. – *Geisha Tying a Pink Under-Sash*, note decorative Japanese round pot with dyed dragon motif hosting an aged plum, bonsai tree.



Top right; Figure 6 – Original Ukiyo-e by Toyokuni III/ Kunisada 1786-1864. In this composition 1863, *Poem by Kiharu-jo*, note the period grouping of garden pots,



the Edo and Meiji Periods. These pictures graphically capture uniquely styled Japanese pots which would have included some imported Chinese porcelain of a similar style. (Figure 5)

The splendid range of highly decorative and colorful pottery used to grow and display Japanese bonsai of these early periods, can be accurately verified, simply through the study of both the intentional and unintentional bonsai captured in wood block prints. While authentic viewing of these historical sources may be difficult, the ease of research on computer search engines will reveal the broad range of situational bonsai and the pots used in these period specific records. There is also a Japanese book called *The Gardens of Edo* published in 2013, which explicitly details this practice through more than 200 pages and pictures. (Figure 6)

Therefore, studying the ukiyo-e pictorial history of Japanese bonsai over the past 400 years clearly demonstrates that antique Chinese bonsai pots have only been fashionable in Japan's public bonsai display and exhibition during the last 100 years or even less. The current fascination and reverence directed at antique Chinese pots for use with the very best Japanese bonsai trees, completely ignores the historical importance of the unique Japanese pots, despite their equal age and unacknowledged status for use with Japanese bonsai trees. (Figure 7 and Figure 8)



typical of this era in Japan.

Middle; Figure 7 – age unknown, Chinese *Shudei*, vermillion colored rectangular, triple drained bonsai pot. Note the austere design and formal angles in the typical early period dimensions, wider than deep with medium height.



Bottom; Figure 8 – age unknown, Chinese *Shidei*, brown colored rectangular, triple drained bonsai pot with central decorative band.



Myth Two: Antique Japanese bonsai pots are flower pots and bulb pots and were not used for bonsai at all.

Yes, the cultivation and display of most antique Japanese bonsai was typically combined with flowering or bulb plants, alongside decorative stones, as is clearly evident in the previously mentioned wood block prints of the periods. (Figure 9)



Top left; Figure 9 – Ukiyo-e reprint of *Buncho active* 1765-1792. Note the combination of early pine bonsai tree with decorative stone and flowering plants in the same container.



Top right, 3 images; Figure 10 – Early Qing Dynasty, Kowatari, Canton Ware, bulb pot.

Rectangle *Lapiz Lazuli* glaze basin with 8 decorative panels colored in over-glaze, 22cm wide x 14.5cm deep x 8cm high. Note the interior glazing with forced drainage added after firing.



Bottom 2 images; Figure 11 – Qing Dynasty, Kowatari, *Cochin* glazed round drained pot 45cm diameter x 19.5 cm high. Note the large hole forced in the centre to improve drainage even in a double, virgin drainage hole pot.



The physical and pictorial study of the rare 17-19th century Japanese bonsai pot does reveal, that at times, the re-use of possibly older or maybe more accessible ceramic basins, collectively known as bulb pots was a clear fact. It is known that bulbous flowering plants were highly esteemed, collected, cultivated and displayed proudly by Edo and Meiji Period Japanese (1603 -1912).

These purpose-built vessels required no drainage hole as the bulbs were often grown especially out of season and kept in controlled storage until physically required to flower. These containers, as captured in wood block prints, are highly decorative and can be irregularly shaped, overtly artistically stylized and fantastically colorful with round pots and shallow trays dominating. (Figure 10)

The barbaric and primitive methods of drilling required for the conversion of these vitreous, fiercely fired and impenetrable ceramics, is proof of early attempts to transform bulb pots or larger trays, so that they could be used to grow a broader range of plants, and also early bonsai trees that demanded the appropriate drainage. There are also very highly prized examples of intricately decorative ceramic incense burners of the period, and also much earlier and treasured ceramic artefacts, which were more suitably sized and ornately shaped for holding smaller bonsai, and may have been converted by the same crude methods. (Figure 11)

To locate an old Japanese or Chinese ceramic garden container with an age-appropriate hole forced through the base should not lead to the total and immediate





Top left; Figure 12 – Late Edo period, *Kutani Yaki, Saiko-Kutani* from the former Kaga Province, from 1804 onwards. *Yoshidaya* commemorative style respecting the five original colors of old Kutani ware: gold, blue, green, red and purple. Round drained pot with hand drawn images of the Edo Period, 27cm diameter x 18.5cm high.

Top right; Figure 13 – Edo period, *Ko Kutani* in the *Ai-Kakiemon* tradition of blue and white ware from the former Hizen Province, Japan from 1616. Round drained pot with hand drawn garden decoration inset in panels, 25.5cm diameter x 19.5cm high. Note this is an old piece with typical Japanese garden scenes, not intended for export to China or the West.

Middle; Figure 14 – *Heian Tofukuji Senior 1890-1970*, Japan. Exceptionally rare, large hand formed oval drained bonsai pot 55.5 wide x 37cm deep x 7.5 cm high. Note due to the use of wood fired, hill climbing kiln with space limitations, large bespoke pieces by Tofukuji Senior were likely only commission pieces and very few exist. Inset also by Tofukuji and typically small sized at 10cm wide x 8.5cm deep x 3.5cm high.



disregard of the object as not being specifically used for bonsai trees in periods past, as they historically were certainly used in this manner.

As for the suitability of brightly colored or extravagantly decorative pots incorporating weirdly shaped designs being used to plant a bonsai tree or landscape design from centuries past, it must not be judged by contemporary fashion trends. The historical reality is conclusive that when compared directly to the recorded pictorial history of Japanese bonsai since the 17th century, antique Japanese flower pots were definitely included for use with early bonsai trees. (Figure 12 and Figure 13)

Myth Three: The most collectable, highly esteemed and valuable bonsai pots from Japanese potters today are typically from the kilns and hands of “The big three,” Heian Tofukuji, Tsukinowa Yusen, and Heian Kouzan

The contemporary focus for serious non-Japanese based bonsai pot collectors is often to follow the historical trail of acknowledged Japanese Masters of this craft. However, the end of Feudal Japan in 1868

and the restoration of Imperial Rule during the Meiji Period until 1912 created the necessary freedom for artistic expression, and more importantly, the employment opportunities required for unique bonsai focused potters to emerge in Japan for the very first time.

Most commonly, the esteemed names of Tofukuji, Yusen and the Kouzan family are commended for their pioneering and outstanding achievements in creating bonsai pottery—and rightly so. However, with the exception of a rare few, like the Inoue Ryosai Family and Harata Takemoto (himself of the former samurai class before the Meiji Restoration), there are very few factually known personal historical links, between Edo Period potters and their exceptional wares. (Figure 14 and Figure 15.)

This should not inhibit their importance or collectability today.

During the Edo Period, potters were virtually enslaved to the ruling class and also their wealthy patrons. The opportunity to explore creative, alternative ceramic production for use by early bonsai enthusiasts, would have been almost non-existent; however, it is likely that rare pieces were created at

the special request of practicing bonsai patrons, most likely from the religious class. Today, it is impossible to historically trace these unique, individual ceramics, and unfortunately, they now exist lost in translation and without credible means of specific identification, they are subsequently labelled by the known historical pots and potters, instead of their true historical path. (Figure 16)

The famous kilns of the period that did produce Japanese bonsai/garden pottery were tightly bound by their own unique and stylized production, which was significantly determined by the ruling class patrons and export demands. Consequently, they are now far more easily classified for modern collection by known and unique styles, for example: Imari, Kutani, Kyo, Satsuma, Shigaraki, Bizen or Omari wares. (Figure 17)

The techniques and skilled artisans of the Edo Period were clearly more than capable of making equivalent bonsai specific pots to match, if not rival, the expert Ming and later Qing Chinese Potters; however, there was no entrepreneurial motivation, domestic market, feudal workplace freedom or export opportunity to empower this change at that time.

Simply because the bonsai antiques of Edo and Meiji Period Japan are not easily personified by recorded history, should not impact on their rightful place in history and collectability. Contemporary Japanese bonsai pot collectors have known of the rarity and the unique contribution of Edo and Meiji ceramics and they treasure these items passionately. (Figure 18)

Increasing the global knowledge and scope of bonsai pot collectors and serious enthusiasts to include antique Japanese ware does risk pushing future economic value for these rare items even



Top; Figure 15 – Takemoto Harata 1848-1892, Japan. Collection of typically small, hand sized, drained bonsai pots. Note these are very rare examples of the very first Japanese bonsai-specific pots ever produced.

Middle and bottom; Figure 16 – age unknown but has been attributed to *Taisho* period 1912-1926, Japan. *Takatori* glaze from the early 17th C enslaved, Korean potters captured in the infamous *Tea Cup Wars* and working at modern *Fukuoka*. This solidly built rectangular pot with double drainage holes has classic early Chinese proportions, 32cm wide x 19.5cm deep x 13cm high. Note the construction techniques are overly strong for a garden or bonsai pot and I suspect it was a commissioned piece made by a late Edo period potter who had little experience in producing a garden pot but was clearly a Master of the famous *Takatori* glaze. This pot is registered by Nippon Bonsai Association as a National Bonsai Treasure.

Top; Figure 17 – Meiji Period Satsuma yaki from Kyushu, Japan. Pair of luxuriously hand painted cream based, triple drained round pots, 7.5cm diameter x 16cm high. Note that both pieces were always intended for garden use despite having vase appearance from the outside and are Registered Treasure of Japanese Shohin Pots.

Bottom; Figure 18 – Edo period Kutani yaki in Saiko Kutani style from former Kaga Province, Japan from 1804. Round red based pot with intricate hand painted garden scenery, original drainage 12cm diameter x 8cm high. Note this is a Registered Treasure of Japanese Shohin Pots.

It is not clear why the Japanese chose, in the Taisho Period, to suddenly develop a preference towards the creation of typically shallow, simplistically styled, often unglazed or in muted colours, bonsai pots similar to the antique Chinese containers.



higher. However, it should be an important goal for all serious bonsai pot collectors, and classical Japanese bonsai growers to keenly watch out for these elusive items, as they do randomly appear in a wide variety of global markets and in a range of affordability.

There is much more bonsai memorabilia to collect from Japan than the more recent classic and named potters who will always retain their important personal place in the history of Japanese unique bonsai pots. (Figure 19)

Myth Four: Older Japanese bonsai pots from the early 20th century are poor substitutes for antique Chinese pots and do not deserve to be collected or used.

The earliest industrial production of Japanese bonsai pots coincides with the Taisho Period (1912-1926). This is not to be confused with the few, aforementioned, independent artisans of the era with a growing ability in producing individual and bespoke works for the emerging Japanese bonsai community.

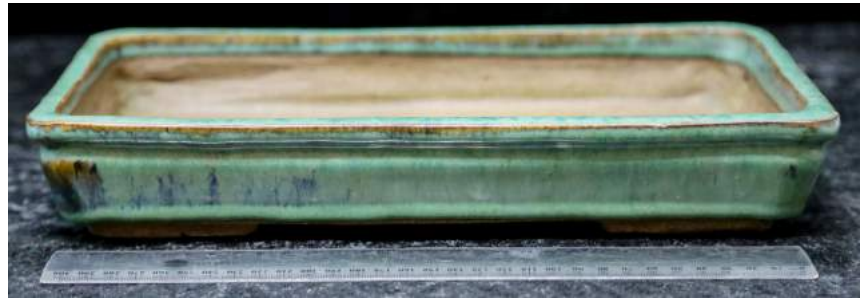
Japanese Taisho Period bonsai pots are too frequently dismissed by contemporary bonsai artists and collectors, citing an alleged lack of detail in design and less durability than the antique Chinese counterparts. (Figure 20)

It is acknowledged, that due to the complexities of world politics after World War 1, Japan found new export markets. In fact, many countries were demanding trading access to Japan's rich cultural resources for many years prior. This growing export exposure also miraculously coincided with a trading ban preventing the long standing importation of Chinese ceramics into Japan in the early 20th century. Also of note, this was a time of a national focus on Western mechanization and technological advancement. (Figure 21)

Taisho Period Japanese pots are an important historical record of the transitional period into what are now more commonly and globally known as, contemporary Japanese bonsai pots.

Chinese penjing trays and pots—which need to be fully addressed in a future article—are completely unique in many obvious ways, including their history, manufacture and even use as the traditional *pen* (tray) of Chinese Penjing when compared to the historical Japanese bonsai tree pot. It is not clear why the Japanese chose, in the Taisho Period, to suddenly develop a preference towards the creation of typically shallow, simplistically styled, often unglazed or in muted colors, bonsai pots similar to the antique Chinese containers. Despite the long history of importation and their valued collection by Japanese, the historical pictorial evidence of the use of these Chinese style bonsai pots is elusive; therefore it is difficult to be certain of their widespread use in Japan.

Taisho Period pots were initially being crudely manufactured, and often bear the scars of primitive moulding, resulting from the amateurish attempt to directly copy the esteemed Chinese Kowatari



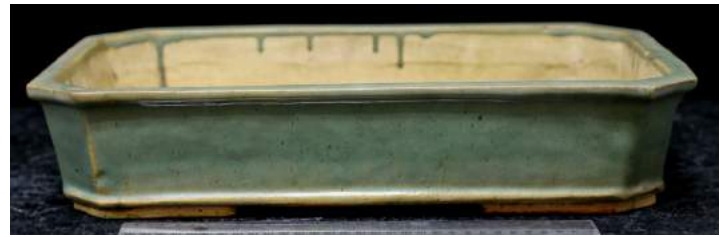
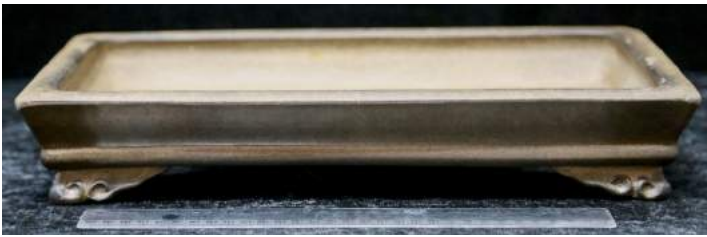
Top; Figure 19 – Taisho Period, Namako Sea slug blue/green glaze attempt. Rectangular double drainage bonsai specific pot 34cm wide x 21cm deep x 5.5cm high. Note the lesser quality clay and detailed pot decoration as well as the under-fired glaze which failed to turn from green to blue.

Middle; Figure 20 – Taisho Period unglazed Udei, grey or light brown clay, Japan. A formal rectangle bonsai pot with double drainage 39cm wide x 27cm deep x 10cm high. Note this clay is a wonderful colour and unique to that time, possibly including previously imported clay from overseas. Very fine textured and a close imitation to the Chinese antique classic bonsai pots.

Bottom 2 images; Figure 21 – Taisho Period Cochinchina glazed rectangle bonsai pot with double drainage, 33cm wide x 18cm deep x 9cm high. Note the imperfections in the granular clay and the excess of glaze which has dripped off, indicative of early practice.

and Nakawatri pots, that were available at the time. Originally, the lack of definition, design and technique during creation went uncorrected. However, as techniques improved and industrial manufacturing operations like the famous Pre-Yamaaki, Kinka kiln grew in popularity and stature, so the quality of Japanese bonsai pots improved significantly. It could be argued that Japanese manufactured pots had, by the late Taisho Period, become the new benchmark of quality, demanded by the emerging global bonsai market and that would continue to the end of 20th century. (Figure 22)

It is a loss that too few Taisho period pots are currently esteemed, both in Japan and abroad for either their aesthetic or historical value. Despite many odds, their eventual durability to outlast the



Top left; Figure 22 – Late Taisho Period early pre-Yamaaki kiln, known as Kinka ware rectangular bonsai pot of shallow proportions and very fancy cloud feet with dimensions of 40.5cm wide x 26cm deep x 7cm high. Note that even in this short time of development, the pot looks very familiar to contemporary Japanese pots of the late 21st C.

Top right; Figure – 23 Taisho period Japan larger sized rectangular bonsai pot in Cantonese tradition 46cm wide x 30cm deep x 9 cm high.

Middle; Figure 24 – Taisho period on the left with the original inspiration of a Nakwatari era pot on right side. Both similar dimensions at 16cm wide x 12cm deep x 4.5cm high and dual drainage holes. Note that the left pot is much less refined around the top edge and bears indications of being moulded from a copy of the right hand side pot, which is of a much earlier and Chinese origin.

Bottom; Figure 25 - Meiji period Kutani Yaki of Japan, in full five color splendor, featuring hand painted designs of Lions as thought to appear to the Japanese at the time and colorful Peony flowers. Note this round pot is a larger size at 30cm diameter and 20cm high with one drainage hole.

past 100 years and remain into the present day, have in fact made them true antiques of their own merit. It is also important to note, that remaining Taisho pots incorporate lost sources of Japanese and imported Chinese clay. Consequently, these uniquely colored and textured pots capture the highly desirable hue and tones of the earlier Chinese Master Pots and significantly most, if not all, were exposed to the ancient wood burning, climbing kilns that were used for their more primitive firing. This unique process in itself is no longer legal, due to modern environmental goals, and modern, fired kilns do not reveal the same rustic authenticity or subtle variation in color that is so desirable in older and Taisho bonsai pots. (Figure 23)

History, conspiring with both domestic and international export opportunities, was to determine the

certain future of the industrial development and eventual mass production of early Taisho bonsai pots. What is truly remarkable is their very sudden design and creation incorporating the more typical Chinese styles. (Figure 24)

Taisho Period ceramics, an increasingly rare group of bonsai pots that can still be found if sought after, need to be collected now and securely passed respectfully on to future generations before they are lost due to current, flippant disregard and devaluation. This group of Japanese bonsai pots are, in fact, the missing link between the acknowledged Antique Chinese Master Pots, uniquely Japanese Edo and Meiji Period ceramics and the period of significant amalgamation of all styles into what are only now recognizable as, the contemporary Japanese (in Chinese style) bonsai pots of the late 20th century. (Figure 25)

Myth Five: Classically inspired Japanese bonsai trees in the 21st century should be potted into contemporary bonsai pots made by local artists, where possible.

Recent fashion, national pride, pressure from globalization and a renewed sense of patronage to individual crafts people have impacted upon the



traditional potting of bonsai trees and the current display protocols for exhibition. More recently—and understandably—it is trendy and politically correct, to support local artisans and thereby promote locally produced, bespoke bonsai containers. It is as if it is the one pure way towards creating a more sustainable future while furthering the development of ceramic art for bonsai. (Figure 26)

However, if a contemporary bonsai artist wishes to honour the genuine, historical traditions of a classical Japanese bonsai, the following recommendations should be adopted.



Expand knowledge of Japanese bonsai and plant growing of the past few hundred years, especially through the use of search engines on ukiyo-e prints.

Collect as many pieces of old pottery and ceramic from the periods as possible, as it is currently unrecognized as being directly relevant to bonsai, and risks being lost completely.

Revive the use of traditional Japanese antique pots or modern equivalent versions to clearly represent early classical Japanese bonsai trees.

Seek to include the formal display of traditional bonsai in contemporary exhibitions, to share the historical context and further inform other enthusiasts who are not familiar with the true history of Japanese bonsai and their pots. (Figure 27)

Surely, it is important to recall all of the historical elements of a traditional Japanese bonsai and that includes the revived use of old and uniquely Japanese bonsai pots before they are lost completely. There should be appropriate respect given to allow for traditional bonsai to be displayed, and therefore appreciated, in the classical manner in contemporary exhibitions when this can be achieved. (Figure 28)

In the recent past, the revival of classical Chinese penjing has seen a respectful inclusion into the contemporary world view of bonsai, and the lost and mysterious Japanese traditions of potting and exhibition need to be considered as a similar quest. 🌳

About the Author: Bradley Barlow began creating bonsai in 1993 and with the generous support of local experts, won numerous styling awards at local, national



Top; Figure 26 – Meiji Period Imari Yaki, Japan. A very rare, large rectangular basin and masterpiece of porcelain. It is hand painted with distinctive omens for good fortune and future success, the *Phoenix*. Size 50cm wide x 33cm deep x 18cm high. Note, these pieces could be used to hold water based stones with plants and bonsai growing as if cliff hanging.



Middle left; Figure 27 – Late Edo period Ko-Imari Yaki, Japan. A smaller round pot with drainage incorporating a traditional Asian Landscape in blue dye. The dimensions are 13.5cm diameter and 10cm high.

Middle right; Figure 28 – Meiji period Imari Yaki, Japan with the inclusion of bright orange to the traditional blue underglaze. Natural drainage and a medium sized pot at 19cm diameter x 15cm high.

Bottom; Bonsai Museum, Brisbane Australia. BCI members are most welcome by appointment to see all of the above items and many more in the new, more accessible, museum.

and international levels. He is a Life Member of BCI and participated in many conventions especially in the Asia Pacific. As well as having a deep interest in Chinese Viewing Stones, of which he has an extensive international collection. He has always been fascinated with the collection and adoration of bonsai pots. In 2014 he launched a small family business focused on creating Virtual Bonsai Trees and in procuring the elusive bonsai treasure from Asia to share with like-minded enthusiasts.

Further information on any related matter is most welcome and Bradley can be contacted on Facebook or directly by e-mail at virtualbonsaistudio@iinet.net.au



A Celebration of the Senses Featuring Bonsai, Suiseki, Ikebana and *France!*

**The Upcoming BCI 2018
International Convention in
Mulhouse, France.**

By François Jeker, France
Photos courtesy François Jeker



Inset above: The Gala Diner for the 2018 BCI International Convention will be held in the Cité de l'Automobile/ National Automobile Museum, Mulhouse, Alsace, France.

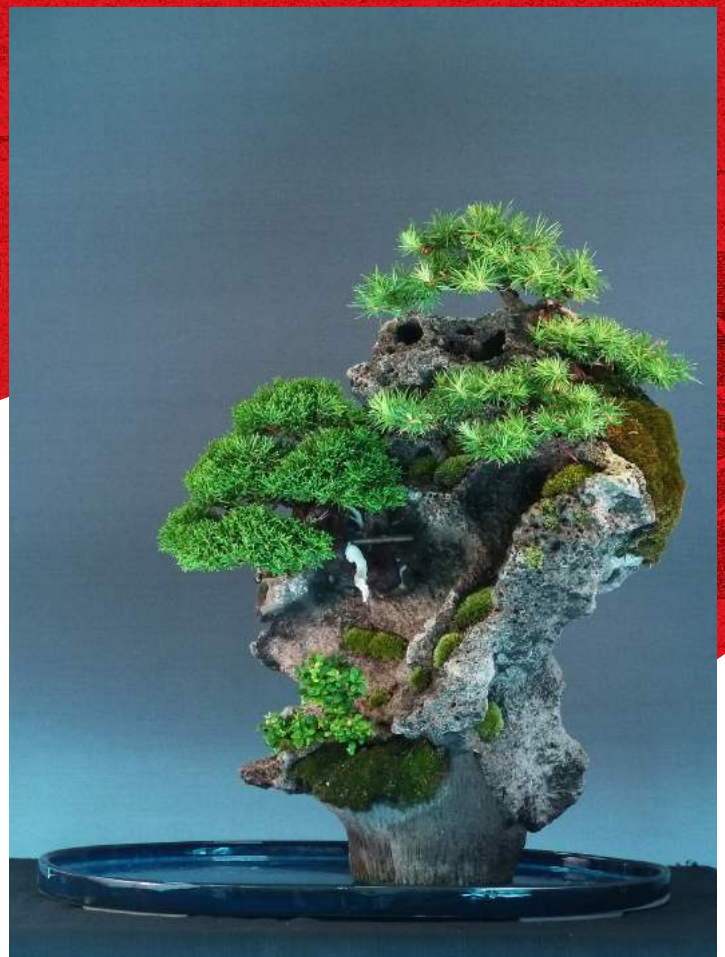
In the background: Peugeot Torpedo Type 146, 1913, photo by Zairon, Creative Commons.

An Event for People with Disabilities

Part of the exhibition will be adapted to the hearing-impaired and visually impaired.

We will organize guided tours in sign language for the deaf; and for the blind, there will be an exhibition that will allow them to touch bonsai and suiseki. The association Le Phare will produce thermoformed plates with Braille text and Bonsai drawings in relief.





A Competition for the 10 Best Ishitsuki

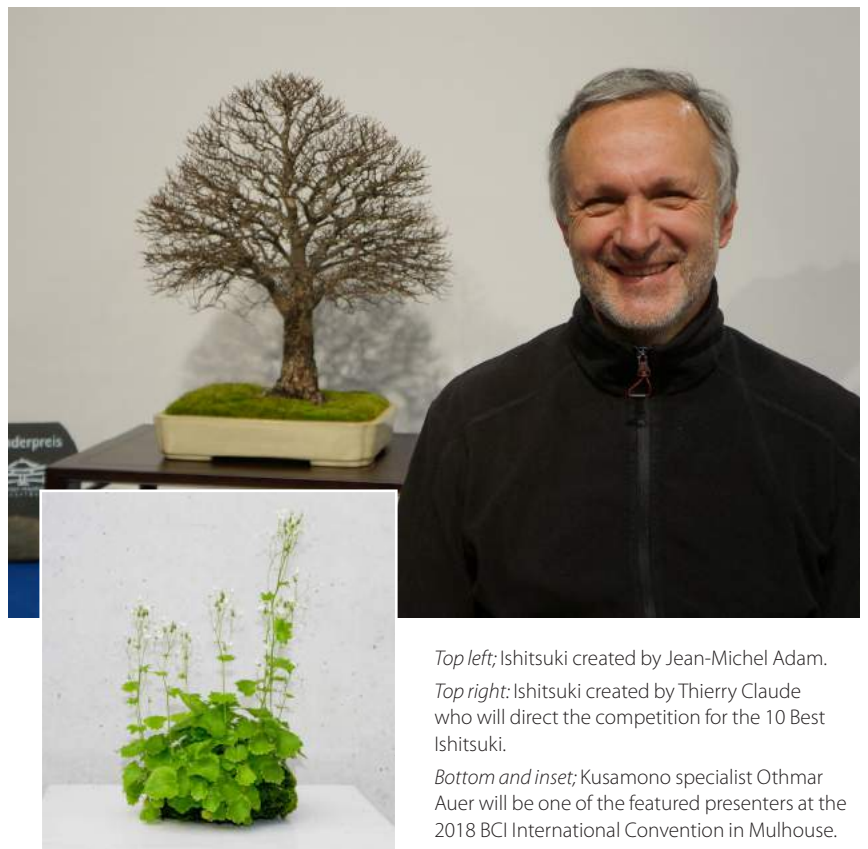
Ishitsuki is the rock-grown style that creates a harmonious composition between a tree and a rock rather than a pot. The FFB, the French Federation of Bonsai, will present an ishitsuki contest with all affiliated clubs. The 10 best achievements will be exhibited at the convention in a very original presentation: imagine ten ishitsuki surrounded by water in a dark room, with luminous lotus flowers floating on the water.

The rock plantation above was made by Jean-Michel Adam.

This ishitsuki competition is a presentation of a French Federation of Bonsai club from the Paris region under the direction of Thierry Claude.

Meet More Demonstrators

Othmar Auer is Italian and studied bonsai with Hideo Suzuki. He was the first non-Japanese member of the NBSK (Nippon Bonsai Sakka Kyooka, a Japanese association of bonsai artists with affiliates all over the world). He was president of the European affiliate from 2000 to 2009. He gives regular international demonstrations (Seoul, Los Angeles, Ratingen, etc.). He is the kusamono specialist in Europe and will exhibit part of his collection at the convention in Mulhouse.



Top left; Ishitsuki created by Jean-Michel Adam.

Top right; Ishitsuki created by Thierry Claude who will direct the competition for the 10 Best Ishitsuki.

Bottom and inset; Kusamono specialist Othmar Auer will be one of the featured presenters at the 2018 BCI International Convention in Mulhouse.

Go to www.world-bonsai-mulhouse.fr for more information and to make reservations.
The website is hosted by Parc Expo and has many details to help you plan your trip.

**Meet More
Demonstrators**



John Wang was born in Taiwan but now lives in California where he opened a bonsai center. At once creative and very modest, he specializes in collecting and shaping juniper trees.

Soazic Lefranc started floral art in 1981 and quickly enrolled at Sogetsu School, famous for its creativity.

An accomplished instructor, she teaches Ikebana, writes articles in a specialized journal and has just published her book, *Chant de Fleurs Soazic Lefranc*.

She participates in international competitions and has given demonstrations in Genoa, Brussels, Saint Petersburg, Tokyo, and Chicago.

With some of her students, she will create a series of Ikebana especially for the Mulhouse convention.



*Middle left and Bottom left;
Ikebana compositions by
Soazic Lefranc.*



Some of the bonsai to be exhibited in Mulhouse, France



Julian de Marco, a Spanish bonsai professional and transplant specialist, will exhibit several of his creations, including this rock planting.

This is a yamadori Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris*.

Thanks to the network of Julian's fans in Spain, the convention will also present the most beautiful bonsai olive trees in Spain.



This very old boxwood yamadori, probably more than 500 years old, was shaped by **Jean-Paul Polmans**, Belgian bonsai professional, during an internship at François Jeker who created the dead wood.

This exceptional tree has now reached a beautiful maturity that allows it to compete with the classic trees of Japan.

The pot was custom made by Englishman Bryan Albright.

This juniper forest on rock was created by **Didier Weiss**, a French amateur who regularly attends courses organized by François Jeker.

This forest was awarded by Tohru Suzuki when he came to France in 2014

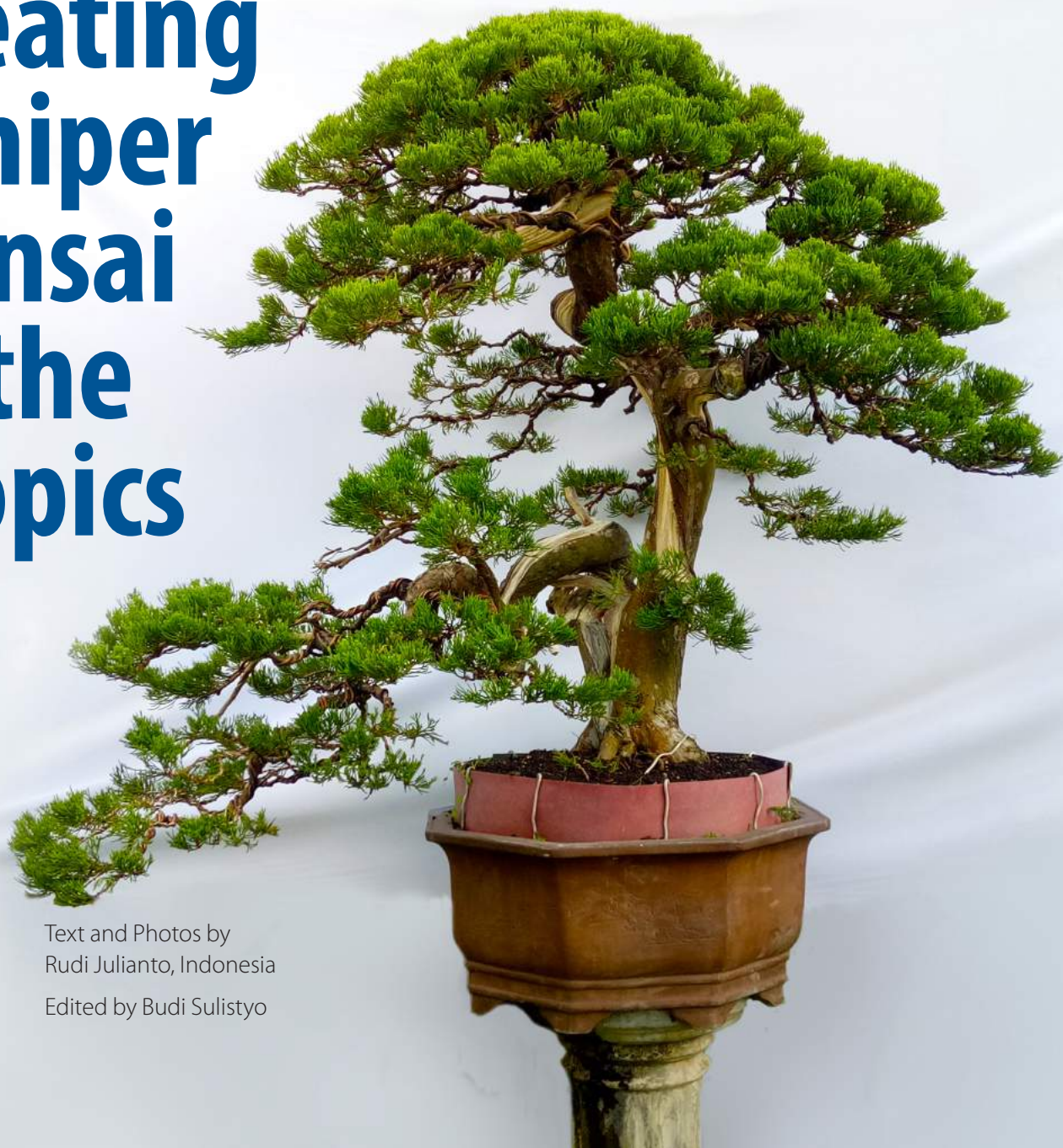


Did you know **John Naka** created three “Goshin” forests? The most famous is exhibited at the Washington Arboretum, but he created two others, one in Latin America that no longer exists, and another in Europe. It is now owned by a German bonsai professional, Manfred Roth, who will lend this extraordinary forest for the BCI convention.

It will be exhibited next to another famous forest, made in 2014 in Mulhouse by five demonstrators each representing a continent, the “Forest of Peace”. This forest is displayed today at the Albert Kahn Garden in the suburbs of Paris and will return to Mulhouse during the convention. 🌲



Creating Juniper Bonsai in the Tropics



Text and Photos by
Rudi Julianto, Indonesia
Edited by Budi Sulistyono

I understand that Juniper is a very famous material for doing bonsai. I was inspired by the pictures of wild junipers growing in the wild that have a unique character due to the severe weather, with storms, lightning, rain, snow, turbulent wind, and cold and hot temperatures that created beautiful trunks with jin and shari. Unfortunately, we can not find junipers growing wild in Indonesia. I have to depend on nursery-grown material or sometimes material from gardens and borders that homeowners do not want anymore. I design my bonsai based on the examples of trees growing in the wild. It does not mean that I copy and paste nature into my creation.

It is the concept and feeling of nature that is applied to my creation.

Juniper grow very quickly in the tropics, especially in at higher altitudes where the temperature is cooler. Due to the ample sunshine all the year around and rain showers for almost six months a year, I believe that Juniper in the tropics grows much quicker than their relatives that grow in temperate areas. Anyhow, the result of the bonsai will depend very much on the material prepared during the training phase in the ground. There are a few people who live in the mountains who have been cultivating *Juniperus chinensis* for over 20 years.



Top left; This juniper has been in the pot for around two years. It is very healthy and sound condition for further training. The thickness of the trunk is around 15 cm with height of 115 cm. It is quite a big tree and interesting material to make a bonsai.

Top right and bottom; We can have a look at the tree from different angles.

The first stage was turning the tree around, investigating the physical condition of the tree and then deciding the front side of the bonsai.





Top left; This view was chosen to be the front side of the bonsai.

Top right; The next stage was deciding which of the live veins on the trunk and branches to keep.

Bottom; Then peeling and stripping off the bark and cambium on the parts of the trunk and branches that were not wanted and creating interesting shari.

The damaged areas that occurred during training are cleaned, then some bark is carefully removed following the natural line of the bark from the damaged part at the top to the damaged part at the bottom. To dramatize the shari, the cut is deepened by stripping the wood fibers along the grain so that it will look natural. The same thing is done on the lower branch. A strip of bark is peeled from the tip where it meets the trunk and the wood below is stripped.





Top left; The next step was deciding which branches and sub branches will be needed for the design. Some very small branches might be allowed to grow further. Some wiring is applied on the branches and twigs to get the nice shape needed.



Top right and bottom; This was the shape after styling and wiring the tree. The position of the trunk looks strong with evidence of some serious damage on the lower middle of the trunk. It gives an impression that the trunk had to lean to the left due to the weight of the upper part. It makes my design also flow to the left in line with the strong branches, my way of arranging the branches and also the flow of the canopy. It gives the bonsai a harmonious look.

Facing page; Some three months later after all was settled here is a picture of the tree. 🌲



“I design my bonsai based on the examples of trees growing in the wild.”



About the artist: Rudi Julianto was born in 1967, graduated from Indonesia Institute of Art in 1990, and started to grow bonsai in 1987. He is one of the prominent artists in the Indonesian Bonsai Society who gives demonstrations and workshops in the organization's activities. He has created over 100 beautiful bonsai including *Pemphis acidula* and *Juniperus chinensis*. His bonsai have won many prizes in the Indonesian Bonsai Society exhibitions. Rudi and more of his trees are shown to the left and below.



Can Bonsai Bring Us Closer to Nature?



One of the forms that nature presents is the tree with exposed roots clinging to rock (Sekijoju). Walking through hills or low mountains, we can see trees with their roots exposed, clinging to rocks that then plunge into the sediment or soil from which they draw the bare minimum necessary for their survival.

Root Over Rock Trident Maple, *Acer buergerianum*, on display at Castello della Rovere 2016 (11 years since the beginning of the work) Tokoname bonsai pot

Walking in nature implies leaving the built world behind and therefore renouncing the comforts offered by it for mobility. Walking in nature means abandoning the comforts of a house or a garden. Walking in nature means facing unexpected events. How many other adventures await us there? Several, I believe!

Walking in the nature, as we all know, means above all that we can move in full freedom to find the rhythms and sensations more suited to our

human nature; that psycho-physical balance that is increasingly threatened by modern life.

The only “passport” that nature asks of us is to accept it as is, without upsetting its balance. Nature presents itself to us in many forms: water, rocks, trees, animals, snow, wind, storms, silence... and anything else we can easily discover. In our balance with it we must accept all these forms and live with them. In this acceptance we find ourselves and fulfil our role, like the elements, which form part of nature itself.

By Danilo Scursatone, Italy

Photos by Danilo Scursatone, Valerio Cavina and Nicoleta Baciu

Translation by Danilo Scursatone and Joe Grande



Creating a Root-Over-Rock Bonsai

MATERIALS NEEDED

- **Interesting rock that contrasts with the future tree in shape and color**
- **A handful of one-year-old seedlings of a deciduous species such as Trident maple**
- **Two plastic pots, one for cultivation, the other for the sand that will press the roots against the rock**
- **A sheet of polyethylene plastic to separate the roots from the sand**
- **Raffia to tie down the roots**
- **Soil for the cultivation pot**
- **Sand to fill the top pot**

First phase:

Positioning the rock in the cultivation pot with soil, and mounting a group of maples (about one year old) on it. Assembly of the whole, the roots are covered with the plastic sheet, the second pot is slit and positioned around the rock, and then packed with sand to press the roots against the rock.

1

We lovers of bonsai, often approach the nature with even greater curiosity than the simple observer. We can penetrate the deeper aspects to try to reproduce them and then make them more accessible to everyone, even those who do not venture far from the comforts of everyday life. Here is an important function of bonsai, bringing people closer to nature—perhaps through unusual forms that go beyond the simple trees seen in city parks—and capturing a viewer's interest with their particular shape and balance that recall the spirit of nature.

One of these particular forms that nature presents is the tree with exposed roots clinging to rock (Sekijoju). Walking through hills or low mountains, we can see trees with their roots exposed, clinging to rocks and then plunge into that little sediment or soil from which they draw the bare minimum necessary for their survival.

This particular growth habit, manages to arouse in the observer curiosity and amazement with how a tree can survive in those conditions of such great precariousness, as if to underline “the clinging” to life

of the plant kingdom, and by analogy the attachment to life that we demonstrate in particular and the difficult moments of our existence.

From these considerations, the bonsai artist can draw inspiration to prepare a bonsai that knows how to capture these feelings.

Let's try to think about what could have happened to make the tree grow in that particular way. In the foot hills of mountain environments, it often happens that water erosion facilitates the detachment of stones that mix with a little soil and are transported together, rolling to the point where they stop and stabilize. If on those stones a seed is deposited in the little sediment that partly covers them, and this seed sprouts, it will be

observed that, in a first step, the small plant will draw what is essential to survive from that little sediment, but later, for nutritive needs, will make its roots extend along the stone, in the cracks between one stone and the other in search of a larger amount of soil, more suitable for its development. With the passage of time, new atmospheric events can occur, moving stones and washing out soil to highlight the roots of our tree clinging to the stone.

With time, the tree will increasingly surround the stone with its roots, improving its anchorage and strengthening its root system and consequently its global development, until it reaches that aspect of ancient tree "clinging to life."

2

Second phase:

After one month of frequent watering, the seedlings absorb nutrients by radical capillarity and extend their roots into the soil of the cultivation pot.



3

Third phase:

Choosing the leading plant and grafting the other plants to it (to help form a large root system and develop the plant faster); after a period of time, pruning the "donor" seedlings from the leading plant and sealing the cuts. Now the leader tree has all the roots of the donor trees to support it.



The technique that we will see is inspired by these observations, we will try to achieve a balance that is as close to nature as possible, perhaps trying to shorten the time of formation that in nature can take hundreds of years.

Before starting work, it is necessary to get the material necessary for the realization of the Sekijōju tree. It is therefore necessary to choose a particularly interesting rock that must contrast with the future tree in terms of shape and color. Then, the species to be placed on the rock will be chosen; generally a deciduous species, because in nature, we encounter deciduous trees with roots clinging to the rock with greater frequency, instead of conifers. This is due to

the different environmental conditions in which they grow. The rocks at high altitude, the realm of coniferous trees, often tend to disintegrate and do not provide the support needed over time to anchor the tree. The rest of the material will be easy to find: two plastic pots, a sheet of polyethylene plastic, raffia, soil and sand.

The choice in our case, has fallen on a lava rock that comes from the Massif Central, an elevated region in the middle of southern France, consisting of mountains and plateaus, and a Buergerian maple or Trident maple, *Acer buergerianum*. These maples have the peculiarity for having a strong root system and a reduced leaf-size that changes its seasonal coloring in a particularly interesting way.



4

Fourth phase:

Positioning in a bonsai pot, topping the leader tree, shaping the structure according to the whole, and styling the foliage.

5

Fifth phase:
finishing of
the foliage and
waiting on
Nature for the
amalgamation of
rock and plant.





Root Over Rock
Trident Maple, *Acer buergerianum*, at 6 years from the beginning of the work. H. 80 cm.



Views of the Front and Back.

The technique derived from the observation of nature has allowed us to create a composition that is credible and will be able, with several years of waiting and through its evolution, to recall more and more the environment that inspired it.

If this tree, during its evolutionary path, will only succeed in attracting the attention of the most casual observer, then at that precise moment the tree will have also accomplished its most important and fundamental mission: to bring us closer to nature. 🌳

Kasahara felt that the true appreciation of Suiseki was originally to appreciate the shape and form that nature can create.



Kasahara Manabu and the Modern Age of Suiseki in Japan

By Thomas Elias, USA
Photos by Thomas Elias



Top; Kasahara Manabu, examining a stone in the vendor area at the 2017 World Bonsai convention in Saitama City.

Bottom; Mr Kasahara was instrumental in helping to establish the new Japan Suiseki Exhibition in the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum in Ueno Park. Here he was setting up several exhibitions for his customers during the 2017 event.

Although Suiseki has a long history in Japan, the period from the 1960s to the present witnessed the most dramatic changes in this country's stone appreciation practices. This period saw the rapid development and expansion of collecting and appreciating native stones in Japan. No longer was stone appreciation in the near exclusive realm of the scholars and bureaucrats, but thousands of Japanese became involved with the practice of Suiseki to some degree during this period. This surge in the number of stone hobbyists began to wane in the late 1980s. Even under these conditions, there was a continuing refinement in stone appreciation practices. This article will examine this period through the eyes and life of Mr Kasahara Manabu, one of Japan's long-time dealers and respected statesmen of Japanese Suiseki—while identifying several of the major trends that occurred during this time. The information presented here results from a series of meetings and interviews with Kasahara, along with additional data obtained



from his book. In 2013, Kasahara published *Notes on Susieki*, in which he described his career as a stone dealer and his interaction with other dealers and leaders in Japanese Suiseki.

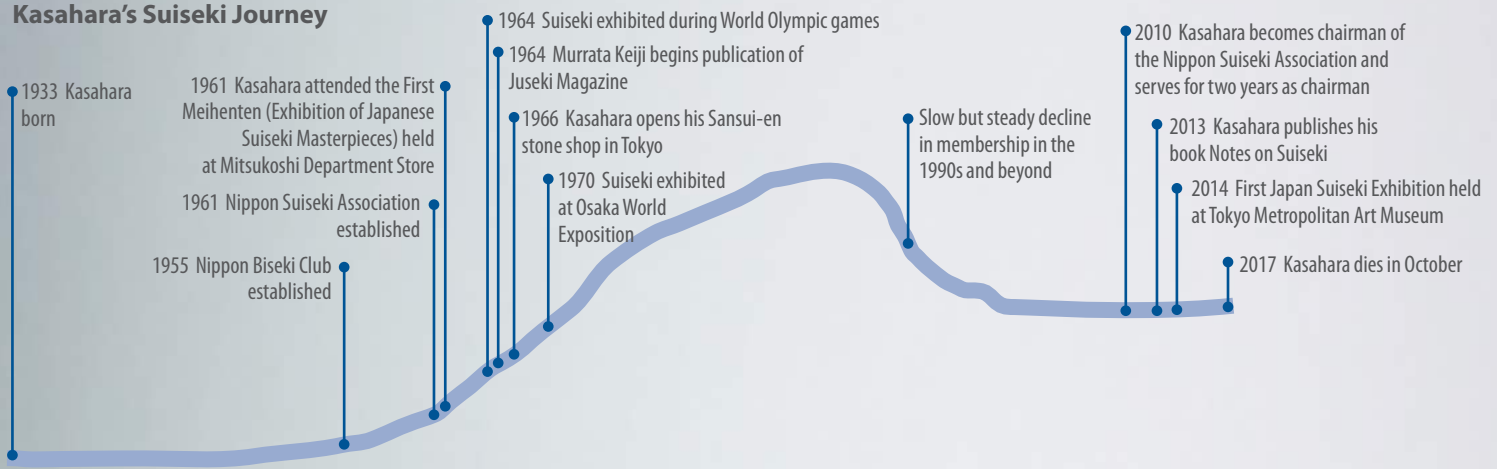
Kasahara was one of the few Suiseki dealers who had a in depth knowledge about Suiseki. He read and reread the important books that were published throughout his career. He loved to sit in his shop and discuss aspects of Suiseki with visitors over a cup of tea and Japanese sweets. He was generous in sharing his knowledge of Japanese stone appreciation, and the many stones he sold were offered at reasonable prices. He developed a cadre of loyal customers who could trust Kasahara for honest opinions about stones. He was patience with novice collectors and never took advantage of them; instead, he tried to help them develop their interest in this new-found hobby. During his career, he was a long-time member of the board of directors of the Nippon Suiseki Association (NSA) and even served as chairman of the association for two years until health-related issue required

him to step down. But his impact on the association was significant. Kobayashi Kunio, current Chairman of the NSA said “Even though he had a short term as chair of the NSA, Mr Kasahara undertook efforts to make NSA a public corporation and he led the way to have the new Japan Suiseki Exhibitions at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum.”

Kasahara’s introduction to stone appreciation in Japan coincided with the rapid expansion of the growing interest in Suiseki. Mr Ito Toshiharu established the Nippon Biseki Club in 1955 and hosted a stone exhibit in a major department store in Tokyo. At this time, there were many polished and colorful stones that were collected and exhibited by enthusiasts. Building on the success of this event, established bonsai nurserymen and stone connoisseurs Murata Kenji and Yoshimura Eiji asked a friend to negotiate with the Mitsukoshi Department store to host a new exhibit. This was held in June 1961 and was an enormous success due to the promotional activities by the department store. It was a milestone year for

Top; Kasahara purchased and resold many older Suiseki including this Furuya stone with a base carved by the well-known master daiza carver Tanimoto Hyakusui.

Kasahara's Suiseki Journey



Membership grew from a few thousand to an estimated two million according to an official in the Japanese stone community



Top: This large, mountain-shaped Kamo River stone is a classic older Suiseki than may have been used in association with the sencha tea ceremony. It is another example of the type of stones that Kasahara sold in his shop.

stone appreciation in Japan. First, the Nippon Suiseki Association (NSA) was established and, secondly, the first *Meihenten* hosted by the Mitsukoshi Department store. The Japanese word *Meihenten* is literally translated as Master Piece Exhibition, but became Exhibition of Japanese Suiseki Masterpieces, the title used on their catalogs documenting each exhibit. This important event has continued to the present as a major event for people to display their stones.

Kasahara attended this first *meihenten* with his boss Miyasaka Takatoma, an active stone collector and owner of the Shinagawa Wiring Company. Miyasaka often took some of his employees, including Kasahara, to the mountains to hunt for stones. These excursions peaked his interest in the unusual. Kasahara considered this first *Meihenten* to be a major turning point that

lead to many people to begin pursuing the hobby of stone appreciation. Those numbers grew from a few thousand to an estimated two million according to an official in the Japanese stone community. While the actual number cannot be documented, it is definite that this was a period of great expansion and popularization of Suiseki in Japan. Five years later, in 1966, Kasahara left his job as an electrician, opened a new viewing stone gallery. Sansui-en and became a full-time Suiseki dealer in Tokyo with the encouragement and support of his mentor Miyasaka Takatoma.

Another trend was a major increase in the number of new books and new serial journals during this time. He thought this was another factor in the rapid growth in the number of people becoming interested in Suiseki. Kasahara said that Kenji and his son Murata

In his *Notes on Suiseki*, Kasahara wrote “There are many ways of displaying stones, and naturally, the display is different from one person to another. There is no need to follow one way to display stones.”



Keiji contributed much to Suiseki. Kenji, a prominent bonsai nurseryman who owned Koju-en, one of the leading bonsai nurseries in Japan at the time. They also bought and resold many stones as well. His son Keiji was adept at writing and between the two men, they wrote or edited over twenty books on Suiseki. Many of these were introductory manuals to help people learn about this hobby. This included information about collecting, cleaning, displaying, and learning how to appreciate Suiseki. Keiji also started a monthly magazine, *Juseki*, with the financial help of Miyasaka Takatomo. Initially, many of Miyasaka's stones were featured in this new magazine. *Juseki* became the leading monthly publication for information about Japanese stone appreciation.

Another trend he observed was a movement from displaying a wide range of stone types in the 1960s towards displaying more natural landscape stones, even if they were not perfect. Members of the Nippon Suiseki Association were displaying some minerals specimens, bright colored and polished stones, and a variety of fossils. Gradually, the focus become more on natural and natural appearing landscape stones. Kasahara felt that the true appreciation of Suiseki was originally to appreciate the shape and form that nature can create. Although, he wrote “When I look at someone else’s stone, I feel it is important to understand the person’s thoughts and feelings in that stone. Then it becomes difficult to say if the stone is good or bad and to easily evaluate the stone.” Kasahara liked to cite the Japanese novelist Natsume Soseki

Top: This Neo Valley natural saba chrysanthemum flower stone was owned by Dr. Shiraki Koichi who collected it in the 1930s. Dr Shiraki, an ophthalmologist who is credited with popularizing chrysanthemum flower stones by presenting several to the Emperor of Japan.

Middle and inset: Kasahara was often asked to buy and resell collections belonging to long-time stone connoisseurs. He obtained two of the historically important stones owned by the Iwasaka family who founded the Mitsubishi Corporation. This large rugged water pool stone was number 31. The stone passed from the Iwasaki family to Murata Kenji and then to Dr. Matsuyama Tomonaka. Matsuyama held it for many years until his death when his collection was sold to Kasahara.



Top left; Interior view of Sansui-en, Kasahara's stone shop in Tokyo.

Top right; Kasahara kept a series of notebooks in his research on Suiseki. He was a wealth of information about Japanese stone appreciation and he experienced firsthand the boom in stone appreciation in the later half of the 1900s. He was acquainted with all of the leading personalities in Japanese Suiseki.

Middle; Kasahara talking with Igor Carino from Italy with Hiromi Nakaoji serving as translator. Kasahara enjoyed meeting with stone enthusiasts and talking about Japanese Suiseki. He would hold a stone and slowly turn it in his hands as he evaluated its qualities.

who said that things incomplete (what is incomplete) reminds of us of true beauty. In more recent years, the overall quality of stones displays at the major exhibitions continued to improve.

According to Kasahara, the diverse types of stones that were displayed in the 1960s included man-made, partially enhanced, and polished stones. He noted that some of the organizers of the exhibitions began to advocate the use of only natural stones and that bottom-cut stones should be eliminated at the time of judging. If this was followed, then there would be a shortage of good stones for display. Thus, bottom cut and other altered stones including polished ones were accepted in NSA exhibitions. Some of the exhibit organizers promoted modifying bottom cut stones to make them smooth, to look more natural and to avoid sharp edges. He noted that there was a debate among collectors about displaying both altered stones with completed natural ones. Some individuals did not want to display their natural stones together with enhanced stones. Kasahara said that in today's exhibitions, the organizers allow people to show man-made, enhanced and natural stones together. Although, there is a desire to displays stones that appear natural.

Another trend Kasahara noticed was the more prevalent use of daiza in western Japan at the beginning of Showa era in 1929; while suibans were used more frequently in eastern Japan. He noticed that people in western Japan began to use suibans more often. Suibans were used by people with more experience and knowledge of Suiseki. He noted that use of a suiban was more difficult to display correctly than to display a stone in a hand carved wood daiza. In his *Notes on Suiseki*, Kasahara wrote "There are many ways of displaying stones, and naturally, the display is different from one person to another. There is no need to follow one way to display stones."

Early in his career, he experienced the rapid growth of the number of people actively involved in Suiseki, the peak years of popularity, and then in the slow but steady decline in membership in the 1990s and beyond. Despite this, he remained optimistic about the future of Suiseki in Japan. He eagerly supported the efforts the new NSA leadership—Kobayashi Kunio and Morimae Seiji—in their efforts to establish the new Japan Suiseki Exhibition at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum in 2014. He felt that the original Suiseki hobby will have a resurgence. Kasahara encouraged his faithful customers to participated in this new higher profile exhibition in an established art museum.

Kasahara Manabu passed away suddenly in early October, 2017 before this article was completed. While his presence in his shop, at the *Meihenten* and the Japan Suiseki Exhibitions will be sorely missed, the legacy he left behind, a re-structured NSA and many well informed and passionate stone collectors, will continue on. 🌸

Bonsai Wall Mural

New Creative Ideas in Saikei



By Jyoti and Nikunj Parekh, India

As our bonsai related activities expanded, many visitors started viewing Bonsai collection on our terrace. One of the walls of our terrace was huge and blank. For quite some time, we waited for our artist friend to create a mural using colorful ceramic tiles. The artist took a very long time to respond and could not create a design on time, forcing us to think inwards. This then, was when we got the idea of a wall mural with living plants.

The first Bonsai Wall Mural was created in the year 1985 in the presence of many of our Bonsai Study Group Members at a meeting. This creation is still alive with all living trees, shrubs and fillers, intact, achieving maturity and turning into a piece of living art. Initially, for this we used a wooden frame, a typically-carved Indian frame. Later on, we changed this into a cement and plaster of Paris frame with an Indian design, which is durable and will last for a long time. (See photo above)

Everyone liked this creation and we gave demonstrations across India. In 1987 we got invitations to give demonstrations at Heidelberg, Germany; at London in the UK; Staten Island Botanical Garden in NY, BCI Bonsai Convention at Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Honolulu, Hawaii in U.S.A. In 1990 we created a Bonsai Wall Mural at International Garden & Greenery Exposition at Osaka, Japan, which won a silver medal from the organizers. We used rocks and a Wooden Frame that were brought from India with live trees and fillers provided by Nippon Bonsai Association. Our friend Pedro Morales from Puerto Rico, on a visit to India, liked the wall mural and created similar ones with brightly painted sunrise and sunset scenery, in his own country.

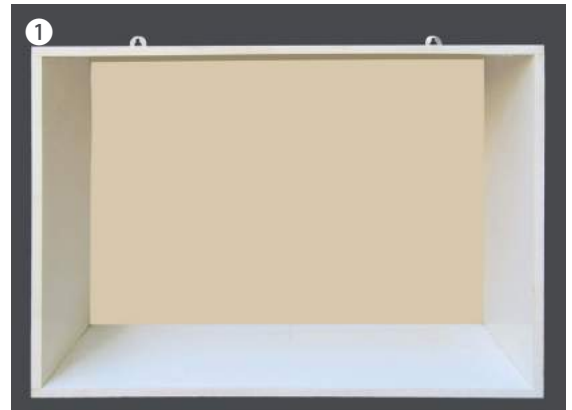


Top; Wall Mural of living plants created in 1985 by authors and Saikei specialists Jyoti and Nikunj Parekh.

Inset; Jyoti and Nikunj with their completed Wall Mural Planting. See details on next page.

A Bonsai Wall Mural for Sun-loving Plants with a New Twist.

① In 2017 we made another wall mural, this time we made the frame smaller. A box was made of white PVC-Vinyl plastic hard board, the size: 24" wide 18" tall and 6" deep, fixed with steel screws and glued. In the background we used a transparent acrylic sheet that will protect the wall against which it hangs from water and stains, again fixed with removable screws. For changing of soil or repotting one can unscrew the acrylic sheet.



2 We took tall mountain shaped slate stones. Cut their base to make them stand vertically. Arranged them like mountain scene. We kept enough space between the stones and the acrylic background sheet for ease of planting of trees, groundcovers and fillers. The arrangement once ready with proper placement, we stuck the base of stones with epoxy glue or reinforce with quick fix glue.

3 4 Composition of the soil used was one part vermicompost to one part of non staining garden soil and one part sand the size of sugar crystals. We used *Brya ebenus*, small sized trees in varying heights and trunk thicknesses, few green groundcovers like *Pilea*, and mini *Euphorbia milli* etc. to provide an attractive look to the Vertical Scenery, a Saikei which can be hung on a wall.

After planting, we poke and compact the soil mix and cover with wet shredded sphagnum moss. Initially, we sprayed water with vitamins and hormones. Finally, clean the background and the completed piece with tissue cloth or paper. Hang on a wall where average daily sunlight suitable for the trees in the plating is available.

Water when needed and fertilize with mild solutions, just as you do to your bonsai. Regularly trim and keep all the trees, groundcovers or fillers in good shape and maintain its beauty.

Bright sunlight, without direct strong winds will be conducive to plant growth. Once in a month, mild dosages of insecticide/pesticides and fungicide will help protect the trees.



A Bonsai Wall Mural for Shade-tolerant Plants

5 6 7 People who have less sunlight can also use small sized indoor green or colorful plants and small rocks to create scenery of your choice. 🌿



Bonsai in Bali

National Bonsai Exhibition in Gianyar, Bali

By Budi Sulisty, Indonesia

Photos by Budi Sulisty and Nur Hasim



The Indonesian Bonsai Society, Gianyar Chapter held a Bonsai Exhibition from 7 to 15 of April 2018. The title of the exhibition is: “Ayuning Taru Taksu Mautama” Indonesia National Bonsai Contest, Gianyar 2018. It is a Balinese phrase that means the beauty of prominent wood to represent plant or bonsai. The Indonesian Bonsai Society has more than 150 chapters all over the country. In one year there could be three or four national exhibition in a year. Gianyar is a small town some 15 km from Ubud, the famous tourist area in Bali.

During this event, 350 bonsai are exhibited in the Astina open field in the center of the town. The bonsai come from Java, Bali and some islands in East Nusa Tenggara.

Indonesia is a very large area with different rain fall and humidity from the West to the East. Bali is in the East of Java with less rain fall, rich sun shine with hot temperature. This makes some plants more popular than plants that grow in the West. Santigi or *Pemphis acidula* is the dominant species in this exhibition. *Pemphis* loves a lot of sun shine so it grows very well in this area. *Pemphis* ramification is very beautiful, so that most of the winning trees are of *Pemphis* species.

Ficus is the next popular species. They are mainly *Ficus microcarpa*, *compacta* and *ampelas*. Other species exhibited are: *Premna*, *Sabinea*, *Streblus asper*, *Malpighia glabra*, *Acacia*, *Tamarindus indica*, *Wrightia* and one or two *Casuarina*. Because it is a competition, people concentrate on species that can perform very well in terms of their beauty.

This is a national exhibition, so that there are four classes exhibited. The most junior is called Regional for the trees that have never been exhibited before. If they achieve qualifying marks, they are entitled to join the Madya class in the next exhibition. In Madya the use of wire in some minor branches is still tolerated. If the plant achieves qualifying marks, they are entitled to go to Utama in the next exhibition. A plant that achieves qualifying marks for three times in Utama class can go on to the Bintang class.

In this exhibition, BCI gave three awards, one for Madya, one for Utama and one for Bintang. All of them are *Pemphis acidula*.

Besides bonsai exhibition, there is a bazaar selling bonsai and the accessories, bonsai demonstrations by artists from Bali, Malaysia and Philippines. 🌳

Facing page;

Top: Michael Siow from Malaysia is designing a *Pemphis acidula*

Left inset: unity in bonsai shown by Malaysian, Philippines and Indonesian bonsai friends.

Right inset: Budi gave BCI Award to Komang Sudjana from Mataram, Lombok

Bottom inset: Philippines and Malaysian artists are doing bonsai demonstrations.

Bottom; Winner of Madya Class and recipient of the BCI Award of Excellence. Santigi (*Pemphis acidula*), by Hary Sulisty, Bondowoso.

Madya Class: the use of wire in some minor branches is still tolerated





Top left; Santigi (*Pemphis acidula*), by Teja Dinata, Denpasar.

Top right; Santigi (*Pemphis acidula*), by Oka S., Gianyar.

Middle left; Elegan (*Ficus compacta*), by Ketut Aryama, Badung.

Middle right; Anting Putri (*Wrightia religiosa*), by Ngurah Bem, Gianyar.

Bottom left; Sianci (*Malpighia* sp.), by Bali Bonsai, Denpasar.

Bottom right; Elegan (*Ficus compacta*), by Edi Suryanta, Malang.



Utama Class: Graduates of the Madya Class



*Top; Winner of Utama Class and recipient of the BCI Award of Excellence. Santigi (*Pemphis acidula*), by Dewa Made Susana, Badung.*

*Bottom left; Santigi (*Pemphis acidula*), by H. Pipin, Denpasar*

*Bottom right; Sancang (*Premna microphylla*), by Mitra Land, Sumenep.*



Top left; Sancang (*Premna microphylla*), by Maming, Jimbaran.

Top right; Santigi (*Pemphis acidula*), by Agus Tarci, Klungkung.

Middle left; Santigi (*Pemphis acidula*), by Oka S., Gianyar.

Middle right; Anting Putri (*Wrightia religiosa*), by H. Nur Khairi, Jepara-ed.

Bottom left; Kimeng (*Ficus microcarpa*), by I Nyoman Sumarta Daton, Den-pasar.

Bottom right; Sancang (*Premna microphylla*), by Dr. Rendra. K, Jepara.



Bintang Class: For three-time qualifiers of the Utama Class.



Top; Winner of Bintang Class and recipient of the BCI Award of Excellence. Santigi (*Pemphis acidula*), by Andrea, Mataram.

Bottom left; Gulo Gumantung (*Vangueria spinosa*), by Oka S., Gianyar.
Bottom right; Serut (*Streblus asper*), by Moh. Arif. R, Ungaran.





Top; Ampelas (*Ficus ampelas*), by Nyoman Sumarta Da-ton, Denpasar.

Bottom left; Santigi (*Pemphis acidula*), by Ketut Aryama, Badung.
Bottom right; Sancang (*Premna microphylla*), by Mitra Land, Sumenep.





Top left; Santigi (*Pemphis acidula*), by H. Pipin, Denpasar.
Top right; Sianci (*Malpighia sp.*), by Winarto, Denpasar.
Bottom; Serut (*Streblus asper*), by Sutomo, Surabaya.

OLYMPIC COLD!



World Bonsai Festival at the Winter Olympics, South Korea

By Glenis Bebb, Australia

Photos by Glenis Bebb

Top: Old, former Korean Residence

Inset: International delegates met in Seoul prior to travelling to the World Bonsai Festival Exhibition. *Left to right:* Michael Grace; Karen Harkaway, ABS President; Frank Mihalic, BCI Director USA; Kim Sae Won, ABFF President and our host; Lindsay Bebb, Chairman, WBFF; Herbert Obermyer, Germany; Glenis Bebb, BCI President; Piotr Czeniachowski with wife Malgorzata, Poland; Willy Evenepoel, Belgium. Not shown is Jorg Derlien from Bonsai Focus, Germany, who arrived later.

Facing page: Views of Beartree Park. A Secret Garden housed several collections, including a bonsai collection.

A Bonsai Exhibition was held in Gangneung, South Korea in February commemorating the 2018 Winter Olympics.

A small group of International delegates, including BCI President Glen Bebb and Director Frank Mihalic, met in Seoul prior to travelling to Gangneung for the World Bonsai Festival Exhibition. Please understand that we have not gained weight. We are wearing at least four layers of clothing! Although I was born and spent my childhood in the UK I have never experienced such cold weather!

We visited several privately-owned Bonsai Gardens and collections on our way to Gangneung.

All the material for both bonsai creation and garden specimens are collected from the mountains. Unlike most countries collecting yamadori is not a problem in South Korea as seventy percent of the country is mountains and covered in Pines!

The species that impressed me the most was the *Pinus densiflora*. This pine is native of both Japan and

South Korea. Whilst I have seen some very stunning old red pine as bonsai, and in famous garden in Japan, I have never seen such textured bark as seen on the Korean variety.

Ei Seok Chungcheong, the owner of these stunning pines, told me that he only uses aluminium wire to style his pines. This is contrary to most pine stylists who usually insist on copper wire!

One of the growers that we visited has been grafting black pine branches onto the red pine root stock for over 25 years.

In Sejong City we visited Beartree Park which encompasses 82 acres of land featuring 1,000 species of trees, 400,000 species of flowers, and 150 Asiatic black bears! We visited a Secret Garden via a secret door which housed several collections, including a bonsai collection.

Our group attended the Exhibition Opening Ceremony followed by a dinner and video presentation hosted by the local Mayor. The Exhibition was housed in a outdoor marquee. It was interesting to see conifers

exhibited whilst in total dormancy. I haven't seen this before. At first viewing I thought that some of the junipers were dead! Even some of the European bonsai guys, who experience very cold winters, thought the same. It wasn't until we looked deep into the foliage that we saw signs of green. Single trees, groups, rock planting and landscapes were exhibited. Species included maples, junipers, pines, taxus and Chinese quince. The bonsai that received the BCI Excellence Award was a stunning *Chaenomeles sinensis*, Koehne, a Chinese quince.

This was my third trip to South Korea but this was a unique experience. The hospitality, friendships and camaraderie was very special. Not to mention the fabulous food. I've also acquired a taste for South Korean beer and wine! 🍷



Beartree Park encompasses 82 acres of land, featuring 1,000 species of trees, 400,000 species of flowers, and 150 Asiatic black bears!



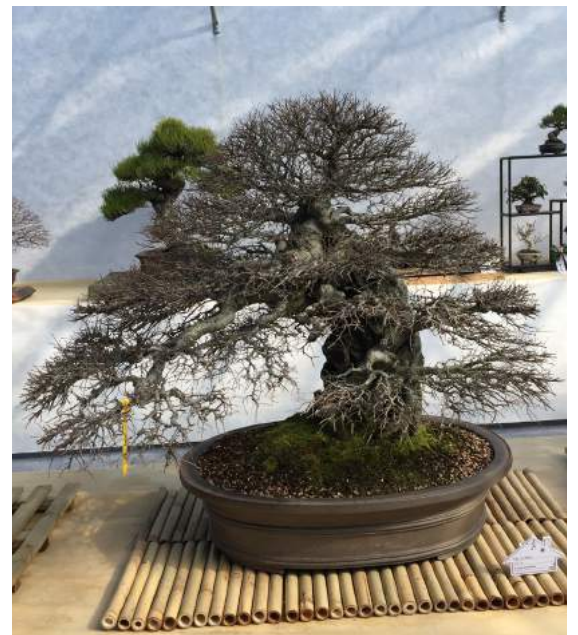
Whilst I have seen some very stunning old red pine as bonsai, and in famous gardens in Japan, I have never seen such textured bark as seen on the Korean variety.





*This page and facing page; Private gardens and nurseries.
 Ei Seok Chungcheong, the owner of these stunning pines, told me that he only uses aluminium wire to style his pines.
 Facing page, bottom left; One of the growers that we visited has been grafting black pine branches onto the red pine root stock for over 25 years.*

Bonsai Exhibition in Gangneung, South Korea Commemorating the 2018 Winter Olympics

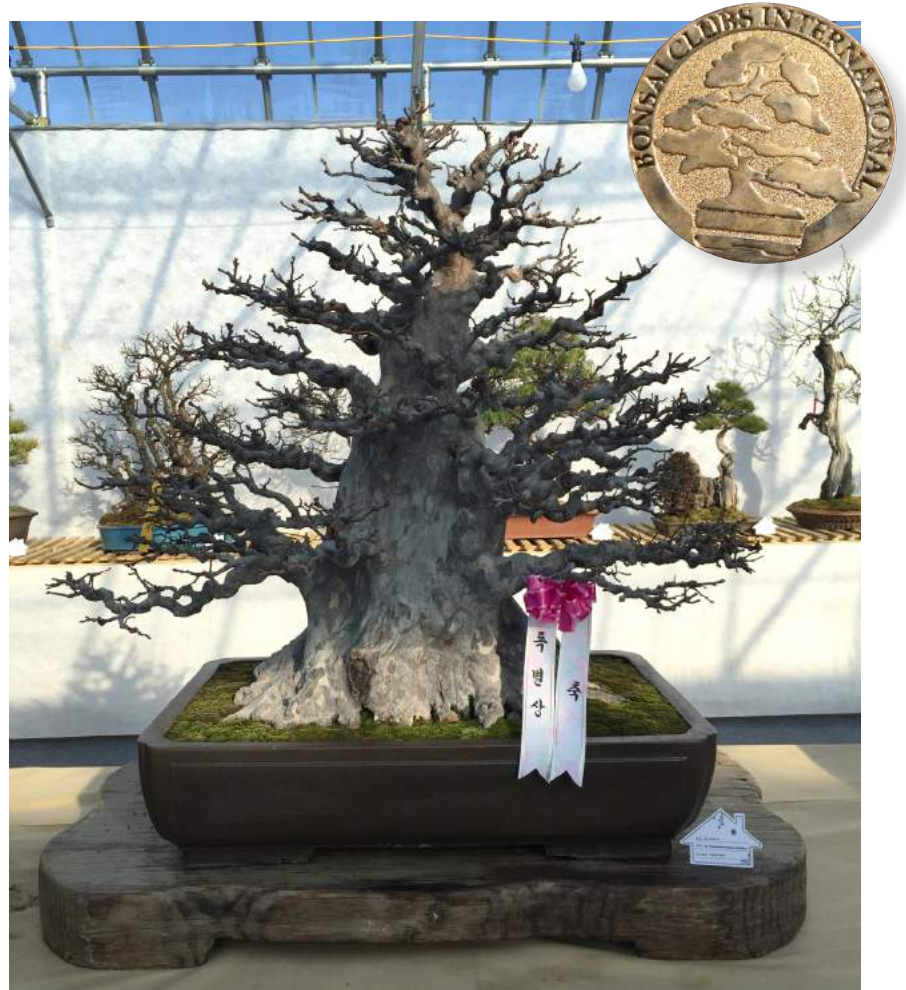


Top left and right; Views of the World Bonsai Festival Exhibition, South Korea.

Middle left; Chinese quince, *Chaenomeles sinensis* Koehne

Middle right; Maple, *Acer* sp.

Bottom right; Korean elm, *Ulmus parvifolia* var. *coreana*.



Top left; *Juniperus* sp.

Top right; Korean Red Pine, *Pinus densiflora*

Bottom left; Korean Red Pine, *Pinus densiflora*

Bottom right; This stunning *Chaenomeles sinensis* Koehne, a Chinese quince, received the BCI Excellence Award.

Trips & Trees



Bonsai Travel Strategies Advance Scouting and Making First Contact

By Stuart Innes, Canada

Photos by Stuart Innes

Being retired has allowed me the luxury of travelling more frequently, while being married has impacted the destinations. I have managed attendance at a few bonsai conventions and shows, but our travels have generally been to locations warmer than Winnipeg, Canada and during winter in the northern hemisphere. We are committed (or should be!) gardeners, so that during our spring and summer months we are consumed with many horticultural activities at home. When living in Winnipeg, one learns to make productive use of every pleasant day. As such, it is difficult for me to justify travel to many large bonsai events and conventions during our growing season.

Regardless, there are approaches that one can take to make the most of their regular vacation travels, in terms of maximizing exposure to bonsai and bonsai appreciation. Some of these may not be obvious at first glance, so I'll suggest some strategies.

Timing is everything.

We have taken two significant bus tours based out of London, England in May, and in both cases, timed it to be able to attend the Chelsea Flower Show a few days after the tour ended. My wife was as thrilled with all the displays, as I was with the bonsai. There were fewer bonsai displays the second time, but still wonderful. We also arranged to tour Kew Gardens during one trip, with its majestic trees and specialty gardens, and RHS Wisley Gardens during the other, including the bonsai walk and rock gardens there. We timed the latter visit for the day that the British Iris Show was underway, pleasing my wife to no end as well. As I stated, timing is everything, and maximizing it requires some research and planning.

Seeing is believing.

An aspect that can be invaluable for someone living on the Canadian prairies is to take advantage of simply viewing the local trees wherever you travel, with some preparation as to what the local species may be. It is insightful to look through dozens of bonsai books and videos, and to watch a master create wonderful specimens. However, creating something great must always begin with a vision; a vision of a scene or tree with character, and something real, not imaginary or on a screen. Nothing provides a basis for this better than actually seeing live examples of the types of trees and associated styles that you are attempting to create. I never felt a connection, a sense of understanding, to many styles of trees, until we travelled through Europe, and later the Caribbean, and gazed at ancient olive trees, at Umbrella pines, at massive ficus stands, and walked through rain forests in Australia. Then I understood what I was seeing in print and at shows.

It's not that we don't have many great examples of trees with character two hours away in the Canadian shield, and we have had many visiting artists provide excellent workshops. We can easily visualize and



Facing page; "Root on Rock" in Blue Mountains, near Sydney Australia

Top right; British Bonsai Federation exhibit, Chelsea Flower Show 2016

Middle; Bonsai Exhibition, Chelsea Flower Show

Bottom; An impressive pine near Killarney, Ireland



Inset; A small pine on the edge of the Grand Canyon, Arizona, U.S.A.

Bottom; Trees on overhang at the Rimrocks, Billings, Montana U.S.A.

create likenesses of local styles with readily available eastern larch, jack pine, junipers, or deciduous species. However, to fulfill our passion during winter months, when those are buried under the snow, we must work indoors with tropical species such as ficus. And this is most productive when having a vision of them growing in nature, seeing not only their shape, but their surroundings.

For instance, I was often confused by the design of otherwise beautiful bonsai that I had seen grown in England. They did not meet the guideline often thrust upon us that the first branch should be one third the way up the tree. After touring the British Isles, then seeing displays at the Chelsea show, it hit me; many massive trees in rural England have a comparatively short bare trunk line, then great height of dense foliage, just like their miniature counterparts. Similarly, many small multi-trunk plantings

resembled the tree bluffs on rocky outcroppings that we had seen in pastures there. Now I understood.

It is equally informative to witness a growth of species that are normally shrub-like in their native environments. While the goal is not to replicate their normal growth habit, an understanding of it certainly helps to guide their pruning and care. Witnessing their environment, including weather, soil, and placement in relation to other flora serves as a much better teacher than reading a few paragraphs in a book, and also seems to provide a longer remembrance of things in my limited memory banks. So I am constantly on the lookout for outstanding trees, and for species of interest. Botanical and Japanese or Chinese Gardens are often terrific sources for the latter, with specimens usually being labelled in case we don't immediately recognize them.

In addition, I have many times been amazed and distracted by trees of character immediately beside

I never felt a connection, a sense of understanding, to many styles of trees, until we travelled through Europe, and later the Caribbean, and gazed at ancient olive trees, at Umbrella pines, at massive ficus stands, and walked through rain forests in Australia.





well known tourist attractions, although coming under scrutiny for not focusing on the matter at hand (I was!). I joke within our club about having discovered a new tree style in the Mexican Yucatan, “root over temple”. All these discoveries are duly recorded via photographs, many of which are later shared with our club back home. This can come at a cost of course, especially when my wife suggests that I put the camera down, quit photographing trees, and just enjoy the vacation. I now have many wonderful photographs of my wife, where she is just by coincidence, in front of a notable tree specimen.

Make the call.

One of the most rewarding strategies that I have come to use takes a little courage for a shy individual like myself, but always adds to the experience. That is to research the local bonsai societies in areas where you may be travelling. Additional research into bonsai displays, Japanese, Chinese, or Botanical Gardens, and even nurseries may be rewarded as well. But the real value is in making contact with local bonsai growers and clubs. Who better to provide information on what there is to see or do locally (bonsai related or otherwise)? And they are often happy to have you attend a local meeting, to visit their own collections, or just to talk about their favorite hobby.

You might be hesitant to make cold contact with a complete stranger, and a club executive at that, in a distant city, and to further dare to impose on their time as well! But consider for a moment the pervasive characteristics of horticulture people and bonsai growers specifically. Firstly, they are patient and understanding; otherwise they would not grow things, especially bonsai. Secondly they are proud of their creations, and love to have others see them. Thirdly, they love to talk about their hobby, especially with someone bringing a different experience. And lastly, would they be on the executive if they were not freely giving of their time? (been there...)



*Top; Windswept trees at Torquay Beach, Victoria, Australia
Middle; Impressive structures at Torquay Beach, Victoria, Australia
Bottom; Unusual nebari in Mossman Gorge rainforest, Queensland, Australia*

Top; A large jade bonsai in Adelaide, Australia

Middle left; Aged Baobab tree (and author's wife) in Queen's Park, Bridgetown, Barbados

Middle right; Bougainvillea with a twist at St. George Village Botanical Gardens on St. Croix

Bottom left; Multi-trunk island near boardwalk at Ponce, Puerto Rico

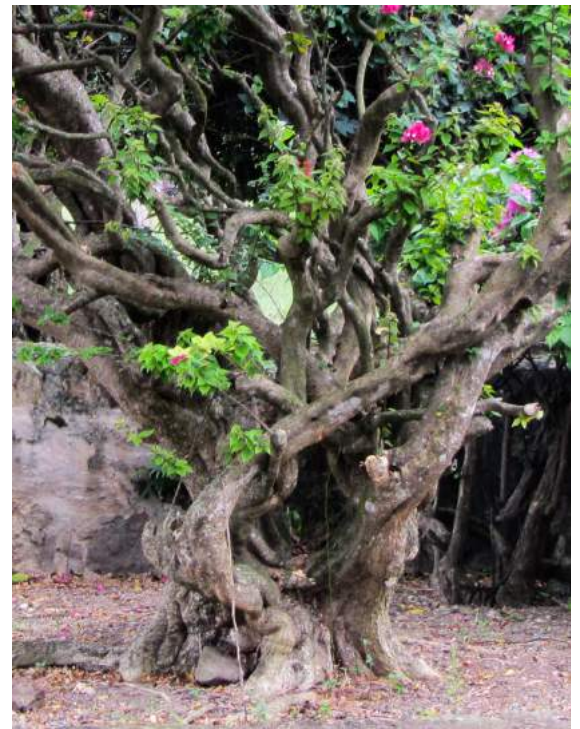
Bottom right; Exposed roots at Dorado Beach, Puerto Rico



Making New Friends.

My experience amply supports this analysis. I've made a point of checking out local club websites on many occasions, and sometimes could only manage a phone call or brief encounter with local growers or businesses due to timelines. Even these helped to guide our decisions of where to spend time. On several trips, however, the effort resulted in experiences that were highlights of the vacation, for both of us actually.

The first was during a trip to Australia several year ago. I had, in advance, contacted Alan Jabs in Adelaide, who had previously spent some time with club members in Winnipeg. Alan was extremely kind to not only allow us to check out his collection, but also to spend several hours touring us to other local growers. I gained a great deal of knowledge on several of their popular species, and was amazed to learn how much we actually had in common between dealing with their extreme summer heat, and ourselves dealing with extreme winter cold. We do also experience short durations of excessive heat in summer, although for much shorter periods and not as extreme. Regardless, we both gained from



the experience. This was also my first exposure to what wonderful bonsai can be grown from jade and similar succulents. We are perfectly capable of growing these indoors in the winter and outdoors in the summer, and I now have one that I am somewhat proud of for a first attempt. Alan has since visited our club again.

Strolls through several rainforests, through botanical gardens at Mount Lofty and Warrnambool, hikes past twisted and restrained growth of trees in the Grampian Mountains and on various coastal areas, and of course the marvelous Royal Botanical Gardens, and Chinese Gardens in Sydney all made the trip to this outstanding continent memorable. And all this for the price of a few hours on the internet researching what was available in the areas where we were travelling, plus a couple of e-mails, oh, and a few bottles of locally produced wine gifted in appreciation.

More recently, prior to us spending a month in Phoenix, Arizona, I had contacted Eric Zimmet, president of the Phoenix Bonsai Society. Eric graciously invited me to attend one of their regular meetings, at which my analysis of bonsai people was once again confirmed. The club members to a person were welcoming and giving of their knowledge. The exchange was highly enjoyable and informative. A number of great ideas not only on growing bonsai, but regarding club activities, were carried home and shared with the Winnipeg club. Eric also advised that the Matsuri (Japanese Cultural) Festival in Phoenix later in the month would feature a bonsai display by their club. We had already considered attending, and this sealed it. We both had a wonderful day there, and a few inexpensive companion planting pots also came home with us.

Observing drought tolerant species on desert walks, a trip to Boyce Thompson Arboretum, and to the Phoenix Japanese Friendship Center (and gardens) rounded out the arboreal interests of our month. Well, except for the slightly interesting visit to the Grand Canyon... I jest. I found myself taking as many photos of the cascading and wind-blown pines and junipers on the cliffs and canyon edge (and of my wife standing beside them of course), as of the dramatic scenery itself. Once again, I had acquired not just inspiration, but a true appreciation.

One bonsai convention that I did manage to attend with this publication's editor was in Victoria BC, Canada in 2016. The conference was terrific, but the visit to the Horticultural Center of the Pacific with local club members, and seeing their permanent display there, was equally rewarding, as well as some time spent with former Winnipeg members now living in the area. Make that call!

I may be missing out on seeing fabulous trees and witnessing remarkable artists at work at major events, but I am meeting people with trees and challenges similar to our own, and learning how to deal with trees, and club interests, just like ours. That's also invaluable!

Having grown up a rather shy farm boy, the saying "a turtle only gets somewhere by sticking it's neck out



Top; Phoenix Bonsai Society display at the Matsuri Festival, Phoenix, U.S.A.

Middle; Phoenix Bonsai Society members working on trees at club meeting.

Bottom; Bonsai on display at the Horticultural Center of the Pacific on Vancouver Island, B.C., Canada



first” always struck home with me. I would highly recommend that you consider sticking yours out, doing a bit of advance scouting, and making contacts whenever and wherever you have the opportunity to travel. If you are ever near Winnipeg (preferably in summer), we're only a phone call away. 🌳

About the Author: Stu Innes is a retired Professional Engineer, and a past President of the Bonsai Society of Winnipeg. He and his wife are avid gardeners, who now enjoy frequent travels during cooler seasons. He has contributed bonsai articles to *The Prairie Garden* and the *Winnipeg Free Press*.

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