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# ***bonsai*** ***Focus***

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Nederlandse editie



**Bjorn Bjorholm**



Recommended by Master Masahiko Kimura and Kinbon Magazine

*"As a bonsai researcher I also recommend this product"*

Kaoru Koizumi

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



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**KINBON**



Photo: Nicole Reed

### A new twist

We've reached the last issue of 2016, but I am already looking forward to next year. Exciting new things will happen, like the World Bonsai Event (April 27-30) in Japan, which promises to be an amazing, not to be missed event. In response to this we have initiated the Golden Concave (pliers) Award. This is a very exciting new contest because you can win a fully organised tour to Japan and experience the World Bonsai Convention in person. What do you need to do? Send a photo of your best bonsai via [www.bonsaifocus.com/award](http://www.bonsaifocus.com/award). Taiga Urushibata, Peter Warren and Ryan Neil are our three great judges. They will nominate the short list from the bonsai trees submitted. Then it's over to you, our readers, to vote for the best tree. If you go to our website you can read all the ins and outs.

I always find it difficult to acquire the right material for a Masterclass demo. A yamadori, or a tree from Japan can be stunning, but won't necessarily provide an interesting story, or perhaps it isn't challenging enough for the Master — it's just too perfect. The best trees are often those that don't initiate the instant wow factor, they are rather like the famed Ugly Duckling, because they can become a beautiful swan in the hands of an artist. If that happens I jump for joy and this is just what happened with Bjorn again last spring when we had him over to our studio.

Bjorn Bjorholm has now become one of the most in-demand bonsai artists who travels all over the world showing his skills. The Japanese yew (*Taxus cuspidata*) was supplied by Maarten van der Hoeven of Bonsai Plaza. Just the right candidate for Bjorn's demo.

Bonsai is a very creative process and Bjorn is a fine example of this. When, after a short break, he returned to his finished work in our studio, he decided that he was not really satisfied and gave the tree a whole new 'twist'.

Bonsai with a new twist seem to be the very latest thing. During the recent US National Bonsai Exhibition there were some great new ideas. And in Jeff Barry's report (see photo above) from Australia, tradition and a new trendy approach meld together very nicely.

Enjoy the read.

**Farrand Bloch**  
Chief editor





## Our Icons



Beginner

Video available  
bonsaifocus.com

Advanced

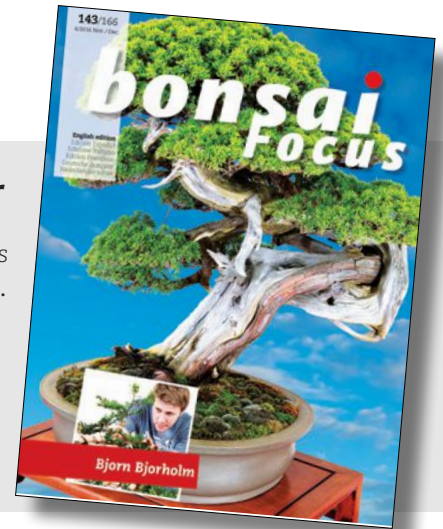
Scan the code  
with your phone

Expert

## On the cover

*Juniperus chinensis*  
by Frederic Chenal.

Photo: Bonsai Focus Studio



## 6 News

Nöelanders Trophy, Agenda, US National Bonsai Exhibition

## 8 The future of bonsai

Bonsai in Australia is full of new energy and ideas

## 12 Gallery

Bonsai from various artists

## 16 Shohin

The winged spindle tree charms with its cork bark and deep crimson foliage



## 22 Always wake up with a smile

The bonsai passion of Andrea Meriggioli

## 26 Step by step

Giacomo Pappalardo works on a field-grown Scots pine

## 30 Bjorn to bonsai

Bjorn Bjorholm styles a Japanese yew

## 42 Omiya this is not . . .

The Showa Kinen Park in Tokyo has great bonsai, too







## 50 Expert opinion

François Jeker analyses the larch of Didier Weiss

## 52 Maintenance

What is the dominant root syndrome?

## 56 The hollow tree

Improving a spindle tree by Ralf Beckers.

## 60 Technique

Using an electric saw to improve a bonsai

## 66 Gallery

Bonsai from various artists

## 72 Case history

A 40-year-old larch forest created by Armando Dal Col in 1975

## 75 Tony's column

Do you suffer from 'Zone Envy'?

## 76 Maintenance

Is there anything to do during the winter?

## 78 The Golden Concave Award

Join our new contest and win a trip to Japan.

## 80 Shopping

The new collectors' pot by Walsall Studio Ceramics





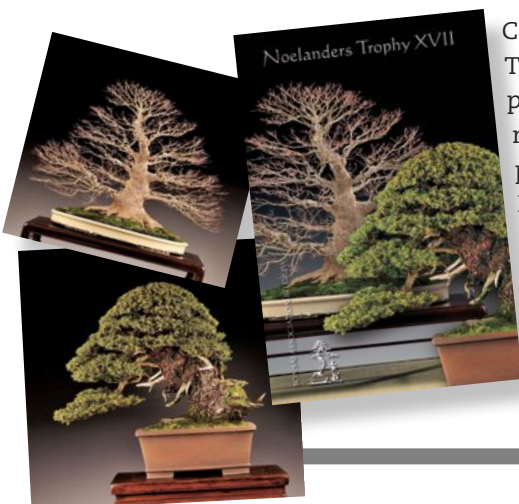
## Alcobendas Bonsai Museum anniversary, 3 - 6 December

The bonsai collection of Luis Vallejo is one of Europe's finest and there will be a special exhibition of his collection and school at the Alcobendas Bonsai Museum, near Madrid, for its 30th anniversary. Unlike the previous exhibitions there is no contest, solely an exhibition. There will, however, be an open selection of 15 bonsai to participate in the exhibition. Info: <http://www.luisvallejoestudiobonsai.com>, or [bonsai@luisvallejo.com](mailto:bonsai@luisvallejo.com). Museo Bonsai, Avenue Olimpica s/n Arroyo de la Vega, Alcobendas.



## Noelanders Trophy XVIII

The Nöelanders Trophy XVIII and the EBA / ESA are coming together. During the weekend of February 4 - 5 2017, the big Nöelanders show will again be taking place, but this time it's a special edition combined with the EBA and ESA convention. Top international demonstrators will be showing off their skills including a delegation from Japan: Mitsuo Matsuda and Daisaku Nomoto, and Europe: David Benavente (ES) and Salvatore Liporace (IT). The venue is the same as last year: Limburghal, Jaarbeurslaan 6, Genk, Belgium. For more info: [www.eba2017.be](http://www.eba2017.be)



Commemorative photo book 'Nöelanders Trophy XVII' is still available! Containing 176 pages It is packed full of information and magnificent pictures of bonsai and suiseki photographed by Willy Evenepoel and Jörg Derlien.

Price: €39 plus packing and transport costs. Format: A4, hard cover. For info and orders: [christian.bonsai@gmail.com](mailto:christian.bonsai@gmail.com).



December 6-9 Bon-  
sai without Borders  
Global Convention  
The First 'Black Scissors'  
Global Bonsai Creators'  
(Artists) Convention.

Where: Nanxun District Huzhou, Zhejiang  
Province, China.

Info: Su Fang 1440372565@qq.com.

## Dec 16-18 Cape Bonsai Kai Show, Cape Town, South Africa

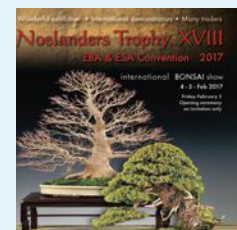
Annual Exhibition with over 100 beautiful exhibits. Demos and traders. Only the obligatory fee to enter Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens.

Where: Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, Cape Town. Info: [www.capebonsaikai.co.za](http://www.capebonsaikai.co.za) Or email Tony Bent at [tony@nanoson.com](mailto:tony@nanoson.com).



## Dec 19 -22 Beyond Spirit of Bonsai 2016

Bonsai Convention & Exhibition. Headliners: Juan Andrade, Glenis Bebb, Tony Bebb, Albert Chang, Tom Elias, Naemi Iwasaki, Walter Liew, Mitsuo Matsuda, Jerry Meislik, Nguyen Thanh Tam, Jyoti and Nikunj Parekh. Supported by: Bonsai Clubs International, World Bonsai Friendship Federation. Where: The Kishkindha Moolika Bonsai Garden, Mysore, India.



February 3-5, 2017  
18th Nöelanders  
Trophy and the  
EBA Congress,  
Genk, Belgium.

February 3rd evening,  
official opening ceremony. The exhibition, new  
talent contest finals and demonstrations on  
4th /5th February 2017. Where: Limburghal,  
Genk, Belgium. Info: +32 491 56 25 26 Website:  
[www.bonsaiassociation.be](http://www.bonsaiassociation.be)

## April 27 - 30 2017: 8th World Bonsai Convention, Saitama City

After 28 years the World Bonsai Convention will return to its birthplace and Mecca of World Bonsai, Omiya Bonsai. Where: Saitama Super Arena, Omiya Sonic city Palace Hotel, Omiya, Japan. Info: [www.world-bonsai-saitama.jp](http://www.world-bonsai-saitama.jp)





# 5<sup>th</sup> U.S. National Bonsai Exhibition 2016



Winner of finest creative bonsai: Creighton Bostrom



Kishu Shimpaku juniper, styled by Bjorn Bjorholm.  
Photo: Bonsai Empire



A pine by Suthin Sukosolvisit



Over the last 15 years the American Bonsai Community has looked across to Europe with incredulity. They have seen the big bonsai exhibitions get better year on year, they have seen the professionalism in the displays and the maturity of the specimens and trusted that someday it would happen in the US . . . now it has.

Text and Photography: Tony Tickle

In September 2016 the US National Bonsai Exhibition took place in East Rochester, New York. This was a defining moment in US Bonsai, a moment when all the stars were aligned. And those stars came from all across America. The exhibited bonsai represented 156 exhibitors from 34 states and Canada, some driving for 3 days, including: California, Florida, Oregon, truly a 'Who's Who' of American bonsai. They brought their trees and showed their best, a massive mountain hemlock group from Michael Hagedorn, beautiful tropical shohin from Louise Leister and a truly amazing European white birch by Dennis Vojtilla. Over 120 different species and cultivars, there were 298 individual displays, with 20 shohin compositions displaying 108 individual specimens. An invitation exhibition of Suiseki featured



The opening ceremony



An amazing creation by Ryan Neil. Photo: Bonsai Empire

over 80 stones. Demonstrators: Minoru Akiyama (Japan), Tony Tickle (UK), Michael Ryan Bell (US), Peter Warren (UK), Enrique Eastano (Mexico), Sean Smith (US). All aspects of the show took place in a huge indoor soccer hall with its superb lighting and artificial grass floor. With over 40 traders from across the US, the only real down side was the lack of air conditioning and what with the weather

unseasonably hot, the temperature in the hall sometimes touched 30°C.

This was the 5th US National Bonsai Exhibition and considered by all who had attended previous incarnations as a huge leap forward insofar as the quality of trees and display. This would not have been possible without the amazing team of volunteers led by Bill Valavanis. Words cannot describe the influence Bill had and continues to have on the US bonsai scene, bringing together the best in America, managing a world class bonsai show and travelling the world promoting American bonsai . . . a dynamo in the true sense of the word.

Picea by Colin Lewis





# The future of Bonsai



Luke Yeoward in football field with Blue Cedar  
(*Cedrus atlantica glauca*)

## Bonsai in Australia is full of new energy and ideas

Text: Jeff Barry Photography: Nicole Reed

Past the graffiti in a lane off Brunswick Street, a crowd gathers in a converted warehouse shell. It's Friday night in Melbourne, something is happening here. Inside, tattoos mingle with cardigans, electronic music competes with thoughtful critique as an ageless crowd gathers for an exhibition opening. The stage is shared; abstract photography and Japanese inspired illustrations line the walls, but the main act and what the people are there for is bonsai. Jeff Barry, owner of the Chojo Nursery, reports on the Australian bonsai scene

Perhaps the most defining moment of bonsai history in Australia happened when a Russian immigrant moved to Sydney's beaches searching for a better future. Vita Koreshoff had come from a town in Russia that bordered Manchuria. He had a close relationship with a local gardener who practiced Penjing from the Chinese side of the border. For Vita the influence stuck. As he crossed the globe in search of a new home, these images of miniature shaped trees were never far from his mind. Not just the trees, but the techniques that he had been taught and

all of the possibilities and experiments that could be attempted. By 1929 Vita was practising his craft with the southern sun on his shoulders and was possibly the first westerner to cultivate and practise the art outside of Asia. The Koreshoff influence was not from Vita alone, his wife, Dorothy, co-wrote multiple books, some focusing on Australian native plants as bonsai. Their daughter Deborah, wrote one of the most influential bonsai books still available today.

Despite the small size of the Australian population, bonsai has a relatively strong and ever growing following. Many Australians visit Japan for its unique culture, natural beauty and its excellent snowboarding, returning inspired by the gardens, niwaki and, of course, bonsai. Once home, they hunt out bonsai culture in Australia.

Due to the somewhat

poor representation of bonsai in the shopping malls, hardware stores and a general lack of understanding, knowledge and exposure to bonsai was limited. In more recent times, though, formal bonsai education has slowly become accessible. When speaking with Craig Wilson, one of Australia's most experienced bonsai growers, he stated that, 'Hirotoishi Saito has single handedly influenced the style of Melbourne Bonsai due to his consistent workshops over the past 20 years.'

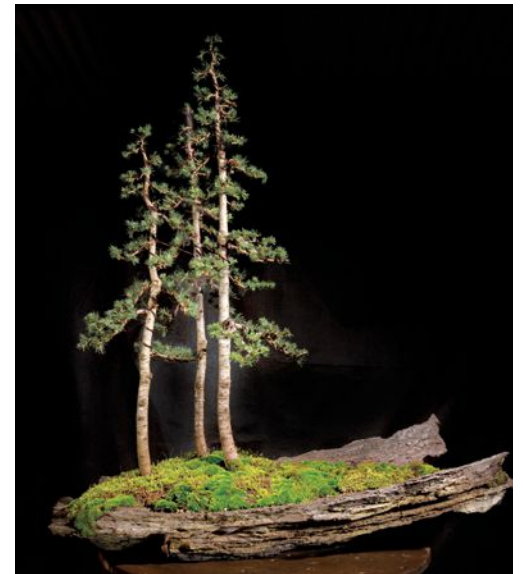
Chojo Feature Trees is a gallery at the Chojo nursery exhibiting professional bonsai. It's situated in a heavily populated tourist district. As owner of the nursery, I can report that, we have hundreds of people roaming through the gallery each week, many of them ask questions on the day and then sign up for the introduction class. It's an excellent formula steadily expanding the bonsai community. In a country like Australia, this is the key to push the art form forward.







Decoration on one of the walls at the Chojo nursery



Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica*), 3 trees on radiata pine bark. Height: 130 cm / 51" Width: 130 cm / 51"



**Essentially, the future of Australian bonsai is in the hands of those who have never practised it before.**

Jeff Barry



Above: Forest of sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) Height: 90 cm / 35¼".  
Below: Luke Yeoward working on a juniper



California redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*)  
Height: 120 cm / 47¼" Base width: 29 cm / 11¼"







Exhibitions away from Japan, (like the Artisans Cup and the Noelanders Trophy) have helped many an enthusiast realize the potential, not

only in the level of quality but also in the possibilities in exhibiting.

Chojo has curated exhibitions directed at artists and art collectors outside of the bonsai community. Melbourne has an internationally renowned arts scene and it is within this, that bonsai has been embraced with open arms. Resonating with the youth in the arts community, many graffiti and street artists, musicians

and design students have been finding a connection with bonsai.

As Jeff explains, 'I could say that Chojo represents modern Australian bonsai. One thing we can add to bonsai is to find a less traditional, more interesting way to present the art form while still keeping the focus on the tree.'

Being an island continent for millions of years, many of Australia's native plants only exist in Australia. These plants have adapted to the unforgiving soils that lack certain elements. In many ways these plants' characteristics differ from the plants commonly used for bonsai in the northern hemisphere. *Banksias*, *Melaleucas*, *Casuarinas* and the subtropical figs had, in Vita's mind, great potential due to their beauty in the natural environment. Although these species created difficulty and much trial and error, they are still used today across Australia, representing

the art form well.

Besides the different species available, there are other differences when looking at the Australian Bonsai. In the 1980s the Australian government prohibited the importation of plants into the country in order to protect the native environment — a significant difference to the European and North American markets. Secondly, yamadori (collecting of bonsai material from nature) is not a real prospect due to the sensitivity of the native plants and the environmental protection policies.

There are many Australian enthusiasts who would argue that, horticulturally, this could be a promising option, most agree that such protection is essential. The vast majority of Australian bonsai has been cultivated within the country. Sourcing exotic species as mature garden stock is active and the potential of finding 100+ year old Azaleas in established private



***One thing we can add to bonsai is to find a less traditional, more interesting way to present the art form while still keeping the focus on the tree.***

Jeff Barry on a bicycle with Japanese red pine (*Pinus densiflora*)



A juniper cascade created by Masahiko Kimura during a demonstration







Hinoki cypress forest on slate (*Chamaecyparis obtusa*)  
Height: 85 cm / 33¼" Width: 120 cm / 47¼"



Bonsai artist Anu Shan-ra with a Coast Banksia (*Banksia integrifolia*).  
Height: 120 cm / 47¼" Base width: 38 cm / 15". Australian Native. Owned by  
Craig Wilson



Jeff Barry using a rubbish  
bin 'display stand' for his  
Japanese black pine (*Pinus  
thunbergii*)

Below: Trident maple forest  
(*Acer buergerianum*) on  
slate. Height: 80 cm / 31¼"  
Width: 120 cm / 47¼".

Victorian gardens or finding European olives in the South Australian desert is possible and exciting. Essentially treating bonsai as an art form will ensure its growing interest amongst the general public. Galleries like Chojo teach and uphold the traditions of bonsai while engaging in a modern approach. In the words of Australian bonsai pioneer, Dorothy Koreshoff, when referring to the future of bonsai and our attitudes toward it, 'It's moved on from, let's say, tradition. In my book I say you have to have respect for tradition, tradition got us where we are now. But we can't stay at this point otherwise we become static. Everything has to move on.







*Punica*  
Frederic Chenal



*Olea*  
Rudy VDW Kei Bonsai Kai



*Quercus faginea*  
Roberto Torti



*Acer buergerianum*  
Danny Use







*Quercus robur*  
Teunis Jan Klein







*Juniperus chinensis*  
Frederic Chenal





# Euonymus

*The winged spindle tree charms with its cork bark and deep crimson foliage*

Text and photography: Kinbon magazine, Japan

There are a number of species in the *Euonymus* family that have been appreciated as bonsai for a number of years. They are shrubs which holds interest with both the colours and fruit of autumn. Additionally, the winged spindle tree also develops a cork like wing on its branches.

The best time to appreciate them is during the autumn when the fruit can be seen peeking through the deep crimson foliage. Once the foliage drops, the branch structure is revealed to show a sense of age and grace

## A finished tree that hides problems within

This shohin sized tree has many years of *mochikomi* and has already been brought to a finished state once before. Looking at the external outline, there does not appear to be any problem whatsoever, but looking inside the branch structure reveals a few leggy branches, some areas of differing vigour and multiple branches

from one spot. Mr Matsue also points out that underneath the moss it is evident that the tree has not been repotted in a number of years and he is worried about the condition of the roots. At the moment there is no obvious signs of a decline in the tree's health, but if left untouched, it will surely deteriorate.

In preparation for transplanting next spring, it will have unnecessary branches pruned off in order to make it healthy once again.

*Euonymus, front before work:*  
Height: 23 cm / 9" Width: 28 cm / 11". With just a little work on the outline, it can soon be enjoyed in a display



*Apex area. A number of branches are all coming from the same spot. If these are left to develop it will become thick and coarse*



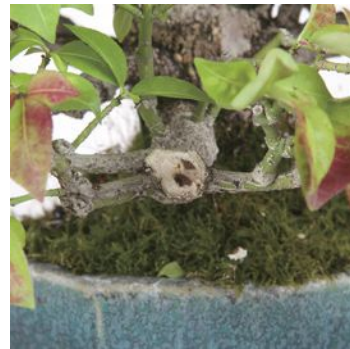
*The lower trunk and soil are covered in moss and the compacted soil surface cannot be seen. It is most likely that it's not been transplanted in 3 or 4 years. Euonymus grows roots relatively quickly compared with other species and so for a shohin sized tree they should be transplanted once every two years*





First branch on left: There are few branches at the base and the branch lacks overall movement. There are too many branches forming at the end which will cause swelling. Mr Matsue starts by thinning out the congested branch tips

### Removing thick branches to correct the enlarged nodes



The lumpy node at the end of the branch is removed to reveal the cause of the problem. The wood has two 'hearts', a situation which formed when it was pruned back previously. However, a small stump was left behind that was subsequently consumed by the new leader of the branch. Had the previous pruning been finished correctly and the old central stem removed, this issue would not have arisen

### Prune back and carve to leave no trace of the central 'heart'



The central part of the branch must be removed entirely when pruned back to two side shoots. Although the wound may have become larger, the callus that forms will be smooth and tight to the branch rather than forming a lump. After smoothing off the wound, it is covered in wound sealant

### Pruning to improve the health and reduce the burden on the tree



Those thick branches that are obviously unnecessary are removed and also those growing in an undesirable direction



Taking into account the overall direction and health of the tree, the branches and foliage are reduced to balance out vigour

### The change in overall foliage density



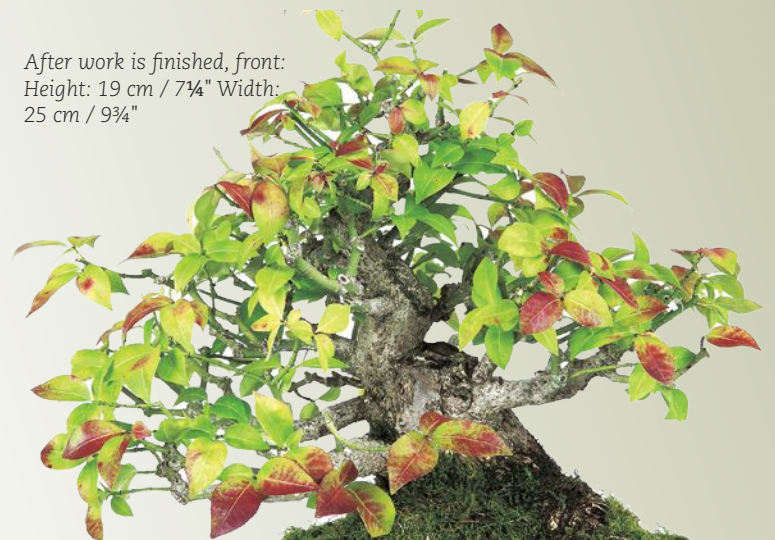
Before work, as seen from above . . .



. . . and after work

There is not a massive difference in the outline of the tree; however, the congested areas and the unnecessary branches have all been removed which will improve the tree's chances. The next stage in improving the tree will be next spring when it can be transplanted

After work is finished, front:  
Height: 19 cm / 7 1/4" Width:  
25 cm / 9 3/4"





Before work, front:  
It is approximately 7  
months since the tree was  
worked on



## The long awaited repotting reveals the condition of the roots



After a little pruning of the branch tips, it is time to transplant the tree. As it has been many years since it was last transplanted, the top soil has become compacted and the roots have surely filled the pot

## Unravelling the roots and cutting back



Above left: After removing it from the pot, using a single pronged root hook, the roots are being unravelled  
Above right: After unravelling, they are pruned back while checking the condition



Front after being removed from the pot.  
The root ball appears to be very solid and full of fine white root tips



The base of the root ball after removing from the pot:  
A vast number of fine roots can be seen on the base, but the condition of the roots cannot be checked



Underside after unravelling all the roots:  
After removing the soil and unravelling the roots, the external ring of roots are long. The area directly underneath the trunk, however, has very few roots growing from it

## Time to repot

Pruning work was done on the tree approximately 7 months ago to reduce the burden on a tree that was looking as though it was starting to decline in health. Now is the time to repot the tree and continue the rejuvenation process.

After giving the branches a simple prune, the repotting begins. *Euonymus* has fine, rapid growing roots and should be repotted once every one or two years so, after being left for longer than

that, the condition of the roots is a mystery.

Once removed from the pot, the root ball is seen to be compact and remains in the shape of the pot. The outside shows signs of root growth, but the condition of the interior roots is unknown. Mr Matsue feels uneasy as he starts to unravel the roots, unsure of what he will find at the core.





After loosening the soil with a chopstick, parts of the roots seemed to be rotten

Below: On the left are roots affected by root rot. The healthy roots are seen on the right.

The normal healthy roots look like fine white hairs, growing all over, whereas the the rotten roots have no hair and have changed colour to a greyish brown, looking lifeless



After root work, front



## Why are there no roots?

As the soil is cleared away directly under the trunk it becomes apparent that root rot has occurred. The area directly under the trunk becomes compacted if not correctly transplanted causing an imbalance of moisture and oxygen which in turn causes root death and then root rot. If water cannot penetrate directly into the heart of the root ball the roots die, causing damage to the tree and then further damage as those roots rot.

The area affected by the root rot will not absorb water and will not be able to send out any new roots, water and air will become stagnant and the conditions within the entire pot will become very poor.

In the case of this tree, there were no obvious signs of any root damage, but it was only a matter of time before branches began dying.



After root work, underside:

The area affected by the root rot has been entirely removed and new roots will be able to grow from this area. Thankfully the area affected was directly under the trunk only and so lateral roots are relatively unaffected. The rotten area can be cut back hard and the tree still has enough roots to survive. If the tree were unhealthy it would be inadvisable to cut back the healthy roots hard like this. Simply clean out the affected area, leaving the healthy roots entirely untouched and transplant as normal



After work, front:

Height: 18 cm / 7" Width: 22 cm / 8¾"

The tree is planted in the same pot with a mainly Akadama based soil mix. Now that the area directly beneath the trunk has been cleaned out, fine roots can start to develop and a new healthy root ball will form. As the tree starts to send out new shoots, care must be paid to ensure the tree is vigorous. If there are no problems development can continue as normal

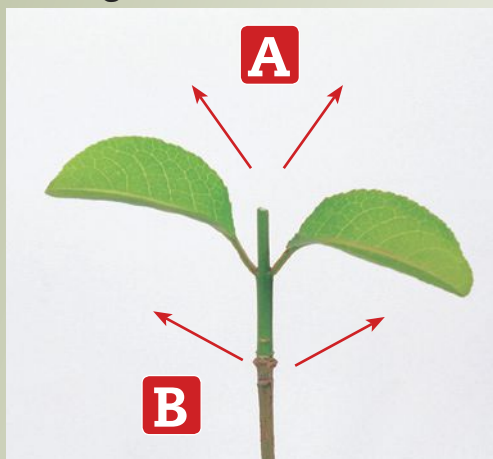


## Pruning

Naturally vigorous, this tree can withstand pruning back hard. It has an opposite growth pattern in that two leaves form at each node. In order to create a natural looking branch structure on a small tree it's important to prune out alternate shoots so that only two form at one point. By doing this some movement can be created in the branch.

The easiest time to prune for structure is when there are new leaves, just before the buds break. Pruning for structure will mean that flower buds are lost though, and it is difficult to enjoy the flowers and then fruit. So once the tree has reached a finished stage, leave short nodes but keep alternating branches so fruit will still develop. This method of branch creation is exactly the same for other species in the *Euonymus* family.

### Pruning for structure



Pruning opposing branches:  
In May, the new shoots are pruned back like this. In order to keep the node length short, they are cut back to leave one new node. The pruning should cause the tree to send out new growth from buds at position A, but if it doesn't, it will send them from position B



A well-developed branch in August. Two opposing shoots have grown out to develop branches to either side. In order to create a more natural looking branch structure, the left side is pruned back to make it shorter



The left-hand side is pruned back, not to the base, but to leave a single node. A very small stub is left above the node which will increase the likelihood of new growth developing



## Pollination

*Euonymus* is a monoecious tree and as such contains both male and female flowers on the same tree, but in varying proportions. Some trees are more male while others are mainly female. It can be very difficult to tell which is which unless you obtain them when they are full of fruit.

In order to set a greater amount of fruit, place several trees close to each other in a sheltered area, out of the rain and, ideally, with one of the trees being male. The pollen will naturally be moved from flower to flower pollinating the females and creating fruit.

If the process is repeated over many years a natural branch structure begins to develop with interesting movement. If the tree is young it is possible to wire and shape, but as the branches grow, the winged spindle in particular will develop hard branches that can't be bent and so developing the twigs is best done with scissors



It is a species that does not heal very well and so wound sealant is used on all the pruning scars



## Defoliation

If the tree is young and still early in its development it's viable to defoliate in

May or June. Defoliation will

cause a second flush of buds

to grow and develop from

the buds at the leaf axils and

will speed up development of

fine twigs. It is really not unusual to

find a concentration of buds on stronger

areas of the tree. Unnecessary buds and

branches should be removed as quickly

as possible and this work can be done at

the same time. Check for adventitious

buds at the base of branches; they can

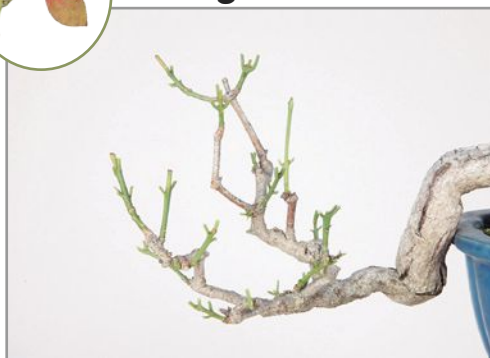
be removed before they develop. If this is

not done the structure quickly becomes a

mess and development slows down.



## Pruning and defoliation during the growing season



Start of June: The tips have been pruned and the leaves removed



After pruning and defoliation, the branches are adjusted slightly with wire



About one week after pruning and defoliation, the second flush of growth has begun to extend



Shoots which have extended too long are pruned back and adjusted with wire. Those that are growing in a bad direction or are unnecessary are removed entirely

## Placement and watering

*Euonymus* is a vigorous species and can withstand a

heavy pruning. It can be placed in full sun

without any issues, in particular those

trees which are reaching the display

stage of their development. They should

be in full sun as that will assist with flower

and fruit development as well as deep autumnal

colours on the foliage. During intense summer

months it is a good idea to place trees that are in

smaller pots underneath some shade netting.

In the autumn once the fruit ripens care must be

taken to stop birds and insects from eating the

fruit. Place in a bird and insect proof cage with net

around it.

During the winter protect from the very harshest

of conditions such as deep heavy frosts and north

winds, though they are relatively strong. If it is a

shohin sized tree it should be protected by placing

in an unheated greenhouse or store room.



## Water loving

*Euonymus* is a water loving

species so care must be taken

during the growing season, in

particular don't allow the trees to dry out. Water thoroughly each

day and multiple times a day during the summer months. If the

tree suffers from a lack of water then it will start to lose vigour

and the roots will rot, branches die and so forth. Watering must be

done with great care for this species. During the flowering period,

if insufficient water is applied the amount of fruit set will be less

and the flowers next year will also be reduced.







# Always wake up with a smile

*The bonsai passion of Andrea Meriggioli*

Text and photography: Bonsai Focus Studio

**Italian Andrea has a somewhat quirky way of doing things, but he has good intentions and a pure dedication to bonsai**

## Tell us about your profession and education

I finished secondary high school and got a degree, I then decided to quit studying and tried to live only for bonsai, putting all my money and my energy into it. I did well! I was probably very lucky, but I could finally live from what I most love doing — that is bonsai.

To be able to wake up smiling every morning just because I love what I do is priceless, especially as I receive so much positive feedback. I run an online store that sells a wide range of tools, special gardening products and lots of trees. I also administrate an online forum. I have students coming to my studio and I work on trees by commission, I maintain a few private collections and carry out demos and workshops in Italy and throughout Europe. As you see, I have no spare time!

## How did you get to know about bonsai?

Like many others, I think. At the start I was happy to appreciate pictures of bonsai in magazines, but after a while I wanted to learn more. I definitely gained inspiration by watching *The Karate kid*. It made me see the light! From there on my passion grew bigger and bigger, filling my days and my thoughts.

## Who is your bonsai teacher, and what is the most important thing you have learned?

I had several teachers through the years. As I was growing up I understood that, other than at the start, we should have more than one teacher in our lives, lest we learn all his negative sides as well as his positive. The best masters in all aspects of life are those who feel they are incomplete and who constantly look for a way to improve themselves. There's never a finishing line in life, you can always improve. We all have something to learn from everyone we come in contact with. We treasure all their qualities — their character and personality as well as their techniques. We put aside all judgement. I worked with several of the famous Masters, but the most important things learned came from somebody who doesn't have a title, a very humble person with a huge heart. I'll never stop thanking the providence that put him on my path. He made me understand that you have to be respectful of nature and the simplicity of things. He taught me to understand the sense of life and appreciate what is really important. He was a real life coach, not only for bonsai.

## What is your philosophy of bonsai?

My philosophy is that making bonsai helps us to work mostly on ourselves. We learn the techniques such as cutting a

branch, or putting on wire, but there are things that you can feel and sense only with the years, and I have a lot more to discover in front of me. What's for sure is that we should improve every day with humility and courage. This is the key to future success.

## Which trees do you most like to work on?

I like to work in a variety ways, this is why I appreciate more than one plant. Each one gives me the opportunity to do different kinds of work, seasonal or daily maintenance. I like conifers such as pines and junipers, but prefer deciduous trees that express better the way I feel about bonsai. They describe the passing of the seasons and what is to appreciate in every one of them. I especially love every type of *Prunus*, from the Japanese *mume* to the European *mahaleb* and *spinoza*, which I







can find growing close to where I live. The flowers at the end of the winter on a bare tree are really spectacular. I appreciate deciduous trees — particularly in winter because you can clearly see all the years they have been cultivated, the thickness of every branch and the way that the ramification was developed. You don't have to rush things if you want a good looking deciduous bonsai.

### Do you have any other interests or hobbies besides bonsai?

Luckily, my only 'sickness' is for bonsai and I don't have other hobbies. I do swim or free climb, but bonsai is part of me, a real lifestyle that fulfils every little space of my day. I don't have time for anything else, but this is what happens when you have a passion.



*The best masters in life, are those who always feel incomplete.*



### In your opinion is bonsai art?

I believe that bonsai provides me with the best inspiration to work on myself and to show emotion through trees and nature. For me a deeper representation of bonsai can be expressed by the trilogy of earth-tree-sky— that is, human beings. Earth represents our bodies to which we are bonded, sky is God and the tree is our soul that we have to cultivate and preserve strongly through our life. This is one of the definitions I use to describe the profound depths bonsai can reach, that it is not only about cutting or wiring. Bonsai is an art for me, but maybe it isn't for others. We work on trees only for ourselves.

### Do you have a favourite bonsai?

I don't have a favourite bonsai, but I do have trees that I've been cultivating over the years that remind me of valuable friendships with awesome people. I will always keep those trees in my collection.

### In 10 years from now what will you be doing?

I never think about that. I follow and nourish my passion with dedication day by day, the result of which will arrive with time. My target is to always improve and to grow up, I hope to become somebody better than now and I hope my trees will mature with me with the flowing of the seasons. I'm sure the future has a lot of emotion and satisfaction waiting for me!

### Born in:

Trieste, Italy in 1993

### Education:

I have a degree in electronics and telecommunications.

### Profession:

I work full time with bonsai.

### Into bonsai since:

I was 10 when bonsai first fascinated me, simply because I was a kid who was interested in all Japanese culture. Thereafter I was self-taught. Just last year I was recognized by the U.B.I. as an official bonsai instructor.

### Favourite species:

I especially like deciduous trees such as *Prunus* and all its varieties. I can find *Prunus spinosa* close to the area in which I live.







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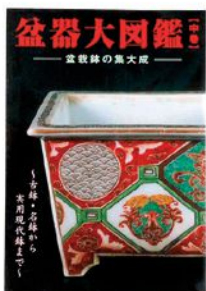




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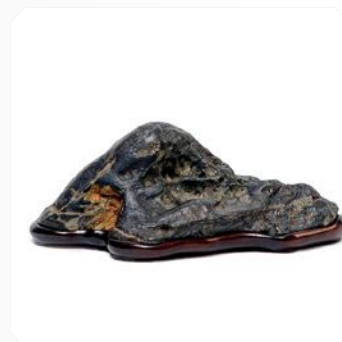
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# Pinus sylvestris

*Giacomo Pappalardo works on a field-grown Scots pine*

Text: Elida Lara Failla / Bonsai Focus Studio Photography: Giacomo Pappalardo

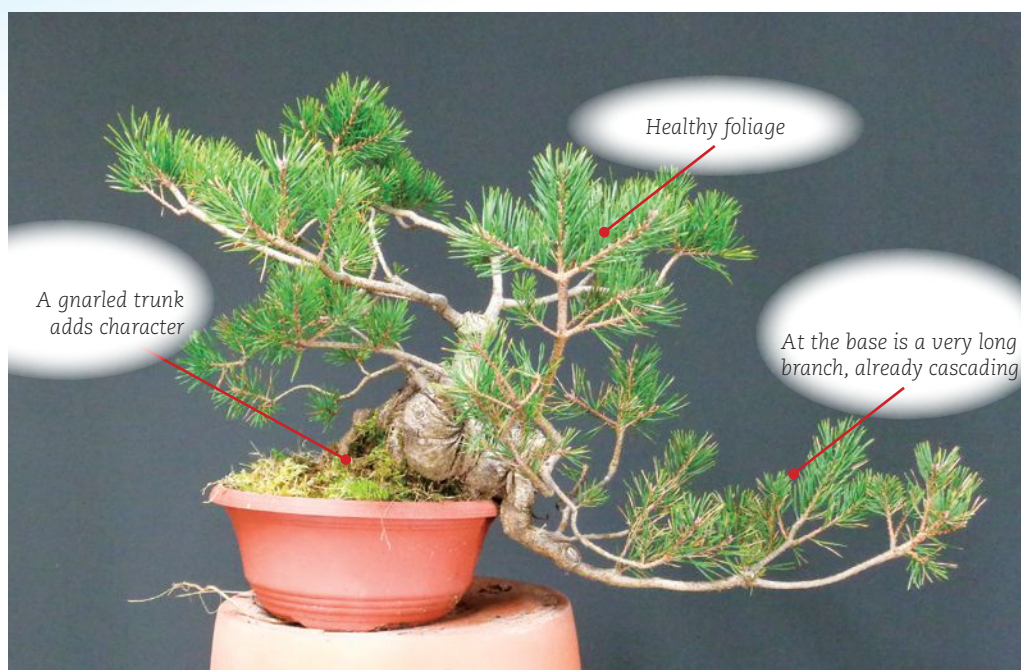
The Scots pine is a very popular pine variety to work with. It's a vigorous grower and is tolerant to bending and wiring. It features flaking bark and strong needles. With a little patience you can have a tree with small needles and a mature look overall. Giacomo, who grows these pines himself, shows how easy it is to style them

# 1

## Analysing the tree

Giacomo: 'This is one of the many pines I grow in the open field. It started as a young tree 8 years ago. After many 'let grow and cut back' sessions to stimulate thickening of the trunk, it was planted in a pot. Now it is ready to be styled. It has very horizontal growth so a cascade style is a very suitable option.'

Giacomo loves to work with pines



*The tree before work: a very possible front because it has the best movement and tapering*



*The tree from the side*



*Seen from the possible back, it has a very bulky trunk*



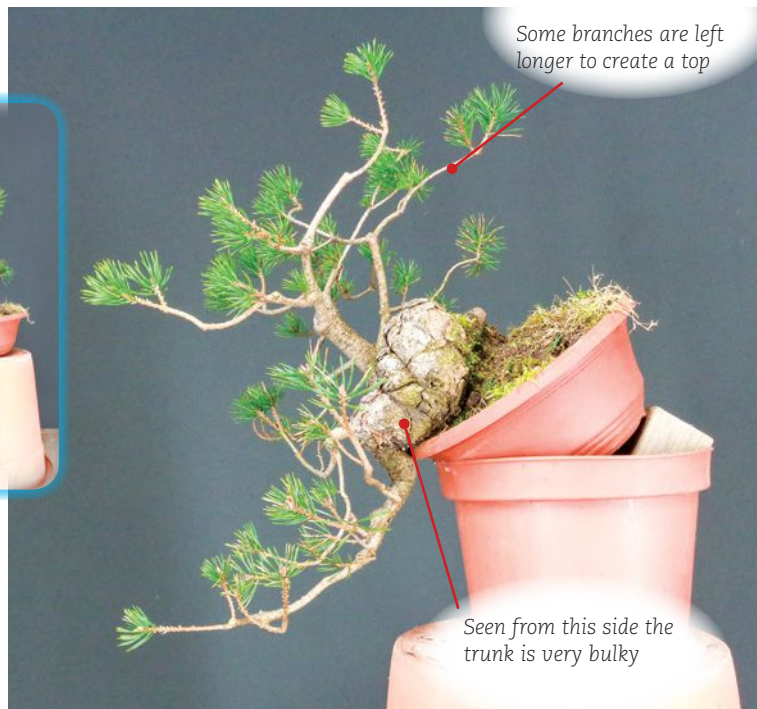
## 2

**Removing the branches**

First task is to remove the old needles. The main branch, the lower one, is left untouched. The upper branches are being shortened, or even removed if they are too thick.



Remove the old needles by plucking them off carefully with fingers, or use scissors

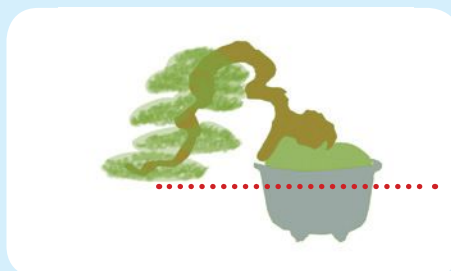


Result after cleaning the needles and removing unnecessary branches

**What makes a cascade?**

One of the most dramatic styles in bonsai is definitely the cascade or, in Japanese, kengai. It's inspired by trees which grow over a rock cliff, or have managed to survive after a landslide. The 'top' of the cascade is actually the steep down-sloping branch that sweeps up again elegantly at the tip. The pine shown here already has a very horizontal growth with long branches — just perfect for a cascade. The cascade style comes in many variations, the main variations being the Kengai and Han kengai.

Full cascade (Kengai) has its main branch lower than the pot



Semi cascade (Han Kengai) has its main branch reaching halfway down the pot, or on a level with the rim

**PINE - HUSBANDRY**

**Propagate:**  
With seed.

**Placement:**

Pines just love full sun and thrive on it. Although pines can survive frosts they should be protected from cold winds. Long periods of rain, especially in autumn, can be damaging for the root system, so give the tree some protection by providing shelter

**Pruning:**

Young shoots or candles can grow very large in spring. Strong candles can be pinched back to almost a third, weaker candles are best left untouched. In autumn strong buds can be removed in favour of weaker ones.

**Repotting:**

Saves time in spring; some prefer to repot late August or early September. Pines live in symbiosis with root fungus (mycorrhizae) so always leave a part of the original soil. Use well draining soil like Akadama 50 % and Kiryu 50%.

**Watering:**

Try not to over water pines, but don't let the soil dry out completely. Water thoroughly and monitor daily. If your water is too hard try to avoid tap water using rain water instead.

**Wiring:**

Pines are easy to wire and very tolerant. Best time to wire is autumn until the early spring when the buds start to develop.

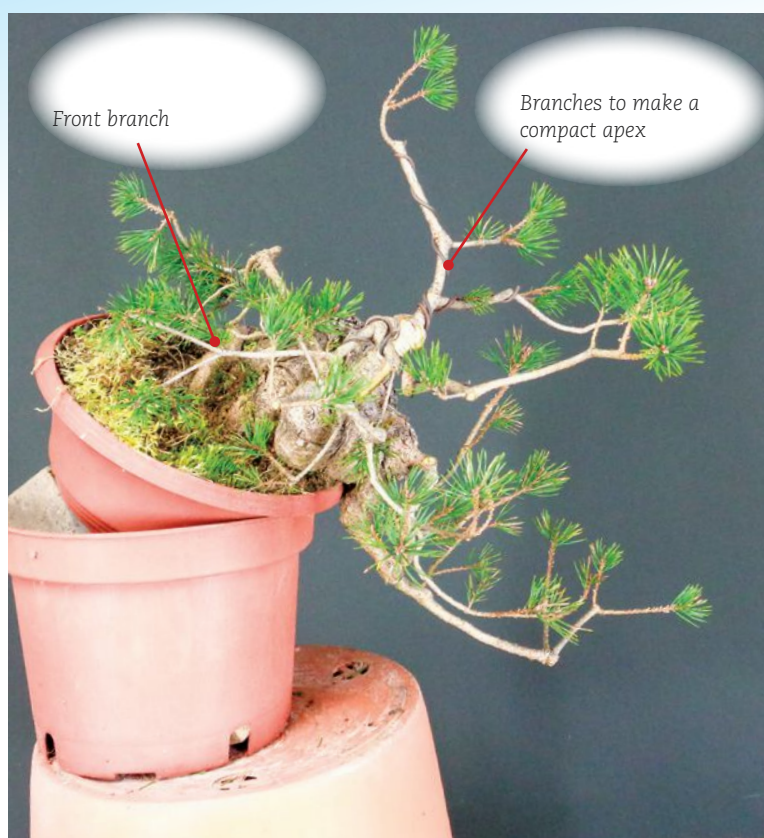


## 3

**The new front**

'I have chosen the front which shows the best movement in the trunk; it has an interesting root base, too. After wiring all major branches I can now concentrate on their positioning. During the wiring I still remove some branches that seem unnecessary. When pruning I learned that it's better to leave a few branches in place to see if they will prove useful during the wiring process.'

The very long branch at the top is wired and bent backwards in a curve to create a more compact apex



The new front: I tilted the tree to the side in order to give the lower branch an even steeper fall



The tree after wiring all the branches, some of which are already in position

**PINE - STYLES**

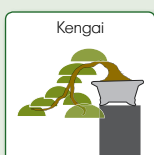
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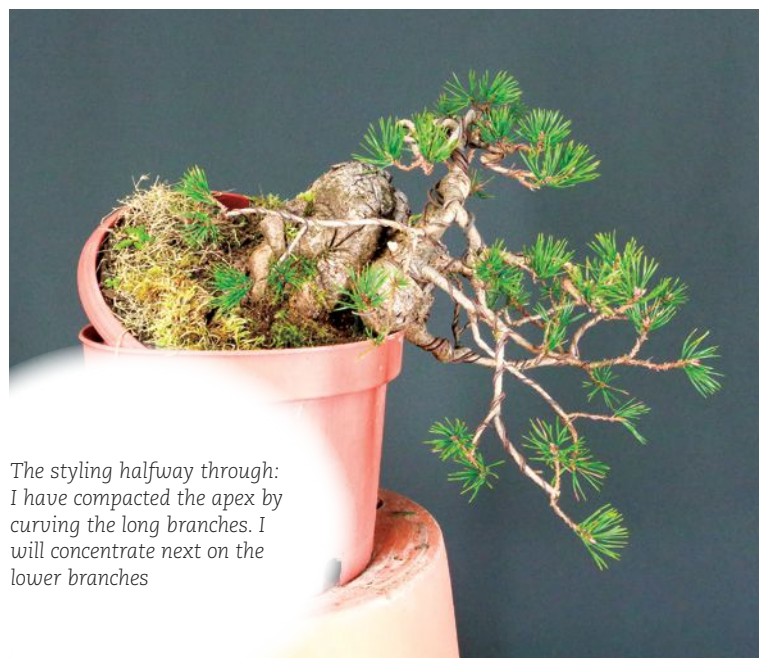
Bankan



Shakan



Kengai



The styling halfway through: I have compacted the apex by curving the long branches. I will concentrate next on the lower branches





## PINE - SPECIES

**Common name:**

Pine

**Genus:**

*Pinus*

**Higher taxon:**

*Pinaceae*

**Skill level:**

Beginner to advanced.

**Soil type:**

Medium rich, well draining,  
with 50% fine gravel or Kiryu

added to the mix.

**Flowers:**

Male are yellow, female red.  
In separate clusters on the  
young shoots in late spring to  
early summer.

**Fruit:** An egg-like cone that's  
green at start and ripens to  
brown.

**Foliage:**

Needle-like, depending on  
the variety, stout and slightly  
twisted, blue green to blue  
grey.

**Bark:**

Purple grey and it peels in  
irregular plates.



Removing the thick lower branch



Seen from the right side: I added a small shari to  
make the reverse top appear more tapered



Detail of the small shari to improve tapering

## Finally

'I have created a very compact tree. The foliage is very close to the trunk resulting in a trunk that looks more dominant and impressive. The long branch below, which was so obviously going to be the main cascading branch, now needs to go as it is too thick compared with the other finer branches.'

*The final result: The tree is planted  
in a computer generated pot*







# Bjorn to bonsai



PLAY VIDEO

Text and  
photography:  
Farrand Bloch

Bjorn is one of the major bonsai artists, travelling the world to demonstrate his skills; we were lucky to get him to come over for special work on this yew provided by Bonsai Plaza.

Bjorn: 'This yew, originating from Japan, has the typical bulky compact growth which makes it a difficult tree to style as it has a very straight lined trunk with some thick chunks. The challenge is to fix the faults and enhance all the good features, which include its impressive base, natural deadwood inside the tree and its abundance of very healthy branches.'

*Bjorn Bjorholm is back in our studio for a demo on a Japanese yew*







A very bushy yew which, on the first viewing, has only a very short straight trunk



Seen from the other side, the netting needs to be removed to get a clear view of the nebari

### Getting rid of some branches for a better view

Bjorn: I removed the front branch and some side branches at the right to see what was hidden — natural deadwood with a few hollows, too. This makes the tree interesting and after tilting it slightly the rather stiff appearance becomes far more elegant. Yannick Kiggen is assisting me to speed up the work.

These short branches are perfect to create a fine apex

Heavy upward growth will be cut back

I will remove the netting round the roots to get a better view of the base

Jins are made from the branch stumps

Work on the many thick stumps needs to be done







With chalk I am tracing where to make the extra shari



The extra shari will enhance the lines of the trunk



With a sharp knife I cut through the bark

If done correctly I can peel off the bark with the help of a chisel



Some parts haven't been cut through sufficiently so I need to cut even deeper



Removing all the bark and using the chisel to create a more rugged surface



Chiselling away the young wood to create a cavity which synchronises with the one that exists in the middle







A large piece comes off, reducing the stump by almost half

### The stumps

The stumps (A & B) at the back need some work, too. They are far too lumpy and thick. I use a large branch splitter to crack the wood and then tear off wood splints. The result should be a thinner piece of deadwood.



Seen from the back, stump (b) is even thicker



The result after splitting the side stump (a); it looks far better now.



To make the hollow slightly bigger I use a Makita to carve out the hollowed part further



Making some openings at the lower part of the big stump (b)



## More carving to do . . .



After adjusting both stumps, I get an overview of all the deadwood. The sharis I made on the left (c) need to blend in with the right-hand area which has those interesting hollows, giving the trunk an ancient feel.



So I use the Makita again to carve the freshly made shari



Hollowing it quite deeply . . .



. . . And then even deeper. I noticed this part of the trunk was hollow too



After carving work is finished I clean up the hollow with a copper brush



## Wiring the branches

Finally the carving work is done and I can now concentrate on the branches. The design of the tree will be a more horizontal outstretched style with some wide outspreading branches which really emphasize its shape. I will start by bringing the heavy back branches to the front to create the main branch.

At the back the branch forks into two large sections



Both parts are wrapped in raffia, then wired



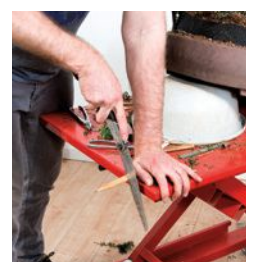
I use the base of the trunk as the anchoring point for the wire



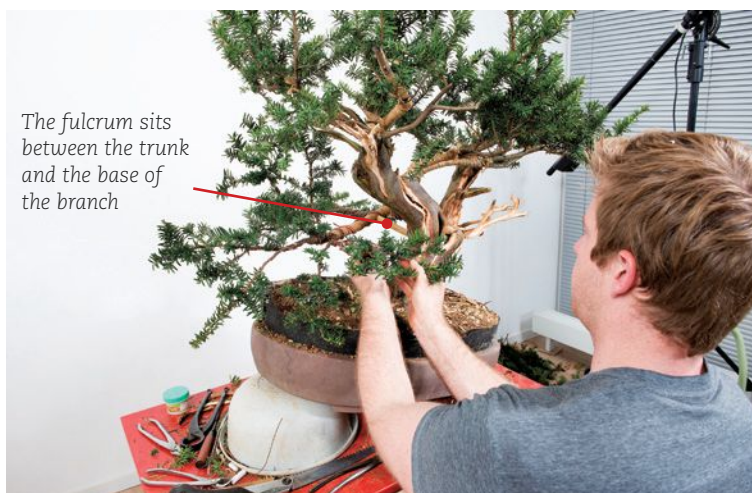
At the front I need to drill a screw into the base which will hold the guy wire



Applying the guy wire, it's attached to the screw and the branch



It is necessary to make a fulcrum to prevent the base of the branch from breaking while it's being bent



The fulcrum sits between the trunk and the base of the branch



I am bending the branch towards the front very carefully





### The main branch

Once the main branch has been set in the position I planned, I can work on wiring all smaller side branches which are quite a number. With Yannick's help this job is done quickly.

The left part of the branch is used to fill in the back space to create depth



The main branch is set, next are the branches (a) and (b) which will come over the side and front



Wiring the right branch (a); I anchor the wire to a jin at the back



It is then bent down to the back and fixed with a guy wire



It is brought down very steeply







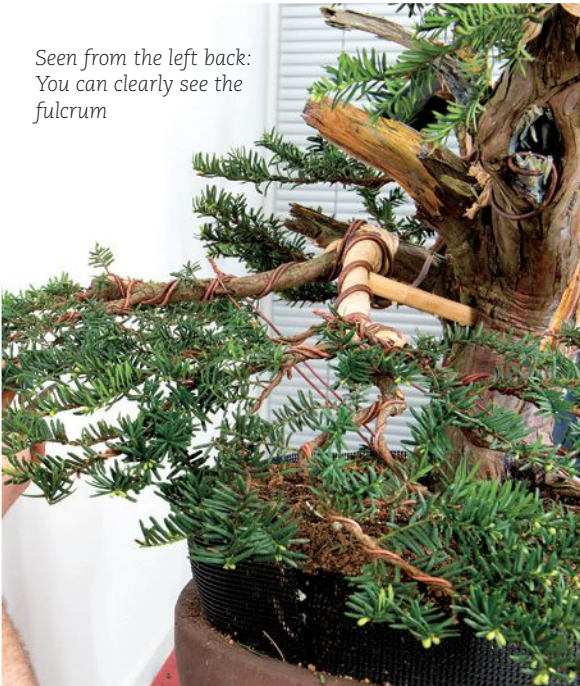
The foliage of the branch is lowered, filling up a gap at the right

### Working my way up

We're halfway through the job and while Yannick paints the deadwood with jin fluid. I can check out the positions of the branches that have been bent downwards.



Seen from the left back: You can clearly see the fulcrum



This branch is a tough one to bend

This branch will be bent down in a twist to cover the empty space below







Bjorn inspects the situation so far

## The branches at the top

The lower section of the tree is ready, all branches seem to blend together. The next stage is to do the same with the top branches; these should come down and therefore need some raffia. Then, with help of guy wires, I will bring them in position.



Strapping the guy wire while pulling the branch down



Then the small side branches are adjusted. Slowly the top part starts to blend in with the rest



The top has an ugly stump, so I adjust it with the splitting tool

The top branch is bent towards the left with a curve. I hold and push the branch while Yannick straps the guy wire



Now that the branch is in position I can create the apex





## Taking a short break

Working on a tree like this — or any tree — is a creative process. After finishing the tree we took a short break. When we went back to the studio I was not really satisfied with the result so far. Initially I planned the design to go to the left using the large branch to emphasise this. Now I think it's better to let the main movement go to the right and therefore shorten the main branch.



As you can see, I did not remove all of the back branch



The main branch works well, but blocks some of the view to the lower part of the trunk



The movement flows to the right

More emphasis on the heavy trunk

The second part of the back branch gives depth

After removing the main branch.  
(Pot is computer generated)







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# Omiya this is not . . .

*But if you take a train to the Showa Kinen Memorial Park, Tokyo, you'll discover great bonsai there, too*

Text and photography: Kinbon magazine, Japan

It has been 11 years since the bonsai garden was opened in the Showa Kinen Memorial Park which can be found in Tachikawa City, Tokyo. It consists of many famous trees donated by collectors and enthusiasts from across Japan. Now they have acclimatised to their new condition and improved under the man in charge of their daily care, Mr Hideo Suzuki

*Visitors strolling round the garden on an average afternoon would include many without links to bonsai, such as foreign tourists, young couples and small children*



## Showa Kinen Memorial Park Bonsai Garden

This exceptional quality display of more than 60 trees is just an hour's train ride from Tokyo. Covering an area of 750 square meters the display area is located in the Japanese Garden within the Park. The garden is split into areas that help visitors to learn about and to appreciate bonsai and see the outstanding examples which were donated to it from famous collections throughout Japan.

The Showa Kinen Memorial Park is open from 9.30 - 16.00h each day, admission fee 400 Yen which also covers entrance to the Bonsai Garden.



## Famous trees in the collection at the Showa Memorial Bonsai Garden

Although Tachikawa is part of Tokyo, it offers a slightly different environment, though not the ideal, cool conditions that spruces prefer. Ezo spruce is naturally found in wetlands with a cool location and high humidity. This makes looking after this incredibly famous masterpiece even more difficult. In order to keep it looking healthy and vigorous, Mr Suzuki calls on his experience of looking after trees indoors and the effectiveness of misting. In an indoor location where the air is dry, it's most essential to water Ezo spruce heavily from the apex, covering the foliage every day. If this is not done the foliage becomes weak and, in the worst cases, will drop. In the collection at the Showa Park, trees are watered heavily once a day, soaking to the core and misting the foliage throughout the day, depending on the dryness of the air.

Compare the Ezo spruce today to when it was donated by the son of the famous collector Mr Oguchi. In the photos you can clearly see just how much effort has gone into preserving it in what is for spruce an unfriendly environment.

When on display, water is spread across the shallow concrete basin it is standing in. The warmth of the sun evaporates the water, causing localised high humidity and a drop in temperature. Due to this level of care and detail, the foliage on the tree is tight and healthy



As it was donated.  
Height 78 cm / 30¾"  
Pot: Rectangular Shidei  
Donated by Mr Kenichi Oguchi  
of Okaya City, Nagano



Ezo Spruce, registered important bonsai masterpiece



The tree in Showa 9 (1934)



The tree in Showa 12 (1937)

Much of the daily work is done in situ, such as defoliation or shoot pinching. Here Mr Suzuki is removing the leaves from the hornbeam







### Five needle pine

Originally collected from the Fukushima area, this has been grafted to change the foliage. Although the needle length at the time of donation was great, two years of strict watering have reduced the needle length even further and it now looks like a Yatsubusa type. Whilst Mr Suzuki was in charge of the Takagi



Tree at time of donation. Height: 55 cm / 21¾" Pot: Japanese rectangle  
Donated by Mr Masaru Hasaka of Murata, Miyagi Prefecture



collection, much the same thing happened to the clump style Nasu white pine, known originally as 'Isshou no Matsu', later renamed 'Meiko' — more evidence of Mr Suzuki's experience and horticultural skill.



### Black pine

Along with needle juniper, black pine is a species that can be difficult to grow successfully in the Kanto Area. As time has passed, however, the main character branch has become full and developed, the trunk has thickened and the aged character of the bark has been improved making this a beautiful example of a formal upright black pine. It is worth noting that black pine, needle juniper and *Prunus mume* are all species that enjoy a lot of fertiliser.



Tree at time of donation.  
Height: 82 cm / 32¼" Pot: modern Chinese rectangle.  
Donated by Mr Masayuki Fujio





## Needle juniper

A hard species to grow well in the Kanto area, but comparing the current tree with the picture at the time of donation, the foliage is now dense and in need of refinement. Mr Suzuki tells us that if he doesn't know something then he will ask an expert. 'The embarrassment of asking lasts only a moment, but that of a dead tree lasts a lifetime.' In this case, he consulted his late colleague, Mr Kihachirou Kamiya of Kihachi-en, Aichi Prefecture. Both men had been through similar hardships in their careers and were able to hit it off and share their knowledge.

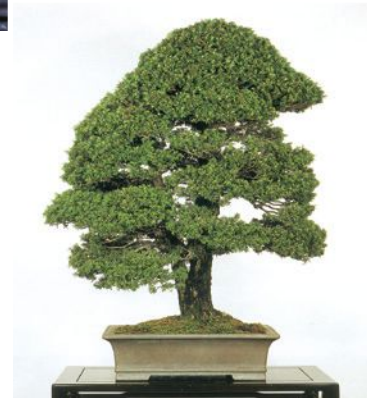


Tree at time of donation: Height 94 cm / 37" Pot: Japanese Rectangle (Seizan). Donated by Mr Kaoru Koizumi of Odawara City, Kanagawa Prefecture



## Hemlock

At the time of donation, the outline was a little on the large and heavy side; this has been lightened with some branch and foliage removal. Some light can now be seen through the foliage, which now gives the impression of a massive tree.



At time of donation. Height: 85 cm / 33½" Pot: Modern Chinese rectangle. Donated by Ms Fujiko Ueda

The collection is displayed on special plinths. Many of the trees are rotated throughout the year to give a sense of the season, especially the shohin and accent plants







Tree at time of donation.  
Height: 82 cm / 32 1/4". Pot:  
White glazed cochin ware  
Donated by: Mr Reiji Takagi of  
Setagaya, Tokyo

## Chinese quince

Mr Suzuki was headhunted due to his experience of working as manager of the Takagi Collection. At that time Mr Takagi was also asked by the Bonsai Association if he would donate a tree. His response was, 'Choose whatever you want'.

In all honesty, that was the hardest thing he could have said. Obviously the new collection would love to receive a famous tree. If they were too greedy, however, he would be upset and they didn't want to do that to a man to whom they were very grateful. They eventually decided on this tree as there were no fruiting trees in the collection at the time. 'Perhaps you could have gone for one of the top trees,' Mr Suzuki commented with a smile.

## Miyasama trident maple

### A registered important masterpiece

A truly top class masterpiece tree by anyone's standard. The previous pot was a little on the small side and so it was moved into a slightly larger and more stable pot. It has a wonderful, deep character, especially in this season



Tree at time of donation. Height: 90 cm / 35 1/4" Pot: Modern Rinka Style  
Donated by Mr Akira Tsukada, Mashiko,  
Tochigi Prefecture



## Japanese maple 'Seigen'

Among the many varieties of Japanese maple, Seigen has beautiful scarlet red shoots in the spring, a bewitching colour and is very popular. This tree is one of the most important, well known examples of the variety and is Mr Suzuki's favourite. 'I love the shape and structure.' Sadly, due to location, the timing and duration of opening new shoots has become very short. It has also suffered from the age old problem of unknown branch death, whereby for no good reason an important branch can just die. As the new shoots start to develop, they turn black and just die off; there is no cure and it does not spread to other branches. The tree has been healthy recently, but Mr Suzuki worries every spring as new shoots develop.



*Tree at time of donation  
Height: 105 cm / 41¼"  
Pot: White glazed cochin  
ware. Donated by Mr Muto  
Masayasu, Tokyo, Higashi  
Kurume City*



*Tree at time of donation. Height: 56 cm /  
22" Pot: Japanese oval  
Donated by Mr Sakuma of Hino City,  
Tokyo*

## Gardenia

Due to repeated pruning and growing out of new shoots, the foliage density has improved compared with the time of donation, making this one of the best examples of the species. It has a large number of flowers that are a wonderful sight in early summer, although it rarely makes fruit.







## Korean hornbeam

At the time of donation the pot was a little on the small size compared with the thickness of the trunk. The health of the tree soon deteriorated and so it was planted into a wooden box in order to regain some vigour. Hornbeam tends to hold on to its leaves for some time into the winter although this tree loses them by the end of the year making it ideal for a winter image



Tree at the time of donation. Height: 70 cm / 27½" Pot: Japanese oval (Harumatsu). Donated by Mr Seiichi Suzuki of Kawaguchi, Saitama Prefecture

to display the importance of cutting back the trunk to develop taper and movement early in the development of the tree



Tree at time of donation. Total Height 100 cm / 39¼". Artificial Kurama Stone. Donated by Mr Reiji Suzuki of Hachioji, Tokyo

## Five needle pine

The nebari of the main tree hides beneath the soil. Despite transplanting the tree to repair a crack in the rock, it was impossible to expose the nebari. The planting angle and position was changed slightly. The 'Saotome' azalea at the base of the tree has started to flower in recent years.

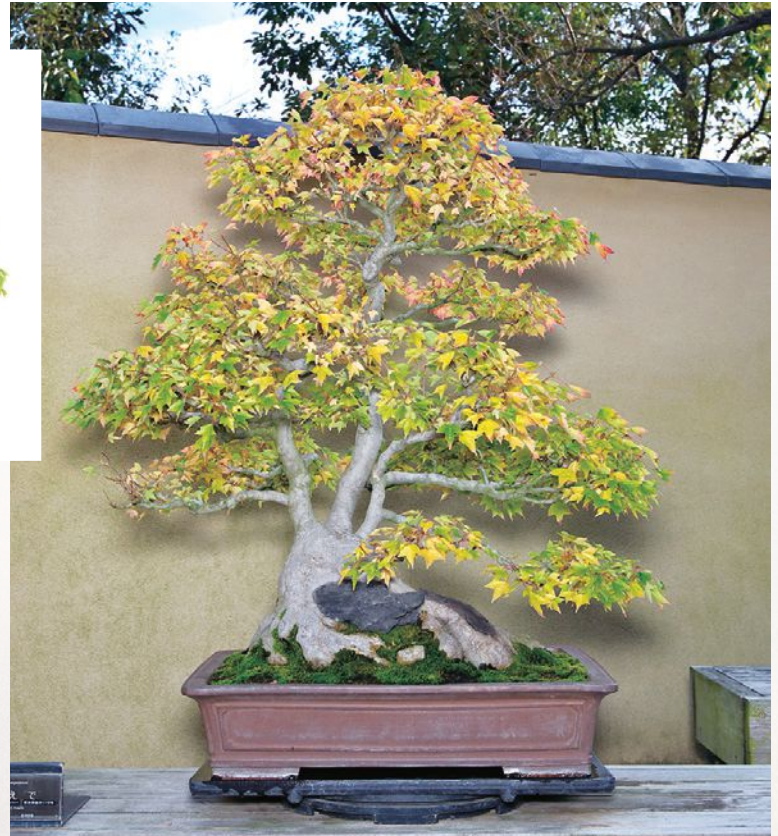


## Trident maple on rock

An old tree enveloping a rock has the delicate fine ramification which can only come through repeated and careful defoliation, giving it an aged appearance.



Tree at time of donation. Height: 88 cm / 34¾" Pot: Japanese rectangle  
Donated by Mr Katsuo Kagaya of Sumida, Tokyo



## Japanese maple.

A branch in the centre of the right side of the tree just died for no reason and so the branches around are being grown and manipulated slowly to fill the space.



Tree at time of donation. Height: 78 cm / 30¾" Pot: Japanese Oval (Koyo). Donated by Mr Taishi Satou of Yamagata City, Yamagata Prefecture

At the entrance there is a workshop-cum-information centre in which a tokonoma has been built. On display is the rare Houki Mayumi (Euonymus sieboldianus var. fastigiatus)





# A larch too ordinary

François Jeker analyses the larch of Didier Weiss



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.

## European larch

The larch (*Larix decidua*) has a special place in the world of bonsai.

In spring, it produces vibrant green opening buds and offers golden yellow autumn colours, but the best season for a larch is winter without its needles. Then, the tree is at its most vulnerable and reveals its soul.

That means that you can't cheat with a larch, because one can see it immediately. That is why larches require the utmost thoroughness in the styling process.

## Analysis

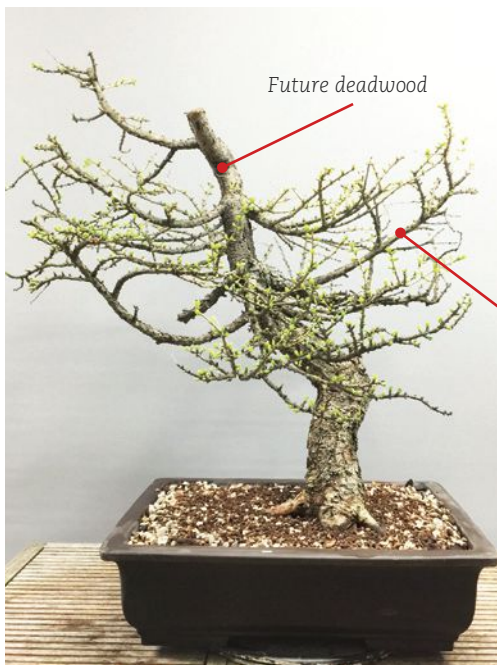
At the moment, this tree is too well behaved, too ordinary. Maybe too much! The trunk shows little strong movement, has a light taper and many long branches. These are the features of a calm, low altitude tree.

It is, however, a tree collected from the mountain heights. To get the most from its potential, you need to eliminate long branches, create a tenjin, select a lower and well-ramified branch to create a new apex and give more movement, taper,

Opposite side



compactness, and avoid its present 'good boy' appearance.



Correct face with a larger, more spreading nebari



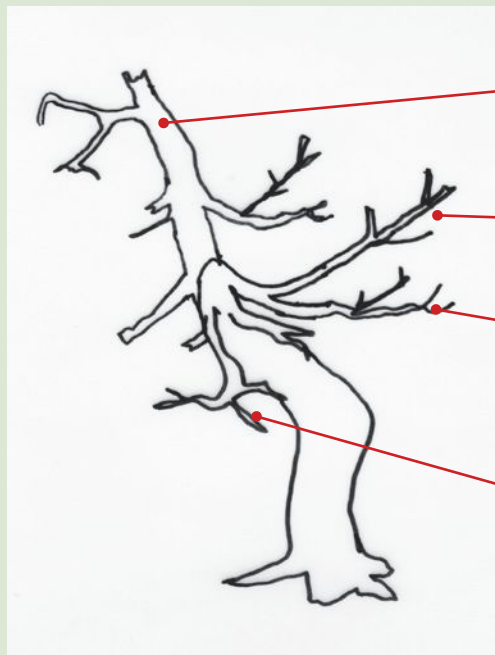
Side view

## Details

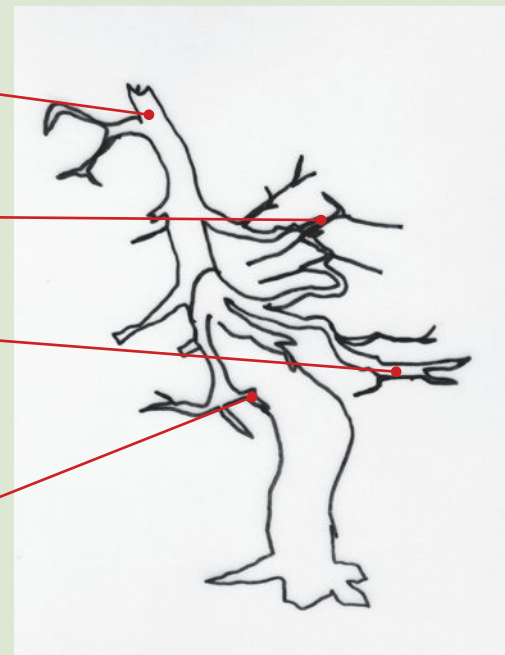
European Larch (*Larix decidua*)

Owner: Didier Weiss  
Yamadori collected in the French Alps, 2014.  
Height: 70 cm / 27½"  
Trunk diameter: 11 cm / 4¼"  
Estimated age: 60 years





After a drastic pruning



After wiring



The ideal pot will be as discreet as possible: same colour as the bark and extreme simplicity in its shape in order to obtain a strong contrast with the tree's movement.

### 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](mailto:editor@bonsaifocus.com)

### Aesthetic choices

As the tree has been reduced in height, the trunk appears more powerful. The downwards angle of the selected branch, which became the new apex, and the powerful jin pointing to the sky are creating a strong graphic break, and they also give this larch an energetic movement.

Please note that if the trunk is left oriented, the green masses are mostly towards the right. Therefore, the beauty of this bonsai increases in elegance and movement.



# Dominant Root Syndrome

*Want to know what to do after layering your tree and how to deal with messy roots? All it needs is post-layer maintenance*

Text and photography: Ofer Grunwald

Ok, I've layered my tree. Now what can I do to get the most from it? Anyone who works with nursery material knows the following scenario all too well — you have a tree with a fantastic trunk and great potential, but the roots are a jumbled mess. They coil over one another, around, over and under the trunk, generally making you question why on earth you ever decided to buy the tree in the first place

With deciduous and broad-leaved trees (and especially when working towards a 'big-tree-in-a-field' design) the trunk base and nebari are of immense importance. They are the foundation that gives the whole composition its visual stability. The flaring trunk and spreading root system are the visual clues that create that sense of a larger-than-life tree.

*The start of a second growing season after layering. A classic example of DRS — this root was so strong that it pushed itself out of the ground.*



## Surface roots

Because those surface roots are so vital, and because they tend to be depressingly bad in nursery material, we are often recommended to 'just layer it'. There is certainly no shortage of articles on how to airlayer a trunk and what the new radial roots should look like, but what happens then? What happens after the tree starts growing on its new root system?

So the good news first — even if you do nothing more, the new radial root system is going to do wonders for the tree. Over the next few years, you will see those roots start to pull out the trunk base and create fantastic basal flare that really adds character to your composition. But if you really want to maximize the benefits of that new root system, there are a few additional maintenance tasks you should do in the first couple of years; and a few things to watch out for.



*Ficus from the Jerusalem Botanical Gardens Collection. The trunk and branch system gives us a good start, but the future design will need a much better visual foundation. The tree was airlayered in 2012*



*Airlayer method with bark removed in a ring; the ring is left in place to stop callusing and force the tree to make new roots. Rooting powder is applied, then sphagnum moss, held in place with a bag*

## The so-called 'syndrome'

First, and most important, is to appreciate that the tree will usually choose two or three roots, and push most of its energy into them. Let's call this Dominant Root Syndrome (or DRS). DRS is what caused that nasty original root system and, if left untreated, can cause it again. Dominant roots will quickly find the confines of a training pot to be quite limiting, and will start running wildly around the pot, or push from the ground in impressive arcs. All the while, those other radial roots you worked so hard on will remain small and





On the other side of the trunk, we see several strong DRS roots running wild. These are drawing energy away from the other roots and preventing an even, spreading nebari



At the back of the trunk, the arching root has been removed. The other radial roots can now grow evenly and create basal flare in the trunk



At the front of the tree, the arrows indicate areas where DRS roots have either been pruned back hard, or else eliminated completely

Closer up, you see the weaker roots that will now grow stronger and improve the trunk base even further

their ability to create dramatic trunk flare will be very limited.

Another common issue is for several roots to grow out of more or less the same point on the circumference of the trunk, but at different heights and at different angles. If you really want to maximize the base flair-inducing potential of the new root system, it is very important for the new roots to all be more or less at the same height on the trunk and for them to grow fairly horizontally.

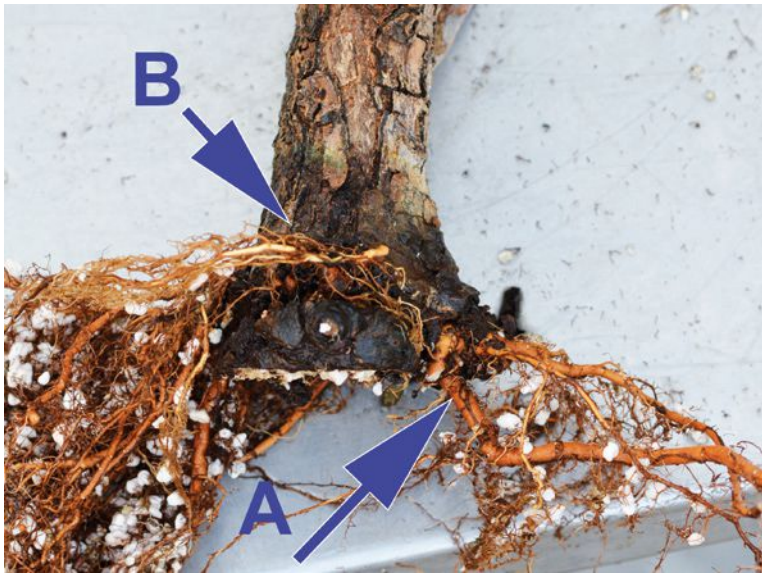


The same Ficus in July 2015 after defoliation and styling session; you can see the dramatic effect the new roots have on the trunk. It is already creating excellent flare and good nebari, which will provide visual stability and interest in the future



Elm (Zelkova), layered a couple of years ago, has now developed a fine outspread of roots. Bonsai by Bruno Wijman





Root A is a dominant root that is growing down almost vertically below the trunk. Above it, we see a horizontal root growing out of the same point. Also note Roots B, which are growing higher on the trunk than the other roots



Root A has been removed, keeping just the horizontal roots. This will maximize basal flare in the coming years. Roots B are kept for now and will be removed after additional roots are grafted (see next picture)



Note this ideal outspreading root system of a root grafted elm (Zelkova) by Bruno Wijman



Sometimes layering can result in a very one-sided root system. In this case, two new roots will be grafted in the spring in the places indicated. This extra step is extremely important to have a balanced, even root spread

Both finely balanced, the root system and branch setting come together



Another example of a very dominant root on the left





## Not that good

Finally, sometimes you will find that the results of layering aren't that good. You might get only one or two dominant roots; or you can find that one side has lots of strong new roots, while the other has very few weak ones. At this point, it might be necessary to intervene and graft another root or two to even out the root spread. It means a bit of extra effort, but is definitely worth doing!

## Future character

The first few years of growth on the new root system are critical for the future character of the tree. It is important to watch out for overly dominant roots and to either prune them back or remove them. Roots growing at different heights or at non-horizontal angles should be pruned out. And remember that it might actually be necessary to graft another root or two. This extra effort and care will create a beautiful, even radial root system that will yield dramatic flaring at the base of the trunk, giving a solid foundation on which to build your future bonsai.

## Check list for grafting



Essential tools and necessities for grafting:

- Root powder
- Sphagnum moss
- Grafting knife
- Chisel
- Grafting tape
- A small plastic bag in which to wrap the graft
- A syringe to add water to the graft



Thread grafting is a very advanced technique and can improve a poor root base, as shown here



It takes almost three years, but after that there is no evidence of it having been grafted. If given some good after care and loose soil, fine roots should develop very rapidly



This beech (*Fagus*) needs to be airtlayered to improve its root base



Ideal dome shaped crown and root base of a Japanese elm (*Zelkova serrata*)





# The hollow tree

*Improving a spindle tree by Ralf Beckers*

Text and photography: Ralf Beckers

**At first sight you wouldn't think that the spindle tree is suitable for bonsai at all. It is native to Europe, has a natural growth of 2 - 6 meters and takes quite a few years before it develops its characteristic corky bark**

## Analysing the tree



The situation before the adjustment work started

At the base there is a small hollow

Side branch is growing very straight

Some ugly roots that I will address later



A large wound at the top

The unwieldy growth, its long shoots and the almost invisible flowers do not add any joy in spring. Even its long shoots with large internodes and fluffy leaves don't look very attractive in the first weeks. By summer, the spindle tree becomes more attractive and after the first pruning the internodes grow shorter and the leaves smaller. Early in autumn the leaves start to change colour, turning the entire tree into an intense red as a reward for the patience shown to it in spring.

## Not interested

It was in spring 2014 that I acquired this approximately 20 year old spindle tree through a tree swap. It didn't really grab



The future image of the 'father and son' as I see it

The cut is just behind this side branch



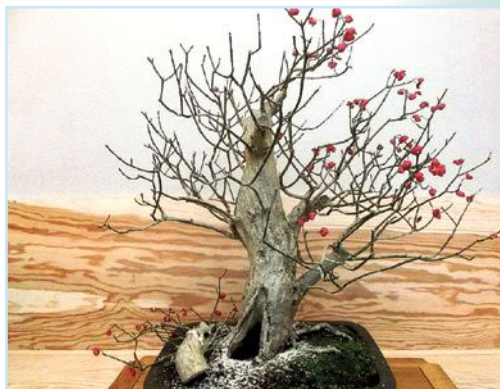
The top part is being reduced with help of a saw.



carefully cutting through the wood

my interest at first. It wasn't in a very healthy state. Spindle trees don't like dry roots and need lots of feeding, too. The root ball was hard as stone and the tree had no significant growth in recent years. Some top branches had died and work was needed urgently. The tree should not require a total style makeover, rather a





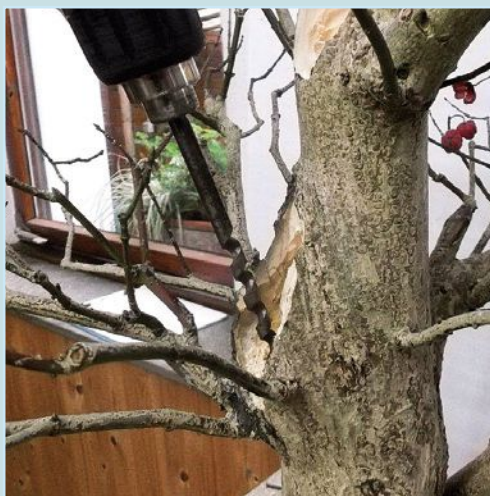
The result after removing some from the top



Seen from the right side there is another ugly wound



The solution is to make use of the wounds and hollow out the tree



Then with a fine drill I manage to connect the hollows together



Connecting the hollow with the one at the base.



The situation halfway



Using a fine bit to smoothen the hollows surface

correction of its faults and improvement to the branch setting. The aim was to create the image of a natural tree similar to those old forest beeches.

### Better shape

Seen from the side I noticed that the top branches were pruned back very strongly, which caused unsightly thickening. I wanted to improve the total shape of the trunk and so I decided to shorten it by 10 cm / 4". I chose a new top branch and

then removed the upper part. Because large wounds like these don't heal very fast I decided instead to make a hollow with a carving machine. It was painted with Indian ink to darken it and make it look older. This gave it a far more natural look than the jin fluid normally used for conifers. I used some Vaseline to cover the surface of the hollow to stop it from drying out and also to discourage harmful fungi.

## EUONYMUS - HUSBANDRY



### Propagate:

Easy to propagate from cuttings and by layering.



### Placement:

Needs good light, but do not scorch it or let it freeze. Provide light shade in hot weather.

### Pruning:



Older branches: prune in autumn or before the new growth in spring. New growth is pinched back to two or three leaves. Always allow the growth to become well developed before pruning. Be careful not to prune too much. Seal pruning cuts. Remove all suckers promptly.

### Repotting:

As a young plant, repot the spindle tree yearly; every other year, or less often for ageing plants.



### Watering:

Water the spindle tree well. It is important that it never dries out, even in dormancy.



### Wiring:

The winged bark makes the branches extra brittle, so great care must be taken in bending the limbs. Never wire directly over the winged ridges as this will fracture or break off the bark. The best period to wire is in June. Use aluminium wire.



## Adjusting the lower side branch



To give more movement to the side branch it is split with a branch or root splitter



The opening is slowly increased by using a wedge



Then both parts are wrapped in raffia and wired and carefully bent

## Father and son

Another problem to take care of is the lower right branch, a very long branch which had no tapering at all. Halfway along it divides itself into two separate branches. It looks more like a stick with leaves than a beautiful sashi-eda (main branch). If I had removed the branch it would've ended up with a symmetrical apex, so I had to deal with the branch and look for a solution. I decided to split the branch in two. By doing so, I created a leaner upward growing branch with a horizontally growing side branch. The image of a Father and Son style came to mind so I made a sketch illustrating my plans. All the smaller side branches can be wired easily and positioned.

was slightly disappointing since it only made new leaves at the tips. By summer, though, it developed more side buds and shoots. The tree will fully recover over the coming years and eventually start to thrive abundantly.



The situation after wiring and trying to improve the branch setting of the tree



Detail of the left side with the hollowed trunk

## The roots

The following year I concentrated on the root ball and planted the tree in a dark blue pot. The colour of the pot will enhance the red leaves. The new growth



The typical corky bark of the spindle tree

## EUONYMUS - SPECIES

**Common name:**  
Winged spindle tree

**Genus:**  
*Euonymus*

**Higher taxon:**  
Celastraceae

**Skill level:**  
Beginner to advanced.

**Soil type:**  
Medium rich, well draining, with 50% fine gravel added to

the mix.

**Flowers and fruit:**  
The green to purplish flowers are small and inconspicuous. The flowers are borne on the undersides of the branches at the nodes and are followed by open-capsuled, small orange fruit.

**Foliage:**  
Elliptic to ovate or lanceolate.

Tapered, pointed and finely toothed. It turns red in the autumn.

**Bark:**  
Fascinating corky ridges of bark on its branches and twigs. The wings are very brittle and need very careful handling.



## Repotting the tree



The situation before repotting in spring 2015. There are some big ugly roots visible on the surface



The very compacted root ball



The root ball has been reduced by almost a third, I have shortened the heavy roots and the thick roots on the surface are cut off



In its new pot, using the thick roots to anchor it

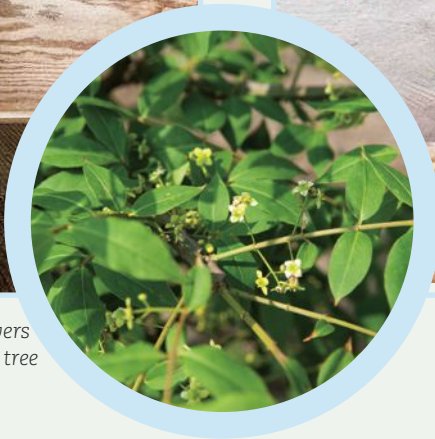


The improved root base after repotting



The tree, spring 2016

The small flowers of the spindle tree



The tree, April 2016



# Split in two

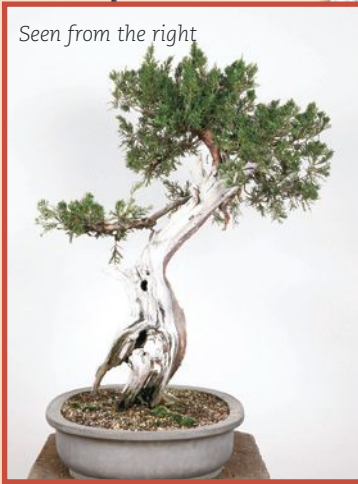
*Using an electric saw to improve a bonsai*

Text and photography: Kinbon magazine, Japan

Take a look at Yoshihiko Moriyama's first transformation job after studying under Masahiko Kimura



Seen from the right

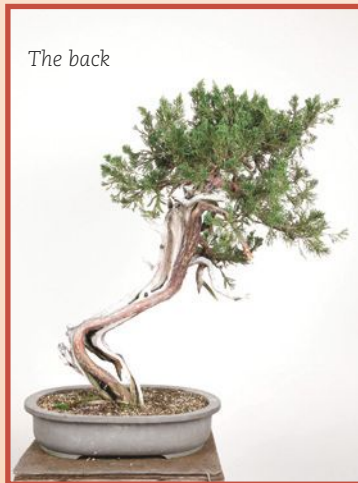


**How to remove the deadwood from the live vein**

Seen from the left



The back



Front before work. Height: 77 cm / 30 3/4" Width: 60 cm / 23 3/4"



After completing a full apprenticeship under Mr Kimura, the young Yoshihiko Moriyama has returned to his home in Fukuoka and this is the first time we have been able to document his skills. The material he will be working on was found by his father and while it could

be created into a literati style tree without too much difficulty, we were worried when we first saw the material that it would be of little challenge and would not show off his skills to the maximum. It was not the most impressive piece we had ever seen. Surely, having worked

and participated in many trunk bending transformations with Mr Kimura he would have picked up something . . . The first work was on 2nd December 2014, with the final photoshoots taken on 5th October 2015. Now we can take a look at the results.





The new front after tilting the tree



The branches in the upper section of the tree can easily be created into a literati style tree without any major difficulties

The shari in the lower trunk is the main character point on the tree. How will this be used in the final design?



The live vein is separated using an electric saw

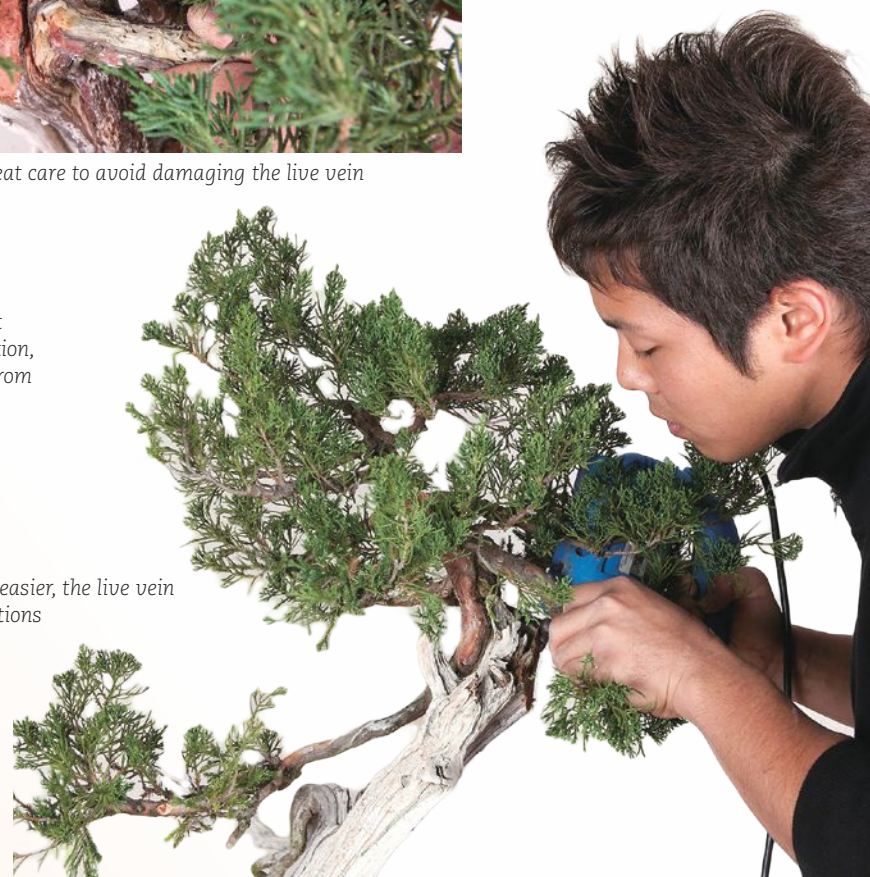


The saw is used with great care to avoid damaging the live vein

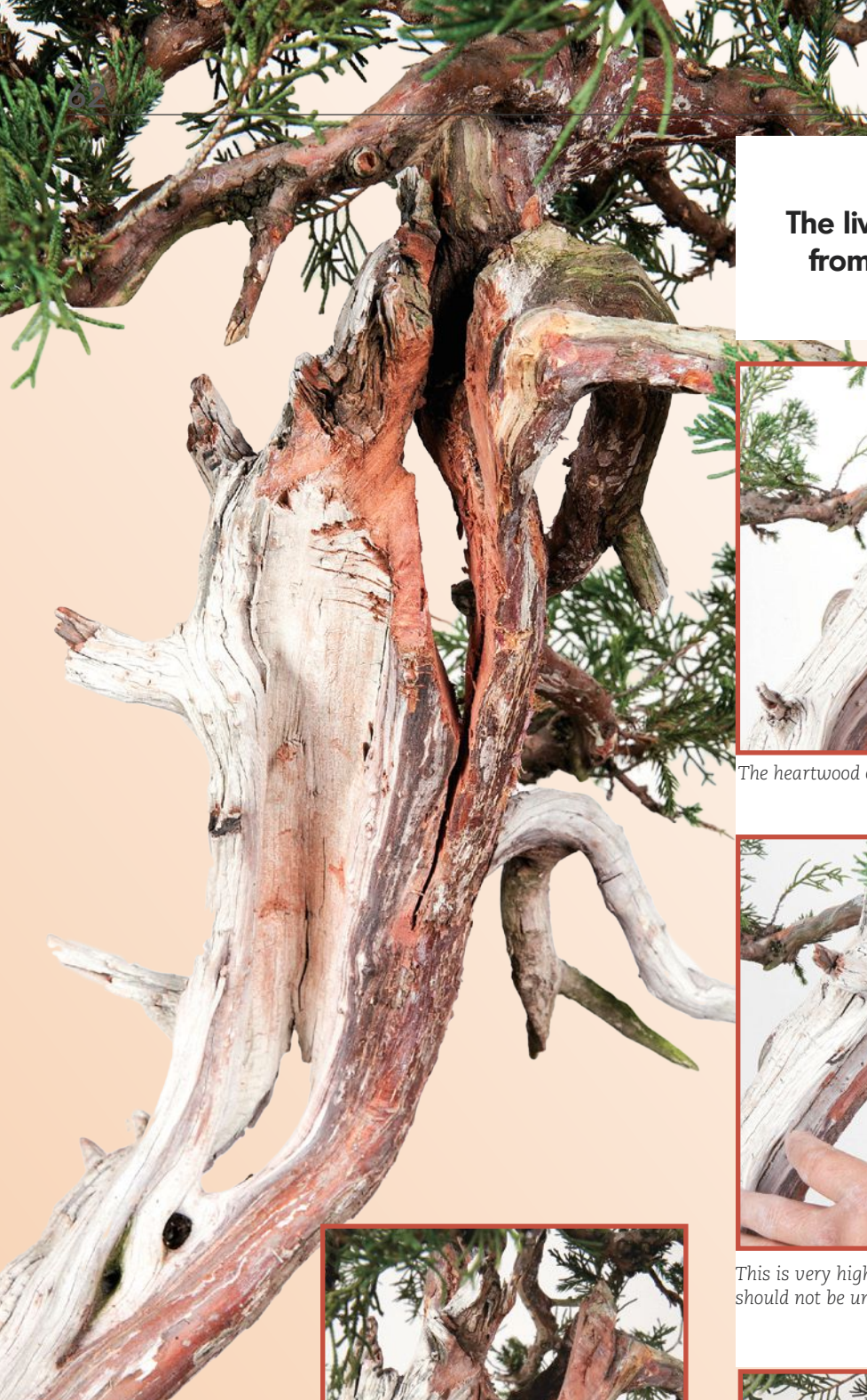


To ensure the blade doesn't cut through the wrong section, Yoshihiko's father checks from the other side

To make the bend easier, the live vein is cut into two sections







**The live vein is separated from the shari without damage!**



The heartwood of the live vein is carved away



This is very high risk work. Please be aware that this should not be undertaken without full understanding



A small wooden block is inserted to give greater access to the back of the live vein

**Removing the heartwood from the two live veins to make bending easier**

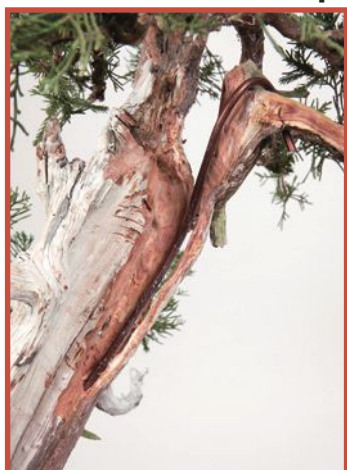


The section to be bent is carved so that it is as thin as possible without damaging the live vein





### Preparing to bend, protecting with raffia



A piece of aluminium wire is placed on the spine of the live vein



Raffia is wrapped around the live vein and wire, pressing them tightly together



The second, thicker live vein has two pieces of thick aluminium wire placed along the spine



Raffia is then wrapped around the thicker live vein in the same way



A screw is placed into the lower trunk area to use as an anchor point for guy wires

### Preparations have been made, the trunk is ready for the dramatic bend. How far will it go?

Size 6 copper wire is now wrapped on top of the raffia, with the live vein held securely to stop it from twisting

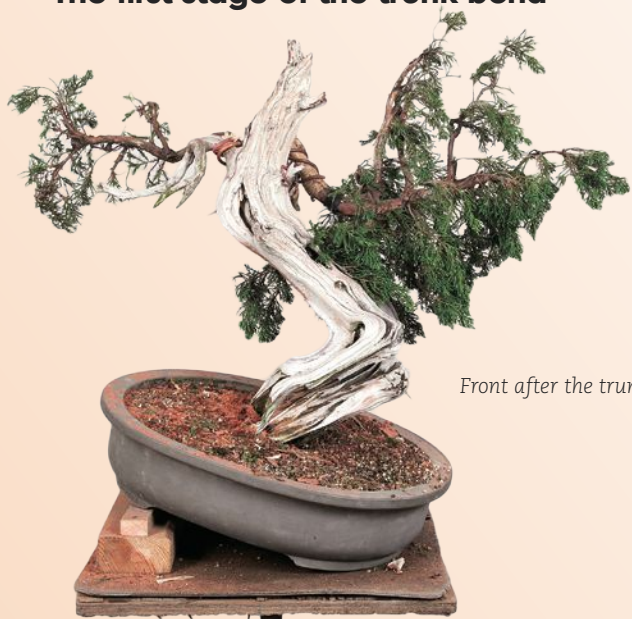


Young Yoshihiko Moriyama is bending, checking the bend with his hands. Meanwhile his father pulls the tension through on the guy wire to hold it in place





## The first stage of the trunk bend



Front after the trunk bend

The heartwood is removed while paying great attention to the direction of the live vein. In this case, no aluminium is used on the spine, just raffia and then size 8 wire

After bending the thick branches.



The back

## Second stage of trunk bending: Lowering the back branch

The final branch needs to be bent around 90 degrees. In order to do so, the heart of the branch is removed



It is not certain that this branch will be required, but it is kept initially in case another branch should die



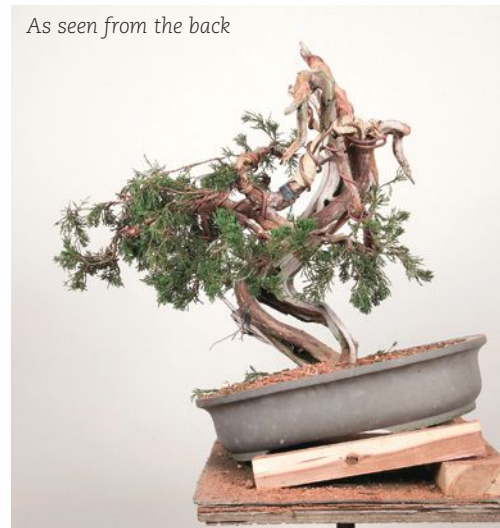
Front after rough wiring and styling



As seen from right



As seen from the back



The back after initial styling



As seen from the front: Height: 51 cm / 20"  
Width: 54 cm / 21¼"

The trunk bending has moved the foliage much closer to the lower trunk section where the interesting shari is the main character point of the tree. This was very dangerous and challenging work for this young man who has a bright future

## A defiant challenge built on repeated experience

One year after the initial styling, two out of the three live veins have been removed to leave just the one thick trunk. One of the smaller ones died approximately two months after the initial work and the other was removed as it was unnecessary. The branches were rearranged slightly and the tree continued on its path.

Yoshihiko Moriyama has now finished his apprenticeship and the work he has shown here is certainly a testament to his skill and ability. That he continually worked on the tree, removing some of the shari lower down in order to reveal the live vein in the lower trunk is evidence of his quest for perfection.

We are certain that this has been a great experience for him and we predict that a bright future awaits him as a bonsai professional.

The front approximately one year after the work: Height: 53 cm / 20¾" Width: 45 cm / 17¾" (Pot is computer generated.) The extra branch and the thin branch that was bent down with just a small tuft of foliage, have both been turned into jin as the main trunk has not only survived, but thrived. The foliage pads are starting to fill out and the outline to form. The trunk line and character of the shari are shown at their best







*Myrtus communis*  
Domenico Lamberti - Arborea



*Carpinus coreana*  
Kei Bonsai Kai





*Pinus mugo*  
Jean Paul Polmans





*Juniperus chinensis*  
Teunis Jan Klein

Photo: Bonsai Focus Studio



*Juniperus sabina*  
Marcelo Michelotti





*Juniperus rigida*  
Bruno VDP Kei Bonsai Kai





## Demonstrators

### Japanese Bonsai Artists



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KIMURA  
NIPPON BONSAI ASSOCIATION,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



HIROSHI  
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WORLD BONSAI FRIENDSHIP FEDERATION,  
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IMAI



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KENJI  
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ISAO  
OMACHI



TAKASHI  
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MITSUO  
MATSUDA

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AFRICA  
HANNES FRITZ



INDIA  
JYOTI & NIKUNJ PAREKH



CHINA  
ZHAO QINGQUAN



ASIA PACIFIC  
MICHAEL SIOW CHEE LONG



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# The 8th WORLD BONSAI CONVENTION

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CITY

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Shinpaku Juniper

## 2017 April 27(Thu)-30(Sun)

### Main Venue

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**Omiya Sonic City**  
**Palace Hotel Omiya**

### Sub Venue

**Musashi Ichinomiya Hikawa-jinja Shrine**  
**The Omiya Bonsai Art Museum, Saitama**  
**Omiya Bonsai Village**

### ■ Host

The 8th World Bonsai Convention Executive Committee  
(Executive Agency: Nippon Bonsai Association)

### ■ Co-host

**Saitama City**



# Sweet seventies

*A 40-year-old larch forest was created by Armando Dal Col in 1975*

Text and photography: Armando Dal Col

**I have always loved larches. They are without doubt the conifer I most enjoy and find the way they change during the passing seasons very exciting. I repotted this larch planting 40 years after its first creation**

I created this forest in 1975 with larches of differing heights, placing them on a stone slab and styling them partially. In the last 40 years they have never been repotted, but I've always fertilized them, pinched the branches and continued to style them to turn it into a bunjin forest. I also used guy wires to add movement to the composition.

During my mountain excursions I had collected some dead larches without bark that showed the wood whitened by the action of wind and snow. Some of these trees will be added to the forest making it look older, more natural and wild.

The slab was starting to look too small to contain all the roots that, by now, needed more room and fresh soil. At this

point Haina, my wife, and I decided to change the slab for a bigger one and face up to the delicate repotting. Some trees, especially those on the left, had extended their roots in the air, since the forest was placed on an old cable drum I found in a junkyard and that I used as a stand for the forest.

Unfortunately, during a three day period when we away from home in July 2015, a tree on the left had suddenly died. The drought over those long hot days had weakened the tree and killed it.

The distinctive look of this larch forest is down to the dead plants lying on the ground on the left hand side, which make you think of adverse natural events. Larches on the Dolomites, with their powerful trunks covered with thick bark, often have mutilated branches, a sign of the mysterious forces of nature. They



October 1975. We started to create a small forest on a stone slab. We chose some trees sown in 1960 and others, differing in height and age, that were cultivated in polystyrene boxes



Creating the curb made with clay soil that will keep the water from washing away the soil





April 1980. Some of the trees weren't used since they were too big and more likely to be styled as single bonsai



Above: The larch forest in 1989 when Haina was cutting the mosses for the landscape.  
Below: Detail of the dead and live trees



May 1986. To emphasize the image of the forest, three dead larches I found on the mountains were added to the composition, looking as if they had always been there

are superb giants that colonize the rocky sides of the mountains, challenging ages of snow and ice, lightning, thunderbolts and extreme temperatures.

When a larch dies it loses its bark and the bone coloured wood is revealed, showing how it was constantly hit by the wind. Those scraggy trees are also dramatic and fascinating to see when they start to rot, giving witness to ancient geological eras.

By looking at the sequence of the many pictures taken throughout the years, where the growth and transformation can clearly be appreciated, readers can

learn what has been done, mostly by Haina. On the new slab I added three new trees, making the composition look more harmonious and this is how it looked in spring 2015, with some final pictures taken in August 2016.

## GROWING - LARCH

### How can I easily transform a larch into a bonsai?

Since they are trees that grow at high altitudes, it's hard to cultivate larch on lowlands or close to the sea for a very simple reason: the small temperature variations between day and night during the summer through which they might not survive. This is why my advice is to set your larch directly above the grass line and in full sun, so the temperature range will be greater at night!

### Placement

Most enthusiasts place larches in a cool and shady area because they think that the trees won't suffer in this position. I did just the same, but after decades of experience growing bonsai I understood that the answer was given by nature! Where larches thrive in their natural habitat the temperature between day and night varies hugely and there are dry periods that the trees have to go through, especially those growing on rock. Despite the very harsh conditions, larches grow healthy and strong, with smaller needles. Trees in nature grow long roots so they can find the water even when they grow directly on rock or gravel. These extreme conditions are hard to replicate with a tree cultivated in a pot, because we can't let the roots dry out and the needles will always be longer.







May 1997. The last picture of the forest in the garden at Belluno. In November we had to move with our huge bonsai collection to our new house in Tarzo, near Treviso



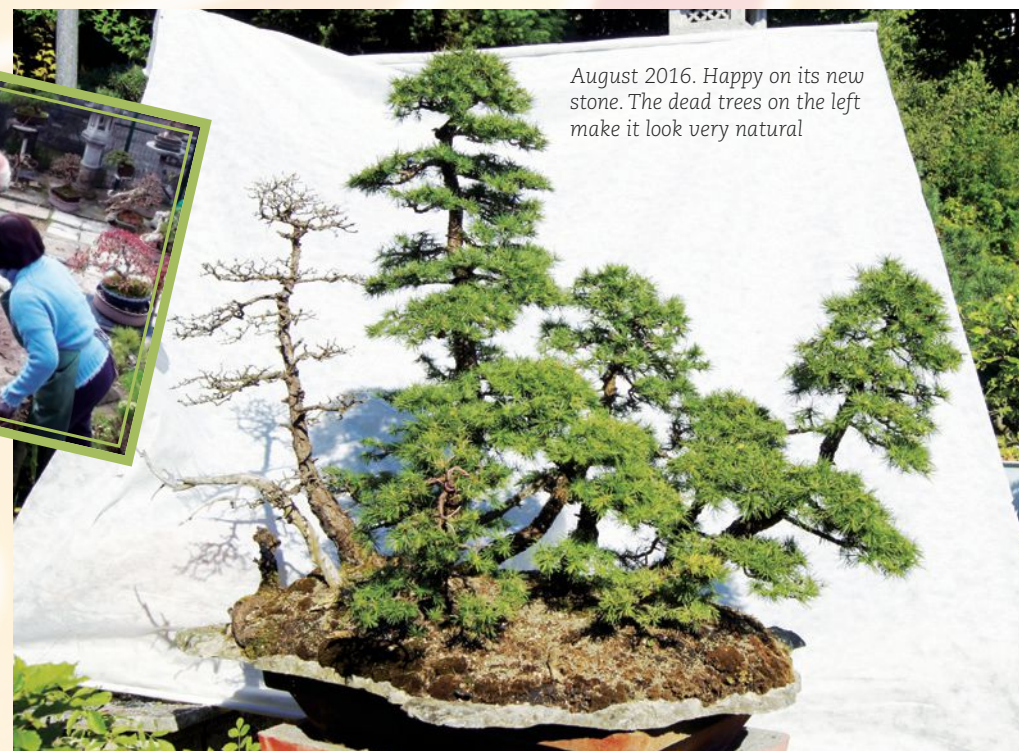
November 2008. The forest has changed its look. This is when we added the other dead trees



Spring 2014. It was to be the 40th anniversary of creating this larch planting in the following year. The health of the trees is still good, but their roots need some fresh soil for them to lengthen. In the spring that followed, the slab would be replaced with one that is larger



Above and right: The huge forest is repotted on a fresh new stone. Below: Haina waters the forest after the job is done.



August 2016. Happy on its new stone. The dead trees on the left make it look very natural

### Pinching

At the beginning of spring, or at the end of October, pinch all the branches. This type of pruning promotes the growth of branches with an extremely short internode that will make a very delicate structure. Larches are very generous trees; if left alone they keep growing until the end of September.

### New growth

The growth of new shoots generally occurs in April, when they reach 3 or 4 cm / 1 or 1½" long and are still green, they should be pinched with the fingertips (between the thumb and forefinger). Don't touch the ones that need to grow to form a new branch. We should use scissors only when the shoot has already lignified, or has become woody, because if we use scissors, or fingernails, when they are still green, there will be an ugly black mark where it was cut. Pinching has to be done several times during the year, every time it looks necessary. Every time we pinch, the larch will grow back buds close to the trunk. This happens promptly if the pot is big enough and soil is rich, if it was properly fertilized in spring and autumn and didn't have any root damage caused by a lack of water!



# Do you suffer from 'Zone Envy'?

By Tony Tickle

**Tony champions the use of native species and explains why beginners in bonsai should look to the trees in their own climatic zone to develop mature bonsai**

'Bonsai are the small trees from Japan, aren't they?' So often heard when someone discovers your passion and if you go back 30 years this would probably be true. I guess when they start the journey that is bonsai, most are of the same opinion.

The Japanese white pine I purchased in the early years of my journey cost me a week's wage and I thought it was amazing. I really struggled to keep the tree in good condition, though, and it did not look like the trees I observed in the Kokufu Exhibition books. Even so, at that time the tree gave me immense pleasure. I quickly realised that truly great mature bonsai coming out of Japan were rare and hugely expensive, but the bonsai that your regular enthusiast could afford were simply not of any quality or maturity.

The 'bonsai' that made up my collection came from garden centre trees and a few examples from a nearby bonsai nursery. Most were Japanese species no more than a few years old. The turning point for me insofar as building a collection of mature bonsai was concerned came from reading an early issue of this magazine, featuring a Swiss bonsai artist who was working with native trees from the mountains. This opened my eyes to the possibility of using mature native material as a starting point.

By using native trees I could improve my maintenance success rate and indeed also have my trees thrive. If a tree grows in your climate and locality you have a good chance of developing that tree into a mature bonsai. This is a major benefit of using native trees. Embracing native species brings on different challenges: Do you style the tree as a 'native' or do you stick to Japanese forms? Are your species suitable for bonsai? Is your climate so harsh as to prohibit successful cultivation?

I have witnessed first hand some of the challenges facing bonsai artists around the world. In Finland a group has to deal with winter months having no sun whatsoever and temperatures as low as -25C. In South Africa it's the opposite; in summer it can reach as high as +40C. Meeting these challenges head on can only be achieved by embracing local tree species. It is certainly

possible to grow trees outside your climatic zone successfully, but this requires an investment in a controlled environment. Why bother when with patience and experience you can create successful bonsai with native trees?

I live in the North of the United Kingdom and the climate is defined as temperate oceanic and, being closest to the Atlantic Ocean, is generally one of the mildest, wettest and windiest regions of the UK. On the other hand, temperatures are seldom extreme. I have a big greenhouse in which I keep Mediterranean species in (controlled environment), but my private collection is made up entirely of trees native to Northern Europe.



I do suffer from 'zone envy'. If I lived in a country with less rain, more sun and higher UV, my trees would mature quicker, have smaller leaf or needle size and I would not get as much moss or algae on the trunks of my bonsai. There is a flip side. I hardly have to water my trees and when I have a tree ready to show, the growth is so slow that the style stays with the tree for longer and the maintenance required to keep the tree in tip top show condition is less.

I think that there are only a few locations in the world where growing conditions are perfect for bonsai, whereby the trees grow well, but not too fast, they have enough light for a healthy small size foliage and the varieties make beautiful mature bonsai. The rest of the world may well look on these places with a longing to be so fortunate. However, most of us do not live in this bonsai Shangri-La so we must work with what we have.

I believe that the bonsai world is richer because of the variety of species that artists are cultivating to create bonsai — bonsai that represent a national identity and culture diversity. I don't think that anyone would argue that Japan is the home of the greatest mature bonsai, having been worked on across many generations. I am sure, too, that there are those in bonsai who still believe that only Japanese trees are the true bonsai and anything else is simply a poor pretender. We know differently.



# Bonsai in winter

*The last leaves have fallen and winter takes everything into a deep rest. Is there anything we should do to protect our trees?*

Text and photography: Bonsai Focus Studio



Acer palmatum

## Watering

When bonsai over winter in a cold frame or polytunnel, they can lose moisture very quickly during sunny days. You can water modestly to ensure they don't dry out; however, conifers generally dislike very wet feet, so don't over water them. If, when there is no frost, they are left outside, take the precaution of placing pines under shelter during long periods of rain.

## Fertilisation

Don't fertilise with nitrogen, but you can do so with PK fertiliser (NPK: 0-10-10) which only has Phosphate (P) and Potassium (K) to help to toughen trees for winter. It helps to thicken trunks and branches, too, and will also work on improving the root system.

## Treatments

Check presence of mites. Clean the branches and twigs. Remove dead leaves, or the parts that have died. Preventive spraying with pesticide avoids fungal attacks before putting the trees into a cold frame.

## How to find the live vein

Marco Invernizzi explains:

'Exposed live veins are very important in the design of junipers. Deadwood may be hidden under bark that is already dead. It's therefore difficult to find it under a thick layer of bark, since it is not always clear where it runs and how it divides.

To check whether or not the bark is still alive, follow cracks in the bark with a very sharp knife. Where there are cracks there is a live vein. A vein within dead bark will have dried out and shrunk.'



This section of bark has dried out, so no live vein will run here



The 'hill and valley' principle, Marco shows the live vein. The bark is thicker on the left and right compared with the section in the centre. This indicates that there is a live vein running on both sides



## Evergreen or summer green?

Winter is the time of year when the care requirement for bonsai is very low and there is more time for design work. Some bonsai can now stand several design techniques such as wiring, shari and jin making, severe bending. The difference between evergreen and summer green must be taken into consideration. Most conifers and some deciduous trees fall into the evergreen category, like azaleas (*Rhododendron*), holly (*Ilex*), some oaks (*Quercus*) and numerous subtropical and tropical species. The majority of middle European deciduous trees, several North American trees and Japanese, over winter

without foliage. But there are also several conifers like larch (*Larix*),



bald cypress (*Taxodium*) or the dawn redwood (*Metasequoia*) which discard their leaves, too.

## Wire in spring

Trees that lose foliage in winter should only be cut in winter and preferably wired in early spring. On the other hand, evergreens can be pruned and wired with the accompanying strong branch bending in early winter. Branch bending and jin and shari treatments are actions that are normally tolerated relatively well.

## Young and thin branches

Branches that are young and thin are still flexible. The thicker the branch, though, the more difficult it is to bend without any damage. Without additional protection, the wiring process will leave bruises on thick branches almost immediately after application. In order to avoid bruising during the wiring process, strong branches are wrapped with raffia or plastic tape. This reduces the wire pressure on the branch and in many cases long-term damage can be avoided



Criss-crossing live veins on an olive trunk

## Working on jin and shari in winter?

To answer that question you need to make a difference between already dead areas and new jin and shari that are yet to be created. Dead branches and trunk segments can always be worked on.

There is no ideal time of the year to make new jins out of living branches so these can be worked on at any time. However, if you intend to make new shari, it should not be done during the heat of summer and the tree must be protected after the treatment has been accomplished and before the first hard frost. This is because the bark that protects the tree from extreme heat and frost has been removed. At the same time that bark is removed and the tree damaged, the anaerobiosis is activated, which reduces the tree's frost resistance.



Crataegus

By Michael Hagedorn

[www.crataegus.com](http://www.crataegus.com)

Worth following is the Crataegus Bonsai Blog by Michael Hagedorn, with really useful well written information. Here is an excerpt from a post:

## Confusion over fall repotting

I've noticed considerable puzzlement over the correct time to repot. Lots of the confusion stems from placing too much weight on exceptions to spring repotting. But essentially, when we repot, the tree is given the signal, 'Hey, it's spring, let's grow!' But not necessarily on top . . . a tree repotted in the autumn doesn't often grow on top, though the roots are often as active as if it were spring, because the tree is trying to regrow what was cut off. Then winter comes. And if we're in the north, blasts of freezing weather can obliterate that tender root system, and kill the tree.

Read more: [www.crataegus.com](http://www.crataegus.com)



## Is hard water detrimental to plant health?

Do you have a film of white build-up on your pots or leaves? Pale, yellowish, and lack lustre growth on the bonsai? If so, you may have very hard water and that can be a limiting factor in plant health. In extreme cases, very hard water may limit the root's ability to draw in water (an osmotic issue). Even moderately hard water can pose limits on the uptake of nutrients.

Read more: [www.crataegus.com](http://www.crataegus.com)



# Send in your most exciting bonsai

## Hall of fame

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## The winner takes it all . . .

Owner of the winning bonsai gets a free 9-day trip to the World Bonsai Convention 2017 in Japan, where the Bonsai Focus Golden Concave Award will be presented during a special ceremony.



Peter Warren



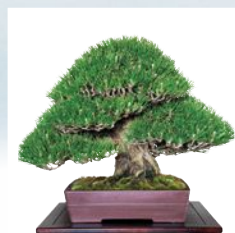
Ryan Neil



Taiga Urushibata

## The judges

A team of judges, consisting of Ryan Neil, Taiga Urushibata, Peter Warren, will pre-select the best bonsai from all the submitted photos and then let you, our readers, decide which tree will win the first edition of the Golden Concave Award.





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# Golden Concave Award

## How to participate

- Take a photo of your best bonsai (max. 3 bonsai per participant). You have the best chances with a high quality photo taken against a plain background.
- All styles, sized or varieties of bonsai are welcome. The focus is on the bonsai, not on the way it is displayed.
- Upload your picture(s) to: [www.bonsaifocus.com](http://www.bonsaifocus.com) and choose 'Award' in the menu.
- Registration: €10 per participant. Free for Bonsai Focus subscribers.





# A limited edition collectors' pot

*Exclusive for Bonsai Focus subscribers!*

For the fourth time, Walsall Studio Ceramics have created a limited edition handcrafted decorated pot exclusively for Bonsai Focus. This time the theme is a dragonfly resting on a stem of Typha. Every pot is numbered and stamped with the initials of the artist and the Bonsai Focus logo



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Walsall Studio Ceramics has been in full-time production of high quality hand-made bonsai pots for more than 21 years. David Jones and Mark Jones work together in their Walsall studio near Birmingham,

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The pots are hand built in a method similar to the one used by potters in Japan; this involves more than 25 different processes from forming the basic shape at the start to the final glazing and firing at the end.







## Issue 144 January/February

### Back to the roots

It all depends on the health of the roots, as Kunio Kobayashi explains in the next issue.



### Dream landscapes

Patrick Bergsma was inspired by Chinese landscapes and penjing. We take a close look at his amazing creations.



### Impossible? Perhaps not

Father and son Iura engage in an adventure by transforming a huge collected juniper into a masterpiece bonsai.



### Just perfect

Peter Warren guides us through the techniques of root and branch improvement of a maple.







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## **Contact us:**

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[www.bcibonsai2017.com](http://www.bcibonsai2017.com) and register online.

(Online registration activated from January 2017)

If you have questions please contact Mr. Sean SC Huang:

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