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Top ***2015***

42 Pages ***Extra***

Recommended by Master Masahiko Kimura and Kinbon Magazine

"As a bonsai resercher I also recommend this product"

Kaoru Koizumi

This tree won the Minister of Education Award at the 28th Taikan-ten



"Genyo" Juniperus rigida,
owned by Kaoru Koizumi.
Pot: Shuzan rectangular

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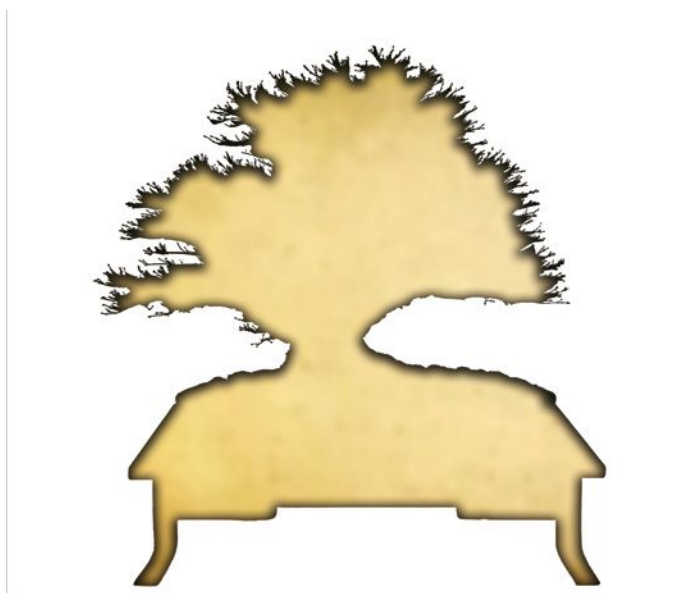
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Translations:

Peter Warren

KINBON



No bonsai this time . . .

This is our very first cover without a bonsai displayed on it. Why? Because it's a special edition and it's a first step in the execution of a much bigger plan we are developing. I cannot reveal too much yet, because we are still cogitating on it, but I will let you know more in the running of this year. In the meantime, I can say that the reason for all this is that we have the wish to show you each bonsai on a full single page so you can appreciate it in it's full glory, just like the Ginkgo photo albums in the past.

Books seem to be old school now and far too costly to produce. A sad thing, but that is the reality we deal with today. We didn't give up, though and tried to find a new way to equal that same experience as flicking through the pages of those Ginkgo photo albums. It is this feeling and emotion we want to bring back to life

by showing you the best bonsai. I hope you like our first step in that direction and cherish this issue as a really special one. Instead of putting a bonsai up front, wire and concave pliers, the two main elements in creating beautiful bonsai, say it all. It was just too difficult to pick one of the selected bonsai anyway.

Of course we have lots more in store, like the amazing Masahiko Kimura who is still going strong when creating a giant juniper bonsai. 'Where eagles dare' is the appropriate title of a masterly creation by Giacomo Pappalardo. Peter Warren's teaching skills guide you through the techniques of grafting. 'Like Fuji-san' shows you an exceptional creation by satsuki specialist Shigeo Isobe.

Enjoy the reading!

Farrand Bloch
Chief editor



Our Icons



Beginner

Video available
bonsaifocus.com

Advanced

Scan the code
with your phone

Expert

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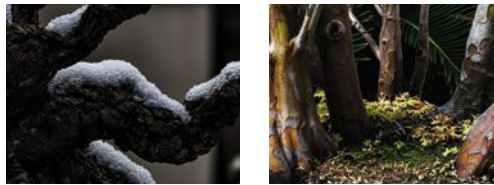
A selection of the most remarkable trees of 2015



A new bonsai art book from photographer Stephen Voss

A book of fine art bonsai photographs is the great and beautiful project embarked on by award winning Stephen Voss. He ran a Kickstarter campaign to help fund the book and he's got a really great video on it that has so much more in it than giving birth to a book. It's a video that quietly teaches. Take a moment to see it.

Stephen Voss: 'One of the biggest challenges in photographing bonsai is the light. Any hint of sun in the sky would mean very



dark shadows and bright highlights far beyond those that a camera can capture. So it was often a waiting game, especially on those slightly cloudy days. I would compose my image and watch the sky, waiting for a cloud to pass over the sun and give me beautiful, diffused light.'

More info: www.bonsaibook.co/blog



EURO TOP 30 2018

BCI & Bonsai Euro Top 30 come together on 12-14 October 2018

Official confirmation comes from François Jeker for this weekend: 'The World Congress of BCI (Bonsai Clubs International) will take place in Mulhouse during the third edition of Bonsai Euro Top 30. In addition to the 30 most beautiful bonsai in Europe, there will be thematic exhibitions: oldest bonsai trees in Europe, a selection of trees created during my workshops in Froeningen (think about it now to prepare your trees for selection), an exhibition of kusamono, Ikebana, 10 ishi-tsuki in collaboration with the FFB, an educational exhibition prepared by the Tenkei Bonsai Club of Mulhouse and of course many traders will be present on each of the days.'



The Black Scissors are coming

Lithuanian Bonsai Association, a member of the Black Scissors Community, will be host at the 1st international Black Scissors convention in Alytus, Lithuania, the 2 - 4 September 2016 in collaboration with the 5th Japanese Culture Festival. The aim is promoting the spirit of respectful bonsai sisterhood, the enthusiasm to explore

new ideas, the freedom to create and to express the spirit of motivation, also to encourage and to share creativity of bonsai art lifting it to a higher level and to give it a new perspective. For further details: www.bonsai.lt/convention-2016
Or for email contact: blackscissors.lithuania@gmail.com



5-8 and 10-13 February

90th Kokufu-ten exhibition
Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum.
Where: (8-36 Ueno-Koen Taito-ku, Tokyo 110-0007)

28th February

Swindon Winter Image Show 2016
Stratton Leisure Centre, Grange Drive, Stratton St Margaret, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN3 4JY
10:30 to 16:00. Info: 07982 401103

17-20 March

BCI Regional Bonsai Convention and Exhibition. Hosted by Philippines Bonsai Association. Ayala Triangle Garden and Art Museum



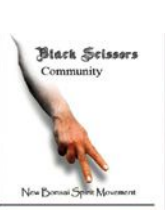
Info: yumiesg.bonsai@yahoo.com

17-20 March

Generation Bonsai 2016
Alter Bammentaler Weg 10, 69151 Neckargemünd, Germany.

2-3 April

Spirit of Shohin 2016 at The Royal Horticultural Society grounds, Wisley GU23 6QB. The best of British shohin bonsai organized by British Shohin Bonsai in association with Sutton Bonsai Society. Info: antique.net-sule@gmail.com





Bonsai Europa 2015

It all happened in Bury, UK over 10-11 October. A dream come true by

initiator Tony Tickle. The

trade stands were in the main room, the exhibition and demos were in a separate room away from the main hall.

More than 125 trees from 80 contributors made up the show

Demos by the new talented or not so known bonsai artists were really well set up, good material and their plans were clearly motivated and explained. A double demo was held by Yannick Kiggen and Will Baddeley who together worked on a large yew. Will did the heavy carving on the deadwood on the first day, then on Sunday Yannick worked on the branches and styling. Tony had big signs made of

all the artists which consisted of a photo and their personal view on bonsai. These were hung throughout the venue. The whole setting was really well done. One small comment is that the lighting was a bit too soft, but the quality of trees and the displays were great. Stone Monkey created a beautiful pot for the best in show, won by Mark and Ritta Cooper for their shohin display. Mark Kennerley made some superb wire tree awards for the various bonsai classes. Tony adds:

'From the feedback I have received Bonsai Europa 2015 was a great success, almost all the traders want to rebook, exhibitors tell me that Bonsai Europa 2017 is a target for getting their trees ready.'



Above: The banners with artist's promotion.
Below: Bonsai market and show



Some trees from the private collection of Fred Chenal



Above: Tokonomas with trees by Andrés Alvarez Iglesias. Below: The Bonsai Focus stand



European Bonsai San, Saulieu 2015

High standard of bonsai and a surprising winner

It was worth the long drive to Saulieu right in the middle of the Bourgogne region of France. This show grows and grows with every edition. This year the traditional tokonomas were set up with trees of Andrés Alvarez Iglesias and David Benavente; with star demonstrator Ryan Neil they formed the jury. The surprising winner was the amazing Olive by Jordi Ugena, which has such a great perfection.

But not only the winning tree had great qualities, many of the bonsai on display showed maturity and grand style. In the theatre hall there were simultaneous demonstrations from Ryan Neil, David Benavente and El Tím.

An even bigger trade market surrounded the exhibition which was located right in the middle of this big hall. Thanks to the effort of Fred Chenal and his team the show was of a very high standard.

The winners are:

Best composition: 1st Ian Stewardson: *Juniperus chinensis itoigawa*, 2nd Davide Cardin: *Juniperus chinensis* 3rd Giacomo Pappalardo: *Pinus sylvestris*.

Best Deciduous: 1st Josef Valuch: *Pseudotsuga* 2nd John Pitt: *Prunus spinosa*, 3rd Jean-Paul Plomans: *Quercus robur*.

Best in show 1st Jordi Ugena: *Olea sylvestris*. 2nd Davide Cardin: *Juniperus chinensis*. 3rd: El Tím: *Juniperus Sabina*.



Like Fuji-san

*A satsuki rock planting
by Shigeo Isobe*



Text and photography: Kinbon magazine, Japan

A rock that evokes images of the famous volcano Fuji, near Tokyo, is the centre stage for an unusual rock planting. The obsession of the artist can be seen forming on the rock. What scene will satsuki specialist, Shigeo Isobe create on this old Ibigawa rock?

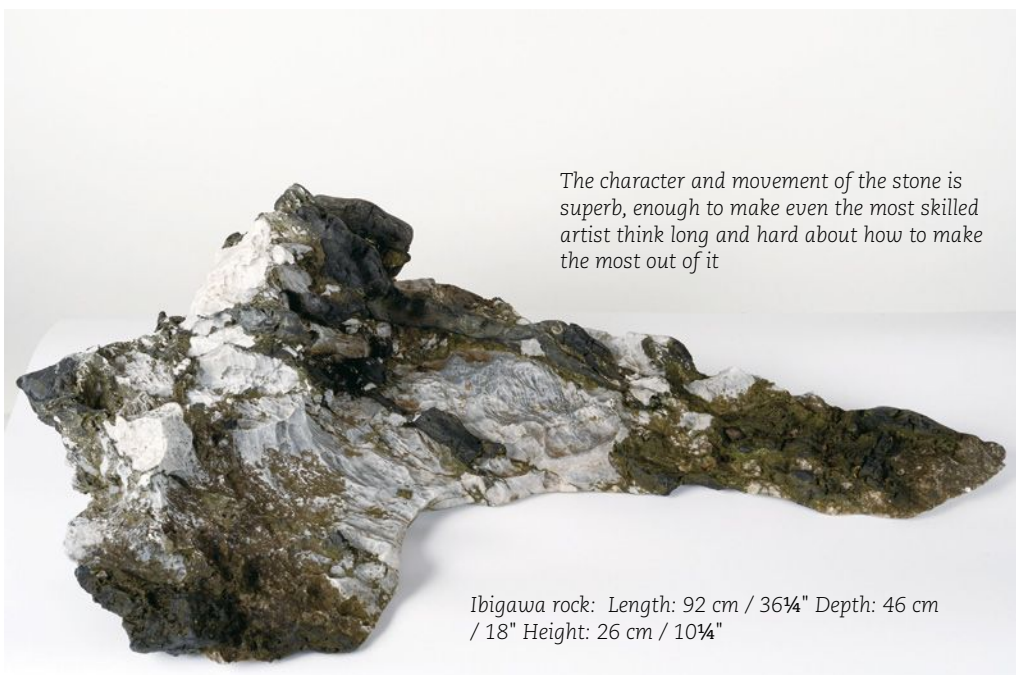


In order to use this stone without destroying the character, much artistic sensitivity is required, rather than technique. Will the iron man of satsuki bonsai, Mr Shigeo Isobe live up to the challenge and create a worthy scene?

Using the Masahiko Kimura technique of planting the rock in a pot

Mr Isobe has been studying underneath Masahiko Kimura for a number of years, seeking his guidance and taking advice on the more creative side of bonsai. He tells us, 'It is important, however, that I do things that he doesn't, or wouldn't do, so I searched long and hard for this stone. It offers a wonderful scene that I cannot improve on by carving, but I intend to use the stone to its fullest potential by planting some azaleas on it. This is a very difficult task.'

A number of trees have been prepared for this make or break transformation, but the two possible pots for use will not hold the entire stone.



The character and movement of the stone is superb, enough to make even the most skilled artist think long and hard about how to make the most out of it

Ibigawa rock: Length: 92 cm / 36¼" Depth: 46 cm / 18" Height: 26 cm / 10¼"



This Ibigawa ryugan rock was owned by an enthusiast from that area for a great number of years. There is a great sense of age and the image of a snow capped mountain is exceptionally superb and rare

Taller than Fuji

The rock planting by creative satsuki specialist, Shigeo Isobe, is not one that is straightforward. One of the reasons for this is that the character and style of the rock being used looks as though it is something you would see at the base of Mount Fuji.

When trying to match a tree to place with such a rock, the immediate logical thought is that there are no trees taller than a mountain top. So trees that are shorter than the 'peak' are chosen. Following on from that logic, you can say that, if Mount Fuji is in the distance and there is a tree just in front of you, it will look taller than Fuji. This brings to mind any number of famous pictures where Mount Fuji appears in the background framed by cascading branches.

If we use some very short, compact trees the main peak certainly does stand out; however, there is a difference between making the peak stand out and utilising its character to its maximum.

As seen from the right. The right edge of the stone overhangs the edge of the pot slightly. The front and back are easily contained inside the pot



Round or oval? The choice of pot is crucial for the whole creation. The first attempt is with an oval pot



The stone is placed in a shallow oval pot to see how it looks. The pot has lots of room, front to back, so the rock fits in, though it does protrude a little on the left. Japanese oval. Length: 93 cm / 36¾" Depth: 72 cm / 28¾" Height: 7.5 cm / 3"



As seen from the left. There is plenty of space to plant trees at the front and back

First, Shigeo Isobe tries to match the material with the rock in the oval pot. The rock protrudes slightly on the right hand side and fits comfortably at front to back. There will be no issues growing trees in this pot. That said, one of the important points is to utilise the space back to front to create a certain feel. It is not simply a case of creating space and throwing a tree in it without thought. Let's start off by considering the trees we have available.



A matter of perspective: small trees to make the rock stand out



In order to make the peak of the rock stand out, a number of small trees are planted around it. Each of them are styled and refined trees, showing the artistic determination of Mr Isobe

Even by pulling down the branches with wire and changing the planting angles so they are below the peak of the rock, Mr Isobe is far from happy with this image



A further two trees are added, filling up the space and making it look rather like a miniature garden



In order to accentuate the main peak of the stone, Mr Isobe tries planting a tree with a crooked trunk at the back. But the result is not satisfying

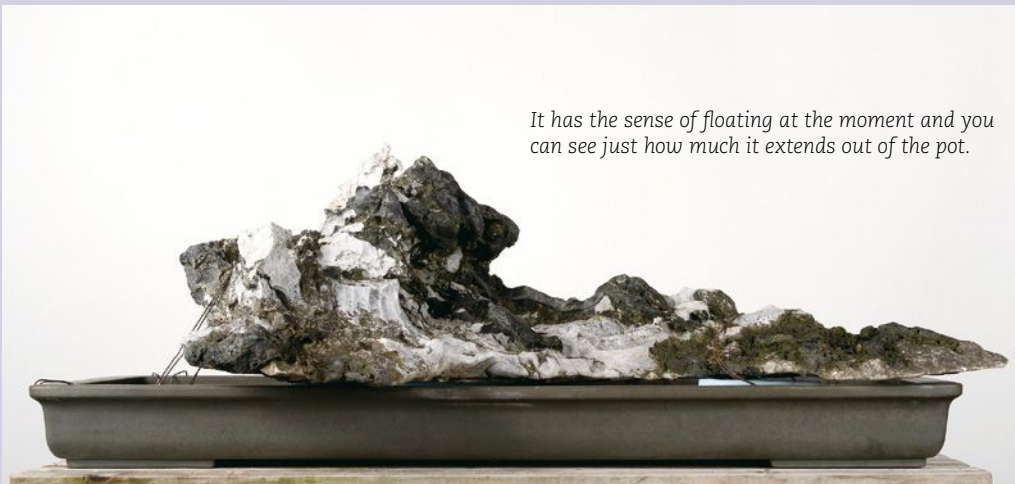
Trying a rectangular pot

Shigeo Isobe is not satisfied with the oval pot combination and so attempts something with a narrow rectangle, deliberately pushing the stone over the front, back and righthand edges. In order to do this, it is placed on blocks so that it isn't touching the edges of the pot.

In comparison with the oval pot, the rock hangs over the edge of the pot a good deal more and there is much less space for the

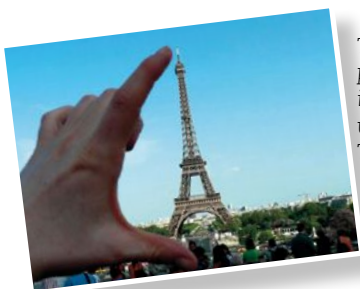
roots to grow, thereby giving it a much more confined image. Let's see what image can be created.

Seen from the right and above. It is raised ever so slightly towards the front in order to give the roots a little more space for growth



It has the sense of floating at the moment and you can see just how much it extends out of the pot.





The principle of perspective is illustrated here with the Eiffel Tower in Paris

Change of perspective: Lower or higher?

Shigeo Isobe has decided against trying to make a planting in the oval pot where all of the trees are lower than the central peak. Instead he is trying to use the long, narrow rectangular pot. Even though the pot is smaller, more confined and has a number of small trees, it still looks like a miniature box garden.

The plan to keep the central peak as the highest point has been abandoned as impractical.

The next tree to be tried is a relatively large tree placed to the left back. With the flow of the rock towards the right, the balance works fairly well; however, the heavy nature of the tree takes the eye away from the quality and character of the rock.

The next is a tall, thin, literati style tree, placed by itself to the left back. It is a high quality tree in itself and due to the lack of lower branches and visual weight in the trunk, the character of the rock is not overpowered. Although not the traditional way of using a rock, a move away from theory is starting to look good.



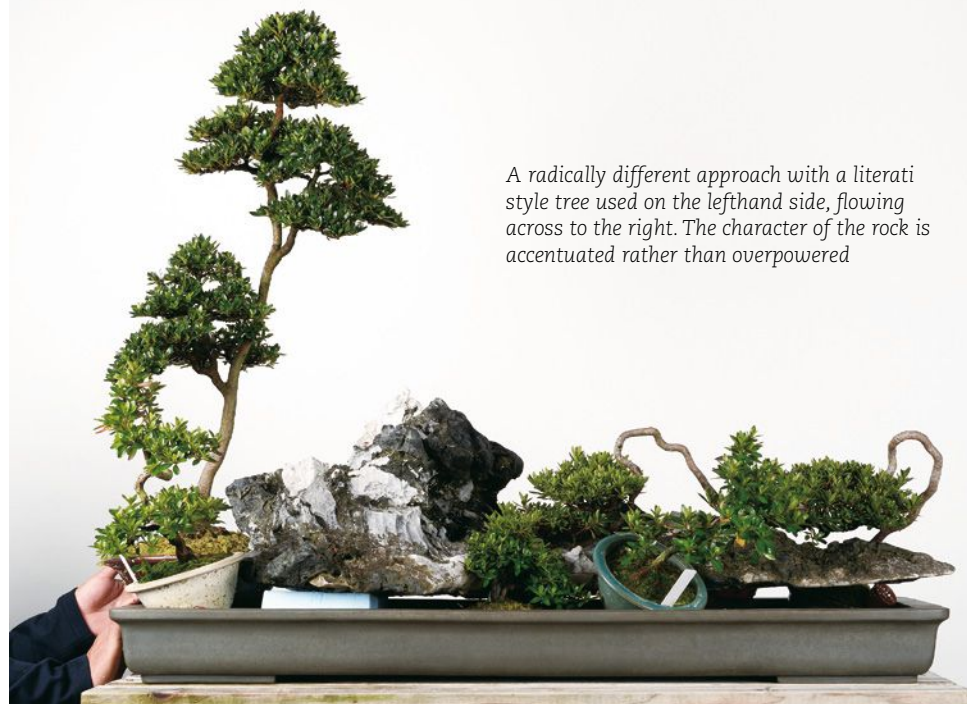
First, the same arrangement as used in the oval pot is tried out here. It still looks like a miniature box garden



As seen from slightly above. A jumble of trees



A relatively large tree is placed on the lefthand side. It is starting to look like a more traditional group planting with a scalene triangular outline. However, the character of the rock is being overpowered



A radically different approach with a literati style tree used on the lefthand side, flowing across to the right. The character of the rock is accentuated rather than overpowered

Inspired by Hokusai



The 36 views of Mount Fuji by Hokusai might have been a great inspiration for this creation. In both of these illustrations you can see a large tree in front and the Fuji in the far distance



Preparing the satsuki material



The trees which will be used for the planting. All of them are the osakazuki variety and each of the trees has its own character and could be appreciated by itself individually



'Tanzaku' shaped narrow rectangular pot. Japanese rectangle Length: 97 cm / Depth: 39 cm / Height: 9 cm /

The wires are not just to keep the trees in place but also to hold the rock and so stronger copper wires are used for that.



The tree to be used on the righthand side could be used as it is, but in order to make it even more compact, Mr Isobe reduces the height by cutting off the main trunk



This is another tree that could just as easily be used as it is in an exhibition. It's an old tree with great character, a sign that Mr Isobe will spare no expense to create the best image

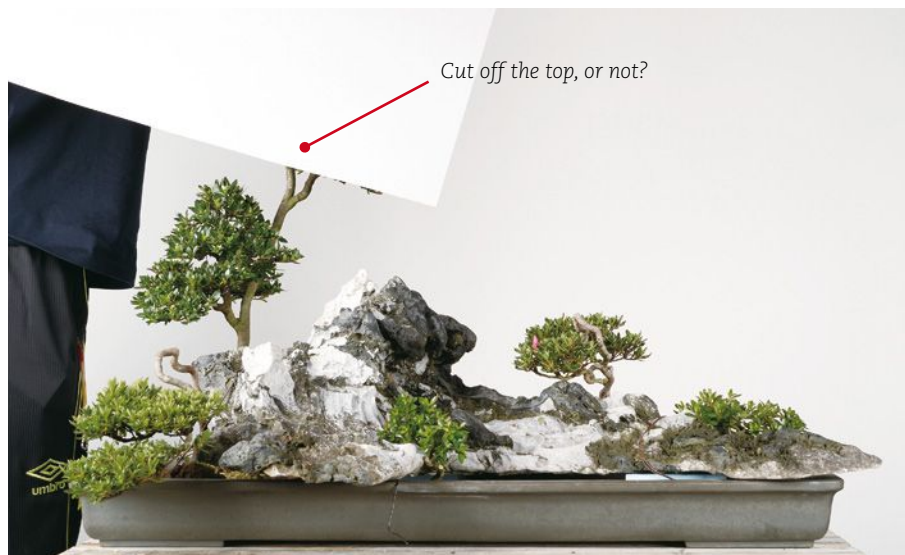


Next to be positioned is the twin trunk tree which had its main trunk removed. As it has character in itself, it is planted so that it can be seen clearly, but placed so it is separate from the rock



The third tree is placed and Mr Isobe stands back to see if that is sufficient or whether more trees need to be added

The main tree is the last to be put in position. It is the wonderful, literati style satsuki which is put at the rear of the stone on the left side



The finishing touches are applied to the two remaining trees and the idea is floated to reduce the height of the literati style tree down to the first branch. But it's not a very good idea



The concept is starting to become reality. Seen slightly from above. With this number of trees and planting positions, the sense of a miniature box garden has been eliminated

Each tree is fixed lightly and reconsidered

The position of each is considered from the front and the sides before it is tightened into the pot firmly. Even at this stage, the last tree to be considered is giving Shigeo Isobe great concern, the one on the lower left.



From the right



Front



Left

Shigeo Isobe fixes the tree in the middle section, considering the angle and front



It is brought closer to the rock and flows from left to right. If the base and roots of the tree on the lower right are covered with moss, this offers a very possible orientation. It gives the impression of trees growing in a ravine



Bringing the tree around to the lower left shows off the full frontage of the stone and it is still balanced. The decision is made and the trees are securely fixed in place

Obsession with the stone

Shigeo Isobe's obsession with the character of the stone is strong. The tree prepared for the lower lefthand side is giving Shigeo Isobe great concern. It looks good without it, but it can also be used flowing to the front right or away from the rock towards the left.

With the tree flowing towards the front right, some of the character of the rock is lost. This isn't what Shigeo Isobe wants since he is looking to make the most of the rock. He decides to use it flowing towards the left.



Seen from the right. There is plenty of space into which soil can be placed



From behind you can see just how much space has been left for the trees to grow into



In this case, just Kanuma and sphagnum moss will be sufficient



A wire is used to hold the sphagnum and soil in place, over the top of which, decorative moss will surely be placed

Considerations for creating rock plantings with azaleas

Now we have reached the final part of the rock planting, there are some important points to understand and consider:

When creating rock planting with conifers, using Keto is a very valuable product to use. However, the very fine root structure of azaleas does not penetrate into the Keto in the same way that other species can.

In this rock planting we do not have many exposed roots or those which are going to be trained down the rock into soil and so the use of Keto is not required, simply Kanuma and sphagnum moss for top dressing.

In the case of creating a rock planting where the roots need to be trained down into the pot, or the pot is created from mesh and wire, Keto is an important ingredient.

Creating rock plantings with azaleas is difficult due to their horticultural requirements and growth habit, so special consideration is required.

Final pruning and styling

The trees were pretty much finished material when planted and so need little manipulation or pruning in order to finish the image.

The point to consider when pruning is to accentuate the character of each individual tree after it has been planted at what may be a new angle or front. Each tree has a certain part to play in the overall design and so may need to be altered to suit that design. They can all be viewed individually and were initially created as such; however, slight but important alterations may be necessary.

Look at the literati tree, for example, and compare the before and after pruning images. The tree had a lofty, aloof air which was accentuated by lightening the foliage pads and creating more of a jaunty rhythm to the movement of trunk and branches, giving somewhat the feel of a Chinese landscape painting — an ideal match for the stone.

Although it might have been possible to create a miniature box garden with this idea, the artistry of the creator has ultimately shone through and he has created a beautiful scene.





The tall tree is aloof and detached from the world. Although it is planted towards the rear, the moss growing around the base suggests otherwise. The impression of a vast mountain range in the distance has been created



An old tree is standing on a knoll. The movement in the trunk and branches and the planting position all give the impression of a solitary old tree by itself, battered by wind on a hill top



Growing from the side of ravine, the lower left tree appears to grasp the side of the cliff, cascading into a valley



Final styling after moss is applied



The image of a mountain plateau with a forest grove is created. The rock spreading outside the pot adds to the grand vista



The small tree planted in the curve of the rock gives the impression of a tree growing around the side of a lake

Final result. Height: 68 cm / 26¾" Width: 98 cm / 38"





Delicate and painstaking...

... but it needs to be done. How to remove the old needles on pines

Text and photography: Kinbon magazine, Japan

Needle reduction on pines can be split into two categories: removal of the old needles and the new needle, or strong shoot removal

Removal of old needles in the autumn helps to create balance between the buds for next year. Once all of the second flush of bud growth has hardened in October, older needles can be removed at the same time as thinning out the number of buds and shoots from the second flush.

Basically, all of the older needles are removed; however, in trees still early in development, simply doing this across

One by one

Removal of unnecessary old needles should be done carefully. Although it is painstaking and delicate work, the needles should be removed one pair at a time using tweezers, pulling them out forwards. If the thin, paper-like base remains, it will drop off naturally.

the tree will not enable you to correct any problems of imbalance in vigour. By leaving more older needles on the weaker branches and removing more from strong branches you'll improve this imbalance. If preparing for an exhibition, though, it is always better to remove all old needles and to create a uniform appearance of needle length across the entire tree. The balance of bud strength will become apparent during the following spring.



Avoid ripping the needles out by hand; always use a pair of tweezers and do it carefully



If you are rough and twist the branch all over the place you can easily damage the bud for the following year. Take very great care not to do this

Removing old needles



Before removing old needles: The tree is very healthy and a good second flush of growth has occurred. The old needles should be removed to achieve balance and reflect the vigour



After old needle reduction: Air and sunlight can now reach all parts of the tree equally and this will strengthen the interior and help the second flush of growth to reach fruition

Strong and weak shoots



Strong section with multiple shoots: Old needles are removed, the strongest shoots are pruned off and any areas of multiple budding are reduced to just two

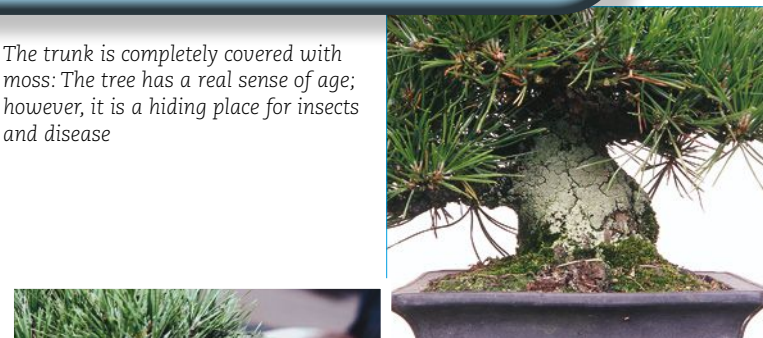


Weak buds at the tip: Remove broken and diseased needles only. Leave all the old needles there to help strengthen the weak shoot



Cleaning the trunk of moss

The trunk is completely covered with moss: The tree has a real sense of age; however, it is a hiding place for insects and disease



For small amounts of moss it's possible to remove it by painting on vinegar. When there's a lot of moss, it should be very carefully removed by hand

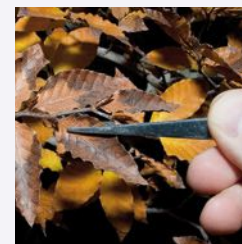


It almost invariably means removing some of the bark which has taken many years to grow. Always try to avoid this happening by cleaning regularly



Beware of attack by fungus

The time is now favourable to fight diverse pests during their winter stages. Some harmful insects and ticks overwinter on plants as eggs, pupa or immovable larva. On a mild winter day treat with winter oil such as Promana, which blocks the openings of insect respiration, so you can decimate them effectively. Using this method, scales and aphids can be destroyed for a long period of time.



Because insects just love to live in old leaves, remove from branches and the pot surface



Acer buergerianum

Consider the front of a clump style tree in order to change the quality!

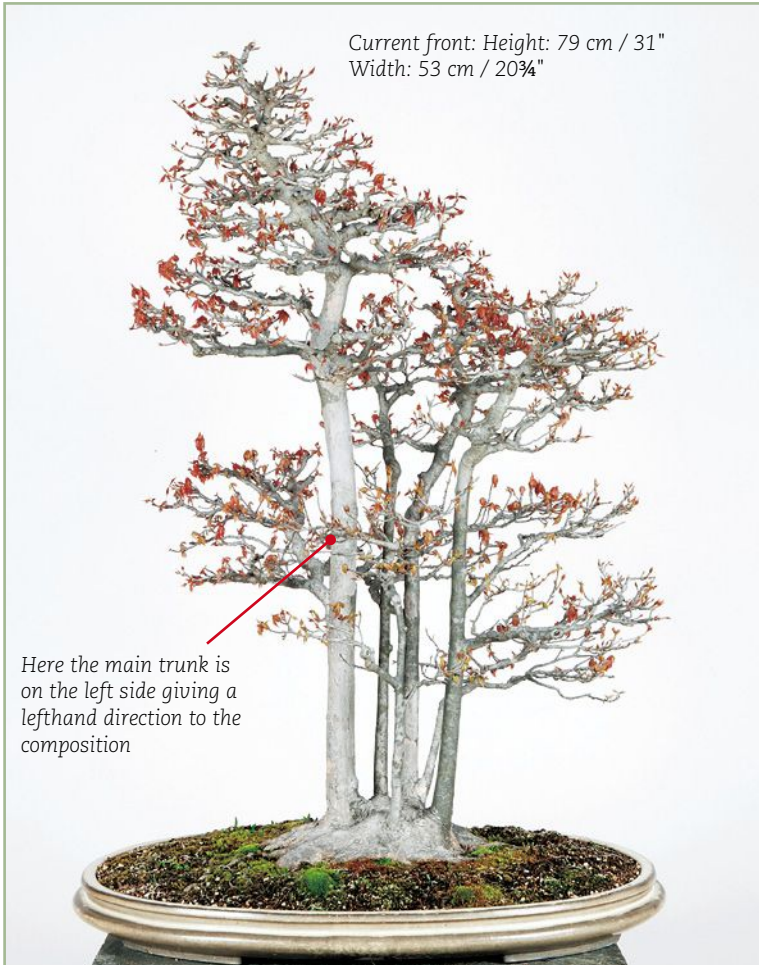
Text and photography: Kinbon magazine, Japan

Haruyoshi Ishii (Ueharu-en) rotates a clump style maple to see whether there is a better way of presenting it

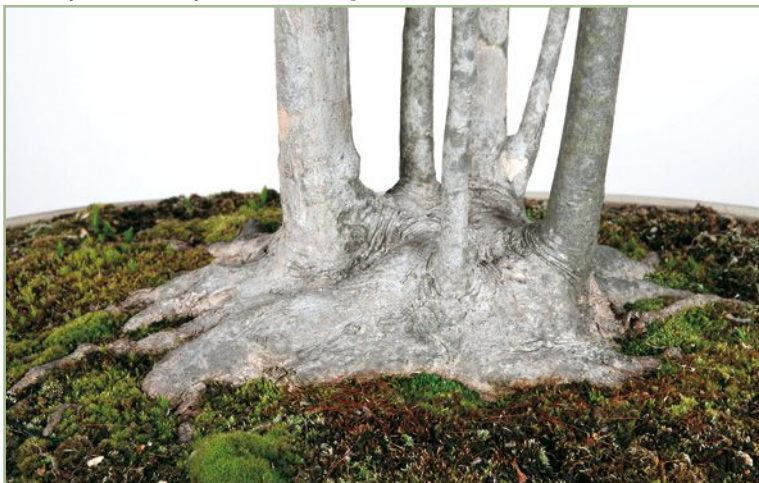
'Rethinking the front of a tree is possible when transplanting, but is not only restricted to clump styles,' Harushi explains. 'Please consider transplanting not just from a horticultural perspective, but also from the aesthetical.'

During the period between transplanting, branches develop and ramify, trees may become damaged. There are many situations where the front of a tree will need to be reconsidered.

This particular tree has been created for many years with the current front and Harushi Ishii is now re-evaluating it. There is often no 'correct' answer, much of the choice is subjective and down to personal taste. This is something to be thought about when transplanting your own trees.



The clump's lower trunk. The roots on the lefthand side are a little problematic, but they have already become a hard plate



Possible front 1

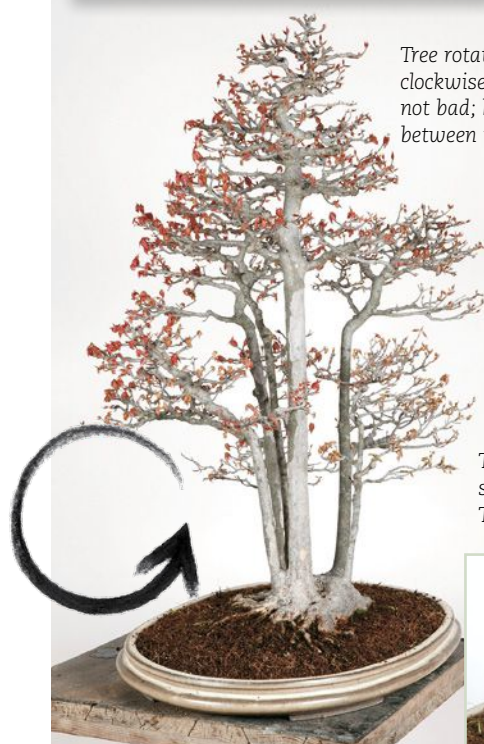
Rotated slightly anti clockwise so the smaller trunk peeks from the side of the main trunk. The branch balance is not bad



Lower trunk viewed closer up. The slightly angled nebari is a bit uncomfortable



Possible front 2



Tree rotated even further anti clockwise. The branching is not bad; however, the balance between the trunks is poor

The lower trunk shows that there is no spreading nebari on the righthand side. This could be solved by root grafting



Possible front 3

Seen from the lefthand side. The main trunk is roughly in the centre. The branch and trunk arrangement look good for a clump style. Mr Ishii decides on this front



New front, lower trunk. The plate-like feel has disappeared and the roots look very natural. There is possibility for some grafting on the right side



We all have our own preferences and transplanting offers a good opportunity for change



As well as spraying the tops, apply a long-acting systemic pesticide to the soil when you over winter the trees

Do it when they sleep...

During the winter months it is not immediately obvious that insects or fungi are present and active, but they are there, lurking under the leaves and in the bark, either as larvae, eggs or creating spores. They become active in the spring at the same time as the movement of buds and growth, attacking the tender young growth. During this time it can often damage the tree to spray with chemicals, but during the dormant period you can spray them at a higher concentration, killing the dormant insect eggs, larvae and spores. In recent years, the relatively mild winters have caused problems with aphids early in the spring as they were usually killed off during harsh winters. This is particularly a problem if trees are kept in warm greenhouses in close contact with other trees.

Transplanting to change the front



There are no particularly thick roots on the base of the root ball. It has clearly been worked on well throughout its life



After untangling the roots, one strong root has been found. The roots are in a good condition



The strong root which raced around the edge of the pot is pruned back to a suitable smaller secondary root



When pruning such strong roots, prune back to a secondary root close to the nebari, if there is a one. Always ensure there is a secondary fine root for safety



After removing some of the soil on the bottom, a thick root emerges



Removing the root at the base with concave cutters has a different effect on root control and development than the previous root pruning



The outer circumference of roots is pruned once again



In order to accommodate the change in front, the roots to the left and right of the old front are pruned back quite strongly to leave an almost circular root ball

Let water flow again

During the dormant period the trees are virtually inactive and so don't need fertiliser. One cause of poor water percolation is the degradation of the top layer of soil through the year, in particular directly underneath fertiliser. Check below the fertiliser cakes and if the soil is compacted and hard, scrape away and replace with fresh soil. If left without attention, the water absorption becomes poor, drainage and gaseous exchange become problematic and the root health will suffer.



Remove the fertiliser and affected soil, add some fresh soil. Moss is placed on top of the soil to make it look more attractive

Consider the planting position



First the tree is put in the centre of the pot. With the current branch arrangement, it is not bad, but the composition has no direction



If it is moved towards the right the apex of the main trunk can be developed towards the left. This combined with the direction of the secondary trunks works well



When it is placed on the lefthand side the direction of the main trunk is brought out. This arrangement is best



In order to plant it in a shallow pot, the root ball has been pruned back at the base quite strongly. If this is done regularly, the nebari will develop quickly



As the roots have been cut back hard, make doubly sure that there is soil beneath and the tree is secure



After transplanting, the nebari on the righthand side feels as though it is lacking something. It will be root grafted at the next transplanting

Trees such as this multi-trunk group will often have more than one obvious front; however, even if it were placed in a round pot, the front would still be determined by the position of the feet. When it comes time to transplanting, please consider the position of the front carefully. In this case, the 45 degree change of front brought a whole new lease of life to this trident maple group planting, raising the quality of it even further. Always remember to look at the front of your trees and their planting angle every time you come to plant them.



Before and after



The mythical tree

François Jeker analyses Aleandro Pierotti's *Myrtus*

Myrtus is a fantastic tree to use for bonsai. Its characteristic trunk shape and vigorous growth make it an amazing tree to work with

Text and illustrations: François Jeker



Have your bonsai or bonsai material judged on its qualities and future potential. Let François Jeker's honest and constructive comments ensure that you get the most from it.

Analyse

This *Myrtus* is an interesting material, especially because of its powerful trunk featuring the bulky veins that are typical of the species.

To enhance this trunk, the tree's height must be as short as possible. The first left branch can become an ideal apex.

This means the two existing apices and the first branch at the left without foliage can be transformed into deadwood.

The tree sprouts easily on the trunk. Buds will be selected to keep in mind future branches. Then young shoots can be wired to get them at a coherent angle.

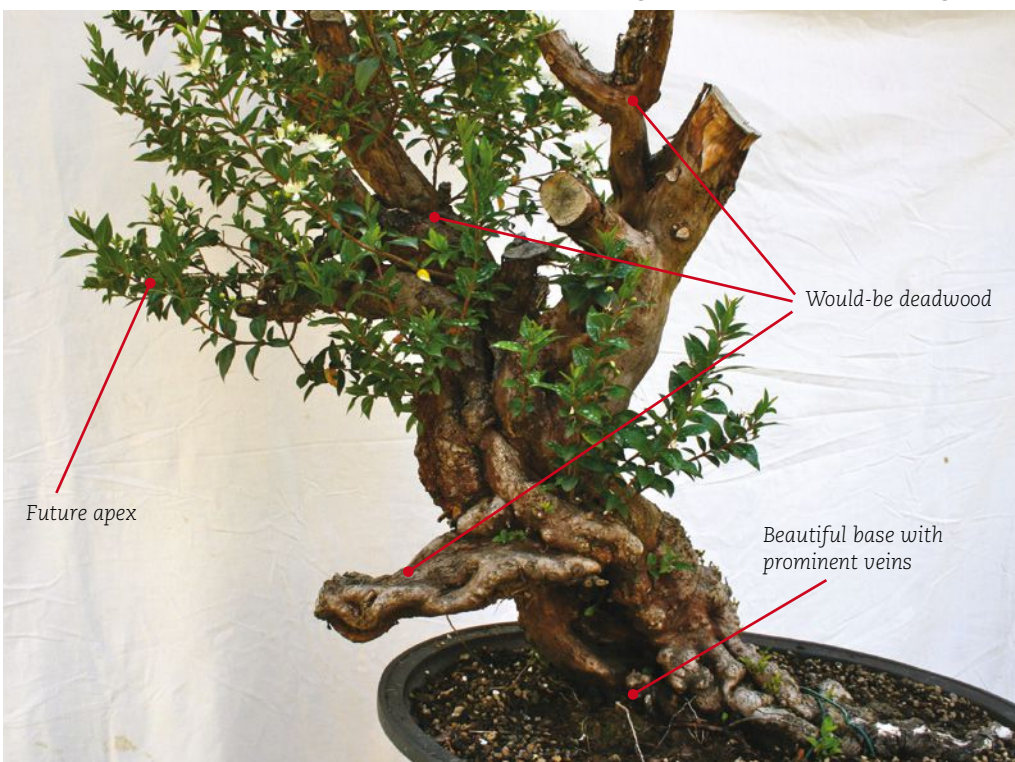


Easy to adapt

Myrtus is very convenient for bonsai, and this species is splendid in spring with its white fragrant flowers, then later with some dark blue berries.

The tree thrives very fast if young shoots are selected. These are both vigorous and flexible.

Its only possible drawback occurs if you live in one of the cool temperate zones. It is a Mediterranean species which will slow down in a cold climate and requires specific winter protection from frost.



Details

Myrtus (*Myrtus communis*)

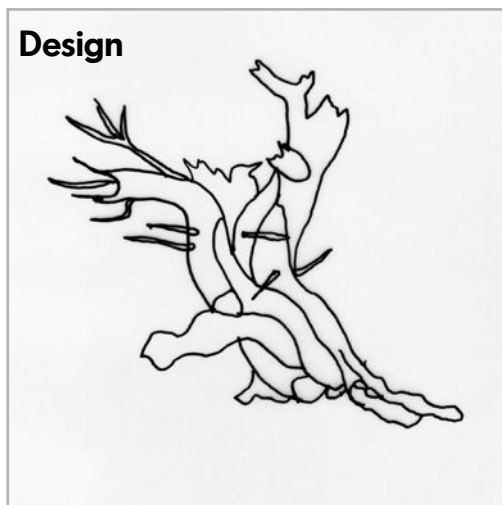
Yamadori collected in 2012 from an abandoned olive field in Tuscany.

Owner: Aleandro Pierotti

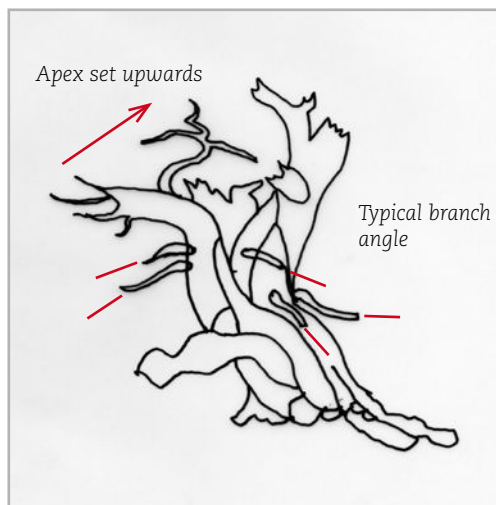
Height: 85 cm / 33¼"

Trunk diameter: 23 cm / 9"

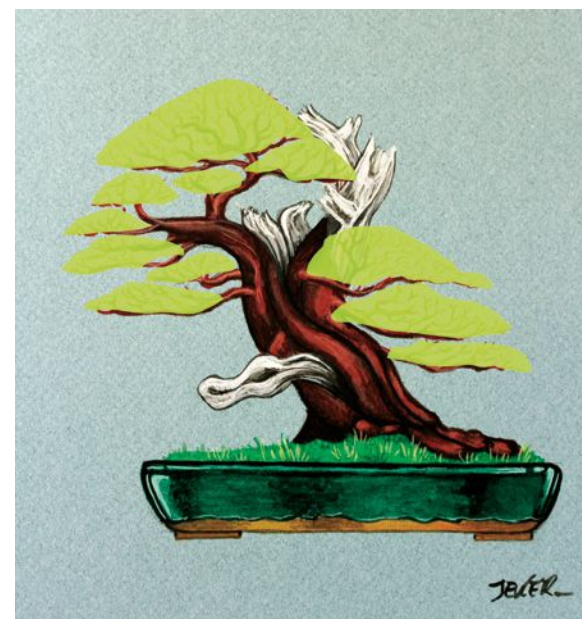
Design



Silhouette after pruning and work on deadwood



Silhouette after wiring branches and apex



For a flowering and fruiting tree, the pot can be glazed, shiny and very colourful. A pot with green tones could enhance foliage, flowers and berries.

To complement this strong persistent tree, the pot should be oval and not too deep in order to enhance the powerful trunk

Aesthetics

Branch structure should be typical of a broadleaf tree, with the main branches almost horizontal, or lightly pointing down, while the fine ramification should point upwards. General silhouette should be rounded (avoid the traditional triangle which is too artificial) with few empty spaces, and with a small gap between the first right branch and the second left.

If the apex is placed in the flow of the trunk, the tree may look too dramatic and unbalanced. The ideal is to bring it back towards the right.



Want to send your bonsai picture, too?

If featured, you are rewarded with the signed original sketch by François Jeker.

Send via e-mail a jpeg (minimum size 1mb) of your bonsai. Photographs should be taken against a light background and from all sides. Add in your e-mail a note of the age, height and the variety.

Bear in mind that publication can take a long time. Bonsai Focus has the right to make a choice without further notice. The submitted material will not be returned.

Send your e-mail and attached jpegs to:
editor@bonsaifocus.com

KIMURA = JUNIPER

In search of a rare masterpiece — a juniper bent, twisted and styled by Masahiko Kimura

Text and photography: Kinbon magazine, Japan

This juniper, which Mr Kimura prepared some time ago for this transformation, is a rare piece nowadays. It has superb shari, twisting movement of live vein and a character that is not often seen. The lower trunk up into the top section of the tree has an almost inexhaustible amount of interest. The only issue with the tree is in the first section of the trunk, with its very strong bend and movement in both directions. The key will be trying to show it off to the fullest. It will be impossible to bend or manipulate the trunk as it is now and something must be done before the tree can be used



This tree will be great. I am convinced that I can make the very most out of this material



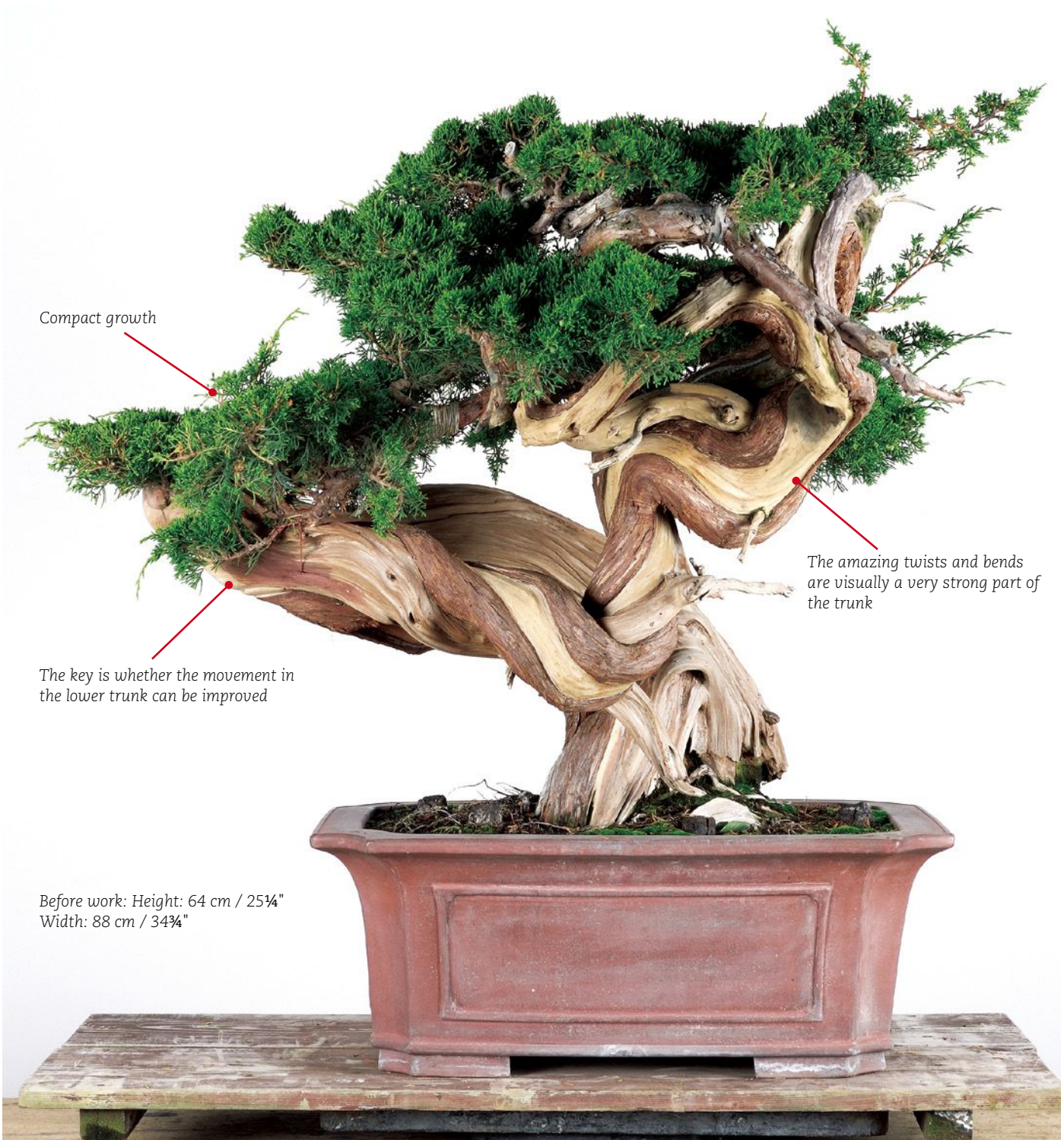
Before work begins: viewed from the right



From the left



From the back



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The back with a small hole

The secret in the back

When taking pictures from all sides we noticed a small hole between the live vein and the shari at the back. Mr Kimura told us not to take pictures of it, but our cameraman had already pressed the shutter. What we can see here are some splits and holes that have been made in order to assist the bending of the trunk without damage.

The positions of the splits and shari removal are very difficult to perform and must have been done on purpose and with great difficulty. Here in this one single photograph we can see the depths of Mr Kimura's technique and the lengths to which he will go to prepare the material in advance.



First the area where greatest stress will be placed is protected by wrapping gum tape around it



On top of the gum tape, a thick belt of tyre rubber is placed and again tightly wrapped with gum tape



Looking at the area that has been protected, we can surmise that Mr Kimura intends to bend the trunk very dramatically.

Prepare and protect for trunk bending

Leaving out the splitting of the shari and the separation of the live vein, which was done well in advance of us arriving, Mr Kimura chooses to use strong gum tape instead of more traditional raffia as protection at the point where the stress will be greatest. It is easier to apply with greater pressure than raffia, although it is less attractive.

On top of the tape, a further wrap of tyre rubber is used to surround the area in a very tight protective cover. It's pulled tight, using full advantage of the elasticity of rubber and held in place by more tape. Once the area of the bend is thoroughly protected, it is time to start and, because such power is going to be necessary in order to move the trunk, the tree is moved down to ground level.

Mr Kimura spends time investigating the exact position and angle of the metal bar he will use for bending. Once set, the bending can commence.

Mr Kimura thinks long and hard about the exact positioning of the bend and the metal bar he will use to bend the trunk. The pot has been lowered to the ground, a sure sign that a lot of effort will be put into the bend



Trunk bending, Stage 1: Raising the lower trunk

After setting the length of metal pipe, three apprentices hold down the pot while Mr Kimura applies pressure to the pipe, causing the lower trunk to start moving. This is done slowly and in small movements, with increasingly larger wooden blocks placed to support the bend.



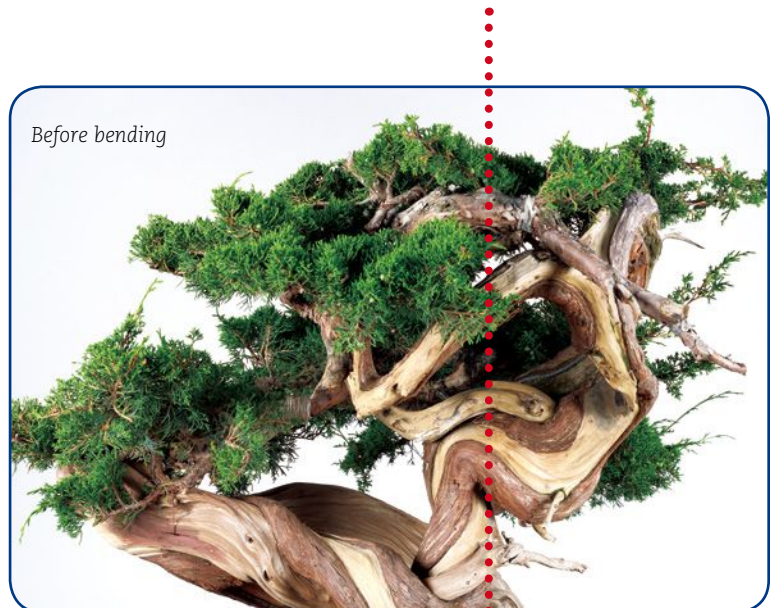
The metal bar is set and pressure is applied to pull the top section and trunk upwards



Wooden blocks are used to hold the bent section in place. These are replaced at several stages as the separation increases with further bending



It is difficult to see in the photograph that the trunk is also being bent forwards



After trunk bending is finished. The bends lying on top of one another have been corrected



Juniper live veins and how they move . . .

By Michael Hagedorn, Crataegus Bonsai Blog

When we style a juniper, very often the live vein changes in size. It's normally an adjustment to foliage or branch loss, both of which tend to happen during styling.

Most commonly, the sides of the vein will shrink, so that the vein will become narrower. Except on the very youngest of trees, a vein will never become wider. We don't cut off a large branch cleanly to the trunk expecting it to callus and close up. A juniper won't do that, so we make a jin. Although it won't widen, over time the live vein will grow more bulbous, growing out from the trunk.

Read more on: www.crataegus.com





A very thick trunk which looks hard and immovable due to the live vein and shari being so closely related. The second bend will also create a lot of stress and so the new bend is protected in the same way



First, the trunk which needs to be compacted has the iron rod inserted into the correct position and fixing wires are prepared



Once the trunk has been bent to a certain degree, a wooden block is used to define from where the bend will continue. This will disperse the stress along the length of the bend



Next, we put our entire body weight into it and bend that trunk!



The second trunk bend

Compacting the top section:

After bending the lower section in order to remove the problem of overlapping bends, the upper section is now in need of some corrections as the angle of the trunk has changed. It now needs to be compacted down, but the problem is the thickness of the trunk and shari, which are connected together.

The metal bar used previously is used here in an attempt to compact the upper section and bend it; however, the shari and trunk are thicker and harder than expected and they won't bend. The initial bend is fixed in place before releasing the tension, then he considers the bend from a slightly different position and angle.

Changing the angle of attack to compact even further



1
Once the trunk is bent sufficiently, it is time to change the position of the bend. In order to do this, a hole is drilled into the trunk



2
A long nail is driven into the hole. You can see just how long it is and how much force is required to insert it



3
This will be the new point from which the trunk is compressed. The distance to be bent is much shorter now and so we can expect even greater compression



4
Once everything is set in place, the metal bar is forced down with all Mr Kimura's body weight. The lower trunk is supported by a wooden block to stop it moving



After the second stage of trunk bending. You can see just how much the upper section has been brought closer to the trunk

Bending the thick branch from the back



1
After compacting the top section, there is a thick branch sticking up. This needs to be brought down and to the left



2
Much of the thickness of the branch is due to the large shari running along it. In order to make it flexible, this shari is carved away



3
The thickness of the cut is checked repeatedly so that only the live vein remains and all the shari is removed.



4
To protect the living tissue from further damage, it is wrapped in gum tape



The thick branch is slowly bent round towards the front. The upper section is now being supported by a wooden block so that it doesn't move

Another branch which grows out of the back needs to come towards the front a little. First the shari is carved to make the branch thinner



How to pull a thick branch: yet another technique is used



Two pieces of thick aluminium wire are placed along the carved section to create a wire spine



Once the aluminium is set in position, it is wrapped tightly with gum tape



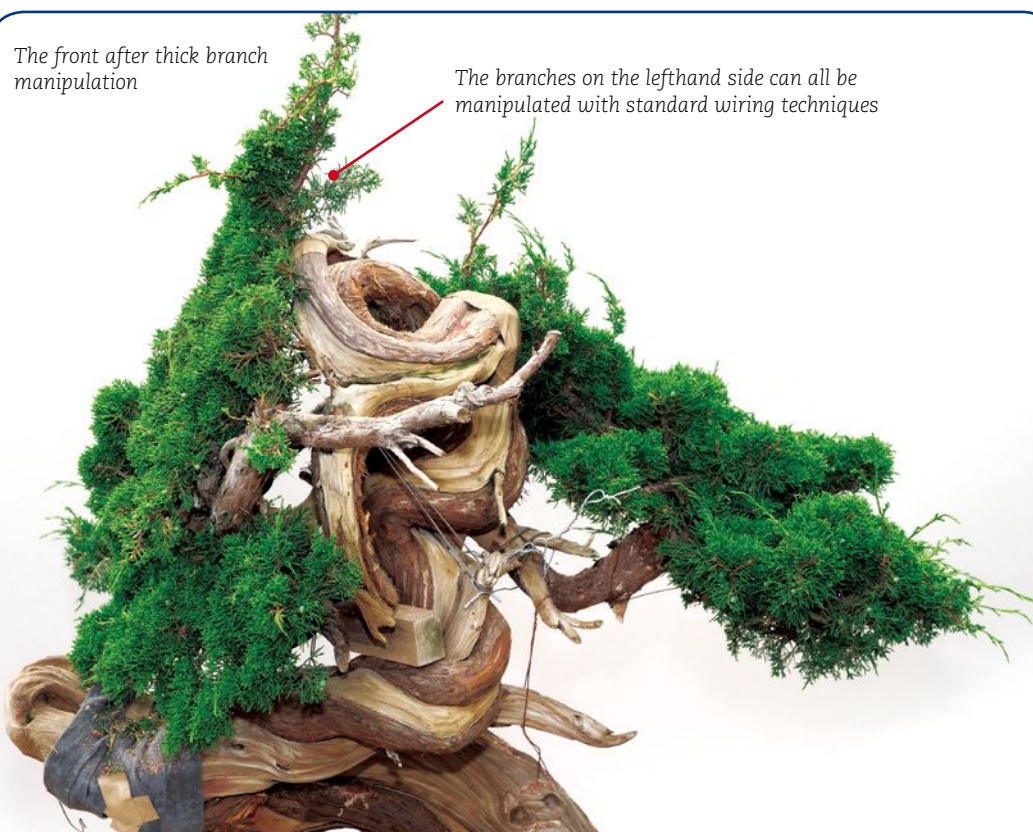
As the branch is to be pulled, it will be wired along its length and so the gum tape is wrapped along the entire branch



The branch is to be lowered overall and so it is bent again

The front after thick branch manipulation

The branches on the lefthand side can all be manipulated with standard wiring techniques



A slight angle change makes a difference

Mr Kimura had changed the front by raising it ever so slightly towards the front, a slight clockwise rotation, but after the initial styling and the heavy branch manipulation, he decided on a new front by raising it slightly on the lefthand side. This slight adjustment has brought even more attention to the lower trunk, accentuating the character further.



Front after initial styling



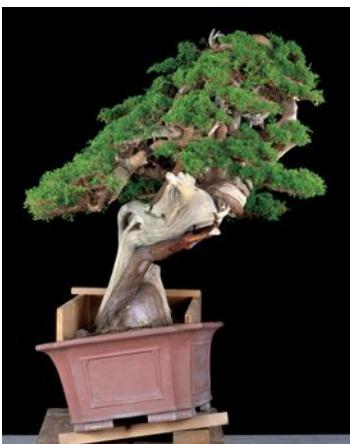
New front and angle after further consideration



Seen from right



From back

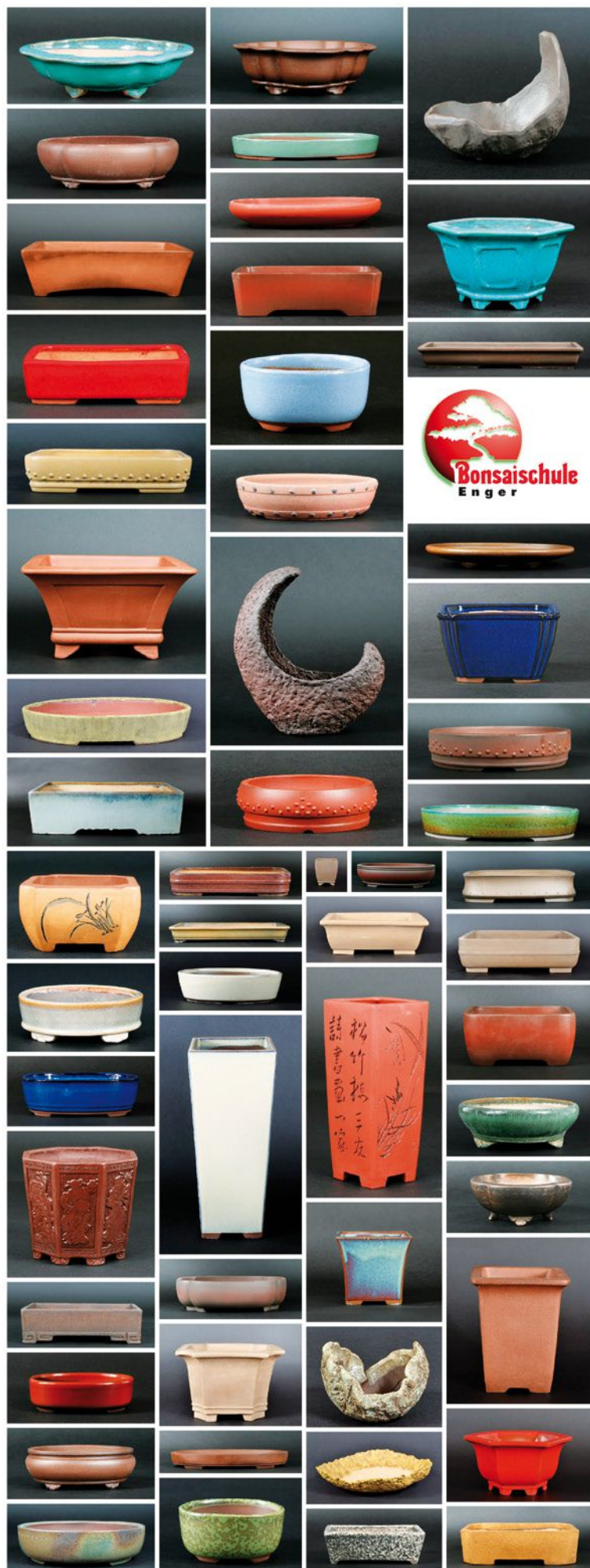


From left

A new masterpiece has been born into the bonsai world

After work. Height: 69 cm / 27" Width: 78 cm / 30 3/4" Pot is computer generated.






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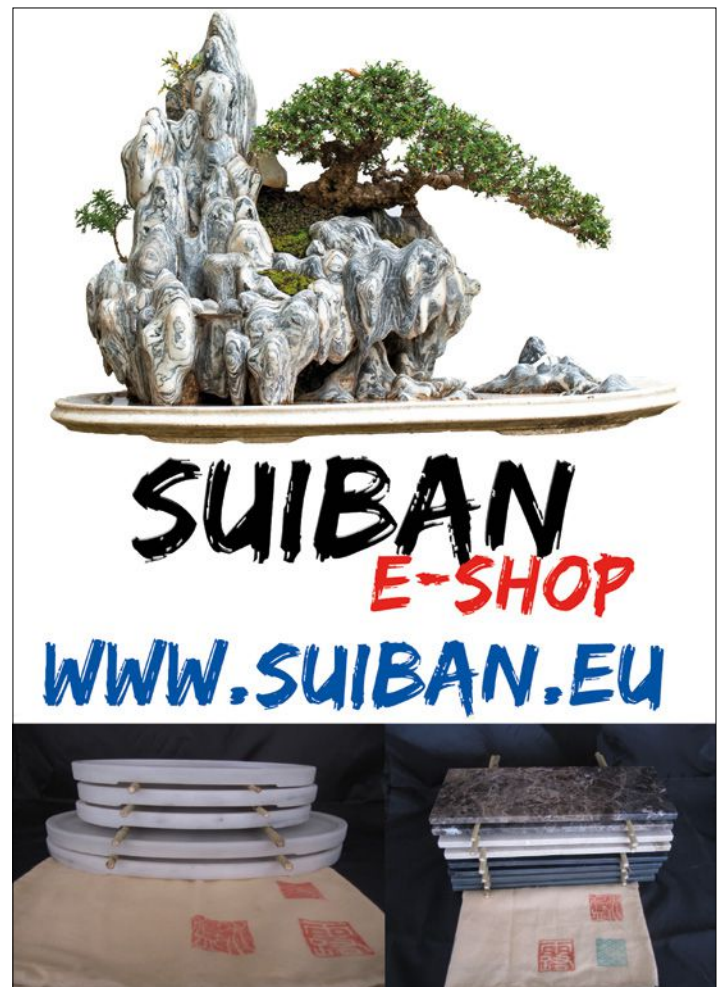
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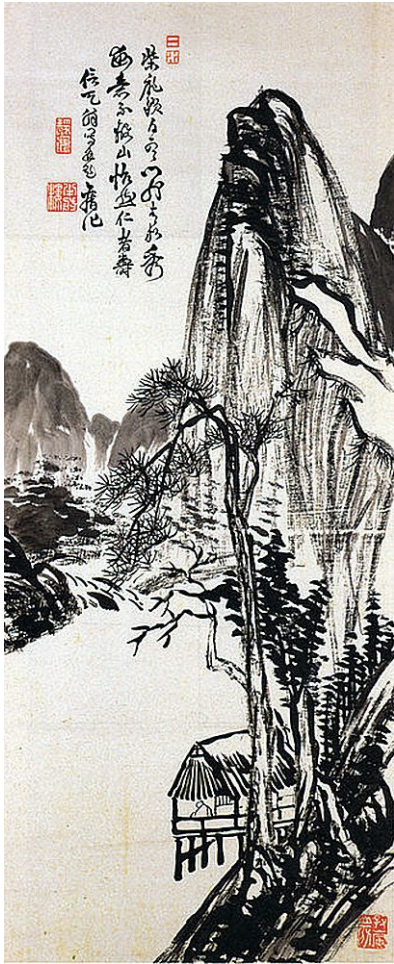
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Floating above the clouds

A stone which resembles Mount Taishan in China

Text: Nippon Suiseki Association, Bonsai Focus Studio Photography: Kinbon magazine, Japan

A unique stone with a long history. Although it can be held in the palm of your hand it resembles the greatness of the holy mountain Taishan

A stone of superb solid texture and despite it sitting on just the palm of your hand, its many peaks create the impression of a vast mountain range.

The base of the stone shows the slightly white 'geta' that is a characteristic of Furuya stones. This is evidence of its untouched natural shape and also gives it the sense of a sacred mountain floating above the clouds.



Furuya Ishi Bonseki: A stone owned by Yamanaka Shintenou in Meiji 3 (1871) when he was a member of the Imperial Council. Width: 9 cm / 3½"

Grey limestone: Furuya stone

The Furuya stones (Furuya-ishi) can be found in the mountains of Wakayama Prefecture, Japan and are of hard black or black-grey limestone. They mostly depict mountain, waterfall or coastal rock scenes. Characteristic are the deep indentations (almost always vertical), with a typically smooth surface, often with thin white mineral veins running vertically down the face of the stone.



The back of the stone is also an impressive sight



Yamanaka Shintenou (1822 to 1885), a student of Chinese classics and a lover of painting

Japan's revolution. A small background history

Around one hundred and fifty years ago, Japan was undergoing a huge revolution; changing from a feudal society into the Japan we know today.

There were a number of very influential people at the time whose names have gone down in history. Here we will meet one such person and the small stone that he owned as part of the pure hearted literary tradition in which he was well versed. During his life as a high ranking political figure and civil servant he was known as Yamanaka Seiitsu, but at the age of 51 he left public service and retired to Kyoto to lead a more refined and quiet life, pursuing the arts until he passed

away ten or so years later. He took on the name of Yamanaka Shintenou on his retirement.

Shintenou was born close to what is now Hekinan City in Aichi Prefecture in 1822 as the second son in a large land owning family. He was encouraged to leave for Osaka and begin his studies when in 1854 his younger brother suddenly died and Shintenou took on family responsibilities and developed a sense of national pride. His studies took him to Ise and then to Kyoto where he became acquainted with other patriots such as Yanagawa Seikan, Rai Mikisaburo and Umeda Unbin all of whom vigorously threw themselves into the abolition of the feudal system and the creation of the modern nation of Japan. This period marked the end of the literati culture that Shintenou was well versed in along with his friend, Tomioka Tessai, a very well-known enthusiast of suiseki.

Up to and after the enthronement of the



Box inscription by the hand of Shintenou



The scenery from Tai Ranzan Bou, the house in Kyoto near Ranzan in Arashiyama

Emperor Meiji in 1868, the powers of the regional shogun were reduced and a new government was created. Shintenou, who escaped from arrest during the 1858 mass round-up of the rebels, took a number of high-ranking civil service positions in the postal service, treasury and as a prefectural governor. After many years of dedicated service in the creation of the new nation state, Shintenou asked the Imperial Council for permission to leave it to the next generation and to allow him to retire. This was granted and he moved to Kyoto to live out the final years of his life in peaceful solitude, happy in the knowledge that he had played a large part in the creation of a new and modern society in Japan.

Holy mountain in China

'Many peaks of Mt Taishan can be found in the palm of a mountain hermit' is the name given by Shintenou. The stone refers to the holy mountain Taishan in China.

Mount Taishan, has been the object of an imperial cult for nearly 2,000 years. The artistic masterpieces found there are in perfect harmony with the natural landscape. The mountain has always been a source of inspiration for Chinese artists and scholars and symbolizes ancient Chinese civilizations and beliefs.



Back to the roots

Accentuating the character in an exposed root pine

Text and photography: Kinbon magazine, Japan

At first glance it is obvious that the major character feature of this black pine (*Pinus thunbergii*) is the exposed roots although it has not been accentuated in the best possible way. If the angle is changed and the branches arranged sympathetically, it will be a much better tree

Looking from the current front, the thickness and movement of the roots show no real variation or interest, whereas from the rear they appear much more interesting. Another plus for using the back as the new front is the thick section of trunk which is peeking through the foliage, giving more visual impact. If the tree is flipped around, some branches will need manipulating to achieve balance, but nothing so serious as to rule out the design.

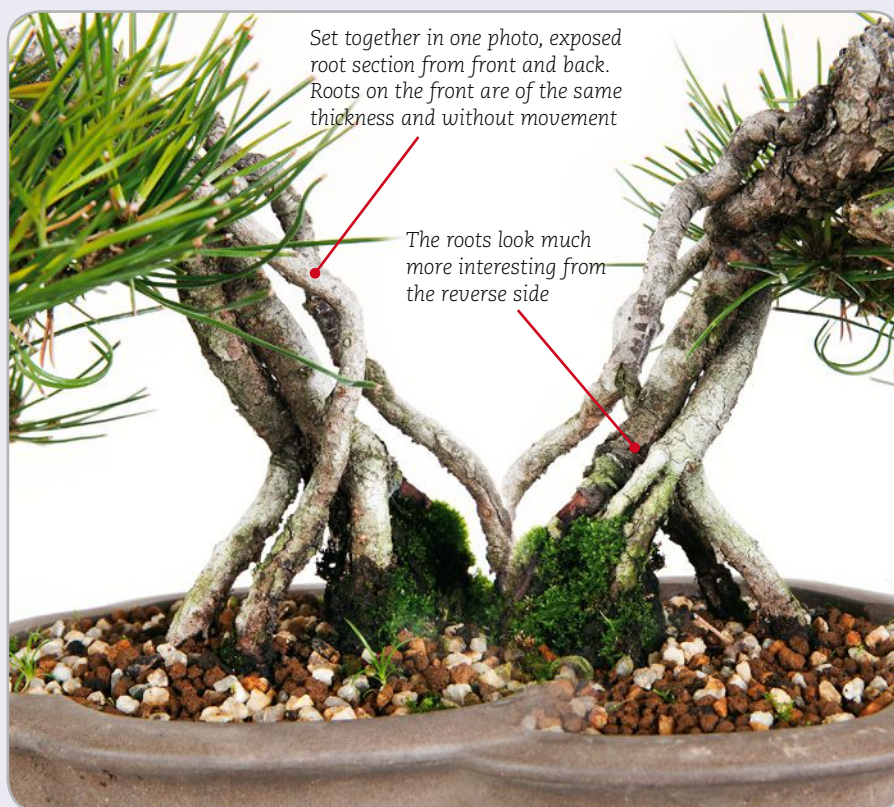


Black pine front before work. Height: 17 cm / 6¾"
Width: 24 cm / 9½"

Expose roots from the rear

You can see the thick trunk, which is starting to develop bark, peeking through and the roots have movement and interest. These character points are the future of the tree and the rest of the branches should be built around them.

**Dare to compare the front and back.
The back has more potential in stock!**



Putting movement and shape into the roots by wiring them

A new front was chosen to accentuate the character of the exposed roots and it certainly was an improvement, but there was room for more. As well as the front change, the movement and distribution of the roots can be improved by wiring and repositioning them, adding movement, a sense of severity and character. It is not just the roots that need to be improved, but also the branches, with unnecessary ones removed and thinned out; then the remaining branches wired and positioned appropriately.

The next stage of tree creation needs to be started by compacting the branches and foliage, making it tight, as well as thickening the roots and trunk.

Twisting roots to compact and also to increase the visual interest

Use aluminium wire to bend the roots similar to branches. It is easy to check the condition of the wire and roots above the soil and remove the wire when it starts to dig in, but underneath and inside the pot is a different story. That can only be checked when transplanting the tree.

The other issue is that the roots under the soil will thicken at a quicker rate than those above the soil level. When possible try to avoid wiring the roots underneath the soil level when applying the wire. Rather than putting movement into each root individually, the whole root system is just twisted and pushed down. Where gaps remain, they will fill up when the roots thicken and become less obvious.

The final image is one where the exposed roots are now much more upright and obvious and the branches drop down. Compared with the starting point, there is more drama and tension in the image.



It is quite common with shohin exposed root trees to have very few fine roots under the soil. Take great care when untangling them so they are not damaged

After the roots are untangled: There are enough fine roots left on the tree and there is not an issue with its vigour. If planted like this it isn't the best use of its character and the tree has not been improved



Wire in exactly the same way as you would the branches, except that roots are more likely to thicken more quickly so they should be wired loosely with aluminium wire



The roots have been roughly styled and placed in a pot



Seen from the right

Twisted and turned roots



Front after work. Height: 16 cm / 6¼"
Width: 18 cm / 7"

From now on the ramification should be increased and foliage pads need to be defined in order to achieve balance with the movement of the roots

Carpinus betulus

A forest planting of hornbeam: 12 years' later

Text and photography Bonsai Focus Studio

This forest was created during a photoshoot we did with Pieter van Uden in 2003. He used European hornbeam (*Carpinus betula*), grown from cuttings that were allowed to grow for some years in the open field. They were clipped on a regular basis so that they obtained a dense branch system. Every year he cuts a circle into the soil around them with a spade to obtain a well-developed, dense root ball. In early spring 2003 he lifted some to make this fabulous forest. It was

originally planted in a glazed oval pot and later changed into this unglazed one. 'I made some small corrections, but mainly the forest is as it was in 2003.

If you want to make a forest yourself Pieter has a valuable tip: 'Your material can be grown from seed, cuttings or obtained from a nursery and you can choose deciduous or coniferous species. The main thing is that you have plenty to choose from.'



The forest, just finished in 2003



The forest created by Pieter van Uden



The trees shown during the 'Bonsai van het Westen' exhibition, summer 2015.

Lots of choice

When choosing material for a forest planting use these tips:

1. Vary the girths of the trunks: Not all the trunks should have the same thickness.
2. The similarity of the trees: They should fit together, but must have some character as well.
3. The density of the root ball: For survival you should prepare your material.



For a forest planting with 5 trees you need at least 3 to 5 extra trees to choose from

Local flavours

Tony Tickle considers whether bonsai today is more reflective of regional styles

By Tony Tickle

I have a vivid memory to this day of, some 20 years ago, presenting to my local bonsai club a yew which displayed copious amounts of deadwood. This invariably led to it being dismissed by the majority of members as 'not looking like any tree that they had seen'. My response to this was that they should look beyond the trees and shrubs they see in the park or public garden and get out into the wild where our native trees flourish without any input from the garden centre. Anyone visiting major shows or surfing the internet now will be familiar with deadwood on juniper, yew and pine and they are an established form in bonsai. But if we consider the premise that we are creating the trees that we see or are familiar with in our locality can we also consider that bonsai now reflects, or at least should be moving towards, reflecting regional or national styles?

The home of bonsai is widely accepted as China and Japan as the art has been practised in the East for many generations. It is safe to assume that in the adoption of the art form, the West was inspired by those trees and the early bonsai artists emulated the eastern style as they saw it in the photos shown in books.

Two other factors added to this: first, several generations of Japanese emigration — to the US West Coast in particular — resulted in a more direct practising of bonsai as an art, and second, today's accessible air travel has opened up opportunities for westerners to actually visit bonsai nurseries and exhibitions in Japan.

Information that flowed from Japan in the early days was vague and concentrated on native Japanese species, focusing rarely on technique but typically on photos of finished trees. These were great for inspiration, but not for bonsai creation. It is understandable that those early pioneers of the art in the West imitated the Japanese style. And why would they not? They were the 'masters': their bonsai having been worked on and developed for generations, with skills often being passed down from father to son. Being mature and refined, these trees gave a target to which the western artist could aspire.

In the 1990s there was a seismic shift in bonsai; native trees in Europe were being considered as good raw material, in fact better raw material than that being imported. The challenge then became how to make this native material into world-class bonsai, with the added factor of having to compete in the early stages as adolescents up against the far more mature trees coming out of the East.

But fast forward 25 years and that raw material is now being presented as amazing finished, refined and mature bonsai.

There are artists who are creating bonsai that will be passed through the generations and will build the portfolio of bonsai history in Europe, in South Africa and in The Americas. But will this portfolio be global or are there influences that will set the various regions apart? Is there such a thing as the American style? Or the European style? To answer that we need to look at the factors that shape trees in different areas and so should influence 'native' bonsai styling:

Geographical and Climatic: The majority of bonsai output in the world is of pines, junipers and maples, and these dominate exhibitions in Japan, Europe and the USA. But they are difficult to grow in many regions of the world, especially those tropical areas which are now coming forward as major centres of bonsai.

Access to information: I think it is safe to say that because of the global reach of the internet, information these days is easily accessible. On the other hand, access to experienced teachers is sometimes a problem, and there is a noticeable difference in the quality of a nation's output where decent teaching is prevalent.

Raw material: Those countries which have ready access to great material do tend to shine above those that have not. Italy and Spain are good examples.

Cultural differences: The willingness to be taught and the acceptance that instruction is beneficial.

Financial: Paying for and access to quality in all aspects of the art: trees, pots, tables, wire etc.

Travel: How enthusiastic individuals are when it comes to travelling to widen their experience.

National exhibitions: These are critical in terms of measuring a nation's output and how artists' work stands up to scrutiny.

So what of particular geographical styles? I like to think that there are distinctions in the output conditioned by these influences. On a recent tour of South Africa I was struck by the huge variety of trees that I had not seen previously styled as bonsai, many were totally new to me. What was perceptible was that many had been styled in such a way that they were noticeably 'African' — but *not* as we are led to believe, flat topped, eaten by a giraffe style. The artists created bonsai influenced by their own landscape.

There will always be those who choose to work towards a traditional Japanese output, but I see the groundswell of artists developing regional styles. The art of bonsai is evolving, but the actual craft, the creation, the maintenance and joy of the trees globally remains the same.



Antonio Zicarelli's raw vision of pottery

ZEN pots

Text: Bonsai Focus Studio Photography: Antonio Zicarelli

As a kid Antonio Zicarelli was fascinated by ceramics. His interest in bonsai pottery came via the tea ceremony

How did it all start? Can you tell us how you got into bonsai pottery?

It all started in 2005. After further study of pottery and experience of creating various shapes in the Italian traditional pottery sector I began my interest for Japanese pottery. Initially, my interest lay in the Tea Ceremony pottery and later on moved to bonsai pot.

Who was your teacher? What is the most important thing you learned?

I learned all the basics of pottery in a traditional pottery studio in Calabria. I studied oriental pottery from Bernard Leach's books.

Why ceramic? What makes it so fascinating for you?

For me pottery means eternity. When I



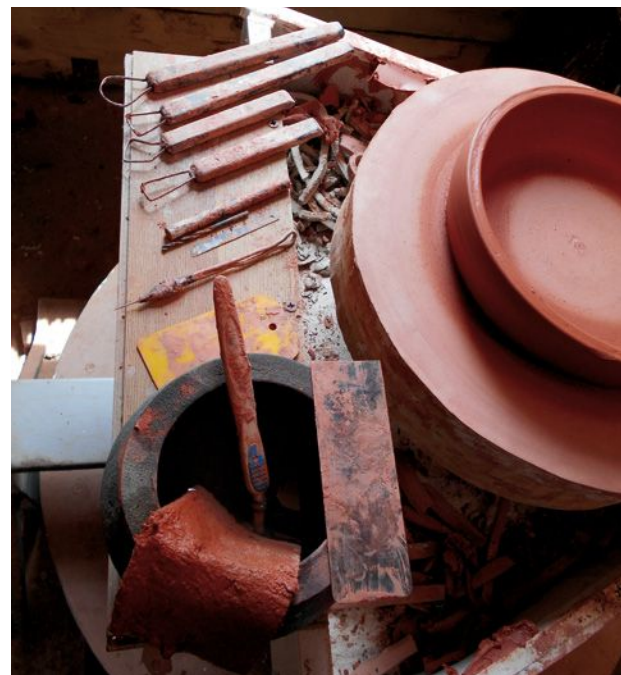
was a child, I always looked at old pots in my father's art books. Moreover, I love thinking that my pottery will tell my story and will be my trademark in the future.

What is your philosophy of bonsai ceramics?

My pottery creations follow a philosophy of Zen origin: 'To reach beauty through tools and simple materials'. Furuta Oribe extended this philosophy to the pottery used in the Tea Ceremony. Oribe liked the simplicity of this type of pottery because it's made only with clay, water and fire.

Do you make your own glazes?

I make all the glazes myself. I obtain my stoneware, rocks, sands wood ash and



other elements that I use to make my glazes. Moreover I collect and hand make the stoneware that I use in all my pottery.

What do think of the Japanese colours and shapes?

I prefer Japanese styled pots, particularly pots made at Shigaraki, Bizen and Tamba. I like these pots for their simplicity and shapes and for the raw stoneware used. I am attracted to the deep Japanese glazes because every glazed pot is unique.





Zen pottery

Furuta Oribe, was a warrior and the celebrated Master of the Japanese Tea Ceremony in the 16th century. Oribe-ware is a type of Japanese pottery most identifiable for its use of green copper glaze and bold painted designs. It was the first use of stoneware glaze used by Japanese potters.

There is a trend in making more traditionally styled pots based on the Japanese principles. How do you feel about this?

I think this trend is very important as the most common form of pots is usually the result of taste refined over the centuries. I also really admire the proportions of the Japanese pots.

Do you think that hand-made pots are being appreciated and valued by bonsai enthusiasts today?

I think that fully hand-made creations are not appreciated and economically valued as they should be, because the artistic

What do you like about bonsai and making pots for bonsai?

I began to make bonsai as an approach to nature, to have trustworthy friends. I love going to my workshop at dawn each morning. I love giving a shape and a meaning to my pots.

Which techniques do you prefer when making your pots?

I prefer my pots to be fully hand-made. I use a potter's kick wheel for the round pots and I use the slab technique for the other pots. All my creations are made by me with hand-made tools. I use a wood fired kiln at a temperature of 1300°C.



work and craft quality they offer is higher than any price put on them.

Do you have any other interests or hobbies beside pottery?

I much like to read contemporary art books and catalogues. In the last few years I have also started to study and practise the art of bonsai. In particular, I am fascinated by pine bonsai.

What or who inspires you?

I chose to change the way I make pottery after buying Bernard Leach's book. He was an English potter who in 1900 lived in Japan. Leach brought oriental philosophy to the western ceramic world.







Where eagles dare

Giacomo Pappalardo creates a cascade sabina juniper

Text: Elida Lara Failla Photography: Giacomo Pappalardo

This is a story of the eight-year evolution of a *Juniperus sabina*. The goal was to bring out the drama in such a way that it evokes a tree clinging to the mountain side, accessible only to the soaring eagles. Work began on this tree in 2007 during a demonstration in Italy at the club of Somma Lombarda in Varese



How it all started

Analysing the tree

The sabina had several problems that were tackled one at a time leaving time after each to allow for recovery. The more complex problems to be solved included a long base and creeping, which should have been reduced at the first transplant; and a trunk that gave the best of itself when turned 90 degrees.



The back of the tree



By tilting the tree to the left, the curling deadwood is being emphasized

Detail of the base. You can see that some roots have been cut; I have to decide later how to solve this aesthetically





Detail of the lush green foliage mass, I have a selection of strong branches which can be used for the branch setting. I eliminate those that were weak in the first place



The situation with the foliage canopy before I started work



Selecting the branches, and removing those that are weak



I start by working on the long dead part of the trunk right at the base

Working on the foliage and trunk

The first work on the plant was focussed on cleaning the deadwood and revealing its live veins. As far as the foliage was concerned there is less dramatic work to do. I have to clean out the old needles and foliage so that fresh air and light can reach inside the foliage mass. This will result in a boost of new compact growth.

The actual styling can only be done after solving the underlying problem that could jeopardize the entire project — the ugly stump at the base.



The work is carried out in front of an audience at the club of Somma Lombarda, Northern Italy, so they can interact during the course of the work



I work on removing the dead part of the bark. Slowly the live vein is revealed

Halfway through the job

By clearing the foliage of its old leaves, the air and sun can reach the interior, promoting strong and healthy growth.

Facing the problem at the base

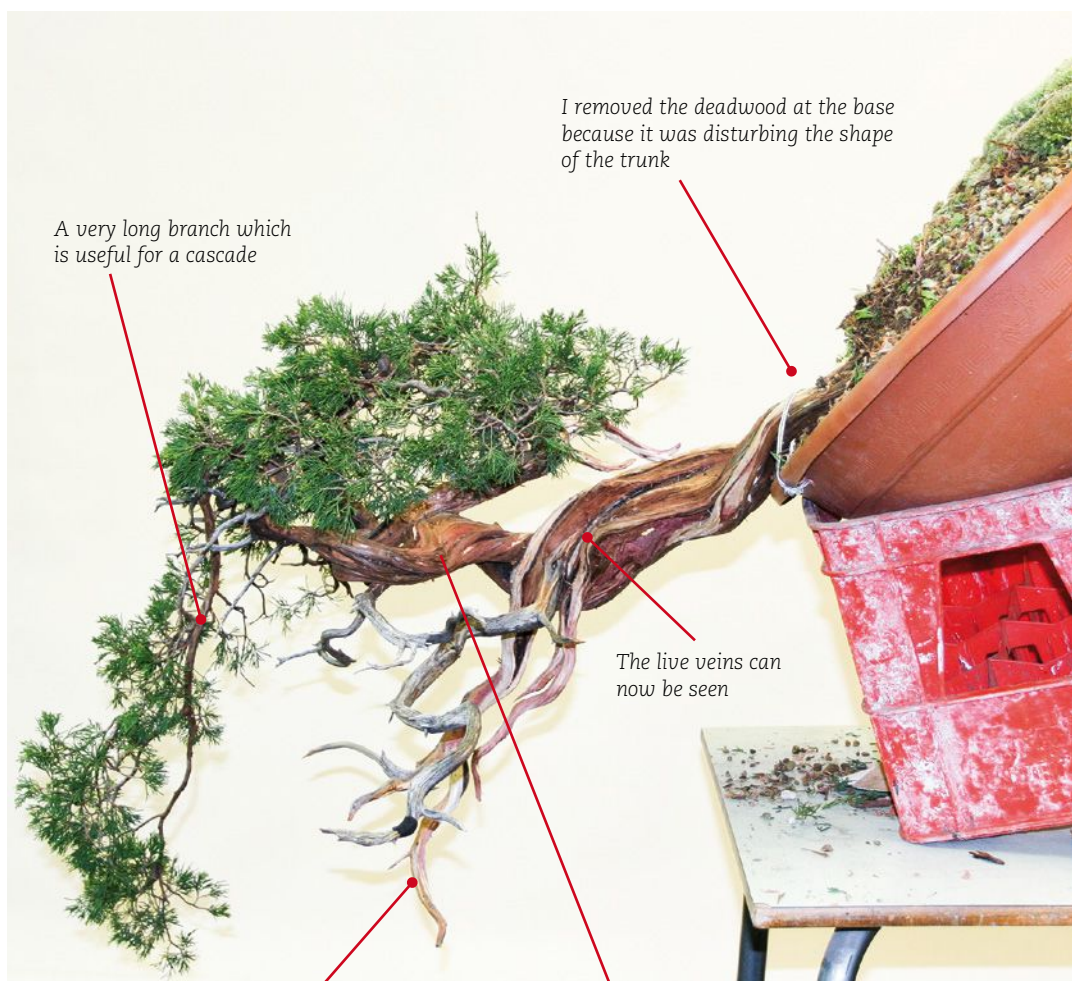
If you view the situation from above, you can clearly see what I mean. Somehow I have to shorten this long section



On examination I noticed that, after removing some of the soil, there are not many effective roots right at the end



But closer to the left I discover that there is a very thick root connected to the live vein. This gives me some hope that I will be able to remove a section on the right



A very long branch which is useful for a cascade

I removed the deadwood at the base because it was disturbing the shape of the trunk

The live veins can now be seen

Deadwood has been cleaned

Detail of the cleaned trunk. When treated with jin fluid the live veins will stand out even more prominently



Yes, wire now!

In the winter, not much maintenance work is needed. You therefore have more time to wire conifers. Pines, junipers, yews and spruces must be wired regularly if they are to be kept in shape. Yamadori of these species can be given their first styling now.



To be on the safe side I leave a small stump



I can now remove the straight section



After cleaning out the entire root ball, I have to solve the problem of how to plant the tree. Anchoring wires and chopsticks are necessary to keep the tree in place. Some mycorrhiza powder will help to promote a healthy root growth



With a magnifying glass I counted 120 rings; this means that the tree might be around 120 years old

Repotting

The following spring I decided to repot the juniper and solve the problem of the base of the tree. I would then place the plant in a bonsai pot giving it a more dramatic inclination. I'd also try to rotate the trunk the 90% needed to enhance its curves. The operation was not without risk because in order to shorten the base I had to remove 80% of the roots hoping that the remainder would be enough for the survival of the plant. I also decided to remove all its original soil to avoid future problems with rotting roots.

Eventually the two big uncertain factors, the base and the rotation of the trunk did really resolve simultaneously. What I had to do next was to be very patient and let the tree grow and recover from its first operation.

Before and after the base is adjusted



After repotting, a large part of the trunk has been removed; the tree is now firmly anchored in a provisional pot



Detail of the base: I need to adjust the stump so that it blends in with the rest



Seen from above: I have adjusted the stump into a smoother shape with a carving machine

After carving





In spring 2009 the growth of the foliage is amazing. The tree is doing very well in its new pot



Seen from the back



Moving the pot slightly towards the left has given a dramatic change to the movement of the trunk



Seen from the right

Three years' later

After the successful repotting and the healthy growth of the tree I could not wait to shape the tree according to the plan that I had in mind. In the meantime, I removed the stump and adjusted it to blend in with the rest of the trunk.

In the three years of leaving the juniper to grow freely, the roots had grown and had thickened. They could now be exposed by removing some of the soil so that it gave the base a more dramatic appearance, as if it had grasped the edge of the mountain. This stage was very satisfying and set the stage for the next step in refining the design.



A wonderful movement of spiralling trunks and branches

After deciding that this is the new front I started to work on the branch setting



The live vein follows the movement of the trunk



Repotting in a kurama

After a few months' work, the tree was ready for its next step, the planting into a so-called kurama, a crescent moon shaped stone. These stones originate from Japan, but I created this one myself with shock proof materials.

The shape of the kurama is extremely rounded to emphasize even further the idea of a cascading tree growing in the cleft of a rock on top of a large mountain.

I soon realized that the transplanting was more complicated than I expected, namely that anchoring the plant in the kurama at such a sharp angle when all its weight is at the bottom was quite challenging. It took several pieces of bamboo along with some steel screws to anchor the plant to the kurama stone. The result was exactly as I had imagined and I was so happy at how all elements fitted together.



I have made some holes for drainage at the base that can also be used as anchoring points



Anchoring wires and netting to keep the soil in place



A small layer of soil, which is 100% volcanic pumice, before the tree is positioned into the pot



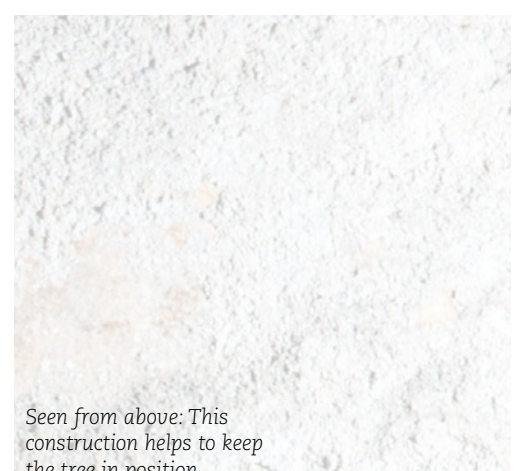
Very dramatic, almost 80% of the roots have been removed. The remaining roots cannot hold the tree upright in position



This construction of chopsticks is necessary to help the trunk stand in position. I needed something to which I could attach the anchoring wires, so I inserted some screws into the deadwood



Once the screw is in place, I could attach the wires so that the trunk is held firmly to the kurama stone



Seen from above: This construction helps to keep the tree in position



The tree in September 2014. After applying a fresh layer of jin fluid, the tree's foliage pads are more defined. I placed it on a root shaped table, which I made myself

Seen from the opposite side, the tree in the garden: It has to stand on the crate for practical reasons



All elements come together

After repotting the plant in the kurama stone, I let the tree grow freely for three years and concentrated on fertilization aimed to further thicken the foliage. Then the moment arrived for modelling the tree further; the aim was to achieve the more refined look that I had in mind. The live veins separate and go to different areas of the tree to feed the foliage. And speaking of foliage, I made a selection of vigorous branches and removed those that were less strong. This cleaning allows light to come into the branches and so promoting further compact and healthy growth.

In all it was eight years from collection to this stage of refinement. Although the tree has improved during these years, there are still several details to improve, but it is a continuing process; a bonsai is never finished.

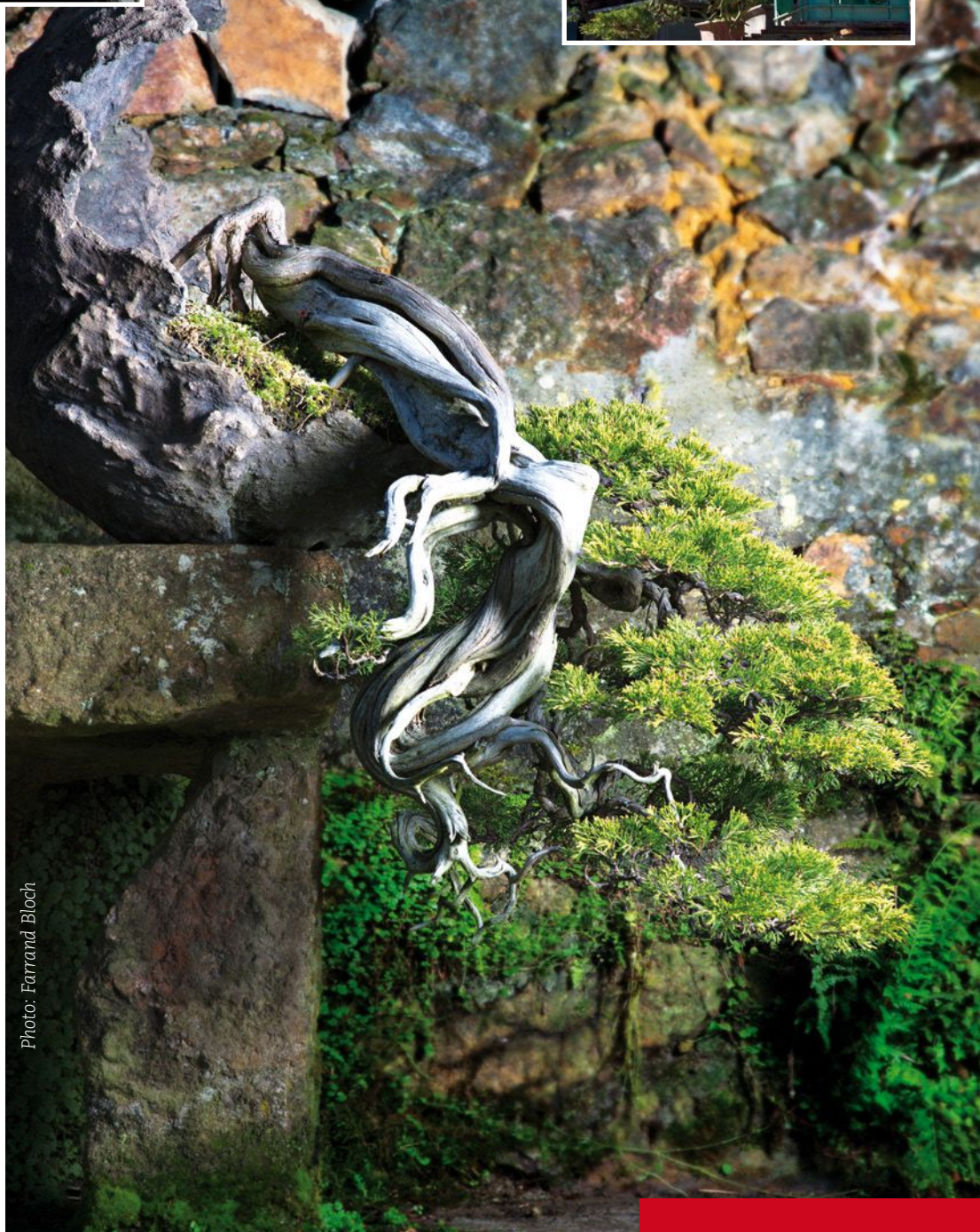
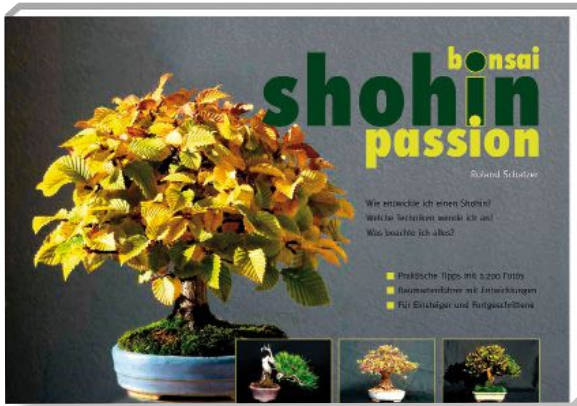


Photo: Farrand Bloch

The tree in the garden set against the very old wall of my home, November 2012. (Photo: Bonsai Focus Studio)



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Passion for Shohin is an amazing book

Shohin has gained considerable popularity; size wise it's far easier to handle and obtaining suitable material is not such a quest either. Roland Schatzer who lives near the mountains of the South Tyrol, has a real passion for these smaller sized bonsai. 'I really couldn't find specialised books on the subject,' he explains, 'except in Japanese and so I decided to write a book on shohin bonsai myself.' On more than 370 pages Roland shows the development of numerous varieties, Japanese and native trees. 'It's a bulky book all about shohin: growing techniques, a varieties guide and even how to display is explained. This is a real book for those who like to grow shohin themselves and my goal was to show how to do it.' Roland adds.

Roland Schatzer, 370 pages, hard cover, full colour. Available in German, Italian and English languages.



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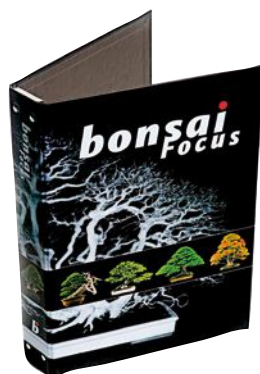
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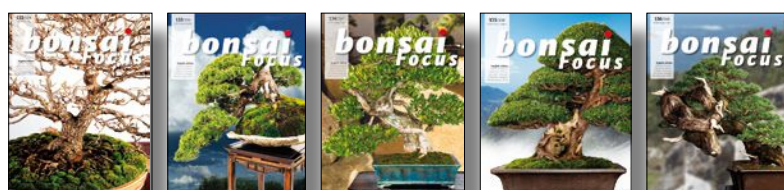
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Our new binder is now available and will fit the newly re-designed format of your magazine. As you can see, it is quite similar to the previous binder, but is now slightly larger.

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Picea abies

The charms of the Norway spruce

Text and photography: Bonsai Focus Studio

Working with spruce can be very satisfying when treated gently. It is not as easy as working with a juniper, it does not mind wire, bending or repotting. However, all needs to be done with a little more care

1

The tree on which Martin Bonvie will work this time is a Norway spruce (*Picea abies*) with a fine set of branches and an interesting trunk. Inspired by the slender giants that you can see in the forests of North America, Martin decides to create a formal upright style

After removing a top layer of soil, fine roots are revealed



Analysing the tree

Examine the options. Spruce is totally different from a juniper. You cannot apply too much bending nor move branches in curves to get foliage closer to the trunk. The variety grows mainly with straight trunks in the wild so a literati, or formal upright would be the best option.



Clean the root base with a soft brush



Find inspiration in the wild. You can see the most amazing shapes of spruce growing at Oswald West State Park, Oregon, US



When seen from either angle you can see that most branches grow to one side

PICEA - HUSBANDRY

Propagating:

From seed or cuttings.



Placement:

Protect against extensive frosts and cold winds. In northern countries, protect from long rainy months by placing under a shelter. Spruce does not like to be overly wet. During spring full sun is not a problem. Shade during hot summers. Half shaded spots in the garden are suitable for spruce bonsai.



Pruning:

Spruce grows in whorls and with multiple shoots coming from one node. This therefore makes pruning essential, but avoid styling the branches like a juniper; they should incline down from the trunk. In spring buds break open. Allow them to push out before starting to pinch back to leave one or two centimetres of the new growth. Repeat with new shoots which will result in dense foliage pads.



Repotting:

Best done in spring just before budding. Protect against frosts and cold winds in a cold frame or poly-tunnel.



Wiring:

Wire in late summer to early spring. Wire younger trees with aluminium wire; older, more mature trees can also be worked on with copper wire.



Branch selection

To create an image of a mature tree you need to create an interesting branch setting. When branches are placed opposite one another it makes a dull image, so remove the one that is less interesting. The front will be selected according to the best root base and options for branches.



Slightly tilting to the right will improve the position of the trunk



To improve the taper of the top visually a small shari is created



Start by choosing a first branch, a second, and a front branch



The stumps that remain after branch removal can be made into small jin



Forking branches are ideal. Spruces will produce multiple buds from one node, so you need to make a selection



Branches grow like the spokes of a wheel



By removing the middle, stronger branch energy will divert to the branches on either side, creating a more compact branch growth



Crowded at the top as lots of branches grow there; again, a choice has to be made



The left stronger branch is removed in favour of the one on the right



It will be made into the apex of the tree

3

Wiring the branches

Wiring is best done in the autumn to end of winter. In spring the sap flow is very strong, which makes the bark easily damaged by wiring. Martin has used aluminium wire because it is softer and gentler for the tree.

The trunk needs no wiring; it is very straight which suits the formal upright design well



After wiring the main branches



Using jin pliers to bend the top branches

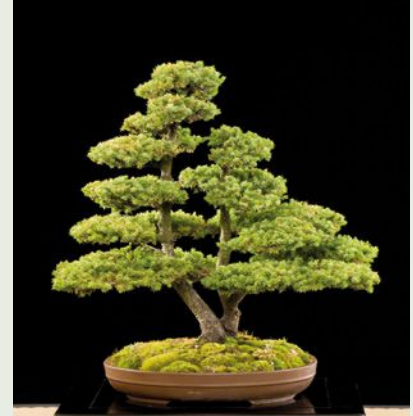


To add more refined detail you can wire some of the bigger side branches, too

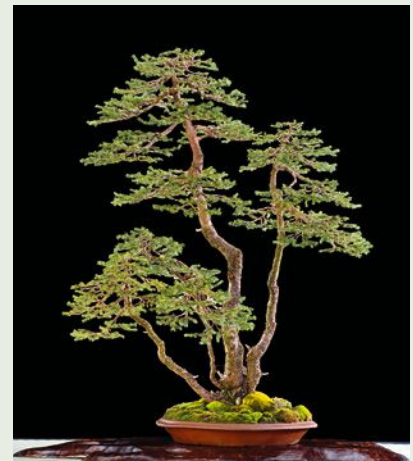


PICEA - INSPIRING

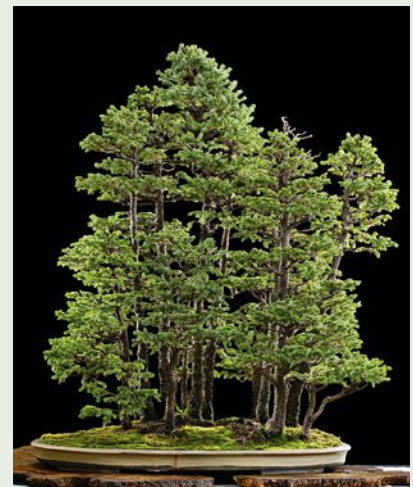
There are a variety of possible styles for spruce like cascade, forest or a simple multiple trunk style



Picea glehnii, Georges Dayer (CH) Height: 60 cm / 23½"



Picea abies, Luigi Maggioni (IT) Height: 109 cm / 43"



Picea jezoensis, Kevin Gray (UK) Height: 120 cm / 47¼"

PICEA - SPECIES

Common name:

Spruce

Genus:

Picea abies

Family:

Pinaceae

Species:

White spruce (*Picea glauca*)

Ezo spruce (*Picea glehnii*)

Norway spruce (*Picea abies*)

Skill level:

Beginner to advanced.

Soil type:

Medium rich, but well draining, with 40-50% fine gravel added to the mix.

Flowers and fruit:

Males are yellowish red, females red, borne in separate, upright clusters on the same tree in spring.

The cone is cylindrical and brown.

Foliage:

Slender and needle like with a sharp point at the tip. Dark green in colour spreading beneath smooth brown shoots.

Bark:

Coloured red-brownish to grey, peeling in thin strips.



Almost ready, but not yet happy with the branch setting. The lower branches seem to be just a little too long compared with the slender trunk.



Removing the stumps and wire after pruning the lower branches

PICEA - STYLES



Ishitsuki



Sakan



Ikadabuki



Chokkan

The final result

By removing those lower branches the bonsai now resembles a tree in the wild. Pinching the new growth from spring next year will eventually result in dense branch pads. The top will need to develop some more density, too, to cover the abrupt end of the trunk. For visual effect, the tree was planted in a rectangular pot with the help of Photoshop.





Frederic: 'Even the trucks are bonsai sized'



Winner of the Crespi Cup 2015 is Paolo Riboli with a Pinus mugo



The fantastic bonsai museum

Crespi Cup 2015

VIP winner Frederic Vandenberghe:
'An overwhelming experience'

The 11th International Bonsai & Suiseki Meeting, Crespi Cup 2015 ended in Parabiago, Milan, on September 20th. From Friday 11 September to Sunday 20th more than 200 exhibitors from all over Italy and several European countries (Switzerland, Germany, Austria, France Portugal, Spain, UK, Belgium), exhibited the best pieces from their collections. Every two years this event takes place on the premises of Crespi Bonsai. Bonsai, suiseki, kusamono, pots and many traditional Japanese crafts were shown or demonstrated. The aim of the Crespi family is to enjoy the Japanese culture in all its aspects. However, bonsai remains the main attraction and the level is always of high quality during this event.



Above: Kaneko Memory Cup winner was Sergio Del Mese with his Quercus suber

Below: BCI award went to Lorenzo Agnoletti for a Pinus mugo

In the last weekend of the Crespi event our reader, Frederic Vandenberghe, won the VIP Weekend with a story told from the perspective of his juniper cascade, which the jury found to be one of the most original letters they had received. Here is a small report of Frederic's Vip weekend:

'On Friday 18th September, we were picked up from Milan's Malpensa Airport, and then at the Crespi premises we were welcomed by Suzanna Crespi. We learned we could take part in every workshop,

Andrés Alvarez was 3rd prize winner with this Pinus pentaphylla



lecture or demonstration. Even visit the great Crespi museum with its beautiful collection. I have never seen so many stunning bonsai together in one place. There was Kyudo Japanese archery to see, ceramics workshops, origami and the bonsai university where we could follow several lectures; our day was simply too short to visit everything. We were guests at the Gala dinner where announcements of the awards were made. The next day we enjoyed even more food — a superb sushi from Chef Robert Okabe. We visited the bonsai museum, after which we enjoyed the demo on a yew by



Frederic, together with Master Shinsaku Yamahata

Master Shinsaku Yamahata and assistant Jun Imabayashi. The full programme with all its different activities and the very friendly and hospitable Crespi family made this an experience never to forget. All my gratitude goes to the Crespi family.

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An amazing turntable, affordable for everyone

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all will fit well on the
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Practical

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The swing brake of the table can be disconnected with a simple movement of the pedal

Bigger

The board is 58 cm / 22¾" diameter instead of the usual 50 cm / 19½" allowing you to work the most impressive materials as well as the smallest trees. You can comfortably use the extra space to have your tools easily to hand, right next to your bonsai



5 removable eye screws, located in the lower part of the work plan, allow a solid anchor of the bonsai to the table

Stronger

The board is made out of phenolic marine plywood of pine which is painted and coated in solid non-slip rubber (4 mm thickness Shore A hardness 70). The lifting capacity is up to 200 kg. Tightening screws and threaded bushes made entirely from stainless steel. All the materials used in the construction of Green T guarantee an excellent outdoor weather resistance



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Beginner's luck

The bonsai passion of Jordi Ugena

Text: Bonsai Focus Studio Photography: Jordi Ugena

Jordi Ugena from Barcelona, Spain, won the 2015 the Bonsai San show in Saulieu. His tree and display convinced the jury that this was the best tree in the show. To be honest, we hadn't heard of Jordi before, so it was an opportunity to learn more about the guy and ask him some questions, too



Jordi at Saulieu with the winning tree and prize

Tell us about your profession and education.

I am a bricklayer by trade, although I plan to learn English. It is very frustrating to have difficulty interacting with people from around the world. The problem is that I don't have very much free time; as well as my formal education I have also completed a gardening course.

Can you tell us how you got into bonsai?

I believe that many people from my

generation became acquainted with bonsai after watching the movie 'The Karate Kid', although not many will admit to this! My girlfriend gave me a Chinese elm as a gift during a Christmas fair twenty years ago, and it is still alive. About the same time, there

was a bonsai school-shop that was run by a really charming couple, Rosa Bonet and Jesus Revuelta, it was called Tokonoma, and it was a pioneer school throughout the whole region. I found their bonsai displays completely fascinating. Over the years they have become very good friends and I will always be eternally grateful for everything that they have done for me.

So who took you further into the art of bonsai?

My teacher is Gabriel Romero Aguado. I have learned so much from him: the cultivation, how to respect timing and the plant, his patience with his students.

I never once saw him get agitated when having to explain the same thing fifteen times. It's impossible for me to choose the one most important thing I have learnt from him. I will always be extremely grateful to him. He is a great guy and a very good friend.

Now that you are doing bonsai more professionally, has that changed things for you?

My attitude to bonsai has changed a bit and my way of understanding it. After becoming professionally dedicated to bonsai, my perspective is different from when I was simply an enthusiast. Before, I would take working on my trees at a very different pace, a lot calmer, when I felt like it and unhurriedly. I lived my life, shared it with my friends and family, and with my trees. Now I have very little free time and dedicate all my time to my trees. The funny thing is that when I do have spare time, I find myself surfing the

Amazing olives stand side by side in his garden





The winning tree at the Saulieu show, October 2015



Another section of his small rooftop garden

Internet looking for trees. I am starting to think that I am getting a little bit crazy. My business takes up much of my time, but I spend as much of it as possible with my son and every now and again I go for a ride on my motorbike. I've taken up 'bouldering' — a form of rock climbing on small, but difficult rocks — which I do at midday, before lunch and my afternoon classes.



Many people of my generation got into bonsai through 'The Karate Kid'

You work with a lot of native trees, is there a specific variety that you prefer?

I like conifers in general, but especially junipers. They have an amazing plasticity, they provide a diverse array of creative possibilities. They are my passion. But if you ask me if I have a favourite I can't give you a satisfactory answer because there are so many extraordinarily beautiful trees that it is impossible for me to single out only one.

As a professional in bonsai, how do you deal with the fact that you need to sell trees?

Bonsai for me is one of my passions, but it is also the way I make a living and apart from some exceptions, all of my trees are for sale. The olive tree that obtained first prize at Saulieu has already been sold. For me it is a finished piece of work and I must dedicate my time to other projects. Personally, I would be very proud to see it in future exhibitions under somebody else's name. I trust that its new owner will maintain it in perfect condition and

I hope to see it win more prizes in other bonsai competitions.

What was your worst mistake?

I have made so many mistakes that it is best not to remember them. My only regret is not to have gone to Japan when I was younger to study for two or three years. However, my best achievement so far is becoming a father and to have a healthy and happy son.

With regards to bonsai, I can say without a doubt, the prize I obtained at Saulieu has been the highlight. I have been so very fortunate; it was the first time I had competed in a bonsai competition and I guess you could call it beginner's luck!

Do you favour the Japanese or Western bonsai style? And what is it you like about these styles?

I prefer to follow the Japanese approach to bonsai rather than the European. But what matters most to me is that I am actually achieving that very high level. I believe the best thing about European

bonsai is that it increasingly resembles the Japanese style. The European level has greatly improved over the last few years and we are now beginning to see mature trees that have evidently been worked on very well.

Jordi at work on a juniper





Malus, 3 from one

Peter Warren uses an airlayer technique to improve a poorly shaped tree

Text: Peter Warren Photography: Bonsai Focus Studio

An unbalanced tree with a questionable future is given a better sense of direction by airlayering the top to give a smaller, more compact tree

Why change?



The rock is not attached to the tree in any way; without it, the imbalance is obvious

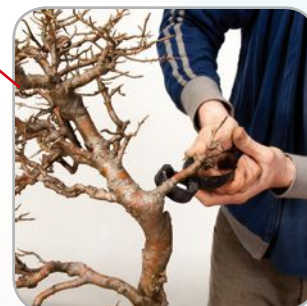


Before work starts. The tree looks perfectly acceptable now, so why change it?



There is a tree in the top and a possibility for a tree in the lower section, if it survives

Dead branches are removed and health of the remaining branches inspected. The lower branch does not look good.



The problem bar branch is removed to stop any future issues with inverse taper

Tree on a rock?

At first glance there was not a lot wrong with this collected *Malus* other than the completely disconnected rock. There were a few immediate and not so immediate problems with the tree, however, most notably the branch thickness and distribution. Most of the branches were growing from one side of the tree and it lacked balance, although it still had a wild and natural feel to it. There were a number of bar branches which, although not a major issue now, would ultimately create inverse taper. Removing either of the branches simply created a more imbalanced tree.

What to do with it?

Branch thickness was also becoming an issue, with a branch in the upper right of the tree just as thick as the lowest branch. Again, removal of either branch would cause more imbalance and the loss of the lower branch would be a shame as it has great character. The lower branch itself did not look to be in the greatest health. It had been weak in the previous year and the bud size was poor in the spring.

What to do then? Hope the lowest branch buds out and suddenly gets stronger? Carry on regardless and hope nobody notices the inverse taper? Or address the problem and see what can be done? Removing the biggest bar branch just exacerbated the difference between the top and bottom sections of the tree, with the top being wild and dramatic, and the bottom less so. It was decided to airlayer off the top and make a smaller semi cascade

Malus is a very vigorous species and this can be done in the spring, such as this one was; the timing for other species is different, however.

The spot and angle

The air layering process is relatively simple, choosing the spot and angle is the difficult thing. In order to maximise the future nebari, the widest point on the trunk was chosen as the top line for the cut. This is from where roots ultimately emerge and this line should be cut with a very sharp knife and steady hand. Press down hard until the hard central core is reached and work around the trunk. The bottom line of the layer should be about $1\frac{1}{2}$ times the diameter of the trunk; now it is not necessary to measure to the micron as shown, but too short a distance and the tree can callus over the gap and cause the layer to fail. Now there are two additional techniques to ensure this does not happen. One is to use a heavy wire around the trunk, the second is to eat away a little at some of the heart wood with concave cutters.

In order to assist root development, root hormone is used. If dry powder is applied, it can often wash off immediately after the first watering and so I tend to use a

At work: making an airlayer with a ring



The top most boundary of the airlayer is defined with a sharp, straight cut across the widest part of the trunk



The lower boundary of the airlayer should be $1\frac{1}{2}$ times the diameter of the trunk



Cut through the bottom boundary in the same way as the top



Cut through the living tissue in a vertical line to join the two cuts



The bark and living tissue can now be peeled off like an orange



To stop it callusing over, nibble away a small amount of the remaining trunk at the centre



A thick wire wrapped around the trunk will also help to stop the live vein from rejoining



The layer is almost ready



The top cut is the important one, from here the roots will emerge. Using a much sharper blade, trim the edges



Use a steady hand. This will determine whether or not you will achieve even distribution and a good nebari in 10 years' time



A clear piece of plastic cut from an old Akadama bag is prepared to hold the sphagnum moss



It should be tied tightly around the base so water will not leak from it too easily



You can use staples to hold it in place initially, then follow that with some wire



The bag is ready



A thin strip of kitchen towel is prepared. It must be absorbent and strong



Root hormone powder is spread along the towel which is then moistened so the powder sticks to it like gel



You could just paint on the powder, but you run the risk of it being washed off



The wet powdery towel is wrapped around the top of the layer

very small strip of moistened kitchen towel on to which a line of powder is placed. This is then wrapped directly over the top of the layer and will hold the hormone in place and keep it moist. Over time the paper will deteriorate.

The layer is surrounded in this case with sphagnum moss that is held in place with some plastic cut out from an old Akadama bag. This is ideal as it gives the roots a taste of Akadama — or maybe it is just because it's good strong plastic that won't deteriorate in the sun allowing you to see root development.

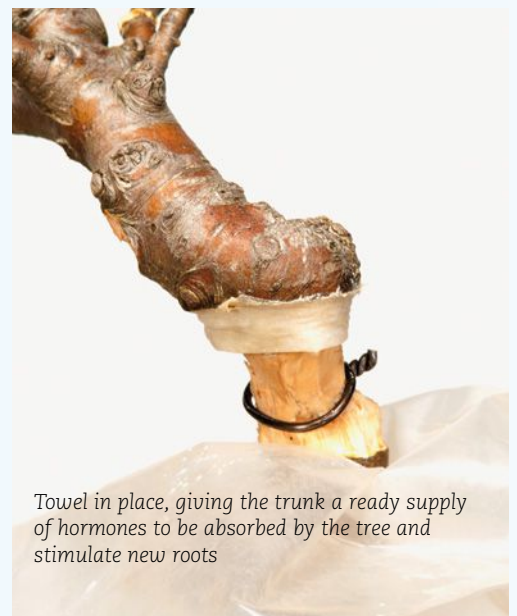
Once there are sufficient roots the top can be separated. You can tell if there are

sufficient roots by looking at the foliage volume and quality, visually through the plastic or by giving the layer a squeeze to see how hard it is.

The separation

The layer was taken in March and then separated at the end of July. Sadly the bottom section of the tree did not bud out as much as I had hoped and, although not completely lost, it essentially reduced down to a stump. But at least I still had the Bryan Albright pot! The top section was, however, a resounding success with roots growing from all directions.

The immediate post separation root work



Towel in place, giving the trunk a ready supply of hormones to be absorbed by the tree and stimulate new roots



Rough, uncut sphagnum moss is placed in the bottom of the bag



The bag is filled carefully, not too tightly and without knocking the paper wrap



Don't fill too far above the top level of the layer or roots will start higher up than desired



The bag is wrapped tightly using string and a couple of small drainage holes are made in case of excessive water retention

Ready for now

The layer is finished. It needs to be cared for afterwards by keeping it out of any intense weather, especially wind.



5 months' later...

The lowest branch has failed to leaf out, much as predicted, but the top is looking relatively healthy.



Time for a visual inspection





It is solid with roots. Make the initial separation cut beneath the moss



We have lift off



With water, carefully try to remove as much of the sphagnum as possible. If left on it will rot and cause damage to the roots



Dunking in a bucket will also help to dislodge the moss and keep the delicate roots moist



Using tweezers, pick out the remaining moss without damaging the roots. Leaving a small amount is not an issue if removing it will cause more harm than good. I should have been a heart surgeon!

is essentially to remove as much of the sphagnum moss and the 'umbilical cord' as possible. This must be done with great care so none of the new fragile roots are damaged. Areas which did not root out as much as hoped need to be wounded again and hormone applied in the hope that they will produce further roots.

Thankfully all of the roots developed on the side we wanted in order to create the strong, semi cascade style of nebari.

In order to fix it in a pot, a piece of wood was screwed to the belly button of the trunk and wires were tied to the wood. This way the nebari creation is assisted as it promotes sideward growth and there is no damage to the trunk.



Once the roots are freed, remove the umbilical cord section of the trunk. A second pair of hands here is always useful



Protect the delicate roots, but remove as much of the trunk as possible

Down to a stubby little belly button beneath the trunk



The new root of the tree



Initially do as little pruning as possible, the more foliage and growth there is on top of the tree for the initial two years, the quicker the root development will be. Once there is a suitable root density to support dramatic changes in branches, restyling can begin. There are still many branch issues to be resolved with this material, but that can wait.



In order to assist the sideward growth of these strong roots and give us something to tie the tree down with, a wooden board is screwed into the navel of the trunk



Areas of little or no root development are re-cut and prayers are offered to the root gods



The tree is ready to be potted. You can see how the strong roots are now growing more horizontally



A mix of medium sized particles (Akadama, pumice and lava, 6:2:2) is used underneath the board



Wires are fastened over the corners of the board



A final arrangement of the roots while working in a small particle mix of soil in the top section of the pot



Once finished, water thoroughly, using the water to help work soil in between roots and also wash all the dust out

Finished airlayer.

The material has the makings of a chu hin sized semi-cascade *Malus*. There are still some structural issues to resolve with the branches, but not today. We can use those branches to power the root development before removing them in a year or so.

Dead branches have been removed...
...and some of the unnecessary branches which are causing problems for those that are necessary



A future image of the Malus



The Artisans Cup

The show which sets a new standard in presenting bonsai



Notable Mountain hemlock (*Tsuga mertensiana*)
by Eric Schikowski



A Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga*) by Doug Paul



Photo: Arthur Hitchcock

Text: Farrand Bloch Photography: Bonsai Focus Studio & Arthur Hitchcock

The show

It's already a few months since we travelled to Portland, Oregon, to witness one of the most remarkable bonsai shows I have seen, the Artisans cup.

One of the halls in the Portland Museum of Art was completely transformed into a low lit space with black carpet and specially designed tables on which the trees had been displayed. The backdrop was made of wooden plates which had some small openings to make them more transparent. No long rows with bonsai divided by bamboo sticks, but a kind of zig zag of tables which stood in pairs so you could walk around and appreciate the bonsai from other sides, not just the front. Two separate lights for each individual bonsai. This treatment gave a very dramatic effect.

'The whole set-up of the show is rather like a forest,' Ryan explains, 'sometimes you see the tree as an individual, the next moment it's more like a forest. Open spaces create a three dimensional experience which give the tree a more sculptured feel. The light setting on each bonsai took some time, we could adjust it with so-called dimmers to create the optimal effect. The concept was designed and made by Skylab Architecture,' Ryan continues, 'this is only the beginning, by 2025 my aim is to bring this show to New York at one of their finest art museums.'



Above: The Portland museum and to the left, the trade stands' tent.
Below: The opening ceremony



Photo: Arthur Hitchcock



Overview of the show

White birch (*Betula alba*) by Dennis VojtillaButtonwood (*Conocarpus*) by Michael Feduccia

Photo: Arthur Hitchcock

Amazing photo collage by Chris Hornbecker
Photo: Arthur HitchcockA real piece of art (*Acer circinatum*) by Michael Hagedorn

The judges

The trees were judged by Colin Lewis, Boon Manakitvitpart, Peter Warren, David De Groot and Walter Pall. Overall winner is the massive Rocky Mountain juniper by Randy Knight whose sober response on receiving the Artisans cup was: 'It's about the tree; I hope that all people see the tree as I do.' A special table with only three feet, was made by Austin Heitzman to match this heavy tree and emphasise the long jin at the front right. On top of his success in being overall winner of the Artisans Cup, Randy also won a special prize for his companion plant.

The Artisans cup: First Place:

Randy Knight, *Juniperus scopulorum*

Second Place: Tim Priest, *Juniperus occidentalis*

Third Place: Amy Blanton, *Juniperus scopulorum* (with Mike Blanton in memoriam) and *Pinus parviflora*, Konnor Jenson.

Best Companion Piece: Randy Knight's companion plant of coastal redwood





A California juniper (*Juniperus californica*) by John Kirby



Above: Coastal redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*), Bob Shimon.



A Japanese beech (*Fagus crenata*) by Pacific Bonsai Museum



Below: An Engelmann spruce (*Picea engelmannii*) by Ryan Neil

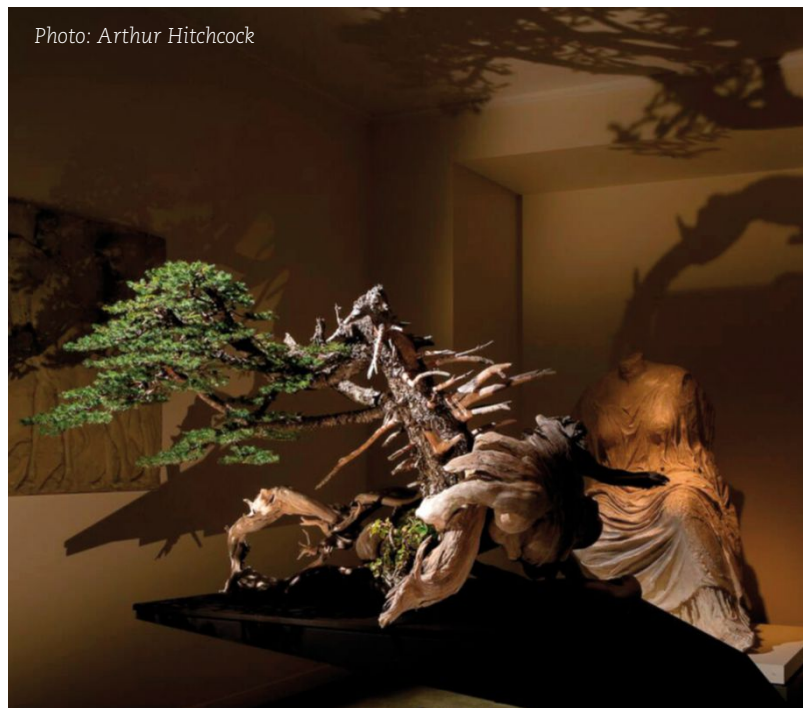


Photo: Arthur Hitchcock

The best bonsai of 2015

Our Top 2015 is a selection of the most remarkable trees we struck upon during 2015. The trees were presented by many artists from round the world at different shows. During the year it was not possible to publish all the photos; sometimes we just had to show them as small images, so we decided to give you, our reader, a treat and show them off with 42 extra pages. Let us know what you think of this idea; we want to do the same next year.

E-mail details of your tree for the 2016 selection to: editor@bonsaifocus.com

We will present the final selection in the January 2017 issue.

Top 2015



Bonsai Focus Top 2015



Olea
Jordi Ugena
European Bonsai San, Saulieu 2015



Pinus uncinata
Jesús Valero Belmonte



Fagus crenata
Luis Vallejo



Pinus parviflora
Mark Cooper



Quercus robur
Jean Paul Polmans

European Bonsai San, Saulieu 2015



Juniperus scopulorum
Michael Hagedorn



Juniperus scopulorum

Brian Hollowell

4TH US National Bonsai Exhibition



Pinus sylvestris
Mauro Stemberger



Photo: Arthur Hitchcock

Juniperus scopulorum
Tim Priest
Artisans cup 2015



Ulmus americana
Suthin Sukolosovisit
4TH US National Bonsai Exhibition



Pinus densiflora
Jean Paul Polmans
European Bonsai San, Saulieu 2015



Photo: Arthur Hitchcock

Juniperus scopulorum
Randy Knight
Artisans cup 2015



Photo: Arthur Hitchcock

Pinus parviflora
Konnor Jensen
Artisans cup 2015



Olea
Frank Cuccihara
4TH US National Bonsai Exhibition



Premna serratifolia
Robert Steven



Photo: Arthur Hitchcock

Juniperus scopulorum
Mike Blanton
Artisans cup 2015



Conocarpus erectus

Paul Pickel

4TH US National Bonsai Exhibition



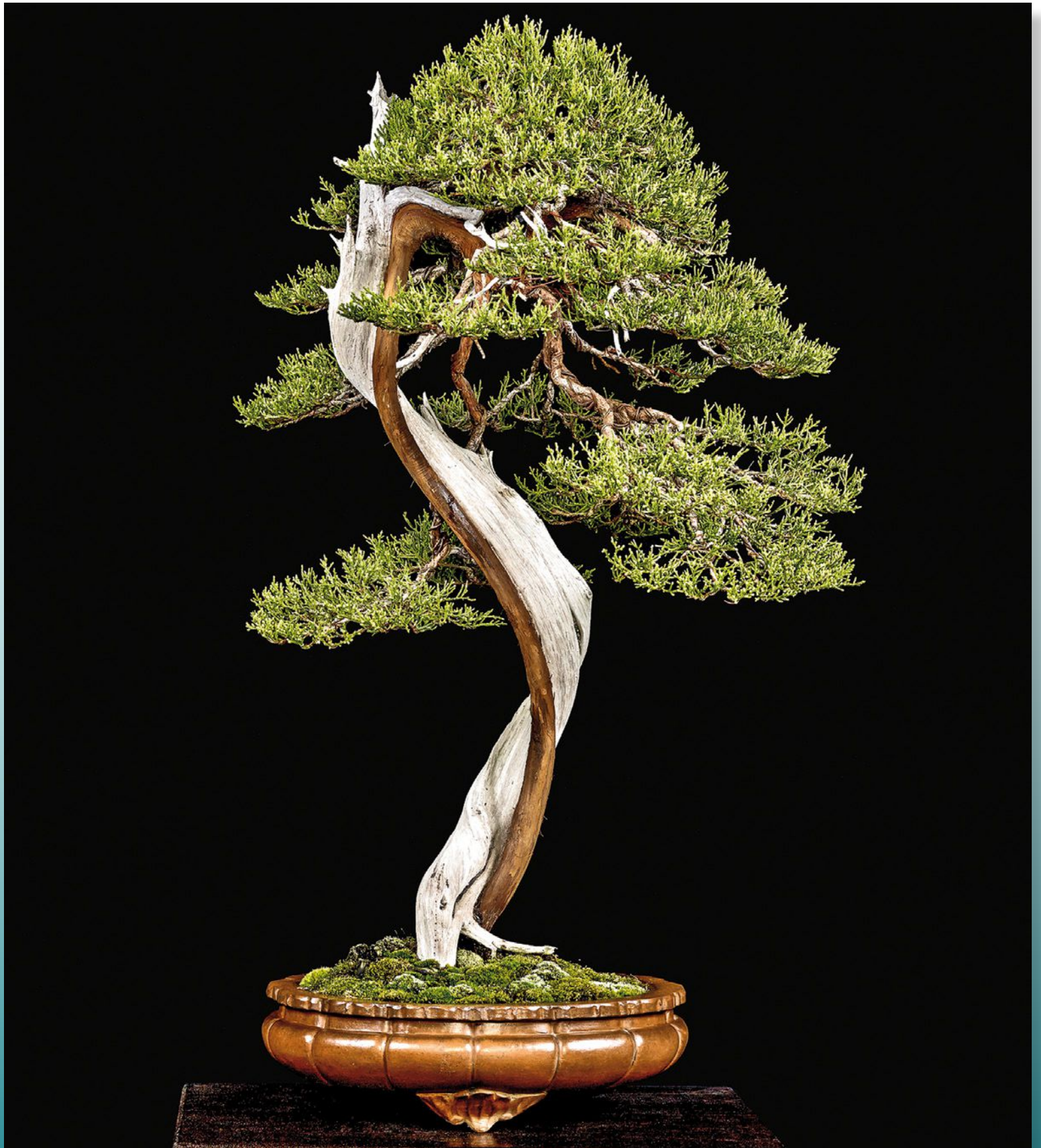
Juniperus chinensis 'Taiwan'
Salvatore Liporace



Picea abies

Nicola Crivelli

European Bonsai San, Saulieu 2015



Juniperus scopulorum
John Kirby
4TH US National Bonsai Exhibition



Pyrus
Bill Valavanis



Juniperus chinensis 'Hokkaido'
Matteo Martin
European Bonsai San, Saulieu 2015



Bougainvillea spectabilis
Nacho Marin



Acacia farnesiana
Nacho Marin



Pinus sylvestris
David Benavente



Buxus
François Jeker



Acer rubrum
Michael Hagedorn



Taxus cuspidata
François Jeker



Acer palmatum 'Sharps Pygmy'
Sergio Cuan
4TH US National Bonsai Exhibition



Pinus mugo
Mauro Stemberger



Photo: Marco Rämisch



Taxus cuspidata
Luis Vallejo



Juniperus sabina

El Tim

European Bonsai San, Saulieu 2015



Juniperus sabina
El Tim
European Bonsai San, Saulieu 2015



Fagus sylvatica

David Barlow

Bonsai Europa, Bury 2015



Pinus sylvestris
Giacomo Pappalardo
European Bonsai San, Saulieu 2015



Olea sylvestris

El Tim

European Bonsai San, Saulieu 2015



Taxus baccata
Giorgio Castagneri
European Bonsai San, Saulieu 2015



Photo: Miquel Krause



Pinus sylvestris
Pavel Slovák
Bonsai Europa, Bury 2015



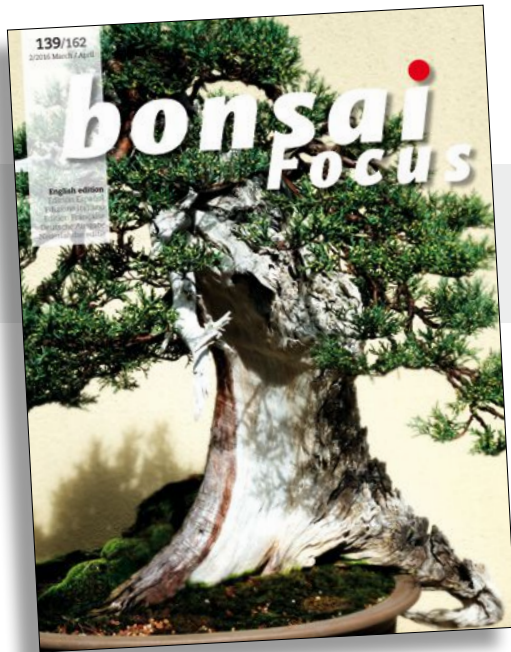
Crataegus
Tony Tickle
Bonsai Europa, Bury 2015



Juniperus chinensis

Ian Stewardson

European Bonsai San, Saulieu 2015



Issue 139 March / April



Almost like a dentist

In Japan roots are being pruned, wired, added to, moved about to create the perfect root base.



Tiny houses

Like them or not, these tiny houses, temples and figurines are really fascinating in their detail.

Back to Boon

Boon Manakitivipart is one of the finest artists in the USA. In 2009 we did our first photo shoot with him. During our trip to Portland last year we were lucky enough to do another.



The splendour of Chiharu Imai

Restyling a huge juniper helped by his students.



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