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Bonsai & Stone Appreciation

2025 Q2



Andres Alvarez, *Taxus baccata*,
Bonsai Association Belgium's
Trophy, 2025,
Silver Jubilee Conifer Winner.

The Trophy 2025: The Silver Jubilee

Beauty and Sadness: *Severinia buxifolia*

Bonsai Aesthetics and the Breath of Leaves...

Bonsai do Campo: Cultivating Tradition,
Growing the Future of Bonsai in Brazil

A Bonsai Forest and a Father's Journey

The Difference Between ASPAC and ABFF

The Journey of a Bonsai: *Olea europaea*

The Kifu Bonsai Awards

The Smallest Bonsai in Brazil



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President's Message

After going through a busy first quarter, we enter the second quarter full of hope. In the past few months, we have witnessed numerous exhibitions, seminars, forums, and various forms of activities related to penjing, bonsai, and stones. In this promising year of 2025, we are about to welcome one wonderful event after another in the art of penjing and stone appreciation. These events will all be like delicious dishes at the 2025 global bonsai and stone appreciation feast. From the United States to Italy, from India to Japan, and then to countries like Malaysia, as well as many regions within China, there will be wonderful penjing and stone exhibitions. Each of these exhibitions has its own characteristics. Some showcase the natural landscapes of different regions, while others reflect the local humanistic spirit. Together, they form a diverse landscape of the art of penjing and stone.

Among these numerous exhibitions, I would like to briefly introduce two regional exhibitions of the BCI China Committee that I am familiar with. They are the penjing and stone exhibitions that will be held in Fengyang, Anhui Province, and Fuling District, Chongqing Municipality respectively.

Fengyang, Anhui Province, is a city with a profound historical and cultural heritage. It is the hometown of Zhu Yuanzhang, the first emperor of the Ming Dynasty. It enjoys the reputation as “the hometown of emperors, the hometown of reform, the hometown of flower drums, the hometown of folk art, and the hometown of Chinese folk culture and art.” There are many precious historical sites remaining here. The “Imperial City of the Central Ming Dynasty,” a national key cultural relic protection unit, is of a grand scale, fully demonstrating the majesty and grandeur of the royal family in those days. At the end of April, 600 pieces of stone and 230 penjing works will be exhibited here.

Fuling, Chongqing Municipality, is located on the banks of the Yangtze River and has a splendid and long history and culture. The Yandunbao Site in Fengdu and the Guihuacun Site in the early Paleolithic period in the Chongqing area indicate that there were human activities here about 100,000 years ago. The Chongqing exhibition in October will display 600 penjing works and arrange various forms of penjing and stone activities. Held simultaneously with the 2025 Chongqing Penjing and Stone Exhibition is the 2025 Baiheliang International Academic Symposium. Baiheliang, renowned as the world's first ancient hydrological station, uniquely utilizes engraved fish and inscribed markers to measure water levels with remarkable precision. At that time, we will also invite members of the BCI Council from all over the world and penjing and stone appreciation enthusiasts to jointly witness and appreciate the historical heritage of Baiheliang on the Yangtze River.

I firmly believe that the penjing, bonsai, and stone exhibitions in 2025 will not only showcase art but also be platforms for cultural exchange and inheritance. They provide a stage for artists to showcase their talents, offer opportunities for enthusiasts to learn and communicate, and open a window for the general public to understand the art of penjing and stone. Let's look forward to the arrival of these exhibitions together. 🌳

Warm regards,
Chen, Chang
President, Bonsai Clubs International



Mr. Chen, Chang, BCI President

I would like to briefly introduce two regional exhibitions of the BCI China Committee that will be held in Fengyang, Anhui Province, and Fuling District, Chongqing Municipality respectively.

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

As we explore the ever-evolving world of bonsai and suiseki, this issue takes us on a journey that highlights tradition, innovation, and the growing global exchange of ideas. In particular, we turn our attention to South America, where bonsai artistry is flourishing in unique and exciting ways.

Brazil stands out in this issue, offering a glimpse into its dynamic bonsai culture. **Carlos Tramujas** introduces us to Bonsai do Campo, showcasing its scope of products, services and forward-looking vision in producing high-quality plants at affordable prices. Meanwhile, **Marcelo Gallep** presents the smallest bonsai in Brazil, proving that artistry knows no size limits, even if it means acquiring micro bonsai tools. Check out the QR codes that link to his provocative videos! Across continents, bonsai remains a practice of patience and passion, and the voices from South America enrich our understanding of its evolution worldwide.

In Europe, The Trophy 2025 in Belgium marks a milestone, celebrating its Silver Jubilee with an ever-evolving standard of excellence. **Christian Vos**, Public Relation Manager, BAB. (Bonsai Association Belgium) reports on the exhibit and **Gudrun Benz** writes about her passion: the outstanding suiseki display at The Trophy.

In the Second Edition of the Kifu Bonsai Awards, **Gaetano Conte** guides us through the competition's highlights, introducing the Super Jury, award categories, and winners.

From Taiwan, **Min Hsuan Lo** and **Andrew Lo** share the poetic beauty of *Severinia buxifolia*, reflecting on the pursuit of beauty, experimentation, and the joy of bonsai—a passion that continues to unite people worldwide.

Marco Mei, a recent BCI Life Member, meditates on the *Breath of Leaves* with his love of words, reminding us that bonsai is about aesthetics, endurance, creation, and harmony with nature.

In an exclusive interview, BCI Contributing Editor and Director **Massimo Bandera** speaks with **Emanuele Cappellano** about his deeply personal journey in cultivating a bonsai forest from seed—a story of patience, growth, and connection.

This issue also brings comparative perspectives, with **Budi Sulisty** and **José L. Rodríguez Macias** discussing the differences between ASPAC and ABFF, while **Sebastiano Villante** traces the journey of an *Olea europaea* from collection to exhibition. In every story, we see bonsai as a bridge between cultures, generations, and artistic interpretations.

We conclude with a review of **Bonsai Empire's** Kimura Techniques Masterclass 2, which showcases Kimura's extraordinary ability to transform massive trees through extreme bending, radical redesign, and intricate refinement.

Wherever you are in your bonsai journey, we hope these stories inspire you to grow, learn, and connect—perhaps even looking southward for fresh perspectives. 🌱

—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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Errata: We offer our sincere apologies to Karolina Pochwat for omitting her first name
on page 64 of the Q1 2025 edition of the BCI magazine. — Ed.

FEATURED ON THE COVER: Andres Alvarez, *Taxus baccata*, Bonsai Association Belgium's Trophy, 2025,
Silver Jubilee Conifer Winner.



Severinia buxifolia: Chinese box-orange, box orange or boxthorn is native to southern China.

Beauty and Sadness

Severinia buxifolia

By Min Hsuan Lo and Andrew Lo, Taiwan

There are many aspects to pursue in the art of bonsai: research, discovery, understanding... and, ultimately, sharing! Sharing how to effectively and correctly address the characteristics of different bonsai species, sharing the pursuit of beauty and dreams, and sharing the joy gained during experimentation—all to help bonsai enthusiasts manage their plants more easily and attract more people worldwide to join the bonsai community.

After years of collecting in the field in Taiwan, along with the rise of environmental awareness, changes in regulations, and significant advancements in seedling and cutting cultivation capabilities, by the early 21st century, materials sourced from yamadori had almost completely depleted!

Fortunately, at the critical juncture of transitioning from yamadori to seed propagation, I encountered and obtained an entirely new species without any



prior cultivation experience, embarking on a series of strange journeys filled with both anxiety and surprises!

This rare and difficult-to-manage bonsai species has extremely personalized characteristics, causing inexperienced enthusiasts to waste their youth in vain—yet the extremely elegant tree shape absolutely tempts cultivators! Undeniably, this is a species that intertwines beauty and sadness! Do you like it? Welcome to the exploration of *Severinia buxifolia*!

1 2003 Spring

I just bought it from Kaohsiung and captured the first image.

Starting to experiment with a new variety, but I am still undecided on how to shape it.

As mentioned in previous articles, there is a significant difference in materials generated from the Coastal Rocky Area of Kenting compared to Non-coastal Forests or Grasslands. *Severinia buxifolia* is particularly evident in this regard; most materials from rocky reefs are very small, with diameters of only 2-3 cm and lengths of about 20 to 30 cm, making them medium to small specimens!



In Taiwan's bonsai community, raw materials from the Coastal Rocky Areas are labeled "sea," while those from Non-coastal Forests or Grasslands are labeled "mountain"!



In Taiwan's bonsai community, raw materials from the Coastal Rocky Areas are labeled "sea," while those from Non-coastal Forests or Grasslands are labeled "mountain"! Mountain *Severinia buxifolia* grows in a more fertile environment and grows faster, resulting in thicker and straighter trunks with no variation! In contrast, coastal *Severinia buxifolia* is twisted and varied,

and it is almost impossible to find larger materials; such forms are rare and almost anomalous!

Hidden in the crevices of the reefs, they grow like weeds, avoiding strong winds and external forces. After years of struggle, they finally produce thicker trunks with longer lengths and bends!

2 2003 (Side A)



3 2004 12 06

Rotated 90 degrees upwards, transforming the flat into a three-dimensional form.

4 2004 12 06

The spacing between branches determines the future shape; adjustments must be made to reach the desired ideal state.

5 2006 04 07

Two years later, the spacing has been adjusted, and preparations to configure the finer branches in the middle and later stages are underway.

Most materials that grow naturally on rocky reefs have a flat structure rather than the three-dimensional shape of a naturally large tree. The flat trunk structure



lacks aesthetic appeal and does not evoke the feeling of a giant tree. Significant angle adjustments and reorganization of branches in various directions are necessary to create a three-dimensional form that presents the old huge tree expanding in all directions or a new aesthetic with multiple trunks growing together!

Transformation (Air-Layering Modification)

6 **7** 2006 08 10

8 2006 10 05

9 **10** 2007 03 28

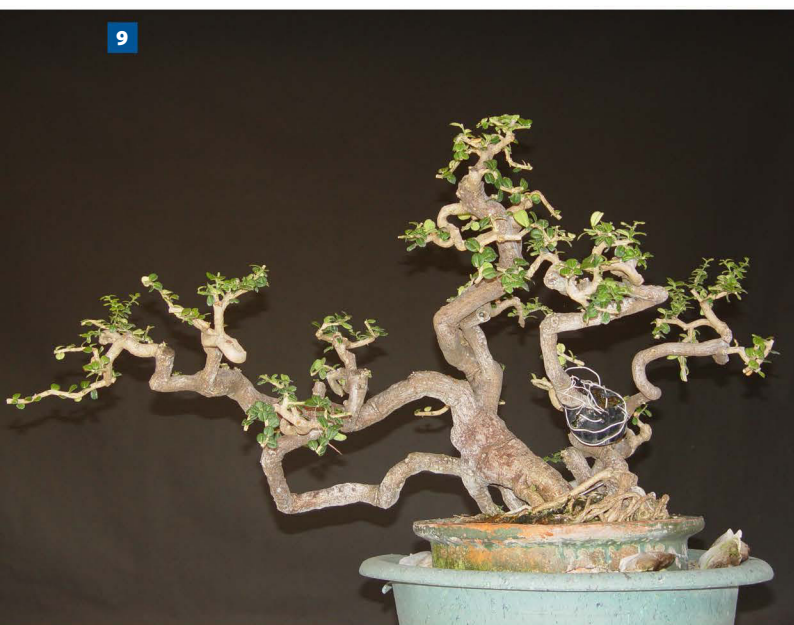
Multiple branches form a flat fan shape; removing one branch from the aerial layering reveals three main tree crown axes.

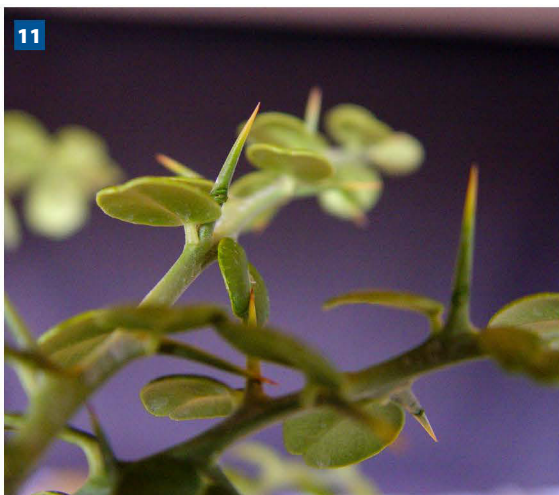
Unique Characteristics

Leaf Pruning Guidelines:

11 Thorns

Every leaf and node of the *Severinia buxifolia* has very hard and sharp thorns; there are as many thorns as there are leaves! In other words, it's like a cactus where all the bud points are covered in thorns! Before any pruning, all the hard thorns must be cut off, which is a





time-consuming and dangerous task! If pricked by a thorn, it must be washed immediately, and the sharp thorn should be removed to avoid inflammation!

Early Creative Process

Front View (Side A)

12 2007 05 17

13 2008 01 24

14 2008 06 01

15 2010 03 08

Guidelines Before and After Leaf Pruning:

It is essential to follow a specific procedure; otherwise, the growth of new buds will be very slow, and many terminal buds may not sprout! In other words, what should grow does not grow, while what shouldn't does so excessively!

- A month before pruning, ample fertilizer must be provided until the leaves turn deep green and fully mature. A more conservative approach is to provide more fertilizer two months in advance to make the bonsai strong and healthy before pruning.





Students assisting with defoliation.

Pruning Season

Severinia buxifolia is native to tropical southern Taiwan, where low temperatures slow growth weaken the tree's vigor in winter. In mid- to late April, as temperatures rise, it begins to grow rapidly, making it the ideal time for leaf pruning and branch trimming. Additionally, late August is another pruning season at the end of summer.

Defoliation Method

This is a very time-consuming task! The *Severinia buxifolia* has thin leaves, very short petioles, and densely packed nodes, making it extremely difficult to cut with small scissors. The leaves cannot be pulled off by hand. It may take two people about three days to completely remove the leaves on a single plant!

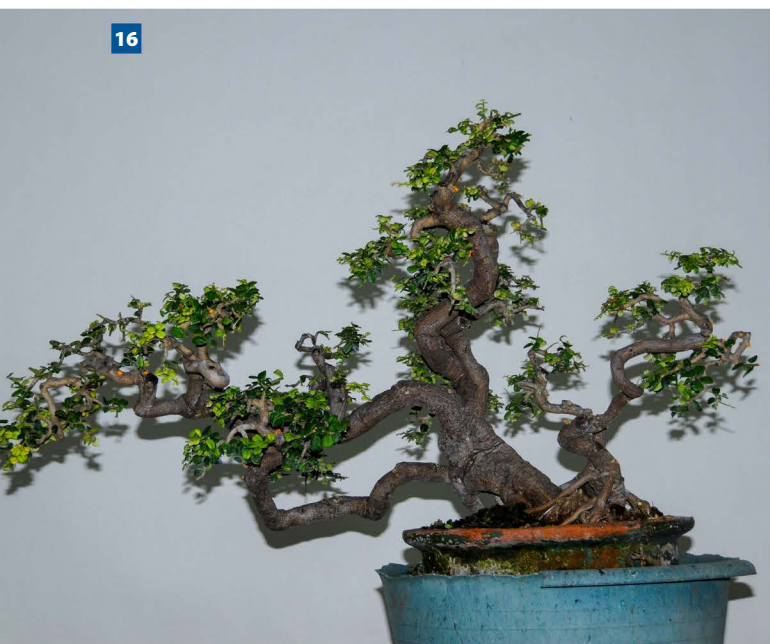
- After defoliation, the leaf petioles will take about seven days to fall off!
- After defoliation, it is necessary to clean up stray branches or adjust the direction of aluminum wire locally. This may require several more days of effort!
- After defoliation, the plant must be placed under partial or even full shade, as strong sunlight will significantly reduce the generation of new buds!

- About two weeks later, new shoots will gradually emerge, marking the beginning of intensive work!

Most broadleaf bonsai produce new buds uniformly after defoliation, but *Severinia buxifolia* behaves like an extremely mischievous child—very clever and adorable, yet requiring careful attention and time. New buds will play a game of hide-and-seek, with some sprouting unnecessarily on the inner side, growing about five to six centimeters in just one or two days. At this point, it is crucial to suppress them by trimming the inner new buds to allow the terminal new buds to grow gradually. Inner buds grow particularly strong and quickly; if not suppressed or removed, the terminal new buds may weaken and wither! After about a day, as the terminal new buds grow, unnecessary water shoots from the inner side must be removed, and the length of the terminal new buds should be limited to just two internodes!

This phase requires meticulousness and patience, where daily morning trimming must be done with love! After about half a month, most new buds will have sprouted, although some may still not have appeared! It's best to wait until all terminal new buds have grown before gradually moving the plant to a full-sun location. A partial-sun location is also an option, making moisture management easier! Based on years of experience, adequate fertilizer, moisture, and quality soil are key to success.

However, while growth is fast in partial sunlight, the wood tends to be softer, with longer internodes, which does not meet bonsai aesthetics! Therefore, full sunlight remains the best option! Under strong sunlight, the growth of *Severinia buxifolia* undergoes significant changes! After about a week of exposure, new bud generation slows down considerably, with denser internodes, thinner leaves, and lighter colors! At this point, it is essential to provide plenty of moisture and begin fertilizing!



Maintaining bonsai requires not only common practices but also an understanding of the unique characteristics of each species! Especially for rare species, due to a lack of effective management data, many trials and errors are necessary to find the correct methods through various experiments and failures! The management description of black *Severinia buxifolia* above is based on years of research and consultations with several friends, resulting in the knowledge gained over the years!

How to Set Up Middle Branches

A more detailed explanation of this challenging process:

Generally, two to three internodes are left when pruning, each with at least one bud. Almost all buds sprout new shoots within a few days after pruning! Ironically, *Severinia buxifolia* tends to sprout water shoots almost exclusively on the inner side, with very few appearing at the necessary points—new shoots do not grow!

Based on years of observation, the proportion of expected new shoots sprouting after pruning is almost



less than 30%! It often takes several rounds of removing inner water shoots before a few weak new branches slowly emerge, occasionally producing two branches!

If lucky, if the new shoots are strong enough and of sufficient length, they can be guided with aluminum wire to bend and extend, enhancing their aesthetic appeal! Unfortunately, once the twigs are wrapped with aluminum wire and shaped, most enter a dormant state, taking about six months or even longer to gradually resume growth! Sadly, about 30% may enter a permanent dormant state and never grow again!

Such instability can be very frustrating; I have attempted to discard it multiple times to avoid further torment! However, giving up might mean permanent failure, a nightmare that lingers for a lifetime!

16 2010 03 08

17 2018 07 16

18 2020 04 04

Comparing the three images on the preceding pages, from the first in 2010, the middle in 2018, to the last in 2020, the ten years of cultivation show only a slight improvement in appearance. According to the perspective of broadleaf bonsai, there should have been significant changes, yet the middle branches of this work have only advanced less than 10 centimeters!

Constant trials, repeated failures, and starting over have nearly led to a loss of confidence, almost resulting in giving up!

Bit by bit, finally discovered a more accurate creative and management model!

The More Difficult It Is, The Stronger It Becomes

The tenacious personality and ambition finally found a way to conquer this—though it is very, very slow!

- Let it grow freely for a while; the branch diameter becomes thick enough. However, the long shoots of the *Severinia buxifolia* can quickly elongate, similar to vines, making it difficult to thicken. Prune the long shoots, leaving two to three internodes; if lucky, one to three new shoots may grow! Unfortunately, the direction of new shoots is typically chaotic; it's best to retain two new shoots extending in a Y-shape to the left. Remember, aluminum wire should only lightly hold the thin branches, guiding them in the desired direction. Any sharp turns, as mentioned, have a very high chance of wilting or ceasing to grow!

Such slow and repetitive execution may yield an outward extension of 2-3 cm in a year, and it's not surprising if it remains stagnant!

Further analysis of this technique:

Cut & Grow & Wire - Mixed and Interactively

First, the Lingnan style of cut-and-grow technique must be employed. Still, new shoots will definitely

20



21



Side C

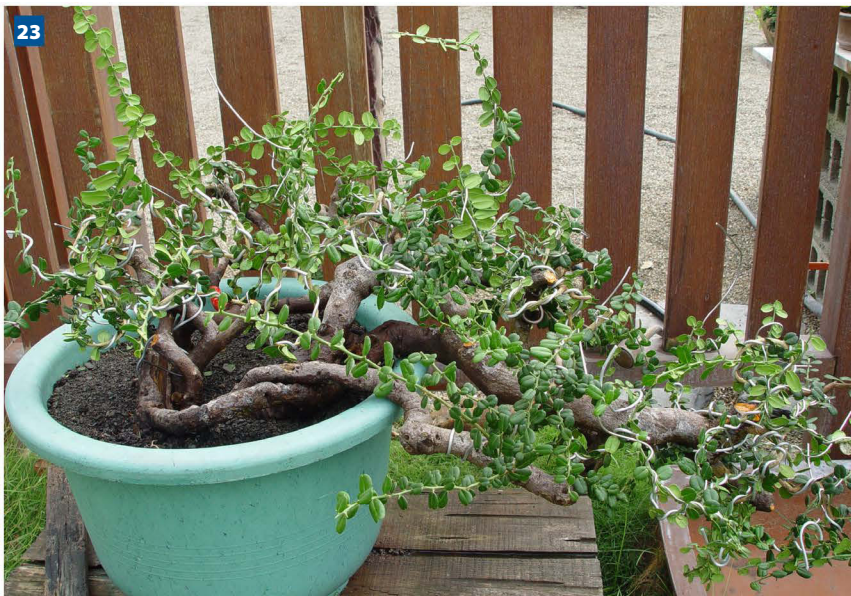
20 2008 01 24

21 2017 07 07

22 2024 08 26

22





grow in the wrong direction, necessitating the use of northern-style aluminum wire to guide them in the correct direction. Most tree species can use aluminum wire to achieve longer, more beautiful shapes; unfortunately, due to health reasons, *Severinia buxifolia* can only be guided in the correct direction with aluminum wire, rarely achieving longer results!

In summary, shaping *Severinia buxifolia* is almost limited to the extremely slow cut-and-grow method, combined with aluminum wire guidance! This can be likened to an ancient agricultural society that does not count time and seeks a graceful ecology without demands!

19 2024 08 26



After over 20 years of struggle, beauty has finally been presented!

Side B

23	2003 12 11
24	2004 12 05
25	2008 01 24
26	2024 08 26

“Ten years to sharpen a sword, decades to grow a bonsai”—isn’t this also a reflection of the spirit and lifestyle of traditional bonsai artists? The pursuit of beauty seems to be the most commendable path! It may be the slowest way, yet it is also the best path to take! 🌲



The Trophy 2025

The Silver Jubilee



By Christian Vos, Belgium

Photos by Willy Evenepoel, Jörg Derlien, Jan Dieryck and Yan LB.

Courtesy Bonsai Association Belgium

Top: Bird-eye view of The Trophy Silver Jubilee Exhibit.

The Trophy: A Prestigious Milestone

Celebrating its Silver Jubilee, The Trophy remains Europe's most prestigious bonsai exhibition, renowned worldwide. The 25th edition took place at the Limburghal in Genk on February 22–23, 2025, with an exclusive opening ceremony on February 21 for traders, exhibitors, and VIP guests.

The First Preview

Guests were welcomed by a serene Japanese garden at the entrance, designed by Patrick de Zwart of Kuro-Seki Japanese Gardens, setting a tranquil tone. Over two hundred meticulously cultivated bonsai, a high-quality Suiseiki collection, and nearly one hundred distinguished

bonsai pots, including pieces by Peter Krebs and Andrew Pearson, were on display. The atmosphere was enhanced by the delicate sounds of koto music, played live by renowned Japanese artist Aki Sato. The preview concluded with a powerful taiko drum performance leading into the welcome ceremony.

The Welcome Ceremony

The ceremony featured speeches by Genk's mayor, Wim Dries, the Japanese Embassy's representative, Etsuro Nonimiya, and American bonsai professional Ryan Neil. Guests were greeted in six languages by Luc Nagels and Christian Vos. A highlight of the evening was the presentation of specially crafted jubilee bonsai



The ceremony concluded with a mesmerizing performance by Aki Sato, a taiko drum ensemble.

Top: Christian Vos introducing the demonstrators.

Middle: Bart Gitz on Taiko drums, opening ceremonies.

Bottom left and right: Luc Nagels, Secretary, BAB., Christian Vos, Public Relation Manager, BAB. (Bonsai Association Belgium)

Left: Andres Alvarez, *Taxus baccata*, Conifer Winner is featured on the cover of this edition.

Top: Valentino Villeco, *Acer buergerianum*, Broadleaf Winner

Bottom: Chris Pieterse, *Ginkgo biloba*, Best BAB Member tree.

Over two hundred meticulously cultivated bonsai, a high-quality Suiseki collection, and nearly one hundred distinguished bonsai pots, including pieces by Peter Krebs and Andrew Pearson, were on display.





Top: Alejandro Izquierdo, *Juniperus chinensis* 'Itoigawa,' Kifu Winner.

Bottom: Alexandre Escudero, *Juniperus chinensis* 'Itoigawa,' Rock Planting Winner.



pots by five distinguished artisans: Klika-Kuratkova (Czech Republic), Made Bonsai Pots (Netherlands), Sabine Besnard (France), Claudi-Schalen (Germany), and Roald Vlems of Studio Tebineri (Belgium). Each exhibitor received one as a commemorative gift. The ceremony concluded with a mesmerizing performance

by Aki Sato, a taiko drum ensemble, and the traditional Ibaraki Sake Barrel Ceremony, followed by Japanese refreshments.



Top: Bob Van Ruitenbeek, *Pinus parviflora*, *Chamaecyparis obtusa*, Shohin Winner.

Bottom: Riccardo Vinciguerra, *Taxus baccata*, Conifer Nomination and UBE Award.

Facing page:

Top: Hartmut Münchenbach, *Acer buergerianum*, Kifu Nomination.

Bottom: Ivo Santos, *Myrtus*, Kifu Nomination.



The Exhibition

Marking 25 years of excellence, The Trophy has matured alongside the bonsai it showcases. Despite a record-breaking turnout the previous year, this edition saw another unprecedented queue at the entrance.

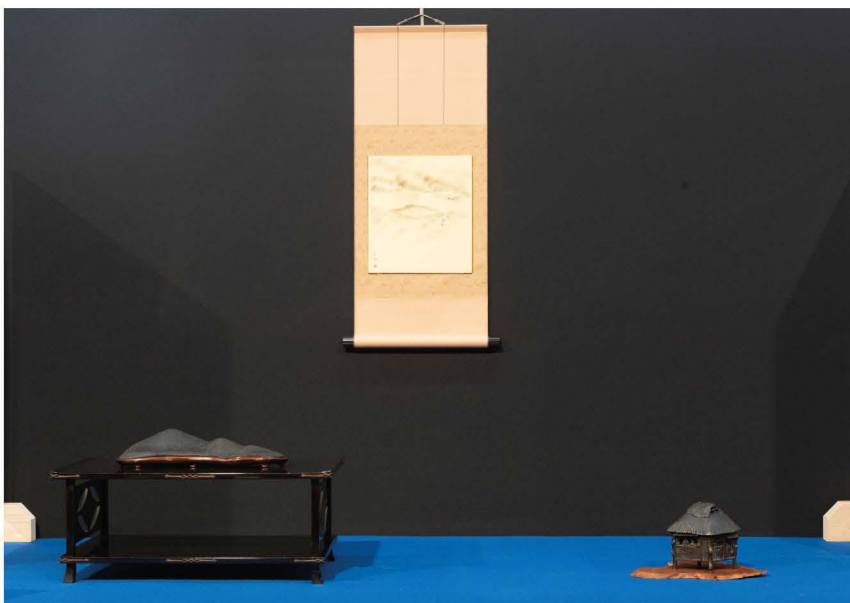
The exhibition space, arranged by Danny Use, featured 170 bonsai, 20 Kifu, and 10 Shohin compositions, all of exceptional quality. Maarten van der Hoeven of Bonsai Plaza expertly curated the Shohin section. A dedicated row of rock plantings, some from Danny Use's private collection, highlighted this year's special theme: Ishitsuki (rock planting). This continues the tradition of honoring specific bonsai styles, following Literati, Windswept, and Forest Planting in past years.

A touching tribute was paid to Alda Clijsters, a founding member of Bonsai Association Belgium, with a display of ten outstanding bonsai from her private collection. Alda, who passed away last summer, was deeply respected for her dedication to the club.

Suiseki & Bonsai Pots

A full row of large-format Suiseki, selected by Holger Göbel, was displayed





Top left: Bastian Busch, *Taxus baccata*, Bonsai Art Magazine Award.

Top right: Best Pot. Potter: İlknur Günes Dag, Turkey. Owner: Yalova Bonsai Museum, Turkey.

Middle left: German Gomez Soler, *Olea europaea* var. *Sylvestris*, WBFF Award.

Middle right: Bart Van Gorp, *Carpinus turczaninowii*, BAB Member Nomination.

Bottom left: Jörg Derlien, "Spring is not far away, the snow in the mountains are gone, but the nights are still cold," WBFF Award.

Bottom right: Lydie Carpentier, *Pseudocycdonia*, FBBC Certificate (Federation of Belgian Bonsai Clubs) for Best Composition.



Top left: Andres Alvarez, *Acer palmatum* 'Arakawa,' Broadleaf Nomination.

Top right: Ruben Ciezar, *Quercus ilex*, Bonsai Museum Düsseldorf Award

Bottom left: Rune Kyrдалen, *Ligustrum*, Broadleaf Nomination.

Middle left and bottom right: Tribute to Alda Clijsters (†), a founding member of Bonsai Association Belgium, with a display of ten outstanding bonsai from her private collection.

with improved presentation, allowing each stone to stand out beautifully. The bonsai pot section, curated by Alex Ruud of the European Bonsai Potters Collective (EPBC), featured 50 compositions, including Shohin-specific pots and special pieces by Peter Krebs and the late Andrew Pearson. The jubilee pots crafted by the five featured artisans were also showcased.

Each exhibit was professionally photographed by Willy Evenepoel, Jörg Derlien, and Jan Dieryck before being placed on display.

The Traders' Area

The Trophy's bonsai market, the largest in Europe, spanned over 4,000 square meters with 125 vendors from across Europe and beyond. Enthusiasts and professionals found everything from seedlings and yamadori to mature bonsai, tools, pots, and specialized soil mixes.

The Gala Dinner & Awards

Saturday's gala dinner and award ceremony welcomed distinguished guests, including Etsuro Ninomiya from



Top left: Lorena Vilas, *Chaenomeles japonica*, Kifu Nomination.

Top right: Alessandro Margutti, *Cupressus sempervirens*, Conifer Nomination.

Middle left: Ruben Ciezar, *Pinus sylvestris*, Conifer Nomination.

Middle right: Niklas Brockschläger, *Juniperus chinensis* 'Itogawa', Conifer Nomination.

Bottom left: Massimo Paterniani, *Crataegus monogyna*, Broadleaf Nomination.

the Japanese Embassy and Kim Sae Won, Chairman of the World Bonsai Friendship Federation, along with delegates from Malaysia. Over 200 bonsai enthusiasts attended this evening of camaraderie and celebration.

Tony Tickle took the opportunity to honor Danny Use and Ingrid with the prestigious Bonsai Angel Award for their lifelong dedication to the art. While numerous winners were celebrated, simply being selected as an exhibitor at The Trophy remains a distinguished honor.

Conclusion

The Bonsai Association Belgium extends heartfelt gratitude to all who contributed to making The Trophy 2025 a resounding success. With unparalleled displays, esteemed international guests, and an atmosphere of shared passion, the Silver Jubilee edition was a fitting tribute to bonsai excellence. 🌳

Suiseki at The Trophy's Silver Jubilee Reach New Heights

By Gudrun Benz, Germany

Photos by Gudrun Benz and Yan LB.



Top: Overview of the Suiseki Exhibition

Left: "Living in the World, as Sōgi says, means sheltering from the winter downpour," Shelter stone, Ibigawa-ishi, Japan, 40 x 32 x 22 cm, owner: Christophe Kurz, France.

Right: "Story of Darth Vader," origin, Wuling, China, 48 x 8 x 28 cm, owner: Harald Lehner, Germany



High expectations surrounded this year's "Trophy" event by the Bonsai Association Belgium, as it marked the 25th anniversary. For the first time, the event spanned more than two days, with the opening ceremony on Friday, February 21, featuring speeches and Taiko and Kotō performances exclusively for exhibitors and vendors. The ceremony began with a ribbon-cutting to open the exhibition, accompanied by live Kotō music. The exhibition, vendor area, and demonstrations were open to the general public on Saturday and Sunday. The visitor turnout was immense, especially on Saturday, with crowds so dense that it was difficult to move through the aisles. By 1:00 PM on Saturday, the amphitheater in the demonstration area was fully packed. The demonstrations featured

renowned bonsai artists Koji Hiramatsu (Japan), Ryan Neil (United States), and Mauro Stemberger (Italy).

The exhibition was divided into several sections, including bonsai, shohin, suiseki, bonsai pot displays, special exhibitions by the Nippon Bonsai Sakka Kyookai Europe (NBSKE), a memorial exhibition for Alda Clijsters, and examples from Danny Use's private bonsai collection, who also designed the exhibition. The award ceremony took place on Saturday evening during the gala dinner.

Holger Göbel, with support from Martin Fercher, arranged this year's suiseki exhibition in the Japanese style. Only 14 large stones were displayed in a row in a tokonoma-like arrangement, each under a theme or telling a story. Each stone was combined with an accessory and/or a scroll painting. The presentations



Top: "Mountains of the Dancing Cranes," Origin: Liguria, Italy, 74 x 18 x 20 cm, owner: Bonsai Museum Heidelberg, Germany

Middle left: "Stop and listen to the cracking glaciers of the misty mountains," Yamagata-ishi, Japan, 36 x 19 x 12,5 cm, owner: Vladan Laxa, Czech Republic

Middle right: "Migration of cranes – the return to their breeding ground," origin: Liguria, Italy, 71 x 36 x 20 cm, owner: Sandro Tschudin, Switzerland

Bottom left: "A nice day at the beach: you can smell the sea," Kurama ishi, Japan, 45 x 11 x 9 cm, owner: Holger Göbel, Germany

Bottom right: "Garden of the divine," origin: Kamui-mintara, Japan, 41 x 14 x 20 cm, owner: Nicola Crivelli, Switzerland



Top: "Cold wind. In the warmth of the hut, the fisherman," water pool stone, origin: Switzerland, 39 x 24 x 7 cm, owner: Enzo Ferrari, Switzerland.

Middle left: "Ansel Adams tribute – American mountains and landscapes," origin: Liguria, Italy, 57 x 27 x 8 cm, owner: Roberto Ferrari, Italy



were separated by shoji-like dividers made of wooden latticework covered with Japanese paper, allowing each arrangement to be viewed in peace without distractions from adjacent displays. This arrangement created an appealing impression.

Landscape stones predominated, with the largest mountain stones measuring over 75 cm in length. The suiseki from Christophe Kurz of France, a shelter stone, received a nomination (first prize for suiseki by the Bonsai Association Belgium).

Holger Göbel noted: "This year's winner is the well-known suiseki from Japan. The last owner was Mr. Koizumi-san, who owned it for over 40 years. It is an Ibigawa-ishi, a shelter stone from Japan. The current owner and winner is Mr. Christophe Kurz, France."

Another prize for a special presentation, personally donated by Holger Göbel, went to "The Mountains of Dancing Cranes" from the Bonsai Museum Heidelberg, an impressive Ligurian mountain stone. The World Bonsai Friendship Federation (WBFF) award went to the mountain stone of Jörg Derlien. However, the quality of the other suiseki and their presentations was also high, making the selection of the best suiseki challenging.

It will be challenging to improve the suiseki exhibition even more next year. 🌳



Upper middle right: "A monk on a pilgrimage at Hokkaido," Hokkaido ishi, Japan, 41 x 15 x 17 cm, owner: Gudrun Benz, Germany.

Bottom left: "Little dragon – this shining pearl! You will never catch," Kibune-ishi, Japan, 43 x 31 x 18 cm, owner: Martin Fercher, Switzerland.

Lower middle right: "Endless Island, a seagull screams," island stone, origin: Ardenne mountain, Belgium, 75 x 34 x 10 cm, largest suiseki in the show, owner: Luc Deschryvere, Belgium.

Bottom right: "I wish everyone the vitality of the bamboo, the purity of the water, the beauty of the mountains, the strength and wisdom of the dragon." Origin: Taiwan, 42 x 15 x 7 cm, owner: Igor Bárta, Czech Republic.

Bonsai Aesthetics and the Breath of Leaves...

By Marco Mei, Italy

Photos courtesy Marco Mei



For the great painter Katsushika Hokusai, “art was a way to understand life,” and the phrase “the only time I feel alive is when I paint” is attributed to Vincent van Gogh. These insights are illuminating for the practice of bonsai, and I, too, strive to live and “walk the path,” as they say, seeing it as a continuous series of lessons—for the spirit and about the spirit. Like an art form that, drop by drop, may not return in exactly the same way, but in a way, a means of understanding life.



With this in mind, spending time immersed in nature—among mountains, valleys, or forests—becomes the perfect opportunity to better understand what we do when we work on a potted tree. If we want to embark on a journey with it to transform it into a bonsai, and in doing so grow ourselves as bonsai artists, then our understanding of nature will be the true scissors, the real branch cutters, and, most importantly, the most powerful tool we have to create something extraordinary.

Some mountains open onto breathtaking landscapes that inspire us so much that we feel the urge to bring our workbench to our favorite spot, along with our tools—gouges, wire, cutters—everything, and try to recreate, like modern-day Impressionists painting en *plein air*, a bonsai that captures the distinctive forms of a tree that captivated us on our last walk...



This is, of course, just for fun, but in this specific case, I'm sharing some photos of a Scots pine from northern Italy that allowed me to step through doors unexplored by most bonsai practitioners. The renowned Japanese director Akira Kurosawa's film *Dreams* illustrates this concept, particularly in the segment featuring a Japanese painter who, in the narrative, seeks to learn the secrets of painting from Van Gogh. By the end of the episode, the painter astonishingly steps into one of

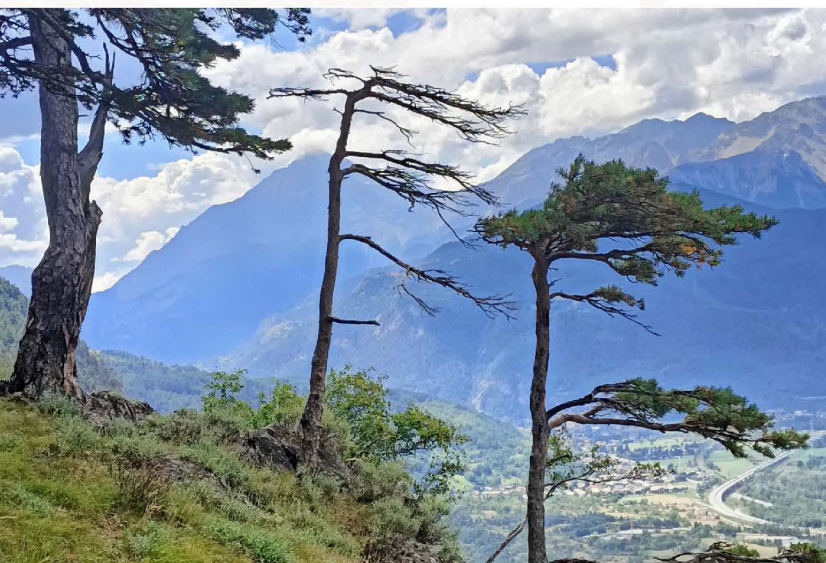
Van Gogh's most famous canvases, which comes to life and is shown from the perspective of a museum visitor.

Encountering that Scots pine on that hilltop felt, to me, like meeting a monk—not a hermit, but certainly solitary—who has witnessed and continues to observe everything that happens beneath and around him, day after day, year after year, century after century, shaped by the forces of nature that he faces daily. The point is not just to see that he has not succumbed to these forces, as we in the West might immediately note, but rather that he does not resist them either. Instead, he exists within them, accepting them as part of a Whole, in which he, like us, has only the time granted between birth and death.



But the reality of an artist's life in bonsai goes even beyond all this: it is not enough to simply imitate nature's work; we must imitate its creative act. This is where the artistry of a masterpiece emerges—a wonder that expresses not only the relationship between nature and the tree but also between us, as bonsai artists, and our creation.

For those who practice bonsai, all of this is crucial not only to understand a fundamental cultural aspect of the civilization from which this art originated and still thrives but also from a technical perspective. Knowing that the seed of that pine, which fell onto solid rock in an exposed mountainous region, grew in conditions closely resembling those recreated in a bonsai pot is key. Those characteristics are genetically preserved, in that tree, before it, and in its descendants after it. Likewise, a wildfire may have broken the trunks of hundreds of larches, yet some remained untouched at their core, surviving and still fighting for life at high altitudes.



Some cases are even more extraordinary because they occur at lower elevations. You can see them, for example, inside a dense fir forest. Here, the towering columns of trees create such deep darkness that the forest floor barely has any undergrowth—especially in stands of silver firs, which are much denser than red firs... true deer country. And yet, in some instances, rocky outcrops emerge, particularly on the northern slopes where it remains damp and cool, where Scots pines cling to the rocks so tenaciously that they evoke the landscapes of the Yellow Mountains. They seem to transport us to the China that many of us have only seen in books—in chapters about the history and origins of our art.

I believe the images I present here speak for themselves, especially of their age. And this is something that, aesthetically, goes beyond anything even a *yamadori* could offer—whether we collect it or not. These trees are something more: they are master trees, guardians of bonsai aesthetics. This applies to those most exposed to the wind, as well as those ancient, twisted, broken, and bent—but not entirely fallen—whose nearly severed limbs have come to rest on another tree, continuing to live only because of that support. Until, perhaps decades later, they finally abandon that broken part, choosing their own fate.



And in this way, especially with this perspective, we can not only notice unique branches and ramification worth exploring in our art but also one of the least discussed aspects of bonsai: short *jin*. And yet, Masahiko Kimura has created many.



The astonishing work of great bonsai masters is not only the result of impressive feats accomplished with power tools and technical skill as we understand it in the West. Their mastery comes from having observed nature and embedded it into their creations through the lens of aesthetics—an essential perspective for us as well. When sharpened, it can one day grant us the ability to perceive, perhaps, the sound of light on moss or the breath of leaves...



"Marco (Ma-Ru-Ko) Mei" is the artistic name of Marco Zocco Ramazzo, a member of the Society of Italian Literature Philologists, PhD in Medieval Studies from the University of Geneva, and Life Member of BCI. For over ten years, he has dedicated himself to bonsai and suiseki. In 2021, he won the Talent Award for Best Bonsai Artist in the Coordinamento Bonsai Piemonte-Lombardia and is currently the President of the Board of Arbitrators of the A.I.A.S. (Italian Association of Suiseki Enthusiasts).



Top: Bonsai do Campo hosts the Carlos Tramujas Advanced Bonsai School, a space dedicated to face-to-face bonsai training.

Bonsai do Campo

Cultivating Tradition, Growing the Future of Bonsai in Brazil

By Carlos Tramujas, Brazil

Photos courtesy Bonsai do Campo

In the lush landscape of Porto Amazonas, a peaceful town 80 km from Curitiba, in South Brazil, Bonsai do Campo was born—a space that combines tradition, art, and nature. The region, known for its apple production, boasts vast plantations, orchards, native forests, and the imposing Iguaçu River. This setting inspired the concept of “bonsai do campo,” bringing the spirit of bonsai directly from its origin.

The story began with the work of agronomist Carlos Tramujas, who was invited to improve the bonsai production system at the Belverede Plantas nursery.

At that time, fellow agronomist Edson Bruno Anderman managed the bonsai area. The partnership bore fruit, and the results were remarkable.

In 2007, even before Bonsai do Campo became independent, the brand was launched, and the I National Rural Bonsai Meeting was held. A bold event that overcame logistical difficulties to bring participants to an environment immersed in nature and the processes of a large nursery’s production. The success of the meeting, which attracted people from various regions of Brazil and South America, marked a turning point



Top: Author, bonsai artist, teacher and nursery owner Carlos Tramuja with an example of the bonsai specimens available from Bonsai do Campo.

Middle: Bonsai do Campo started operating January 2013 in its new facilities, a 60-hectare plot.

for the company, showcasing the natural richness and potential of the region.

With the separation from the Belverede nursery, Bonsai do Campo gained autonomy, and in 2009, it was officially established. Construction of the headquarters on a 60-hectare plot began shortly after, and in January 2013, Bonsai do Campo started operating in its new facilities.

Today, with more than 25 employees, Bonsai do Campo remains true to its ideal of exclusively producing bonsai and pre-bonsai. It continually invests in

improving its facilities and refining its techniques to deliver plants that embody the care and beauty of the bonsai art.

OBJECTIVES

Specialized in the production and commercialization of bonsai and pre-bonsai, Bonsai do Campo's main objective is to spread this art across Brazil. The company aims to produce high-quality plants at affordable prices, using traditional bonsai species and top-quality ceramic

Bonsai do Campo will host the XV Latin American and Caribbean Bonsai Congress in November 2026 in Curitiba, in partnership with FELAB.



Top and middle: The first production line is dedicated to large-scale commercial bonsai, aimed at retailers who want to offer their customers a quality and affordable product.

Bottom: Seedlings destined for the field are planted according to basic agricultural principles: soil preparation, pH correction, fertilization, phytosanitary care, pruning, and tree modeling.

pots, always respecting the principles of harmony and proportion.

The first production line is dedicated to large-scale commercial bonsai, aimed at retailers who want to offer their customers a quality and affordable product, allowing more people to experience the fascinating world of bonsai. Garden Centers, florists, and specialty stores are served, with deliveries by the company's own fleet to several states and shipping through transport companies.

The commercial bonsai line also caters to companies interested in offering unique gifts for events, ensuring a special present that leaves a lasting impression. While Bonsai do Campo focuses on wholesale sales, it also serves the end customer at its nursery, providing detailed information about each species and cultivation tips to help beginners in the art.

The headquarters is open for visits, with frequent participation from bonsai clubs and associations from all over Brazil. Special attention and discounted prices are offered to groups, and advance booking is encouraged for a more pleasant experience. During visits, guided tours of the fields are organized, where the cultivation processes and the development of the plants are shown— a work that surprises and delights visitors.

The second production line is aimed at bonsai enthusiasts and professionals in the field who are interested in acquiring higher-quality bonsai and pre-bonsai for advanced work, courses, and exhibitions. The company offers a “Premium” line of unique specimens cultivated over many years and with careful modeling.

The recent website redesign introduced the sale of selected pieces, both small and large, including those planted in pots by renowned Brazilian ceramic artists. The company also offers high-quality pre-bonsai, with the structure and expertise to deliver these true works of art to customers.

RESULTS

Today, Bonsai do Campo stands out as the largest nursery specializing in producing and commercializing pre-bonsai and bonsai in South America. Its robust structure includes a space of over 1,000 m², housing the office and operational and logistical sectors, providing necessary support for production and storage.

The ideal conditions for large-scale cultivation and storage are recreated in an area of over 5,000 m² covered by shading nets and equipped with automatic irrigation. This infrastructure allows for preserving the essential qualities of the ancient art of bonsai, maintaining Bonsai do Campo's commitment to excellence.

The nursery develops a complete production system, applying modern and varied propagation techniques such as seed sowing, cutting rooting, air layering, and grafting. The entire structure is carefully organized into specific sectors, providing ideal conditions for each stage of the cultivation process.

The rooting sector accommodates over 450,000 cuttings from over 100 species intended for bonsai and pre-bonsai production.



Top and middle left and right: The second production line is aimed at bonsai enthusiasts and professionals in the field who are interested in acquiring higher-quality bonsai and pre-bonsai for advanced work, courses, and exhibitions.

Bottom left and right: The recent website redesign introduced the sale of selected pieces, both small and large, including those planted in pots by renowned Brazilian ceramic artists.

After the necessary time, the seedlings are selected according to the production plan, with some going to field planting and others being transferred to plastic pots for the formation of small plants.

The seedlings destined for the field are planted according to basic agricultural principles, including soil preparation, pH correction, fertilization, phytosanitary care, pruning, and tree modeling. The length of stay in the field varies according to the desired size of the

plant. Currently, this planting area occupies around 10 hectares, housing approximately 200,000 plants of different species and sizes, all cultivated to preserve the art of bonsai in its essence.

At this stage, plants are cultivated in plastic pots to significantly increase in size and trunk diameter. Bonsai do Campo begins a controlled fertilization process and successive pruning, adjusted according to the type of plant and production purpose. After 2 to 5



Examples of bonsai specimens available from Bonsai do Campo.

Top left: *Calindra Rosa*, *Calliandra brevipes*.

Top right: Chinese fringe-flower shrub, *Loropetalum chinense* var. *rubrum*.

Middle left and right: Jaboticaba trees, *Plinia cauliflora*, also known as Brazilian grapetree.

years, these plants can be used for bonsai production or sold as pre-bonsai. The storage area spans over 20,000 m² and holds an inventory of over 50,000 plants with automatic irrigation.

BONSAI SECTOR

In the final stage of production, pre-bonsai are carefully transferred to high-quality glazed ceramic pots in various sizes and models, selected to ensure visual harmony with each plant. This process requires technical skill, as specialized labor must position the bonsai to enhance the composition's design. Additionally, the substrate is prepared in a balanced way, ensuring

aeration, water retention, nutrients, and ideal drainage for healthy growth.

After planting, the plants undergo a "curing" period of three to nine months, depending on the species. During this time, they are protected in a shading net area of over 2,500 m², which accommodates up to 10,000 bonsai and offers the ideal conditions for cultivation. The bonsai receive controlled fertilization and are pruned frequently, acquiring their final shape before being made available for sale.

Bonsai do Campo's dedicated work is reflected in its sales volume and the presence of its brand in various distribution points across Brazil. In 2023, the company sold more than 3,000 plants per month, totaling over



Top: Bonsai do Campo has a wealth of bonsai specimens for professional enthusiasts.

Bottom: An excellent example of the exhibit-quality *Juniperus chinensis*.



In 2023, the company sold more than 3,000 plants per month, totaling over 40,000 plants for the year,



Bonsai do Campo is equipped with automatic irrigation.

In the dispatch area, Bonsai do Campo carefully prepares the bonsai for shipment, ensuring that the plants arrive at their destinations intact.

40,000 plants for the year, consolidating itself as a reference in the bonsai sector in the country.

In the dispatch area, Bonsai do Campo carefully prepares the bonsai for shipment, ensuring that the plants arrive at their destinations intact. The company makes regular deliveries to various Brazilian states, using special packaging that protects the bonsai from damage during transport. This care reflects the commitment to quality at all stages, from production to final delivery.

Additionally, the nursery hosts the Carlos Tramujas Advanced Bonsai School, a space dedicated to face-to-face bonsai training. The school was designed for bonsai enthusiasts seeking advanced technical knowledge, and it has complete infrastructure to provide students with an efficient and immersive learning environment.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Bonsai do Campo's partner's ambition is to expand and strengthen the company's presence as a reference center for bonsai art. One of the main projects is to transform the nursery into the "Porto Amazonas Bonsai Museum" by 2026. This project includes improvements in accessibility and infrastructure to receive visitors not only from Brazil but from around the world, offering a unique space for the appreciation and learning of bonsai.

Furthermore, Bonsai do Campo is organizing an important event for the sector: the XV Latin American and Caribbean Bonsai Congress. Scheduled for November 2026, in partnership with the Latin American and Caribbean Bonsai Federation (FELAB), the congress will be held in Curitiba at a location yet to be defined. This event is an opportunity to consolidate the company's and Brazil's position as leaders in the bonsai culture, promoting the exchange of knowledge and techniques among the best bonsai artists from Latin America, the Caribbean, and other countries worldwide. 🌳

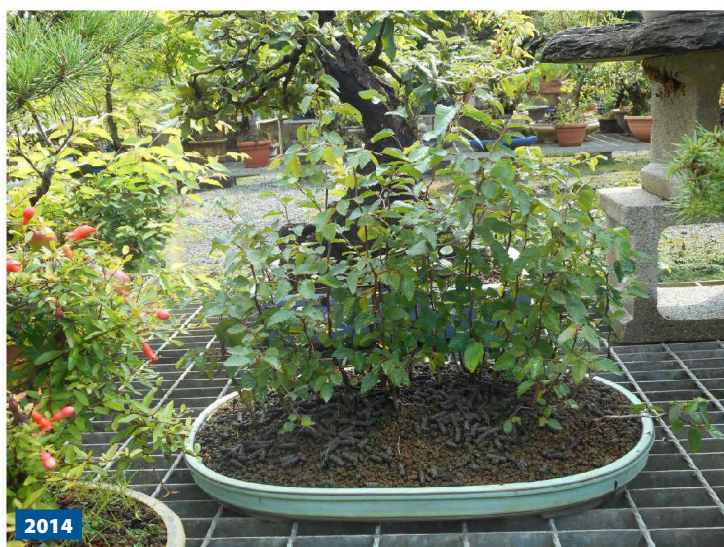
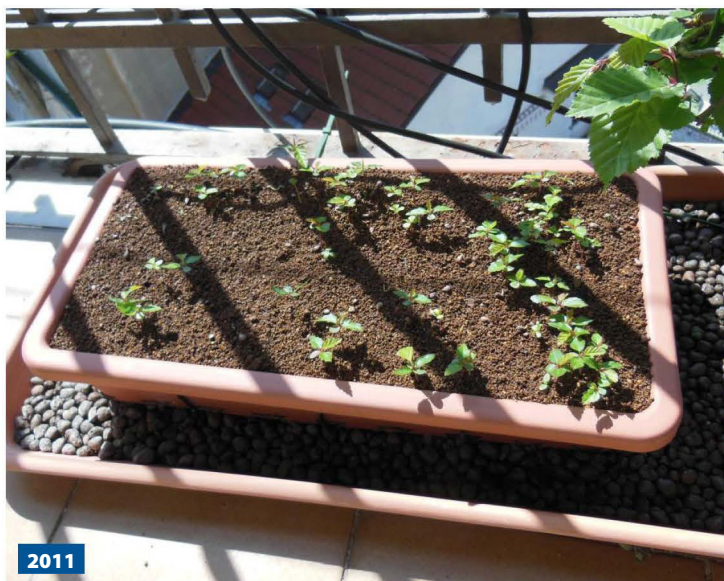


Growing Together A Bonsai Forest and a Father's Journey

By Massimo Bandera, Italy

Photos by Massimo Bandera and Emanuele Cappellano





In this exclusive interview, BCI Contributing Editor and BCI Director Massimo Bandera speaks with Emanuele Cappellano about his deeply personal journey of cultivating a bonsai forest from seed.

This method allows for complete creative control, starting with the careful bending of supple seedlings to shape their trunks and define the composition from the very beginning.

For Emanuele, this forest is more than just a bonsai project—it is a living symbol of growth, paralleling the life of his son, Andrea, for whom it was created. Over the years, Massimo and Emanuele have documented the forest's evolution through photography, capturing not only the transformation of the trees but also the story they tell of patience, dedication, and the passage of time.

Inspiration and Beginnings

What inspired you to start this bonsai project to commemorate Andrea's birth?

It was the idea of nurturing my son's growth over time, alongside the growth of the bonsai forest. Our personal development, much like the maturation of our bonsai,

is an ongoing journey—always evolving yet always remaining true to itself. Many of my bonsai are tied to different moments in my life, as well as to family and friendships.

Why did you choose Korean hornbeam for this special planting?

Among the most commonly used species for forest-style bonsai, the hornbeam stands out for its elegance. In autumn, it becomes a striking presence in the garden, with its foliage shifting through shades of red, pink, orange, and burgundy—changing slightly every year.

Did you have prior experience growing bonsai from seed, or was this your first time?

This was one of my first attempts. In general, I've always had a deep passion for growing bonsai from seed. Of course, it takes years before you see meaningful results, but the wait is always worthwhile. I'm fascinated by the level of quality and refinement that seed-grown trees can achieve.



Process and Challenges

Can you describe the planting and early care process during the first few years?

I usually start with shallow seed trays, allowing the seedlings to grow freely for the first year. By the second or third year, I begin transferring them into bonsai pots, carefully arranging the groups to create depth while leaving some empty spaces. At this early stage, when the seedlings are still thin and flexible, it's crucial to wire each one individually to shape movement and harmony within the composition.

Did you encounter any difficulties moving the young trees from your balcony to the garden?

No, quite the opposite. Managing bonsai is much easier in a garden, where overall growing conditions are far more favorable.

How has Massimo Bandera's guidance influenced the cultivation of this forest?

Massimo has been both a friend and mentor to me for nearly 20 years. He has taught me—and continues to

teach me—not just the technical and horticultural aspects of bonsai, but also the artistic and cultural dimensions that define this world.

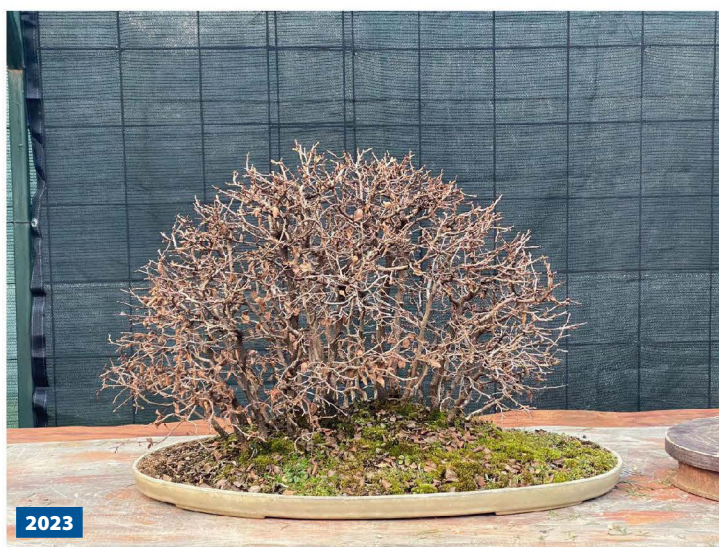
Did you follow a specific plan to shape the Tsukamiyue style, or did it develop naturally?

*Hornbeams grown from seed tend to be quite rigid and upright unless they're wired early on, so I started wiring them in their second year. A major source of inspiration for my forest compositions has been the historic bonsai forests of Saburo Kato, particularly his 1963 book *Forest, Rock Planting & Ezo Spruce Bonsai*.*

Bonsai Philosophy and Personal Growth

How has this bonsai journey deepened your understanding of patience and dedication?

Bonsai teaches you to appreciate every moment, regardless of the final outcome. This is especially true for seed-grown bonsai, which take many years to mature. Even young trees, when arranged harmoniously, can convey a sense of natural beauty. Over time, progress happens almost imperceptibly—but it happens.



Have you found parallels between parenthood and caring for this bonsai?

When I stand in my garden, looking at my forests or revisiting old photos, I'm amazed at how much they've grown. Isn't it the same with children? We spend years nurturing, guiding, and raising them, and then one day, we suddenly realize how much they've matured.

Has Andrea developed a connection with the bonsai as he grows alongside it?

Not much yet... I've never tried to push Andrea or Lorenzo toward bonsai, though deep down, I secretly hope they'll take an interest one day.

Present and Future

What does this bonsai forest represent to you today, 15 years later?

It's impossible to look at or care for this bonsai without reflecting on its story and what it symbolizes.

Do you have any specific plans for its future development?

I'll continue caring for it year after year, and I still feel

the same excitement when I see new seedlings sprout each spring.

Will Andrea eventually take part in its care as he grows? If he wants to, it would be my pleasure.

Looking ahead, do you see this becoming a family tradition—perhaps starting a new bonsai for another milestone?

Every year, I take the opportunity to start new projects, often linked to life events. For instance, in 2021, we moved to New York for a couple of years for work, and now my garden includes trees grown from seeds collected in Central Park.

Final Reflections

What advice would you give to someone who wants to grow a bonsai from seed to commemorate an important life event?

Go for it! The results are truly rewarding.

If you had to sum up this experience in a single thought or feeling, what would it be?

Growing bonsai from seed is a unique experience that every bonsai enthusiast should try at least once.

Emanuele Cappellano's bonsai forest is more than a carefully cultivated arrangement of trees—it is a testament to the beauty of time, patience, and personal connection. Growing bonsai from seed offers a unique opportunity to shape a tree's journey from its very first stages, making each bend and branch a reflection of one's vision and dedication.

Whether to commemorate a milestone, honor a loved one, or simply embrace the rewarding challenge of long-term cultivation, starting a bonsai from seed is a deeply fulfilling experience. As Emanuele's story shows, the trees we nurture become more than just bonsai—they become living memories, growing alongside us, year after year. 🌲



The Difference Between ASPAC and ABFF

A Brief Synopsis of Two Distinct and Unrelated Entities

By Budi Sulistyo, Indonesia, and José L. Rodriguez Macias, Puerto Rico

Photos courtesy Budi Sulistyo

On June 19 -22, 1991, a new chapter in the history of “Bonsai” was born at the Nusa Indah Convention Center Hotel in Nusa Dua, Bali. Indonesia, a brand-new player in the bonsai world, represented by The Indonesian Bonsai Society, celebrated its first International Bonsai Congress, The Asia Pacific Bonsai Exhibition and Convention, or, as many of you know

it, by its acronym, ASPAC. Foreseeing the necessity of covering ground within Asia to catapult Indonesia’s emerging bonsai industry, the gathering was mainly geared towards Asia and Pacific countries under the slogan “Friendship Through Bonsai.” At the time, as a

Left: *Casuarina equisetifolia*, demonstration tree by Budi Sulistyo and team in ASPAC 1

Top right: ASPAC 1 Bali

Bottom right: Aspac 1



Top left: The warm embrace of Mr. Saleh and Mr. Kato at ASPAC 1

Top right: The Working committee of ASPAC 1

Middle left: ASPAC 5, Taiwan

Middle right: Pine at ASPAC 8, Beijing, 2005

Bottom left: ASPAC 10, Taiwan. Opening ceremony

Bottom right: ASPAC 10, Taiwan



new International Convention, and until the present day, ASPAC is still considered a big success and a cornerstone within the world bonsai gatherings. Back in 1991, it was the first to garner world attention since the Osaka Expo in Japan held in 1970 and The World Bonsai Convention in Omiya in 1989. Fifteen (15) countries were represented in the event with a total of 450 participants, of which 223 were foreign delegates. The event was sanctioned by the Nippon Bonsai Association (NBA), whose delegation was led by none other than the late Grandmaster Saburo Kato. Four hundred (450) bonsai were on display, and the event spearheaded the art of Suiseki in Indonesia.

During the First ASPAC, as an informal gathering of countries, delegates from Taiwan, the Philippines, China, India, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, France, Italy, the USA, and Indonesia held a roundabout meeting to exchange ideas on bonsai industry and trade. All participating delegates agreed to continue with the second ASPAC, which will be set at a later date, two or three years after the conclusion of the first congress. As agreed upon, Hong Kong took the task of holding the second ASPAC in the year 1993.

After a successful event in Nusa Dua, Bali, the Second ASPAC was diligently organized in Hong Kong in 1993, followed by the Third ASPAC in 1995 in Singapore; the 4th ASPAC gloriously handled in Shanghai, China, a memorable event attended by a significant number of foreign guests in 1997; the Fifth ASPAC in Taipei in 1999; ASPAC 6th in Malaysia in 2001 and ASPAC 7th in Manila in 2003.



Mr. Ismail Saleh, former Indonesian Minister of Justice, was also the Patron of The Indonesian Bonsai Society is credited with being the founder of ASPAC. As stated earlier, the Chairman of the World Bonsai Friendship Federation (WBFF), Grandmaster Saburo Kato attended the first ASPAC. After witnessing the organizational capabilities of Patron Ismail Saleh, Mr. Kato appointed him as an international advisor to WBFF, an appointment unrelated to ASPAC but of significant importance.

After the passing of the Asian Bonsai Friendship Federation Director, Lee Chul Hoo from Korea, Mr. Saleh was appointed as the new Asian region director, and subsequently, they changed the name from Asian Bonsai Friendship Federation to Asia Pacific Bonsai

Friendship Federation region or ABFF as we all know it. The name change was a result of honoring Mr. Ismail Saleh for his efforts in promoting bonsai and for organizing independent events from WBFF, such as ASPAC, which remains an independent nonprofit organization from the WBFF umbrella to this day.

Top left: Sui-seki at ASPAC 10, Taiwan

Top right: Pine at ASPAC 10, Taiwan

Middle left: ASPAC 11, Japan, 2011

Middle right: Trees in the bazaar at ASPAC 11 in Takamatsu, Japan.

Bottom left: ASPAC 12, 2013 in Jintan

Bottom right: Budi and Paiman with the monument in Jintan, China during ASPAC 12, 2013



Top: PPBI won the bid in ASPAC 16 in Manila
Bottom: ASPAC and ABFF in Vietnam 2019

The words “Asia Pacific” within the names of both organizations (ASPAC and ABFF) have contributed to immense confusion. On more than one occasion, people have approached me to clarify this misunderstanding, and the answer is always the same: both organizations totally different. ASPAC is an informal organization that has many freedoms, while ABFF is a formal organization under WBFF rules. ASPAC has much larger coverage, including Japan, India, Malaysia, Taiwan, Myanmar, the Philippines, Macao, Vietnam, Thailand, Korea, China, Australia, New Zealand, and more.

In contrast, ABFF only has 8 members so far and is bound by WBFF’s “One Country, One Club” policy, meaning that each country is represented by a single national bonsai organization within the WBFF structure. This organization acts as the official liaison between the WBFF and bonsai practitioners in that country. As many of you know, WBFF is a world bonsai organization promoted by the Nippon Bonsai Association that divides the world into nine regions that are Japan, China, India or South Asia, Asia (Asia outside Japan, China and India), Europe, Africa, North America, Latin America, and Oceania. As history shows, during

the 7th ASPAC in Manila, Mr. Saleh took the opportunity to organize a meeting with members of ABFF to discuss the possibility of also having an ABFF recurring convention. As history shows, it was decided then that ABFF should also have a convention every two years. This is the genesis of confusion between the two entities. Since then, there have been two conventions with the name of Asia Pacific included within their organization title; one was the Asia Pacific Bonsai and Suiseki Convention (ASPAC), while the other is the Asia Pacific Bonsai Friendship Federation Congress (ABFF) under the WBFF umbrella. For example, in 2005, ASPAC was organized in Beijing, while ABFF was in Taiwan. Notwithstanding, in 2019, ASPAC 15th and ABFF were hosted by Vietnam and carried out at the same time. It was done similarly by the Philippines, where ASPAC 16th and the ABFF conventions were held simultaneously.

ASPAC is a unique organization characterized by its informal nature. Held every two (2) years, it has no permanent Chairman, secretary, treasurer, or officers, and there are absolutely no ASPAC members. If a country is within the Asia Pacific Belt, it has the right to attend the informal meeting and procure, via a formal presentation to the participating countries, to be the host of the next ASPAC Convention. Besides being within the Asia-Pacific Belt, the only requisite is that the country that successfully bids for the event covers all costs, advertisements, and other necessary expenses related to the event. Contrary to ABFF, there is no one-country and one-club rule within ASPAC.

For the 17th ASPAC, it will return once again to its roots, Bali, Indonesia. The Indonesian Bonsai Society, Gianyar Chapter, will host ASPAC 17th from July 18 to 21, 2025. This event marks the third time Indonesia has hosted the ASPAC Convention, from its inauguration and founding in 1991 until the present.

On behalf of the Indonesian Bonsai Association, we welcome you once again to rejoice in Bali’s natural charm and enjoy a piece of Balinese Bonsai. Selamat Datang!!! 🌳

THE JOURNEY OF A BONSAI

Olea europaea: From Collection to its First Exhibition

By Sebastiano Villante, Italy

Photos courtesy Sebastiano Villante



Top: Cava Ispica, Sicily, vicinity where the wild olive was collected..

Top inset: The wild olive after collection.

Bottom inset: After the initial styling in 2007.

The *Olea europaea*, commonly known as the olive tree, is one of the most iconic plants of the Mediterranean. For centuries, it has been a symbol of peace, longevity, and resilience, with roots deeply intertwined with millennia of history. Its presence in ancient Greece and Mediterranean cultures forms a continuous thread through the ages. Beyond its fundamental role in olive oil production, the olive tree serves as a living witness to traditions and legends lost to time.

This species is among the best for bonsai creation due to its unique characteristics: a naturally dense and irregular branching pattern, a gnarled and characterful trunk ideal for creating the illusion of an ancient tree, and rugged grey bark that adds fascinating texture and visual appeal. Furthermore, it is a hardy plant, capable of enduring drastic pruning and aggressive shaping techniques.

In my personal collection, I have many specimens of *Olea europaea*, including the sub-varieties *sylvestris*

and *europaea*, which I have been studying for over 20 years. It is both interesting and rewarding to highlight the differences between these two varieties.

The *sylvestris* sub-variety, commonly known as the wild olive, is highly popular among bonsai enthusiasts for several reasons: short internodes, small leaves, high vigor, and resistance to disease. Conversely, the *europaea* sub-variety has longer internodes, larger leaves, lower vigor, and is more susceptible to disease.

These are the key aspects I have observed in my study of these two varieties. In some cases, what might initially appear as “cons”—specifically regarding the *europaea* sub-variety—have proven to be “pros.” For example, a slightly longer internode or reduced vigor can significantly aid in achieving finer branching in a bonsai’s maturation process, reducing the need for major pruning to maintain the silhouette.

In this article, I aim to share my journey through time, detailing all the phases and decisions that accompanied me in shaping a centuries-old *Olea europaea* bonsai—from its collection in the wild to its first exhibition.

Phase 1: Collection

The collection of a centuries-old *Olea europaea* tree directly from nature is not only a technical challenge but also an ethical one. The tree must be chosen with care, respecting local laws and the natural environment in which it grows.

This particular olive tree was found on the slopes of a cliff and was selected for its unique structure: a knotted, twisted trunk and significant deadwood, highlighting a life endured under harsh conditions—strong winds and arid soils.

For the collection, I waited until February, one of my preferred times for this operation. About a month after collection, the tree began to sprout along the trunk, showing uncommon vigor. For the substrate, I used a mix consisting of 20% peat, 20% agricultural perlite, and 60% pumice.

Phase 2: Initial Shaping

March 2007

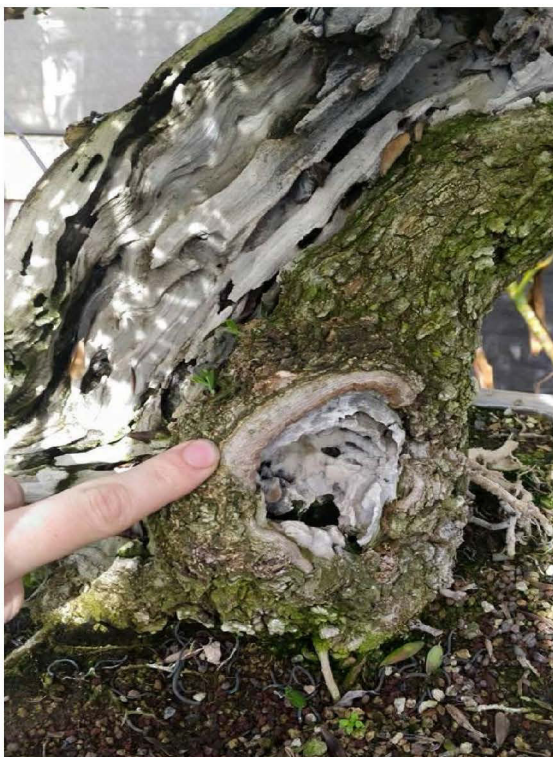
During the bonsai exhibition organized by the Bonsai Club of Vittoria, alongside my friend Giovanni Mugnas, the first shaping of this specimen was carried out.

After carefully studying the tree’s characteristics and focal points, we began by cleaning the deadwood, distinguishing the live sections from the dead ones. We then proceeded with selecting the main branches and wiring them simultaneously. This phase laid the foundation for the future shape of the bonsai.

It is worth noting that, almost twenty years later, my approach to shaping Mediterranean bonsai has evolved slightly. Today, I focus on achieving results more quickly and creating a more tapered structure.

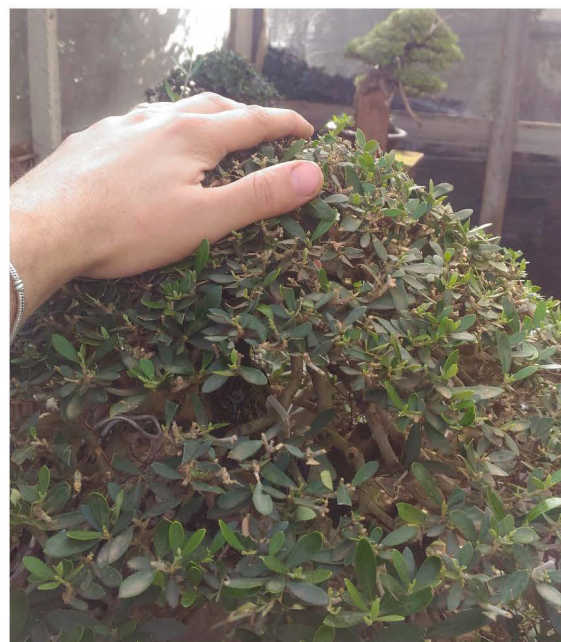
Phase 3: Repotting

Approximately five years after its collection, the tree was repotted into a pot imported from Japan, using a substrate of pure pumice.



Top: Approximately five years after its collection, the tree was repotted using a substrate of pure pumice.

Bottom: Its deadwood feature was treated and detailed to ensure its longevity and visual impact.



Phase 4: Crown Development and Final Refinements

My final work focused primarily on shaping the crown. During this phase, I encouraged and selected natural branching to create the characteristic compact shape found in this species in nature. My goal was to represent the appearance of a centuries-old olive tree that had grown under challenging environmental conditions.

Thanks to its adaptability and vigorous growth, the olive tree responded very well, developing strong, well-distributed branches. Over time, the crown became denser, and I began applying precise finishing techniques, such as selecting fine twigs and meticulous pruning, to achieve an ideal aesthetic balance.

Meanwhile, I also focused on detailed work, which I believe always makes a difference in the art of bonsai. Specifically, I worked on the callusing of certain parts of the trunk that had been shaped over the years and maintained the deadwood to ensure its longevity and visual impact.

Phase 5: Preparation and Presentation at the First Exhibition

After months of meticulous planning, refining the display, and carefully cultivating the bonsai to preserve its ideal silhouette, the moment had finally arrived to showcase it at its first exhibition.

This was the **XII Mostra Nazionale Arte Bonsai e Suiseki di Catanzaro**, held from September 16 to 18, 2022.

The preparation for this event was quite demanding, as the exhibition was scheduled for late September, just after the scorching summer season. In Sicily, especially, the extreme heat often pushes most plants into vegetative dormancy.

In the weeks leading up to the event, I dedicated myself to perfecting every detail of my bonsai. The day of the exhibition marked the culmination of all my efforts, and seeing my bonsai on display was an incredibly moving experience.

During the Gala Dinner, the Ambassador of Japan, who was invited as the guest of honor at the event, awarded my bonsai as the best Mediterranean specimen exhibited at the show.

Conclusion

The journey of transforming this centuries-old *Olea europaea* into a bonsai was both fascinating and complex. Every step, from collection to final shaping, was carried out with the utmost respect for the tree—striving not to force its natural evolution but to guide it in a way that honored both the laws of nature and the aesthetics of bonsai. 🌳

The day of the exhibition marked the culmination of all my efforts, and seeing my bonsai on display was an incredibly moving experience.



BEYOND LIMITS: The Smallest Bonsai in Brazil

The Art and Precision of Micro Bonsai

Photos and background information
courtesy Marcelo Gallep, Brazil



Beyond its tiny stature, the beauty of Marcelo's creation lies in its ability to capture the essence of a full-sized tree in a space no larger than a coin.

When we think of bonsai, we often imagine small yet majestic trees, carefully pruned and shaped over decades, standing proudly in elegant ceramic pots. But what if the concept of “small” in bonsai was redefined to an extreme? What if a bonsai could fit on the tip of your finger?

Enter Marcelo Gallep, a Brazilian bonsai enthusiast who has challenged the very perception of bonsai size by cultivating what may be the smallest bonsai in the world. His micro bonsai, a *Zelkova abelicea*, stands at an astonishing height of just 1.6 cm—smaller than a fingernail. While conventional bonsai already require skill and patience, micro bonsai push the limits of horticultural precision to an almost surgical level.

The Challenge of Working on a Micro Scale

Cultivating a bonsai of such extreme miniaturization is not simply a matter of growing a tree in a smaller pot. It demands an unparalleled level of control over the plant's growth, requiring meticulous pruning,

precise watering, and careful monitoring of environmental conditions. The margin for error is virtually nonexistent—overwatering by just a drop, a slightly misplaced cut, or an imbalance in light exposure can spell disaster for a tree this size.

Marcelo has spent years refining his techniques, working with tools more akin to those found in a jeweler's workshop than a traditional bonsai kit. His dedication underscores a key truth about bonsai: the challenge is not in the size of the tree but in the skill of the grower.



19-09-22



A Testament to Patience and Mastery

"Working with bonsai is a passion that gives me a profound sense of connection to nature," Marcelo shares. "Watching this little Zelkova grow over the years has been a constant source of joy and wonder for me."

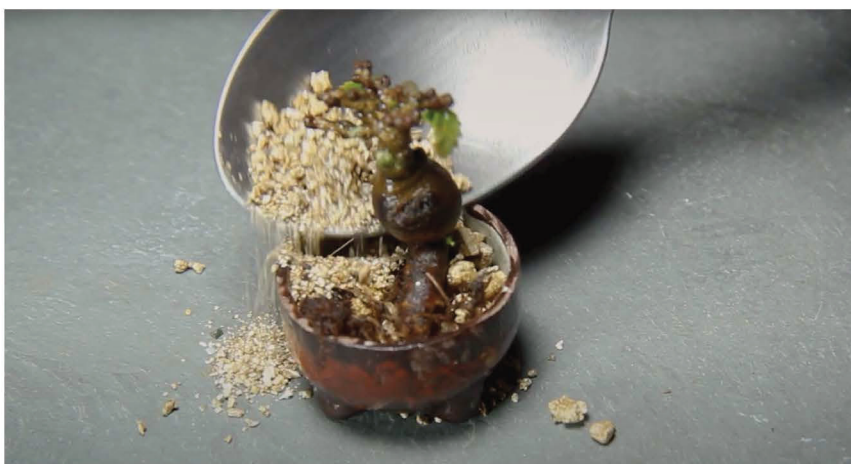
Beyond its tiny stature, the beauty of Marcelo's creation lies in its ability to capture the essence of a full-sized tree in a space no larger than a coin. This is the ultimate test of the bonsai philosophy—creating the illusion of an ancient and majestic tree in the smallest possible form.

The Future of Micro Bonsai

Marcelo's work not only pushes the boundaries of what is possible in bonsai cultivation but also inspires others to explore the fascinating world of extreme miniaturization. As more enthusiasts embrace micro bonsai, we may see new techniques emerging, further refining the art and science of growing trees at this scale.

His tiny treasure is a testament to the notion that true artistry in bonsai is not about size but about vision, patience, and precision. Micro bonsai challenges us to rethink what we believe is possible in nature and in ourselves.

This and next page: A repotting sequence for a micro bonsai. Do you have a magnifying glass, steady hands and micro-tools?





Micro bonsai challenges us to rethink what we believe is possible in nature and in ourselves.



Technical Sheet

Species: Zelkova abelicea

Height: 1.6 cm

Age: 4 years

Origin: Cultivated in Brazil

Cultivator: Marcelo Gallep

Unique Feature: Possibly the smallest bonsai in the world

Special Care: Precise watering, controlled pruning, and meticulous monitoring of growth conditions

For a closer look at this remarkable tree, you can scan the QR codes and watch Marcelo's videos documenting its maintenance and evolution:

The Smallest Bonsai in the World



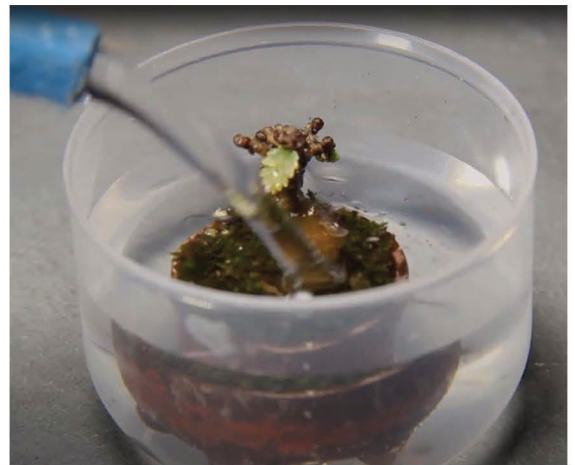
Micro Bonsai



Maintenance - Micro Bonsai (Keshi Tsubu)



Facing page: Size comparisons and the artist, Marcelo Gallep.





The Second Edition of the **Kifu** Bonsai Awards

By Gaetano Conte, Italy



Top: First Place, Conifers:
Juniperus itoigawa
by F. Pappalardo

Facing page: First Place,
Evergreens: *Olea sylvestris* by
L. Monni

The second edition of the international Kifu Bonsai Awards concluded in January, with its permanent exhibition remaining available on the website kifubonsaiawards.com and social media platforms.

Kifu bonsai fall between shohin and small-sized bonsai. They measure approximately 21 cm (8.5 inches) to 35 cm (13.5 inches) in height, making them a versatile choice for bonsai enthusiasts who desire a slightly larger display without being too cumbersome.

This competition is open to all bonsai enthusiasts and offers gift vouchers as prizes. To participate, simply submit a photo of your bonsai with a minimal display setup and a video verifying the tree's height. An optional video showcasing the bonsai in its display can also be included, as explained in detail on the official registration page: [How to Register](#).

Participants may submit photos and videos taken at other exhibitions or events, provided they have the

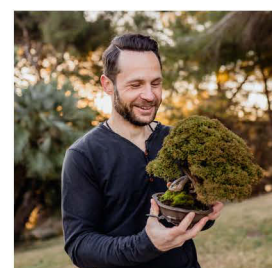
owner's authorization. Completing the bonsai presentation form is also required, though the entire process takes no more than 10 minutes.

The Kifu Bonsai Awards is a completely free and non-profit contest. Sponsors provide €100 gift vouchers to the top winners, while endorsing bonsai associations grant honorary mentions. Among the sponsors supporting this second edition were Morini Bonsai Shop and Utensili Manzanese, both long-time trusted partners of the competition.

The event was also supported by renowned bonsai associations, including UBI (Unione Bonsaisti Italiani), IBS (Istruttori Bonsai & Suiseki), and ABE AEB, which extended participation opportunities to Spanish bonsai enthusiasts.

The Super Jury

The distinguished Super Jury for this second edition included last year's experts—B. Bjorholm, A. Bonardo, F. Forno, and F. Zorzi—along with the addition of a



celebrated instructor known in Spain as El Rey Shohin, David Ruiz.

The evaluations remain undisputed, as the judges do not communicate with each other, either physically or linguistically. Once again, the Super Jury has done an outstanding job!

Special recognition goes to Angelo Ferlita, who undertakes the challenging task of reviewing submissions and ensuring a consistent level of quality in the permanent exhibition.

Award Categories

As in the first edition, prizes were awarded based on three categories: conifers, evergreens, and deciduous trees. Honorable mentions were given according to the ranking scores. It is important to note that the top awards are not necessarily given to the three overall best bonsai but rather to the finest tree in each category. This approach benefits collectors and enthusiasts who may work with unique and unconventional specimens.

Below are the selected bonsai that participated in the second edition! To watch videos of the winning compositions, visit the permanent exhibition at www.kifubonsaiawards.com. You can also follow the Kifu Bonsai Awards on social media for more photos and videos.

Winners and Honorable Mentions

First Place, Conifers: *Juniperus itoigawa* by F. Pappalardo

First Place, Evergreens: *Olea sylvestris* by L. Monni

First Place, Deciduous: Korean Hornbeam (*Carpinus coreana*) by A. Geraci

UBI Honorable Mention: Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) by R. Collino

IBS Honorable Mention: Yew (*Taxus baccata*) by A. Ammaccapane

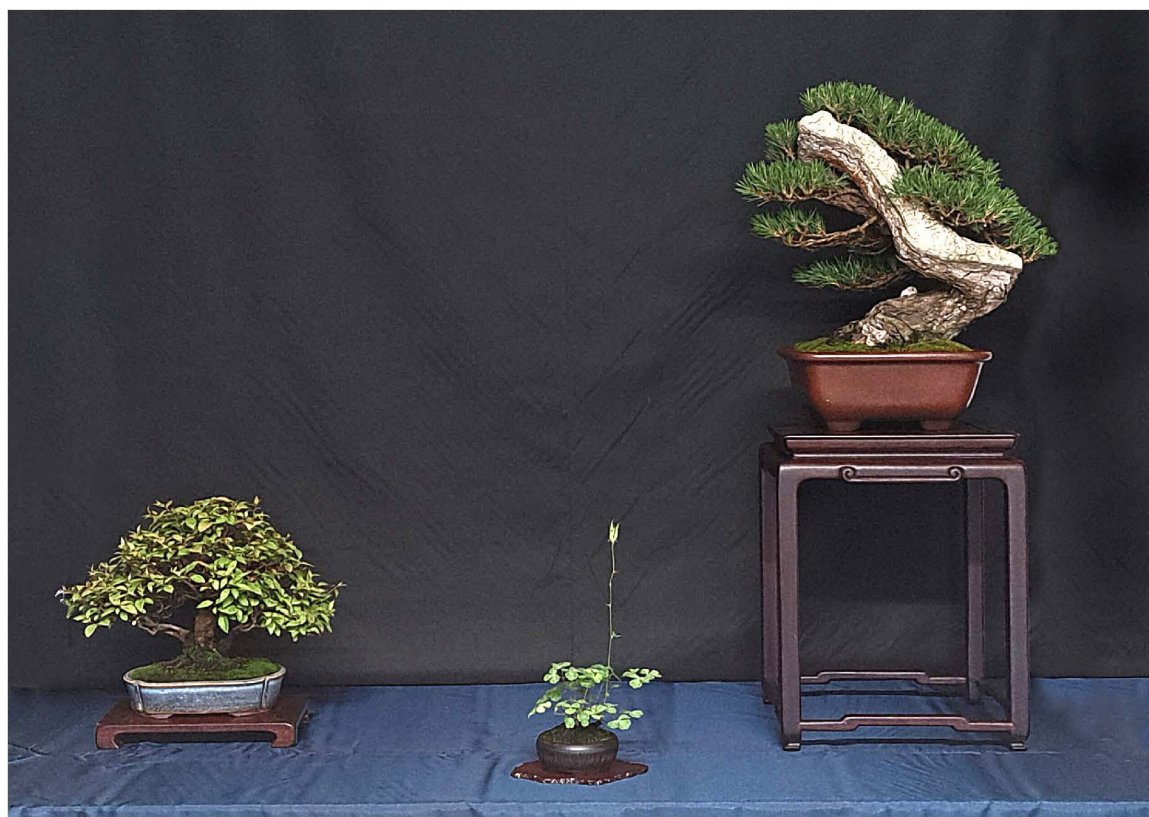
ABE AEB Honorable Mention: *Juniperus kishu* by A. Gori

Top to bottom: The distinguished Super Jury for this second edition included last year's experts—B. Bjorholm, A. Bonardo, F. Forno, and F. Zorzi—along with the addition of a celebrated instructor known in Spain as El Rey Shohin, David Ruiz.



Top: First Place, Deciduous:
Korean Hornbeam (*Carpinus
coreana*) by A. Geraci

Bottom: UBI Honorable
Mention: Scots Pine (*Pinus
sylvestris*) by R. Collino



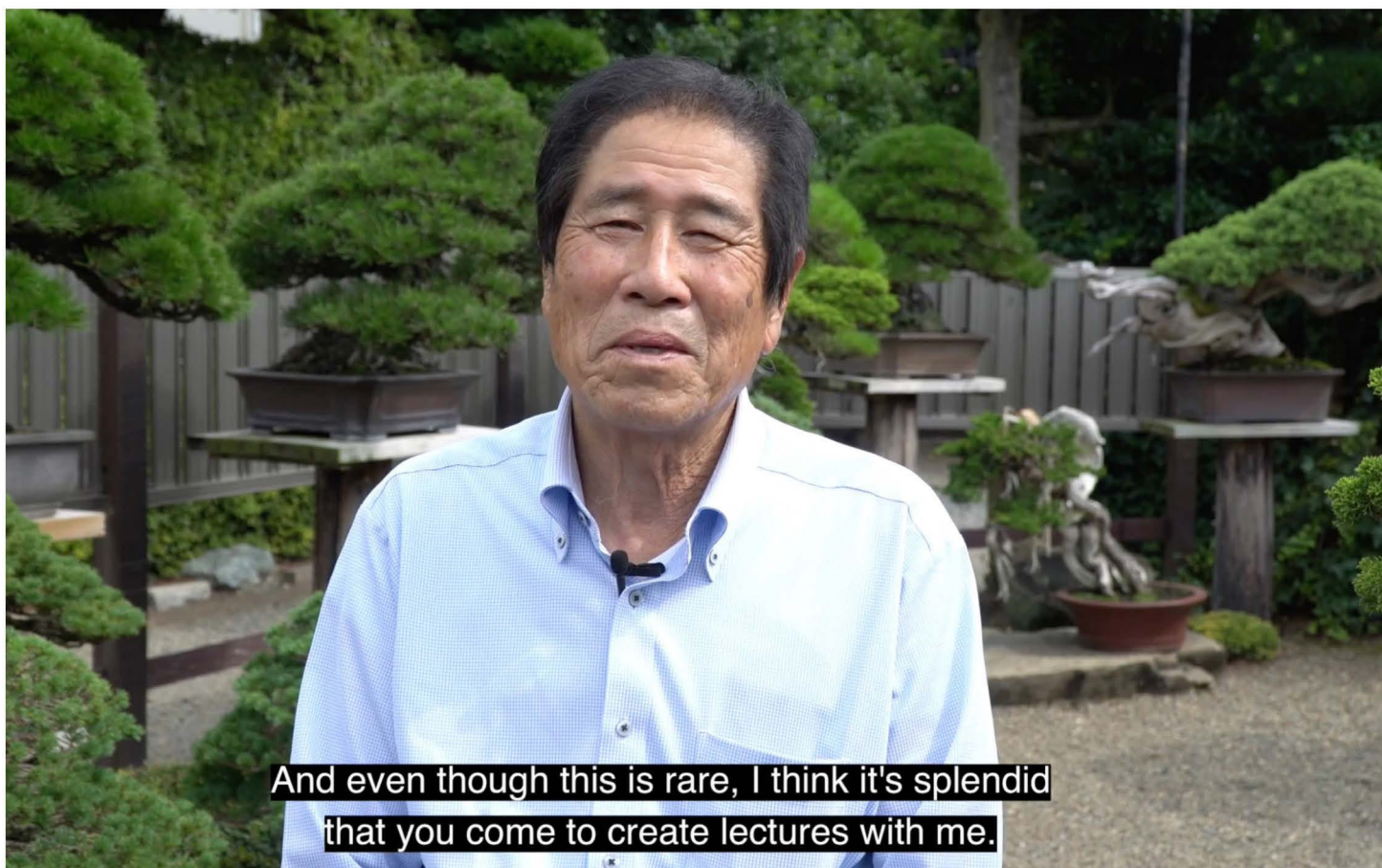
To participate as an exhibitor, sponsor, or endorsing organization—or for any other inquiries—please contact info@kifubonsaiawards.com.

Registrations for the next edition are open year-round until autumn 2025. To enter, complete the form and upload your files using this QR code. 🌲



Top: IBS Honorable Mention:
Yew (*Taxus baccata*) by A.
Ammaccapane

Bottom: ABE AEB Honorable
Mention: *Juniperus kishu* by
A. Gori



And even though this is rare, I think it's splendid that you come to create lectures with me.

Review of Bonsai Empire's Kimura Techniques Masterclass 2



Masahiko Kimura, the legendary bonsai master, returns in this extraordinary masterclass, sharing his expertise on advanced bonsai techniques. This course, produced in collaboration with Bonsai Empire, offers an unparalleled learning experience, showcasing Kimura's ability to transform massive trees through drastic redesign, extreme bending, and intricate refinement.



The course follows Kimura as he works on two remarkable trees: a towering Black Pine and an elegant Hinoki Cypress. The Black Pine segment is nothing short of a mystery thriller, as Kimura masterfully reduces a 1.5-meter tree to a compact, refined form. The project took an entire day to complete, a testament to Kimura's remarkable stamina even in his eighties. His extreme bending and advanced repotting techniques are mesmerizing to watch, demonstrating the structural and aesthetic transformation of a seemingly unworkable tree.

The Hinoki Cypress section shifts focus to refinement and exhibition preparation, as Kimura prepares the tree for Kokufu-ten, Japan's premier bonsai exhibition. His attention to detail in pad creation, apex design, and overall balance highlights the subtle artistry required to bring a tree to peak form.

One of the most engaging aspects of this masterclass is Kimura's willingness to explain his thought process. Despite his legendary status, he patiently answers questions from the Bonsai Empire representative and translator, making this an accessible yet deeply insightful experience. The presence of his dedicated apprentices, particularly Alessandro Bonardo, adds another layer of depth, showcasing the rigorous training involved in mastering bonsai.

The production quality is top-notch, with clear visuals and translations that allow viewers to grasp even the most intricate techniques. Watching Kimura work on world-class trees is an inspiring, vicarious experience—his skillset is simply beyond reach for most practitioners, yet deeply motivating. Having Kimura work on beginner-level trees would be like asking a world-class chef to cook instant noodles.

A final note: this project was initiated by Kimura himself, a true testament to the trust and respect he has for Bonsai Empire. This alone speaks volumes about the course's significance.

For anyone serious about bonsai, this masterclass is a must-watch. Whether you're fascinated by transformational techniques or the refined art of exhibition preparation, Kimura Techniques Masterclass 2 delivers an experience that is both educational and awe-inspiring. 🌲

LEVEL: Advanced

TOTAL TIME: 4.5 hour

LIFETIME ACCESS: \$ 99.99

LINK: <https://www.bonsaiempire.com/courses/kimura-masterclass-3>

Link and free previews

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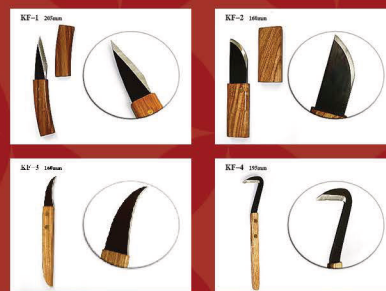
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