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Bonsai & Stone Appreciation

2025 Q1

**The 13th Liuzhou
Invitational Convention**

**Bai Dai Yu: 20-
year Juniper
transformation**

Double Nemaki

**How Do Plant
Cells Com-
municate in
Response to
Water?**

**Italian
Bonsai and
Suiseki
Events**

**The Toronto
Bonsai
Society's
Landmark Exhibit**

**BCI Excellence
Award: Old Mountain
Pine**



月中景
(Scenery in the
Moon)

Golden Award
Winner, Liuzhou
Convention

This evocative
composition by
Chinese bonsai artist
Mr. Pan Dazhai captures
the poetic essence of a
serene landscape framed
within the celestial symbol of
the moon.

Dimensions: Diameter 75 cm

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President's Message

As we usher in the first quarter of 2025, I reflect on the remarkable journey we've undertaken together in the world of bonsai. Since assuming the presidency in late 2023, I've had the honor of witnessing our community's unwavering dedication and passion.

Our conventions have been a testament to this commitment. The 2023 Annual International Convention and Tour in Shuyang, China, showcased the rich heritage of bonsai. Regional conventions in the Philippines and Indonesia further strengthened our bonds. The "Bonsai on the Bayou 2024" convention in Houston, Texas, brought together enthusiasts from diverse backgrounds. Most recently, the Liuzhou Convention in October was a culmination of meticulous planning and collaboration.

I invite you to enjoy the comprehensive report on the Liuzhou Convention in this issue. It features insights and perspectives from various authors, offering a vivid portrayal of the event and its significance. This convention was a labor of love, and the reflections shared here capture its essence beautifully.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the BCI Directors, whose passion and dedication have been instrumental in these successes. Your unwavering support propels BCI forward.

Looking ahead, I'm excited to announce that our new BCI website will soon be live. This platform will offer features designed to elevate the profiles of BCI member clubs, fostering greater connectivity within our global family.

Our Volunteer Directors are diligently revising the BCI Instructor Program. This initiative aims to assist local clubs in selecting qualified instructors and demonstrators for events at all levels, ensuring the highest standards of bonsai education and artistry.

I'm also thrilled to share that our next BCI International Convention will be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Details will be announced soon, and I encourage all members to participate in what promises to be an enriching experience.

At the Liuzhou Convention, we welcomed three esteemed bonsai masters to the BCI Board:

- **Mike Siow** from Malaysia: Founder and President of the Malaysia Penjing Art Creation Society, Mike has been a passionate bonsai artist since 1992. His expertise has been showcased through demonstrations in China, Vietnam, and Malaysia. His innovative approach to penjing and bonsai has inspired many.

- **Pisith Ariyaamornkul** from Thailand: President of the Thai Bonsai Association, Pisith has over 26 years of experience in bonsai, beginning his journey in 1997. Recognized as one of the first bonsai instructors by the Thai Bonsai Association, his contributions have been pivotal in promoting bonsai in Thailand and beyond.

- **Peter Macasieb** from the USA: Based in West Covina, California, Peter is renowned for his specialization in Shohin bonsai. His dedication to the art has earned him the affectionate title of "Mr. Shohin" within the bonsai community. Peter's work exemplifies the balance of precision and creativity that defines bonsai artistry.

Their diverse backgrounds and profound expertise will undoubtedly enrich our organization.

As we embrace the new year, let us draw inspiration from the art of bonsai—a practice that teaches patience, resilience, and harmony. May 2025 be a year of growth, creativity, and strengthened international friendships. Together, let's continue to cultivate beauty and understanding through our shared passion for bonsai. 🌳

Warm regards,
Chen, Chang
President, Bonsai Clubs International



Mr. Chen, Chang, BCI President

I'm also thrilled to share that our next BCI International Convention will be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Details will be announced soon, and I encourage all members to participate in what promises to be an enriching experience.

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:

Mr. Chen Chang, president@bonsai-bci.com

Message from the Editor

The 13th Liuzhou Viewing Stone Festival & BCI International Landscape Bonsai Invitational Convention was a feast for the senses and the soul. From the moment attendees arrived, they were greeted with warm smiles, a rich program of events, and artistry that inspired many. The creative brilliance of Chinese Bonsai and Penjing masters shone brightly, setting the tone for a gathering celebrating tradition, innovation, and the bonds uniting us as a global bonsai community.

This issue brings you the reflections of authors who were there to experience it all firsthand, each offering a unique perspective shaped by their personal journeys in the art of bonsai.

Dr. Sujata Bhat, BCI 1st Vice President, a bonsai artist and teacher from India, captures the event's essence with the keen eye of a storyteller, weaving together art, nature, and the friendships that blossom at such gatherings. Indonesia's **Budi Sulisty** shares his joy in discovering the intricate beauty of stones and bonsai, vividly depicting the convention's unforgettable moments.

From the UK, award-winning bonsai artist Tony Tickle shares his admiration for the Penjing landscapes, offering personal photographs and reflections that reveal how deeply he was inspired by this journey. In contrast, Australia's second-generation bonsai professional **Tony Bebb** brings warmth and camaraderie in recounting the signing of friendship agreements at Baowen Garden—a significant milestone for the global bonsai community.

Yang Xi and **Liu Chuangang**, both from China, delve into the artistry of the event with an eye for tradition and innovation. Their reflections remind us why Liuzhou is a vital hub for bonsai and suiseki enthusiasts.

This issue also features BCI 2nd Vice President **Min Hsuan Lo** and his son **Andrew**, a dynamic duo from Taiwan, whose technical expertise and poetic approach to bonsai are as inspiring as they are educational. In two articles presented by BCI Director and contributing editor **Massimo Bandera**, **Alessandro Bonardo** from Italy, an apprentice of the legendary Masahiko Kimura, shares a fascinating look into the *Nemaki* technique, while **Carmelo Bonanno** brings us a story of triumph with his award-winning mountain pine.

Our technical minds are also treated to an article by Doctors **Enrique Castaño** and **Luis Carlos Rodriguez Zapata**, who offer a deep dive into how plant cells communicate in response to water. Their work exemplifies the union of art and science that defines bonsai.

Closer to home, I had the pleasure of attending the **Toronto Bonsai Society's 60th Anniversary Exhibit**. Witnessing the dedication of volunteers working in one of the most challenging growing zones for bonsai was genuinely inspiring. Their passion and commitment remind us of the vibrant community that sustains our shared art form.

As you read through this issue, I hope you'll feel the same sense of connection and inspiration that I did while preparing it. Behind every article is a story, a personality, and a shared love for bonsai and stones that transcends borders. Let us celebrate the authors, their contributions, and the volunteers who make it all possible. 🌳

—Joe Grande, Canada

MISSION STATEMENT

BONSAI CLUBS INTERNATIONAL

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

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FEATURED ON THE COVER: 月中景 (Scenery in the Moon). Golden Award Winner, Liuzhou Convention. This evocative composition by Chinese bonsai artist Mr. Pan Dazhai captures the poetic essence of a serene landscape framed within the celestial symbol of the moon. The circular ceramic vat, representing the moon itself, serves as a window into a meticulously crafted scene featuring Jeju Cypress, basaltic rock, cascading water, and figurines. The interplay of natural and sculptural elements evokes harmony and balance, hallmarks of traditional Chinese aesthetics. This masterpiece stands as a testament to the artist's skill and vision, blending nature and art into a timeless narrative. Diameter 75 cm.

A Global Bonsai Experience

The 13th Liuzhou Viewing Stone Festival & BCI International Landscape Bonsai Invitational Convention

Photos by He Xiaojia, and Qing Yunlong,
courtesy Bonsai Clubs International China Committee Limited

BCI President Chen Chang officially opens the convention with a welcoming speech.

From October 31 to November 4, 2024, Liuzhou, the “Chinese Stone Capital,” welcomed the world to the 13th Liuzhou Viewing Stone Festival and Bonsai Clubs International (BCI) International Landscape Bonsai Invitational Convention. This extraordinary event brought together bonsai and viewing stone enthusiasts from across the globe, celebrating artistry, cultural exchange, and community spirit.

A Warm Welcome

Delegates from countries including Australia, Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, Germany, and the UK arrived in Liuzhou, greeted with VIP hospitality.

Under the expert leadership of BCI President Chen Chang, the Guangxi Society of Landscape Architecture, and the Liuzhou Stone Museum, the organizers ensured a seamless and memorable experience for all attendees. From personalized airport pickups to luxurious accommodations, every detail reflected a commitment to excellence.

The convention included a vibrant opening ceremony featuring energetic dances and speeches from organizing representatives. The atmosphere was electric, setting the stage for days of inspiration and connection.



Community and Collaboration

President Chen Chang's Baowen Bonsai Garden provided an unforgettable experience. Guests were invited to the grand opening of this remarkable garden, home to over 5,000 exemplary bonsai and penjing. The welcoming banner, signed by attendees, became a symbol of global unity and shared passion for these art forms.

The convention also fostered international collaboration, with President Chen signing friendship agreements with bonsai schools and museums in Germany and Australia. These partnerships underscored the global reach and enduring bonds within the bonsai and viewing stone communities.



Top to bottom: Convention delegates from India, Germany, Australia, Malaysia and the United Kingdom are warmly greeted at the airport.

“This was one of the most inclusive and friendly events I’ve ever attended,”
Glenis Bebb,
Executive Director of BCI.



Top: Visitors to Baowen Garden sign the welcoming banner and mingle on the green carpet.

Middle: This remarkable space, which also serves as the site of the new BCI Training Centre, showcases an extraordinary collection of bonsai and materials. Photo by Tony Tickle.

Bottom: Another view of Baowen Garden.





Top left: Two views of the banquet at Baowen Garden.
 Top right: President Chen welcomes Kunio Kobayashi and his Japanese colleagues to Baowen Garden.
 Middle left: President Chen signs cooperative agreements with Australian and German clubs.
 Middle right: Opening ribbon-cutting ceremony, and unveiling the plaque for the BCI Bonsai Industry-Academia-Research Center.
 Bottom: View of Baowen Garden.



A Feast for the Senses

The convention featured over 200 masterpieces of bonsai and viewing stones, showcasing the exceptional skill and creativity of their creators. Chinese penjing masters captivated audiences with their live demonstrations, crafting miniature landscapes that evoked the iconic Karst Mountains of Guangxi Province. Other compositions depicted the arid beauty of the Gobi and Taklamakan Deserts, enhanced by delicate figurines of people, animals, and boats, adding depth and storytelling to each display.

At the Liuzhou Stone Museum, attendees were treated to a stunning array of Chinese viewing stones, each a marvel of natural beauty. A highlight was the collection of Lingbi stones (靈璧), sourced from Anhui Province.



These dense, glossy, deep-black stones are renowned for their unique resonance, producing a pleasant, bell-like sound when struck. A museum musician showcased this quality by performing on a percussive instrument crafted from Lingbi stones, creating a mesmerizing blend of sound and artistry.

A Celebration of Excellence

The BCI Annual General Meeting brought together the BCI executive to celebrate achievements and chart the path forward. During the meeting, exciting plans for the next convention in Kuala Lumpur were unveiled. Updates on ongoing BCI projects and initiatives highlighted the organization's commitment to fostering



Susan Lee from the Philippines shared, “This truly extravagant event will be imprinted forever in our hearts.”



and Yangshuo. Guided tours revealed breathtaking landscapes, while fine dining and cultural performances added layers of enjoyment to the event.

Words of Gratitude

The heartfelt feedback from attendees reflected the convention’s success. Susan Lee from the Philippines shared, “This truly extravagant event will be imprinted forever in our hearts.” Sujata Bhat from India praised the high quality of the exhibitions, workshops, and sightseeing, expressing gratitude for the organizers’ hospitality.

Looking Ahead

The 13th Liuzhou Viewing Stone Festival and BCI Convention was more than an event—it was a celebration of artistry and connection that transcended borders. As the bonsai and viewing stone communities look forward to the next gathering in Kuala Lumpur, the memories of Liuzhou will continue to inspire and unite.

Join us next time, and be part of this vibrant global family. 🌿

the global bonsai and suiseki community. A special highlight was the introduction of the newly elected BCI Directors—Mike Siow from Malaysia, Pisith Ariyaamornkul from Thailand, and Peter Macasieb from the USA—who were warmly welcomed into their roles.

Unforgettable Experiences

Beyond the exhibits and meetings, attendees explored the cultural and natural treasures of Liuzhou, Guilin,

Top, middle and bottom: The opening ceremony at the Liuzhou Stone Museum.

Facing page:

Left column, top to bottom: Views of Baowen Garden, and the BCI Executive meeting.

Right column, top to bottom: Performers at the opening ceremonies at the Liuzhou Stone Museum, opening speeches, Glenis Bebb imitates the soaring character of this amazing stone—photo by Lindsay Bebb—and a musician playing an instrument made from Lingbi stones.

A Journey Through Art and Nature

Highlights from the 13th Liuzhou Stone Festival and BCI Bonsai Invitational

By Dr. Sujata Bhat, India



Top left: Unveiling the plaque for the BCI Bonsai Industry-Academia-Research Center.

Top right: Chinese master creating a gravity-defying Penjing composition.

Middle left: The author, and BCI 1st Vice President Dr. Sujata Bhat, with her demonstration tree, a Podocarpus designed in a tropical-tree style.

I had the great privilege of being invited as an international bonsai demonstrator to the 13th Liuzhou Stone Festival & 1st BCI International Landscape Bonsai Invitational Exhibition, held in the city of Liuzhou from October 31 to November 3, 2024.

Guangzhou Baowen Garden & BCI Bonsai Industry-Academia-Research Base Centre

Before heading to Liuzhou, we attended the grand opening ceremony of the newly relocated Guangzhou Baowen Garden & BCI Bonsai Industry-Academia-Research Base Centre. The bonsai garden was breathtaking, showcasing spectacular tropical trees like bougainvillea and podocarpus. This science and horticulture-based research center dedicated to bonsai is a much-needed initiative, and I eagerly anticipate the progress it will achieve.

Journey to Liuzhou

A high-speed train ride transported us to the beautiful city of Liuzhou. There, the BCI Board held its meetings, including welcoming newly elected directors Mike Siow (Malaysia), Pisith Ariyaamornkul (Thailand), and Peter Macaseb (USA).

The Main Convention

The convention began with a grand opening ceremony attended by delegates from around the world, including the USA, Australia, Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia, Taiwan, Germany, the UK, and India. The event featured vibrant local dances and ended with a colorful display of fireworks lighting up the sky—a truly memorable experience.

The opening ceremony was followed by the inauguration of the Liuzhou Stone Museum, which featured stunning exhibits of landscape and object stones, including fossils. The museum's three floors were a visual feast, showcasing the incredible beauty of local stones and exhibits brought in from across China. Judging the landscape exhibits was a challenging but rewarding task.

Bonsai Demonstrations

The outdoor bonsai demonstrations were another highlight of the convention. Each demonstrator was provided with a mature Podocarpus tree. My tree, as tall as I am, was styled as a tropical bonsai. Working alongside international demonstrators from various countries was an enriching experience.



The scenery along the Li River is a masterpiece of nature, rivaed only by the artistry displayed at the convention.

Top, middle left and right: Chinese Penjing artists and their marvelous creations that are inspired by the Karst mountains of Guangxi.
Bottom: An evocative stone artfully displayed in the Liuzhou Stone Museum. Photo by Lindsay Bebb.



Liuzhou Stone Museum and Landscape Creations

The convention also included a visit to the museum's outdoor displays and live demonstrations of landscape creation. Artists crafted gravity-defying landscapes using beautiful stones sourced locally. Watching their creative processes was inspiring.

Guilin and the Karst Formations

On the final day, we visited Guilin to explore the spectacular karst formations in the Guilin-Yangshuo area of Guangxi province. A cruise along the Li River brought us closer to the towering karst mountains, offering breathtaking scenery. We also visited the iconic Elephant Trunk Hill, a natural formation resembling an elephant drinking water from the river.

Reflections on the Convention

I must commend BCI President Mr. Chen Chang and his team for organizing one of the most well-planned and hospitable conventions I have ever attended. Their



personal care for each delegate was heartwarming, and the camaraderie among participants added to the experience. My sincere gratitude to Mr. Chen Chang for making this event so memorable. 🐘

A Celebration of Bonsai and Stones

Unforgettable Moments from the BCI Liuzhou Convention

By Budi Sulistyo, Indonesia. Photos by Budi Sulistyo



Author and BCI Director Budi Sulistyo observing the V-cut technique expertly executed by USA bonsai artists Jack Rubenstein, and Baowen Garden's Li Wencai.

The BCI Liuzhou convention was an extraordinary event, impeccably organized under the leadership of Mr. Chen Chang. The scale of the exhibition, the warm hospitality, and the flawless logistics in such a vast country were truly remarkable.

Bonsai Exhibition

The bonsai exhibition showcased an incredible variety of styles and ancient trees. The drooping style at the entrance immediately conveyed the essence of Chinese bonsai. Other styles, such as windswept and compositions incorporating unique rock formations, added depth and richness to the display.

A unique Technique at the Bonsai Demonstrations

One of the highlights for me was the bonsai demonstration by Jack Rubenstein from the USA, assisted by Li Wencai, an artist from Chen Chang's Garden. Like the other artists, they worked on an old Podocarpus, a challenging material requiring creative approaches.

While many demonstrators used thick wires to bend trunks and branches or created new apices by cutting off thick upper trunks, Jack and Li employed a unique technique. They made a V-cut (also called a wedge cut) in the thick trunk with a saw, used a guy wire to bring the cambium on either side of the cut together, and



wrapped it with tape to prevent water intrusion. The result was a beautifully styled tree with a natural flow from the base to the apex.

Suiseki Experience

For suiseki enthusiasts, the convention offered a visit to the Liuzhou Stone Museum. While there was no dedicated suiseki bazaar, the museum's exhibits were stunning, and participants received an album featuring photographs of the displayed stones—a delightful bonus.

During my visit, I discovered a small shop in the museum selling a few stones. I purchased a black stone from the Yangtze River with a pattern resembling a woman and a white mark above it. This stone reminded me of the Mid-Autumn Festival legend of the moon goddess Chang'e, who resides on the moon. The cultural significance of this stone made it a treasured find. I call it, *Legend of Mooncakes*.

Final Impressions

The convention concluded with an unforgettable gesture by Mr. Chen. Upon our return to Guangzhou via high-speed train, he arranged a luxurious farewell lunch for us before our flights home. The meal was a fitting end to a convention that was exceptional in every way.

Thank you, Mr. Chen, for your dedication and thoughtfulness in creating such a memorable experience. 🌸

The scale of the exhibition, the warm hospitality, and the flawless logistics in such a vast country were truly remarkable.



Above: Additional photos of the Podocarpus showing the results of the V-cut and the guy wires used to create and hold bends in the trunk.

Bottom: The stone purchased by Budi from a small shop in the Liuzhou Stone Museum he titled *Legend of Mooncakes*.

The Incredible BCI Liuzhou Convention

A British Perspective on Bonsai, Stones, and Cultural Wonders

By Tony Tickle, UK

After an 18-hour journey, I arrived in Guangzhou, China, greeted by Spencer, one of the English-speaking guides who would assist me throughout the BCI convention. Guangzhou, a bustling metropolis

in southern China, served as the gateway for many international delegates heading to Liuzhou. Meeting fellow participants for the first time marked the start of a fascinating journey.

Exploring Bonsai and Beyond

Our first day began with a visit to a massive koi farm, followed by the Baowen Bonsai Garden. This exceptional learning center not only highlighted the beauty of bonsai but also the dedication to preserving the art form. The garden was a fitting introduction to the cultural depth we would encounter throughout the event. That evening, we enjoyed the first of three grand banquets that punctuated our six-day adventure.

The next day, we revisited the Baowen Bonsai Garden before boarding a high-speed train to Liuzhou. The journey itself was an experience, offering glimpses of China's vast and diverse landscapes. Upon arrival, the BCI Annual General Meeting officially kicked off the convention.





What captivated me most was the ingenious use of rocks to create intricate landscapes. Some constructions were massive, featuring dramatic overhangs, plateaus, and miniature desert scenes.

The Main Event: Liuzhou Convention

The grand opening of the BCI Liuzhou Convention took place at the Bagui Viewing Stone Museum. As the “Viewing Stone Capital of China,” Liuzhou has a deep connection to the art of viewing stones, with traditions dating back to the Tang Dynasty. The opening ceremony, led by BCI President Chen Chang, showcased over 200 exquisite works of art and provided opportunities for technical exchanges, workshops, and demonstrations.

What captivated me most was the ingenious use of rocks to create intricate landscapes. Some constructions were massive, featuring dramatic overhangs, plateaus, and miniature desert scenes. These works were assembled using quick-drying cement and glue, and many included finely detailed elements such as tiny trees, buildings, and human figures that brought the landscapes to life.

Cultural and Scenic Highlights

The convention concluded with a guided tour of the breathtaking landscapes and cultural landmarks of Liuzhou, Guilin, and the picturesque town of Yangshuo. The karst formations, serene rivers, and charming towns offered a perfect blend of natural beauty and cultural richness.

Final Reflections

The BCI Liuzhou Convention was a testament to the global passion for bonsai and viewing stones. The exceptional organization, the camaraderie among participants, and the unique experiences left an indelible mark on me. My heartfelt thanks to Chen Chang and the BCI team for an unforgettable event. 🌳



Author and award-winning bonsai artist Tony Tickle from the United Kingdom was inspired by the natural landscape of the region and the artistry of the Chinese Penjing masters. Photos bottom of facing page and middle, above, by Tony Tickle. *Bottom:* Figure pattern stone in an intricate and elegant setting. Photo by Lindsay Bebb.

Building Bonds Through Bonsai

Friendship and Cooperation Agreements at Baowen Garden

By Tony Bebb, Australia



I was honored to sign friendship and cooperation agreements on behalf of the Brisbane International Bonsai School with Mr. Chen and Baowen Garden, as well as with Mr. Huang Lianhui and the BCI Landscape Bonsai Museum.



Recently, I had the privilege of traveling with my wife, Keiko, to China as an invited International Demonstrator and Judge for the 1st BCI China Landscape Bonsai Invitational Convention. Held in conjunction with the 13th Liuzhou Viewing Stone Fantastic Festival in Guangxi Province, this event offered an incredible opportunity to immerse myself in the artistry of Chinese landscape bonsai.

This was only my second visit to China since the WBC in 2013, and I was particularly excited to study the methods of Chinese Landscape Bonsai Masters. Landscape bonsai holds a special place in my heart—it was the first style I attempted at age 13, and it has remained a lifelong passion. Unlike in Japan or the

West, where this form is less prevalent, it is a deeply rooted aspect of Chinese bonsai tradition and culture.

A Warm Reunion

Arriving in Guangzhou, we were greeted by familiar faces and long-time acquaintances from the bonsai community, including many I had previously known only through social media. It felt like a grand reunion. The following day, we boarded a high-speed train to



Bonsai professional Tony Bebb, representing the Brisbane International Bonsai School, his demonstration tree, the signing of the friendship and cooperation agreements with Mr. Chen and Baowen Garden, as well as with Mr. Huang Lianhui and the BCI Landscape Bonsai Museum, the creative process of Penjing masters, and the tray landscapes that are a testament to the artistry and creativity of their makers.



Liuzhou, a logistical feat seamlessly managed by BCI President Chen Chang, his daughter, and their dedicated team, including Oscar, Tim, Genia, and Spencer.

Exploring Baowen Garden

One of the highlights of the trip was visiting Chen Chang's newly established Baowen Garden. This remarkable space, which also serves as the site of the new BCI Training Centre, showcases an extraordinary collection of bonsai and materials. The initiative to develop this center represents a significant step in fostering connections and expanding bonsai and penjing education for local enthusiasts.

I was honored to sign friendship and cooperation agreements on behalf of the Brisbane International Bonsai School with Mr. Chen and Baowen Garden, as well as with Mr. Huang Lianhui and the BCI Landscape Bonsai Museum. These agreements promise to strengthen ties between China and Australia, offering opportunities for cross-cultural learning and collaboration in the art of bonsai.

The Convention Experience

The convention officially began with a grand opening ceremony, followed by a tour of the exhibition and

traders' area. The display featured 270 stunning bonsai and landscape bonsai creations, each a testament to the artistry and creativity of their makers. For the demonstrators, this was also our first chance to inspect the materials we would work with during the event.

The day was packed with activities, including judging the exhibition pieces and later enjoying a relaxing river cruise dinner. The evening featured an awards presentation and a chance to unwind with fellow participants, rounding off a day filled with inspiration and camaraderie.

Reflections and Gratitude

I am deeply grateful to Chen Chang for his vision and leadership in organizing this landmark event, as well as to his tireless team and the many individuals who contributed to its success. The opportunity to visit such extraordinary places after the convention only deepened our appreciation for the rich cultural and natural beauty of China.

This experience has left us eager to return and continue exploring the incredible world of Chinese bonsai and penjing. 🌳

Blending Tradition and Innovation

Aesthetic Reflections from the BCI Liuzhou Convention

By Yang Xi, China



Artist Yang Xi from Nanjing and a proponent of Jinling bonsai commented on the convention, "Liuzhou, with its dramatic karst topography, resembles a natural landscape bonsai, making it a fitting host for the inaugural BCI International Landscape Bonsai Invitational Exhibition." His demonstration tree is shown on the facing page.



On October 31st, I traveled from Nanjing to Liuzhou alongside Mr. Rui Xinhua, Executive Vice President of the China Bonsai Artists Association, and Mr. Yan Jiajie, former Director of the Nanjing Landscaping Bureau. These esteemed figures, each with over 40 years of experience in bonsai and suiseki appreciation, made me feel both honored and humbled as their younger companion.

The Essence of Landscape Bonsai

Landscape bonsai, a vital branch of bonsai art, has its roots in China, embodying the principles of traditional Chinese garden aesthetics. Contemporary styles, such as the Haipai school from Shanghai, the Sichuan-Chongqing school, and the Jiangsu regional style, have enriched this art form. Modern techniques like “flat perspective,” “deep perspective,” and “high perspective” emphasize depth and three-dimensionality, while evoking profound artistic impressions. Innovation, alongside tradition, is essential for the evolution of landscape bonsai.

Liuzhou, with its dramatic karst topography, resembles a natural landscape bonsai, making it a fitting host for the inaugural BCI International Landscape Bonsai Invitational Exhibition. The event provided a significant platform for the exchange of ideas and the promotion of bonsai artistry on a global scale.

A Showcase of Innovation and Tradition

The exhibition featured a diverse array of works from across the globe, blending traditional masterpieces with innovative creations. This harmony between tradition and modernity underscored the healthy evolution of bonsai as an art form. The international workshop competition was a highlight, where participants created pieces from their own materials, later donated to the BCI Stone Museum.

For my contribution, I selected a Huangshan pine planted in a Zisha pot over 50 years old. Despite its modest size, the tree’s aged bark and compact needles exemplified the bonsai principle of “grandness in miniature.” Its upright trunk and elegant posture made it an ideal candidate for a literati-style composition.

A Tribute to Jinling Bonsai

As a native of Nanjing, I infused my work with elements of Jinling bonsai: shallow pots, exposed roots, cloud-like forms, and natural branching structures. My aim was to achieve a balance of “dense yet refined,” “rich yet restrained,” and “simplicity with sophistication.” Techniques like “drooping branches” and “floating branches” highlighted the tree’s natural elegance, emphasizing its resilience and grace.

During the creative process, my work drew the attention of bonsai masters, including Taiwanese expert Wang Zhensheng. Explaining the tree’s origins, I shared how Huangshan pines, shaped by harsh conditions at high altitudes, develop aged bark and compact needles, making them ideal for bonsai.

After completing the piece, I discussed it with Mr. Luo Zhijie, assistant to BCI President Mr. Chen Chang.



He praised the work for its artistry and noted a resemblance to Japanese bonsai, which opened a dialogue about Jinling bonsai’s historical influence on Japanese styles during the Tang Dynasty.

A Cultural Exchange

This exhibition was more than a showcase of skill; it was a meaningful cultural exchange. I gained valuable insights into global bonsai practices while sharing the beauty of Chinese bonsai with an international audience.

Bonsai, with its universal appeal, bridges cultures and fosters appreciation across borders. Participating in this event deepened my understanding of bonsai’s traditions and innovations, and I am grateful to have contributed to this exchange.

As we look to the future, I hope the art of landscape bonsai continues to flourish, inspiring creativity and appreciation worldwide. 🌲

Luo Zhijie praised the work and noted a resemblance to Japanese bonsai, which opened a dialogue about Jinling bonsai’s historical influence on Japanese styles during the Tang Dynasty.

Natural Harmony and Artistic Gathering in Liuzhou

Reflections on the First BCI International Landscape Bonsai Invitational Exhibition

By Liu Chuangang, Executive Vice President of BCI China, International Bonsai Master

BCI's first international exhibition themed around landscape bonsai, set a new benchmark for global bonsai collaboration.

On November 1, 2024, the city of Liuzhou, China, hosted the inaugural BCI International Landscape Bonsai Invitational Exhibition. Although the event has concluded, the vivid moments and unforgettable scenes remain etched in my memory. This grand occasion was not only an artistic feast but also a bridge fostering deeper exchanges and collaboration among bonsai artists and enthusiasts worldwide.

An Unprecedented Event

The success of this exhibition and its associated activities owed much to the strong support and guidance of Mr. Chen Chang, President of Bonsai Clubs International (BCI). The event attracted teams from over 20 provinces, regions, and special administrative zones across China, including Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan, alongside more than 150 international

guests. As BCI's first international exhibition themed around landscape bonsai, the event set a new benchmark and provided an expansive platform for global bonsai collaboration.

Exceptional Showcases

The exhibition brought together top-tier bonsai creations from various regions, including landscape bonsai, tree bonsai, tree-stone bonsai, and miniature bonsai. These works vividly showcased the philosophical essence of Chinese bonsai art, emphasizing the harmony between humans and nature and the unity of objects and self. The masterpieces embodied the principles of drawing inspiration from nature, achieving a perfect blend of natural beauty, craftsmanship, form, and artistic expression that left viewers in awe.



A Multitude of Engaging Activities

Beyond the stunning bonsai displays and the Liuzhou Stone Festival opening ceremony, the event featured three highly meaningful activities:

1. Inauguration of the BCI Landscape Bonsai Museum
2. The unveiling ceremony was a highlight, with heartfelt speeches by President Chen Chang and BCI China Vice President Huang Lianhui. Congratulatory messages from various bonsai associations added to the event's solemnity and significance.
3. Live Demonstrations and Interactions by International and Domestic Artists

Over 100 artists showcased their bonsai techniques through live demonstrations, blending performance with commentary. This created a vibrant and interactive atmosphere where participants shared creative insights and engaged warmly with the audience.

Charity Auction on a Liuzhou River Cruise

The charity auction, held aboard a scenic cruise, was an unforgettable experience. Featured items included calligraphy by President Chen Chang, paintings by Master Wang Hengliang, and landscape bonsai by BCI China Vice President Huang Lianhui. These works achieved remarkable auction results, leaving a lasting impression on attendees.



Thoughtful Organization and Hospitality

To ensure the smooth execution of the event, Mr. Huang Lianhui and his team dedicated significant time and effort. From guest reception and conference arrangements to catering and event promotion, every detail reflected meticulous planning and care. While the scale of the event inevitably posed challenges, it also highlighted areas for future improvement, offering valuable insights for organizing similar events going forward. 🌱

Facing page: President Chen tours the Penjing landscapes.

Above, top right: The adjudication process of the Penjing creations.

Middle left, middle right and bottom: highlights of the charity auction that featured original works of art, including calligraphy by President Chen.



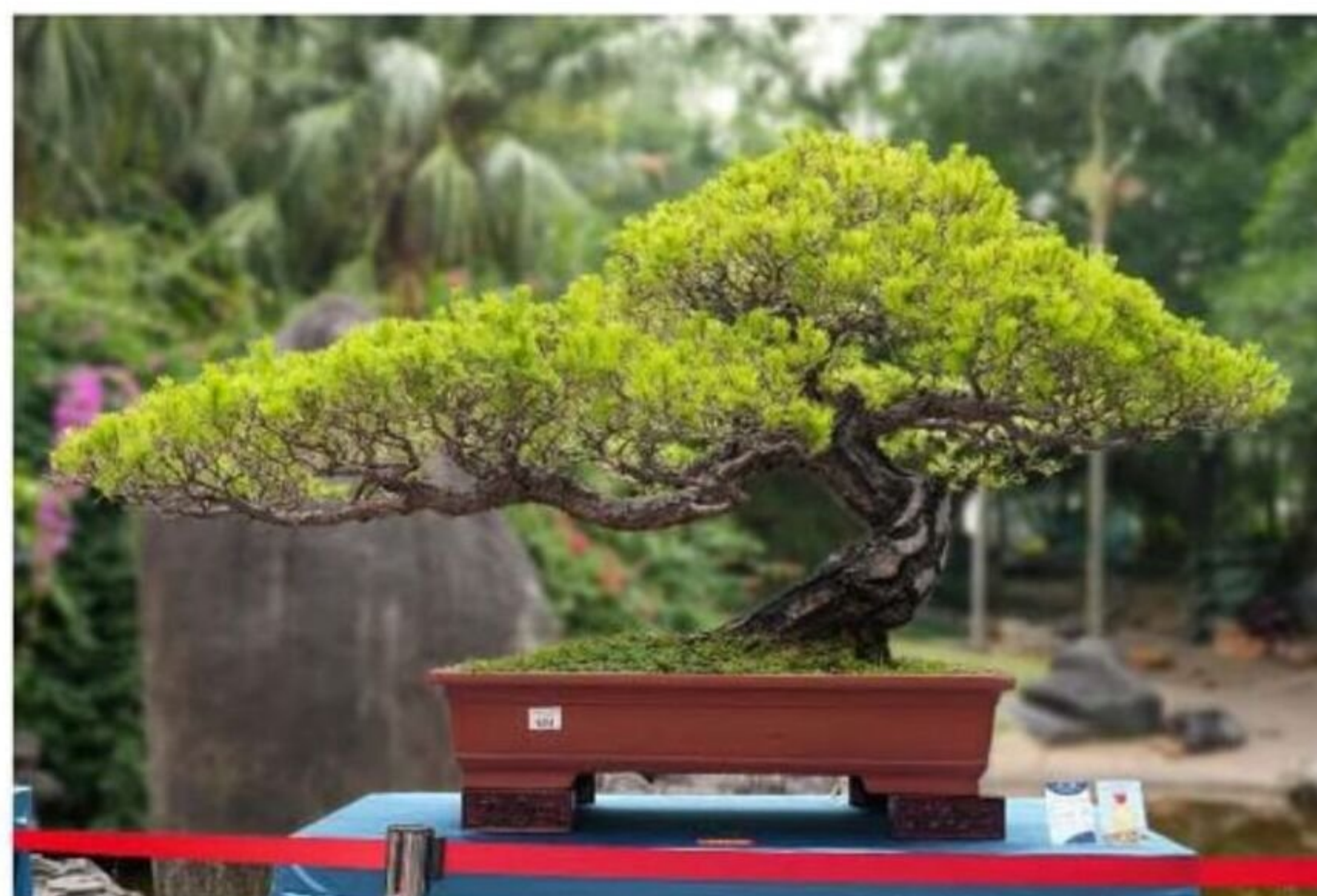
On Exhibit

The 13th Liuzhou Viewing Stone Festival
& BCI International Landscape Bonsai
Invitational Convention

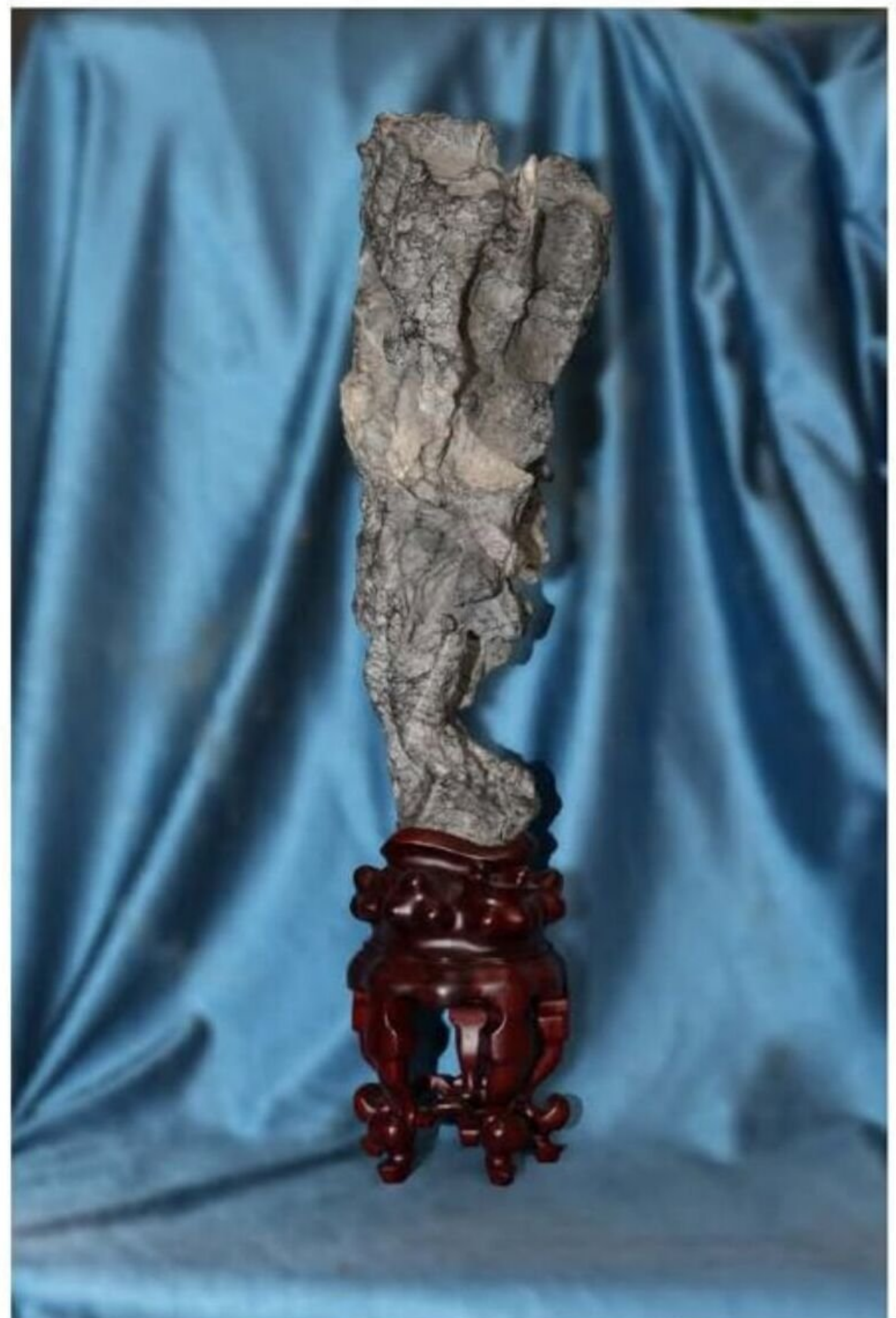


Modern techniques like “flat perspective,” “deep perspective,” and “high perspective” emphasize depth and three-dimensionality, while evoking profound artistic impressions.





At the Liuzhou Stone Museum, attendees were treated to a stunning array of Chinese viewing stones, each a marvel of natural beauty.















Bai Dai Yu 白帶魚 White Banded Fish (*Trichiurus lepturus*)

20-year Juniper transformation

By Min Hsuan Lo and Andrew Lo, Taiwan



1 2023/07/10

The main trunk on the right side of this Juniper is flattened and white, spiraling upward as if it were the rapidly leaping Bai Dai Yu (White Banded Fish), affectionately nicknamed “Bai Dai Yu”!

After World War II was a time filled with suffering yet brimming with hope.

The public faced significant struggles due to a lack of basic necessities, and in an era without refrigerators, it was common for ordinary people to go days without fish or meat in their meals. A small piece of pickled Bai Dai Yu, about three to four centimeters square, less

than one centimeter thick, and laden with fish bones, accompanied by some cabbage or tofu soup, became the dining table’s centerpiece.

Most Taiwanese of that era have vivid memories of Bai Dai Yu, whether tied to hardship or helplessness, whether they embraced it or not! It was a symbol of hope and aspirations for the future, and these sentiments accumulated into the very elements that helped us grow strong. The Bai Dai Yu also became one of the best emblems of emotions during this period!

Our nursery stock that my father began with a cutting about 40 years ago.



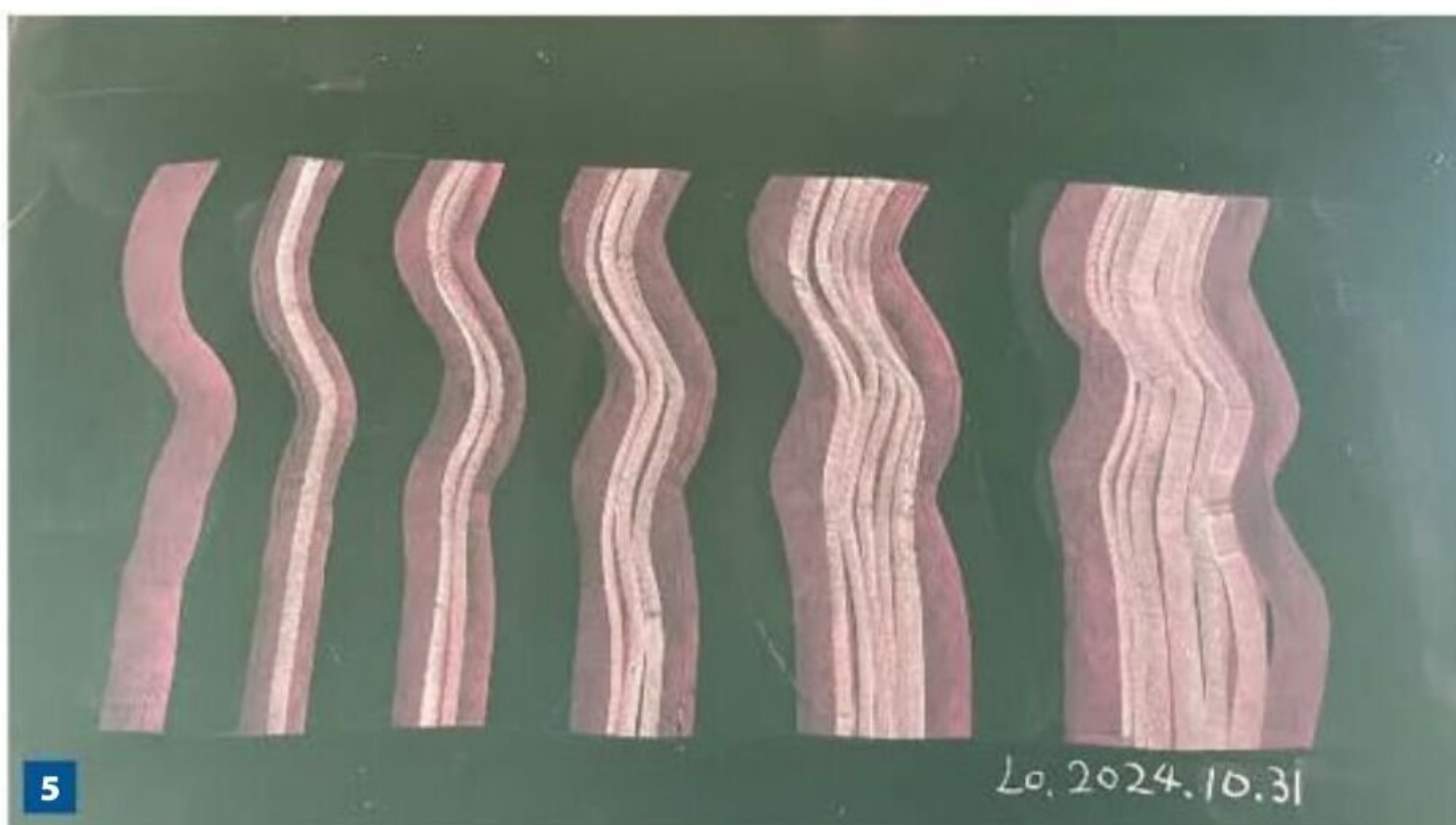
Flattening Concept Origins:

1. Natural Formation

After enduring harsh environmental conditions for centuries, the Juniper in the wild often exhibits a flattened, horizontal growth pattern. Growing slowly and resiliently in difficult terrain, they eventually take on a flat, curved form over the course of hundreds of years. This rare flattening phenomenon is regarded as a unique aesthetic of the Juniper, celebrated by bonsai enthusiasts as the pinnacle of beauty!

Junipers growing on ridges or rocky surfaces are more likely to display this characteristic due to their challenging environments. Two of the most iconic and accessible examples of flattened Juniper are as follows:

1. Taiwan Hight Mountain Juniper survives at over 3400m in the Taiwan mountains.
2. California Juniper can be found on the rocky hillsides on the left side of the road from White Mountain to Yosemite in California, where numerous ancient Junipers bear witness to the passage of time. Both are pilgrimages every bonsai enthusiast must undertake in their lifetimes!



2. Flying Celestials

In Buddhist legend, celestial beings overseeing music and dancing soar through the sky during grand religious ceremonies. Their forms are as fluid as water, especially the colorful ribbons of their garments twist and spiral, dancing gracefully with the wind! The imagery of these flying celestials represents the lifelong dream of Juniper bonsai creators.

3. Japan Juniper Art

With its intricate and twisted flattening, the extraordinary Japanese Juniper evokes admiration and longing! In recent years, the small and middle sizes of Itoigawa Juniper have exemplified the artistry of this flattening technique to perfection.

2 3 4 2004/12/09

Our nursery stock that my father began with a cutting about 40 years ago.

The wood has developed a reddish hue and is extremely hard, resembling Yamadori Juniper. The main trunk has only a slight curve, and although the lifelines have been treated for many years, the trunk remains cylindrical. The branches are also very short and clustered, lacking the grandeur typical of Juniper. If no significant changes are made, having such an old Juniper without its unique characteristics would be a pity!

After a simple restyle, I am preparing to adopt a more proactive cultivation method. In other words, I will treat the old Juniper as a raw material to be restructured and nurtured anew. Personally, I believe this new attempt and change may gradually bridge the gap between a cutting and a Yamadori Juniper. Although it is just a small step, it serves as a foundational stone for progress!

Approximately 20 years later, the cylindrical trunk has begun to exhibit flattening.

Bark Carving and Silk Carving:

The carving and shaping of the Juniper wood are collectively referred to as silk carving. If we delve deeper into classification, the design of the lifelines, excluding the wood itself, can be termed bark carving.

Bark carving can yield astonishing effects in Juniper materials. The combination of both techniques often results in unexpectedly superior quality materials!

A Brief Overview of the Flattening Process of Juniper:

Generally, the branches of young Junipers are cylindrical. Over the years, as the trunk thickens, the connection between the roots and the trunk causes the transport of moisture and nutrients to concentrate along the line where the branches and trunk meet. As the branches and trunk grow, this connected line's surface becomes noticeably thicker and raised, forming distinct lines. In contrast, the unconnected surface tends to shrink and even dry out. This ongoing interplay of raising and shrinking leads to the formation of pronounced lifelines.



The intertwining of red lifelines and deadwood is the most captivating aspect of Junipers. At the same time, the flattening of the trunk imparts a sense of age and beauty that is unmatched by other bonsai species.

5 2024/10/31

How to Achieve Flattening in Juniper:

1. Create a longitudinal cut, one to two centimeters wide, in the middle of the cylindrical trunk.
2. Preserve the bark on both sides of the trunk.
3. After about one to three years, when the bark on both sides has raised, make another longitudinal cut of one to two centimeters in width on the thicker bark.



4. Depending on the growth condition of the raised areas, repeat the carve every two to three years. Removing the raised bark forces the lifelines to grow outward, leading to a ribbon-like flattening effect on the trunk over many years.
5. Another method to achieve flattening involves retaining some lateral branches at the outer corners of the trunk while continuously pruning. After several years, stripping the bark from the outer corners to expose the dead branches can also create a flattening effect!

6 2008/10/28

The abundance of foliage is a key factor in rapid growth, and only through such growth can the dream of transformation be realized! By placing the pot on a concrete pipe filled with sand, the tree roots can directly penetrate the ground, as if the tree were planted in the earth itself. This method significantly accelerates growth compared to traditional training pots.



By placing the pot on a concrete pipe filled with sand, the tree roots can directly penetrate the ground, as if the tree were planted in the earth itself.

Despite the rapid growth, the wood remains exceptionally hard! Additionally, by raising the tree, I can sit in a chair with my line of sight almost level with the work table, making it easier and more accurate to shape the tree without errors! This faster and higher-quality cultivation method has led to countless high-quality works over the years.

7 8 2015/06/10

Placing the pot high on a concrete pillar, rapid growth began after about three years! Many roots likely grow simultaneously through the drainage holes, so keeping the pot watered is crucial to maintain moisture; otherwise, the root system may gradually weaken or even disappear entirely! When the roots inside the pot weaken or vanish, it could signal the beginning of disaster!

9 10 2017/07/28

Rapid growth must be accompanied by intensive shaping. After over ten years of Bark carving, the trunk has gradually flattened.

11 2019/09/28

By autumn, two years later, the overall structure was nearly complete and ready to be moved to a display pot!



12 13 14 2019/12/17
Root Management:

This special cultivation method requires careful attention to the health of the root system inside the pot. After about five to six years, holes can be drilled into the concrete pillar to inspect the roots growing downward! Among the numerous roots, thicker main roots must be weakened or removed; a single large root cannot be tolerated! Instead, a more uniform root system must be cultivated! This cultivation method may take 10, 20 years, or even longer.

Long-term dedication will eventually lead to the necessity of transferring to a display pot. This presents yet another challenge!

15 2021/01/11

After resting for about a year, the fine roots in the pot have grown well. The winter dormancy period is the best time for repotting!

16 About 40 years old 金同成 (Jin Tong Chen) pot should be the best choice.

Transferring the Juniper into the Display Pot:

1. In the first year, around November, cut off about half of the thick roots while also trimming some branches and leaves or excessive growth branches.

2. In the second year, about six months later, cut off another half of the roots. After about a year or more, remove all roots growing downward through the drainage holes!

3. Wait for another year or so to allow the root system in the pot to thrive again!

4. Ensure dense and sufficient fine roots are inside the pot!

This process may seem meticulous and requires long-term commitment! However, isn't bonsai cultivation like that? Isn't life the same?



...after repotting, covering the trunk with moss helps retain moisture, ensuring a safer and quicker recovery to health!



17



18



19



20

17 Due to the tree's big size and the abundance of leaves, combined with several years of rapid growth, after repotting, covering the trunk with moss helps retain moisture, ensuring a safer and quicker recovery to health!

18 **2021/12/27**
All repotting procedures were correctly executed, and during the Christmas holiday of the same year, Andrew began reorganizing again!

19 **20** Every detail adjustment must be planned in advance!

21 **2022/01/25**
The lengthy process of refining the details and deciding the direction far exceeds the actual working hours! Yet, this process is the most fulfilling and joyous, serving as the best opportunity for growth!

22 **23** **24** **25** **2023/07/07**
Striving for Perfection:
Bonsai is a living art form, and growth is a continuous process that never stops; it is a crucial factor in transformation. Change can lead to beauty or to the lack thereof! Only through careful consideration can one elevate one's work!



Using newspapers to cover areas needing removal allows for a clearer understanding of future feasibility!



Using newspapers to cover areas needing removal allows for a clearer understanding of future feasibility!

26 2023/07/13

After a week of gradual work, a newer shape has emerged! However, this is merely a phase of the process, and as age and wisdom accumulate, I believe it will become even more mature and diverse!

Overview of Taiwan Juniper

Undeniably, Taiwan juniper has become one of Taiwan's most representative and dazzling bonsai species. After years of ups and downs, it has recently become the focal point for most enthusiasts in their bonsai learning journey.

There are two main theories regarding the origin of Taiwan juniper. The first suggests that it was introduced from southern Japan, specifically Kyushu, during the Japanese colonial period when it was planted in Yangmingshan. The second theory proposes that early settlers brought it from Fujian, China.

The earliest cultivation of Taiwan juniper occurred in areas such as Taipei and Changhua, where it was primarily used as cut flower material and in a few gardens. About 60 years ago, Mr. Ke Wan-fa 萬 from Changhua introduced Junipers into the bonsai community. During a time when ficus were predominant, he dedicated his life to promoting juniper, earning him the title of "Father of Juniper."

Approximately 60 years ago, systematic production of Taiwan's juniper began. The most significant influences on its quality in later generations can be attributed to Wu San-lang 吳三郎 from Yangmingshan and Huang Tian-her 黃天鶴 from Tianwei. Notably, the juniper materials left behind by Wu San-lang underwent a transformation, winning numerous awards and becoming a guarantee of success at bonsai exhibitions.

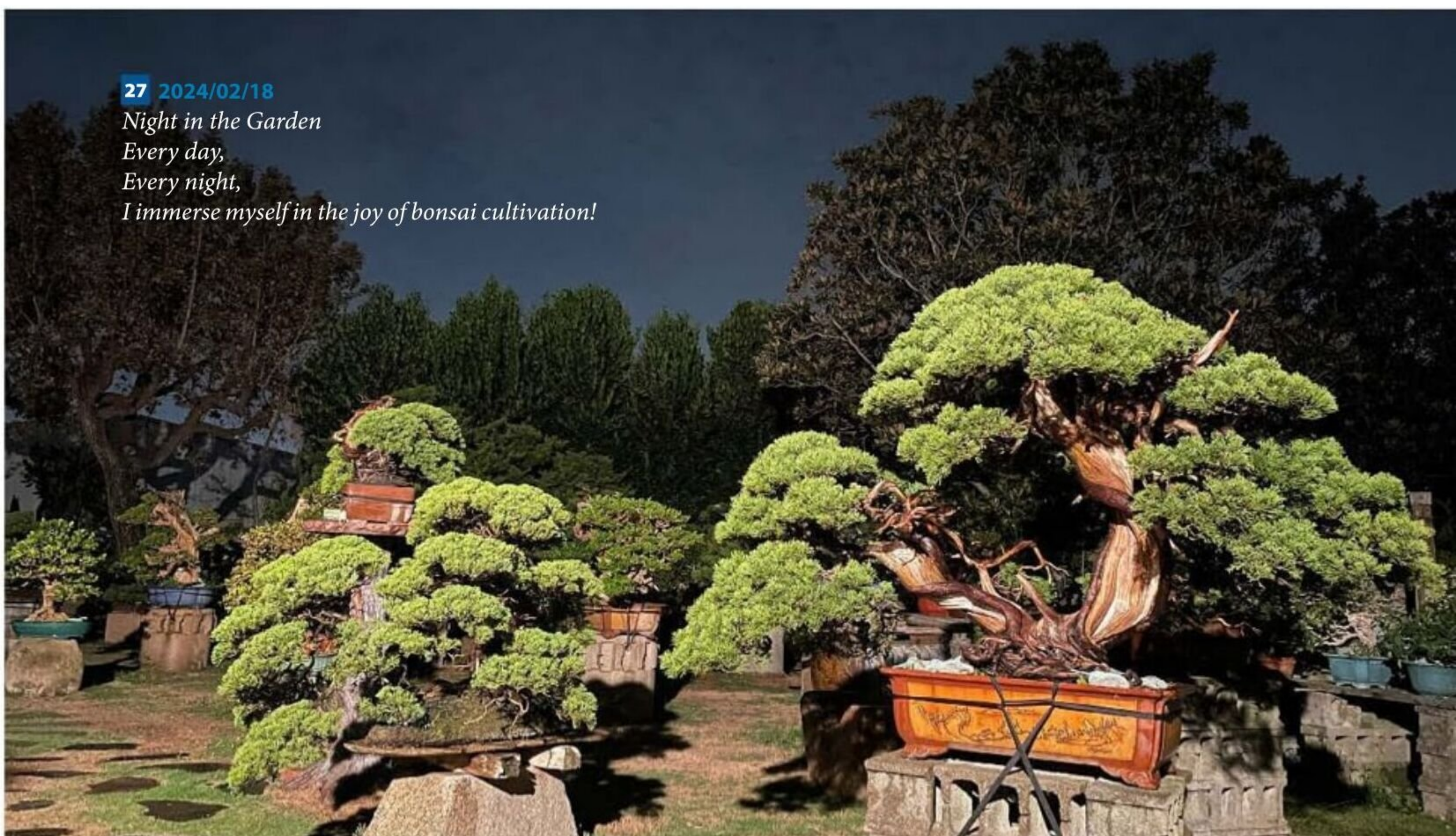
Over the years, Taiwan juniper has spread around every county of Taiwan, fostering the emergence of many master craftsmen. One of the most talented artists, Chen Jian Liang 陳建良, elevated Juniper to a higher stature. Almost every bonsai nursery boasts impressive works, and there are countless professional juniper artisans across generations. 🌲



26

27 2024/02/18

*Night in the Garden
Every day,
Every night,
I immerse myself in the joy of bonsai cultivation!*



Double Nemaki

By Alessandro Bonardo, Italy

Photos courtesy Alessandro Bonardo

The *Nemaki* Technique

Nemaki (Japanese for “root bending”) is an advanced bonsai technique used to reduce the length of a plant or eliminate a section of rigid trunk by manipulating its live vein. The live vein is the part of the tree’s vascular system that carries water and nutrients from the roots to the foliage, running along the trunk and connecting the roots to specific branches or leaves. The live vein is carefully separated from the trunk and manipulated.



Top: Alessandro Bonardo carefully separating one of the two live viens from the deadwood.

Bottom: The cloth shows the proposed new base of the tree and just how much the trunk will be compacted through the *nemaki* technique.

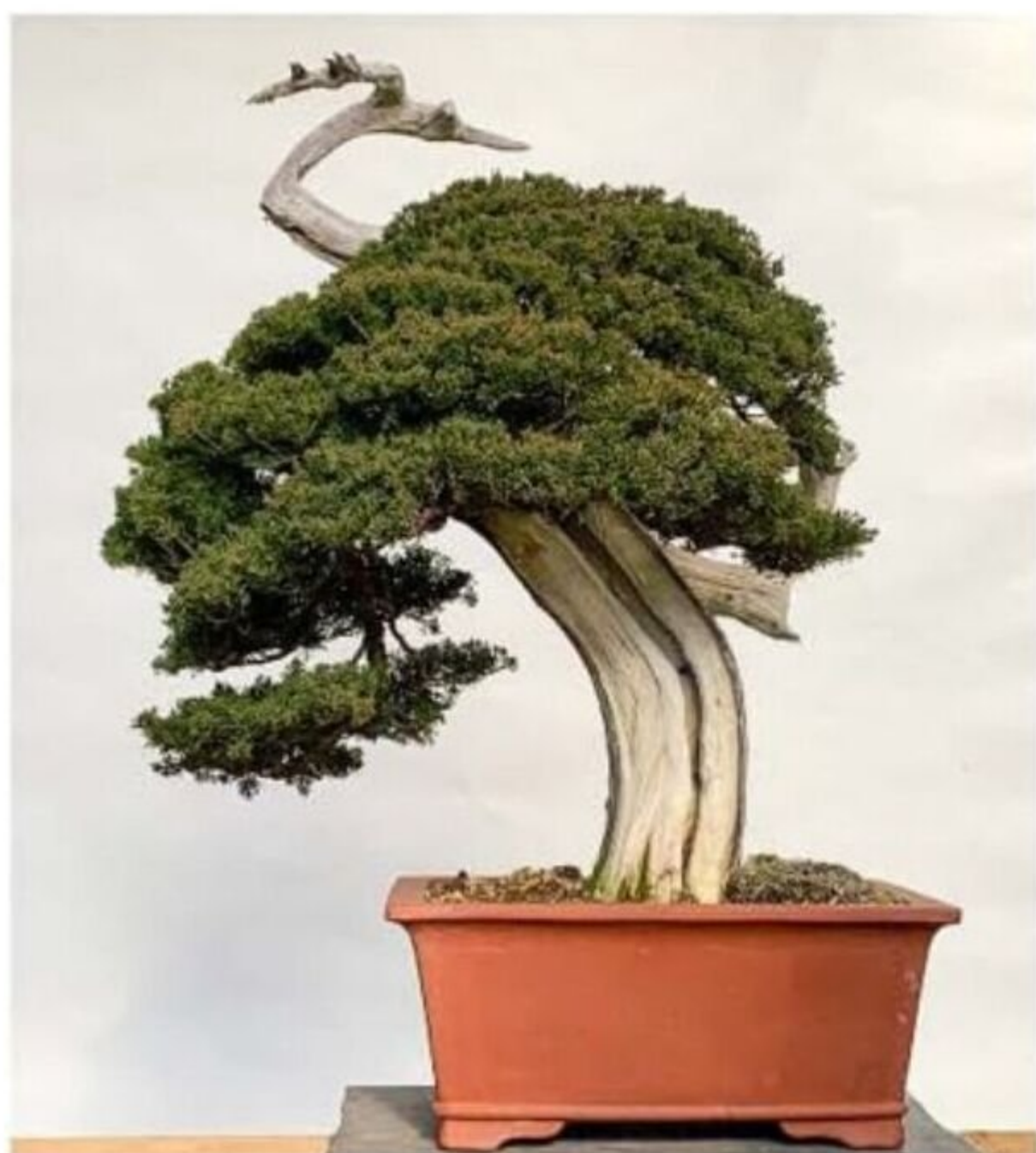
The main reason I chose Masahiko Kimura as my master was his extraordinary bonsai techniques, which continue to inspire both professionals and hobbyists. Kimura takes material with obvious flaws—ones that might seem impossible to fix—and transforms it into stunning works of art. He addresses problems at their core, using a combination of ingenuity, deep knowledge of plant physiology, and masterful technique.

Before Kimura’s groundbreaking work, bonsai was often seen primarily as cultivation. His methods elevated it into an art form with a sophisticated technical foundation.

The *nemaki*, or “root bend,” is one of the most rewarding bonsai procedures, especially for hobbyists looking to advance their skills. It provides immediate results, allowing you to see the tree’s potential final shape relatively quickly. Additionally, it’s an excellent way to assess your technical proficiency—any mistakes



The main reason I chose Masahiko Kimura as my master was his extraordinary bonsai techniques, which continue to inspire both professionals and hobbyists.



Top four images: Views of the front, sides and back of the juniper with top-grafted Itoigawa canopy.

Bottom: The juniper is removed from its pot and ready for the nemaki process.

could harm or even kill the tree, so precision and care are crucial.

In this article, I present a tree with beautiful sections of deadwood (shari), two prominent live veins at the front, and a high-quality grafted Itoigawa canopy. However, the lower section of the trunk was straight and cylindrical, which disrupted the overall design. Addressing this flaw was essential to enhance the tree's natural beauty and movement.

Having observed my master perform nemaki on several occasions, I knew the steps involved:

1. Separate the live vein from the shari.
2. Carefully thin the live vein to make it as flexible as possible.
3. Protect the vein with raffia and aluminum wire, ensuring it bends uniformly without breaking.

For hobbyists attempting this technique, patience and attention to detail are key. The live vein is the lifeline of the tree; any damage can be catastrophic.







This two-page spread shows the deliberate, precise and unforgiving process of separating the two live veins from the deadwood, wrapping the live veins in rafia, reinforced with aluminum wire, carefully bending and compressing the live veins under the deadwood and settling the tree in its pot. Note the length of deadwood top left of this page that Alessandro cut away to shorten the trunk.



A unique challenge with this tree was its double live vein. Typically, junipers have only one, but here, two veins nourished distinct parts of the canopy. This meant the process had to be executed perfectly twice, each time separating a distinct root system connected to each vein.

Handling a large juniper while performing such delicate operations can be daunting, even for experienced enthusiasts. That's why I sought help from Marco Invernizzi and Valentino Villecco, who happened to be in Japan for the Kokufu exhibition. For any hobbyist attempting complex bends, having an extra pair of



Top left: The newly compacted tree fits nicely in its new pot.

Top right: With soil added to fill the pot, Alessandro and his colleagues, Marco Invernizzi on the far left and Valentino Villecco on the far right, pose with the subject of the successful nemaki technique.

Middle four images: Details of the deadwood and the new shoots a couple of months later, that had grown by about 1 inch (2-3 cm)



The nemaki procedure was done in February, just before the tree's active growth phase. The tree was then placed in a heated greenhouse to stimulate budding and promote healing.

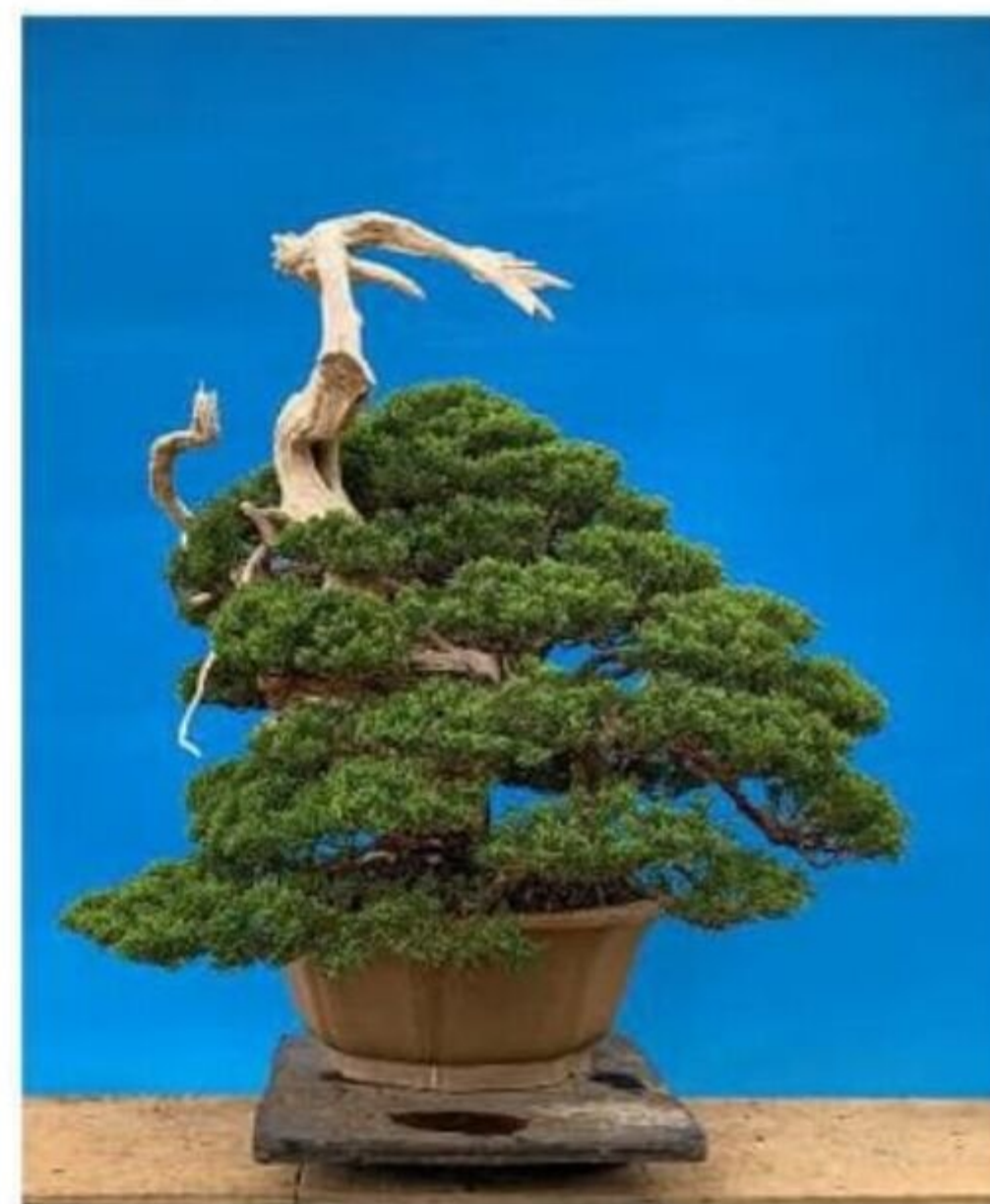
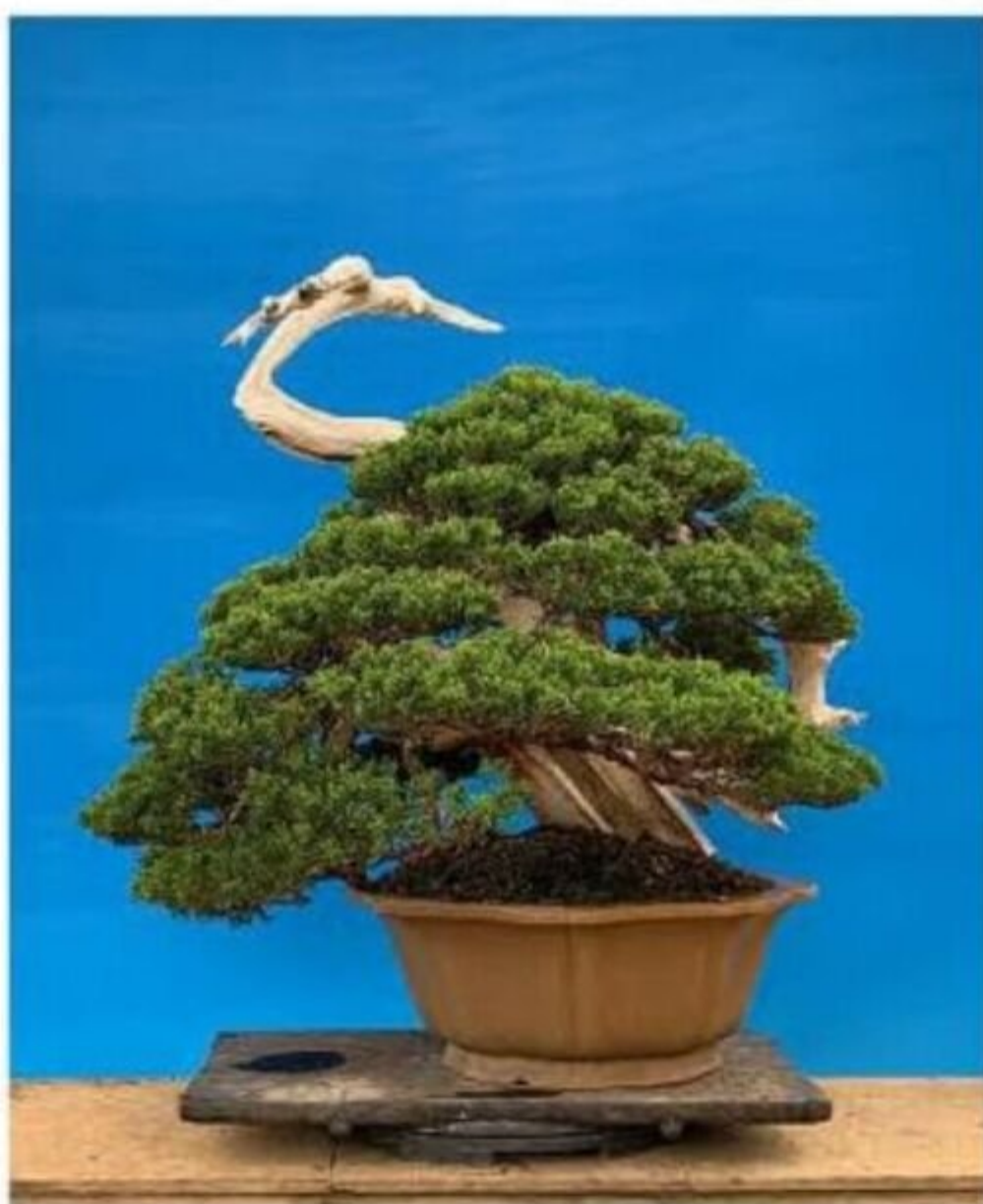
hands (or two) can make the process safer and more manageable.

During operations like this, even tools like a chainsaw—normally seen as rough and imprecise—must be wielded with the finesse of a paintbrush on canvas. The cuts need to be clean and smooth; jerky movements could tear the delicate live vein, leading to irreversible damage.

After a morning's work, the two live veins were successfully coiled into the pot, and the trunk was lowered by about 10 inches (25 cm).

However, the process doesn't end with the initial operation. Impeccable aftercare is crucial. This procedure was done in February, just before the tree's active growth phase. The tree was then placed in a heated greenhouse to stimulate budding and promote healing. For hobbyists, ensuring the right environment and closely monitoring the tree's recovery are essential steps in such advanced techniques.

A couple of months later, new shoots had grown to about 1 inch (2-3 cm). At this point, I thinned out the foliage to prevent the tree from becoming overly stressed and began positioning the branches.



The final photos, taken a year and a half later, show the juniper in excellent health. Its flaws have been transformed, and it's now exhibition-ready—a testament to both the technique and the care that followed.

For any serious bonsai enthusiast, mastering nemaki opens up new design possibilities and deepens your connection with the art. While challenging, it's a deeply rewarding skill that highlights the transformative potential of bonsai. 🌲



Photos, taken a year and a half after the nemaki process, show the juniper in excellent health

How Do Plant Cells Communicate in Response to Water?

By Luis Carlos Rodriguez Zapata and Enrique Castaño, Mexico



In general, plants are sessile organisms with the ability to carry out photosynthesis, taking advantage of the sun's energy to break the water molecule and fix carbon dioxide into sugars. This process is the source of most of the organic materials produced and the chemical energy required to carry out the reactions needed to sustain life. Since it is an essential basic process, we thought it would be good to understand more in-depth how plant cells respond to water signaling. We all know that watering our trees is one of the most complicated tasks that we tend to do empirically. Many of us have horror stories of traveling and asking others to water our trees, only

to find that the apparently simple task was beyond their capacity to execute. In addition, excessive watering can cause root rot, which is one of the most common causes of death in trees. Because bonsai are planted in such small pots, they also dry out easily. Depending on the species, its metabolic requirements (how fast it is growing), the local environment (temperature, humidity, wind), the amount and type of substrate, as well as the type of container (material and shape) will influence the amount of water needed for your tree.

The properties of water are sometimes forgotten, and it's good to review a few due to their relevance in tree development and care. Water is a molecule made

of an oxygen atom and two hydrogen atoms bonded through a covalent bond in a non-linear structure that forms an angle, creating positive and negative poles that allow interaction with other polar molecules. This is why water is considered the universal solvent, as most substances can dissolve in water, allowing the movement of molecules within and between cells. Due to its polar properties, water greatly influences the structure and stability of molecules such as proteins and sugars, as well as macro and microelements. Likewise, cell expansion and the physicochemical integrity of the cell wall depend on water. For many of our species, a loss in water pressure is shown as the leaves wilt, which is the first indication that there is no water uptake by the roots.

The upper limit of water storage is often referred to as the field capacity, while the lower limit is referred to as the permanent wilting point. After a rainfall or irrigation event that saturates the soil, there is a rapid downward movement (drainage) of a portion of the soil water due to the force of gravity and capillarity. During the drainage process, soil moisture decreases continuously. The rate of drainage is related to the hydraulic conductivity of the soil. The rapid drainage becomes negligible after some time, and at that point, the soil moisture is referred to as field capacity. The permanent wilting point is the soil moisture content at which the plant can no longer absorb water from the soil, causing the plant to wilt and die if additional water is not provided. However, most plants will be under significant water stress before this point, and they will likely suffer a significant reduction in yield long before reaching the wilting point. The total amount of water available for plant uptake is the available plant water, often expressed as a percentage by volume (volume of water/volume of soil sample). The available water-holding capacity is determined by multiplying the water available for the plant (equivalent to the difference between an upper and lower water limit) by the depth of the root zone where water extraction occurs. Decreased water content at the permanent wilting point negatively affects plant health and yield. At this point, our trees begin to lose leaves to prevent complete dehydration, followed by branch dieback. In conifers, the wilting point is difficult to define, which is reflected in the loss of many junipers each year due to improper watering. Maintaining the substrate at a high field capacity over an extended period may result in oxygen loss, allowing conditions for fungi and bacteria to invade weakened roots (as in everything in life, there are several exceptions, like Buttonwoods, Campeche, Bucida, Bald cypress, etc.).

Phytohormone Absciscic Acid (ABA)

To survive, plants require rapid adaptation and the capacity to detect environmental signals. For this purpose, one of the main hormones plants use in response to different types of stress is abscisic acid (ABA). To date, three central components make up the ABA signaling mechanism in higher plants. The first is the family of soluble ABA receptors referred to

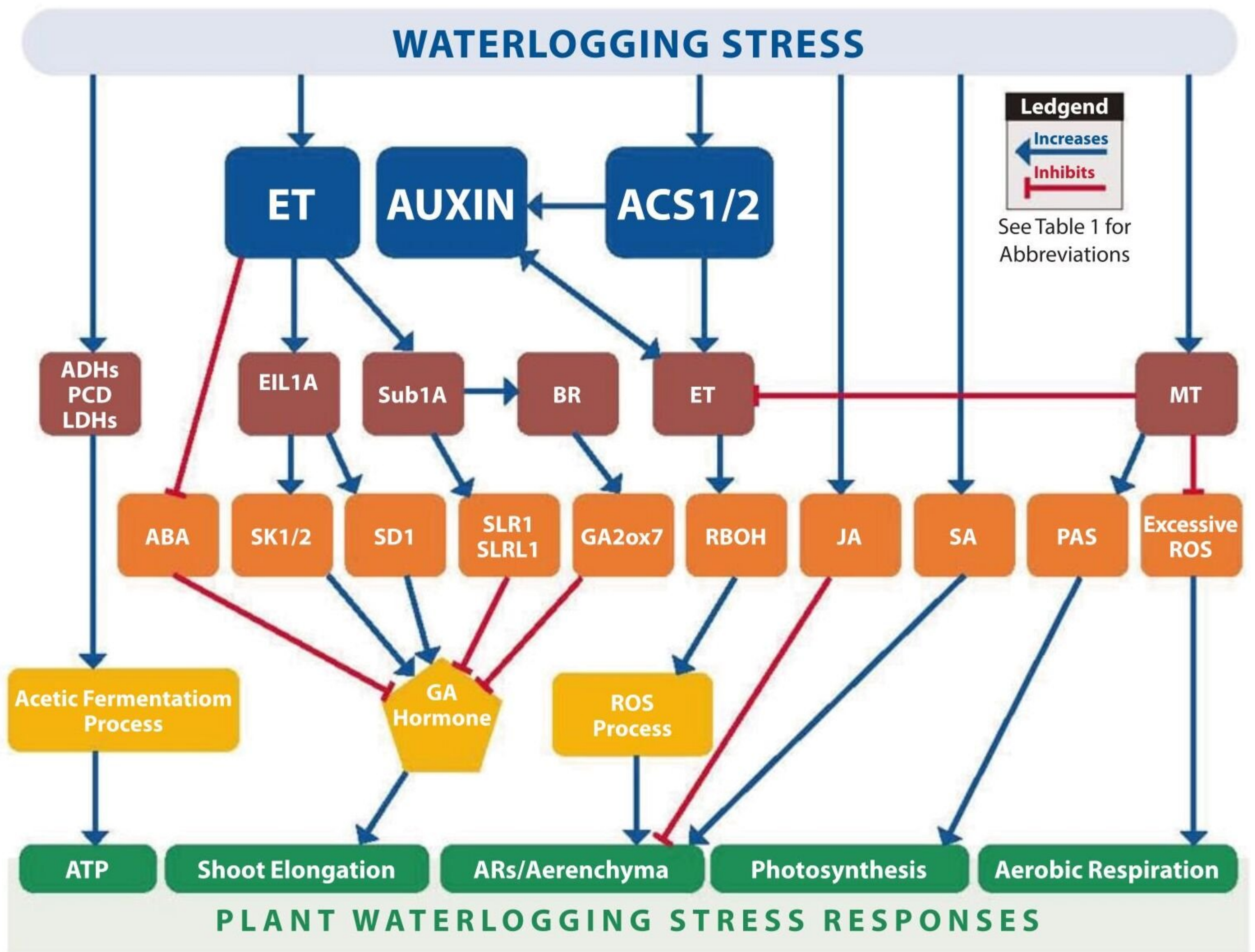
as PYR/PYL/RCAR (pyrabactin resistance/pyrabactin resistance-like/regulatory component of the ABA receptor). These are proteins that can bind to the hormone and produce a set of instructions for the plant to respond. The second component is the group A protein phosphatase 2C (PP2C-A); this protein has the ability to modify other proteins by removing phosphate groups that were added, a process called dephosphorylation. The last component is SNF1-related protein kinase 2 (SnRK2), which has the opposite role of adding phosphate to selected proteins, a process known as phosphorylation. In flowering trees, SnRK2



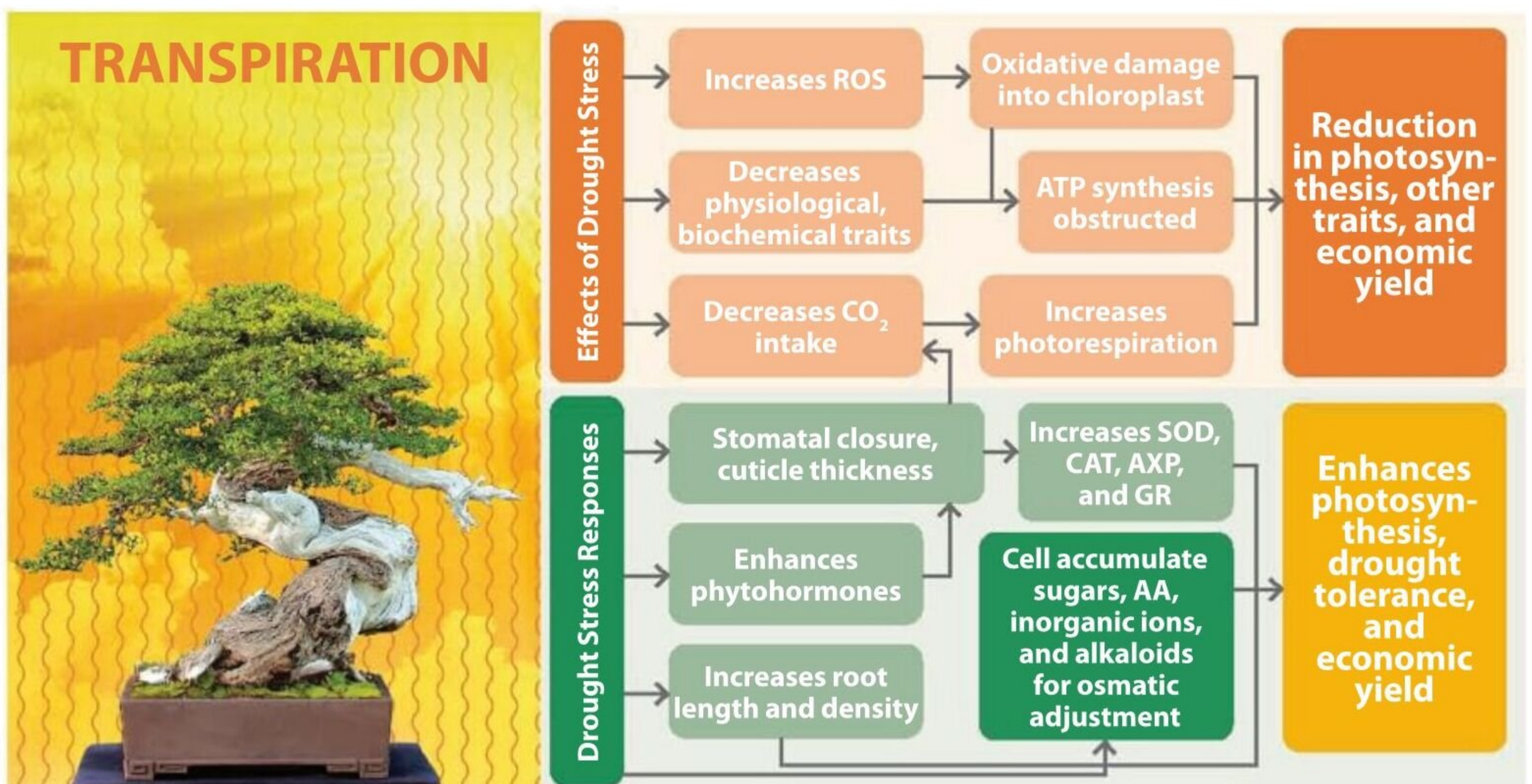
is the main positive regulator of ABA signaling, being activated by phosphorylation. In the absence of ABA, PP2C-A blocks the kinase activity of SnRK2 through dephosphorylation. In the presence of ABA, PYR/PYL/RCAR bound to ABA binds to PP2C-A, freeing SnRK2 from being inhibited by PP2C-A. When SnRK2 is activated, it controls certain genetic sequences via a transcription factor (AREB/ABF) that binds to ABA-responsive elements for gene expression.

Macromolecules Involved in a Water Deficit

When the water deficit develops slowly, there are changes in developmental processes that have several effects on growth. One of primary importance is the specific limitation of leaf expansion. Although leaf area is important because photosynthesis depends on



Drought Stress Effects and Responses



it, rapid leaf expansion can negatively affect adaptation to low water availability. Another process modified is root growth. Water availability affects the relationship between the growth of the aerial part and the root; the root continues its development while the aerial part stops growing because of stress. Thus, plants can continue root development in search of water in deeper soil zones. Calcium (Ca²⁺) acts as a signal in the response to ABA. Recent studies identified the role of phosphorylation in response to ABA by finding that AtCPK32 regulates ABA-related transcription factors (ABRE BINDING FACTOR) such as 4/ABSCISIC ACID RESPONSIVE ELEMENT BINDING PROTEIN (AREB). ABA also activates mitogen-activated protein kinase (MAPK) that phosphorylates many ABA- and stress-responsive transcription factors necessary for stress response function. In the transcriptional regulation of genes by ABA, both cis- and trans-acting factors have been identified. Currently, more than 20 functional ABRE-like elements have been found in promoters of ABA-responsive genes. The element is defined as an 8-10 base pair sequence with an ACGT sequence, which corresponds to the core or center of the cis-transcriptional factor known as the G-box. The sequences flanking the ACGT core are important for the in vivo function of this element. Expression studies indicate that the (C/T)ACGTGGC sequence is a strong ABRE; however, other sequences are equally functional. In plants, several transcription factors have been cloned in trans with basic, leucine zipper-like (bZip) domains that bind to the ABRE as dimers.

Although the expression of many genes that are induced during water stress is significantly increased by ABA applications, there is no consistent correlation between mRNA levels and ABA levels under these conditions. This evidence strongly suggests that the expression of some genes during dehydration is totally or partially independent of ABA. Based on these data, Shinozaki and Yamaguchi-Shinozaki, in 1996, proposed the existence of at least four independent pathways of gene regulation during water stress: two ABA-dependent (one dependent on protein synthesis and the other independent of protein synthesis) and two ABA-independent, through DRE/CTR-type elements. It has been shown that the cold-independent pathway is also regulated by DRE/CTR-type elements that respond exclusively to cold.

Macromolecules Involved in Waterlogging

Plants respond to waterlogging stress by regulating their morphological structure, energy metabolism, endogenous hormone biosynthesis, photosynthesis, respiration, and the concentration of different reactive oxygen species (ROS). Although excess ROS are detrimental to plant cells, ROS can also act as signaling molecules in plant cells under stress. NADPH oxidase is a key enzyme in ROS production and plays a vital role in ROS-mediated signal transduction. Expression of the NADPH oxidase-related gene *Atrboh D*, a gene

TABLE 1

ABA: Absciscic Acid	ethylene pathway that would otherwise lead to PCD.	RBOH: Respiratory Burst Oxidase Homolog, regulates growth by producing secondary metabolites such as vitamin E, carotenoids, and ascorbate, helping to manage ROS.
ACS: Salicylic Acid Response genes that improve growth and help deter stress in plants.	ET: Ethylene, a plant hormone that signals several stress pathways.	ROS: Reactive Oxygen Species, undesirable by-products of metabolism produced in various cellular compartments, especially under unfavorable environmental conditions.
ADH: Alcohol Dehydrogenase, facilitates fermentation and produces a small amount of energy as ATP.	GA: Gibberellic Acid, a plant hormone involved in numerous processes, including stress responses.	SA: Salicylic Acid
APX: Ascorbate Peroxidase, another enzyme that mitigates ROS by converting H ₂ O ₂ into H ₂ O.	GA2Ox7: A gibberellin-synthesizing gene and a positive regulator of stress response.	SD1: The semidwarf1 gene, functions to change leaf angles to improve light penetration.
ARs/Aerenchyma: Formation of adventitious roots as a mechanism to absorb water when normal roots are compromised, or conditions elsewhere on the tree are more suitable for root growth.	JA: Jasmonic Acid, a plant hormone that regulates growth and participates in numerous plant functions, including stress responses.	SK1/SK2: Snorkel 1 and 2, proteins that induce GA synthesis.
ATP: Adenosine Triphosphate	LDH: Lactate Dehydrogenase, an enzyme involved in oxygen-deficient conditions (e.g., stagnant water), producing chemicals to prevent cell death.	SLR1: Slender Rice1, a plant protein first identified in rice that accumulates GA.
Auxin: First plant growth hormone	MT: Melatonin, an antioxidant and stress reliever.	SOD: Superoxide Dismutase, an enzyme in the first line of defense against ROS.
BR: Brassinosteroids, a hormone involved in many pathways in plants, including development, stress response, and growth.	PAS: Phenolic Acid, causes dark pigmentation and signals responses to PCD.	Sub1A: Ethylene response transcription factor that produces proteins receptive to ethylene during plant stress to avoid PCD.
CAT: Catalase, an antioxidant enzyme that prevents PCD.	PCD: Programmed Cell Death, a last resort to contain dying cells, prevent infection, and recover some cellular chemicals for the plant.	
EIL1A: Ethylene Insensitive Protein, helps cells block the		

associated with ROS production, is induced by waterlogging and positively regulates H₂O₂ production and increased ADH1 gene expression. Therefore, this signal enhances ethanol fermentation ability and increases the survival rate of plants under waterlogging.

Plants may rely on antioxidant enzyme systems and other active antioxidants to maintain a dynamic ROS balance, thereby reducing the extent of oxidative damage. Waterlogging treatment results in an increase in catalase, ascorbate peroxidase, and superoxide dismutase activities, as well as polyphenol oxidase. Rapid ethylene (ET) accumulation is an important way plants respond to waterlogging. Endogenous ET

production is closely related to aerenchyma cell development under hypoxic conditions and promotes ET synthesis in roots. At the same time, ET induces ROS-mediated cortical cell death, leading to aerenchyma formation. ET accumulates in roots under waterlogging because its biosynthesis continues while the rate of diffusion in water is low. ET stimulates programmed cell death that occurs during lysogenic aerenchyma formation. ET response factor (ERF) is an important transcription factor involved in plant responses to various biotic and abiotic stresses. ERF family genes specifically induce genes containing AGCCGCC and cis DRE/CRT elements, which activate or inhibit the expression of downstream functional genes and thereby mediate plant tolerance to various stresses.

This is a brief overview of how our trees respond to changes in water availability that can result in stressful conditions. As we look at our bonsai, we have to remember that they are living organisms with a myriad of reactions happening in response to every

signal around them. Water is by far one of the most critical factors for life, and proper watering is crucial for our bonsai to grow healthier and recover. Needless to say, a lot is going on inside, even when conditions are not optimal. 🌱

About the Authors:

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Practical Advice:

The information in this article provides bonsai practitioners with a deeper understanding of how water affects plant physiology, which can improve their watering practices and overall tree care. Here's how it can be practically useful:

1. Optimizing Watering Techniques

- **Recognizing Water Stress:** Understanding the physiological signs of water stress, such as wilting leaves, helps practitioners identify early issues before significant damage occurs.
- **Preventing Overwatering:** Knowing that excessive water can lead to root rot and oxygen deprivation encourages careful monitoring of soil drainage and moisture levels.

2. Tailoring Watering to Tree Needs

- **Species-Specific Care:** Different species have varying tolerances to water availability. For example, junipers are more susceptible to improper watering compared to species like Bald Cypress that can handle waterlogging.
- **Adaptation to Environmental Factors:** Practitioners can adjust watering based on temperature, humidity, wind, and substrate type, minimizing the risk of water-related stress.

3. Improving Substrate and Container Choices

- Understanding the role of field capacity and permanent wilting points highlights the importance of choosing substrates that retain sufficient water while allowing drainage.
- Using appropriate containers (e.g., porous versus glazed) can enhance water retention or drainage as needed.

4. Recognizing and Preventing Water-Related Stress

- **Aerenchyma Formation in Waterlogged Species:** Understanding how certain species adapt to waterlogging helps practitioners identify candidates for unique techniques like bog-style bonsai.

- **Root Growth and Stress Adaptation:** Knowing that roots grow in response to water deficits informs pruning techniques and pot size selection.

5. Disease Prevention

- Awareness of how waterlogging facilitates fungal and bacterial infections can prompt actions like avoiding standing water, improving aeration, or adjusting watering schedules.

6. Using Hormonal Responses for Training

- Understanding how hormones like abscisic acid (ABA) regulate stress responses helps practitioners predict how trees might adapt to pruning or defoliation, especially under water-limited conditions.

7. Planning Seasonal Care

- Trees may require different watering strategies during dormancy, active growth, or periods of environmental stress. Knowledge of these processes can guide seasonal adjustments to care.

Practical Example:

A bonsai practitioner observing wilting leaves in a juniper might recall that it could indicate insufficient water uptake or overwatering causing root damage. By checking soil moisture levels and adjusting watering practices accordingly, they can prevent further decline. Additionally, selecting a well-draining substrate helps avoid repeated waterlogging issues.

By applying this scientific knowledge, bonsai practitioners can make more informed decisions, resulting in healthier trees and greater success in their art.

Questions about this article? Email the editor and we'll forward your questions to the authors.

BCI Honors Artistic Excellence at Italian Bonsai and Suiseki Events



Bonsai Clubs International (BCI) continues to champion the global recognition of bonsai and suiseki as cultural art forms, as demonstrated by its sponsorship of two exceptional events in Italy this fall. The **14th Bonsai and Suiseki Exhibition**, held in Catanzaro during the last weekend of September, showcased 51 displays and drew an impressive 6,402 visitors. This event also marked a milestone with a European-record 503 signatures gathered in support of UNESCO's recognition of bonsai and suiseki as intangible cultural heritage.

In October, the **27th AIAS Congress in Martina Franca** brought together enthusiasts from across Italy and beyond, further cementing Southern Italy's growing role in the art of suiseki. Hosted by the Bonsai Association of Locorotondo, this event featured distinguished guest and judge Martin Pauli, along with a rich history of dedication to bonsai and nature.

BCI was proud to present Excellence Awards at both events, celebrating the outstanding artistry and dedication of the bonsai and suiseki communities. These gatherings highlight not only the vibrancy of these traditions but also their potential to inspire cultural dialogue and appreciation worldwide.

The 14th Bonsai and Suiseki Exhibition, Catanzaro, and The 27th AIAS Congress, Martina Franca, Italy

By Aldo Marchese, Italy



Nicola Sorressa, BCI award-winner, award presenter Luciana Quierolo, and Aldo Marchese pose next to Nicola's winning stone display the 27th AIAS Congress in Martina Franca.

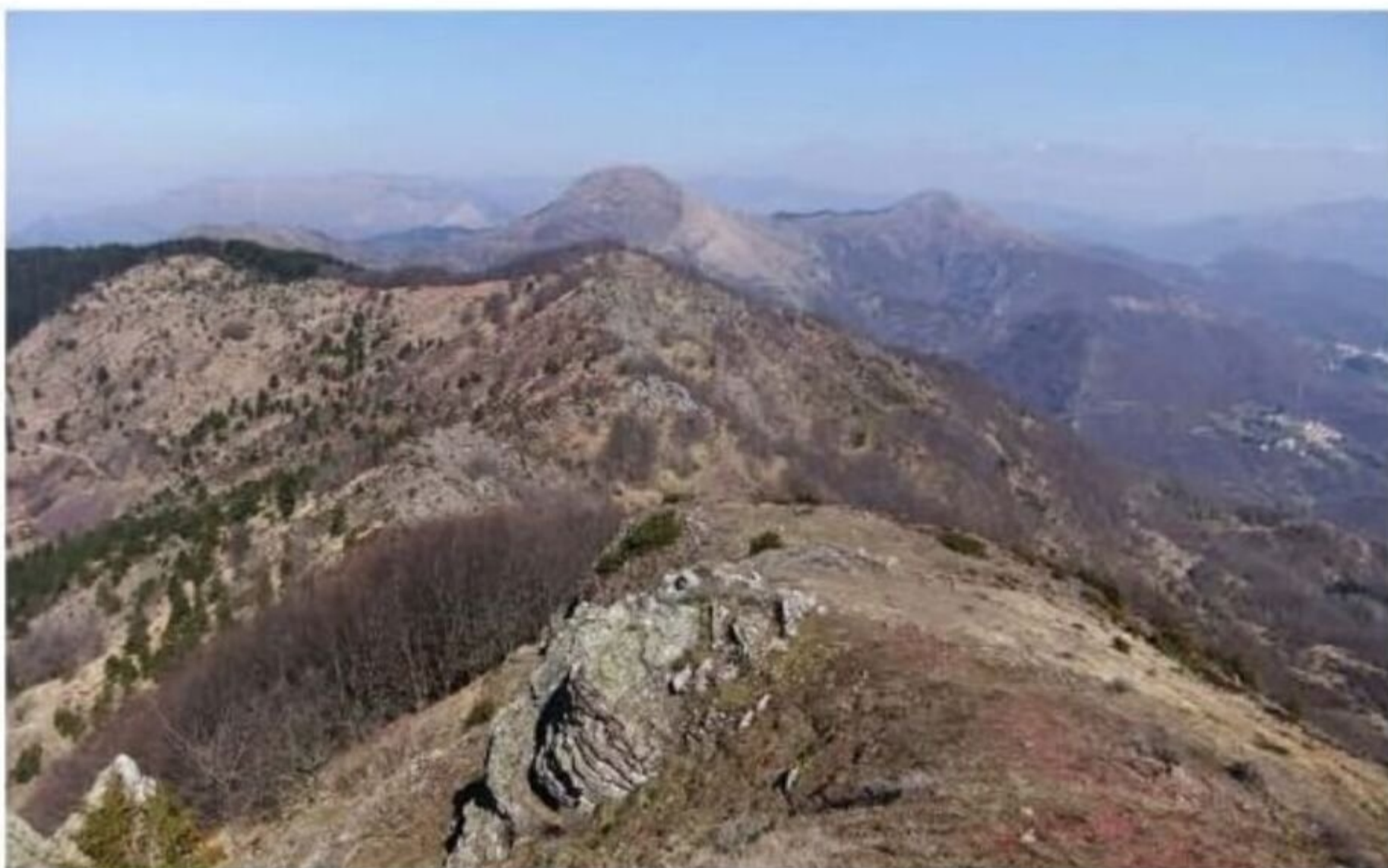
The 14th Bonsai and Suiseki Exhibition held in Catanzaro, Italy, during the last weekend of September 2024, was a great success, attracting 6,402 visitors. The exhibition featured 51 displays (26 bonsai and 25 suiseki) from all over Italy. In addition to the sponsorship of Bonsai Club International, for which I take this opportunity to thank President Chen and the entire Technical Staff for their support, this year we had the novelty of hosting a signature collection campaign to support the recognition of bonsai and suiseki as intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO. This initiative originated in Japan, led by Tom Nishiyama, with European representation by Sami Amdouni, who was present throughout the three days of the exhibition

I also want to highlight the sponsorship of the Japanese Embassy in Italy and two Italian ministries: the Ministry of Agricultural and Forestry Policies and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Regarding the signature collection for the UNESCO project mentioned above, we achieved a European record with 503 signatures gathered.

These few lines aim to give visibility to an exhibition that is evolving from a national to an increasingly international event, reaching a unique level of artistic refinement in the works on display. With this, I present the BCI awards judged by Sebastiano Villante. I hope you enjoy the tanakazari presentations.

Just weeks later, Southern Italy hosted a major event for bonsai and suiseki enthusiasts: the 27th AIAS Congress in Martina Franca, from October 25 to 27, 2024. Set in one of the most picturesque locations in Puglia, this congress built on the momentum of Catanzaro's success. Martina Franca featured stunning exhibitions and demonstrations.

Both events reflect the growing prominence of Southern Italy as a hub for bonsai and suiseki, offering visitors and participants an unparalleled experience of artistic mastery, cultural exchange, and community celebration. I had the pleasure of attending both, witnessing firsthand the dedication and passion that elevate these gatherings to an international level. 🌳



Top left: Summit of Mount Pu' and its panorama.

Top right: Detail of Lóngmén

Bottom: The Kazari display featuring Lóngmén in a bronze incense burner, a scroll with the moon over pine trees, and three bronze carp tempai.

Lóngmén 龍門 (Dragon's Gate)

Text and Photos by Diego Andreani, exhibitor and winner of the BCI Excellence Award, XIV Bonsai and Suiseki Exhibition, Catanzaro, Italy.

This stone was found in the 1990s on Mount Pu' in Liguria, above Sestri Levante. It was collected by my late friend Angelo Attina during a *tanseki* (stone-collecting excursion).

To me, this stone evokes the concept of Go Shintai—a dwelling place for the *Kami* (spirits).



It is composed of multiple materials, and its texture resembles a waterfall entwined with the coils of a dragon. Hence its name: Lóngmén (Dragon's Gate).

Kazari (Display):

For the display, I used a century-old silk *shikishi* holder featuring traditional Heian Period motifs, such as migrating birds. These motifs reflect the sentiments of *aware* and *mono no aware*—the transient beauty of things that fade. They express an appreciation for the passage of time and its natural, irreversible transformations, even on something as enduring as a “stone.”

Inside the holder, I placed a *shikishi* with an artwork by Hon'ami Koetsu and Tawaraya Sotatsu, exemplifying the Rimpa school. The depiction of the moon over pine trees reflects the autumnal seasonal *kigo*, no longer as radiant as during Tsukimi (September's moon-viewing festival).

The poem on the *shikishi* reads: “The moon is a guide to those who seek the voice of the heavens. It clears the wall of clouds above the forest of the world.”

The stone rests on a bronze incense burner from the early Meiji Period. One side features a phoenix, while the other displays a Japanese dragon, identifiable by its three claws (Chinese dragons typically have four). This sits atop a *jita*—a fine, lacquered wood slab used in *cha no yu* (tea ceremonies)—measuring just 8 millimeters thick and coated in *urushi* lacquer.

The *tempai* includes three bronze carp—two large and one small—resting on a round burlwood *jita*. These were crafted by master goldsmith Terinazzi. Two darker dots can be seen on the heads of the larger carp.

The composition represents the legend of the carp at Lóngmén 龍門 (Dragon's Gate).

This ancient legend, renowned throughout East Asia, symbolizes surpassing one's limits and striving for self-improvement.

The Legend: Long ago, there was no passage for water under Mount Longmen. The Yi River ended its course at the base of the mountain, where a roaring waterfall cascaded down. Beyond the waterfall, on the southern side of the mountain, lay a vast and enchanting lake, inaccessible from the north.

The carp of the Yellow River heard tales of this wondrous place and longed to visit it. They embarked on a journey from the Yellow River near Mengjin, swam through the Luohe River, and entered the Yi River. Eventually, they reached the base of Mount Longmen, where the waterfall blocked their way.

Unable to find a passage through the rock, the carp gathered to decide what to do. One small carp suggested, “What if we jump over the mountain?”

The others hesitated, fearing the height and potential danger. But the little carp, filled with courage, volunteered to try. With a mighty leap, it soared into the air, disappearing from view. Battling the waterfall's force, the tiny fish pressed on, enduring immense pressure and pain as its tail began to burn. Despite the agony, it persevered and finally leaped over the mountain, landing in the southern waters.



At that moment, thunder roared, and lightning flashed as the little carp transformed into a majestic dragon. It called to its companions, urging them to follow its example. Inspired, some attempted the leap, but most failed, leaving a black scar on their foreheads as a mark of their fear.

To this day, the carp of the Yellow River bear this scar, a reminder of the courage it takes to overcome life's challenges.

In the Tang Dynasty, poet Li Bai immortalized this tale, writing:

“Carp of the Yellow River, dwelling in Mengjin's waters, you did not become a dragon, and the mark remains on your forehead. Return now among the lesser fish.” 🐟



The stone rests on a bronze incense burner from the early Meiji Period. One side features a phoenix, while the other displays a Japanese dragon, identifiable by its three claws.



Springer's Leap: The Journey of a *Juniperus phoenicea* from Puglia's Fields to Bonsai Excellence

Text and Photos by Francesco Lo Piccolo, exhibitor and winner of the BCI Excellence Award, XIV Bonsai and Suiseki Exhibition, Catanzaro, Italy.

The *Juniperus phoenicea* is a shrubby species of the Cupressaceae family, native to various areas of the Mediterranean. This specimen was collected in 2015 in Puglia. After a phase of rooting and stabilization, it was extensively studied and observed to identify potential solutions to enhance its features.

The evolution of this yamadori led to its being named "Springer," symbolizing its first "leap" from a sunlit field to a pot and later, with much creativity and skill, a rotation of nearly 90° to achieve its current inclination. During these stages, the main challenge was to keep the root system and vascular structure of the plant alive. The achieved position highlights the qualities of the



deadwood and better emphasizes the dense foliage in a cascade style. Many years and meticulous care were required to invert the original root position by over 90 degrees and elevate the deadwood, which was initially part of the roots, into a striking feature.

Springer made its public debut at a club contest during the IBS Congress held in Trevi in November 2019. In May 2021, I managed to acquire it from its previous owner, Master Zino Rongo, who had pruned it significantly to encourage the foliage to back-bud. After arriving in my garden and undergoing an acclimatization period, the plant began to grow vigorously. In March 2022, it was worked on during its first workshop with IBS instructor Francesco Forno. The tree responded very positively, and over two years of proper cultivation, it was worked on two more times, achieving remarkable thickening and ramification.

In 2023, given the progress achieved, I commissioned a Kurama—a “Moon Stone” pot—from a Spanish master potter. In March 2024, the tree was gently repotted



in preparation for display at the 27th UBI Congress held from April 26 to 28, 2024, in Arco di Trento, where Springer received widespread acclaim. I then decided to exhibit Springer at the 27th Bonsai and Suiseki Exhibition of Sicily in 2024, where it garnered significant recognition and was awarded the “UBI President’s Plaque” by instructors Giovanni Mugnas and Pietro Sampirisi.

After six months of targeted cultivation, during which the foliage doubled in density—a remarkable achievement for this species—I decided to showcase Springer at the 14th National Bonsai and Suiseki Exhibition held in Catanzaro from September 27 to 29, 2024. On this occasion, in addition to receiving praise from numerous artists, Springer was honored with the 2024 BCI Award for Bonsai. 🌲



Top right: The juniper pre-collection.

Middle left: The juniper post-collection in a training pot.

Middle right: The juniper planted in its first moon pot.

Bottom: Sebastiano Villante (left) presenting the BCI award to Francesco Lo Piccolo (right), and Aldo Marchese (center).



Top: "Mihara," featured is a Kazari with scroll, complementary element, and the BCI awards.

Bottom: "Mihara" during its Yoseki phase.

Mihara's Journey: A Forgotten Stone's Transformation into Award-Winning Suiseki

Text and Photos by Nicola Sorressa, exhibitor and winner of the BCI Excellence Award, 27th National Congress of the Associazione Italiana Amatori Suiseki (AIAS), Martina Franca, Italy.



In 2006, I found this stone while I was deeply engrossed in bonsai cultivation and had never considered the world of suiseki. That's why, when I discovered this stone in a garden in Calabria and brought it home, I didn't give it much thought. I only recall washing it several times with a pressure washer, cleaning off the soil, and, feeling no particular emotion, leaving it in a corner of my terrace, unprotected. Unknowingly, I began "cultivating" it through the natural process of *Yoseki*.

In 2022, however, during the Catanzaro exhibition, I began to rethink my view of suiseki. My curiosity grew steadily, and in 2023, during a cordial conversation with Mimmo Abate at another Catanzaro exhibition, I suddenly remembered the stone I had left forgotten somewhere on my terrace.

Why not commission a *daiza* (custom stone base) and keep it indoors? Mimmo, with his characteristic kindness, offered to craft it as part of the Suiseki



Academy's workshop activities in Roccavaldina, Messina.

By now, my interest in suiseki was growing, and my friendship with Aldo Marchese, an expert in the field, led me to ask countless questions. Naturally, I had to discuss the abandoned stone with him. What a revelation—it opened a whole new world to me!

Unknowingly, I had cultivated a stone for 17 years, and it had become a suiseki, which I named Mihara. Aldo, with his calm and practical guidance, introduced me to the magical world of stone contemplation and suiseki, teaching me about the Japanese art of creating harmonious displays in spaces like a tokonoma or exhibition niche. At the heart of this practice is simplicity and the pursuit of elegance.

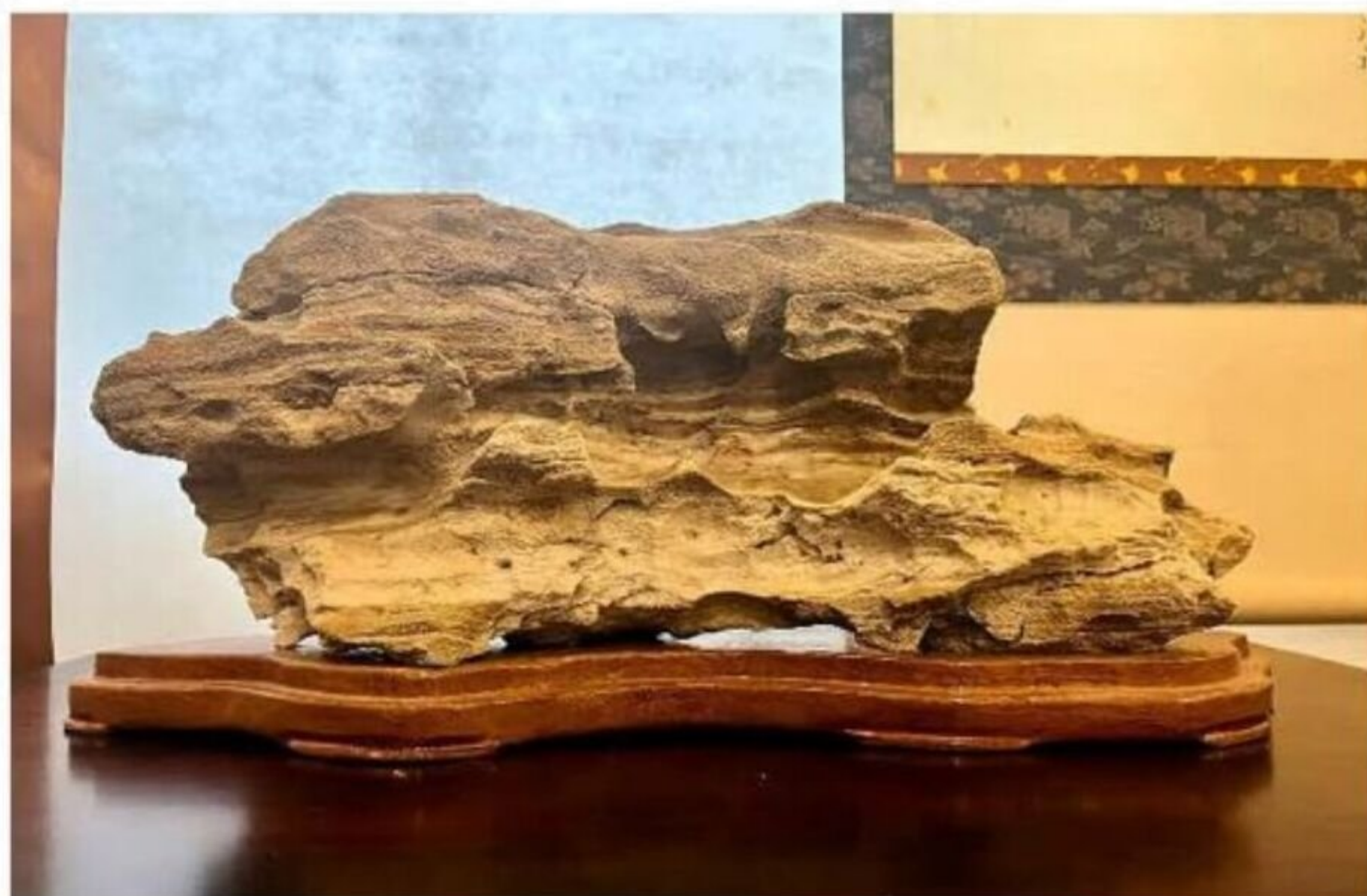
Today, Mihara owes its name and recognition to Aldo's invaluable advice. He transformed what I once saw as a mere rock into a dignified suiseki, beautifully showcased in a *kazari* (display).

Naturally, after this transformation, I was eager to show it. At the 2024 National Exhibition in Catanzaro, Mihara was displayed and received the award for Best Suiseki. Without any great ambitions, I decided to present it at the AIAS Congress, where it won the prestigious BCI Award, bestowed by President Luciana Queirolo.

This is the story of Mihara, the stone that made me fall in love with the world of suiseki.

The Kazari:

The display highlighted the stone's unique features. Its base is a light cream color, evoking the relentless crashing of waves that carved into it. The upper portion, in contrast, is a darker beige, reminiscent of exposure



to atmospheric elements like wind and water. The minimalist daiza reflects the stone's natural character and enhances its beauty. The base was commissioned from daiza maker Mimmo Abate, while the table was crafted by Milan Roberto in harmony with the stone's style.

Accompanying the display was a *kakejiku* (hanging scroll) featuring the poetess Ise no Miyasudokoro, one of the 36 immortal poets of the Heian era. The calligraphy references Mihara, an archipelago in Japan with numerous coastal rocks where one can feel the sea breeze, fostering a dialogue with the stone.

As a third complementary element, a pair of *okobo* (traditional Japanese sandals) was included, evoking the sensation of walking barefoot on sand, seeking inspiration—the wellspring of every artist. 🌊

Above: Close-ups of the *okobo* complementary element, the poem, and "Mihara."

Celebrating 60 Years of Bonsai Artistry and Community

The Toronto Bonsai Society's Landmark Exhibit

By Joe Grande, Canada

Photography by Jay Madore,
courtesy of the Toronto Bonsai Society



Toronto, Canada's largest city and a global cultural hub, provided a vibrant backdrop for the Toronto Bonsai Society's (TBS) 60th-anniversary exhibit. A world-class metropolis, Toronto blends natural beauty, cultural diversity, and urban sophistication. For bonsai enthusiasts, the city offers inspiration through serene spaces like its numerous ravines, beaches along Lake Ontario, the Toronto Botanical Garden, and High Park's Japanese-themed gardens, which reflect the harmony and balance central to bonsai. Its culinary scene, featuring everything from international street food to newly-anointed Michelin-starred fine dining, mirrors Toronto's multicultural heritage and promises unforgettable dining experiences. Art and history lovers can explore the Royal Ontario Museum and the Art Gallery of Ontario, while vibrant neighborhoods like Kensington Market, Little Italy, the Danforth, and the Distillery District offer a mix of local charm and global influences. Together, these elements enriched my experience as I attended the TBS exhibit as editor of *BCI Bonsai & Stone Appreciation Magazine*.

Exhibit Venue

The exhibit was held at the Toronto Botanical Garden, an idyllic venue that perfectly complements the artistry of bonsai. Located on the site of the former Civic Centre



Facing page:

Top: The venue's main building, designed by celebrated Canadian architect Raymond Moriyama.

Top inset: Opening ceremony with guests Bill and Dianne Valavanis, Éric Auger, curator of the Montreal Botanical Garden's bonsai collection, and Marianne Duhamel, curator of the Montreal Botanical Garden's penjing collection.

Bottom: Mike Roussel guides guests through the exhibit after the opening ceremony.

This page:

Top: **Best in Show**, Scots Pine, *Pinus sylvestris* RAF, by Aaron Khalid.

Bottom: **Honorable Mention**, Eastern White Cedar, *Thuja occidentalis*, by Angelo Dumitru.

To celebrate this milestone, TBS curated a special collection of their best trees for the exhibit: *Thuja occidentalis*, *Larix laricina*, *Picea glauca* and *Picea mariana*. Reiner Goebel, Arthur Skolnik and John Biel helped put these species on the world bonsai map in 1997 at the international convention in Toronto.

Top; **Best Deciduous**, Trident Maple, *Acer buergerianum*, by Adrian Pontarini.

Bottom: **Honorable Mention**, Korean Hornbeam, *Carpinus coreana*, by Anthony Brade. Previously owned by Arthur Skolnik.

Facing Page:

Top left: **Best Shohin**, Musk Maple, *Premna japonica*, by Dyar Mohammed.

Top right: **Best Conifer**, "The Snake," Eastern White Cedar, *Thuja occidentalis*, by Mike Roussel.

Middle left: **Honorable Mention**, Larch, *Larix laricina*, by Aaron Khalid.

Bottom: **Best Tropical**, Serissa, *Serissa foetida*, by Nigel Saunders.





and adjacent to Edwards Gardens, which features lush landscaping, tranquil walking paths, and water features, the venue's serene environment enhanced the contemplative nature of the bonsai displays. Towering ancient weeping willows further added to the tranquil atmosphere.

The venue's main building, designed by celebrated Canadian architect Raymond Moriyama, subtly incorporates Japanese design principles—harmony, simplicity, and a deep connection with nature. These align seamlessly with bonsai culture. Moriyama, of Japanese heritage, drew from his family's internment experiences during World War II to shape his approach to design, emphasizing resilience and tranquility. This combination of architecture and landscape enriched the exhibit with layers of history, artistry, and natural inspiration.



Top: View of the exhibit.

Upper middle left: Display by ceramic artist Wayne Malleau, who captivated visitors with a detailed presentation of his creative process.

Middle right: Anishinaabe Traditional Grandmother Kim Wheatley.

Lower middle left and bottom: Before and after of Éric Auger's demonstration tree, an Eastern White Cedar.

Bottom right: Bill Valavanis and Éric Auger engage the audience in an interactive critique, analyzing and discussing several trees on exhibit.



Facing page:

Top left: Water Pool Stone, Jennifer Defour collection.

Top right: "Tsunami," Joel Trojanowski collection (collected by Joel), Japanese suiban by Koyo. Stand by Kevin Yates.

Upper middle: Mountain Stone, John Khuu Collection. John acquired it from a stone yard in Whitby, ON.

Lower middle: Mountain Stone by Jeffrey Shortt (from the Arthur Skolnik collection).

Bottom: Island Stone by Jeffrey Shortt (from the Chiara Padrini collection).





Landmark Exhibit

As I entered the venue, I was warmly greeted and escorted through the workshop and vendor areas before being guided into the heart of the bonsai displays. The hospitality of the TBS volunteers was palpable, setting the tone for the entire event.

A 60th anniversary is significant for bonsai in the West, particularly in Canada. The TBS, the oldest bonsai club in the country, is known for cultivating some of Canada's finest bonsai. To celebrate this milestone, the club curated a remarkable collection of their best trees for the exhibit—a departure from their usual open format, which accepts all trees submitted. Many trees showcased the maturity and refinement that only decades of care can achieve.

Growing bonsai in Canada is particularly challenging due to the short growing season and harsh winters. This context adds depth to the exhibit, highlighting the dedication and skill required to cultivate bonsai in such a demanding climate.

Among the highlights were the Legacy Trees—bonsai nurtured by multiple generations of practitioners. These trees embody the enduring philosophy of bonsai: imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete. Their ongoing care symbolizes a journey rather than a destination, offering rewards and satisfaction along the way. It's comforting to know these trees will continue to thrive, cared for by future generations.

The exhibit also featured contributions from the Montreal Botanical Garden's Bonsai and Penjing Collection, most of which were created by TBS artists including Arthur Skolnik and David Johnson, who donated these pieces to the Garden's permanent collections. These collaborations reflect a shared dedication to promoting bonsai and its precursor, penjing.

A small but striking selection of viewing stones was curated by Jeffrey Shortt, who captivated visitors with stories about the stones' provenance and collectors. Some stones were displayed alongside bonsai, adding drama and depth to the presentation. Jeffrey's advocacy for this evocative art form aims to inspire TBS members to incorporate viewing stones into their bonsai practice.





Montreal Botanical Garden's Bonsai and Penjing Collection.

Top left: Arctic Dwarf Birch,
Betula nana, donated by David
D Johnson, Toronto, Ontario.

Top right: Chinese Hackberry,
Celtis sinensis, donated by Wu
Yee Sun, Hong Kong.

Bottom left: Eastern White
Cedar, *Thuja occidentalis*,
donated by David D Johnson,
Toronto, Ontario.

Bottom right: White Spruce,
Picea glauca, donated by David
D Johnson, Toronto, Ontario.

It was during this event that I reconnected with Joan Greenway, a former BCI Director. Joan had two stunning legacy bonsai compositions on display, exemplifying the artistry and dedication she brings to her work. It was a pleasure to catch up and share our mutual appreciation for the exhibit and its significance.

The TBS Volunteers

Volunteerism was the defining feature of the event. TBS members brought professional-level expertise to various roles: marketing, wayfinding, exhibit setup, workshops, demonstrations, merchandise sales, visitor reception, and food preparation for ceremonies. "Tree wranglers" ensured every bonsai was photographed

professionally by Mark Olson for a commemorative album. Their warmth and hospitality created a welcoming atmosphere, with free admission for children under 12 ensuring the exhibit was accessible to families.

The exhibit's layout, masterfully organized by i Pochwat, a former TBS president, and Angelo Dumitru, the show's chair, balanced beauty and functionality. Careful attention was given to traffic flow and first impressions, ensuring a seamless and memorable visitor experience.

I would like to acknowledge Josh Chang, the president of the Toronto Bonsai Society, whose dedication and leadership were instrumental in the overall coordination of the event. Josh tirelessly worked from 8 a.m.



Top: Avant-Garde Award. "Penelope," and "Demon Larch," *Larix laricina*, by Mike McCallion, previously owned by Nick Lenz.

Bottom left: Trident Maple, *Acer buergerianum*, by Mike McCallion.

Bottom right: Eastern White Cedar, *Thuja occidentalis*, by Angelo Dumitru. Container and stand by Angelo Dumitru.



to 10 p.m. for three consecutive days and stayed until midnight on Thursday night, encouraging, organizing, and supporting the volunteers every step of the way. His unwavering commitment ensured the success of this landmark 60th-anniversary exhibit.

Special recognition is also due to Mike Roussel, the project manager who steered the event's planning committee. Winner of the Best Canadian Tree award at the 2023 U.S. Nationals in Rochester, NY, Mike is a consummate bonsai practitioner who plans to focus on bonsai full-time starting in 2025. His expertise and vision were invaluable to the event's success.

Special thanks are due to Jay Madore, whose photography skillfully captured the essence of the event. His stunning images showcased the beauty of the bonsai, the enthusiasm of the volunteers, the expertise of guest headliners, the vibrancy of workshops, and the engagement of TBS members and visitors. Through his lens, the spirit and energy of the 60th-anniversary exhibit were brought to life.

Sales, Reception, and Ceremonies

The vendor area featured a diverse selection of items, including starter bonsai plants, well-developed

Top left: "Beast," Eastern White Cedar, *Thuja occidentalis*, by Kevin Yates. Chinese pot. Stand by Kevin Yates.

Top right: "Mini Snake," Eastern White Cedar, *Thuja occidentalis*, by Mike Pochwat inspired by Mike Roussel's "Snake." Pot by Erin Bonsai

Middle left: Eastern White Cedar, *Thuja occidentalis*, by Kevin Yates. Pot and stand by Kevin Yates.

Middle right: Willow Leaf Ficus, *Ficus salicifolia*, by Brock Seymour.

Bottom: Larch, *Larix laricina*, by Aaron Khalid. Container by Aaron Khalid.



specimens, suiseki, viewing stones, and ceramics. A highlight was the display by ceramic artist Wayne Malleau, who captivated visitors with a detailed presentation of his creative process. Malleau sourced his clay from Kagawong, a picturesque village on Ontario's stunning Manitoulin Island. His exhibit traced the journey from raw material collection and processing to the creation of his exquisite ceramics, showcasing glazes that masterfully blended artistic expression with scientific precision.

I had the privilege of attending the closing reception, held among the bonsai in the exhibit area. The tables were thoughtfully arranged, creating an intimate and inspiring atmosphere. Bill Valavanis, a respected figure in the bonsai community, offered insightful critiques of many trees, providing both encouragement and constructive feedback. Volunteers and members circulated,

enjoying food and drink added to the intimate, warm and celebratory ambiance.

Opening ceremonies featured a ribbon-cutting attended by dignitaries including a representative of Moriyama Teshima Architects, the Consul-General of Japan in Toronto, Stephanie Bowman, member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and Anishinaabe Traditional Grandmother Kim Wheatley. The acknowledgment of Treaty 13, or the Toronto Purchase, highlighted Canada’s efforts to address historical injustices. The Mississaugas received additional compensation in 2010 through a land claim settlement, a step toward reconciliation. Through the art of bonsai—symbolic of international and cross-cultural friendship—TBS underscored its commitment to inclusivity and respect for all. 🌲



Top: Eastern White Cedar, *Thuja occidentalis*, by Paul Chong.
Middle left: Eastern White Cedar, *Thuja occidentalis*, by Paul Chong.
Middle right: Eastern White Cedar, *Thuja occidentalis*, by Mike Roussel. Previously owned by Norman Haddrick.
Bottom left: Larch, *Larix laricina*, by Mike McCallion.
Bottom right: Blaauwii Juniper, *Juniperus chinensis* “Blaauw,” by Joan Greenway. Previously owned by Patricia McDougal.





AN OLD MOUNTAIN PINE WINS THE BCI AWARD AT THE 25TH IBS CONGRESS



By Carmelo Bonanno, Italy
Photos 1-5: Alessio Marotta
Photos 6-13: Carmelo Bonanno

On October 12th and 13th, 2024, the 25th Congress of the National IBS College (Instructors of Bonsai and Suiseki) was held in Chiampo, Italy. This exhibition was highly anticipated and proved to be a prestigious event, thanks to the outstanding contributions of all participants.

The organizing club, Ovest Vicentino, hosted the congress in a unique location—inside the spacious premises of Margraf, a company specializing in marble processing. The large, meticulously detailed tokonoma (display alcoves) were interspersed



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with marble statues and artworks, creating a truly enchanting experience.

All exhibitors, including instructors and our supportive friends, honored the event by presenting significant bonsai specimens. Our guests, Gabriel Romero Aguade from Spain and Luca Tamburello from Switzerland enriched the congress with two impressive demonstrations.

During this exhibition, I displayed a very old bunjin-style mountain pine. It was both a great surprise and a profound honor to receive the BCI award, presented by Massimo Bandera (photo 4).



6



Description of the Mountain Pine

The tree itself is quite small, standing just 16 inches tall. The nebari (root flare) is 2.4 inches wide, and the pot has a diameter of 7 inches. The foliage pads are compact, clearly defined, and arranged to enhance the overall lightness of the composition.

Despite its small size, this bonsai evokes deep emotions, primarily due to its trunk. Remarkably, no technical interventions have been made to enhance its aesthetics. This means all the curves and movements were naturally formed before it was collected.

The trunk ascends towards the foliage in two distinct parts: one completely dead and the other alive (**photo 6**).

The living part has a tubular shape reminiscent of juniper veins, winding and twisting around the deadwood (**photo 7**). Another striking feature of the living part is its ancient, rugged bark (**photo 8**).

The deadwood evokes the most emotion for me. Its deep cracks communicate the tree's age and have developed naturally over time without tools (**photo 9**).

Bonsai History

This mountain pine was collected by Fabrizio Beltrame, a bonsai enthusiast and friend, in the early 2000s. At that time, bonsai was yet to be my profession, and Fabrizio and I shared this passion. When I began working professionally in bonsai in 2013, I started caring for his collection, including this pine.

In 2016, when Fabrizio decided to step away from bonsai, I purchased several trees from his collection, including this one, which I had always admired. The 25th IBS Congress marks the first public exhibition of this bonsai since it became part of my collection.

Future Plans

Over the years, the weight of the canopy and the fragility of the trunk have caused the most prominent curve (**photo 10**) to close, reducing the tree's height. One fascinating aspect of bonsai is observing how our trees evolve over time—not just through our interventions but also due to the passage of time and natural conditions.

In the near future, I plan to make some aesthetic adjustments without compromising the tree's character. My focus will be on the trunk's direction and overall height, aiming to restore its original shape when first collected. **Photo 12**, taken recently, illustrates my vision for this project. To achieve this, I will begin by slightly adjusting the tree's tilt during its next repotting. Subsequently, I will then make structural adjustments to gently open the closed curve. This new angle will also highlight the final curve just before the foliage (**photo 11**).

These adjustments may mean this bonsai stays out of exhibitions for a few years, but that's not a concern. It will continue to bring me daily joy in my garden. 🌲



The photo below illustrates my vision for this project. To achieve this, I will begin by slightly adjusting the tree's tilt during its next repotting. Subsequently, I will then make structural adjustments to gently open the closed curve. This new angle will also highlight the final curve just before the foliage .



About the Author: Carmelo Bonanno, an IBS-certified bonsai instructor, founded In Arte Bonsai to share his expertise in bonsai cultivation and education. Trained at the IBS Bonsai Time school under Giorgio Castagneri and Japanese masters like Minoru Akiyama, he now teaches and promotes bonsai art through his collaboration with Noaro Nursery in Camporosso, Italy. Since 2018, In Arte Bonsai has offered in-person and online courses, along with high-quality bonsai and materials, making bonsai education accessible to enthusiasts worldwide.

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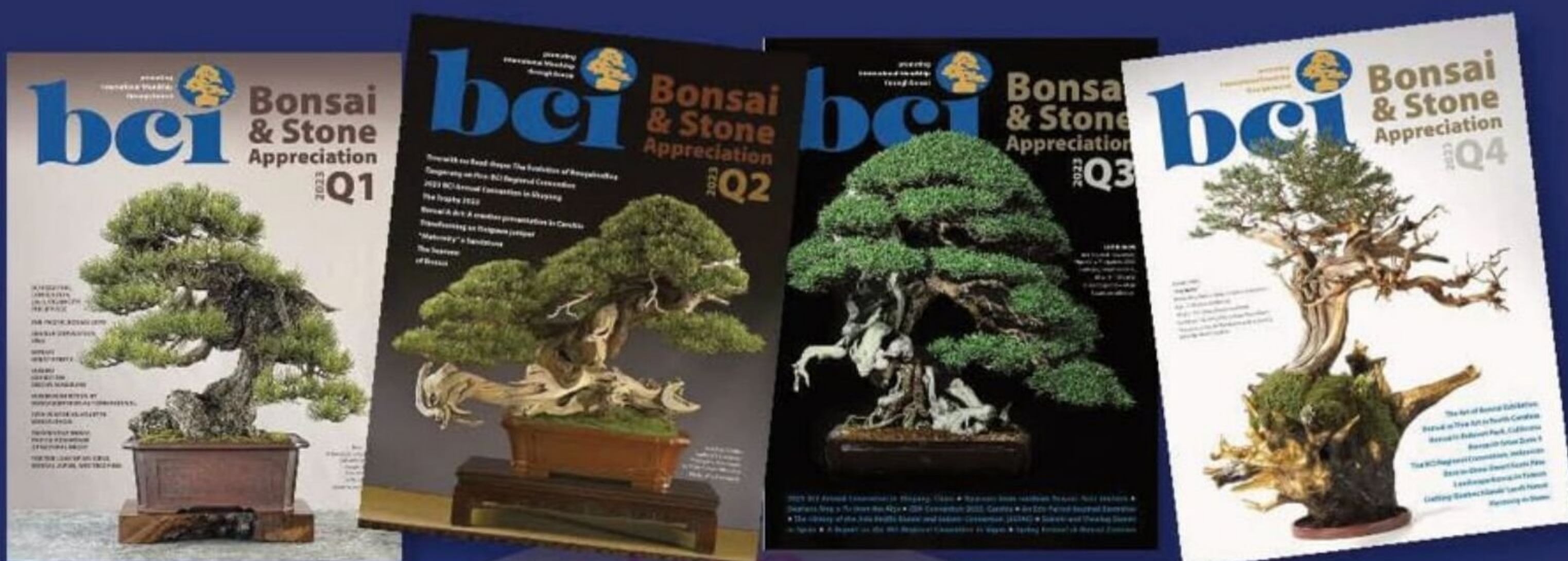
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