

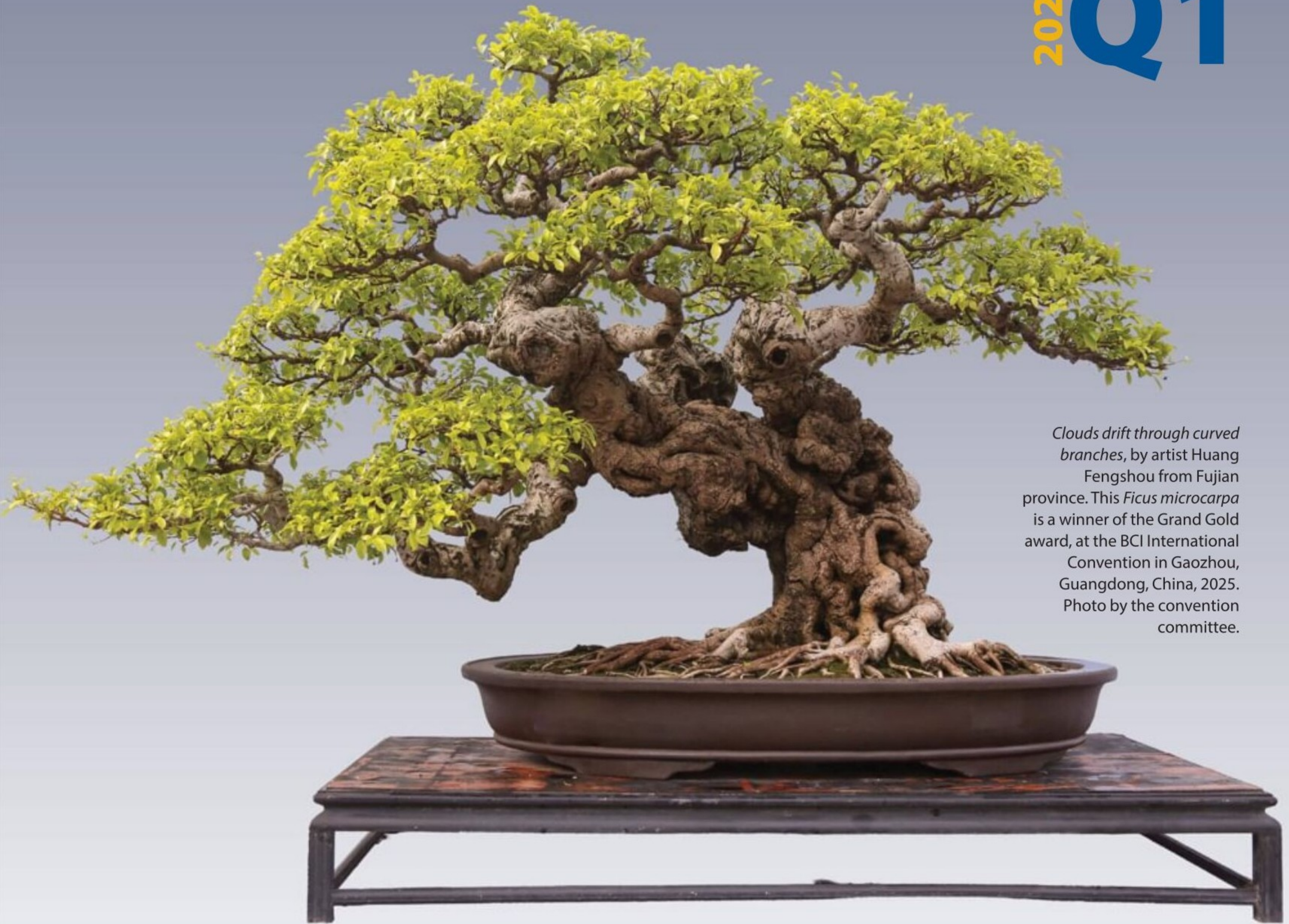
promoting
international friendship
through bonsai



bc*i*

Bonsai & Stone Appreciation

2026
Q1



*Clouds drift through curved branches, by artist Huang Fengshou from Fujian province. This *Ficus microcarpa* is a winner of the Grand Gold award, at the BCI International Convention in Gaozhou, Guangdong, China, 2025. Photo by the convention committee.*

BCI 2025 INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION IN GAOZHOU, GUANGDONG PROVINCE

- ONE SCENE, ONE WORLD: ONE STONE, ONE CHRONICLE, THE ART AND SPIRIT OF LINGNAN BONSAI
- LINGNAN PHOENIX GARDEN, GAOZHOU CITY
- RETROSPECTIVE: CHINA LINGNAN WAX STONE COLLECTION
- PENJING COMPETITIONS FLOURISH ACROSS CHINA

READING THE CLASSICS IN JAPAN

THE DRAGON'S SCREAM:
A LARCH REVEALED

CRESPI CUP 2025, ITALY

FORTY YEARS WITH BONSAI:
THE PAREKHS' ARTISTIC JOURNEY

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President's Message

Dear BCI Members and Fellow Bonsai and Viewing Stone Enthusiasts around the World,

As we welcome the beginning of 2026, I would like, on behalf of Bonsai Clubs International (BCI), to extend my warmest greetings and best wishes to all BCI members, bonsai and viewing stone practitioners, friends, and families worldwide. May the recently celebrated Christmas season have brought you warmth and joy, and may the new year ahead be filled with good health, creative inspiration, and meaningful achievements.

The year 2025 marked another remarkable chapter in the continued growth of bonsai and viewing stone art. Through the collective efforts of our global community, we have witnessed the enduring vitality of this ancient art in a contemporary context. I extend my sincere gratitude to every artist, enthusiast, club, and partner whose dedication and creativity have enriched the international bonsai and viewing stone landscape throughout the year.

Across the globe, international exchange has continued to deepen. From the Asia-Pacific region to Europe and the Americas, exhibitions, symposia, workshops, and online activities reached unprecedented levels of engagement. Advancements in technology have allowed us to transcend geographical boundaries, enabling the sharing of ideas, techniques, and experiences in ways previously unimaginable. Particularly encouraging has been the growing participation of younger artists, whose fresh perspectives and energy have infused new life into our art.

At the same time, there is an increasing awareness within our community of ecological responsibility and sustainable practice. More artists are embracing environmentally conscious approaches, advocating the use of native plant species and locally sourced stones, and exploring the harmonious relationship between artistic creation and environmental stewardship. This reflects not only a respect for tradition, but also a shared responsibility toward the future.

Like many art forms, bonsai and viewing stone appreciation continue to move steadily toward greater internationalization and wider public recognition. These arts have become powerful bridges for cross-cultural understanding. The dialogue between Eastern philosophy and Western aesthetics has inspired remarkable innovation, producing works that demonstrate the unique and universal value of bonsai and viewing stone art.

Looking ahead to 2026, BCI remains firmly committed to advancing artistic development, expanding educational opportunities, and strengthening connections within our global community. We will continue to promote international collaboration through initiatives such as online master classes, international exhibitions, and joint research projects, with a particular focus on nurturing young talent and building sustainable pathways for future generations.



Mr. Chen, Chang, BCI President

Looking ahead to 2026, BCI remains firmly committed to advancing artistic development, expanding educational opportunities, and strengthening connections within our global community.

Through scholarships, workshops, and digital platforms, we aim to encourage emerging artists to engage deeply with bonsai and viewing stone art, ensuring the transmission of both technical skill and artistic spirit. BCI will further enhance its global network by supporting local clubs in organizing regional activities, encouraging individual participation in international events, and providing timely coverage of exhibitions, conferences, and educational programs through our website and magazine. We also encourage artists and enthusiasts to explore the thoughtful integration of digital tools into education, exhibition, and creative practice, allowing this timeless art to flourish in the modern era. The beauty of art is born from nature and refined through craftsmanship. Bonsai and viewing stones are not merely disciplines of technique, but paths of inner cultivation—teaching us patience, reverence, balance, and humility. May we continue in 2026 to use bonsai and viewing stone art as a medium through which we engage with nature, enrich our inner lives, and guide this art toward an ever-broader horizon. 🌳

With my warmest wishes for a happy and fulfilling New Year.

Sincerely,
Chen Chang
President, Bonsai Clubs International

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

Exhibitions are where living tradition meets public imagination. In bonsai, penjing, and suiseki, these gatherings display refined works, reveal how trees and stones carry cultural memory, regional identity, and the values of the societies that nurture them. This edition is shaped by exhibitions and encounters that show how our arts continue to evolve while remaining deeply rooted in history, place, and shared experience.

The BCI 2025 International Convention in Gaozhou, Guangdong Province, provided a multifaceted view of Lingnan bonsai, penjing, and viewing stone culture through a series of complementary reports by contributing authors.

BCI President **Chen Chang** offers an overarching account of the convention in *One Scene, One World; One Stone, One Chronicle*, documenting the scope and structure of the Cultural Tourism Integration & Intangible Heritage Empowerment Bonsai Art Invitational Exhibition and Lingnan Phoenix Garden Viewing Stone Showcase.

Budi Sulisty examines the BCI China National Bonsai Invitational Exhibition and explores how Lingnan history, landscape, and cultural memory shape a distinctive bonsai aesthetic, offering insight into the regional character that defines the exhibition and its participants.

From a cultural and institutional perspective, **Ho Wai Fong** presents *From Garden to Global Dialogue*, framing the Lingnan Phoenix Garden as a venue for cultural diplomacy. **Tim Xu Dongting** turns attention to viewing stones in *Lingnan Legacy, Stone Rhythm Naturally Formed*. His essay traces the historical development of yellow wax stones. In *Penjing Competitions Flourish Across China*, by **Chen Zhaonian**, strong institutional support and technical rigor highlight penjing's ongoing role as both cultural heritage and evolving horticultural craft.

Together, these reports provide a layered and cohesive record of the BCI 2025 International Convention, documenting its artistic achievements, cultural context, and broader significance within the global bonsai, penjing, and suiseki community.

On the international stage, we travel to Italy for the 15th International Bonsai & Suiseki Meeting – Crespi Cup 2025. Celebrating its thirtieth anniversary, the **Crespi Cup** once again affirms its status as a global crossroads that honors both legacy and innovation.

This issue is further enriched by thoughtful articles and personal stories. *Reading the Classics* by **Min Hsuan Lo** and **Andrew Lo** is a reflective travel essay that explores how repeated encounters in Japan deepen bonsai understanding through humility, observation, and the lived continuity of centuries-old craftsmanship. **Carlo Perini** explores the formidable beauty of alpine larch in *The Dragon's Scream*; and **Jyoti** and **Nikunj Parekh** share a deeply human journey in their article, tracing a lifetime shaped by trees, travel, and mentorship.

Together, these contributions affirm a shared truth: that bonsai, penjing, and suiseki are sustained not only by skill, but by community, dialogue, and cultural exchange. May this edition remind you that our art forms are living conversations—rooted in place, enriched by history, and continually renewed by those who choose to engage with them. 🌳

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

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Q2	A/M/J	March 1
Q3	J/A/S	June 1
Q4	O/N/D	September 1



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FEATURED ON THE COVER: This ficus tree, titled *Clouds drift through curved branches*, is by artist Huang Fengshou from Fujian province. It is a winner of the Grand Gold award, at the BCI International Convention in Gaozhou, Guangdong, China, 2025. Photo by the convention committee.



Top: Grand Gold Award-

One Scene, One World; One Stone, One Chronicle

**A Complete Review of the 2025 “Cultural Tourism
Integration & Intangible Heritage Empowerment”
Bonsai Art Invitational Exhibition and Lingnan
Phoenix Garden Viewing Stone Showcase**

By Chen, Chang, BCI President (China)

Photos, courtesy Chen, Chang



Top: Scene from the welcome dinner



Middle: President Chen Chang and Executive Vice President Yang Xingzhu inspecting the bonsai exhibition setup



Bottom: Group photo of judges and supervisors of the bonsai exhibition



Top: Bird's-eye view of the exhibition grounds
 Opening speeches left to right, top to bottom:
 Yang Guangqing, Director, National Radio and Television Administration,
 BCI President Chen Chang
 Du Yonghong, Executive President, Bonsai Branch of the China Flower Association
 Huang Yuanying, President of the Guangdong Bonsai Association
 BCI China Executive Vice President Yang Xingzhu
 President Luo Kunming, book launch for *The Legend of Uncle Ba*



Above: President Chen Chang and Glenis Bebb presenting certificates to BCI China Executive Vice President Yang Xingzhu, Vice President Luo Zerong, and Secretary-General Tim Xu Dongting

October in Lingnan carries the crispness of autumn and the full bloom of artistic vitality. From October 17–22, the 2025 Cultural Tourism Integration & Intangible Heritage Empowerment Bonsai Art Invitational Exhibition, jointly organized under the guidance of Bonsai Clubs International (BCI) and co-hosted by the BCI China Committee, BCI Guangdong Office (USA), Baowen Garden (Guangzhou), and Lingnan Phoenix Garden (Gaozhou), was successfully held in Gaozhou, Guangdong.

This six-day event—featuring exhibitions, live demonstrations, academic dialogue, tourism activities, and charity programs—not only showcased the profound heritage of Chinese bonsai art, but also explored an innovative model in which intangible cultural heritage empowers rural revitalization and drives cultural tourism. It further enriched the channels through which BCI promotes bonsai and viewing stone culture, training, and transmission worldwide.

Art as a Bridge: Connecting Bonsai Traditions Across Cultures

With “cultural tourism integration” as its platform and “intangible heritage empowerment” as its core, the exhibition brought together over 260 bonsai masterpieces from across China, including works from Guangdong, Guangxi, Fujian, Jiangsu, Beijing, Sichuan, and the Hong Kong-Macao-Taiwan region, alongside 80 viewing stones from Lingnan Phoenix Garden’s renowned collection.

The works spanned tree bonsai, landscape penjing, tree-and-rock compositions, and miniature group plantings, presenting the rugged strength often

“We hope to take Gaozhou as a new starting point—bringing bonsai art from professional circles into everyday public life, and carrying the spirit of Lingnan bonsai from its local roots onto the world stage.”

– BCI China Executive Vice President Yang Xingzhu

associated with northern styles and the refined elegance of southern traditions. Together, they embodied the classic Chinese aesthetic ideal: within a small tray, one can glimpse a universe; in finely worked details, vast worlds unfold.

International Gathering

The event opened on October 17 with a warm welcome banquet. In his speech, BCI President Chen Chang remarked:

“A bonsai may be small, yet it contains heaven and earth; A stone may be still, yet it tells stories of a thousand years. Through bonsai we make friends, and through stones we form bonds—not only to exchange skills, but to share our reverence for nature and our commitment to culture.”

Artists and colleagues from China, the United States, Australia, India, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Hong Kong–Macao–Taiwan region joined in a night of cross-cultural dialogue. A charity auction held during the banquet seamlessly combined art with philanthropy, demonstrating the social responsibility and cultural commitment of the bonsai community.

Opening Ceremony and Key Milestones

The exhibition officially opened on October 18 at Lingnan Phoenix Garden. The program included the launch of the new book “The Legend of Uncle Ba”, the appointment ceremony for new BCI China executive vice presidents, vice presidents, secretary-general, and deputy secretary-generals, the certification of newly recognized BCI China Masters and the unveiling of the BCI International Study Base.

These initiatives are not only concrete steps in consolidating BCI’s organizational presence in China, but also important milestones in promoting the globalization, rejuvenation, and educational development of bonsai art. BCI China Executive Vice President Yang Xingzhu emphasized in his speech:

“We hope to take Gaozhou as a new starting point—bringing bonsai art from professional circles into everyday public life, and carrying the spirit of Lingnan bonsai from its local roots onto the world stage.”



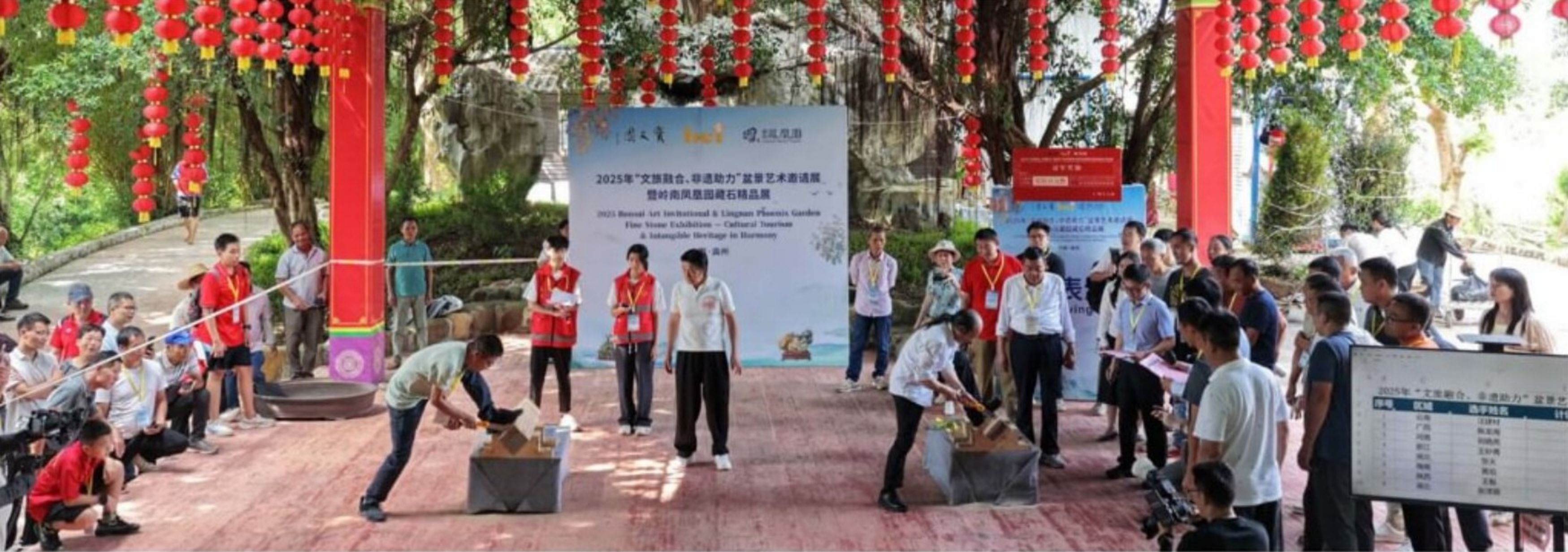
Left to right: Opening ceremony host Master Liu Chuangang
Vice President Chen Zhaonian delivering concluding remarks at the awards appreciation dinner
Top middle: Chen Chang, Wang Hengliang and Tang Senlin presenting certificates to newly recognized BCI China masters



Strong Support from Government and the Bonsai Community

Local government departments attached great importance to the event. Attending officials included: Yang Guangqing, Director of the Department of International Cooperation, National Radio and Television Administration of China

Lower middle: Chen Chang, Liu Chuangang, Wang Hengliang, Tang Senlin, Shen Hongbing and Huang Lianhui presenting certificates to newly appointed Deputy Secretaries-General
Bottom: Guests cutting the ribbon at the opening ceremony



Top: Scene from the "Saw King Championship" hand-saw skills competition

Top middle: President Chen Chang presenting the award to Saw King winner Luo Zhijie

Lower middle: Joint demonstration by Chen Chang, Sujata Bhat, and Mike Siow

Bottom: Joint demonstration by Michael Morden, Guan Yin Hai, and Huang Zhenyu



Li Zuyuan, Member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Maonan District Committee and Secretary of the Political and Legal Affairs Commission

Ou Zhi, Chief Engineer of the Maoming Forestry Bureau

Lu Rongzong, former Member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Gaozhou Municipal Committee

Chen Peilang, Head of the Social Work Department of the CPC Gaozhou Municipal Committee

Ding Kan, Executive Deputy Director of the Publicity Department of the CPC Gaozhou Municipal Committee

Li Xueming, Deputy Head of the Organization Department of the CPC Gaozhou Municipal Committee

Chen Zhenghan, Deputy Director of the Gaozhou Emergency Management Bureau

Deng Shuqiang, Deputy Director of the Gaozhou Agriculture and Rural Affairs Bureau

Liang Hairong, Deputy Director of the Gaozhou Bureau of Culture, Radio, Television, Tourism and Sports



Distinguished guests from the bonsai and viewing stone community included:

Mr. Chen Chang, President of the BCI Council and BCI China Committee, Chief Representative of the BCI Guangdong Office (USA), owner of Baowen Garden, Guangzhou, BCI International Bonsai Master, and Chinese Bonsai Art Master

Mr. Lindsay Joseph Bebb, former President of the World Bonsai Friendship Federation (WBFF)

Ms. Glenis Bebb (Australia), former BCI President and member of the BCI Executive Committee

Dr. Sujata Shashidhar Bhat (India), First Vice President of BCI

BCI Council Members: Sulistyo Budi Darmono, Susan Chua Lee, Mike Siow, Jack David Rubenstein, and Liu Chuangang

Mr. Chee Min Chen (Malaysia), President of the Malaysian Bonsai Creation Association

Mr. Michael Mangahis Morden (Philippines), President of the Philippine Bonsai and Viewing Stone Association



BCI China Executive Vice Chairpersons: Yang Xingzhu, Wang Hengliang, Tang Senlin, Shen Hongbing, and Huang Lianhui

Mr. Du Yonghong, Executive President of the Bonsai Committee, China Flower Association

Mr. Chen Mingxing, Executive Vice President of the Chinese Bonsai Artists Association

Mr. Huang Yuanying, President of the Guangdong Bonsai Association

Ms. Chen Zhaonian, BCI China Vice Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of the Guangdong Women's Federation

BCI China Vice Chairpersons: Wang Deguo, Wei Jiquan, Wu Min, Luo Zerong, Ding Shaohong, Wang Zhixin, Guan Yin Hai, Chen Rongseng, He Xiaobing, and Wang Luxiao

Mr. Luo Kunming, Honorary President of the Guangdong Bonsai Association

Mr. Wu Xiwen, Senior Advisor to the BCI President

Mr. Xu Dongting, Secretary-General of BCI China and Representative of the BCI Guangdong Office

Mr. Lam Mou Fat, President of the Hong Kong Bonsai and Viewing Stone Society

Mr. Wu Guorong, Executive Vice President of the Shanghai Bonsai and Viewing Stone Association

Mr. Xu Xiaoming, President of the Hebei Bonsai and Viewing Stone Industry Association

Mr. Cai Zizhang, President of the Bonsai Committee of the Fujian Flower Association

Mr. Zheng Wenguo, President of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps Landscape Architecture Society

Mr. Xing Jinke, Chinese Bonsai Art Master

Mr. Gao Xiang, BCI International Bonsai Master

Together with numerous BCI International Masters, BCI China Masters, and provincial and municipal bonsai artists from across China, these guests added great momentum and depth to the event.

Craft as the Pulse: Breathing Contemporary Life into Intangible Heritage

One of the exhibition's major highlights was the Hand Saw Skills Competition – “Saw King Championship”, held on the morning of October 18. Young bonsai craftsmen from 20 provinces and regions competed using hand saws, judged on both speed and precision. With the saw as their brush and the square timber as their canvas, contestants demonstrated the fundamental disciplines that underpin bonsai creation—earning repeated rounds of applause from the audience.

The grand prize of 100,000 RMB, fully sponsored by President Chen Chang, went to Master Luo Zhijie of Baowen Garden. Deeply moved by the selfless dedication of President Chen Chang, Mr. Yang Xingzhu and others in organizing the exhibition, Luo announced on the spot that he would donate half of the prize



Top: Joint demonstration by Jack Rubinstein, Chen Zhaonian, and Li Wencai

Top middle: Joint demonstration by Yayat Hidayat, Wu Guorong, and Yan Longjin

Lower middle: Demonstration by He Wenkai

Bottom: Master Wang Hengliang giving demonstration commentary



Top: President Chen Chang and the BCI China team toasting guests at the appreciation and awards dinner

Top middle: President Chen Chang and Glenis Bebb presenting certificates to the exhibition judges

Lower middle: Sujata Bhat and Yang Xingzhu presenting certificates to exhibition supervisors and viewing stone judges

Bottom: President Chen Chang, Glenis Bebb, Sujata Bhat, and Lindsay Bebb presenting the Grand Gold Award certificates

**“Bonsai is not about creating scenes behind closed doors; it is a dialogue with nature and a resonance with people.”
— Master Yan Longjin**

money back to BCI, further strengthening the event’s charitable dimension.

Master Demonstrations: A Dialogue of Global Techniques

During the exhibition, master demonstrations were held in rapid succession. International artists such as Yayat Hidayat (Indonesia), Jack Rubenstein (USA), Michael Morden (Philippines), Dr. Sujata Bhat (India), and Mike Siow (Malaysia) joined Chinese masters including Chen Chang, Yan Longjin, Luo Zhijie, Li Wencai, He Wenkai, Guan Yin Hai, Wu Guorong, Chen Zhaonian, Huang Zhenyu, Du Jiankun, and others in a series of live performances.

On the demonstration stage, Chinese and foreign masters each displayed their signature styles, combining keen observation of the material with deep artistic interpretation to create works that maximized the expressive potential of every tree and rock. Different schools of bonsai art were presented in all their diversity, giving the audience a visual and intellectual feast.

These demonstrations were accompanied by public commentary and interactive sessions, allowing visitors to experience up close the heritage techniques of wiring, pruning, rock selection, and container matching that define bonsai as an intangible cultural art.

As Master Yan Longjin from Jiangsu observed: *“Bonsai is not about creating scenes behind closed doors; it is a dialogue with nature and a resonance with people. Through platforms like this, we hope young people can see the culture and philosophy that lie behind bonsai.”*



Top: Budi Sulistyyo, Mike Siow, and Yang Xingzhu presenting Gold Award certificates



Top middle: Wei Jiquan, Xing Jinke, Wu Min, and Ding Shaohong presenting Silver Award certificates

Lower middle: Xing Jinke, Gao Xiang, Wang Deguo, and Ding Shaohong presenting Bronze Award certificates



Bottom: Susan Lee and Jack Rubinstein presenting the Special Contribution Awards

Hands-On Experience for the Public

A specially designed Bonsai Creation Experience Zone invited visitors to participate in bonsai making under the guidance of professional craftsmen, from material selection and pruning to styling and finishing.

This immersive format transformed intangible heritage from something purely to be seen into something to be felt and practiced—shifting bonsai from mere “viewing” to true “participation” and greatly enhancing public understanding and identification with bonsai art.

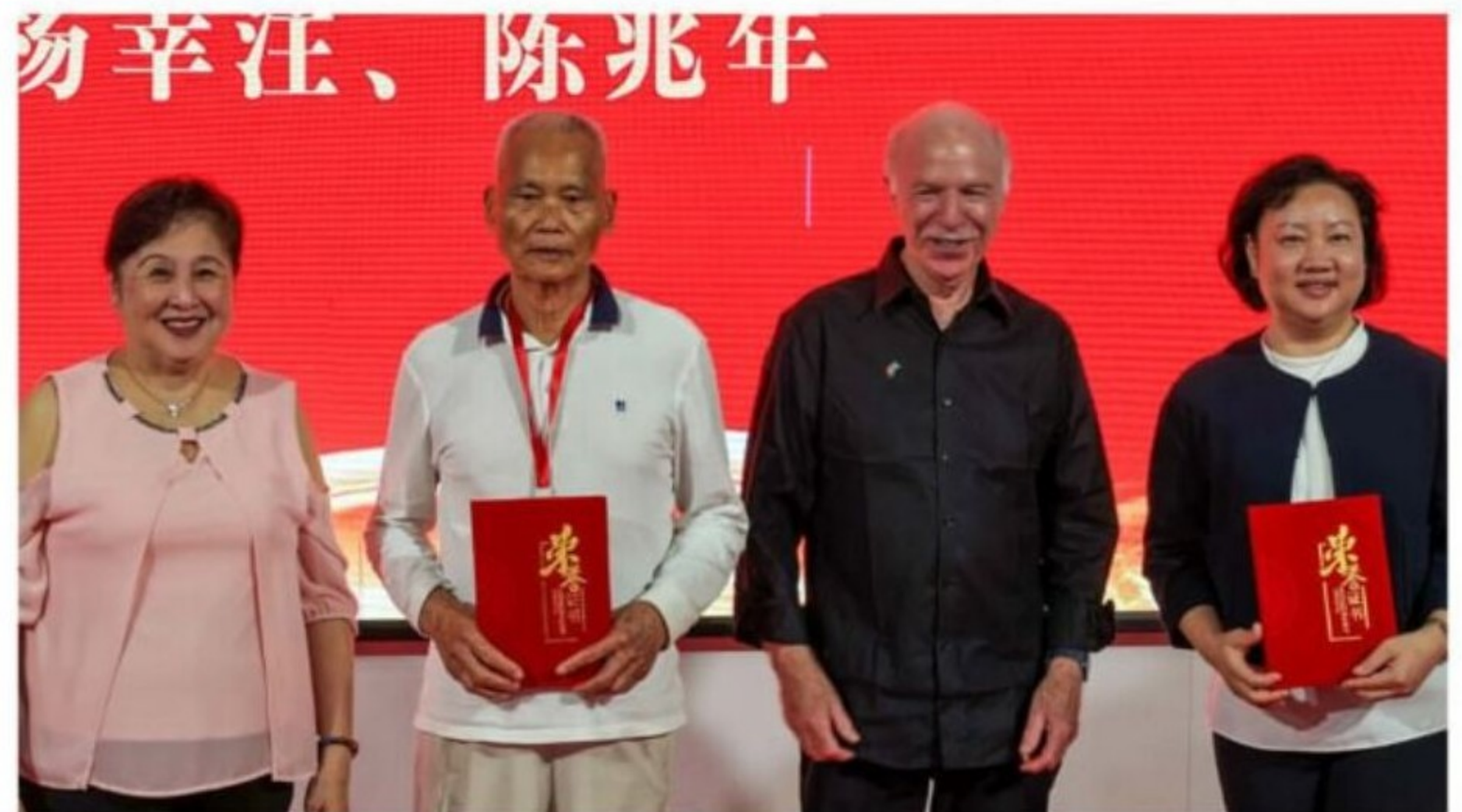
Tourism as the Wing: A New Pathway for Rural Revitalization

The host venue, Lingnan Phoenix Garden in Gaozhou, is not only a national AAA-level tourist attraction, but also a living cultural space that fuses rural entrepreneurship with modern tourism concepts.

Its founder, Yang Xingzhu, affectionately known as “Uncle Ba”, has, well into his eighties, devoted his later years to creating this Lingnan masterpiece with tons of Taihu stones and hundreds of notable bonsai trees.

“I want to show that farmers can create beauty, and villages can be the soil of art,” he said.

Within the garden, attractions such as Phoenix Waterfall, Lion Waterfall, Moon-Reflection Lake, and Mandarin Duck Lake harmonize with the bonsai



exhibits, forming a unique spatial pattern in which “the exhibition resides within the garden, and the garden unfolds within the exhibition.”

“Exhibition + Tourism” and the “Hundreds and Thousands of Projects”

The organizers introduced an innovative “Exhibition + Tourism” linkage model, integrating Madam Xian culture, Gaozhou’s lychee heritage, historical temples and pagodas, ancient villages and ecological landscapes.



Top: Liu Chuangang, Wang Hengliang, and Huang Lianhui presenting the Outstanding Individual Certificates

Middle: Yang Guangqing, Michael Morden, Chee Min Chen, and Chen Zhaonian presenting the Excellent Organization Awards

Bottom: Glenis Bebb, Lindsay Bebb, Yang Guangqing, and Yang Xingzhu presenting Appreciation Certificates to demonstration artists

On October 19, guests visited the Madam Xian Temple, China Lychee Exhibition Hall, Baoguang Pagoda, Qiaotou Village, and Gongyuan Garden, gaining firsthand experience of Madam Xian's spiritual legacy and the economic vigor of Gaozhou as "China's No. 1 City of Fruit."

This initiative is a vivid example of how Gaozhou implements Guangdong's "Hundreds and Thousands of Projects", advancing green ecological development and cultural revitalization in tandem, and promoting balanced development of cultural and rural tourism across the province.

Intangible Heritage Enters Schools

Another meaningful component of the event was the "Intangible Heritage into Campus" series. Bonsai masters visited local primary and secondary schools to introduce bonsai history and aesthetics, demonstrate basic techniques, and interact with students face-to-face.

These activities not only enriched students' extracurricular lives, but also planted seeds of traditional culture in young hearts—cultivating a potential new generation of bonsai practitioners and appreciators and ensuring the living transmission of bonsai craftsmanship.

Vision as the Sail: BCI Leads Global Exchange Without Borders

As one of the world's most influential bonsai organizations, BCI has long upheld the principle that "art knows no borders." Through international exhibitions, academic forums, publications, and training, it continues to promote global dialogue and integration in bonsai art.

During this exhibition, BCI announced that the 2026 BCI International Bonsai & Viewing Stone Exhibition will be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, further expanding the international influence of Chinese bonsai and opening new chapters in global cooperation.

At the appreciation banquet on October 18, BCI China Vice President Chen Zhaonian stated:

“Bonsai is a universal language. It transcends nationality and borders, united only by our shared love of nature and beauty. BCI will continue to build bridges for bonsai art between East and West, so that Eastern aesthetics can resonate with the world.”

During the banquet, the organizing committee also presented a range of awards—including Outstanding Individual Awards, Special Contribution Awards, and Excellent Organization Awards—to individuals and organizations that made remarkable contributions to the event, and issued certificates of appreciation to participating demonstration artists.

Council Meeting and Future Directions

During the exhibition, BCI convened its annual meeting and council election, at which Mr. Chen Chang from Guangzhou was re-elected President of the BCI Council with an overwhelming majority.

The organizing team also conducted in-depth interviews with attending BCI council members, masters, provincial bonsai association presidents, and regional leaders, discussing topics such as standards and norms for bonsai art, talent training systems, and international cooperation mechanisms.

The interviewees agreed that this exhibition should serve as a new starting point: to accelerate theoretical research and technological innovation in bonsai art, promote creative transformation and innovative development of traditional techniques in the new era, and further strengthen the global network that connects bonsai artists around the world.

Conclusion: Within Inches Lies a Universe, and Fusion Opens New Journeys

“One scene, one world; one stone, one chronicle.” The 2025 “Cultural Tourism Integration & Intangible Heritage Empowerment” Bonsai Art Invitational Exhibition and Lingnan Phoenix Garden Viewing Stone Showcase was an artistic feast, and a collision of ideas and a grand reunion of cultures—linking tradition and modernity, local roots and global vision, artistic expression and rural life. It demonstrated the vitality and emotional power of intangible cultural heritage in contemporary society.

As Su Shi of the Song dynasty wrote:

“The breeze over the river and the moonlight in the mountains—heard as music, seen as color.”

Bonsai and viewing stones are precisely a miniature and distillation of this “breeze and moonlight”—capturing the resonance between humanity and nature in a small yet profound form.

According to statistics, the exhibition drew more than 500 guests and artists from China and abroad, while total visitors numbered in the tens of thousands, with extensive media coverage throughout.

Although the exhibition has concluded, the seeds of bonsai art have already taken root in the fertile soil of western Guangdong. They will grow into towering trees, witnessing new possibilities for dialogue between Chinese intangible heritage and the world.



Top: Master Huang Lianhui presenting a viewing stone to Lindsay and Glenis as a token of gratitude for their support of the BCI Liuzhou Landscape Bonsai Exhibition



Middle: Susan Lee winning the calligraphy piece donated by President Chen Chang to BCI in the charity auction



Bottom: A Chinese bonsai enthusiast winning the calligraphy piece donated by President Chen Chang to BCI in the charity auction

BCI will continue to act as a bridge and bond—helping Chinese bonsai art go global, welcoming world bonsai art into China, and contributing to the flourishing of bonsai art and the deepening of cultural exchange and mutual learning between China and the rest of the world. 🌳

Grand Gold Award-winning works

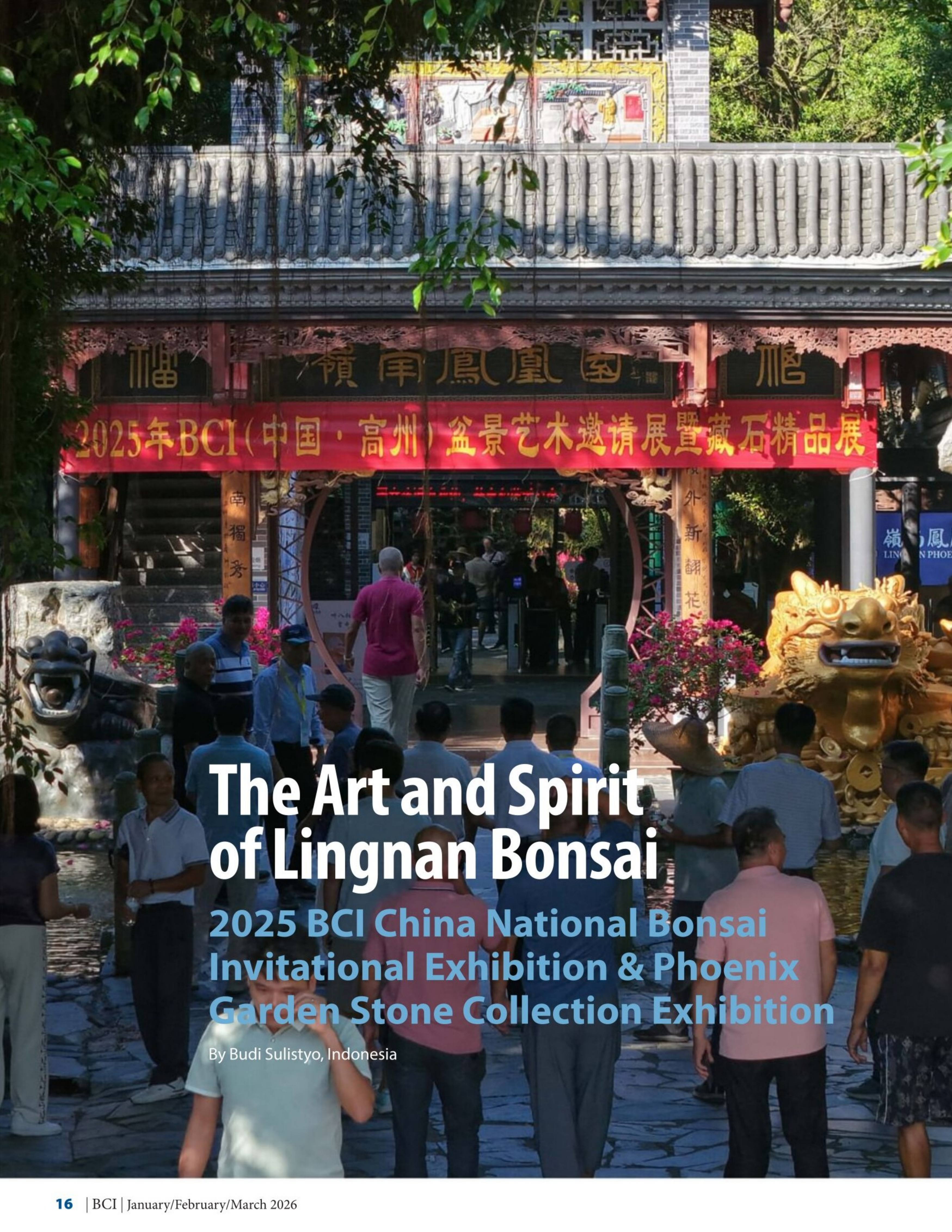


Left: This ficus tree, winner of the Grand Gold award, is called *Clouds drift through curved branches*, and is featured on the cover of this edition.

The tree is from Fujian province, by artist Huang Fengshou. Photo by the convention committee.







The Art and Spirit of Lingnan Bonsai

2025 BCI China National Bonsai Invitational Exhibition & Phoenix Garden Stone Collection Exhibition

By Budi Sulisty, Indonesia



The Convention was held from 18 to 22 October 2025 at Lingnan Phoenix Garden, Gaozhou, Maoming, Guangdong Province, China. Gaozhou is a beautiful city famous for its historical and cultural heritage. It is known as the birthplace of Lady Xian, a celebrated heroine who lived from 512 to 602. More than one hundred temples dedicated to her exist across China and even in Vietnam and Malaysia. Her most revered temple is said to be in Gaozhou, and we were fortunate to have the opportunity to visit it.

We travelled by high-speed train from Guangzhou to Gaozhou, a journey of about two hours. Thanks to President Chen's staff, everything was arranged for the overseas guests, including train tickets, hotel bookings, and sightseeing plans. Before leaving for Gaozhou, we visited Mr. Chen Chang's expansive garden, home to thousands of beautiful bonsai, and enjoyed an excellent and luxurious meal.



Facing page: Entrance to Phoenix Garden, convention venue
Top: Special Chinese Windswept, *Ponamella fragilia*
Bottom: Exotic Cypress

Top: Informal Ficus

Bottom: Persimmon in a raft style

Facing Page

Top: Ficus *Clouds drift through curved branches*

Bottom: Exotic rock planting



Lingnan Phoenix Garden covers more than 300 acres and presents the unique landscape of a Jiangnan-style garden in the Yang tradition. It has a distinctly masculine character, reminiscent of the strength and vitality of spring and summer. The garden is surrounded by mountains and water features. Large and distinctive Taihu stones are used extensively for rockeries and mountain compositions. Streams, ponds,

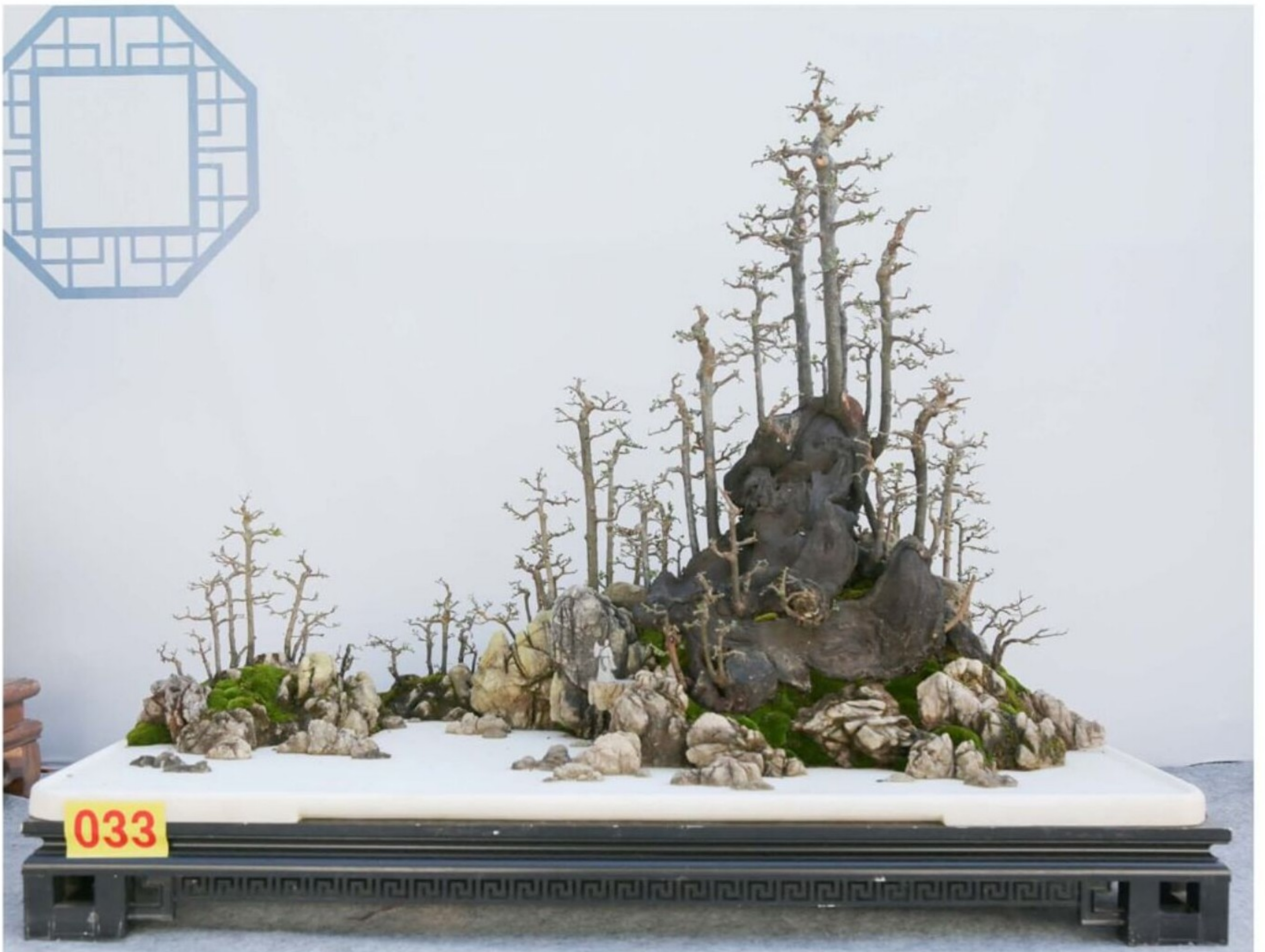
grottoes with striking stones and lighting effects, and lush plantings are arranged in traditional Eastern garden architecture, creating an extraordinary and beautiful environment. Some say it is one of the most beautiful gardens in the world.

A giant phoenix statue stands at the entrance as the garden's landmark—truly an impressive sight. The spacious grounds provided a perfect setting for all activities, including the opening ceremony, demonstrations, the bonsai exhibition, and the stone display.

The opening ceremony featured cultural performances and speeches by representatives of the BCI China Committee, the BCI Guangdong Office, Lingnan Phoenix Garden, and other authorities. A ribbon-cutting officially opened the Convention, followed by a tour of the exhibitions.

Approximately 260 bonsai of various species and styles were displayed. Many were extremely old and included unique styles not commonly seen outside China. These trees represented the Lingnan style, created primarily using the clip-and-grow method rather than wiring. Branches are repeatedly pruned as they extend, and each cut produces a new turn or segment. Over time, this technique creates taper from base to apex and intricate branching with many twists and natural variations.

Among the many remarkable bonsai, one ancient slanting Ficus stood out to me. Its trunk and branches had wonderfully expressive turns and twists. The overall appearance was beautiful, natural, and harmonious. Though unlike Japanese or typical tropical bonsai, the tree possessed its own charm and elegance equal to any traditional style. I gained a new appreciation for the beauty of Lingnan penjing. The tree, titled



Top and middle: Two examples of Water and Land Penjing
Bottom left: Exotic suiseki
Bottom right: A Turtle figure stone



Clouds drift through curved branches, is from Fujian Province and was created by artist Huang Fengshou.

Another Ficus, in an informal upright style, was equally impressive. The arrangement of its twisting branches, its subtle taper, and its fine aerial roots created the perfect impression of an ancient banyan. The aerial roots were well-controlled—slender and unobtrusive—enhancing rather than competing with the main trunk. The simplicity of its outline conveyed a deep sense of antiquity.

There were also many old and unique bonsai in classic Chinese penjing styles, such as drooping Ponamella, dramatic windswept forms first introduced globally about 15 years ago, and a fruiting persimmon growing directly from an aged trunk—a design approach seen only in China and requiring great skill. The display included ancient junipers, pines, water-and-land penjing, and a striking long rock planting resembling a forest.

Several very old junipers were notable. One tree featured an extreme downward bend before rising upright again, forming a captivating canopy. Another ancient specimen displayed a natural yet powerful form with an aged appearance.

Around 80 stones from the Lingnan Phoenix Garden collection were also exhibited, enriching the Convention with their unique shapes, textures, and colors.

Demonstrations were conducted by bonsai artists from the USA, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, and China. These were well-received and enjoyed by many visitors. A unique feature was the wood-sawing show, which attracted considerable interest.

The wood-sawing event presented at the Convention is part of a long-standing folk tradition in southern China, especially in Guangdong, Guangxi, and Fujian. Historically, rural festivals and temple fairs often included strength and skill competitions related to everyday trades: carpentry, farming, masonry, fishing, and forestry. These demonstrations celebrated craftsmanship and the physical labor that shaped local communities.

We also had opportunities to visit many beautiful and historic sites, including Chikan Town, Lingnan Ancient Town, Lady Xian Temple, the Lychee Museum, and the Genxi Boqiao service area.

The Convention concluded with a pleasant dinner and lively singing by the guests. During the donation session, Susan Lee from the Philippines contributed funds to receive a calligraphy work written by Mr. Chen Chang.

We look forward to meeting again at BCI 2026 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from 19 to 23 June 2026. 🌿



Top: A Tour of Chikan Town

Bottom: A walk through Phoenix Garden



From Garden to Global Dialogue

The Bonsai & Stone Exhibition
as Cultural Diplomacy
at Lingnan Phoenix Garden,
Gaozhou City

Text and photos by Ho Wai Fong,
Hong Kong



From October 18th to 22nd, 2025, the Lingnan Phoenix Garden in Gaozhou City hosted the remarkable 2025 Bonsai Art Invitational & Lingnan Phoenix Garden Fine Stone Exhibition. This event was not only a celebration of penjing artistry and natural stone aesthetics but also a honor to the visionary founder, affectionately known as Uncle Ba. His journey from humble farmer to renowned penjing master through relentless learning is a story that continues to inspire. His crowning achievement—the planning and creation of the Lingnan Phoenix Garden stands as a living testament to his creativity, perseverance, and deep reverence for nature.

The exhibition offered three unforgettable highlights to me: the design and natural ambiance of the Lingnan Phoenix Garden, the diverse Lingnan penjing showcase,



Top: A vibrant dragon sculpture anchors the Phoenix Garden's landscape, symbolizing power amid pine forests and classical architecture.

Bottom: Miniscape Garden showcases bonsai personally curated by Lingnan Phoenix Garden's founder, Uncle Ba.



Top: A miniature rock garden blends seamlessly with a misty mountain mural, creating a poetic fusion of nature and art.

Middle left: A masterfully cultivated bonsai with a slanting style during a peaceful outdoor exhibition at sunset.

Middle right: *Ponamella fragilia* with abundant foliage and mossy rocks evokes a tranquil miniature landscape.

Bottom: Zui Yue Pavilion, with its elegant bridge and poetic signatures, embodies Lingnan culture's harmony between architecture, nature, and reflective living.



and the imaginative stone exhibition housed in the Stone Museum.

The garden itself was a masterpiece of Lingnan design. As I wandered through its serene pathways, I encountered the Zui Yue Pavilion and crossed the Nong Yue Bridge. These structures, rich in Lingnan architectural features, offered tranquil views over the river and invited moments of quiet reflection. The harmony between built elements and natural surroundings was palpable, making the garden feel like a living poem.

Among all the scenic spots, the Long Fong Pavilion left the deepest impression. This pavilion, with its regal aura, embodied the “Majestic presence” that Uncle Ba envisioned. Flanked by two forest-style penjing embracing the Dragon Fountain, the pavilion seamlessly merged artistry with nature. It was here that



Top: Pine forest at Long Fong Pavilion (Left side)
 Middle: Pine forest at Long Fong Pavilion (Right side)
 Bottom: A majestic bonsai with twisted trunks and exposed deadwood commands attention as a centerpiece of refined artistry.



The harmony between built elements and natural surroundings was palpable, making the garden feel like a living poem.

the founder's creative spirit truly came alive, transforming the space into a sanctuary of elegance and imagination.

The penjing exhibition was the heart of the event, featuring over a hundred exquisite creations from various artists. Each piece told its own story, showcasing styles ranging from fruit-bearing and windswept to forest, foliage, and landscape compositions. The diversity of species and techniques reflected the depth of the penjing tradition and the innovation of contemporary artists.

One of my favorites was the forest-style *Sageretia theezans*, whose branch distribution conveyed a profound artistic rhythm. Its layered structure and natural flow evoked a miniature woodland, inviting viewers to lose themselves in its quiet beauty. Equally



Top left: A gnarled bonsai bearing vivid pomegranates embodies nature's richness and the elegance of cultivated age.



Top right: *Diospyros cathayensis* with twisted bark and vibrant fruits radiates seasonal charm and artistic precision.



Middle: A rugged stone slab hosts a grove of twisted bonsai trees, evoking a windswept forest of *Ponamella fragilia* frozen in miniature.

Bottom: Forest type of *Sageretia theezans* rises from mossy ground, evoking winter's stillness and the quiet rhythm of nature.



captivating was the windswept style of *Ponamella fragilia*. This piece captured the dynamic force of nature, with branches sculpted to mimic the effects of persistent wind—vivid, dramatic, and full of life.

The fruit-bearing *Diospyros cathayensis* was my another highlight. Its vibrant fruits were not only visually striking but also a testament to the artist's mastery of water control and fertilization. The tree's health and balance reflected years of careful cultivation and deep horticultural knowledge.

Landscape penjing, which had already captured my interest during the Liuzhou exhibition organized by BCI last year, became my favorite style after this event. The combined landscapes presented here were breathtaking—miniature worlds that sparked imagination and a sense of awe. They reminded me of the phrase "Discovering the greatness of nature," as each composition offered a new perspective on the harmony and grandeur of the natural world.

The Stone Museum added another layer of wonder. Natural stones, shaped by time and elements, were





Top left: The Five-colored "Golden" stone, with its rounded form and mottled surface, resembles a resting toad poised in stillness.

Top right: This stone artwork evokes the painting of autumn mountain with wandering clouds.

Middle: A poetic Penjing landscape of mountains with fluid curves and mossy growth captures nature's grandeur in miniature form.

displayed to resemble landscapes, animals, and abstract forms. Each stone invited interpretation, encouraging viewers to explore their own perceptions and emotions. The interplay between form and imagination of each masterpiece of stone deeply sharpen my personal inspiration.

In conclusion, the exhibition was far more than an art event—it was a living dialogue among nature, creativity, and human spirit. From the vision of Uncle Ba to the breathtaking penjing and stones, every moment celebrated beauty and imagination. Equally meaningful was the human connection: during the exhibition, we forged friendships with bonsai artists and absorbed invaluable knowledge and skills, deepening our appreciation of this timeless art. Together, these experiences transformed the exhibition into not only a showcase of artistry, but also a journey of learning, sharing, and inspiration. 🌲



Bottom: A group of bonsai enthusiasts stands united before a majestic stone, their shared passion forging lasting friendship.

Lingnan Legacy, Stone Rhythm Naturally Formed

The 3rd China Guangzhou Park Cultural and Creative Conference. The 25th Anniversary Retrospective Exhibition of the "China Lingnan Wax Stone" Collection

By Tim Xu Dongting, China

Right: Lao Hui, Deputy Secretary-General of BCI China, presided over the opening ceremony.

Facing page: Some of the exhibits on display

To promote the stone appreciation culture of Lingnan and showcase the artistic charm where nature and human culture harmoniously blend, the “Lingnan Legacy, Stone Rhythm Naturally Formed” – 25th Anniversary Retrospective Exhibition of the China Lingnan Wax Stone Collection, jointly guided by the Guangdong Garden Society and BCI, and hosted by the Bonsai and Stone Appreciation Professional Committee of the Guangdong Garden Society and Guangzhou Cultural Park, was grandly held at the Art Studio of Guangzhou Cultural Park. Leaders, guests, and renowned stone appreciation experts from the Guangdong Garden Society, Guangzhou Cultural Park, Macau Bonsai and Stone Appreciation Association, the Garden Photography Committee of the Guangdong Garden Society, and the Guangdong Gold, Silver, Jewelry, and Jade Industry Manufacturers Association, along with China’s stone appreciation masters Mr. Lao Bingheng, the grandmaster of Lingnan wax stone, Mr. Ling Wenlong, and representatives and experts from stone appreciation associations in Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Chaozhou, Jieyang, Zijin, Dongguan, Foshan, Taishan, Shaoguan, and other regions, jointly attended







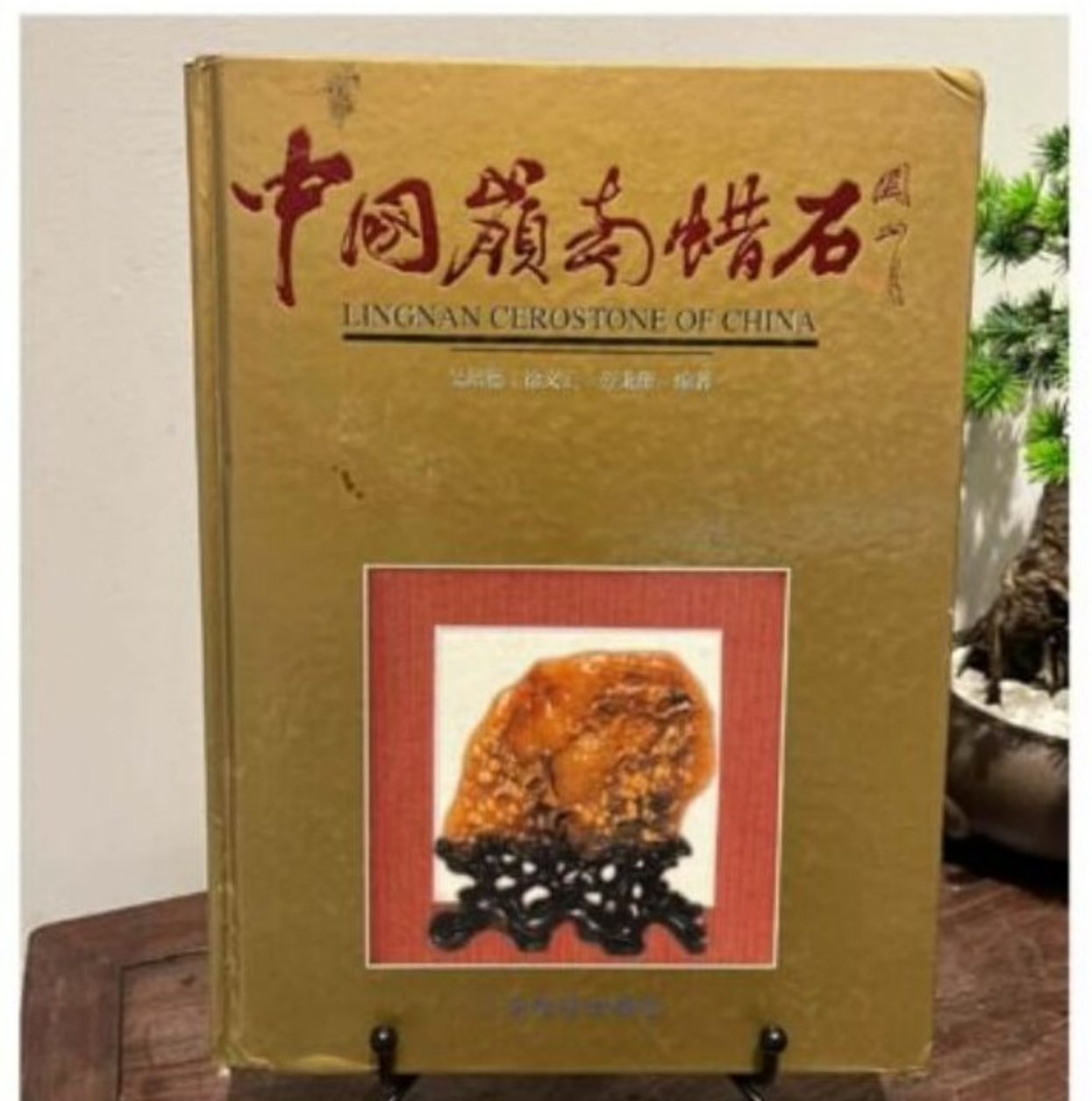
Top left: The main entrance to Guangzhou Cultural Park

Top right: The 66th Guangzhou Chrysanthemum Festival is held in the Cultural Park

Middle: Art Studio of Guangzhou Cultural Park, the venue for the exhibit

Bottom left: Group photo of leaders

Bottom right: The book "China Lingnan Wax Stone," published in 2000 played a significant role in the inheritance and development of Lingnan wax stone appreciation.





Top left and right: Some of the exhibits on display

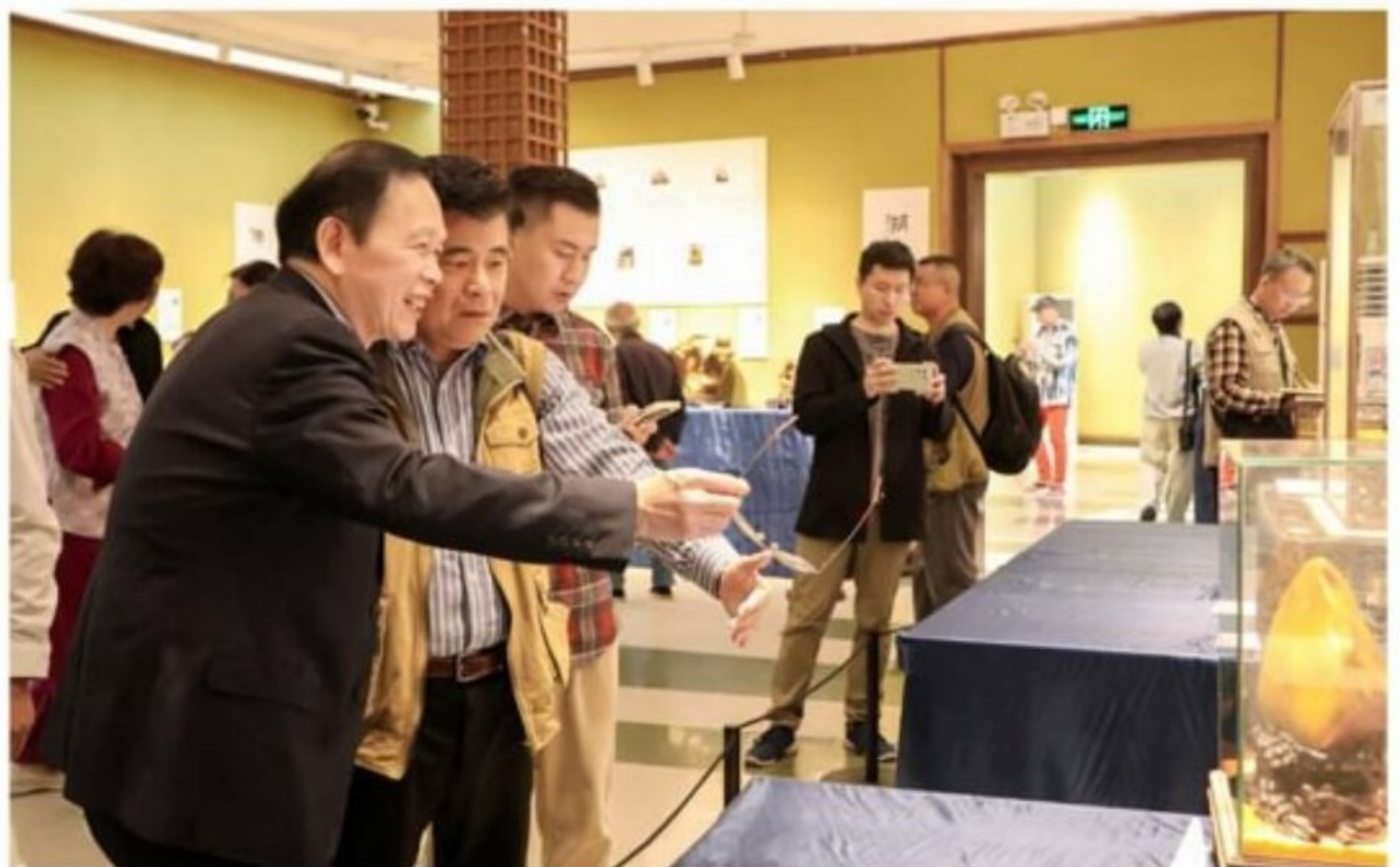
Middle: Guests discussing and appreciating the yellow wax stone exhibits.

Bottom: Views of the exhibit

This exhibition features 60 exquisite Lingnan wax stone pieces

the opening ceremony. Lao Hui, Deputy Secretary-General of BCI China, attended and presided over the ceremony.

Lingnan stone appreciation is a cultural tradition originating in the Lingnan region and is an important part of China's broader stone appreciation heritage. Lingnan has a long history of stone appreciation and is home to many varieties of ornamental stones. Among them, wax stone is one of the most representative. The appreciation of wax stone emerged in the Tang Dynasty, and the name "wax stone" appeared in literature from the Ming Dynasty. In the Qing Dynasty, Qu Dajun of Guangdong listed "wax stone" in his book *Guangdong Xinyu*, and wax stone trading was already taking place during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Wax stone appreciation gained widespread popularity during this period, transcending the traditional criteria





Views of the exhibits

Lingnan stone appreciation is a cultural tradition originating in the Lingnan region and is an important part of China's broader stone appreciation heritage.



of “wrinkled, slender, translucent, and porous.” The aesthetic characteristics of Lingnan viewing stones were later summarized into the modern principles of “shape, quality, color, red, and rhythm.” By the 1980s, Lingnan yellow wax stone—following in the tradition of Ying stone—became a hallmark of Lingnan stone appreciation, celebrated for its beeswax-like yellow color and warm, jade-like texture, and soon became a national favorite among Chinese stone enthusiasts.

In the inheritance and development of Lingnan wax stone, the publication of the book *China Lingnan Wax Stone* . It was the first comprehensive illustrated volume created specifically for a single stone variety and has been widely welcomed and cherished by stone enthusiasts. The book has guided modern wax stone appreciation and collecting in China and helped fuel the wax stone collecting boom.

As one of the supporting activities of the 3rd China Guangzhou Park Cultural and Creative Conference, this exhibition features 60 exquisite Lingnan wax stone pieces. The exhibition traces the aesthetic evolution and cultural development of wax stone from ancient times to the present. Through diverse displays and interactive experiences, it aims to create an artistic feast that blends natural beauty with cultural charm for citizens, art lovers, and collectors, while promoting the inheritance and innovation of Lingnan stone appreciation culture.

Guangzhou Cultural Park, the venue of this stone appreciation exhibition, is also a leading platform for the promotion of Lingnan culture. It is one of the earliest historic buildings in Guangzhou. The park originated from the South China Local Products Exhibition and Exchange Conference held in October 1951. In 1952, the Lingnan Cultural Relics Palace was established on



the same site, and in 1956 it was renamed Guangzhou Cultural Park. Marshal Ye Jianying inscribed the park's name on all three occasions. The park features numerous exhibition halls, including the Thirteen Factories Museum, the Exhibition Center, hall buildings such as Hall Nine, Hall Seven, and Hall Four, as well as the Art Studio and the Aquatic Products Hall.

The Thirteen Factories Museum hosts two permanent exhibitions: "The Thirteen Factories of Guangzhou in the Qing Dynasty" and "A Special Exhibition of Donated Artifacts by Wang Heng and Feng Jie." Guangzhou Cultural Park has also established the Wan Zhaoquan Sculpture Gallery and a multifunctional cultural center—the Chess Art Museum—whose central stage regularly hosts chess tournaments. The park is dedicated

to creating spaces that highlight historical and cultural heritage, as well as venues that showcase distinctive Lingnan theater arts.

Every autumn and during the Spring Festival, the park hosts large-scale outdoor events such as the Guangzhou Chrysanthemum Festival and Mid-Autumn/Festival lantern shows, which remain extremely popular with the public. For decades, it has been a key venue for bonsai and stone appreciation exhibitions, Cantonese opera and music performances, and public cultural programs related to Lingnan intangible heritage—making it a well-deserved historical landmark in Guangzhou. 🌿

Views of the exhibition hall

Penjing Competitions Flourish Across China

A Case Study of the 2025 Sichuan–Chongqing “Craftsman Cup” Penjing Technique Competition at Chongqing Garden Expo Park

By Chen Zhaonian & Chongqing Penjing and Flower Association

The 2025 Sichuan–Chongqing “Craftsman Cup” Penjing Technique Competition opened successfully on September 30, 2025, at the Chongqing Garden Expo Park. The ceremony was attended by Huang Ping, Second-Level Inspector of the Chongqing Municipal Administration Bureau; Tang Qin, former Inspector of the Chongqing Landscaping Administration Bureau; representatives from the Organizational and Personnel Department, Park Management Division, and Publicity and Education Division of the Municipal Administration Bureau; leaders of the Chongqing Garden Expo Park Management Office; and representatives from the Chongqing Penjing and Flower Association and Sichuan Penjing Association. Their presence reflected strong institutional support for the advancement of penjing culture and horticultural craftsmanship in the Sichuan–Chongqing region.

The competition, hosted by the Chongqing Garden Expo Park Management Office, organized by the Chongqing Penjing and Flower Association, and co-organized by the Sichuan Penjing Association, consisted of two major components: the Fine Penjing Invitational Exhibition and the Open Penjing Creation Competition. The event spanned from September 30 to October 10.

The invitational exhibition presented a total of 121 penjing artworks, including 100 pieces contributed by 23 districts and counties of Chongqing and by local enterprises and institutions, as well as 21 pieces submitted by seven prefectures and cities in Sichuan Province. All exhibits were installed on September 29 in preparation for the opening. On the morning of September 30, a jury composed of penjing masters from both Sichuan and Chongqing conducted an in-depth review of the works, ultimately selecting twelve Gold Prize winners, eighteen Silver Prize winners, and thirty Bronze Prize winners.



Right: Organizers of the Craftsman Cup



Selected Gold Prize works
from the Fine Bonsai
Invitational Exhibition



**Penjing is a
precious gem
of traditional
Chinese
culture.**



The Open Penjing Creation Competition, held concurrently on the morning of September 30, brought together thirty-three penjing and bonsai enthusiasts and practitioners, including twenty-one participants from Chongqing and twelve from Sichuan. After evaluation, three Gold Prizes, five Silver Prizes, and eight Bronze Prizes were awarded.

On October 1, the award ceremony was held at the main square of the Chongqing Garden Expo Park. Leaders from the Park Management Office, the

Chongqing Penjing and Flower Association, and the Sichuan Penjing Association attended the ceremony and presented honorary certificates to the Gold Prize winners from both the Fine Penjing Invitational Exhibition and the Open Penjing Creation Competition.

Penjing is a precious gem of traditional Chinese culture. Within each branch and leaf lies the ecological philosophy of “harmony between man and nature” and the artisan values of meticulous refinement and dedication. The Sichuan–Chongqing region, linked by



Selected Gold Prize works from the Fine Bonsai Invitational Exhibition



Presentation of awards to the Gold Prize winners

Gold Prize-winning creations from the Open Bonsai Technique Competition



The dedication, passion, and professionalism demonstrated by China's penjing practitioners and organizations have won admiration both domestically and internationally.



geography and kindred culture, has long been fertile ground for penjing art. The harmonious development of penjing in both regions embodies the profound cultural affinity shared across their mountains and rivers, revealing a mutually nourishing artistic heritage shaped over generations.

The 2025 “Craftsman Cup” is expected to further deepen penjing and bonsai exchange between Sichuan and Chongqing. The event contributes to the strengthening of interregional cooperation mechanisms among

penjing masters, the promotion of classical horticultural techniques, and the ongoing transmission of the craftsman spirit. It also channels cultural strength from traditional Chinese aesthetics into the shared development goals of the Chengdu–Chongqing Economic Circle, enriching its cultural foundation while elevating the artistic standard of penjing practice in the region.

In recent years, vocational penjing and bonsai competitions have blossomed across China. Regional events have been held successfully in Guangxi, Guizhou,



Gold Prize-winning creations from the Open Bonsai Technique Competition



Yunnan, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, and many other provinces and cities, while national-level penjing skills competitions took place in Jiangsu. These developments clearly illustrate the vigorous growth of penjing craftsmanship nationwide. The dedication, passion, and professionalism demonstrated by China's penjing practitioners and organizations have won admiration both domestically and internationally. Increasingly, penjing and bonsai enthusiasts around the world are showing heightened interest in learning about Chinese penjing traditions. This growing attention provides a solid foundation for deeper exchange, interaction, and cooperation between Chinese penjing artists and the global bonsai community, enabling Chinese penjing culture to engage more fully with the world. 🌲

15th International Bonsai & Suiseki Meeting Crespi Cup 2025

**An extraordinary thirtieth anniversary
celebrated with exceptional guests
and record participation**

*Left inset: Ribbon
cutting ceremony at
Crespi Cup 25.*

*Right inset: Takahiro
Kato, Luigi Crespi,
Susanna Crespi and
Masayuki Fujikawa
touring the exhibit.*

*Bottom: View of the
exhibit.*

By Susanna Crespi, Italy

Photos courtesy Crespi Bonsai



The 15th International Bonsai & Suiseki Meeting – Crespi Cup 2025 was held in Parabiago, at the Crespi Bonsai headquarters, from September 12–14, 2025. This event—one of the most important gatherings for bonsai and suiseki professionals and enthusiasts worldwide—featured exhibitions of bonsai, suiseki, and pots, along with workshops, demonstrations, and cultural activities showcasing bonsai art and Japanese traditions. Hundreds of collectors, artists, and hobbyists presented their works in the five exhibition-competitions, and thousands of visitors from across Europe attended.

To celebrate the 30th anniversary of the International Meeting—founded in 1995—a Special Exhibition was created with six tokonoma displays featuring winning bonsai and shohin from previous editions, as well as works by celebrated guests who attended past Crespi Cups, including Kunio Kobayashi, Hiroaki Suzuki, and Minoru Akiyama.

The popularity of the event continues to grow thanks to the consistently high quality of the works presented and the strong participation in all five competitions. This year reached a new record with 255 entries—bonsai, suiseki, and pots—from across Italy and from European countries such as Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, and Switzerland.

In her opening speech, Susanna Crespi reviewed the history of the event, now recognized as a symbol of both continuity and innovation—an event that looks toward the future while remaining rooted in tradition. She highlighted the evolution of the bonsai world over the past thirty years, a period in which Crespi Bonsai has played a significant role. She encouraged attendees to continue cultivating their passion by learning, sharing, and promoting bonsai culture.

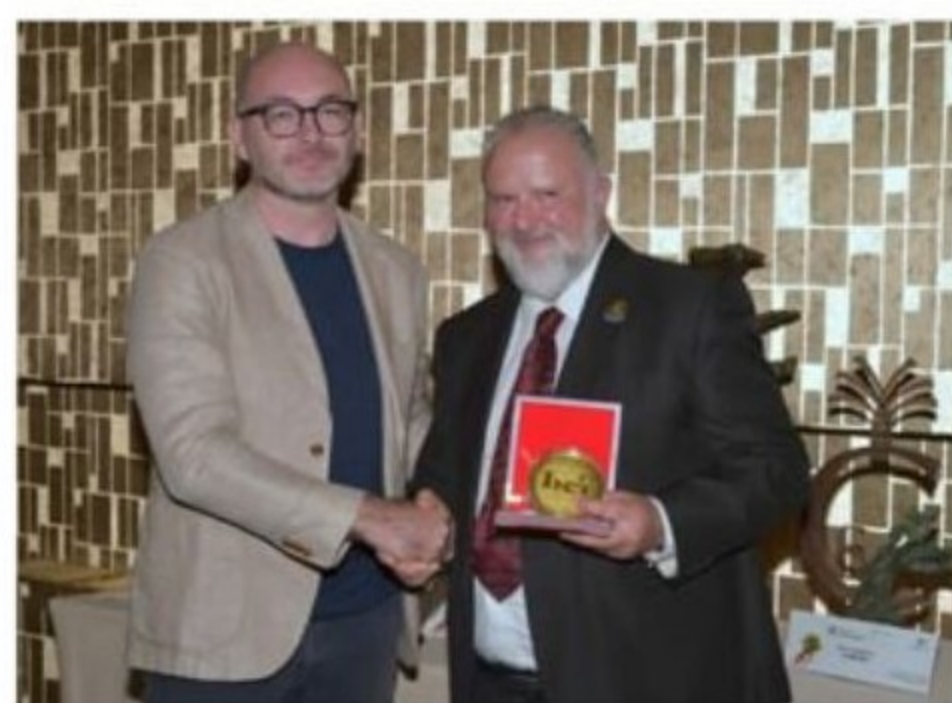
A particularly emotional moment came when the Deputy Consul General of Japan in Milan, Nabeshima Tokuko, expressed her support for the event and praised the Crespi family’s long-standing dedication to promoting bonsai, together with masters Takahiro Kato, Masayuki Fujikawa, and Nobuyuki Kajiwara.

The Key Figures of the Crespi Cup 2025

The program for this 15th edition was rich and engaging, thanks to the many distinguished guests.

Takahiro Kato, representing the fifth generation of his bonsai family lineage, emphasized the importance of cultivating not only trees but also one’s relationship with nature. During his lectures on pots, bonsai, and suiseki, he discussed how “bonsai is the pursuit of natural beauty as conceived by humans, the most unnatural beings in the natural world.” He also explained how Europe and Japan have developed different visions of nature, influenced largely by their religious and cultural backgrounds.

Masayuki Fujikawa and his wife Takako, known for their modern and innovative approach, also played major roles. Fujikawa conducted a preview demonstration on



Top: The *Juniperus chinensis* of Valentino Villecco was awarded the BCI prize by Massimo Bandera, in the exhibition-competition “Crespi Bonsai Cup.”

Middle: Kotaro Beni Nagashi-ishi stone of Riccardo Sorbino was awarded the BCI prize in the exhibition-competition “Crespi Suiseki Cup.”

Bottom: BCI Director Massimo Bandera presenting the BCI Awards and Certificates to Valentino Villecco and Riccardo Sorbino.



Top left: The *Juniperus chinensis* 'Itoigawa' of Fabio Pappalardo was awarded the BCI prize in the exhibition-competition "Crespi Shohin Cup."

Top right: Kikka-seki stone of Pietro Lombardini, 1st classified in the exhibition-competition "Crespi Suseki Cup."

Middle left: The ancient pot of Juraj Marcinko was awarded the BCI prize in the exhibition-competition "Crespi Pot Cup."

Middle right: Sugata-ishi stone of Christophe Kurz, 2nd classified

Bottom left: The *Juniperus chinensis* of Dario Lorenzi was awarded the BCI prize in the exhibition-competition "Enthusiasts' Competition."

Bottom right: The ancient Chinese 'Kinyou' pot of Massimo Bandera, 1st classified in the category "ancient pots" - "Crespi Pot Cup."



Top and middle left: The *Pinus sylvestris* of Mauro Stemberger, 1st classified in the exhibition-competition "Crespi Bonsai Cup." Mauro Stemberger during the prize-giving.

Middle right: The ancient Tofukuji pot of Paolo Dassetto, 3rd classified in the category "ancient pots."

Middle, lower: The oval pot in grès of Luca Caroppo, 2nd classified in the category "hand-made."

Bottom left: The round pot in grès wood-fired of Igor Carino, 1st classified in the category "hand-made" - "Crespi Pot Cup."

Bottom right: The *Pinus thunbergii* of Sergio Gentile (top shelf), 3rd classified. "Crespi Shohin Cup."





opening day, working on a *Chamaecyparis obtusa*. On Saturday he led a workshop on his cultivation and styling methods, and on Sunday he guided a large group through the exhibition, teaching how to observe bonsai on display. The weekend concluded with a technical demonstration by Fujikawa and Takako—described by the master as his “irreplaceable assistant”—working on a *Taxus cuspidata* before a large audience.

Nobuyuki Kajiwara, curator of the Crespi Bonsai Museum and instructor at the Bonsai University, was active throughout the event. He contributed to the exhibition layout and spent extensive time in the school area, assisted by his students. He taught lessons on flowering and fruiting bonsai, repotting, his well-known three-bud pruning technique, and even created a rock planting.



Top left: Dobutsu-seki stone of Franz Xaver Koppmaier, tied for 3rd classified.

Top right: The *Cryptomeria japonica* of Giancarlo Nicolazzini, 1st classified in the exhibition-competition “Enthusiasts’ Competition” and tree most voted by visitors.

Middle left: Toyama-ishi stone of Martin Fercher, 3rd classified.

Bottom left: The *Cotinus coggygria* of Roberto Bassetto, winner of Bonsai Association Belgium Award.

The *Rhododendron indicum* of Oscar Vanzo, 3rd classified, “Enthusiasts’ Competition.”





Top left: A lesson on pots by the master Takahiro Kato.

Top right: Nobuyuki Kajiwara in one of his workshops in the "University of Bonsai" space.

Middle left: The lesson on kazari by the master Takahiro Kato.

Middle right: Masayuki Fujikawa during the event preview while working on a *Chamaecyparis obtusa*.

Bottom: Masayuki Fujikawa judge of the exhibition.



the gardens of Crespi Bonsai. The tea ceremony performed by Yoko Takada drew great interest, as did tastings of fine green tea and Japanese sweets prepared by pastry chef Yukiko Okabayashi. The popular *shodō* calligraphy and *yuzen* and *sumi-e* painting classes taught by Kazuko Kataoka also attracted many participants. Children enjoyed special activities: a bonsai course for kids led by Andrea Scarenzi on Saturday and an origami workshop with Agnès Paganelli on Sunday.

Herbaceous bonsai were also well represented. Igor Carino offered a workshop, and Edoardo Rossi presented a class dedicated to the art of *kazari* (display).

Demonstrations, Learning Activities, and Cultural Events

Beyond bonsai, visitors could explore many aspects of Japanese and East Asian culture while enjoying

The Success of the 15th International Meeting

The event opened with an emotional ceremony featuring speeches by Susanna Crespi, distinguished guests, and the master artists. The audience then enjoyed the premiere performance *Ryu no Shirabe*, a moving collaboration between Japanese painter Haruna, vocalist Yoko Takada, and pianist Agostino Barbieri. Their artistic tribute to composers Cacciapaglia, Morricone, Hisaishi, and Puccini concluded with the creation of



Top left: The *Taxus cuspidata* worked by Hiroaki Suzuki in the 2019 edition of the Crespi Cup.

Top right: The *Juniperus chinensis* worked by Minoru Akiyama in the 2023 edition and the pot in grès of Linmin Gong worked in the 2012 edition of the Crespi Cup.

Middle left: The *Juniperus chinensis* worked by Kunio Kobayashi in the 2023 edition of the Crespi Cup.

Middle right: The tokonoma with the *Taxus cuspidata* 'Tiger' of Massimo Bandera, winner of the Crespi Bonsai Cup 2012.

Bottom: View of the 'Special Exhibition'.

Facing Page:

Top: The *Juniperus sabina* of Lorenzo Agnoletti, winner of the Kaneko Memory Cup.

Bottom: The *Pinus thunbergii* of Luigi Maggioni (top shelf), 1st classified in the exhibition-competition "Crespi Shohin Cup."

a dramatic four-meter dragon painting, earning a standing ovation.

Strong emotions continued at the Saturday gala dinner during the awards ceremony for the Bonsai–Shohin–Suiseki–Pot competitions. Masters Kato, Fujikawa, and Kajiwara, along with Susanna and Luca Crespi, presented the prizes. The Bonsai Association Belgium Award was given to a specimen exhibited in the Bonsai Cup by Christian Vos, and the BCI Awards, curated by Massimo Bandera, recognized outstanding works across all competition categories.

The event concluded late Sunday afternoon with awards for the “Enthusiasts’ Exhibition,” curated by Luigi Crespi. This year, in addition to the top three winners, the Masakuni Cup for Best Deciduous, the Yokohama Cup for Best Evergreen, and the prestigious BCI Award were presented.

The curtain closes on the fifteenth Crespi Cup—an event that, over thirty years, has become a reference point for bonsai and suiseki lovers. It is a place to admire exceptional trees, stones, and pots, and a community where stories, experiences, and knowledge are shared. This edition, which welcomed a record number of participants and visitors, reflects the growing public interest and offers renewed optimism for the future of bonsai. 🌳





Reading the Classics

By Min Hsuan Lo, Andrew Lo, Taiwan
Photos courtesy; Min Hsuan Lo, Yen Lin Liu , Xian Hui Wang

JAPAN IS HOME TO COUNTLESS GARDENS THAT HAVE ENDURED CENTURIES, each with its own captivating qualities. Among them, Ritsurin Garden in Takamatsu is the one that fascinates us most. This is our third visit, and each time brings new discoveries and deeper emotions. Some elements have already influenced our past works, and we believe they will continue to appear, merging with other aesthetic experiences and enriching our creative lives with diverse and unexpected inspiration to form new artistic possibilities. I believe that Ritsurin Garden is a place every bonsai artist must visit at least once in their lifetime.



Ritsurin Garden

Ever-changing, full of twists and turns.
Facing a miracle maintained for hundreds
of years, one can only learn with humility.



“Hakumatsu feelings” by Min Hsuan Lo

*It is hard to imagine
how pine trees that has been meticulously trimmed for over 300
years
can present such a face!
Every bend,
every curve,
is calm and measured,
yet vigorous,
mysterious, and dreamlike.*

*Walking among them, can almost faintly see
craftsmen from centuries past
moving through the branches and treetops—
the diligent trimming,
their brows damp with sweat,
accidentally revealing
a look of firmness, determination,
and gentle welcome.*

*Travelers chirping along the path,
with hearts full of pilgrimage—
solemn or excited—
reading carefully, inch by inch,
tasting
the chapters carved over more than 300 years.*

*Even though,
even though the masters
never could have imagined
that travelers across the ocean
would be willing—and perhaps able—
to carry on the craft they established over centuries,
their steadfast beliefs
layered over generations,
and paint them into another ray of light
in a foreign land.*



The twisting branches—where straight and curved lines collide and interweave—resemble the strokes of calligraphy.

Although they may appear chaotic at first glance, they embody more than 300 years of painstaking cultivation.





On the south side of the path, the branches cascade like a waterfall.

Along the lake, the water reflects the shadow of the pines.





Top: At the front of *Tsurukame-matsu Pine Tree* With students and their families leave traces together, creating shared memories.

Bottom: *Tsurukame-matsu Pine Tree* (South side)

Tsurukame-matsu Pine Tree

“One hundred and ten stones are masterfully arranged into the shape of a turtle, and on its back stands a black pine resembling a dancing crane. Among the roughly 1,400 pines in the garden, this is considered the most beautiful.”

Reading Ten Thousand Books Is Not As Good As Traveling Ten Thousand Miles

The path of bonsai is full of wonder. With three to five years of dedicated learning, one can gradually enter the realm of professional craftsmanship. However, to reach a higher level requires lifelong learning, effort, and continual reflection. Bonsai education is diverse, and through different approaches, attitudes, and methods, one can broaden their perspective. Beyond hands-on practice, observing the beauty of nature—absorbing the essence accumulated over centuries—is one of the best ways to deepen understanding.

For many years, Lo Bonsai school has organized various annual study trips—whether to famous bonsai exhibitions or pilgrimages to ancient trees, both in Taiwan and abroad. This tradition has always been a core principle for us. This was the fourth trip to Japan and the third to Ritsurin Garden, a six-day learning journey undertaken by a group of sixteen.

Traveling is like visiting a sequence of fantastical exhibitions; it takes us into a surreal utopia where daily concerns fade away, enriching us with broader and more colorful perspectives.





The Shinpaku (Juniper) of Hoshoin Temple

“According to legend, this tree was planted by Emperor Ojin during his visit to Shodoshima Island and is estimated to be over 1,600 years old.”

This is the largest and oldest specimen of its kind in Japan and is designated a Special Natural Monument.

In the gentle morning sunlight, we felt the giant tree calling to us even from afar. Eagerly, everyone quickened their pace toward the small hill to witness the thousand-year-old tree. With a pilgrim’s reverence, we stood in awe, quietly absorbing the sacred energy it radiated. Gradually, a deep silence fell over us as we reflected on the moment. When it was time to leave, we walked slowly back to the bus, reluctant to part from the majestic presence of the tree.

Growing up in Taiwan, we are accustomed to seeing junipers twisted and dwarfed by the harsh conditions of mountains such as Yushan and Hehuan. We long believed that these low, contorted forms were the true and only nature of junipers. However, seeing a juniper thriving in lowland conditions—majestic and rounded like the great trees of the plains—was a profound revelation. It reminded us of Taiwan’s Zemin Camphor Tree in Taichung, the great Ficus at National Cheng Kung University, and even faraway memories of the San Antonio oak, the Ficus behind the Sydney Opera House, and the giant fig trees of Buenos Aires.

This experience broadened our imagination and dispelled the narrow view of a single tree form. It demonstrated that the environment shapes a tree far more than its innate tendencies. Many students own numerous junipers—from compact bonsai to large



Top: The Shinpaku (Juniper) of Hoshoin Temple

Middle: Gigantic Juniper trunk
Height: 16.9 m
Circumference at Breast-Height: 17.28 m
Branch Spread:
East, 11.4 m; West, 14.0 m;
South, 16.7 m; North, 9.7 m.

Bottom: Monument inscription:
Special Natural Monument

garden trees. This visit to Shodoshima unquestionably deepened their understanding and strengthened their confidence to create magnificent works in the future.



Himeji Castle

Himeji Castle, with its white walls and sweeping eaves, is known as the “White Heron Castle” and is one of Japan’s most iconic historical fortresses.



Taikanten

Late autumn brings the fading of heat, the winter’s first snow not arriving. Maple leaves assert their vivid and layered colors, using the earth as a palette and painting the world as they please. In this radiant season, the 45th Taikanten blooms in Kyoto.

Time passes swiftly, like the shadow of a blade. I recall visiting Taikanten for the first time 26 years ago with my father and being immediately drawn to it. Its gentle rhythm, diverse and dignified displays, and the variety of personal bonsai presentations all reflect bonsai’s rich cultural depth. The judging seems intentionally understated, reminding visitors that bonsai is not merely about competition but about expression and heritage.

Top left: Himeji Castle

Top right: Trident maple at the Taikanten

Middle: Himeji Castle in autumn, framed by leaves glowing in the setting sun

Bottom: A corner of the Taikanten exhibition hall





Top: Personal display by Seiji Endo

Middle: Education Minister Award and Prime Minister Award

Bottom: Shohin display

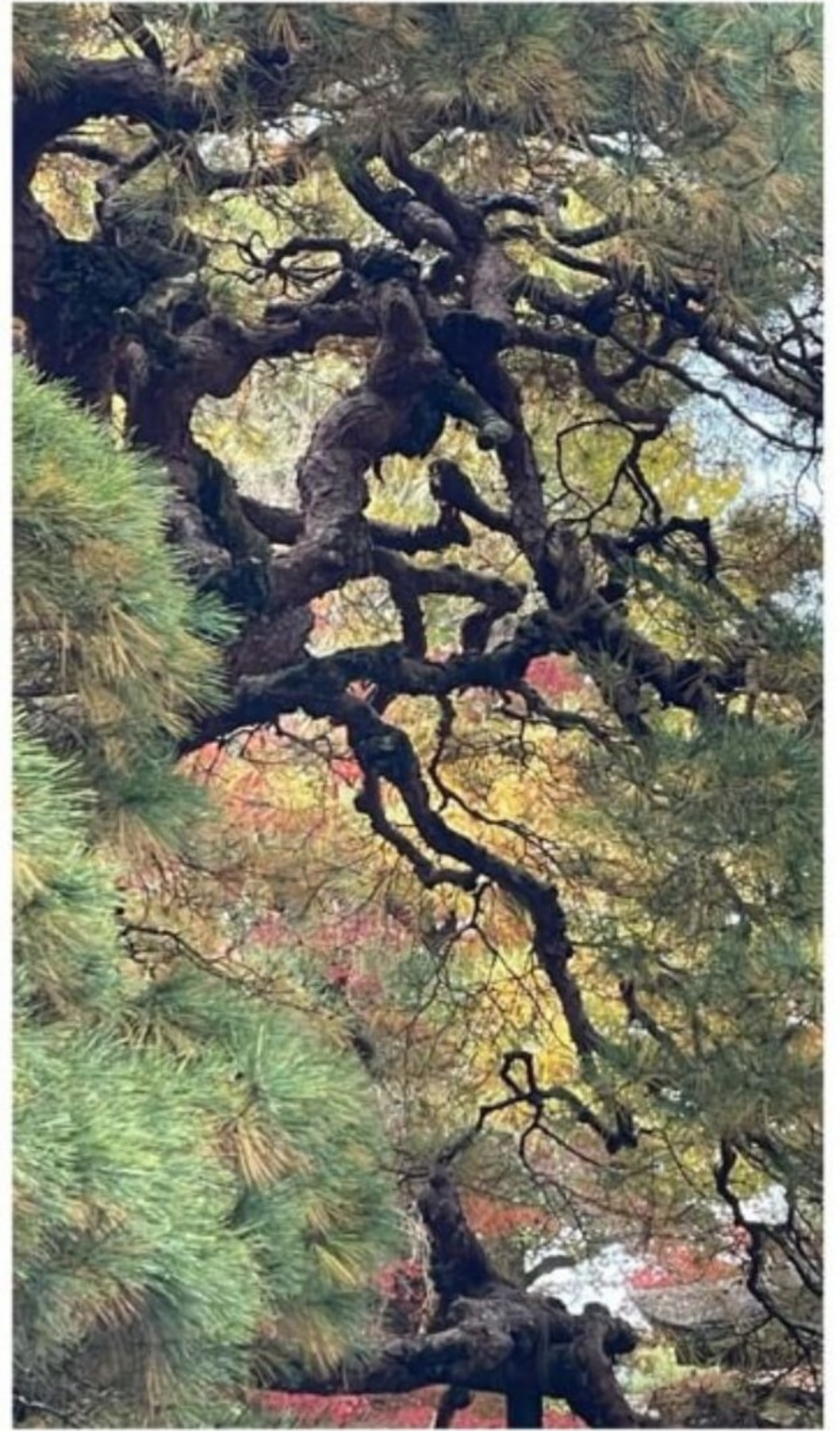


Top left and right: The strolling garden and ancient pines of Ginkakuji

Detailed view of the venerable pines

Bottom left and right: A narrow entrance creates a sense of mystery.

Daitokuji Temple bonsai garden at sunset



Ginkakuji

As our group wandered through Ginkakuji, the quiet beauty of its strolling garden and ancient pines drew us in. Pausing beneath the venerable trees, I found myself studying their gnarled trunks and layered needles—living witnesses to centuries of care and weather.

Daitokuji – Fangchun yuan

In March 2021, Fangchun yuan at Daitokuji Temple opened Kyoto's first Zen temple bonsai garden, assembling historically significant and classical bonsai.

The warm afterglow of sunset concludes the visit, but our enjoyment remains undiminished. 🌲



Forty Years with Bonsai: The Parekhs' Artistic Journey and Their Move from Mumbai to Bengaluru

By Jyoti & Nikunj Parekh, India

Photos: Harish Hoogar



Left: In 1979, Jyoti with John Naka Sensei at the World Bonsai Convention in Osaka.

Right: In 1980, Nikunj with Saburo Kato Sensei at Mansei-en, near Tokyo.

It all started with the miniature trees displayed at the International Expo 1970 in Osaka. After patiently waiting in a long queue with thousands of other visitors, Nikunj returned to India and showed Jyoti the photographs he had taken of the eye-catching bonsai. At that time, she was just beginning to pursue bonsai-making herself.

Jyoti's next opportunity came when she was asked to lead four children from a Mumbai school to the Children's International Summer Village. At the end of the trip, the host family asked if she would like to see anything else. She said "yes," and they took her to visit Mansei-en at Omiya-Koen in Saitama—the world-famous garden of Saburo Kato Sensei.

Jyoti, who had just authored her first bonsai book, *Tropical Bonsai*, gifted a copy to the man considered the father figure of world bonsai. She was later invited to attend the World Bonsai Convention in Osaka in 1980.



In that same year, we had yet another opportune visit to the U.S. when we travelled to Boston. A cousin, who knew of our interest in bonsai, took us to a night workshop for bonsai growers led by the renowned John Yoshio Naka.

Immediately, we asked Naka Sensei if he would be willing to come to Mumbai to conduct a four-day workshop. He agreed to come in 1981, and we felt truly blessed to be taught by both of our gurus.

After watching his workshop, Nikunj tried his hand at creating a bonsai from a *Juniperus prostrata*. The next day, he showed his novice creation to Naka Sensei, who frankly said that the tree lacked depth. He then simply moved a branch that was wired slightly to the back, and the tree was transformed into a beautiful bonsai. This juniper was later featured in a newspaper advertisement for the ORSON TV brand and also showcased on advertisement hoardings across India.

Following this, numerous bonsai experts from around the world visited to share their knowledge. Sharing expertise on bonsai, saikei, and penjing displayed in suiban became the lifelong mission of the Bonsai Study Group of The Indo-Japanese Association. Established in 1979, the group has nearly 23 affiliated chapters throughout India. In addition to hosting experts, the group has also been publishing books on the subject and editing *Nichin Bonsai*, a quarterly magazine, since 1985.



Working with Juniper Bonsai

Juniper species are highly versatile and can be used to create nearly all bonsai styles. However, proper care is crucial for maintaining their health. Use clean, sharp pruning scissors, and trim regularly to prevent the canopy from becoming dense and blocking sunlight. When the lower branches do not receive enough light, they become dull and lanky. Regular trimming also reduces the chances of fungus and disease spreading among your junipers.

Pruning Juniper Bonsai

To maintain a juniper bonsai's health and shape, prune it correctly:

- Always remove dead branches from the tip down to the base.
- Dieback at the bottom is often caused by an overgrown apex. To prevent this, leave new green shoots closer to the trunk.
- Be selective when trimming. Cut back individual new shoots while keeping in mind the desired direction for next spring's growth.
- Many junipers grow laterally. You may allow a few vertical branches to grow upward depending on the design.

Juniper Varieties

Juniperus procumbens ("Garden Juniper") is a low-growing evergreen conifer. The "nana" cultivar is compact and spreads in all directions. In India, junipers thrive in the Hooghly River Delta region near Kolkata. Slow-release organic fertilizers like vermicompost, leaf mould, or compost can be added during the dry season to improve soil moisture and nutrition. An organic fertilizer with a 19:19:19 NPK ratio is useful when nutrients are depleted. Powdered goat or sheep manure can also be applied to achieve lush green foliage.



Top: In 1980, this *Juniperus prostrata* featured in an Orson TV ad.

Middle: *Juniperus procumbens*, semi-cascade style.

Bottom left: *Juniperus procumbens*, grown on a ceramic rock.

Bottom right: *Juniperus blaauii*, semi-cascade style.





Top: *Juniperus rigida*, forest style on a stone slab.
 Middle: *Juniperus chinensis* variegated, broom style.
 Bottom left: *Juniperus prostrata* with jin & shari with kusamono.
 Bottom right: *Juniperus prostrata* with jin & shari with suiseki.

Repot once a year, either at the end of the rainy season or in early February to March during spring. A recommended soil mix includes two parts sun-dried garden soil, two parts sun-dried cow manure (without lumps), and two parts broken brick pieces for aeration and water retention.

Juniperus chinensis (Chinese Juniper) is popular in Japan, China, and the Himalayan regions. It typically grows to 15 meters tall in the ground. It prefers moist, well-draining soil until established.

To manage an overgrown juniper, trim side branches—which often take up space—by cutting a quarter of their length. Use sharp scissors on top branches, as many grow laterally. To encourage rapid vertical growth, cut branches about 2–3 cm outside any dead areas. Avoid aggressive trimming of apical branches.

Remove dead or damaged branches, or shape them to create a “lightning strike” effect. Do not trim new growth during summer, as the soft green shoots are delicate.



Juniperus prostrata, netsurarenari (root-connected) style, made in Mumbai in 1990.

Many branches died and it was restyled in Bengaluru in 2024.

Shifting from humid, sea-facing Mumbai to cooler, less humid Bengaluru posed a challenge for our trees.



Drooping branches can be wired toward the sunlight. Check the wire periodically to avoid it biting into the bark. With experience, artists may intentionally allow minor wire marks to develop a shari effect.

Juniperus rigida (Needle or Temple Juniper) is native to Japan, Korea, and China. It retains its needles year-round and can be propagated from tender cuttings. It has a deep taproot and fibrous surface roots, adapting well to many soils. Full sun or light shade is ideal.

Water in the morning so the needles dry during the day. Evening watering can cause fungal infections. Brown needles may indicate disease, insects, under-watering, or, if extensive, the death of the tree.

Juniperus blaauw has greenish-blue needles and can be styled with careful bending and wiring. Jin and shari can also be created on this variety.

Disease indicators include an excessive number of dead branches, discolored foliage, and cracked or damaged bark. Moisture stress can cause browning, as can high salt levels in water or air. Avoid over-spraying fertilizers if the plant looks dull.

To check if a dormant juniper is alive, test whether the branches are pliable or scratch the bark for green tissue underneath.

Just as people change over time, so do bonsai. It is often necessary to restyle and redesign a tree as it ages. We have included photographs of some of our junipers styled since 1980, focusing on depth, branch flow, root spread, and trunk line. Techniques such as jin and shari help highlight the tree's age and character.



A lime sulfur solution is used to preserve deadwood as part of the tree's visual history.

Cultivating a Passion

From 1980 onwards, we nurtured nearly 1,800 bonsai and trained nursery plants at our home in Mumbai and at our farm. We travelled extensively to Japan, China, Sri Lanka, the U.S.A., and across India, participating in conventions and demonstrations. Our bonsai group members have become an extended family. As an active board member of Bonsai Clubs International (BCI) and a founding member of the World Bonsai Friendship Federation, we feel blessed with the guidance of Naka Sensei and Katoh Sensei and the friendships we have formed worldwide.

A Manageable Collection for a New Stage of Life

A time came when we decided to move from Mumbai to Bengaluru to be closer to our only daughter and her family. We reduced our collection of 1,800 bonsai to just 350 for the move. Shifting from humid, sea-facing Mumbai to cooler, less humid Bengaluru posed a challenge for our trees. To create temporary humidity, we placed earthen containers filled with water around the bonsai to help them acclimatize. Even so, the change in climate, water quality, and location had an adverse effect, and we lost some trees. Some juniper bonsai had to be redesigned, but after nearly two years, they are now thriving.

The rest of our creations were given to leading industrial houses and bonsai lovers.

Now in our 80s, we are adjusting to our new environment and have begun sharing our knowledge of bonsai and landscape gardening with the community of 800 villas in our residential complex. Our new helpers have also begun learning with great enthusiasm. We continue to learn, adjust, and maintain a manageable collection in the space available. For us, age is no barrier to learning or sharing knowledge. We have kept a select few ficus, bougainvillea, and other fruiting,



tropical, and subtropical bonsai, as well as saikei and suiban penjing, to care for with complete satisfaction. 🌲

Top left and right: *Juniperus chinensis*, from nursery-grown material in 2011. Shown as developed by 2022.

Bottom: Restyled in Bengaluru in 2024 after dieback.

The Dragon's Scream

A Larch Revealed: Character, Craft, and Aesthetic Insight

By Carlo Perini, Italy

Photos by Massimo Bandera



Photomontage showing an intended container that harmonizes with this mighty larch, Courtesy Antonio Attini Photographer



The European larch, *Larix decidua*, stands as one of the great symbols of alpine wilderness—powerful, resilient, and forever tied to the drama of the high mountains. It is loved by every bonsai artist and, at the same time, deeply feared. This remarkable species grows at the highest elevations, where nothing else can survive. Its deciduous nature allows it to withstand the severe winters of high mountain climates. To us, it represents the ultimate conifer: strong, resilient, and a true bonsai icon. It has everything—coniferous power, the impermanence of a deciduous tree, seasonal color changes with its golden fall foliage, and finally the absolute stillness of winter dormancy when bare... only to burst forth again with delicate emerald-green buds in spring.

In the lowland climate around Milan, cultivating European larch is unusually challenging. Although the species tolerates heat in its native alpine environment, it depends on constant air movement, cool nights, and significant day–night temperature swings—conditions that are largely absent in the humid Po Valley summers. Without these factors, larch often struggles with prolonged heat stress, weakens, or declines over time. For this reason, successfully growing larch in and around Milan is difficult unless one has a cooler microclimate or access to mountain areas. For the fortunate few who can provide such conditions, the larch becomes a treasured presence in the garden.

In the winter of 2023, I had the pleasure of working on this piece featuring one of the most important larches in Europe—owned by my teacher, Massimo Bandera. Thanks to its nebari, roughly 40 cm across, it is truly unique. The tree stands about 80 cm tall.

The first step of my work was the carving. I wanted to emphasize the dramatic character of the tree by accentuating its hollowed trunk (saba), encouraging the viewer to imagine what the tree has endured throughout its centuries-long life. Another particularly interesting feature is the carved upper jin, which marks



Top, left to right: The larch after collection in 2010, 2021 and 2022.

Middle and bottom: In the winter of 2023, the first step of my work was the carving

It was a long process, interrupted when I cut myself with a carving bit, forcing me to stop for months. That is where “the scream” first came from—initially my own scream.



where a large branch once existed, leaving behind this testimony of its presence.

The upper portion of the carving was probably the most challenging. The live veins were completely intertwined here and there, making it difficult to carve cleanly without causing damage. The tenjin resembles a dragon. One day, while studying it, I suddenly saw it clearly: It's a dragon!

The fascinating part is that I barely carved that area; it is almost entirely natural, apart from a few touches. As many successful artists say, when observing a work of art, each person sees what their emotions allow them

to see. Some may see just a piece of wood... while we see a dragon.

It was a long process, interrupted when I cut myself with a carving bit, forcing me to stop for months. That is where “the scream” first came from—initially my own scream. Later, my teacher noted a resemblance to a famous artwork... Munch's *The Scream*.

And thus came the name: *The Dragon's Scream*.

What makes this work most distinctive, besides its uniqueness, is the freedom I felt when working on it. Once again, with the carving tool, we were able to create something completely authentic—no



Top, left to right: One day, while studying the tenjin, I suddenly saw it clearly: It's a dragon
 Later, my teacher noted the hollow or Uro resembled a famous artwork... Munch's *The Scream*. And thus came the name: *The Dragon's Scream*.



stereotypes, no resemblance to other pieces. A true artist's tree.

Wiring the tree was also fascinating. My teacher allowed the branches to grow for several years, shaping the tree only through pruning. With the first wiring, we achieved an exceptional result. A major success was the drastic bending of an apex branch that represented

Above: The carving is completed. Next comes the wiring.



With the first wiring, we achieved an exceptional result. Using the wedge-cut technique, we were able to bend and lower an apex branch by about 15 cm, restoring triangularity and harmony.

a serious flaw. Using the wedge-cut technique, we were able to bend and lower the branch by about 15 cm, restoring triangularity and harmony.

Another interesting observation was how that same bent branch, in the same year, produced astonishingly vigorous growth—double that of the other branches. This meant the tree was responding strongly, channeling its energy into that area.

In 2024, I completed the wiring of the new shoots, leading to the current result. From here, the tree will progress through pruning of new growth until the branches reach maturity.

Aesthetic Analysis

FUKINSEI – Asymmetry

One of the most difficult aesthetic values to grasp in this larch is *fukinsei*, asymmetry. At first glance, the tree appears rigid, and without careful study it might seem light. But with deeper observation, many asymmetrical elements emerge: the radial nebari (very rare for yamadori larch) that spreads to the right, leaving the left side open; the trunk rising gradually in the opposite direction before returning to the right with an elegant curve, and then again to the left with its jin

saba. The chosen canopy is well balanced, with a slightly projecting *sashieda* (main branch) compensated by a powerful yet compact *ukeeda* (counterbalance branch) on the left. The *atama* (apex mass) is perfectly centered, giving the tree additional balance.

KANSO – Simplicity

The simplicity of this tree is evident. Like many ancient trees, it lacks lower branches, and its entire crown is formed by just a few limbs descending from the top, shaped by snow load. This reduction to essentials is the heart of Zen. Its simplicity is felt most strongly in the trunk's *shari*, carved away by time and the events it has witnessed. It remains steadfast, shedding all youthful ornament and persisting in humble simplicity.

YUGEN – Mystery & Depth

Yugen—the elusive, the uncertain—is one of this work's most important aesthetic values. The mysterious, austere, almost frightening trunk, so ravaged by time, leads the viewer to wonder: "What could have happened?" What has it seen before reaching this state of mysterious beauty? A thoughtful observer can imagine its story—each in their own way. Personally, I imagine the central *saba* as a cave, a refuge, yet also something dark and unknowable.



WABI-SABI – Patina of Age

This is a profoundly austere tree. Its ancient bark and hollowed trunk—damaged by time—express the essence of wabi-sabi. Its immovable nebari conveys an urgent need to cling to earth and life, continuing its centuries-long existence. Only the oldest trees can transform their life experience into a lifelong, enduring presence. “Whatever happens... I remain here.”

SHIZEN – Naturalness

Its elegance lies in its unconventional form and extremely simple canopy of just a few branches. It is a weaving of simplicity, elegance, and modernity at once. “The little I need to survive is all I require.”

DATSUZOKU – Transcending Convention

Here lies one of the most interesting aspects: as a true work of art, the creator abandoned all classical rules, pouring pure emotion and instinct into the

Top left: After wiring, the carved areas are treated with lime sulphur.

Top right and middle: The *Dragon's Scream* was repotted in the spring and both student and master pose with their new creation.



The jins are also extraordinary: carving them rather than simply refining them allowed me to harmonize the deadwood with intertwined live veins—“now you see it, now you don’t”—creating flowing curves and movement that stimulate creativity.

carving. Knowing how larches appear in nature, when I found myself facing a semi-hollow trunk, I had no doubt—the tree needed to be fully hollowed to express its greatest power.

The jins are also extraordinary: carving them rather than simply refining them allowed me to harmonize the deadwood with intertwined live veins—“now you see it, now you don’t”—creating flowing curves and movement that stimulate creativity.

The hole in the front hollow, is the ultimate expression of artistic freedom: its resemblance to Munch’s *The Scream*, combined with the dragon emerging from the tenjin, makes this work unmistakably unique. The dragon is the tree.

SEIJAKU – Stillness & Inner Quiet

When I contemplate this tree deeply, I find myself in absolute silence, as if hearing its story while needing to say nothing. It radiates tranquility, freedom of thought, and pure joy—this magnificent bonsai that continues to live, magnificent and vigorous, turning its life experience into its greatest value.

This tree expresses the full character of the *yamahaji* aesthetic—the taste of the mountain. Anyone who loves *yamadori* has felt this power when observing ancient, austere trees—sometimes “flawed” by classical bonsai standards, but filled with the characteristics that instantly evoke the harsh places where they lived: the movement, the weathered *shari*, the hollows in the trunk. Such feelings are understood only by those who know the mountain deeply.

Another aesthetic value clearly visible is *kokejun*, the sense of a monumental tree. It is deeply satisfying to see a bonsai that resembles a monumental ancient tree yet contained within a small pot. The *nebari* of *The Dragon’s Scream* enhances this, recalling old larches



in nature whose radial roots and powerful yet formal movement give them a wild, almost military austerity.

I conclude with a poem I hold dear, because it brings me back to those beautiful days spent among my larch friends. It was conceived and created with the support of digital writing tools. 🌲



On the stony slope of rock and earth
the larch stands, a seasoned hero.
It sinks its roots, never retreating,
in a silence that deepens every sorrow.
The golden mantle of its autumn crown
is not empty gold, but struggle,
light filtering through its branches
falling on bare roots that battle their path.

Deep cracks in its ancient bark
shelter lichens, the breath of stone,
as wind lashes and the spirit tangles
with the pine scent that cradles the forest.
And when snow covers every trail,
it becomes pure whiteness, yet remains itself,
a sign of hope in the severe cold,
a promise of life always reborn.

The larch is a soul that knows persistence,
a song of strength, a gift of purity,
a tree that teaches us not to yield,
its trunk holding the certainty of life.
The larch... the solitary hero...



Landscape Suiseki Wins BCI Prize at 2025 AIAS National Congress

By Aldo Marchese, Italy

At the National Congress of the Italian Suiseki Lovers Association (AIAS), held in Cesano Maderno from October 10–12, 2025, the BCI Prize was awarded to an exceptional landscape suiseki owned by Mrs. Virna Marchi. Discovered in Liguria, the stone bears the poetic name *Vision of a Distant World*.

The story of this suiseki begins in August 2017, during a short summer holiday. As had become a tradition, Mrs. Marchi went stone searching (*tanseki kō*) at Lake Giacopiane with dear friends Ettore Gardini and Ivana. Throughout the day, countless stones were dug up and turned over, yet none seemed to spark genuine interest. As Jesús Quintas once observed in 2013—when he awarded my suiseki *The Mystery of the Mountain* with the AIAS Trophy—finding a stone that lives up to such comparisons can be exceptionally difficult. For years, Mrs. Marchi’s search had focused almost exclusively on mountain landscapes, to the exclusion of other forms.

Then, nestled between two enormous rocks, she noticed a stone. Flat on its underside, its upper surface was entirely concealed by earth and moss, obscuring its true shape. With patience and care, the group managed to extract it. As the moss and soil were gently removed from one side, the surface revealed intriguing qualities, convincing Mrs. Marchi to take the stone home.

Once there, the stone was placed beneath the benches that hold her bonsai collection, where it remained for several years. One day, while watering her plants, her gaze fell upon the stone, which suddenly revealed itself in a new way—almost magically—evoking a distant, unfamiliar landscape. From that moment came its name, *Vision of a Distant World*.

With the help of her husband, the stone was carefully cleaned, and he then skillfully carved a daiza from mahogany wood to complement it. The suiseki had never before been exhibited; its first public appearance was at the 2025 AIAS Congress.

Mrs. Marchi did not expect any recognition. When her name was announced for the BCI Prize, she was deeply moved—especially because the award was presented by Aldo Marchese, whom she regards as a highly knowledgeable expert and a true connoisseur and admirer of suiseki. 🌲



Vision of a Distant World, Palombino stone from Liguria. Collection of Virna Marchi.

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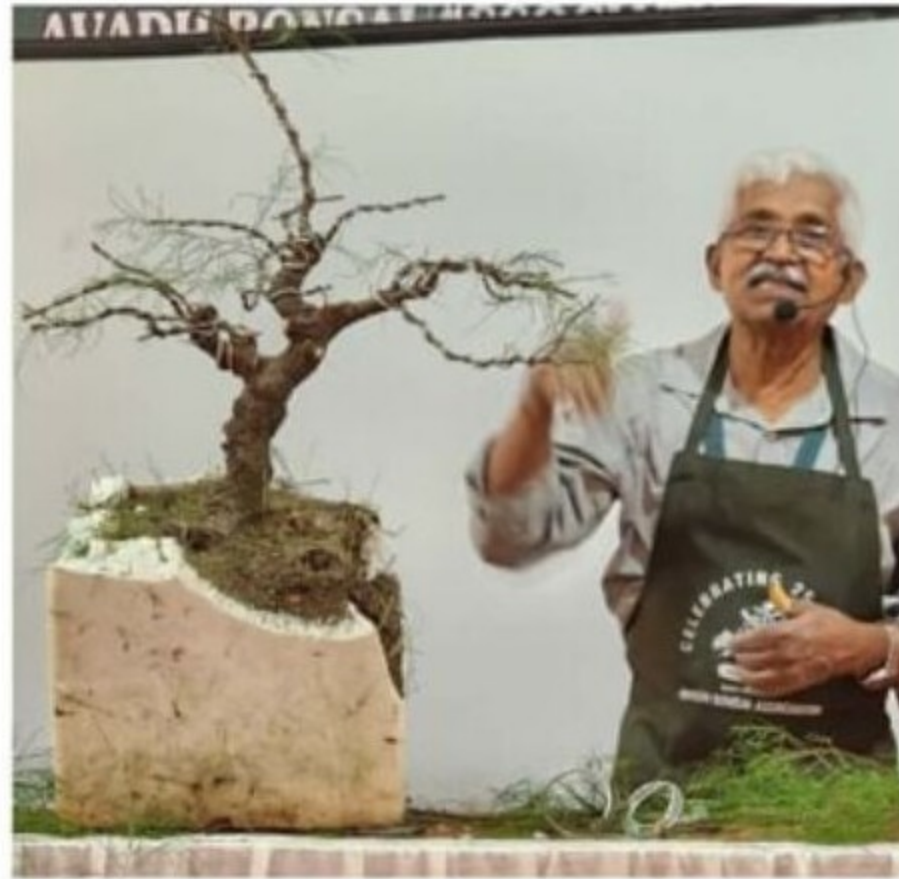
Avadh Bonsai Association Celebrates Its Silver Jubilee

By Mr. K. K. Arora and Priyanshi Dayanand

The Avadh Bonsai Association (ABA), Lucknow—founded in 2000 by the late Mrs. Santosh Arora, a BCI Life Member, to promote the art of bonsai in North India—celebrated its Silver Jubilee in 2025 with a series of special programs and events. The highlight of the celebrations was a grand two-day bonsai exhibition, organized to honour the mentors and teachers whose invaluable guidance has shaped the association over the past 25 years.

The exhibition was inaugurated by Jyoti and Nikunj Parekh, together with other distinguished bonsai masters from across the country. On the occasion, Mr. K. K. Arora and Mrs. Renu Prakash shared the inspiring journey of the Avadh Bonsai Association and expressed their heartfelt gratitude to the visiting masters for their continued support and encouragement.

Approximately 200 bonsai, representing a wide range of species, sizes, and styles, were displayed. The exhibition was further enriched by kusamono, suiseki, ikebana arrangements, inspirational quotations, and hand-painted scrolls. A life-sized Casuarina served as the centerpiece and showstopper of the event, drawing particular admiration from visitors.



Bonsai demonstrations were conducted by leading artists: Mr. Ravindran Damodaran (WBFF Director – South Asia Region and SABF) on *Casuarina equisetifolia*; Mr. Veer Choudhary on *Ficus rubiginosa*; Mr. Soumik Das on *Premna microphylla*; and Mr. Fahad Mallik on *Casuarina equisetifolia*. They were supported by Ms. Sujata Bhat, Vice-President of BCI, along with ABA artists, teachers, and members, including Ms. Priyanshi Dayanand, Mrs. Drona Singh, Mrs. Gunjan Banga, and Mr. Sidharth Singh, among others.

A life-sized Casuarina served as the centerpiece and showstopper of the event



Renu Prakash posing with her composition which was awarded Best Penjing.

Member exhibits were judged by Jyoti and Nikunj Parekh across various categories, encouraging creativity, learning, and continuous improvement among participants.

As the Avadh Bonsai Association marks 25 years of dedicated service to bonsai, its members remain deeply grateful for the support received over the past quarter-century and look forward to carrying forward the bonsai legacy of their Founder President and Guru, Mrs. Santosh Arora. 🌲



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