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bonsai ***Focus***

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Takashi Iura

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



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

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Translations:

Peter Warren

KINBON



Taking photos at the 21st HWA-Fong bonsai exhibition after closing time (photo: by Francesco Santini)

They like 'em big

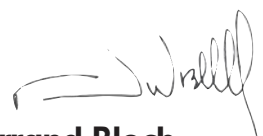
In November I was invited by the Taiwan National Bonsai Association to visit their national bonsai show. The aim? To showcase the quality of their bonsai to the rest of the world. I already knew Taiwanese bonsai by the amazing winding trunks and sharis of its junipers. Interesting to discover that all of them are field grown and skilfully made to look like really old yamadori. Therefore, when arriving at the venue I expected a show completely dominated by these junipers. I was most surprised to see displayed many different varieties that I had only seen before as third grade indoor bonsai at home. Here in Taiwan these were seriously large and well refined specimens, row after row. The humid climate of Taiwan must be a great help in encouraging trees to grow well. It was an amazingly large show with very high end trees.

It was just too crowded to take good shots of the trees, so I managed to sneak out of the gala dinner to make a deal with the guards in order to take photos of those amazing trees after the show closed to the public. In our gallery pages you can see a selection of the trees I shot. As well

as this assortment of trees there was a very large section of shohin, too.

The Taiwan trip included a visit to some of the most important bonsai nurseries and Masters. What struck me was that the trees were mega big, impossible to carry by humans and needed to be lifted by a fork lift truck. They were very refined, though, and wired to the smallest branch. I soon found out that this was purely for the Chinese market; as one of the bonsai Masters told me, 'they just like things big'.

And speaking of big, though not as big as those Taiwanese trees, take a look at the 'Last Giant' juniper created by father and son Iura. They managed to bring this huge tree back into appreciable proportions. 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

A creation of spruce (*Picea*)
by Michael Hagedorn, with Canon
Beach as the backdrop.

Photo: Bonsai Focus Studio



6 News

Italian at Taikan-Ten, Agenda, Jerusalem show

8 Report

The latest edition of the big show in Saulieu

10 Bonsai in Taiwan

Report of the show last November

22 Profile

The bonsai passion of François Gau

24 Styling

The vision of Bruno Proietti Tocca

28 Technique

Old jin, impossible to bend?

32 Expert opinion

François Jeker analyses Lozano Heemskerk's sabina

34 Just a plastic tray

Peter Warren works on a field grown maple





42 Step by step

Despite its many thorns hawthorn is a great subject for bonsai

48 Masterclass

Father and son Iura work together on one of the last big junipers

58 Interview

Patrick Bergsma's wonder world of bonsai

62 Into the core

Pine roots need extra care

69 Tony's Column

Tony Tickle questions whether becoming a bonsai pro is really what you want



70 The Trikele gang of potters

A very special bonsai pottery project

72 Suiseki

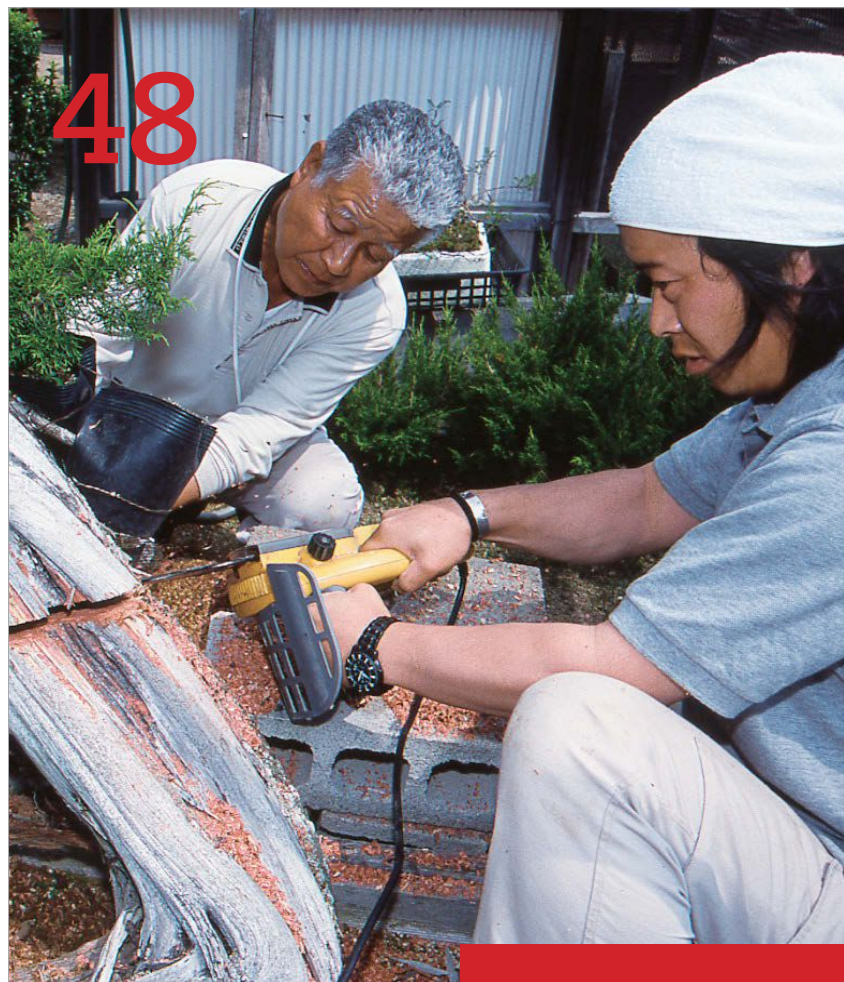
The roof of the world, precious stones

74 Gallery

Selection of the best trees from the European Bonsai San show

80 Shopping

Great deals, books, pots from Bonsai Focus

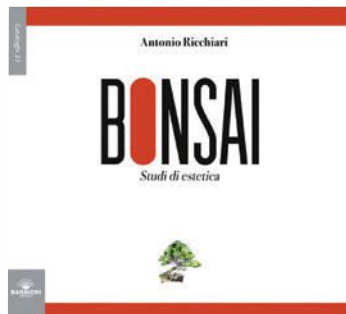




Bonsai, but not only bonsai . . .

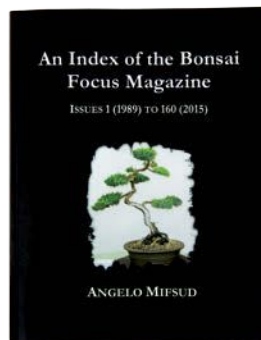
Antonio Ricchiari, author of many bonsai books and articles, has published a new and extensive book simply called 'Bonsai'. It is totally dedicated to the aesthetic side of the bonsai design with bonsai shown in clear black and white and coloured illustrations.

In the Italian language only. 228 pages with 100 illustrations. ISBN 978-88-7533-066-8 Barbieri Editore.



The bonsai 'google'

Or to put it precisely: 'An index of the Bonsai Focus magazine' by Angelo Mifsud from Australia. It contains an index of keywords in Bonsai Focus incorporating the old Bonsai Today and Bonsai Europe issues. It brings together a useful research tool for both bonsai beginners and the experienced. It is in English only and covers the US and UK editions.



www.bonsaifocus.com



Italian Fabiano Frasson wins at the Taikan-Ten in Kyoto, Japan

Fabiano, who studied for six years at Suisho-En garden under the guidance of Suisho Nakayama, is one of the authorities in Satsuki bonsai. Last year he won a prize with a Satsuki at the Taikan show, now at this year's edition he won again with a

Japanese black pine (*Pinus thunbergii*).

'I acquired this tree 4 years ago from a Nagoya black pine grower while it was still growing in the field. I washed out its roots and removed the poor soil. One year later I planted it in a slightly larger pot and the tree grew very healthily. I also grafted two small branches near the top to complete the design. After two years it was shown at the Taikan-Ten in Kyoto and I won a prize. I did all the work in Japan. Last year I returned to Italy to work in our family bonsai nursery, Roberta Bonsai, in Como, near Milan.'



February. 3-5: The 18th Nöelanders Trophy and EBA Congress

Friday, February 3rd evening, official opening ceremony. The exhibition, New Talent Contest Finals and demonstrations, 4th & 5th February 2017.

Where: Limburghal, Jaarbeurslaan 6, Genk, Belgium. Info: M +32 491 56 25 26. www.bonsaiassociation.be



February 4-8 & 10-13 91st Kokufu-Ten

Greatest bonsai exhibition in Japan. Bonsai market is open at Ueno Green Club near the museum. Where:

Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, Ueno.

February 5-8: 42th:

Gafu-Ten

Biggest and highest level of Shohin-Bonsai Exhibition in Japan. Where: Miyakomessu, Kyoto.



February 26: Swindon Winter Image Show

12 Clubs/Societies exhibiting. Open: 10.30am – 4.00pm. Where: Grange Leisure Centre, Grange Drive, Stratton St Margaret, Swindon, SN3 4JY.

April 1-2: 40 Years Vlaamse Bonsai Vereniging

Opening event. Exhibition, demos, workshops, trade stands. Where: Aalst, Belgium.



April 27 -30: The 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.

Open for just one day

A special experimental show that broke away from the traditional restrictions of bonsai display was held in Jerusalem. Ofer Grunwald invited Bonsai Focus to visit this one-day exhibition that showed works by Emilya Gladun, Matan Rosen, Itamar Conforti, Oran Sheinman, Avi Pashnov and Ofer Grunwald. Other than Ofer, none of them were practitioners of bonsai, but designers who were asked by Ofer to share their vision of the art. As Ofer explained to us: 'Bonsai is a very frustrating medium for an artist.



The exhibition was held in an old Ottoman style house, downtown Jerusalem

The upside down juniper, a work by Itamar Conforti. It examines the relationship between urbanism and bonsai, city and nature. This symbiotic relationship is delicate and easily pushed off balance



A small olive of about 350 years old is planted in a copper bowl with Hebrew letters



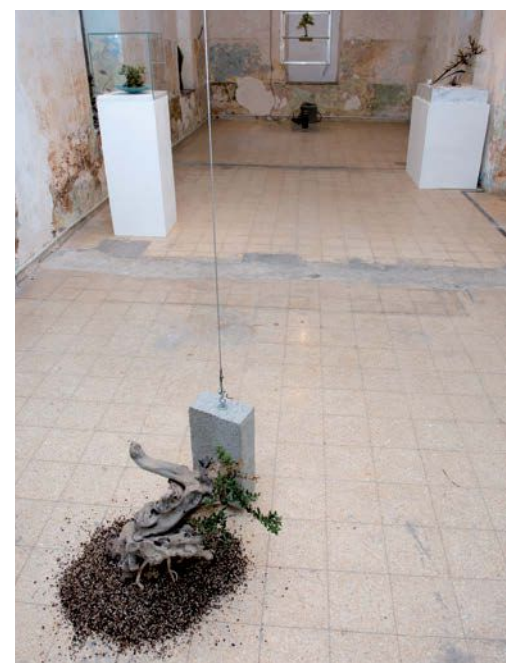
A work inspired by the practice of Tefillin used by Jews at prayer

'Although it is amazingly beautiful and Zen-like in its focus on process rather than product, the dominant nature of the trees makes it extremely challenging for use in conceptual art pieces. That's why traditional, personal artistic expression in bonsai has always been executed through the display, rather than the tree itself. So, all around the world, current bonsai displays tend to be the same copies of the same template, in a sort of watered-down interpretation of traditional Japanese display.

'So we decided to change that in this world-first exhibition that would reinvent bonsai as a contemporary, Western art form.

'We're a group of young designers from the Bezalel academy in Jerusalem and a leading bonsai artist, who got together to try and bring the ancient art of bonsai up to speed within the contemporary art world.

'We worked for four months to put this exhibition together, but in keeping with the fleeting nature of bonsai, and to ensure the health and safety of the trees, the exhibition was only open for one day!'



By Ofer Grunwald, an olive that maybe hit or not by a big concrete stone which stands for the mischief and frustration of practising bonsai

A work by Matan Rosen with a bare rooted juniper. There's no need to worry about the tree, it was cared for by spraying regularly. This work re-examines the components of the classic tokonoma that expresses traditional Japanese minimalism in a brutalistic style



4th European Bonsai-san Show

The Four Disciples of Kimura live in action at the great Bonsai-San show

Text and photography: Bonsai Focus Studio



The Four Disciples of Kimura, left to right: Hiroaki Suzuki, Taiga Urushibata, Marco Invernizzi, Masayuki Fujikawa, with Victor Goulard from Laos Bonsai and Fred Chenal, organiser of the big show. (Photo: Fred Chenal)



The amazing bonsai in the show

In October last Frederic Chenal and Stephanie Chenal-Wheeler organised a special edition of the 4th European Bonsai-San show which was held in the French town of Saulieu. We arrived Friday evening, the day before the official opening of the show. Most of the trees had already arrived and were put on display after a check-up by the so-called Four Disciples: Masayuki Fujikawa, Marco Invernizzi, Taiga Urushibata and Hiroaki Suzuki who were, or are still, apprentices of Master Masahiko Kimura. They kept a close eye on the bonsai as they arrived to make sure they were ready for show and that the display tables and accent plants should fit well before the tree was put in place. I took a quick stroll along the display and it seemed that this edition's trees had raised the standard of quality once more.

On the Saturday morning before the doors opened for the public a long queue of people were already waiting to get in. The tokonomas are now a tradition of

this show and these were supplied with trees by honoured guest, Luis Baliño from Spain, who exhibited some of his best bonsai. In a change from last year, Luis added old photos of the trees so we could see their development. Personally, I found that some of the tokonomas were a bit too small, or the trees in them were a little too big for the space, but the trees were amazing.

The Four Disciples at work

It was announced months in advance that the Disciples would be at the show and finally you could see them in real life working with fabulous material. During the entire day, you could appreciate their skills as they worked on material that was provided by Laos Garden. The stage for the four demonstrators was set in the centre of the hall with the audience around it. A very clever set-up because it was possible to walk round and see all the four demonstrators at work.

Peter Warren gave a lecture on pots in



The tokonomas by Luis Baliño



A large section of shohin



The stage for the demos was set in the centre (Photo: Nicola Crivelli)



On Sunday the Four Disciples worked together on a juniper



There was already a long queue waiting to get into the show early on Saturday morning



The Kei Bonsai Kai club presented a different kind of display with a landscape backdrop



The big bonsai market was situated round the bonsai show

which he focussed on historical Japanese perspective and modern European trends. Even more trade stands were present this time. A large bonsai market attracts many people looking for the best buys. But it did not overshadow the show which was placed in the centre of the huge hall.

And the winners are . . .

This year instead of one single winner there were four winning trees. Awards went to Antonio Ponce Navarro with a *Myrtus communis*, Noel Garcia Suarez's *Juniperus chinensis*, Jose Luis Crespo Almajano with a *Pinus sylvestris* and Xavier Massanet with a *Juniperus chinensis* 'Itoigawa'. Best Bonsai-ist or Best Bonsai Evolution: Martin Nielsen with a cascade *Larix*. This is a remarkable prize focusing on the evolution of the bonsai from raw material to bonsai which was on display at the show.

The design of the trophies was by Dirk Van de Molen. As well as a trophy, the winners each received a special limited pot made by René Lecocq.

The organising committee asked Bonsai Focus to sponsor a special prize: 'The

Best New Style' which was presented to François Gau. His original creation of a *Buxus* tree planted in a self-made pot with dragons decided us to give him this prize. The tree has a very dramatic trunk, while the pot's colour and shape synchronises wonderfully with it.

It is, perhaps, a long drive to Saulieu, which lies in the Burgundy region of France, but it's well worth the journey.



Taiwan Bonsai

The 21st Hwa Fong Bonsai exhibition, Taiwan

Text and photography: Farrand Bloch

Farrand was invited by Sae Won Kim, Korean bonsai promoter in Asia, to attend the big national bonsai show in Taiwan. It was a full programme with a tour laid on to visit the best bonsai nurseries and the Masters of Taiwan as well as the National Bonsai Show that is held at the Ghanghua Xizhou Gardens near Taichung. The whole event was sponsored by Mr Tsang-Shing Chen, who runs one of Taiwan's largest nurseries. Here is Farrand's report on his visit



Mr Tsang-Shing Chen, Chairman of the committee organising the coming BCI and 14th Asia Pacific Bonsai and Suiseki Convention and Exhibition, 2017



Left: A huge juniper cascade at the entrance to the museum
Below: Overview of the National Bonsai Show





The Chinese delegation and Mr Tsang-Shing Chen presenting a friendship trophy during the opening ceremony



Impressive juniper at the show in the Ghanghua Xizhou Gardens

It was not only the National Taiwan Bonsai Show, but an extra special edition as well. This was because of the Chinese contributions making it the '11th edition of the Guandong-Hong Kong-Macau and Taiwan Penjing Art exhibition 2016'.

Its title is a mouthful, but that was what it was, a reunion of bonsai lovers from mainland China and Taiwan. Held at the Ghanghua Xizhou Gardens in early November, delegates from the world over were invited to come to see the amazing bonsai of Taiwan. I, too, was invited, to report on this show and then join a tour, which led us around the best nurseries and gardens Taiwan offers. But before we visited the bonsai exhibition we had a stop first at the Wann Ying Art Garden of Mr Tsang-Shing Chen who is one of the major figures in Taiwanese Bonsai and owner of a very large tree nursery. Mr

Tsang-Shing Chen is also Chairman of the committee organising the coming BCI and 14th Asia Pacific Bonsai and Suiseiki Convention and Exhibition, 2017.

Showcase

Wann Ying Art Garden is a showcase of Taiwanese bonsai. We were led along broad paths to see amazing bonsai, stones, ponds, bridges, small pavilions. The famous Taiwan junipers, which all have spectacular curling and twisting trunks with deadwood, are very well presented in the collection. Interesting to know that although these junipers have been field grown they have been made to look like old yamadori. Taiwan has a very hot and humid climate, plants and trees just love to grow here and that makes it almost perfect for bonsai. Not only can you find junipers or pines here, but



The Chinese delegation together with Tsang-Shing Chen (second right) presenting even more gifts

It was an impressive number of high quality trees



Lions guarding the entrance of the museum





The big exhibition of Ghanghua Xizhou Gardens a large park which, besides annual bonsai exhibitions, also hosts large flower shows



The drum act during the opening ceremony



Above: The delegates from all over the world were seated in the VIP lounge.

Below: A large suiseki collection in the museum



also many other varieties like Hibiscus, *Podocarpus*, *Premna*, *Ficus* can be seen in abundance as well. A whole part of the garden was dedicated to a display of only *Ficus* bonsai. I will do a report on this later this year.

Down a winding road there was even more to discover, a kind of temple with a courtyard guarded by two lion statues and a mega-sized cascade juniper. Inside there was a large collection of suiseki and artefacts like Buddhas, scroll paintings and furniture made of old and precious woods.

For me the trip was one big surprise after another. Where would we be going next? Our bus drove to a big hall with life size posters of marrying couples, flowers and pink ribbons. It turned out to be our stop for a typical Taiwanese lunch in a party restaurant. Next it was off to the official opening ceremony.

Ghanghua Xizhou Gardens

The opening ceremony of the bonsai show at the Ghanghua Xizhou Gardens was quite a major experience with lots of show elements like lights, music and dance added. It felt like going to the Grammys or Oscars; all the delegates had to dress up in a suit and were welcomed by a team of hostesses and hosts who pinned a flower brooch to your jacket. We were then led to our seats in the front row in the VIP lounge. The show began with a children's harmonica group followed by a Japanese drum act after which the official opening started. It was a long, long row of officials who were called to the stage to make a speech — in Chinese, which of course I could not understand! The entire event was loud and noisy and presented by a professional team with music and flashing lights. Things got a bit chaotic in my opinion, but everybody was happy

An enormous juniper at the Wann Ying Art Garden





The famous Taiwan juniper and a large collection of mouth-watering shohin



At the entrance of the museum in the Wann Ying Art Garden, a huge old trunk



A very expressive Bougainvillea

A small pavilion at the Wann Ying Art Garden



Above: The courtyard of the museum. Below: A harmonica concert given before the official opening



and the mood was very outgoing. One interesting aspect of the show involves mainland China's wish to reclaim Taiwan. The Beijing government applies pressure to have Taiwan return to the motherland China, because 'there is only one China'. So, having guests from mainland China gave this show an extra dimension. There were, however, no signs of hostility and all was very smooth and relaxed as it is in the bonsai community.

Large show

It was already getting rather late when the show came to an end and we almost forgot that there was still a big show to see — namely the bonsai exhibition. And, indeed, this was a big show with

an impressive collection of very refined trees. Not a pine and juniper show, rather a great mix of all kinds of varieties, *Ficus*, *Hibiscus*, *Premna*, *Podocarpus*, etc — the tree varieties that you would normally find in a commercial nursery sold as indoor bonsai here shown as high-quality trees. I was taken by the sheer size of it all, rows and rows of great trees. There was not much time to enjoy all this because the opening party was up next. I would slip away from the party later and arrange an after-hours' photo shoot at the exhibition hall. I managed to photograph a selection of interesting bonsai which were typically Taiwanese. In our next issue I will show off some more Taiwanese bonsai.



Inside the museum a rare collection of artefacts of all kinds



Twisting trunk of a Taiwan juniper



A massive juniper in the garden of Wann Ying Art Garden

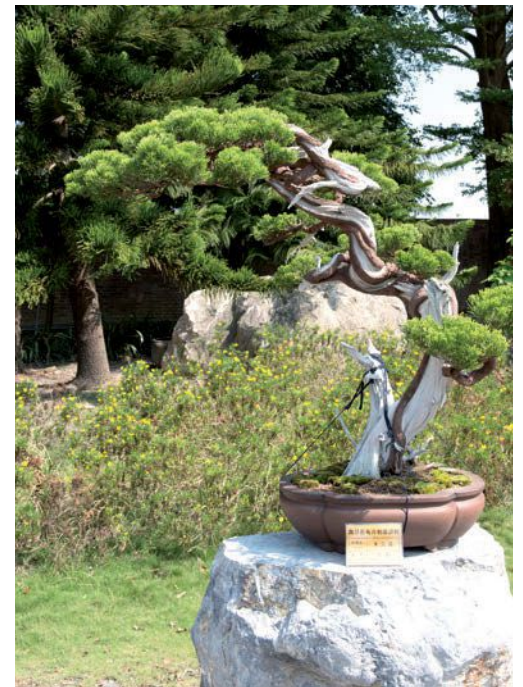


A massive suiseki

Spectacular junipers are scattered throughout the garden



Above: A very big Podocarpus bonsai with a massive base. Below: a giant Ficus tree



Above: The live veins of this juniper just swing around the trunk. Below: Shohin at the big show





2016 HWA FONG NATIONAL BONSAI EXHIBITION





Premna obtusifolia



Juniperus chinensis



Diospyros ferrea



Podocarpus costalis



Zelkova serrata



Pinus massoniana



Juniperus chinensis



Bougainvillea



Plinia cauliflora



Pemphis acidula

Photo: Bonsai Focus Studio





The Buxus before any work was done.
Below: The other version of the dragon pot

Text and photography: Bonsai Focus Studio

François Gau is the winner of our 'New Innovative' prize (awarded at the last European Bonsai San show, Saulieu, France). He is very creative and has an amazing collection of native bonsai.

Tell us about your profession and education

I followed an apprenticeship in masonry. Then I started my own business. I used to build industrial buildings and carry out the restoration of ancient houses.

How did you get to know about bonsai?

I used to be an aquarist for many years. And during many trips to Belgium to visit other aquarist enthusiasts, I noticed that many of them had some bonsai, which fascinated me. These encounters set off the beginning of a new passion, but also concluded my interest in aquariums.



Don't follow the others

The bonsai passion of François Gau

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

I attended the EEBF (Ecole Européenne de Bonsai, France) of Salvatore Liporace for 4 years. He taught me to have precision in my work and to always ask myself if I've done the most I can to enhance the tree.

What is your philosophy of bonsai?

Bonsai became a mind set and a way of living: always respect and be in harmony with nature. It has no limits, no borders, and to be practiced, all you have to do is to follow your desire and your taste. It can be a simple plant in a pot or a work of art. It can be a reflexion of nature or a product of your imagination. Bonsai is timeless and will always be in motion. It teaches us patience and humility.

Which trees do you most like to work on?

Essentially I am devoted to boxwood and Scots pine, even if these two species are demanding of rather opposite techniques and husbandry. Pines love plenty of sun and dry soil. Their flexible branches are very easy to style. On the other hand box

prefers shade during summer, dryer soil, and its branches are very hard, brittle, and extremely difficult to style.

Do you have any other interests or hobbies besides bonsai?

I am practicing sculpture on a variety of materials: wood, steel, concrete, and lately stoneware, which I use to make bonsai pots.

In your opinion is bonsai art?

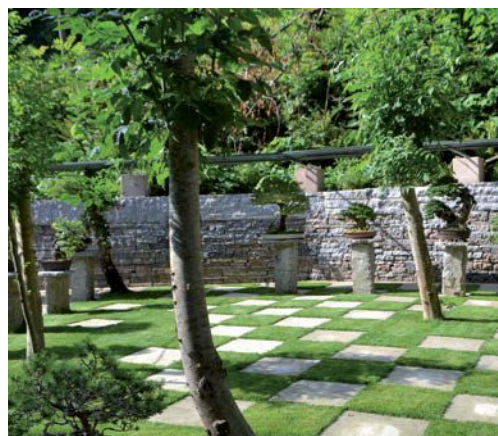
Yes bonsai is an art, even if it's still a minor art in Europe. It's not very far from sculpture and painting. Of course, there are rules set by the Japanese, but art begins when you stand your ground and stay true to who you are. You shouldn't always follow the others.

Which is your favourite bonsai?

My favourite bonsai are those I have just acquired or have just styled.



A Buxus with an impressive base



In 10 years from now what will you be doing?

In ten years I think I will spend most of my time in my garden and I'll travel far less than I do today when visiting shows and conventions.

Why did you use the dragon design pot for your Buxus?

The trunk of this *Buxus* displays a shari on which there is a wavy, pale-coloured vein as a dragon would have.

This *Buxus* is hardly a bonsai, and you could say it is closer to Chinese penjing. That allows me more freedom in my choices than if I wanted to create a more traditional Japanese display.

Who made the pot?

I created this pot myself with white stoneware fired at 1260degC / 2300degF. I created several pots before achieving the results I wanted for that tree. The first one was too shiny. This one which I used for the show, has the perfect colour and texture, which echoes the bark and the deadwood. But it is too small to keep the tree in good health and vigour. A third pot was created to match aesthetics and provide healthy husbandry.



Can you tell us something of the winning Buxus tree?

This tree was collected in southern France, and it arrived in my garden in 2010. Back then, it only had some very stiff branches with a few leaves at the tips. It was planted in a large training pot. The first task was to bend the branches, and then heavy fertilization allowed the tree to produce an abundance of back budding. The tree was transplanted in a Chinese pot just 4 years later when the ramification was well developed. It was not necessary at that time to stimulate a vigorous growth. The tree was repotted in this display pot last spring. The evolution of the tree can be seen on YouTube.

Born in:

In Castres, Southern France, 1956

Education:

Apprenticeship in masonry

Into bonsai since:

A long time ago! It all started with aquariums.

Favourite species:

Devoted to boxwood and Scots pine.



Above: A cascading pine. Below: Working on the pot for the Buxus



Art begins when you stand your ground

The garden with a dragon sculpture



François Gau with his winning Buxus





The Grim

Bruno Proietti Tocca philosophises about his work on a savin juniper

Text and photography: Bruno Proietti Tocca

The savin is a juniper species that time continuously remakes and remodels in an endless circle. Man and nature come together in this very expressive tree

Working on the tree

My choice of plant was influenced by my feelings for and interpretation of bonsai. I received my graduation Diploma at the Creative Bonsai School of Sandro Segneri where, thanks to his very eclectic vision, I developed a somewhat unconventional taste in bonsai.

First of all, I am going to describe the tree at the time of purchase. In 2010, when it arrived in my garden, it had a medium sized dimension. The specimen already had some wiring on the main branches. After this complex treatment, the foliage did not appear very healthy and, due to the stress it suffered, its scale-like foliage turned into needles.

Practical approach

The first approach with this eccentric specimen has been the need to restore juvenile growth to the growth of scaled foliage. In 2011, I planted the tree in a growing bonsai pot, with a mixture of soil as follows: Pumice 60%, Akadama 30%, Kiryu 10%, with a particle size from 2 to 5mm. The organic fertilization, N7-P6-K1 in spring and N3-P6-K7 in autumn and an additional weekly use of liquid foliar feed, has helped the plant to recover its vibrant colour.

Design

Of course, there are elements crucial in the design: the nebari, trunk, branches,

foliage, lines of power, veins, dry wood and so on, but the most essential thing is to follow the tree and to understand its temperament. To feel its beauty, as it is unique and original, without necessarily keeping to commonly defined aesthetic codes. It is important to magnify the areas of major interest and hide those

parts that make the vision of the plant monotonous and static. Dynamism is a value which, in bonsai, should always be considered. The vision of a small tree in a pot should evoke emotion of beauty, naturalness, vitality and, to conclude, amazement. A tree that we may perceive as static does not let us feel all these





The tree in 2011 before starting to work on it

emotions.

Drawing the design of the future plant, with creativity and technical knowledge, will help stylistic choices and facilitate the insights that will make it an original creation. You must just try to imagine our bonsai after, perhaps, twenty or thirty years of growing in a pot.

The Grim

The main characteristic of this plant is the abundance of dry wood and presence of many jin. The spooky shapes of the deadwood have all together inspired me to call the tree 'L'Arcigno' or 'The Grim'. It has been fascinating to discover how, layer by layer, beauty and balance of

proportion between dry wood and living vein are unveiled. Under the attacks of extreme weather, part of the deadwood rotted. Using a variety of tools like gouges and a gas burner I managed to repair all the faults. Finalizing it with a mixture of jin liquid with a small percentage of black paint / Chinese ink has given a touch of naturalness and ageing to the whole picture.

Depth

There are a great number of beautiful aspects of a tree to give me inspiration, especially when the structure of the dry wood is considered as something that changes and not just as a lifeless mass of wood. Wood, such as the foliage and negative spaces, is an essential element in my designs.

How do we realize and sculpture a bonsai? By observing trees on cliffs and mountainous regions. When a branch comes off from its trunk, it rips a portion of wood and, by doing this, it hauls out the underlying fibre, too, with hurting and sharing bands of bark. Old wounds on the trunk are attacked by bacteria, fungi and animals, so creating large openings.

The circle

I was struck by the turn of the branch in the foreground that highlights the top

The Savin JUNIPER

Savin juniper (*Juniperus sabina*) is part of the *Cupressaceae* (cypress) family. It is a shrub variable in its shape, with very thin branches. The colour of its bark is brown tending to red, while its foliage will have a characteristically strong smell. Its strong roots are able to grow amongst rock stones. It is possible to find this shrub on sunny slopes, sparse forest with rock areas, cliffs and detritus.

The Savin juniper (*Juniperus sabina*) is native to the mountains of central and southern Europe and western and central Asia, from Spain to eastern Siberia, typically growing at altitudes of 1,000-3,300 m / 3,250-10,000ft above sea level. For a few months during the winter, the snow presses the shrub to the ground breaking its branches and bark. In following years, the new growth, aiming for light, will suffer the same treatment in winter. This isn't the only suffering it will undergo, the rolling of big stones and power of the wind are other natural factors that contribute to the creation of extreme and eccentric shapes. As it is relatively easy to get in nature, this juniper is specially suitable for the creation of bonsai.



I made a design sketch of the tree



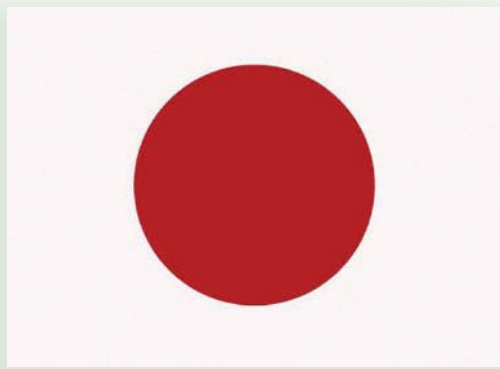
Detail of the upper part left



Detail of the jin in the lower area



Circular shape of the top jin



And the Japanese flag



With the aid of a bamboo stick anchored in the ground and on the trunk, it was possible to insert a rod that held the back branch in place. In the photographs, you can see how it was processed to create harmony in the arrangement of the foliage pads using rods and wire



left. I wanted to reflect on the figure of a circle trying to make a few comments. It made me remember what I have learned about a drawing concept which was about a red disk on a white background, the Japanese flag. Because the background is white, the red disk appears more visible and isolating. I linked the concept of the red disk on a white background with the circle shaped branch, asking myself: 'Can an inserted circle in such a composition become attractive to the observer? Maybe yes.' A disk is a very attractive shape that demands attention. In fact, we have the tendency to pay less attention to angles; for example, when observing a triangle our attention will change direction three times. A circle does not have angles and so the attention will remain concentrated on its shape. The perfection of circular shapes captures the attention.

What I am aiming at is to find inspiration from theoretical studies and apply them when I create my bonsai. Everything, that comes closer to our interest, such as a memory, old studies, pictures of nature, art and so on, is a good way to guide our creativity whether modelling or carving a plant. The bonsai used as a stimulus to continue study, without relying only on the technique, although essential, but limited to the repetition ad infinitum! A bit like our circle.

The trap

Japanese have interpreted trees from nature by defining a 'list' of bonsai styles. We could refer to these fixed 'rules', or follow new ideas in order to be able to enrich the 'bonsai art'. By following this second option, we should be careful; it is easy to fall into the trap of banality, 'just so that it is different'. The avant-garde art starts from classic rules by exploiting these principals.



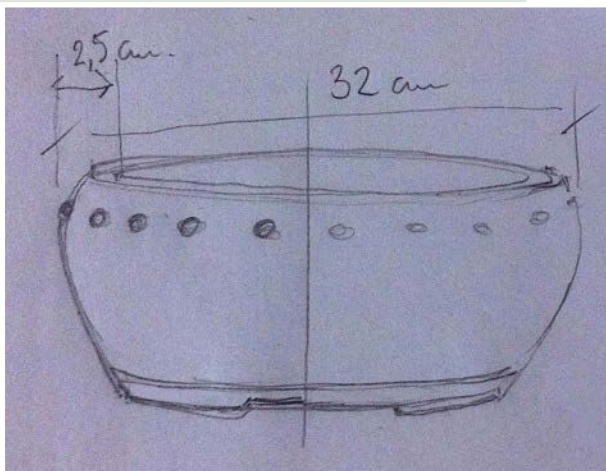
The tree in 2013, after the first styling; note the bamboo rod below left



The tree in 2014, after removing the wire



After thinning the branches and finishing the deadwood



The design of the pot



Pot made by Walter Dal Pra

The tree in 2015; later it will be repotted in the newly designed pot





Foil, the key to success

The technique of bending using aluminium foil

Text and photography: Kinbon magazine, Japan

Branches can be bent in almost every direction, but jins are dead and stiff. However, with heat, moisture and aluminium foil they can be brought back to 'life' and regain their 'flexibility'



Before

The position of the so called ten-jin, or top-jin, is somewhat undesirable

Looking at the before and after pictures you can see how the top section of the jin has been brought up and out to create both space and movement at the top.

Before the work was performed, the two jins appeared as one — thick, heavy and flowing downwards. After bending there's clear space between them and the elegant line of the ten-jin adds extra character to the composition.

This technique is not incredibly difficult, but does require some patience and an understanding of what is possible to achieve when bending jins. This only comes with experience, so try out and practise this new technique.



After

It has taken less than 30 minutes' work to do this



Wrap the area to be bent in a wet cloth



Wrap aluminium foil over the top of the cloth

Ensure the wet cloth is entirely wrapped in foil for the key to success.



The positions of the bend and fixing wires are checked to ensure no stress is placed on the tree



An electrical iron is placed on the area that is to be bent



Aluminium foil is wrapped round the heat producing tip of the iron



The irons are turned up to 100W and allowed to heat up the area



The jin is then bent using the trunk bender

Wait until the cloth has cooled down and then remove both the cloth and the foil



Apply water once again to the bent area to cool it down



Once steam starts to rise from the wet cloth, the full bend can be performed



Once the bend is finished, remove the iron, open up the aluminium foil and apply water to the area



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Ghost rider

Text and illustrations: François Jeker

*François Jeker analyses the
Juniperus sabina of Antonio J.
Lozano Heemskerk*



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.

Analysis



Reverse taper on the left side of the nebari



The tree will be styled using only this branch

The screw will be inserted here

Empty space between live and dead trees

The current apex will be transformed into deadwood

Being an original creation of nature, these two trees are telling us a story.

It seems cruel to pull apart the live tree and its ghost friend. In keeping them together, we are going to give a dramatic character to the whole composition. It is possible to cheat a little bit. On the dead tree, dig a 30-40 mm / 1-1½" long groove from the bottom towards the apex, 10 mm / ¼" deep and 5 mm / ⅛" wide. Then drill the tree and attach the two trees together with a screw. The head of the screw will be hidden in the groove. To perfect this little deception, you can use epoxy paste to fill in the groove. In addressing the inverted taper, it should be enough to lean the tree towards the left.

This sabina juniper has two major issues. The first is almost philosophical: there are two virtually entwined trees and one of them is dead. There is an empty space between the two trunks. The dead tree would normally be eliminated. The second problem is an aesthetic issue: the trunk is very constricted at the base and the tree will always seem unstable if we retain this position.

Details

Juniperus sabina

Owner: Antonio J. Lozano

Heemskerk

Yamadori: collected in Spain

Height: 43 cm / 17"

Estimated age: 40 years

Design



Current position with the reverse taper at the base



Tilt the tree towards the left to obtain a large and stable base

As far as I can see in the photos, the tree appears to be quite weak. The first task is to cultivate it to allow it to gain some more strength. Then, within a period of two years, eliminate the apex in two stages in order to avoid any weakening and to draw all the tree's energy towards the first branch.



The pot can be round or oval, with an equal height to the nebari width. An ideal choice could be a dark brown, non-glazed clay, with a slightly red tone.

Aesthetic choices

The raw yamadori is too tall in relation to the thickness of the base of the trunk. If you use only the first branch and transform the apex into a jin, the total height of the tree will be almost three times the width of the nebari; like this, the bonsai will become acceptable.

The jins can produce too much drama to this bonsai; you should balance this by introducing a calm styling. Therefore, the green masses need to be styled in a classic and formal way.

To enhance the slight movement of the trunk towards the right, you can position the first branch to the right of the trunk, inside the curve, and place the balance branch much higher on the left side. The green mass to the left will be short and dense, while on the right it will be longer, with more empty spaces. The apex should stand right above the nebari.

By the end, the composition will be very asymmetric, with a long jin on the left. This bonsai will be original, unique and completely unforgettable!

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:
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Just a plastic tray

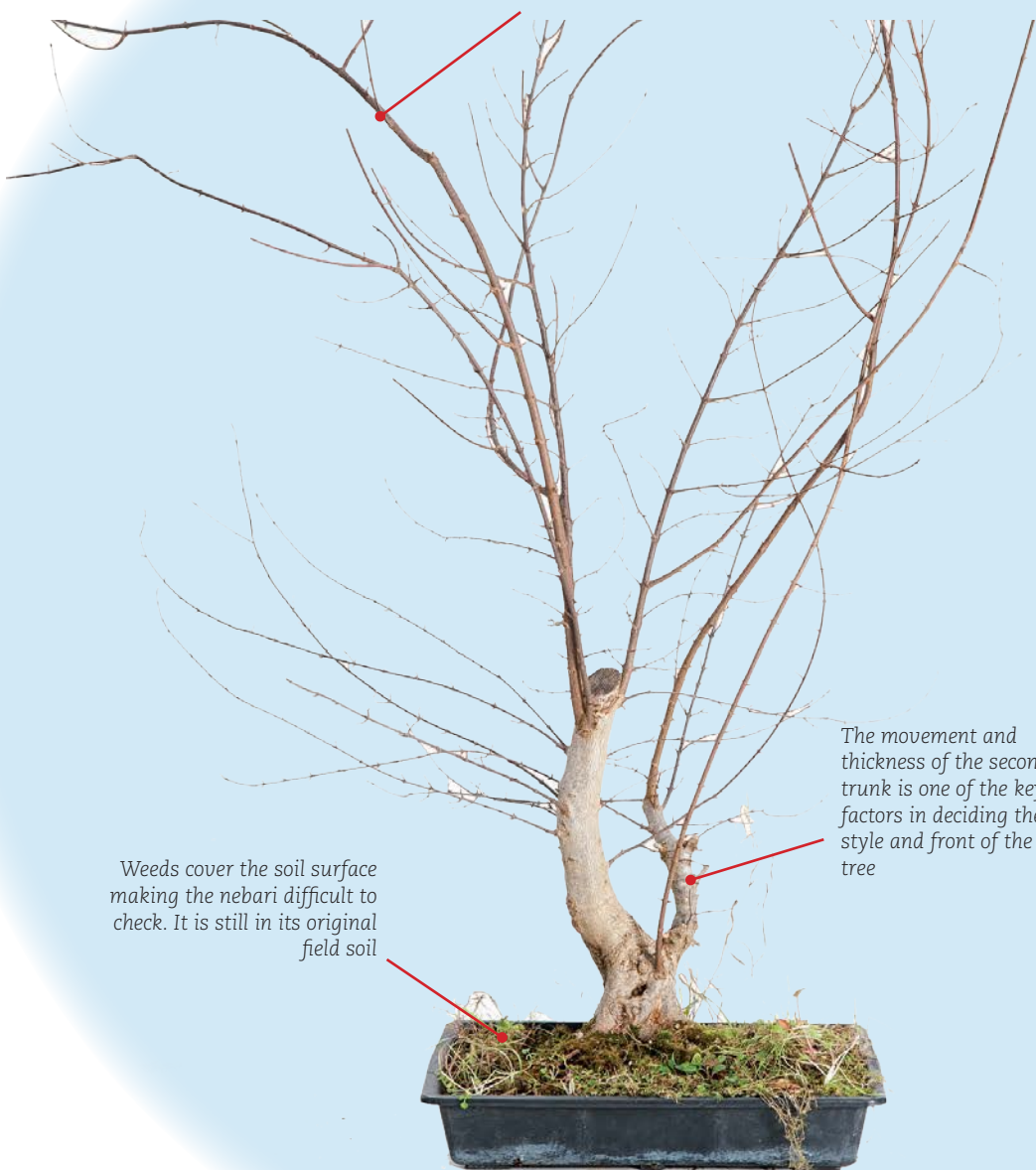
Working with deciduous trees is always a long-term project which needs some clever thinking, too

Text: Peter Warren Photography: Bonsai Focus Studio, Shinchi Adachi

Peter Warren: 'Here you can see the first stages in taking a piece of field grown trident maple material into a bonsai container and setting it off on its path to becoming a bonsai. Attention is paid to several stages of development at the same time, making the result occur much more rapidly'

The tree in March 2012

Long vigorous growth in the top of the tree although it does show signs of having good leaf and node characteristics



The movement and thickness of the second trunk is one of the key factors in deciding the style and front of the tree

Weeds cover the soil surface making the nebari difficult to check. It is still in its original field soil

This piece of material was grown in the UK from seed and I picked this because it exhibits good foliage characteristics and growth habit. On the less vigorous branches the node length is small and the leaves a relatively compact size; this means that, with work, a fine and delicate branch structure is possible. There are, however, many problems to overcome at the initial stage, the roots, the trunk and branches — pretty much the entire tree.

Lacks excitement

Work on deciduous trees is a long-term project. It lacks the excitement of styling a conifer in one sitting, but it gives you the opportunity to plan everything from scratch and put that plan into action step by step. Here there are several major steps to consider and then decide if any can be done at the same time.

The order of work on raw material is most important, we cannot put girth on the trunk at the same time as developing a fine, well ramified branch structure and so the initial stages of development will require some years of vigorous growth before we settle down into a stage of refinement.

Twin trunk

One of the great characteristics of this tree is the twin trunk arrangement and the size relationship between them. There are two main potential viewing angles from the start point, but the final decision will to a certain extent depend on what we find in the roots and how the tree responds.

Correcting the root system is essential from stage one as the type of roots, their vigour and their structure, have a direct



Removing the weeds reveals the nebari. Already a problem root can be seen curving down and back into the soil



Removing the soil underneath the trunk. There are clearly many fibrous roots



Once the majority of the soil is removed, the rest is washed off



It is important to be able to see the details of the structure, to untangle roots, cutting where appropriate



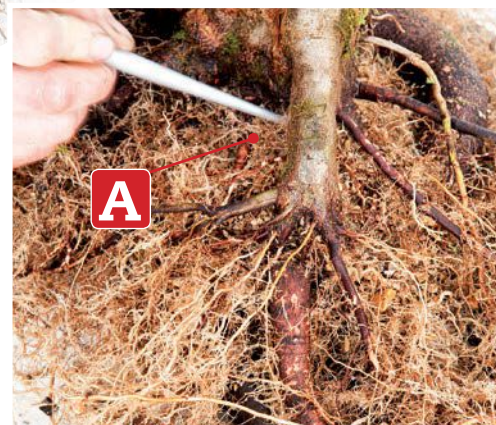
Above: Long thin roots such as this need attention. Below: This one is cut back to a secondary side root



Here there is a considerably-sized root is growing from the underside



There is a strong well positioned upper surface root and vigorous roots growing from directly underneath it (a). In order to favour the surface root which will form an intrinsic part of the nebari, the lower root is to be carefully removed



influence on the branches. Strong, racing roots are a sign of strong racing branches and vice versa. In order to create well rounded delicate branching, we need to create well rounded delicate roots. The initial stage will be to begin the correction process and to develop a nebari that flows outwards evenly in all directions, formed of fine lateral roots.

Strong roots

After exposing the roots initially, the structure becomes apparent. Many years had passed since it was last worked on and one root in particular had become strong. This was reduced dramatically and other roots taken back to a suitable weaker side root. The initial stage also required a period of vigorous growth on

top and so care was taken to maintain as much root as possible. The original planting was done without concern for the front of the tree, but more with the development of an '8-sided nebari'. Space was given to roots that needed to develop and well developed areas given less. It was also planted on a perforated plastic tray. The idea being that the roots directly



A fine blade saw is used to get into the difficult to reach area. It is cut back on top and will then be removed from underneath



The entangled end is removed



Another problematic situation, a thick root which then grows out in opposite directions (a), neither of which is useful



The side roots are cut off



The thick heavy inward curving root is to be cut back. There is a small side root, but the majority of the growth is from the tip



A third of the root mass comes away with the root



Now the cut end needs to be shaped a little more attractively

A chisel is used to do this, finishing off with a knife



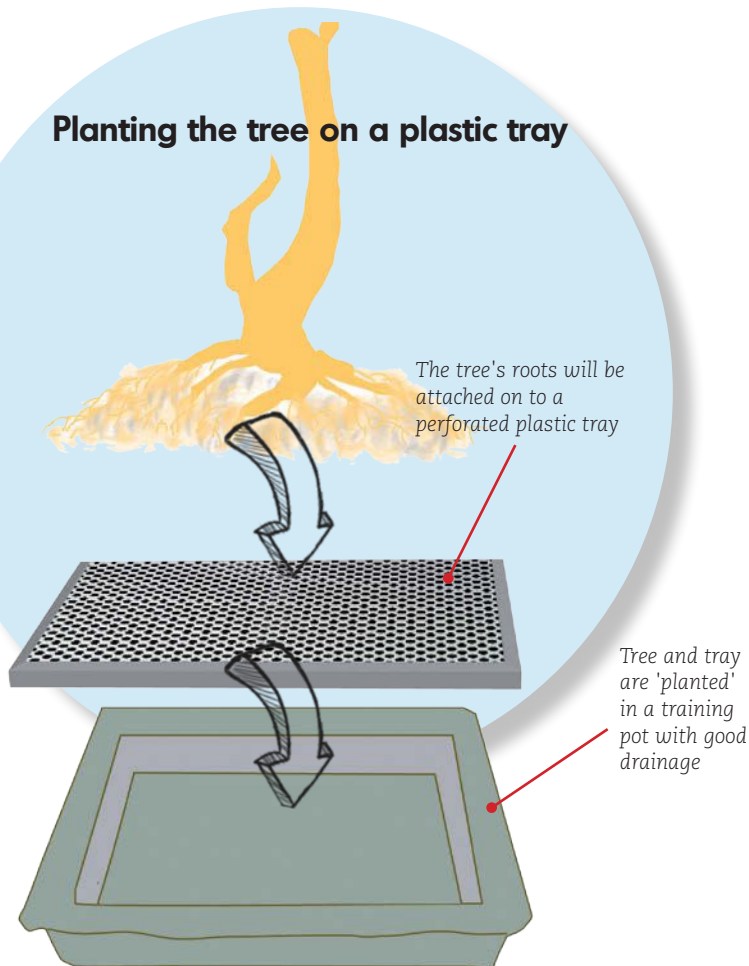


The heaviest roots on the bottom are cut back, but not so much as to remove all the fine roots and weaken the tree



After root pruning: As there is still development required above the soil, plenty of roots have been left underneath

Planting the tree on a plastic tray



The pot and soil are prepared. A large plastic pot with good drainage and fine particle soil mix of 50% Akadama, 40% Pumice and 10% Kiryu



underneath the trunk will grow down and through those holes, but will only reach a certain thickness before being stopped by the diameter of the hole. This restricts growth on the unwanted roots beneath the trunk and forces the tree to favour the lateral roots above.

Taper and movement

The two other aspects of development are introducing taper and movement to

the upper sections of both trunks while the large trunk scars heal. Both of these require several years of growing a new leader and branches above the wound and then removing before they cause a new problem. There needs to be at least two if not three occasions where the leader is cut back to a suitable side branch, then regrown in order to achieve the desired taper. This also introduces natural looking changes of direction.

The same is done with branches. The initial styling of the tree chose the front so that the large wound was at the back of the tree, but the smaller trunk curved towards the front. The size of the largest wound is such that it is unlikely to heal completely in the next 15 years, whereas the small wound healed in 4 years.

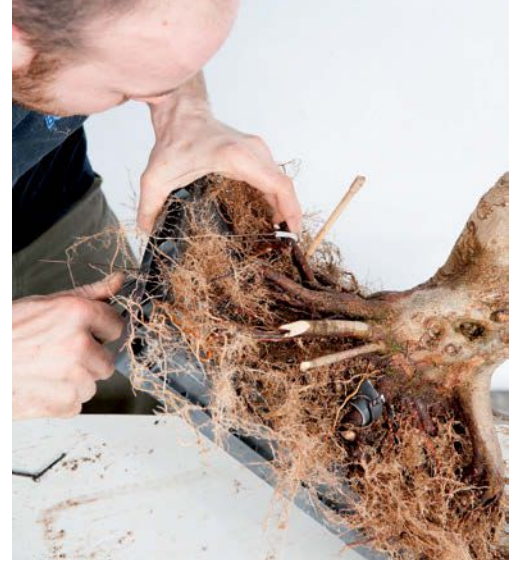
Attaching the roots to the tray



The perforated plastic tray will help to fix the tree in position and stop any excessive downward root development



Wire is passed through the holes and over the top of the strongest surface roots. Protective rubber hose is used at any point that the wire touches the roots



Wire is also used to pull thinner roots into more desirable positions. This root floats above the others and is pulled down



The plastic tray is placed into the pot and tied down



Fine roots are then positioned using bamboo sticks pushed through the holes in the tray



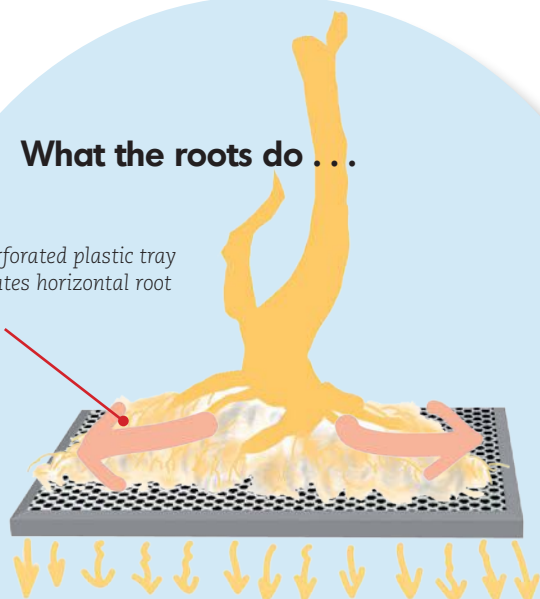
Once all the roots are in position, soil is carefully poured over . . .

. . . And immediately watered in. The dry soil will start to kill the finest roots within minutes



What the roots do . . .

The perforated plastic tray stimulates horizontal root growth



Downward growing roots are stopped thickening by the holes of the perforated plastic

Using the pressure of the water, the soil is worked into the gaps. The soil level drops as the soil works its way into all the holes

The basic structure

Work begins on the branches, setting the basic structure.



Selecting the branches that will stay

Let it grow

After planting the tree is allowed a year of unrestricted growth before the branches are looked at again. On inspecting the development of the surface roots and looking at the branches, no reasons for concern are found with the roots and they can be given another two years to grow before needing work. The top of the tree is starting to develop nicely. The lower branches, inevitably, are still quite weak; however, the main focus is on the 'neck' of the tree. Creating the movement and taper is essentially a case of cutting back to a suitable side branch and then accentuating with wire.

The second major repotting of the tree is to remove it from the training pot and to get it into something shallow.

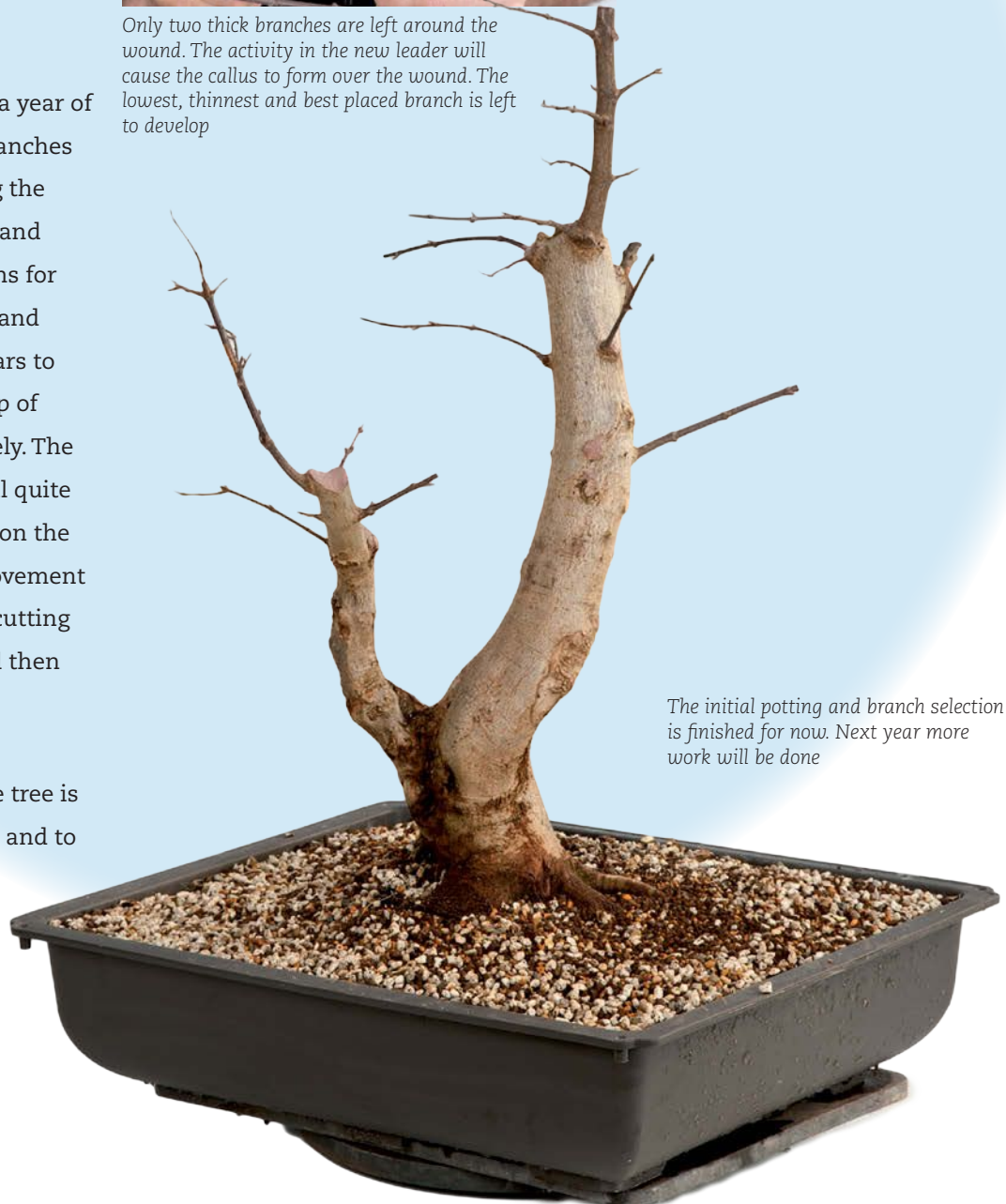
The biggest issue is the wound on the top of the main trunk. There is some rotten wood around it. As much of this as possible is removed



Only two thick branches are left around the wound. The activity in the new leader will cause the callus to form over the wound. The lowest, thinnest and best placed branch is left to develop



The initial potting and branch selection is finished for now. Next year more work will be done



February 2013

A year later I returned to the Bonsai Focus studio to work on the branches. The tree showed vigorous growth all over and no sign of problems with the roots. So far so good.



Where branches are already thick enough, they are pruned back to the first node



A small stub is retained, which can be removed later



To introduce taper and movement to the top of the second trunk the leader is pruned back to a side branch moving towards the left



The wound on the second trunk is yet to heal fully and the thickness of the top section is insufficient, so the strong branch midway on the right-hand side will be grown to help solve this



One branch in the top section is now too vigorous and is removed, causing another major wound



The large wound on the top of the main trunk is carved a little more to remove further soft wood



Shaping and smoothing the large wounds is essential to create natural looking taper as they heal

Kitchen towel for the delicate branches



I use kitchen towel to wrap around heavy aluminium wire that will be used on the apex. This will protect the delicate bark. Rapidly growing trees have very thin bark and will be easily damaged



Double wires are used, carefully avoiding the freshly created wound on the outside of the curve

Movement is put into the top section very carefully and slowly, using both hands





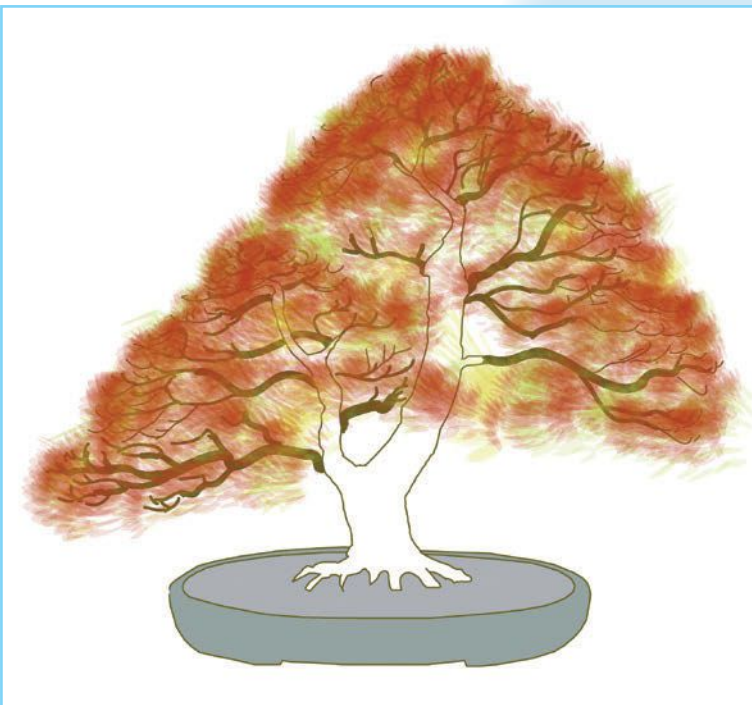
This bud was very carefully protected, as it is ideally positioned to become a branch or a potential new leader



The wound at the top is carved once again to match it to the new line of the trunk



The freshly created wounds at the top are wrapped tightly in grafting tape. This will force the callus to form tightly against the trunk rather than bulge



A future image of the tree gives an impression of how it will look

Finally

The next stage of branch selection has been finished, but there is more thickness required in the top sections of both trunks. Another couple of years' vigorous growth is required.



To be continued . . .

The second major repotting of the tree is to remove it from the training pot and to get it into something shallow. Read it in the next issue



Despite its many thorns, hawthorn is very bonsai friendly

Crataegus

Text and photography: Bonsai Focus Studio

Hawthorn, or *Crataegus*, is a great subject for bonsai. Easy growing and very forgiving when mistakes are made. It will send out multiple new shoots, giving you plenty of opportunity to grow new branches. The abrupt change in the direction of growth, the characteristic bark and its small leaves make it a most suitable variety to work with. Here Dominique Bosch takes us step by step as he styles a hawthorn . . .

Its bizarre growth that switches direction in an almost 90 degree edge is one of its main characteristics. Applying a clip and grow method is very useful for this variety, but sometimes difficult to predict in which direction the new shoot will sprout.

Big cuts will heal quite slowly, so if you work on this tree, spring is the best season to do so. It's preferable to cover the wounds with cut paste directly after removing branches. You will notice that with regular pruning new growth will continue through the whole season. The first shoots don't need to be pruned instantly

because its new growth won't thicken fast. However, the new shoots from younger plants are mostly pruned to two or five leaves according to the planned length of the branch. If the tree is more mature, pruning is done earlier to maintain its shape. Wiring must be done with some care; thicker branches will not really be bendable, so it's best to wire the young and flexible branches. The thicker branches can be adjusted, helped by guy wires, but use protective tube so that wire doesn't cut into the bark. Because the hawthorn does not thicken very fast, wire can remain in place for longer.



Analysing the tree

According to Dominique: 'This tree is interesting since it has one main trunk and a lower side branch or trunk, making it suitable for a 'Father and son' style. Its root base offers interest on the opposite side, its roots and the movement are much better balanced there, making it a more suitable front than this.'



2

Removing branches

'Many branches have grown out of proportion and in the wrong direction. I will remove these first and then slowly the shape of the tree becomes visible. A large section at the top needs to be removed leaving a stump.'



Removing some thick shoots at the base as they block the view



Lots of branches are too thick or criss cross



Thick branches need to be shortened

The result after the first pruning

**Hawthorn - HUSBANDRY****Propagate:**

With cuttings, or air layer.

**Placement:**

Cannot withstand hard and long periods of frost. Likes full sun and a well ventilated place in the garden. Avoid placing too close to junipers.

**Pruning:**

Clip and grow method to create a natural appearance.

**Repotting:**

It can be a pain to repot, so be careful when pruning roots. If you allow the older trees to become slightly pot-bound there will be more flowering.

**Watering:**

Loves to be kept moist, so don't let it dry out in summer. In winter, avoid it becoming too wet.

**Wiring:**

Only young branches can be wired. Don't wire older branches, nor bend them; instead they are shaped by pruning.

3

More to remove

'The big stump is removed and a final selection of branches is made. Most of them are very useful, but need to be just a bit shorter to improve tapering. They should then develop side branches.'



I use a very fine saw to remove the stump



The wound's surface is smoothed so that it will heal over rapidly



Detail shot of the spherical cutter removing all the irregularities

The result after pruning



Removing those branches at the top is not necessary

The top is left long

Young branches that I can wire and position

Side trunk enhances the movement to the right



Hawthorn - STYLES

Sharimiki



Moyogi



Sankan



Sokan



Shakan



Kengai



Hawthorn - SPECIES

Common name:

Hawthorn

Genus:

Crataegus

Higher taxon:

Rosaceae

Skill level:

Beginner to advanced.

Soil type:

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

added to the mix.

Flowers and Fruit:

White flower clusters in late spring with berry like fruit. Hawthorns provide food and shelter for many species of mammals, birds. Flowers are important for nectar-feeding insects

Foliage:

Leaves of most species have lobed or serrated margins

and are somewhat variable in shape.

Bark:

Smooth grey in young trees, and developing long shallow fissures with narrow ridges in older trees. The thorns are small sharp-tipped branches that arise either from other branches, or from the trunk, and are typically 1–3 cm long.



Careful wiring takes place



I hold the wire around my right arm while wiring

Wiring is next

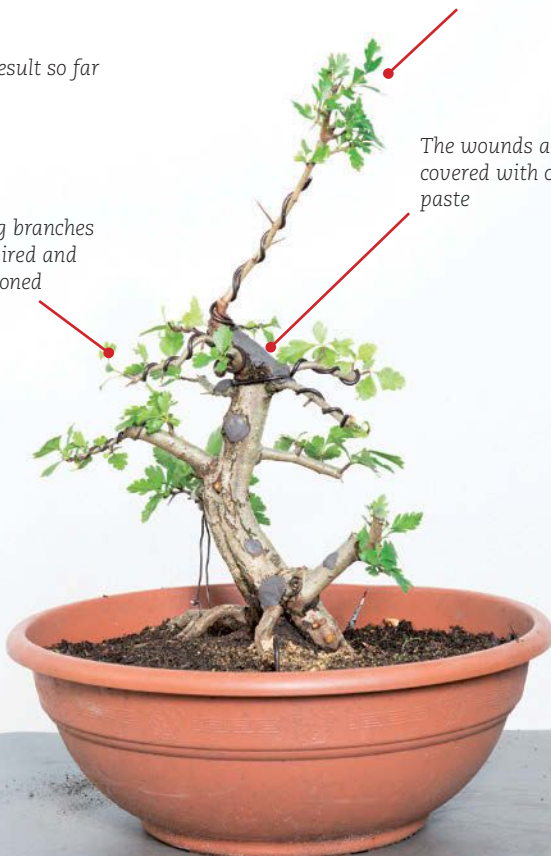
'After the pruning task is complete the shape of the tree is almost set. Wiring is done to make some small corrections only. I let the top branch grow as long as possible. Its strong growth will help to heal the large wound.'

The result so far

Young branches are wired and positioned

The top is left to grow freely for a couple of seasons

The wounds are covered with cut paste



Future image of the tree

Demonstrators

Japanese Bonsai Artists



MASAHIKO
KIMURA
NIPPON BONSAI ASSOCIATION,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



HIROSHI
TAKEYAMA
WORLD BONSAI FRIENDSHIP FEDERATION,
TREASURER



KUNIO
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2017 4.27 (thu)～4.30(sun)

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THE LAST GIANT

Taking a mega juniper from raw material to masterpiece bonsai

Text and photography: Kinbon magazine, Japan

Mr Hirokatsu Iura and his son Takashi Iura took quite a risk in creating a marvellous juniper of amazing proportions



Height: 220 cm / 86½" Width: 210 cm / 82¾"
June 2003. The grafts for layering have already been put in place

Mountains of Tohoku

This juniper originated in the mountains of Tohoku where it was collected before being planted in a wooden box to develop its roots. To say that it is one of the last of the giant Tohoku junipers would not be too far from the truth. The famous junipers 'Fushin' and 'Reishin' were both initially collected by Mr Iura who is expert on such matters and in his opinion, this is

the last of the Giants.

Collecting a juniper is a very difficult practice and a tremendous gamble as to whether or not it will survive. Here lies the romance and interest of junipers as bonsai material and what attracts us to them. Working on roots to compact them and get them into a pot is the most important initial work, something that

comes with a high level of risk. Mr Iura has been at the forefront of research into grafting different foliage on to junipers and used this knowledge to develop the techniques for grafting roots.

Here we will see the transformation of this giant juniper from raw material into the beginnings of a bonsai.



1st August 2005

The root grafts are as they were and new grafts have been made with good foliage-type whips



The root grafts are connected and working with the tree, the branches are growing very strongly, but it will be another two years before they are separated



To lift up the tree after separation, a chain block and tackle is created. It is time for the tree to be independent and continue on its path to become a bonsai



The long awaited
day of
separation arrives



First Mr Iura Snr checks the roots of the graft. They are very active and are filling the box



From separation to planting in a pot, the new life of a bonsai starts here . . .



After checking the position of the separation, Mr Iura's son, Takashi Iura, helps out with the chainsaw.



As you would expect, the trunk is very hard and it takes a long time, with Mr Iura Snr looking on and checking the progress



The separation is complete and the tree is dancing in mid-air



The tree is very carefully lowered and unfastened. Now, lying on its side, it is independent

Somehow it is lifted by two people and carried to the polytunnel where it will be planted in the prepared pot. It took a long time with many rest stops





It takes three people to lift and settle the tree into the pot



Wooden blocks are placed in the soil to elevate the tree to the correct height and also to reduce stress on the grafted roots



After checking the angle and the depth, the fixing wires are drilled through holes in the shari



The grafted roots are essentially floating in the centre of the pot, without any stress or weight being put on them



Soil mix is poured into the pot. As the roots are fresh and delicate, there is no need to work the soil in and around the root ball

Even without cleaning the trunk, it is clear that it is a masterpiece



A trunk beaten by wind and snow



This is the base of the trunk that has been supporting the top section of the tree for countless years. It is an emotional day



It is quite impossible to count the rings at the point of separation and estimate the age

15th March 2013: The first pruning since transplanting



Mr Iura with the planted juniper. The next stage of development is down to his son, to whom he hands over the baton

The variety of foliage that was grafted is an *itoigawa* type that grows rapidly. The branches have actually grown too much and the internal shoots started to die off. If left alone, the branches would get longer and longer and it would need to be grafted again. Unnecessary branches are removed and the remaining branches are wired to give it a basic shape, positioning them to create foliage pads and flattening the upward growing branches to form an apex.



The last remaining branches of the original foliage are removed at the same time as it is planted



All the original foliage has been removed, the grafted branches have grown vigorously and the foliage has become too dense on the inside



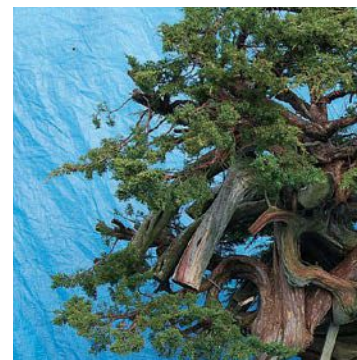
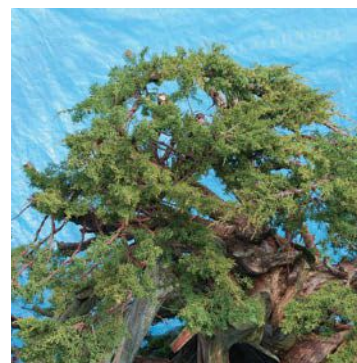
The grafted branches are worked on by removing all unnecessary branches and wiring from the bottom main branch. All of the removed foliage on the floor is from the lower section only



It took both Mr Iura (right) and his senpai, or senior apprentice, Mr Omachi hours to wire and style the tree



The various stages of wiring



Detail of the lower left branch before and after styling

Front after the initial styling. At this stage there are still a number of unnecessary branches on the tree. As time goes by, more branches will be removed and foliage pads created. The trunk in the centre of the tree is a powerful image



After the initial styling, it returns to a wooden box in order to allow the branches to again grow rapidly. It is such an important piece of material that excessive caution must be taken



Getting closer to the finish

9th April 2015

It is now 13 years since we first started to follow this tree. At this stage we will see the tree styled into what will essentially become the finished image and Mr Iura will have to do all of the wiring himself. It is almost too big to be a bonsai and Mr Iura must get the most out of the tree and compact it once again.



Front before the work began. The basic foundation for the branches has been set and there is plenty of vigour, which can be seen in the adventitious shoots



The styling begins from the lower branch. It looks an overwhelming task looming over Mr Iura



Jins that were left with a flat cut end are worked on



Once reaching the apex, Mr Iura has to stand on a plastic case to reach. The bright blue sky is dazzling.



The front after the rough wiring. It has reached a bonsai-like outline, but needs some more refinement, which will take at least half a day to do



'An unique and romantic path'

Mr Iura, Snr: 'I first met this tree more than 15 years ago and fell in love with the character seen in the middle of the trunk, yet it was too large to become a bonsai and too difficult to grow

as a garden tree. I acquired it with the sole intention of turning it into a world famous bonsai, even though it would be a massive challenge. Many of our trees are related to the business, but

not this one. This tree challenged me to develop new techniques and to push myself to the limit in order to bring the most from its character and create a monument to the beauty and severity of nature. It is testament to the junipers that you can see out in the wild that the few of us, who venture into the depths of the mountains, can see and experience their beauty.

It was my job to start it on the path to becoming a bonsai and now it is my son's job to continue that path, though I fully understand that one day he may decide to make it smaller and perform another root graft at a different point on the tree. That would be fine with me, but for now, I love to look at it and remember it as the last of the Tohoku Giants.'

We were sad to hear the news that Mr Iura Snr. passed away last year.

'My father and his juniper'

Mr Takahashi Iura: 'Even when I was young my father was always fascinated by yamadori and had them around the nursery. I decided to pursue bonsai and became an apprentice (at Mr Takeo Kawabe's nursery). I have forgotten how many trees I have seen die when my father thought that roots had grafted successfully, yet after separation the tree had died. I am amazed my mother put up with all the failures, but whenever my father found new yamadori material, his

excitement was unbelievable. The father of my fellow apprentice, Mr Omachi, was exactly the same. When you see a raw piece of juniper yamadori that has been captured and for want of a better word, imprisoned by man, it is a wonderfully moving sight. It is what inspired me along my path.

In the case of this tree, for a long time, I thought that my father had placed the roots in the wrong position, too high, making it too big. I now understand his

decision. The power and magnificence of this Tohoku Giant cannot be compacted down into a smaller tree. Perhaps one day in the future, somebody may want to make it smaller, but for now, I intend to finish it at this size.





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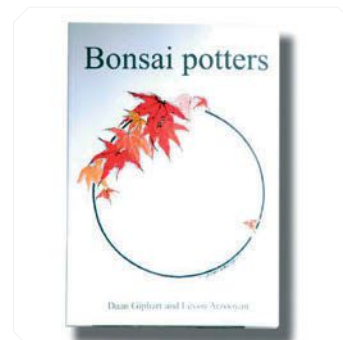
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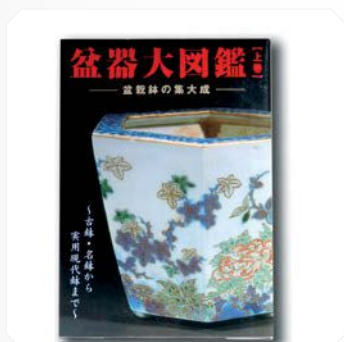
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Is it real?

Bonsai has the magical power to transport us to another world and Patrick Bergsma's Landscape-Sculptures do just that — but are they real?

Text: Farrand Bloch Photography: Farrand Bloch, Patrick Bergsma

Patrick Bergsma is the artist I came upon at an Art Fair in Rotterdam. I was completely charmed by his floating bonsai with the addition of all manner of houses and figurines, just like Chinese penjing. Some of the bonsai were real trees; not living, but brought to life by this skilful and creative artist. His works find their way to the USA, to Korea and China. I met him at his studio just near Heerhugowaard in the north of Holland.

Above: A head covered with the roots of a conifer. Right: Floating in the air, life and death in one work



Did you have any interest in nature or gardening?

I have always been enormously drawn to nature. I was raised in the seventies and my teachers were kind of hippies with very romantic ideas about nature. This had a great impact on me and so I started to grow plants from seed when I was 16. They told me that it had weed in it to smoke and so I just loved to see how the plant grew bit by bit every day. Making art some years later really gave me a far bigger kick than the need for smoking weed, but just for fun I continued growing these plants which always proved to be a good present for my friends who loved to smoke. Growing bonsai myself gives me even more satisfaction, it has become a kind of addiction which can be very intense

But how did you really become interested in bonsai?

My interest started when working on a series of artworks based on the history of ceramics and porcelain. Contrary to the pretentious art paintings

it was a most welcome and refreshing source of inspiration. I made large contemporary panels with images based on German porcelain. German porcelain in its turn was inspired by the much older Chinese examples. When I hit upon the idea of making these images in 3D I thought of using the oriental art of bonsai. I approached nurseries in Holland and asked if they could save their sick and dead bonsai for me, which I could then use in my 3D landscape sculptures.

What is it that attracts you to bonsai?

The stories about the onset of bonsai and penjing art appealed to me. The Chinese theory of the 5 elements, for example, or Wu Xing, the Buddhist monks who took odd-shaped trees from the mountains and used them for meditating about the forces of nature and the struggle to survive. In this same spirit, I try to see the world as it occurs to me, including



Patrick with his 'growing' bonsai outside his studio



A bonsai book is a source of inspiration



Lots of material is waiting to be used for the next creation

modern communication, like Facebook, Instagram and so on. With an open mind, just as when I had a clear dream and feel totally free, I let my intuition guide me. My workshop has all kinds of materials lying about like toys, bonsai trees, old trains, houses. I combine these elements till they just fit together. I can define this process as similar to dreaming out loud. After this stage I refine my sculptures with various techniques which come from the areas of bonsai and penjing as well as the art of miniature modelling, welding and art painting.



A rock named 'Anywhere', has a windswept tree planted to the right



A car junk yard with a juniper planted on top



A big water tower with artificial tree, hangs from the ceiling



A pine planted on old silos and a water tower



'Burden sometimes' is a small work, but with a very clear message

artwork of a horse, which I dressed with living material. Its tail and pony hair are made of grass and its body is covered with the sedum mosses used to cover roofs. The horse is transformed in a kind of landscape which depicts a caravan and a young lady who seems to have lost her way. My artificial bonsai have improved meanwhile and look far more realistic since I received more insight into the art of bonsai; but still there is much to learn from the bonsai Masters.

Most of your bonsai are made from inanimate things. How do you approach bonsai as a living organism?

Some of the bonsai I acquired stayed alive, these were the beginning of my fast-growing bonsai collection. Like a true beginner I just did what I thought was right. Later when bonsai fever hit me, I sought out more information. Fortunately I bumped into Ron de Roo, a respected bonsai lover and artist, who happened to live very close to my home. He is a great help in teaching me to understand the living bonsai in which I consider myself still a novice. I already have plans to use live bonsai in my artwork, but need to learn much more to be able to get this going. Just recently I delivered a large



*Above: In Patrick's studio one of the works on the wall was inspired by Chinese porcelain.
Right: 'Times', an apocalyptic scene?*



Patrick working on the next creation in his studio



Do you consider bonsai as an art form?

Just like painting and sculpture, it can be a hobby or practiced professionally. The intention of the creator, grower or any regular guy decides whether or not it's art.

Post-apocalyptic?

Patrick's bonsai are very intriguing. His previous works included paintings of bonsai on china plates. The artist owes his special interest in porcelain and miniatures to spending time in his family-owned antique shop as a child. 'My landscape sculptures first started off as a modern 3D version of floating landscapes on old porcelain plates,' Patrick explains. 'I use the bonsai as a structural base for dramatic, mysterious and playful tableaux.'

His mixed media pieces are typically 'planted' in traditional plots, others are suspended to look as if they float in mid-air, resembling the latest Air Bonsai trend. Using materials which include miniature figures and objects sourced from 1950s and 60s model kits, epoxy clay, metal and paint, he breathes new life into this centuries-old art form: in one, cars are piled up in a junkyard, from which a cowboy looks pensively over the edge and in another, a man parks his motor at the foot of an old tree. Patrick Bergma's works offer us a more sorrowful version of bonsai's simplicity, a landscape that is strangely both calming and distressing as we're asked to contemplate our way of life.

(Excerpt from online magazine HiFructose
www.hifructose.com)



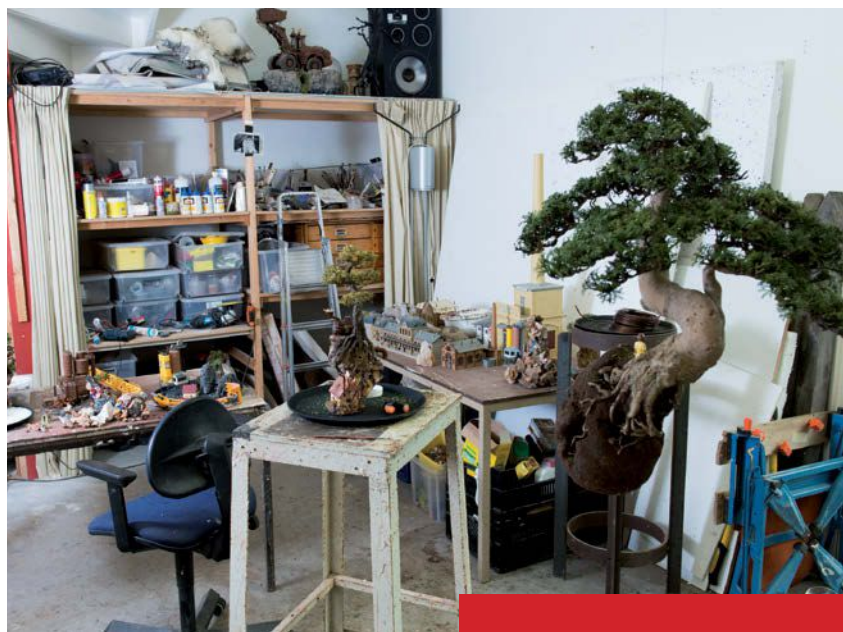
'The Gondola', a real, but dead bonsai planted on an artificial rockery hanging from the ceiling



I use the bonsai as a structural base for dramatic, mysterious and playful tableaux



*Above: detail of the work on the left.
 Left: A juniper planted on a pile of trash placed in a supermarket trolley.
 Right: Patrick's studio*





Into the core...

Search for a cause of ill health in a white pine

Text and photography: Kinbon magazine, Japan. Skills: Mr Kunio Kobayashi (Shunkaen Edogawa-ku, Tokyo)

A pine slowly starts to die off, so what is happening here? Did you give it too much water? Maybe just too little? The problem and its solution is hidden deep within the root ball

Why has the pine reached this condition?

Many branches here and there in the apex have died

Is a lack of water the only cause for the branch death?

The Miyajima white pine before work takes place.
Height: 58 cm / 22¾"
Width: 87 cm / 34¼"

The lower trunk girth is considerable at about 30 cm / 11¾"

Looking at the recent scars and dead branches we see that well over half the tree has died off. It is difficult to imagine that this much damage has been caused by a lack of water on just one or two occasions

Is it just a lack of water?

The material we are looking at here is an old Miyajima white pine. It has been grown by an enthusiast at home for a number of years and during the recent past it has suffered from lack of water. It did not die entirely, but continued to deteriorate in health until it was brought to Mr Kobayashi's garden. Even under the care of a professional, several branches continued to die without any obvious reason and the vigour did not return.

Miyajima white pines are chosen for their suitability for bonsai cultivation. They do not tend to send out very vigorous, uneven extensions of either branches or roots. This means that, once established, they can be left for up to ten years before transplanting. They are drought resistant, require very little attention and will grow quite happily. In order for the tree to deteriorate to this level there must be a deeper reason and in order to find out, a closer inspection of the roots is required.

Several months after taking care of the tree, carefully watering it and placing charcoal on the soil surface, the tree has yet to recover



The first thing is to check the condition of the roots

When removed from the pot, the outer circumference of soil doesn't look bad. It was previously repotted 3 years ago and by now the pot should be full of roots, but considering the condition at the top of the tree, there are a reasonable number of roots and there is a good distribution of mycorrhiza throughout the root ball. If anything, the roots appear to be in a good condition.



It is removed from the pot, a two person job with this tree



Removed from the pot and the root ball stays pretty much intact without breaking down



A sign of root health in pines is the presence of the symbiotic white fungus, which spreads through the root ball. It is present here throughout the roots



It doesn't look that bad . . .

Soil rakes and hooks

There are a number of different root hooks and rakes that are essential tools for all repotting work. From working around the pot edge, to removing the tree

from the pot, to breaking down the root ball and exposing the roots, the three pronged 'bear claw' root hook is used for removing larger amounts of soil initially

before moving to a single hook for more detailed work in between roots. Then move on to using bamboo chopsticks, etc.



The three pronged root hook is used for removing a large amount of soil initially, working around the edge of the root ball, from the centre outwards



When working on more delicate areas where you don't want to pull on the roots, a single hook is preferable



Once the majority of the easy to remove soil has gone, a chopstick is used



Working downwards using tweezers between the fine roots



When the root ball is very solid and hard, an awl, a sharpened metal rod, is used to start breaking up the soil



Looking into the core of the root ball



After removing a large part of the root ball healthy roots are found, but there's also a noticeable quantity of black and grey dead roots

After pruning back some of the longer roots: The area within the circle is directly under the trunk. There doesn't immediately appear to be much of a problem . . .



Guilty as charged!

From the start Mr Kobayashi suspected that the cause of the problem was the presence of field soil, left over from the early days of development. Miyajima white pines are often cultivated in fields in the western parts of Japan, especially Shikoku where they are grafted on to black pine root stock. When they are lifted from the field the soil is removed and

replaced with bonsai soil, though sometimes the original soil will remain.

In the core of the root ball the original field soil has created a compact wall which makes the water and oxygen penetration almost impossible. If this continues for a period of time the roots inside the core will die, either from lack of

water, or lack of fresh air. Once the health of the tree starts to deteriorate it's quite impossible for the tree to grow new roots and recover.

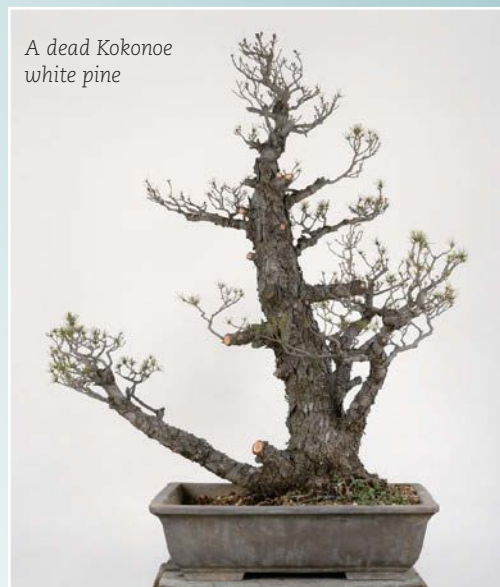
As Mr Kobayashi suspected, the cause of the tree's bad health is excessive field soil in the core of the root ball.



With a chopstick, Mr Kobayashi digs away at an area between the two thick roots and a greyish clay starts to appear. This process reveals a surprisingly large amount of field soil, the cause of the tree's decline in health



This is the amount of field soil removed from the first spot in between the two roots. There is still a large amount remaining among the roots.



A dead Kokonoe white pine



Removed from the pot, the root ball soon falls apart



Once the soil is removed, there are plenty of thick roots, but few that are fine

Inspecting the roots on a dead tree

In the same way as the tree featured in the main article, this tree (Kokonoe white pine) gradually declined in health, losing branches here and there. Mr Kobayashi kept the tree so we could take a look at the roots.

There are a considerable number of roots, but they are all thick with very few fine roots to absorb water as required. The core of the root ball also showed a considerable amount of field soil, which has a suffocating effect on the roots.

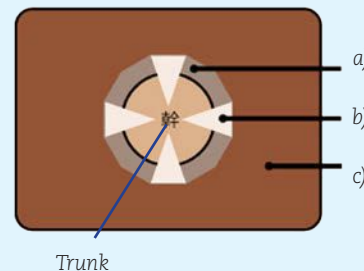


In the centre of the root ball areas of clay-like field soil remain

Deal with it patiently and gradually

Not all of the field soil is removed during this first stage of recovery. It has been there for more than ten years and it cannot reasonably be removed in one go without the risk of causing severe damage to the roots. It would be inadvisable to remove it all, even on a healthy tree.

For the first step, between a third and half of the field soil is removed and will be replaced with bonsai soil. This will have a dramatic effect on the health of the root ball and the health of the tree. Water and oxygen will now be able to penetrate into the core of the roots and new roots will grow. Once, after several years, the vigour returns, the rest of the field soil can be removed.



Trunk

A: Removing the field soil in stages

B: Field soil (around and directly underneath the trunk)

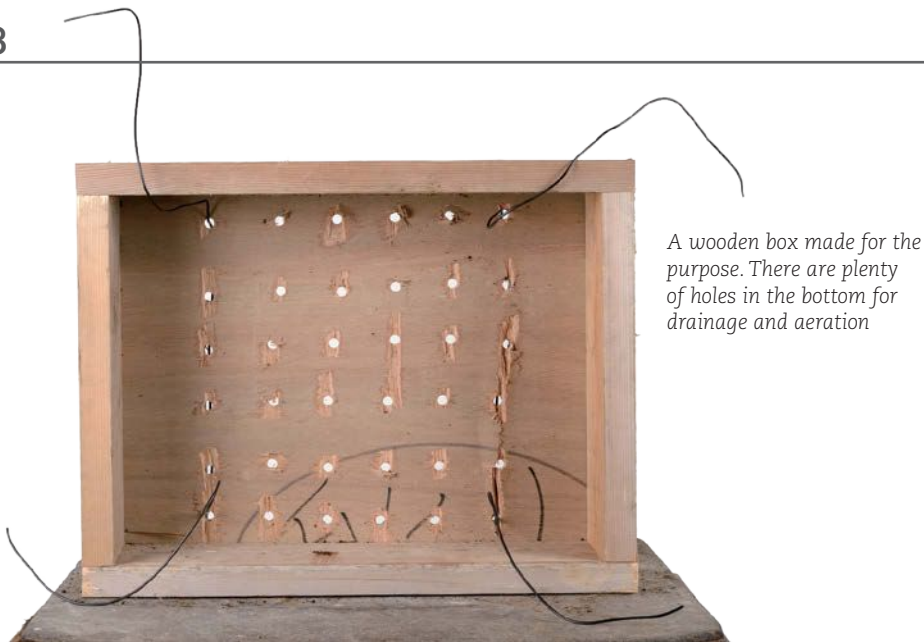
C: Bonsai soil

The field soil is in between the roots directly underneath the trunk and has formed a solid ball, clinging stubbornly to the roots. It is difficult to remove it all at once, so it will happen in stages over several transplanting operations



The removal of the field soil is finished and the roots have been pruned appropriately. Holes were made in four different locations. This has a huge influence on the water and oxygen penetration into the root ball. The areas that remain will be worked on once the tree has recovered sufficiently





A wooden box made for the purpose. There are plenty of holes in the bottom for drainage and aeration



Soil to be used: Large particle, main soil and fine soil. The main soil is much larger than most situations, with particle size up to 10 mm. It is a mixture of Akadama and pumice with the addition of charcoal. The most important thing is to improve the balance between oxygen and water in the root ball

Using a wooden box for maximum growth

A technique that is often used in the Satsuki bonsai world is to plant the tree either directly in the ground, or into a wooden box for rapid development of roots and vigour. It allows much more gaseous exchange and drainage than a ceramic pot.



A 2-particle sized layer of large soil is poured into the pot



The main soil is poured in, making a small mound in the centre



The freshly created holes in the root ball are filled, especially the deep ones



After working soil into the gaps, the root ball is watered lightly to help prevent the soil from dropping out



After the tree has been fixed in position, the pot is filled with soil



On the surface a layer of fine particle soil is spread, more for the sphagnum moss than aesthetics



Dried sphagnum moss is grated using a soil sieve



It is then spread across the soil surface. The repotting is finished

After planting: The dead branches are all cut off. This will help somewhat to redress the balance between roots and foliage mass



The branches that will certainly die were also cut off



The tree is thoroughly watered and the first major step on the long road towards recovery is taken

Wooden box therapy to help a famous old tree

Mr Kobayashi used a wooden box to help with the recovery of the famous pine known as "Oku no Kyousho".



It was planted directly into the ground for two years during which time the vigour returned to the tree, causing elongation of needles and shoots. It was ready to be returned to a pot and so it was removed from the ground in March



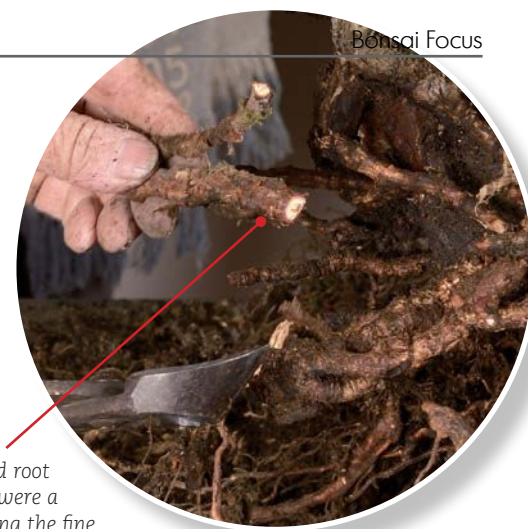
The soil is removed gently. Around the base of the trunk a number of heavy roots can be seen



The presence of many fine roots are a sure sign of the recovery process, the first and most important step. From here they will be carefully treated and given priority



Dead roots that were not dealt with last time are now removed



A fairly heavy dead root is removed. If this were a normal transplanting the fine roots would also be pruned back to help stimulate more growth, but as we are still in the early stages of redevelopment, not a single fine root is to be pruned



As there are very few roots, grated sphagnum moss is added to the soil mixture to ensure that the fine roots do not dry out



Soil is worked in very carefully between the gaps in the roots



To ensure that the soil does not become too acidic, fine flakes of charcoal are added to the soil



After repotting is finished: The wooden box will offer superb drainage and aeration capabilities, which will help the recovery

Two years after the transplanting vigour has returned, while the approximate outline has been maintained. Branches inside the tree have increased in vigour



Living the dream

So you want to be a bonsai professional?

By Tony Tickle

I am sure that at some point during a work day our minds have wandered to the trees in our gardens and dreamt that we could leave the mundane job. Be able to work full time with bonsai, to create trees as and when we like, to enjoy the freedom and fulfilment of fashioning a thing of beauty.

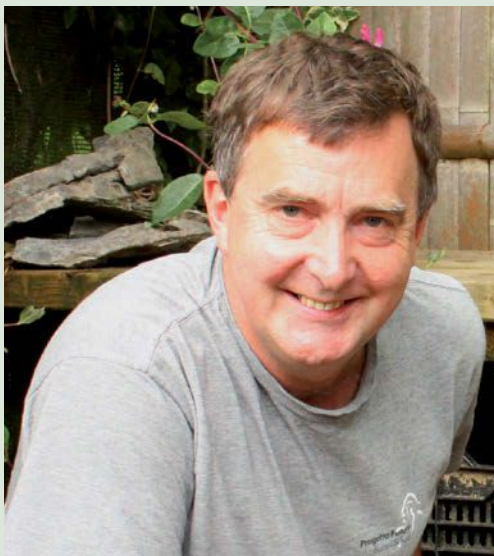
More than 20 years ago a couple of Britain's best known bonsai professionals gave me some advice; I was Managing Director of a successful design company that had been trading for ten years, but my passion was for bonsai. I wanted to work with bonsai full time, to teach, create and travel. I had won the UK Bonsai New Talent competition, I was building a good collection, but I had a young family, a mortgage and commitments.

The advice from my peers was harsh. 'Bonsai will never make you rich.' 'Right now you are good, but not THAT good.' 'Make your money doing something else and just enjoy bonsai in your spare time.' I felt that trying to make a living from bonsai would compromise my creative integrity and I would stop having the passion for trees. Now leap forward 20 years and today I don't have a mortgage, my children are grown and my income, though modest affords me the luxury of working with bonsai full time. . . I have all those years of experience behind me, plus my passion is even stronger.

If you turn creating bonsai into a side business, you could potentially generate enough income to leave your full-time employment. But at the same time, this means that creating bonsai will become a job. At the moment, creating bonsai may be a relaxing activity — your way to unwind after a hard day. Unfortunately, if creating bonsai becomes a job, it might lose its appeal. However, if you don't like what you're doing now, this can seem very attractive, but be warned, the bonsai landscape is littered with those who have tried and failed to make a decent living.

Perhaps the only way that one can build a career in the bonsai 'business' is to be unswerving and dedicated at a young age or to have an income from other sources. With few credible bonsai apprenticeships available in the West it takes a lot of self belief, commitment, bravery and cost to travel to Japan and follow your

dream. Being a bonsai professional also means you have to be good at business, it helps if you have decent language skills, are happy with speaking in public and a good networker. There are plus sides of course. You will be working with bonsai, you will get to style some amazing trees for clients and if you are happy to travel, invitations to far flung countries may ensue. Perhaps the best of all is meeting up with enthusiasts eager to learn and having the ability to help fulfil their dreams.



Apart from a few individuals who have ventured east, studied with established Masters, returned and are setting the bonsai scene on fire, bringing expertise and ideas with them, few folk make a decent living. I have witnessed that the most successful people in bonsai, unable to travel to study, are those who have developed a business that support the bonsai scene: Potters and table makers are prime examples. I am fortunate that bonsai enables me to travel to events across the world and, without exception, the bonsai globally are excellent. What many lack are pots and tables of quality, this is a good gateway into the wider bonsai scene.

Over the last 10 years Italy has been proactive in establishing schools of bonsai with many graduates going forward and becoming teachers. Conversely, an Italian Master recently told me that 'in Italy there are more teachers than students to teach'. I cannot imagine that we have reached saturation point as far as professional bonsai teachers are concerned and there's always room for talent. Many early bonsai pioneers in the West are either retired, working in the 'bonsai nursery in the sky', or simply doing something else.

If you are still determined to make bonsai your career be honest and ask yourself whether you are good enough. If you are not, choosing a different career may be the answer and keep bonsai for the relaxation and peace it can bring.



Triskele Pot Auction

Three potters, known as the Triskele gang, join forces and swopped pots

A unique project uniting three potters of completely different styles. They decided to swap their pots and let the other potter 'do something' with it. We show you the results of their first pots which are to be auctioned.

The first six pots, the result of this unusual collaboration, are to be released at the Nöelanders Trophy in 2017, where they will be displayed and, at an auction, will be sold to the highest bidder. There will be a chance to bid on these pots online until Sunday, February 5th. The bids will be announced via social media, Bonsai Focus website and on the Bonsai Focus stand



What Thor did with the pots



THOR - no 1

Thor: My idea for this deep thrown pot by Andrew was 'blood runs cold'



THOR - no 2

Pot made by Tom Benda: 'Working name is 'Man in the moon'. The two round moons are flanked by two flying Schamans'

Swapping pots

Tom Benda, Thor Holvila and Andrew Pearson all started to work together to create a collection of pots. The purpose is to share knowledge and experience, to influence and give inspiration to one another by getting together on a regular

basis to create pots.

The Triskele Group was founded at a pub in Manchester during the Bonsai Europa Event in 2015 by Tom Benda (CZ), Andrew Pearson (UK) and Thor Holvila (SWE). The

three potters chose as their name the Triskele, a Celtic symbol for the triform, since they wanted to start a collaboration where they could change ideas and share knowledge and experience by working together on different projects.



What Andrew did with the pots



ANDREW - no 1: The pot is made by Tom Benda and finished by Andrew Pearson from Stone Monkey



ANDREW - no 2: A pot made by Thor Holvilla and finished by Andrew



The same beliefs

The three potters all share the belief and vision that, by sharing on a regular basis, they would inspire one another and influence each other's work from which a stronger European style in pots could emerge. They all declare that this is only the beginning of something bigger that

will hopefully include more potters and artists on the European bonsai scene in the future.

At the Nöelanders Trophy in Belgium 2016 Andrew 'Stone Monkey', Tom and Thor swapped 'wet' pots, which they took home for final adjustments, glazing and

firing. A total of six unique pots, two by each potter, was the result of this first Triskele Group project. Each pot is signed and stamped by both potters involved and also stamped with the symbol of the Triskele Group.



What Tom did with the pots



TOM - no 1: The pot is made by Thor Holvilla and finished by Tom Benda



TOM - no 2: A pot made by Andrew and finished by Tom



The stamp of the Triskele gang

How to bid:

Go to www.bonsaifocus.com and choose: 'Auction'.

Place your bid on your favourite pot(s).

(All funds from this auction will go into the next project of the Triskele Group)

www.bonsaifocus.com

The roof of the world

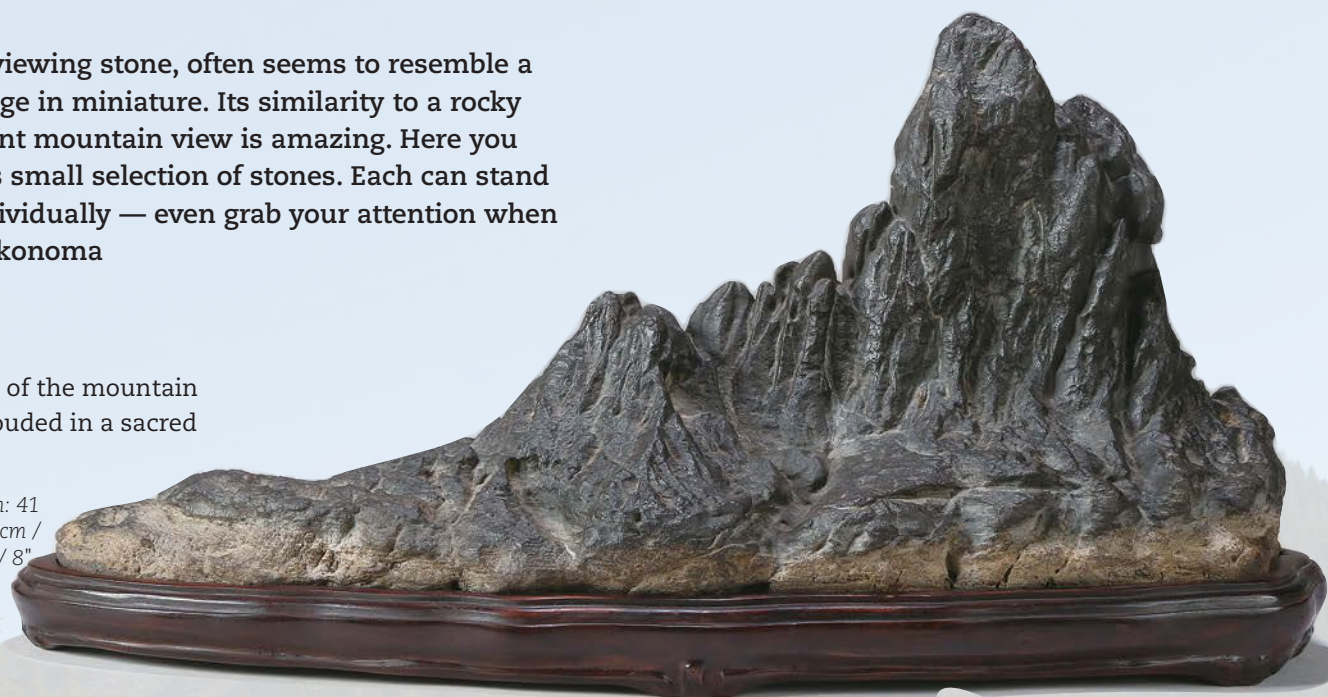
Miniature stones that stir evocative images of a mountain chain

Text and photography: Kinbon magazine, Japan

A suiseki, or viewing stone, often seems to resemble a mountain range in miniature. Its similarity to a rocky cliff or a distant mountain view is amazing. Here you can enjoy this small selection of stones. Each can stand in display individually — even grab your attention when placed in a tokonoma

The sharp peak of the mountain soars high, shrouded in a sacred aura.

Seigaku Ishi: Width: 41 cm / 16" Depth: 15 cm / 6" Height: 20.5 cm / 8"



Asuwagawa Ishi: Width: 28 cm / 11" Depth: 11 cm / 4 1/4" Height: 14 cm / 5 1/2" Doban by Harada Houn

Resembling Mount Fuji, this stone is imbued with deep character which is beautifully matched with the masterpiece doban.



In the tokonoma

A wonderfully composed display, which brings to mind an autumnal mountain bathed in the light of the rising sun.



Sado-Akadama Ishi 'Red Yamato': Width: 50.5 cm / 19 3/4" Depth: 27 cm / 10 3/4" Height: 26 cm / 10 1/4"

Rosewood stand and the 'sunrise' scroll by Yokoyama Taikan

Among Kotaro stones this uncommon piece shows great character, bringing to mind an enchanted mountain peak.



Kotaro Ishi: Width: 40 cm / 15¾" Depth: 20 cm / 7¾" Height: 21 cm / 8¼"

'Kunlun Mountain Chain': Taking its name from one of the longest mountain chains to be found at the roof of the world, which it resembles, this superlative Seigaku stone is well known in the suiseki world.



Seigaku Ishi 'Kunlun Mountain Chain': Width 70 cm / 27½" Depth: 29 cm / 11½" Height: 15 cm / 6"



In the tokonoma

The light purple colour of the stone, dotted with snowy valleys resembles a mountain waiting in the early spring. This image is beautifully captured with the scroll.

Ibigawa Ishi 'Yamato Early Spring' Width: 55 cm / 21¾" Depth: 21.5 cm / 8½" Height: 7 cm / 2¾"
Scroll: 'Snow Moon and Flowers'



Photo: Bonsai Focus Studio

Picea jezoensis
Michael Hagedorn

4th European Bonsai-san Show



Myrtus communis
Antonio Ponce Navarro



Fagus sylvatica
Cindy Verstraeten



Larix decidua
Jean Paul Polmans



Larix decidua
Martin Nielsen



Ulmus campestris
Jean Denis Lenoir



Myrtus communis
Andrea Albergo



Pinus sylvestris
José Luis Crespo Almajano



Pinus mugo
Enzo Ferrari



Juniperus chinensis 'Itoigawa'
Xavier Massanet



Taxus
Jean Denis Lenoir



Juniperus chinensis 'Itoigawa'
Nôel Suarez Garcia

Bonsai Institute Terakawa

Hotsumi Terakawa



*Juniperus communis trained & styled by Hotsumi Terakawa
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Bonsai Pots
By David Jones
& Mark Jones

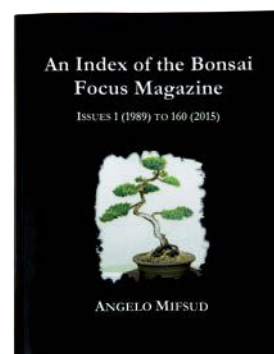
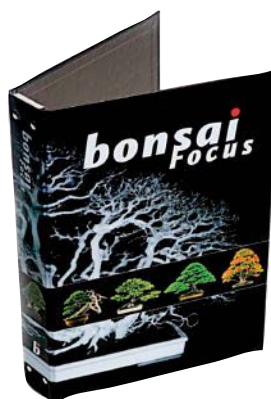
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SPRING DAYS

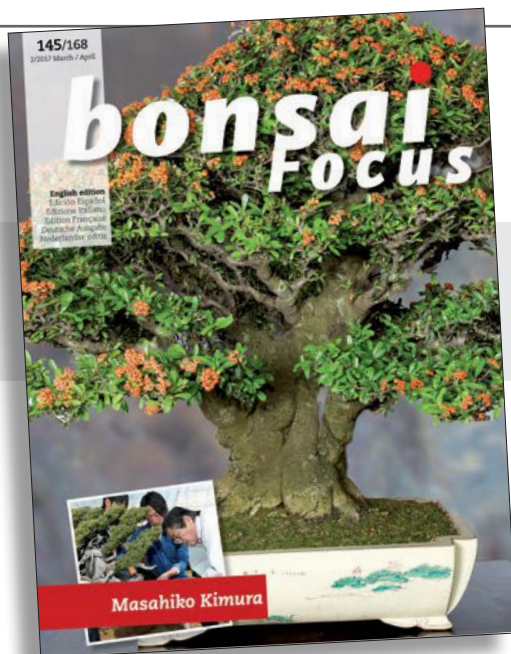
SAVE THE DATE: APRIL 8th AND 9th 2017

NEW

JAPAN IMPORTS



DAVID BENAVENTE



Preview 145 - March / April



TECHNIQUE

Part two of 'Just a Plastic tray' finds Peter Warren applying force to remove the tray on which his tree was growing.

TECHNIQUE

Andrea Meriggioli works on growing techniques for maples.



MASTERCLASS

Masahiko Kimura re-works one of the most important juniper masterpieces.



TRAVEL

In the same way that Japan has Satsuki shows, there are shows that are dedicated to the *Ficus* in Taiwan. An impression.





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Contact us:

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Information: Sean SC Huang

E-mail: bci2017aspac14@gmail.com or seanschuang@yahoo.com.tw

Registrations:

How to Register: The detail for all Bonsai Convention Information and Registration Forms, please visit this convention website:

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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*Noelanders Trophy XVIII 4-5 February 2017. Come to visit our stand.
March 2017: New trees from Japan.*