

Esprit Bonsai

#78

INTERNATIONAL

エスプリ盆栽

▶ The magazine for bonsai enthusiasts • Oct./November - 2015



**A shohin
maple** p.38



Ficus
p.52



Getting your **BONSAI TO FRUIT**



EUROPEAN BONSAI-SAN SHOW

DEMONSTRATORS

Ryan Neil (USA)

David Benavente (SPAIN)

El Tim (SPAIN)

Matteo Martin (ITALY)

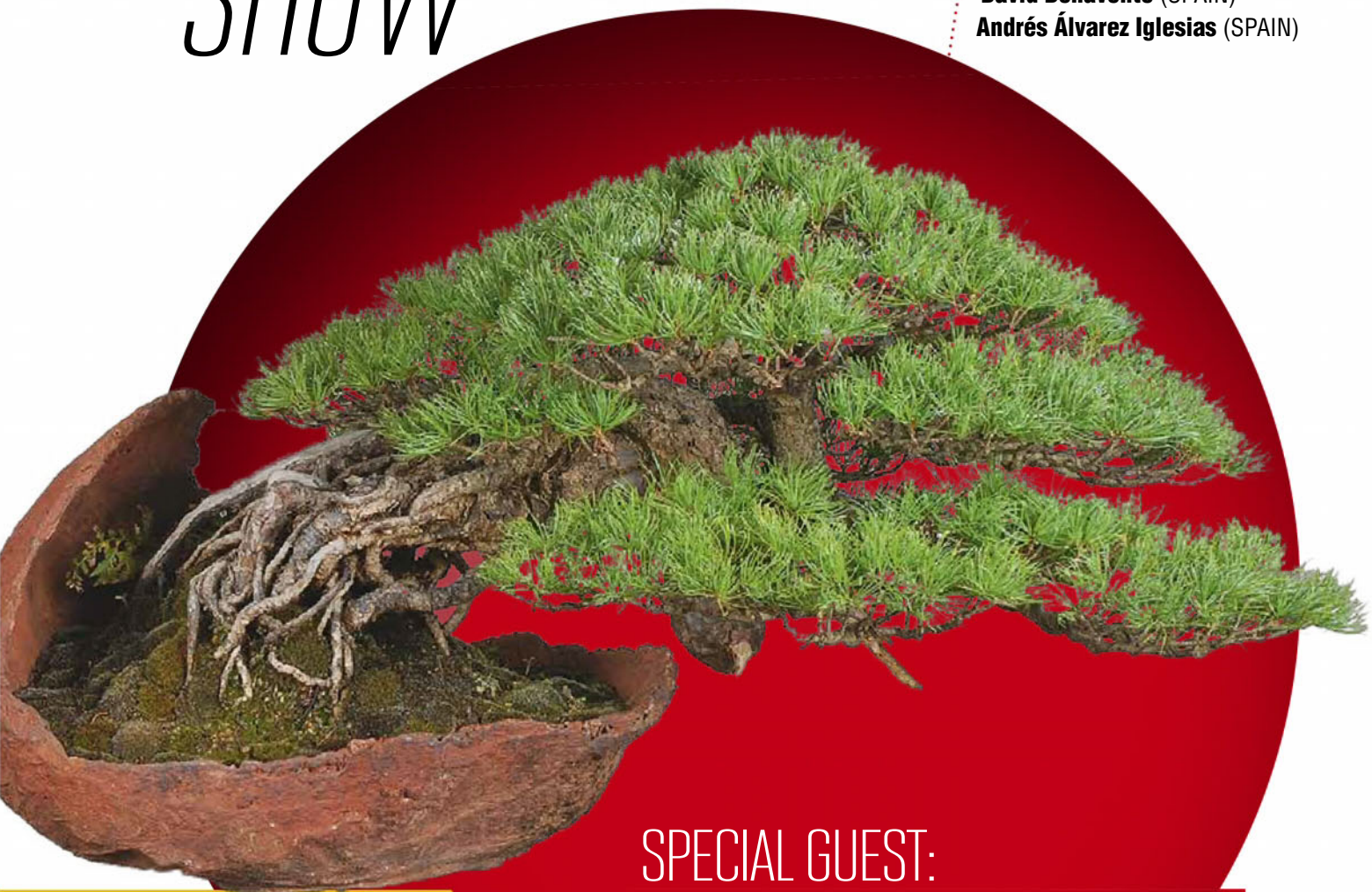
Mario Pavone (ITALY)

TOKONOMA

DISPLAYS

David Benavente (SPAIN)

Andrés Álvarez Iglesias (SPAIN)



SPECIAL GUEST:

RYAN NEIL

17-18 OCTOBER 2015 / **SAULIEU**

www.european-bonsai-san-show.com - info@bonsai-san.com - Parc des expositions 21210 Saulieu - FRANCE





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Editorial

Respecting trees

In our last issue, Jean-François Busquet informed us of the existence of intelligent plant behaviour. And in this issue, François Jeker shows us the appalling consequences of the stupid behaviour of certain individuals who are so determined to collect a tree which cannot be removed from the ground, that they end up killing it. Some people try to understand how to communicate with trees, how to respect them and take care of them. Do others see trees as no more than attractive pieces of wood-with-foliage that will react well to whatever is done to them? You can see in exhibitions that everyone takes great care not to damage their bonsai, and to look after all of their branches – with good reason. Are bonsai no more than common stooges for some individuals? It's hard to believe, and yet it seems to be a sad reality. The art of bonsai means working with the tree, not going against it. It means understanding how the tree functions, so that you can adapt your plans and interventions to the species, and to the constraints that it imposes on you – not the opposite. These are values that we stand up for and want to share with you.

Happy reading!

Michèle Corbihan



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On the Web

L'ARBRE DANS LA MAIN

<https://adlm59.wordpress.com/>



This club, which has existed for over 30 years, is getting ready for the big challenge that awaits it in 2016: organising and making a success of the convention of the Fédération Française de Bonsaï (French Bonsai Federation – FFB)

to the same degree as they did nine years ago, in 2006. This is why a whole section of the website is dedicated to the convention. This large club's activity has been displayed on the website for the last two years, making the site quite recent. It just needs to be developed, despite the direct overlap with its Facebook page. It features all the necessary information on the workings of the club, as well as basic articles on bonsai cultivation and maintenance. And let's not forget the famous multiple-choice test (QCM), for anyone who wants to move up through the levels of the FFB.

TORONTO BONSAI SOCIETY

<http://torontobonsai.org/>



Now off to Canada, with the very high-quality website of the Toronto Bonsai Society. Its members' trees can be admired on the site through the seasons in a number of galleries, as well as being grouped by species.

Photo reportages of events

organised by the club also allow these trees to be seen in exhibition conditions, always very well photographed. One gallery shows the evolution over time of four of the trees in pictures, with a small part of the same gallery dedicated to accent plants. A number of articles on care procedures and cultivation advice discuss several of the continent's typical species. Lastly, there is a fantastic gallery of drawings of bonsai by Norman Haddrick.

BONSAI BARK

<http://bonsaibark.com/>



This website, by Wayne Schoech, is quite disconcerting in its layout, but is of great interest for bonsai lovers. It is structured like a blog, with articles (all very interesting) listed one after the other, without any index

to be able to navigate in any way other than by scrolling ... The absence of upload dates for the articles suggests that you're supposed to discover it bit by bit; or visit the Facebook page of Stone Lantern & Bonsai Bark, which is a reflection of the website, but easier to consult. Either way, it's a delight to see the beautiful photographs of very famous trees, often with the bonus of an explanatory article on their evolution and their owner.

Philippe Massard, parlonsbonsai.com

DIARY

In North Carolina, USA

From 10 to 11 October, 20th Annual Carolina Bonsai Expo at the NC Arboretum, Asheville, North Carolina, USA. Exhibition of work by 15 bonsai organisations from a six-state region; educational programmes; marketplace and live auction. Guest demonstrator: Walter Pall from Germany
■ Admission to show is free, normal parking fees apply. www.ncarboretum.org

In England

On 18 October, the Bonsai Traders Association is organising the Autumn Show: the perfect opportunity to get bonsai essentials. Venue: Elsecar Heritage Centre, Elsecar, Barnsley S74 8HJ, Yorkshire, UK
■ For more information, contact Corin Tomlinson

Phone: 0115 9205757 Email: office@bonsai.co.uk
www.bonsaitraders.co.uk

In Germany

Bonsai-Faszinationen 2015: 31 October to 1 November, Bonsai-Clubs Deutschland e.V. (German Federation – BCD) and German Suiseki Society Convention. The programme is planned around the theme of bonsai including the BCD's "New Talent Competition" and lectures. Presenting trees under the slogan "Bonsai in the middle of Germany", they hope their visitors will enjoy stimulating conversations. In the spacious foyer will be a large sales area.
■ Bonsai Working Team Hessische Rhön-Künzell: marek.saalfeld@me.de
Venue: Hahlweg 32-36, 36093 Künzell, Germany
www.bonsai-faszinationen.de

ERRATA

A few errors slipped into our last edition. Our sincere apologies to the authors.

• Re-imagining a Tree, page 66

The photo of the original tree is shown here.

• On chestnuts, page 46

The captions of photos 2 and 3 have been switched. Under the sub-heading "Stimulating latent buds", the buds measure 1 mm, not 1 cm. Lastly, it is one of Yves Ingels's drawings of the hollow trunk of a *Prunus mahaleb* that will feature on the poster of the 2016 convention of the Fédération Française de Bonsaï, not one of his chestnut trees.



Mugo pine by Paul Putsey.

© FRANÇOIS JEKER



GATHERINGS

Bonsai Europa 2015: innovation guaranteed!

The Castle Armoury, in the centre of Bury, near Manchester, is sure to be the setting of a new type of major event: Bonsai Europa 2015, on 11 and 12 October this year! Because there have been no major bonsai events in the UK since 1999, and since there are none planned, Tony Tickle, a British bonsai professional, had the idea of creating Bonsai Europa, a major event that will place Bury and the UK on the cultural map of European – and, why not, international – bonsai. Tree displays and demonstrations are on the programme, and Bonsai Europa is already set apart by the choice of demonstrators. There is space here for amazing and very promising young artists from all over Europe, rather than just well-known characters: Milan Karpíšek (Czech Republic), Nik Rozman (Slovenia), Sandor Papp (Hungary), Dirk Dabringhausen (Germany), Bartosz Warwas (Poland),

Andrew Campbell (UK), Ofer Grunwald (Israel), Will Baddeley (UK), Jose Redondo (Spain), Yannick Kiggen (Belgium), Tracey Gibson (England). Special guest: Pavel Slovak (Czech Republic). No fewer than 125 top-quality trees from all over Europe will be exhibited. An area will be dedicated to unusual or avant-garde presentations: you wouldn't expect any less of Tony Tickle, who stands out in exhibitions for his out-of-the-ordinary displays, notably at the Noelanders Trophy. Also unusual is a workshop where children from 7 to 13 years can try their hand at the art of bonsai. Bonsai Europa promises to be one of the places to be this autumn – a creative and innovative event. A market will bring together some 30 professional stands, including *Esprit Bonsai international*. Parking and catering.



Castle Armoury
Castle Street, Bury BL9 0LB, UK
Opening hours: Saturday 9.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m., Sunday 9.30 a.m. to 3.30 p.m.
Admission: 1 day (exhibition and traders' market) £10, £15 including demonstrations; weekend pass £25.
www.bonsaieuropa.com
[facebook.com/bonsaieuropa2015](https://www.facebook.com/bonsaieuropa2015)

Ryan Neil at the European Bonsai San Show

For the last few years, in the French and European bonsai world, Saulieu has been synonymous with a great weekend in October when it's good to get together. So, put 18 and 19 October in your diary, for the European Bonsai San Show in this small town in Burgundy. Besides a high-quality exhibition of trees, the European Bonsai San Show has always promised top-notch demonstrators. The 2015 will be no exception to the rule, because we will have the pleasure of encountering one of the most charismatic North American professionals of the moment: Ryan Neil, in France for the first time. Alongside him will be David Benavente and El Tim, both from Spain, and Matteo Martin and Mario Pavone, both from Italy. Always a

safe bet among European bonsai events, the European Bonsai San Show will again this year feature around a hundred trees that are some of the continent's finest. David Benavente and Andres Alvarez Iglesias will each present four trees in tokonoma. The European Bonsai San Show also stands out for being one of the biggest traders' markets in Europe, with around fifty stands available for visitors to peruse. There's no reason to doubt that this weekend will again bring new surprises. *Esprit Bonsai international* will publish a book on the exhibition and the highlights of the weekend. Available in January 2016, priced €19.90. **Parc des expositions Jean Bertin**
Rue de la Gare, 21210 Saulieu, France
Opening hours: Saturday 9.30 a.m. to 7 p.m., Sunday 9.30 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Admission: €15 for one day, €20 for the weekend
www.european-bonsai-san-show.com
[facebook.com/European-Bonsai-San-Show](https://www.facebook.com/European-Bonsai-San-Show)



Worth discovering

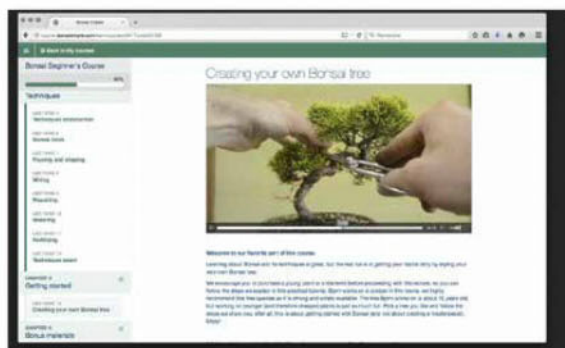
An online course for beginners

Watching is the best way to learn, and when two very good professional bonsai teachers such as Bjorn Bjorholm (Bjorvala Bonsai Studio) and Oscar Jonker (Bonsai Empire) combine forces, the result is an excellent online tutorial on the Bonsai Empire site, to help you start out in the art of bonsai. "Experiment and don't be afraid to break the rules," says Bjorn in his introduction. The one-hour class consists of five separate chapters that are split into modules of varying length, depending on the subjects being tackled. The course runs through everything you need to know to start working on a tree, from history to styles to all the techniques for beginners: pruning, shaping, wiring, watering, repotting, fertilisation ... A very comprehensive module allows students to work on all aspects of their trees while following the tutorial, from the choice of bonsai to its final watering. I particularly appreciated the straightforward explanations, the precision of the techniques, the summaries of keywords at the end of each module, the subdivision which makes it easy to navigate between modules ... and the background music, which is well chosen and not repetitive. A 16-minute bonus video shows a time-lapse film of Bjorn working on a Japanese white pine – impressive – and the superb collection belonging to Nobuyuki Yanai, with geishas and tea ceremony, to immerse viewers in all dimensions of the art of bonsai in Japan. This is a must-watch for all beginners and for others, even if only for the bonus video and the atmosphere.

■ In English. \$29.99, i.e. about £19.44 or €26.51.

Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/user/bonsaimovies>

Course: <http://course.bonsaiempire.com>



Exhibitions 2015

BHOPAL, INDIA	2-4 October	All India Bonsai Summit Silver Jubilee Celebration & Exhibition Featuring: Budi Sulisty (Indonesia), Pedro Morales (Puerto Rico), Mauro Stemberger (Italy), Sue Aziz (Indonesia) and national artists. Organised by Bonsai Club Bhopal. Email: bonsaiclubbhopal@gmail.com www.bhopalbonsaitreasure.com
CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA	22-25 October	The 4th African Bonsai Association Convention Venue: City Hall, Stellenbosch. François Jeker (France), Ryan Neil (USA), Tony Tickle (UK). ABC4 Project Manager: info@abc4.co.za www.abc4.co.za
KYOTO, JAPAN	20-23 November	35th Taikan-Ten Miyakomessu, Kyoto 200 displays, sales area Venue: 9-1, Okazaki Seisyoji-cho, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto, 606-8343
OVERIJSE, BELGIUM	28-29 November	Bonsai exhibition of the FBBC (Federation of Belgian Bonsai Clubs) Sales area Venue: Community centre of Bosuil, Witherendreef, 1 - B-3090 Overijse

Exhibitions 2016

GENK, BELGIUM	23-24 January	Noelanders Trophy XVII Featuring: Taiga Urushibata (Japan), Koji Hiramatsu (Japan), Mauro Stemberger (Italy) Venue: Limburghal c.v., Jaarbeurslaan 6, B3600 Genk http://www.bonsaiassociation.be/en/trophy.php
TOKYO, JAPAN	5-8 & 10-13 February	90th Kokufu-ten exhibition (2016) Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum Venue: 8-36 Ueno-Koen Taito-ku, Tokyo 110-0007
MAKITA CITY, PHILIPPINES	17-20 March	BCI Regional Bonsai Convention and Exhibition Hosted by Philippines Bonsai Association Venue: Ayala Triangle Garden and Art Museum Email: yumiesg.bonsai@yahoo.com
RHS WISLEY, SURREY, UK	2-3 April	Spirit of Shohin 2016 at the Royal Horticultural Society grounds, Wisley GU23 6QB A major exhibition of the best of British shohin bonsai run by British Shohin Bonsai in association with Sutton Bonsai Society. Email: antique.netsule@gmail.com
SZÉKESFEHÉRVÁR, HUNGARY	20-22 May	EBA (European Bonsai Association) and ESA (European Suiseki Association) convention
VILNIUS, LITHUANIA	2-4 September	Bonsai Clubs International convention and 5th Japanese Cultural Festival www.bonsailithuania.com

Butchered beauty in the French Alps

An attempt at collecting a tree from the wild has cost a handsome pine its life and sent a wave of outrage across the bonsai world. One example among many of a practice that is unworthy of the art of bonsai.

Author: François Jeker

Yamadori is the origin of bonsai. It is its very essence. Yamadori is the future of bonsai. Nature's creativity knows no bounds. It presents us with extraordinary trees to admire. Trees that tell us the story of their eventful lives. They explain to us how, in the face of adversity, they have managed to create a rare and serene beauty.

These trees also tell us about ourselves: about our place in nature and our relationship with time; about our responsibilities concerning the future of the planet. Our imagination pales into insignificance by comparison. We possess neither the same time frame as them, nor such inventiveness.

Impossible to collect

Yamadori are priceless treasures. When collecting them, we must not take any risks. Our technique and our moral approach must be faultless. For the most demanding specimens, four or five years of on-site preparation may be necessary.

Choosing a yamadori and then adapting it into a bonsai means humbly putting ourselves at the service of the tree and magnifying nature's creativity. We can never own a yamadori; it is they that own us.

There are yamadori that are impossible to collect. There is no way around this. They are too large to make into bonsai. We would be signing a death warrant for them if we were to cut off the over-long branches and the thick feeder roots. These fan-

tastical trees are beautiful where they are. They are where they belong.

So, from time to time, when passing nearby, we might make a detour to say a quick hello and lay a hand on their trunk. And just admire them.

Gradually, as the years go by, they become faithful companions.

And we wish we could have them classified as part of the world heritage of humanity, on the same level as famous monuments.

Vandalised and murdered

But some such encounters go wrong. Some such encounters leave us in a turmoil of anger, disgust and shame.

This Scots pine has been known and admired by many bonsai enthusiasts for many years, with its sturdy trunk nearly 40 centimetres in diameter, wonderful swirling forms and curves, and tapered branches fashioned over centuries, enthroned on the edge of a cliff, majestic, bursting with energy.

This Scots pine is dead. Murdered. Vandalised. Butchered.

The victim of a savage, stupid, rushed and thoughtless attempt at collecting.

95% of its branches have been cut off and are lying on the ground, and thigh-thick feeder roots have been severed. The hole left by the botched attempt at digging it out hasn't even been filled in, which might have given the tree a chance of survival – albeit only a minuscule one.

What can be said of these vandals? They have clearly understood nothing about bonsai. Their action is the polar opposite of the spirit of this art. They have prioritised their ego and their greed over any respect for the tree. They have brought shame upon themselves.

But they have also stigmatised the bonsai world. They have given us all a bad name. Logically, this could ultimately lead to a ban on collecting. What can be done to avoid a repeat scenario? There is no miracle solution.

First of all, we need to display our anger and firmly condemn this type of behaviour, which is unworthy of our noble art. Next, we need to teach others, make our disgust be heard loud and clear, raise awareness.

Lastly, each of us needs to stick rigorously to our personal ethics, and to set a good example in our bonsai practice. ●



Whoever tried to collect this uncollectable tree left it no chance of survival whatsoever.



Late-summer exhibitions are unusual in Japan: in early September, the Baiju-en club in Nose-cho, north of Osaka, presents its annual display of shohin - the Baijukai.

BAIUKAI

An exhibition by a top-level club in Japan

Besides the major national shows in Japan, it is possible to visit club exhibitions where there are no competitions. Baijukai is one of these: a high-level club event in late summer, near Osaka.

Author: Bonsai Translations



Situated in Nose-cho, in the Toyono district of Osaka prefecture, the Miura Baiju-en nursery, which belongs to the Miura family, hosts the Baijukai.

For anyone who is looking for a different experience than the events offered in Japanese cities, the Baiju-en club's "Baijukai" is a must-see! It takes place every year in early September – 5th and 6th in 2014 – so, late in the year, which is very unusual in Japan. It is held at Miura Baiju-en, the nursery belonging to the Miura family, who specialise in shohin. The nursery is spectacularly situated in a mountain valley to the north of Osaka.

In Japan, there are two main seasons for exhibiting bonsai: autumn and winter. Normally trees are chosen in view of their autumn colours, their bare branch structure or their first spring blossoms. Thus, when displayed at the end of the summer, trees are shown in different states: the summer growth brings rich foliage, fruits or berries and different flowers.

Going shopping

Prices for shohin are reduced during the Baiju-en club's exhibition, and it is not just the nursery that offers them for sale: club members can sell their bonsai too. Happy clients go in search of treasure. "One of my clients sold two trees that he had been cultivating for about twenty years, and with the proceeds he paid for a holiday in Europe for his whole family," explains Mr Miura.



When preparing their compositions, the club's members have the benefit of advice from several professionals who are fellow members.

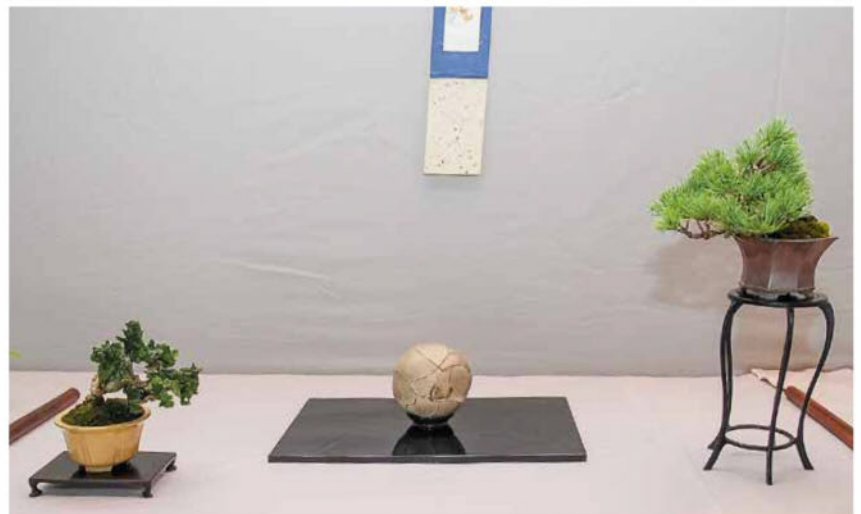
The Miura family's nursery is transformed every year for this exhibition, which attracts bonsai lovers from all regions of Japan. Not one bit of the space is left unused: the garages are transformed into an exhibition gallery, and there is even a little restaurant for visitors – as well as an area for trading stalls, of course.

A high-level club

The Baiju-en club's members prepare 36 compositions for the display, with advice from masters. It is a high-level club, and five people who have been members for over twenty or thirty years are registered as official instructors for the All Japan Shohin Bonsai Association. Consequently, there are plenty of teachers for the club's other members. Also, several members participate in the Gafu-ten, an annual national exhibition dedicated to shohin that takes place in Kyoto in January. It is even fair to say that a large percentage of exhibitors at the Gafu-ten have been taught by the Miuras at some point in their lives.

Informal exhibitions like the Baijukai allow members to practise and try out different combinations, with the benefit of advice from several professionals. This advice is therefore very precious, with the autumn and winter exhibitions in mind.

Accessories are used by some members in their displays, and landscapes make an entrance from time to time. Sometimes, when thinking ►►►



The rock in this composition is very unusual.



This scene represents a summer festival – an original depiction that is possible in this sort of exhibition.



This black pine's foliage has not been cut back. Some people might have carried out this procedure before displaying it, because, aesthetically speaking, it is preferable.



Akebia fruits are usually shown open, in autumn. In the summer, they resemble large green peas and give compositions a different look.



In late summer, crepe myrtle - *Lagerstroemia indica* - is in full bloom. Its smooth bark is beige, and its flowers are pink or sometimes red. It is rare in the Japanese bonsai world.



On the right, a *Vitis coignetiae*, or crimson glory vine, displays its summer fruits: the vivid green brings a certain freshness to the ensemble. The fruit is normally shown mauve.

▶▶▶ constantly about a competition, you can lose sight of the pleasure of playing with bonsai. These more laid-back exhibitions can therefore be gems of creativity.

Showing the season

It is usual to prepare bonsai with a view to displaying them at exhibitions in the autumn or winter. For example, we trim candles off pines between mid-June (for large trees) and early July (for shohin). This way, the new leaves will be perfect around November time. So pine foliage normally needs to be cut back during this period of the year. However, in bonsai, we are always seeking to make the viewer sense the season. Displaying trees in the summer therefore means showing them at the point in the year when they are in their most vigorous state.

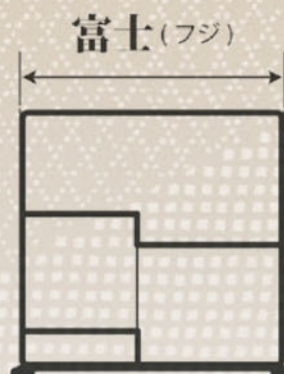
More classical

The main tree in this classical composition (1) is a shimpaku juniper of the itoigawa variety (*Juniperus chinensis* var. itoigawa). It has interesting curves, and the vivid green foliage contrasts with the trunk. The tree on the right is a *Euonymus hamiltonianus*. It is very interesting to use at the end of the year, because the fruits are not yet open. These little green balls resemble apples on a mature apple tree. Summer accent plants can also be used.

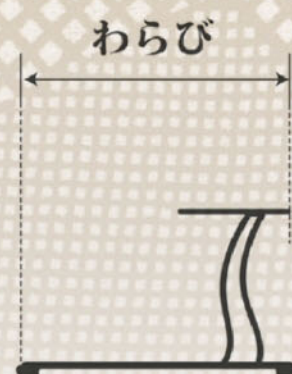
The shelf on the left is in the *Fuji* style, while the one on the right is in the *warabi* style. To create a shohin bonsai arrangement, you need to have access to plenty of stands and accessories. This can be expensive, so it is very useful to be part of a club to exchange stands and accessories with other members.



(1) This very traditional arrangement is of an average size for shohin.



"Fuji" shelves are the most common type in Japan.



A "warabi"-style stand.



(2) The composition's monotonous colour stems from the season of the exhibition. In autumn, the leaves will change colour.

Worthy of a major exhibition

Here is a very high-quality group (2), worthy of the Gafu-ten. The main tree is an itoigawa juniper with impressive deadwood. This deadwood was a branch for about thirty years. When the branch had grown sufficiently thick, it was transformed into deadwood.

Some of these trees are very well known in the shohin bonsai world, but most people have only ever seen them in autumn or winter. Seeing them in summer, looking very vigorous indeed, is a unique experience. Showing trees in summer also has its drawbacks. The absence of berries

or summer flowers causes a lack of colour and therefore of variety. All of these trees are green, and uniformity of tone is to be avoided in shohin groups. This is part of the reason why no two trees of the same species are ever used in a composition. In autumn, broadleaves will be orangey or yellow and will add a great deal of character to the ensemble.

Nonetheless, this composition remains the most extraordinary of this year's exhibition. Prizes are allocated by visitors, which is a fairly informal procedure, and the competition winner is chosen on the basis of pure visual pleasure. ►►►



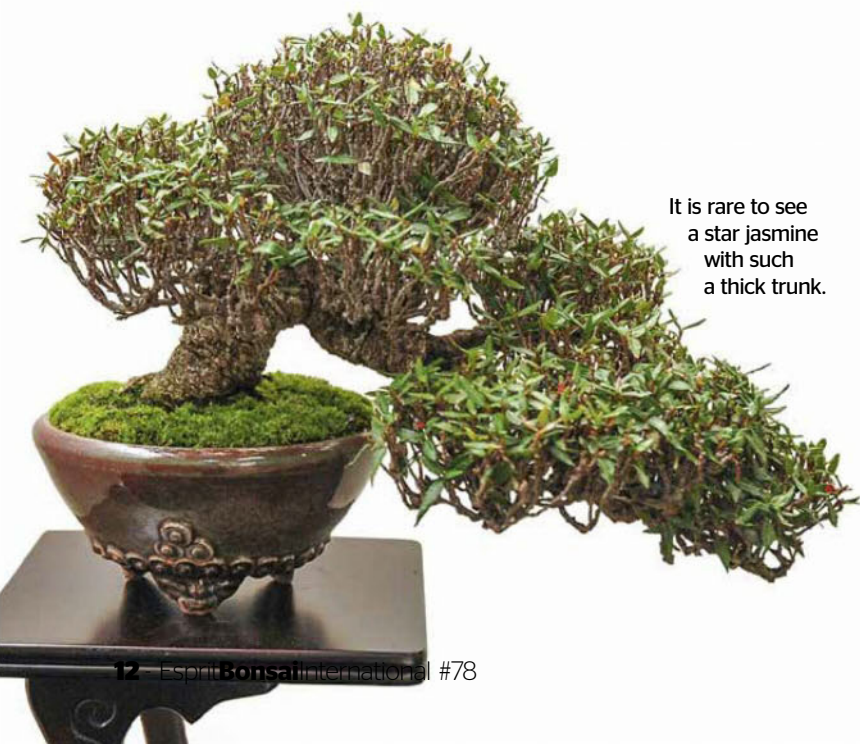
(3) This *Acer buergerianum* was produced through air-layering.



(3) Photos show the evolution of the maple's structure.



(4) This three-element composition features a top-notch star jasmine as the main tree, on the left.



It is rare to see a star jasmine with such a thick trunk.

Photos of work in progress

Learning by example is always an interesting process. Several of the trees in the exhibition were accompanied by photos illustrating the different stages of their development.

This trident maple (3) was created by air-layering. In January 2006, it was a much taller tree and was poorly balanced: the base was much thinner than the middle. Air-layering was therefore entirely justified. In February 2007, the two parts of the air-layer were separated. In July 2010, the tree was placed in a much shallower pot and the branches were shaped. Now, the tree has become a lot more mature. It has dense foliage and its trunk has a respectable thickness. "By changing the viewpoint, you can transform a flaw into an asset!" explains Mr Miura.

A beautiful star jasmine

Here is a very impressive group of three elements (*san ten kazari*) (4). The tree on the left is a star jasmine, *Trachelospermum jasminoides*. It is unusual to see one with such a thick trunk. The foliage is very dense on the base of the branch: it is difficult to balance out the growth at each level of a cascade form. The top has been thinned out a little, to allow light to pass. In autumn, the foliage should be perfectly balanced for winter exhibitions, because there is no doubt that this is a competition-standard tree. The brownish-coloured pot is a good match for the colour of the trunk.

The secondary tree needs to act as a sort of "receiver" tree, taking in all the visual energy, which comes from the top left in this case, to absorb it and retain it. A very stable multi-trunk tree is therefore a good option.



(5) The yellow fern announces the following season, the autumn, in this three-element display.



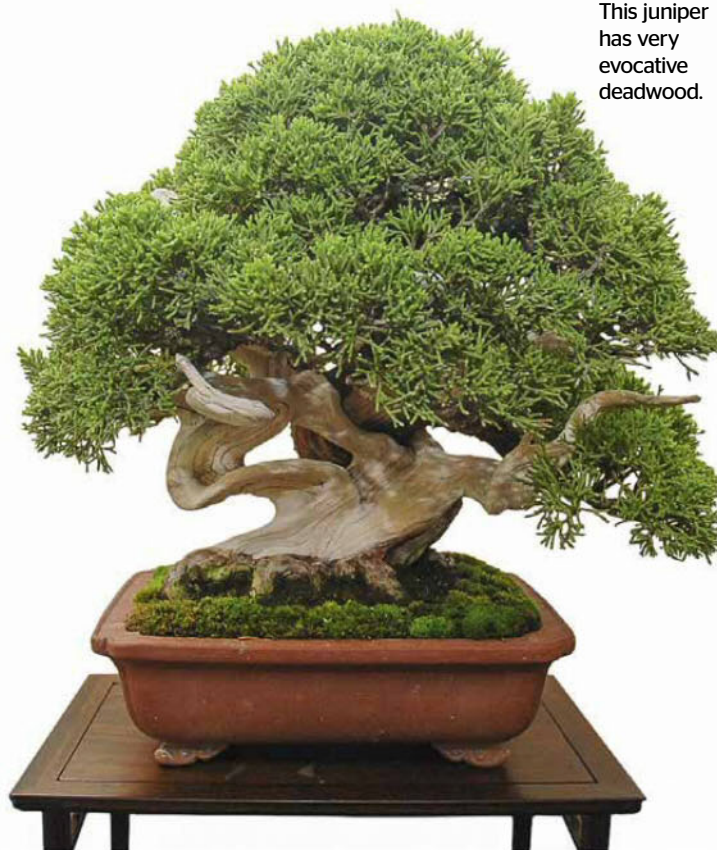
This persimmon's coiled trunk will fuse together over the course of time.

A coiled trunk

The trees in this three-element composition (5) have very interesting forms. The juniper, on the left, has curves and a silhouette formed by growth lines that give the tree an almost alien appearance.

The persimmon (*Diospyros*), on the right, is inclined to grow long and thin. It is therefore difficult to obtain a thick base. Coiling the bottom of the trunk like this is a way to make the base look thick. After a few years, the trunk will fuse together more, giving the tree a more natural appearance.

These three elements are displayed with a parchment illustrating a waterfall. Human beings are always impatiently looking forward to the next season. The heat of summer makes us long



This juniper has very evocative deadwood.

for the cooler temperatures of autumn. When exhibiting trees, it is good to suggest the following season. Adding ferns for a touch of yellow is therefore a good idea.

The Baijukai may well be a club display, but it is of a very high quality. It offers another facet of the art of bonsai in Japan. ●

Visit Miura Baiju-en at <http://www.miurabaijuen.com/about/index.htm>



Dedicated entirely to azaleas, the exhibition in June this year included four bonsai by Japanese masters, displayed in tokonoma at Bad Rappenau, Germany.

A festival all about azaleas

Azalea exhibitions are quite rare in the West. Report on a trip to Germany last June for a guided tour of an azalea festival in Bad Rappenau, and a few tips for looking after these beautiful plants.

Author: Gudrun Benz



The romantic castle of Bad Rappenau served as the showcase for the azalea festival.

The castle in Bad Rappenau, a small town in southern Germany, is an extremely romantic place and the ideal venue for an exhibition of azaleas. For its fifth edition, from 5 to 7 June 2015, an azalea festival took up residence in the German town's symbolic site. The event was organised by Udo Fischer, one of Germany's most talented bonsai artists and professionals.

The festival began on the evening of Friday 5 June with a tour of the various exhibition rooms to the sounds of the koto, a traditional plucked



This "Nikko" satsuki azalea belongs to the Japanese master Minoru Akiyama, the weekend's special guest. Pot: Peter Krebs. Height: 46 cm.

stringed instrument, played by Naoko Kikuchi who succeeded in creating a special atmosphere between modern and traditional music.

Timely flowering

This year, the azalea show was not only a feast for the eyes, just as in previous years; but, thanks to the cool atmosphere in the castle, it also offered a much-appreciated refuge on this hot, late spring weekend. As soon as they arrived, visitors were welcomed by the magnificence of the flowers on Udo Fischer's trade stand, which gave a foretaste of the exhibition itself.

The azalea exhibition was on the first floor of the castle. Displayed in four tokonoma were masterpieces by Minoru Akiyama, Kunio Kobayashi, Yasuki Esaka and Shigeo Isobe, all from Japan, that represented the festival's highlights. The azaleas belonging to exhibitors from Germany and other European countries were also of a very high standard. It is amazing that they all managed to have their trees in full bloom precisely for this weekend. The exhibition was a true festival of azaleas, splendidly expressed in a vast variety

In southern Germany

Bad Rappenau and its surrounding villages are home to some 20,000 inhabitants. The town's history dates back to the 13th century. Following the discovery of a salt water source there in the 19th century, it was gradually transformed into a spa resort, with a number of health-care establishments being set up in the late 20th century. The castle, which is the little town's emblem, is a romantic site where dreams can become reality.



The high-quality azaleas were displayed on the first floor of the castle.



"Nyohozan" satsuki azalea, Tokoname pot, Kunio Kobayashi collection.

of colours. Udo Fischer, who came up with the concept of the event, certainly knows how to stage these superb bonsai in a way that shows them off at their best.

Also worthy of praise are the volunteers from the German "Mannheimer Bonsai-Arbeitskreis" group and the organiser's friends, for their work ►►►



"Kakuo"
satsuki azalea,
Tokoname pot,
Kurt Liechti
collection.



Minoru Akiyama,
the invited
demonstrator, giving
a demonstration
on a "Nyohozan"
satsuki azalea on
the Saturday.



The azalea
after completion
of the work.

▶▶▶ setting up and taking down the exhibition, as well as during the event itself (watering, monitoring, welcoming visitors, etc.). These days it is almost impossible to make an exhibition of this sort financially viable, even with help from volunteers.

A special guest from Japan

The guest of honour, Minoru Akiyama, son-in-law of the famous Japanese bonsai master Kunio Kobayashi, gave demonstrations throughout the weekend. Akiyama is a young bonsai artist and a Japanese azalea master. He discovered bonsai very early in life, in his father's nursery at Yamashiro, south of Tokyo, which has views towards the west face of Mount Fuji. He was apprenticed for five years to Kunio Kobayashi, in the Shunka-

en nursery in Tokyo. An additional year allowed him to develop his bonsai forming skills. He then took over his father's nursery. Minoru Akiyama does not work only on azaleas, but also on some varieties of conifer. Over the course of the last few years, he has won several prizes in high-profile bonsai exhibitions in Japan.

Starting on the Friday, Akiyama led a workshop with nine participants in attendance. On the Saturday and Sunday, he revealed his know-how via demonstrations throughout each day. As well as explaining his working methods, he also took the time to answer the many questions asked by members of the public about upkeep and other aspects of azalea bonsai, his infectious smile clearly helping quite a lot of them to overcome their timidity.



Minoru Akiyama working on a "Kozan"
satsuki azalea on the Sunday.



Working from the base
upwards to the top.



The azalea after
completion of the work.



"Korin"
satsuki azalea,
Japanese pot,
Janine Droste
collection.



"Korin" satsuki
azalea, pot by
Bryan Allbright,
Bernd Hochwartner
collection.

A real lesson in technique

The copious amounts of advice he gave out amounted to a real lesson in azalea shaping and maintenance. On the Saturday, the base material for the demonstration was a satsuki azalea of the Nyohozan variety; on the Sunday, it was one of the Kozan variety. Akiyama first saw these two plants on the very morning of the first demonstration. Both specimens had been imported from Japan, were between 40 and 50 years old, and, after initial styling in a pot, had been returned to open ground for 30 to 40 years to develop good nebari. Following this period in open ground, the potensai had been planted in kanuma soil to stimulate the development of fine roots.

These small-leaved, evergreen azaleas are considered hardy and produce pale pink flowers. Akiyama attaches a great deal of importance to the quality of the nebari because, according to him, the aesthetic interest of azaleas lies not only in their attractive flowers but just as much in their appearance as bonsai outside the flowering season. Since azalea wood is hard and brittle, shaping is essentially done by pruning, and all the more so since these azaleas are inclined to grow vigorously.

Choosing the front

The first task is to choose the side that will be the bonsai's front. Ideally a principal branch needs to be chosen – one with attractive movement. A little thinning out allows a better idea of the tree's structure to be gleaned, and this structure determines the steps that follow. Azaleas need to be pruned twice per year. The first time is just after flowering, and the second when the new buds start to appear, as these are determining factors for the new ramification. Azaleas need to have their structure constantly corrected



"Nyohozan"
satsuki azalea,
Klika pot,
Siegfried Vendt
collection.



"Aoi" satsuki
azalea,
Tokoname pot,
Michael Dörr
collection.

by pruning. Problems of branch orientation can be corrected through wire training.

During his demonstrations, Minoru Akiyama tackled the main aspects of creating azalea bonsai. He works from the base upwards to the top. The principal branch and the tree's crown need to point in the same direction. He also ►►►



"Kaho" satsuki azalea,
Tokoname pot, Michael
Herrlinger collection.



"Chiyo no Hikari" satsuki azalea,
Chinese pot, Ute Enzer collection.



"Nyohozan" satsuki azalea, Tokoname
pot, Manfred Roth collection.

►►► mentioned aesthetic aspects, and underlined the importance of empty space in bringing out the best of the tree's structure. The principal branch, in particular, requires a larger space. The void also needs to be sufficient in the area where the crown is pointing. Azaleas generally start flowering the year after this first, rather radical shaping work, in the course of which the raw material of the tree is transformed into a bonsai.

Beware of frost

As far as possible, the fertiliser used should be organic (Biogold with added Kali and some phosphate to encourage flowers to form) from March to October. If the fertiliser is applied later, the bark risks splitting if there is a heavy frost, because of freezing of the sap that is still present in the trunk. From time to time, it is also advisable to change the fertiliser. Before flowering,

only a moderate amount of fertiliser should be applied, as otherwise the flowers risk being darker in colour, which is generally an unwelcome outcome. Liquid fertiliser acts more quickly than organic fertiliser.

Azaleas like water, so it is better to choose a fairly deep pot. However, stagnant water in the pot should be prevented, to avoid the roots rotting.

Azaleas are sadly vulnerable to parasites, and particularly to mites. If their leaves take on a yellowish tinge, it is advisable to spray them with a suitable product. In Japan, after the rainy season of June and July, they have to be sprayed twice as a preventative measure in August, which is a dry month.

So, beautiful trees and high-quality demonstrations came together to create an excellent event which satisfied visitors' appetites for both knowledge and aesthetic appreciation. ●

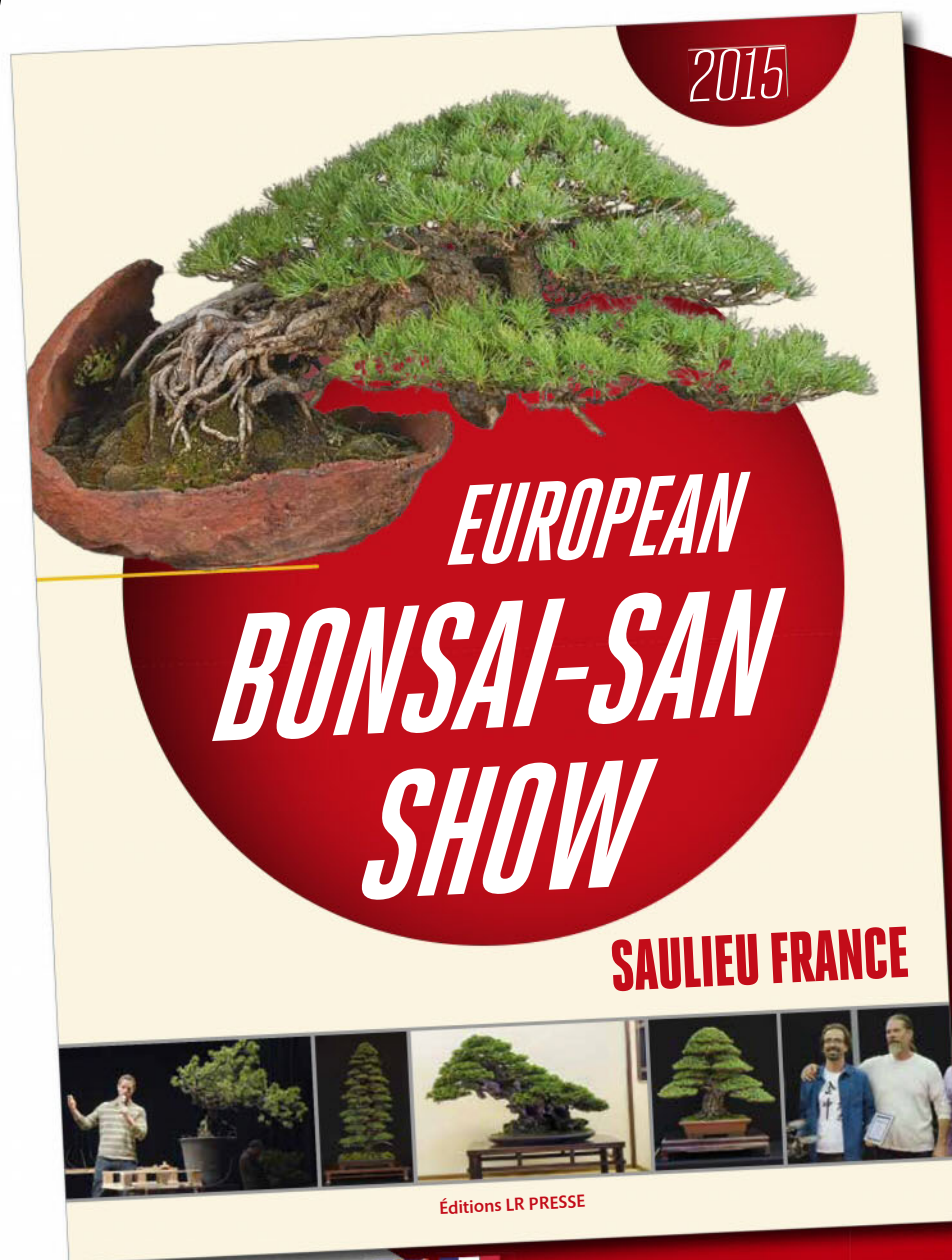
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Wild llamas live in the Páramo, on the high Ecuadorian plains. In Cuenca, at 2,500 metres altitude, there is also a considerable presence of bonsai.

Ecuador: bonsai in the land of llamas

Author: François Jeker

Practising bonsai in Ecuador, and more specifically in Cuenca, sounds exotic: 2,500 metres altitude, zero latitude, a very unusual climate, indigenous tree species, and a unique history and mixture of cultures. Report on the trees and their creators.

The international bonsai

convention in Cuenca, the capital of Azuay Province, which took place from 12 to 20 June 2015 at the Pumapungo Museum, gave a glimpse into the practice of bonsai in Ecuador, and showed that, despite appearances, bonsai is universal and authentic in all areas of the world ...

In its various spaces, the museum brings together contemporary art, the history of the country and its civilisations, a



Starting right from the entrance hall at the Pumapungo Museum, where the event was held, contemporary art flirted with the art of bonsai.



A contemporary space with beautiful light: ideal conditions for an exhibition.



Some of the members of the Cuenca Bonsai Club gathered around the demonstrators at the international bonsai convention in June 2015.

botanical garden and an archaeological site. There was a lovely symbolism in the choice of venue: an aim to combine the art of bonsai, a prestigious past and contemporary art.

The display only included bonsai produced by the local club, Cuenca Bonsai Club, which had invited three international demonstrators: Milagros Rauber

from Venezuela, Leonardo Bravo from Ecuador and myself (from France). The programme for the eight-day event featured no fewer than five demonstrations and five workshops.

Fifteen different nationalities were recorded among the visitors, mainly from Latin America but also from the United States of America. ►►►



The top prizewinning tree in the show, this *Juniperus procumbens*, by Boris Goercke, has been worked on for five years.

The Pumapungo Museum

Cuenca's Pumapungo Museum brings together several entities:

- the museum proper, with a permanent display on the civilisations before the arrival of the conquistadors, an exhibition of contemporary Ecuadorian artists, and temporary shows (including bonsai);
- a large botanical garden with ancient food crops and plants indigenous to the Andes;
- an archaeological site with ruins of the first Cañari city dating from the 6th century, later occupied by the Incas.



Second prize: *Myrrhinium atropurpureum*
by Cecilia Vicunia, worked on for 23 years.

In its 26th year

The Cuenca Bonsai Club was founded in 1989, in particular by Aida Tosi who still remains the heart and soul of the association. The club now has 25 members, coming from all sorts of backgrounds. They include a large number of young people, starting with its dashing president Diego Torres, who is only 25 years old. At the beginning, the club worked entirely from books, but then after seven years' existence it started regularly inviting international figures such as Ben Oki (USA) and Milagros Rauber.

Aida Tosi is the core of the club, and has remained very active in it ever since its creation. It is her charisma that has not only ensured the club's survival, but also its development. Always smiling and friendly, and ready to tell jokes, she is multi-talented. Her love of nature has driven her to gather a collection of stones that she has found all around the world, and which inspire her in her painting.

Milagros Rauber is the queen of South American bonsai. She started studying bonsai with John Naka, no less! She then continued under Toshio Saburomaru,



Third prize: a *Eugenia* forest by Boris Goercke, worked on for six years.



In accordance with Ecuadorian tradition, fireworks concluded the inauguration ceremony.

Shinji Ogasawara, Saburo Kato, David de Groot and myself. She gives talks in all the Latin American countries, especially in Cuenca where she has taught every year since 2004. Besides her encyclopaedic knowledge, she is also appreciated for



Rauber refines the details of her composition during a demonstration.



Milagros Rauber (Venezuela) congratulates the club's president, Diego Torres, for the perfect organisation of the event.



A design for a *Taxodium* belonging to Aida Tosi, one of the founders of the Cuenca Bonsai Club.

her very effective teaching methods, her boundless energy and her very engaging personality.

Local species

The practice of bonsai in Cuenca is affected by a number of factors. Firstly, of course, the trees' living conditions: the climate is the same all year round, varying from a minimum of 4 or 5°C in the morning to a maximum of 21 or 22°C at the hottest times of day. It is very slightly cooler from June to August, but there is never any frost. This is what the South Americans call the climate of the Páramo, an area situated between the tree line ►►►



During the convention, Milagros Rauber and Leonardo Bravo together created a Chinese-inspired landscape, a highly popular exercise on this continent.



An electric saw is essential for cutting away deadwood.



Few trees manage to survive at 4,200 metres altitude, despite the absence of frost.

▶▶▶ and the permanent snow line. Having less protection from major air masses than those on plains, trees at high altitudes defend themselves against the more intense ultraviolet rays by growing in dwarf form. Humidity levels are very high.

Bonsai enthusiasts there work mainly with local species, whether as nursery-grown plants, trees grown from seed or yamadori, but they also use plain-dwelling species that can cope with high altitudes and the lack of any dormant period. Junipers, for example, can adapt well and produce amazingly dense, compact and vigorous foliage, without any human intervention.

Pinus ayacahuite, for example, resembles Himalayan pine, with its long, drooping needles. Strangely, when young, it looks

like a spruce from temperate zones; it is only when mature that it produces needles similar to those on European pines.

The climatic conditions are too favourable for yamadori, which form straight trunks without any taper. The only solution is to keep a single low branch, cut off all the rest, and work on the deadwood. Fortunately, in Cuenca, everything grows back very quickly.



Pinus ayacahuite is typical of the region.



Juniperus procumbens has adapted well to Cuenca's climate. It very quickly produces dense foliage with very small needles.



The "arbol de papel" (*Polylepis species*) grows above 3,000 metres and adapts well to cultivation as a bonsai. Its orange-coloured bark flakes off in fine, silky-soft leaves.



In Ecuador, the sky is constantly changing: from one minute to the next, you can find yourself above, below or surrounded by clouds.



All that remains of Cañari and Inca structures is their foundations.



These days, there is enthusiasm everywhere.

Tall and slender trees

Trees certainly do grow much more quickly in Cuenca than in temperate zones, and it is possible to obtain a respectable bonsai in a quarter to a third of the time that it takes in European climates. Trees in nature have an overall form that appears unusual to us: very slender and tall with a trunk that is proportionally rather spindly. Many broadleaves have fibrous wood, which is similar to that of European conifers and allows beautiful deadwood to be created, but they are very sensitive to rot.

People's living conditions also have an effect on bonsai practice and on the dynamic of clubs. Life at a high altitude, especially in the countryside, is harsh; so solidarity and kindness are an obligation. The inhabitants of the Cuenca region have a reputation as being the sweetest in Latin

America. They certainly are welcoming, warm and generous, and seem not even to know what animosity is. Even the many stray dogs are eager to welcome you.

The bitter, majestic beauty of the high mountain landscapes – such as those of the Cajas National Park where one pass reaches 4,200 metres – forges minds and characters and a particular aesthetic sense.

Bonsai brings people together

Just as the sky is seldom all blue but is crossed by clouds that are driven by strong winds, people's attitudes are ever-changing, passing from joy to nostalgia and from expressiveness to great tact and dignity.

The past is burdensome. The arrival of the Spanish left traces on people's

hearts by partially erasing those of the indigenous civilisations. Cañari and then Inca temples were demolished, and their stones salvaged to construct the "old" cathedral. This was built by indigenous people, but after its completion they were not allowed to enter it: there was a debate as to whether they were human beings, or whether they had souls ...

These days there is an amazing syncretism that mixes a touching Catholic fervour together with ancient beliefs, the Spanish language with Quechua (or Kechua or Quichua, an American Indian language), and colourful traditional costumes with Western dress.

But bonsai brings this whole little world together in a passion for nature and especially for trees – with heightened intensity and motivation. And enthusiasm. ●

Changing pots in autumn

Winter can be fatal for pots. Precautions are necessary to avoid damage: protect your pots, and change them if necessary.

Author: Gilbert Labrid

After the period of major tree growth from springtime onwards, there comes the time to prepare for the winter season. Winter always comes hand in hand with cold and frost, and with associated damage. The main concern is to prepare shelters to ensure effective protection against low temperatures and dry winds – but without going too far. You still need to follow the rhythm of the climate and maintain a reasonable level of coldness. Sometimes, certain specimens are unable to remain in good shape while they await the arrival of spring. There are numerous reasons to intervene in good time and save some pots from breaking. Pots are just as much at risk in frosty periods as trees are, and all the more so if they have been weakened by poor maintenance. Whether you appreciate them for sentimental reasons, for their rarity or for the perfect balance between pot and tree, to avoid seeing favourite pots consigned to the rubbish bin, you need to overwinter them in a dry place that is well sheltered from frost.

Why change pot?

The reasons that might call for a change of container just before winter sets in can be summarised in a few points:

- the tree was not repotted in time in the spring; the pot is completely full of roots, and drainage is poor
- the pot is cracked; it will shatter at the slightest sign of frost
- the sides of the pot are concave; by causing compressed damp soil in an enclosed space to expand, frost risks shattering the pot
- the pot is a rare piece, an antique or created by a renowned craftsman; you only use it for public displays.

How to carry out this elementary procedure without major risk? There is nothing simpler: just



1 Following a knock, a sliver of the edge has come off and the side has split right down to the base. This pot will not survive frost if it is full of soil. A change of pot is needed.



2 The pot has a bulging shape, and a barely visible fine crack (indicated by the red arrow) has weakened the beautiful curve of its oval form. If temperatures remain below 0°C for a few days, the whole mass of earth will push against this weak spot until it gives way.

use a well-sharpened tool and remove a strip around the sides of and sometimes underneath the root ball. By not changing the rest of the roots, you will avoid any adverse effects on the tree's survival. In spring, it will be time to take more drastic action on the whole of the root structure. ●



3 A weakness at the point where the edge meets the body of the pot has allowed this crack to spread. If nothing is done to stop this phenomenon in time, next winter may get the better of the pot.



7 The cuts can be made directly, without taking the tree out of the pot. The edges of the root mass can be cut back without being selective.



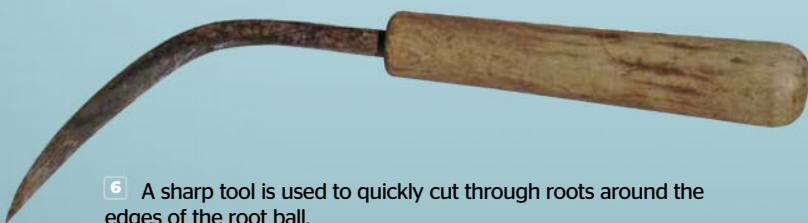
4 The roots have filled the entire available space for a long time. It is very cramped.



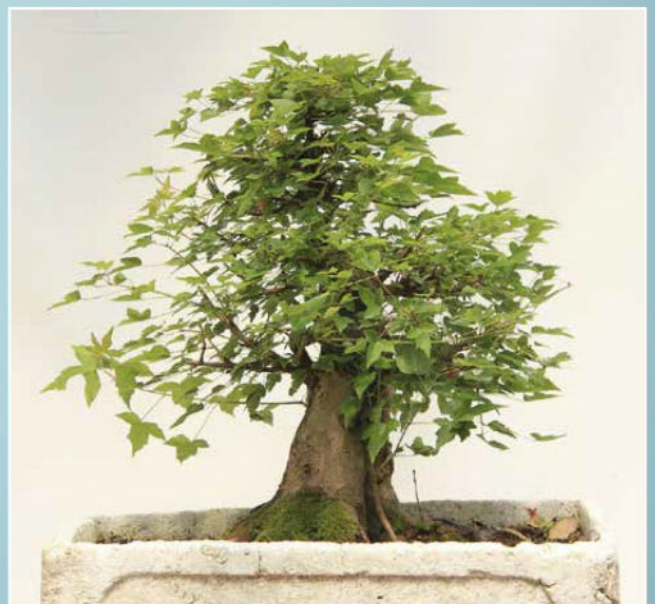
8 For pots with concave sides, the cut should be made vertically from the inner line, which allows the tree to be removed without any damage. A more open temporary pot will suffice for overwintering.



5 There is no longer sufficient drainage. If the tree is watered, the retained water risks freezing and destroying part of the pot.



6 A sharp tool is used to quickly cut through roots around the edges of the root ball.



9 A good compromise to avoid risks of frost is to place the tree, with or without its pot, in a polystyrene container which will insulate the roots from the cold.

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When to work on bonsai

Part One

Author: Bruno Mazza

It is common sense to work on a tree at a time when it is possible to obtain the best result, while interfering as little as possible with the plant's natural activity, because causing stress to a plant will slow down its process of development instead of speeding it up.

Any intervention must have a specific purpose. The point is to do what needs to be done, without leaving anything out or putting anything off, because it is a chance to improve the bonsai that doesn't come up often.

To obtain noticeable results, it is very important to work on vigorous plants. Weak plants respond feebly, and their survival may be put at risk.

To boost the strength of a plant that you want to work on, you need to apply fertiliser in the previous year: nearly all species absorb and store up nutrients in order to use them during the following growth season.

The tree's cycle

Within a given year, plants go through various phases:

- winter dormancy
- revival and flowering
- producing new growth and fruit
- a short period of summer dormancy
- consolidation of the new growth
- preparation for the winter dormancy.

The start points and lengths of the phases are very much dependent on variations in the

photoperiod (the relationship between the length of the daytime and of night) and climate, which can alter the periods of rest or activity. For example, if there are very high temperatures, above 32–35°C, that last for more than a very brief spell, this will slow down or inhibit photosynthesis: the plant will then go into a period of dormancy that will not end until normal conditions have been re-established.

When to intervene

The time to intervene on a bonsai is usually dictated by the plant's life cycle. Sometimes the right moment is limited to a very short period of just a few days: this is the case for pinching buds on maples. Sometimes, on the other hand, the work can be carried out over an extended period, by adapting the procedures or replacing them with other solutions which, if carefully applied, may even be preferable: this is the case for the repotting of some broadleaves in summer.



This hornbeam was pruned at the end of winter. Since then, it has put out plenty of new growth. It now needs to be cut back to two leaves.

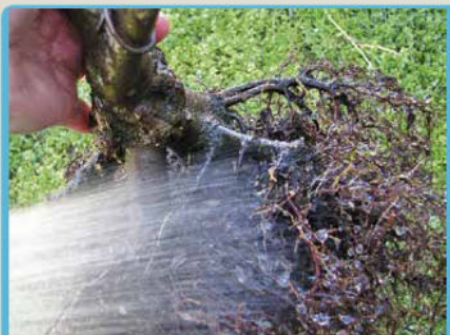
In general, the period for intervention more or less coincides with seasonal changes:

- in winter, the tree is dormant because of very cold weather
- in early spring, growth begins again
- in spring and early summer, there is major growth
- in high summer, the tree is dormant due to the heat
- in early autumn, fruit is produced and growth stabilises
- in late autumn, the tree prepares for the winter dormancy.

These are only rough guidelines, however. Geographical position and local microclimate are highly variable factors, so it is necessary to check the plant's ability to adapt to the chosen location.

Paying close attention to the biological cycle of plants to glean useful pointers and to choose the time and method of intervention is much more pertinent, and gives more accurate information than following tables of prescribed data. ►►►

Towards the beginning of May, the hornbeam has stopped growing because of overly high temperatures (35°C and above) recorded in the region (Italy).



1 After gently removing the soil from this maple, its roots are cleaned by hosing down.



2 When you can see all of the roots, you can cut them back. Remove the taproot and the thickest roots, and slightly reduce the fine ones, to stimulate growth of new roots.



3 The root ball is ready to be placed in a pot.

During winter dormancy

Broadleaves are inactive during this period. The absence of leaves does not allow photosynthesis, and there is no activity in the organs.

The part above ground has no need for either light or fertiliser. Stick only to routine maintenance, to avoid the possibility of infestation by parasites or fungus.

The roots, on the other hand, need a certain amount of moisture in the soil to stay alive and not dry out. But take care not to over-water; otherwise you risk asphyxiating them.

During this period, because of the low temperatures, water evaporates slowly and is not absorbed at all by the leaves. The soil dries so slowly that it is easy to forget to check it.

This is a good period for a number of types of work on bonsai.

• Repotting

Most bonsai can be repotted during the winter, but the best period for this is the weeks immediately prior to the early spring revival, when you judge that there is no longer a danger of intense cold that could damage the roots. If repotting a tree in the middle of winter, you need to remember to put it in a place where is safe from frost – although not in a heated room, because you do not want to stimulate premature growth.

Broadleaves are generally repotted after hosing down the root ball to clean it and leave the roots bare. This provides an opportunity to have a good look at all of the roots every two to three years. You therefore need to take advantage of it to improve them, by removing thicker ones so as to stimulate growth of finer ones which absorb nutrients dissolved in water. The improvements must concern either the buried roots, or those on the surface, and the nebari which should be attended to at each repotting.

The root mass of a vigorous broadleaf can be reduced by 60%, or even more, without causing any suffering to the plant.

Repotting conifers is more complicated and carries a slightly higher level of risk than that of broadleaves. It should never be done with bare roots; instead, part of the root

ball must be kept intact. The fine roots of conifers generally have more trouble forming. To absorb food, they need mycorrhizas, which therefore need to be retained.

The time available in late winter for repotting broadleaves is rather limited. Repotting must be suspended as soon as the first buds start to open. A second possibility for repotting arises in June, when the leaves from the first budding are mature.

The period for repotting conifers is much longer and can extend right up to the point when the candles open for pines, or to the growth of new foliage for junipers: in practice, it can last from the first half of February until mid-June, depending on the microclimate of the location concerned.

Cutting back the roots during repotting stimulates the plant to quickly produce new roots, new



Two years ago, this Japanese maple was 7-8 cm tall, making it a shohin. It grew freely and its branches now measure almost a metre in length. Next year, hard pruning and regular pinching will create the secondary ramification, the tertiary, and so on.

growth, and to repair its wounds: healing is very speedy in this period.

• Pruning

As for the above-ground parts of the plant, this late winter period is a good time for structural pruning, replacement pruning and maintenance pruning:

► Structural, or 'hard', pruning is intended to give an initial form to virgin material, reducing the length of the trunk and accentuating the taper if this is part of the design conceived for the bonsai, or removing unnecessary branches.

It is always best to treat the severed ends after pruning with cut paste or adhesive aluminium tape, to protect them from microorganisms and insects, and to retain a minimum level of humidity, which is necessary for the development of healing cells.

The use of adhesive aluminium tape (0.5 mm thickness) for healing has been adapted to bonsai by the master Harumi Miyao, renowned in Japan as the greatest expert on Japanese maple, *Acer palmatum*. The technique consists of covering the perfectly flat (not concave!) cut with a piece of aluminium tape which goes 2 centimetres beyond the edge of the cut all round. Healing then takes half the time that it does with other methods, and there is no swelling.

► Replacement pruning is used to reduce the height of a bonsai or the length of its branches. It thus serves to make the bonsai's form more compact. This and the previous type of pruning use a smaller and shorter secondary branch to replace the one that has been cut off.

If necessary, before growth starts again in the spring, this is the moment to carry out a second styling exercise, to go back over the design or perfect it.

► Maintenance pruning. It is also possible to use a very light pruning to get back the shape that has been



1 Adhesive aluminium tape can be used to heal wounds.



2 Cover the wound, which must be very flat.

lost through the new growth from the last season. This type of pruning, which is usually combined with wire training, allows the bonsai's form to be re-established and the foliage to grow correctly.

Repeated every year, this procedure leads the bonsai towards maturity and encourages its growth activity to stabilise.

• Other tasks for the dormant period

The winter dormancy is a good time for:

- working on jin and shari (dead parts of branches or trunks), whether small or large
- major work on deadwood on junipers, pines and *Prunus*
- bending trunks and branches, small or large
- treating deadwood with jin seal to prevent it from rotting



3 It will heal quickly, without swelling.

► using jin seal as a preventative measure (dilute 1 part jin seal with 30 parts water) on trunks and major branches of broadleaves.

► On pines, just before maintenance pruning and wire training, if it has not been done already, it is possible to remove the old needles to allow more light to ►►►



The winter dormancy is the moment to work on jin. Cut into the bark by twisting the pliers without squeezing them too hard (only the thickness of the bark), then make a cross-shaped incision in the stump of the branch.



Pull at the wood fibres so that they tear away, to give the most natural effect possible.



A few weeks after the plant has started to grow again, this hornbeam's new shoots need to be cut off with scissors after the second leaf.

▶▶▶ penetrate, to activate the dormant buds inside the tree and to sort through the terminal buds at the ends of the branches to leave just two of them.

Springtime reawakening

At the beginning of spring, broad-leaves need to be carefully inspected to spot the first signs of budding. Some species, such as elm and hornbeam, should initially be left to bud freely. Only a few weeks later, when the new shoots have developed at least four to six leaves, is intervention necessary by cutting with scissors after the second leaf.

Others, however – especially in the case of bonsai that have already been styled – need intervention to keep overly vigorous growth under control and avoid compromising the elegance and refinement of the ends of the ramification. This is the case for Japanese maples in the styling phase: if they are left to grow unfettered, during the season they will produce thick, straight shoots a metre long.

On the other hand, on a maple that is in the phase of refinement, intervention on the buds is required every day, from the moment the first ones start to open until the last ones have finished budding. The procedure consists of opening the first two leaves, which will be retained, and removing the leaves inside.

This operation, which is called “pinching”, induces the growth of new and smaller buds, which will sprout from the axils of the remaining leaves.

The procedure, which needs to be constantly repeated and is often carried out alongside deleafing, generates small leaves and an elegant and slender ramification, which is what characterises Japanese maples.

Beech is an unusual case, because it only buds once in the spring. This idiosyncrasy has the result of increasing the time required for the ramification to densify. ●



1 Beech buds are starting to open.



2 Every day, the buds need to be opened by hand to remove the central part.



3 The first two leaves are retained.

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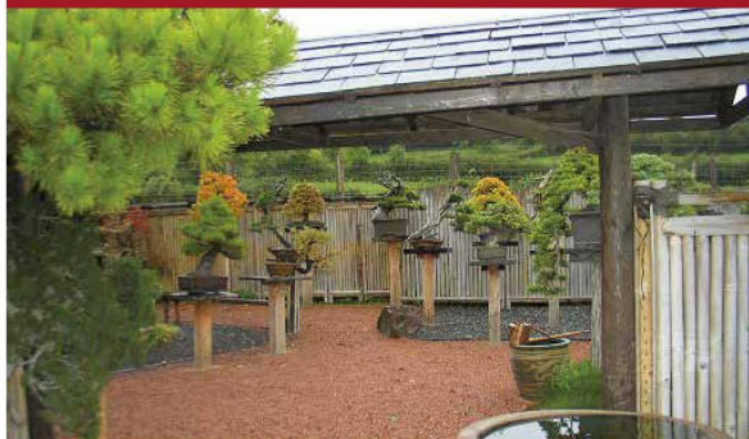
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Autumn fertilising

In autumn, trees need help, in the form of fertiliser, to prepare them for the winter and for the new growth period in the spring.

Author: Xavier Dreux

Neutralising substrate

Fertiliser application throughout the season has made the soil acidic. This is particularly true for trees that are being cultivated and that are given high amounts of feed. Using rainwater, which can be very acidic, can also exacerbate this phenomenon.

Some trees do not appreciate soil that has too low a pH (acidic). Acidity slows down the absorption of fertiliser and trace elements.

To raise the pH, the substrate needs to be neutralised using water that has been infused with wood ash. For this, mix one part wood ash (not exotic or treated wood) with 10 parts water. Stir it well and leave it to settle. Filter it, then water your bonsai with this preparation, once in the autumn and once at the end of spring.



Early autumn is the ideal time to fertilise bonsai: liquid or solid fertiliser?

The use of inert soil with good drainage properties means bonsai need to be regularly fertilised. And it's in the autumn that fertiliser needs to be applied in the most sustained way. In fact, this is the only time when mature bonsai should be fed. Trees that are in cultivation, however, are fertilised throughout the growth period, generally from February to October.

1 Why to fertilise

Fertilising trees before the winter, before they go into their dormant period, allows bonsai's metabolism to be strengthened and helps them prepare for the spring-time revival. They build up reserves, as phloem sap is stored up in the wood.

Bonsai are under a lot of strain when their buds start to wake up and growth begins again. But our little protégés also need strength to withstand countless interferences from us, such as repotting, late winter pruning, wire training, manipulation, etc. This is what autumnal fertilisation is for.

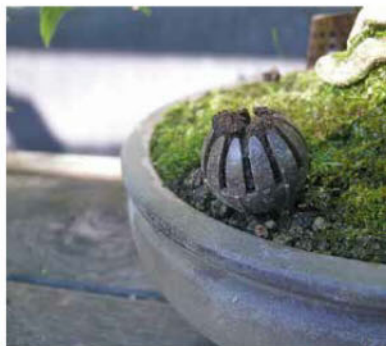
This application of a potassium-rich fertiliser also gives them strength and protection against diseases and insects, as well as increasing their resistance to cold winter weather.

2 NPK: how does it work?

When discussing fertiliser, we always speak of NPK: N is the percentage of nitrogen in the fertiliser, P is that



Put balls of fertiliser in little baskets all over the pot.



The granules start to dissolve after a few days, and they will continue to break down over several weeks.



To keep a constant supply of fertiliser to the plant, add new baskets each week in between the older ones.

of phosphorus and K that of potassium. These three elements are crucial for plant wellbeing. They allow bonsai to develop healthily and vigorously.

Each of the elements offers specific benefits for plants. Nitrogen helps the development of leaves and new shoots. Growth of roots, flowers and fruit is encouraged by phosphorus. As for potassium, it allows increased resistance to cold, frost, disease and insects. It is easy to understand why, in autumn, trees mainly consume potassium (K) but a bit less nitrogen (N).

3 Autumn fertilisation

Autumn fertilisation is sometimes a controversial topic, but there is one thing everyone agrees about: it is necessary. Some advise reducing or even entirely removing the nitrogen (N), while others, including myself, think that you can use the same type of fertiliser all year round. The requirements are different, but the plant uses what it needs. The main thing is to vary the fertiliser (with different compositions and origins). Although we tend to speak of autumn fertilisation, in fact it needs to start at the end of summer – especially with slow-release solid organic fertiliser, which will only start to act about three weeks after it has been applied.

4 Liquid or solid fertiliser?

Both types have their advantages. With solid fertiliser, you just need to place granules or balls of it on the



Biogold® has a number of advantages: its shape stops it from rolling, and its subtle smell does not attract dogs or slugs. It can be used all year round, but is quite expensive.



Biogold® granules are placed directly on the surface of the soil, in little heaps.

surface of pots and they will gradually break down. It is possible to cover solid fertiliser with little plastic baskets or put them in teabags to protect them from slugs and birds. These measures keep the organic fertiliser in contact with the substrate, in the shade, and damp, thus helping it to be broken down by micro-organisms in the soil. They also stop balls of fertiliser from rolling around during watering.

The liquid version needs to be diluted according to the manufacturer's specifications and applied on previously dampened soil. It is possible, and even recommended, to spray it on leaves, in a more diluted solution. Liquid fertiliser acts more quickly, and can be absorbed almost immediately. ●



in a watering can, put a little water, add liquid fertiliser, then fill up with clear water ...



... then apply it to damp soil.

Urban trees

In the towns and cities of the Western world, the role played by trees is often confined to that of decorative extras. Urban trees: a link between citizens and nature, or the miserable martyrs of standardised urbanisation?

Author: Gilbert Labrid

It is well known that towns and cities were built in the countryside. A countryside that has been digested, calibrated and maintained as a sort of decorative accessory, sometimes in a positive way, sometimes in a vulgar and cynical one. What do city-dwellers want to see of nature? A distant memory inscribed in their genes? An opportunity to breathe while out running? Or an unconscious need to connect with their original setting, which is necessary for mental balance?

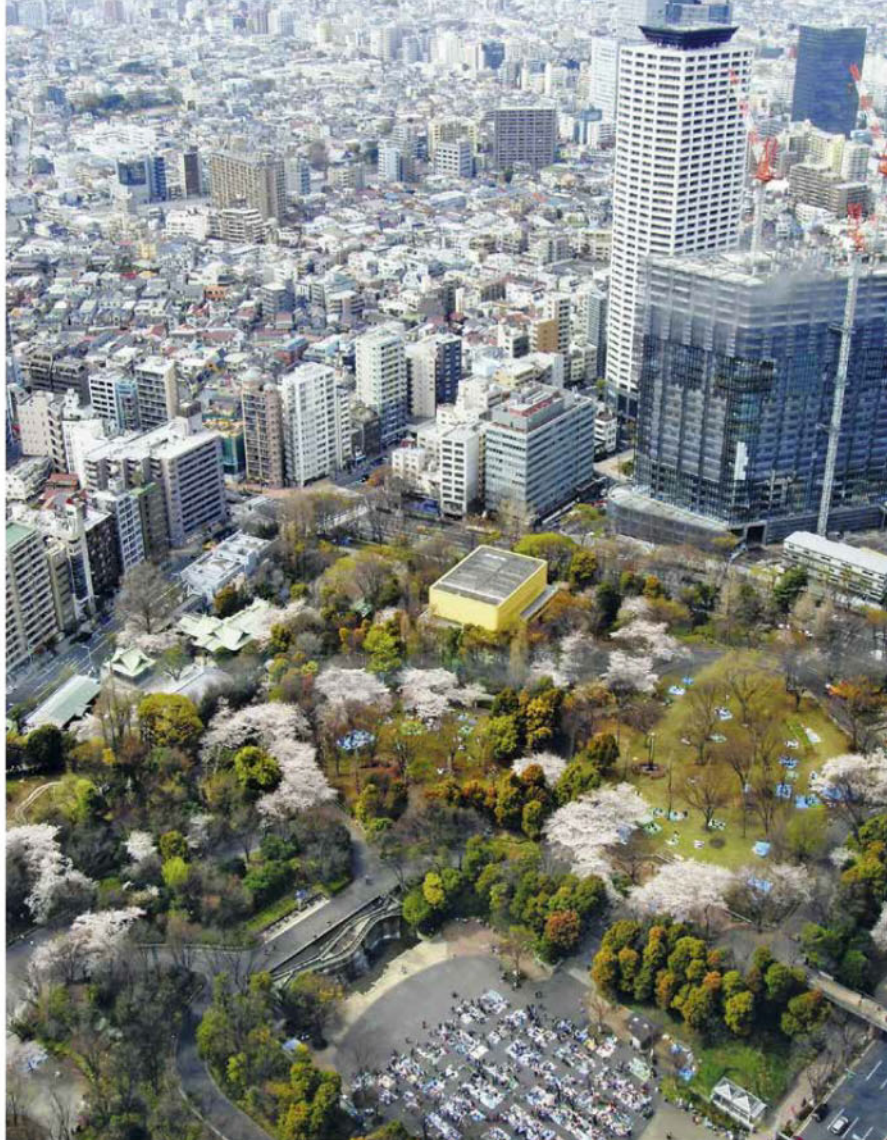
In view of the exponential development of cities and the continuous spread of alternative technologies, we may well ask ourselves: "What is left of nature in the city?"

A brave resistance

Of course there are parks, landscaped or not, that offer an extended space for solitary walkers' day-dreaming steps. But they are botanical zoos where exotic varieties stand side by side, with no order or purpose other than to flaunt the pleasure of having conquered the plant world. Of course, broad shady avenues that are open, linear and unsurprising, but crucial for their air-cleansing function, are not to be overlooked in terms of urban balance when they offer a comforting and beneficial visual aspect.

Of course, some private gardens harbour lovingly preserved ancient treasures, but these are invisible to the passer-by. Is this enough to nourish and calm our conscience, exhausted as it is by the pursuit of happiness? Urbanites' eagerness to flee the city and throw themselves into the "adventure" of forests and beaches certainly suggests otherwise.

So now let's look to unexpected places to find the survivors that can reveal an expression of the



Cities are built in the countryside. What remains of it, in the form of "green spaces", is laughable or pathetic!



Within the uniformity of the modern built environment, a few stray individuals put up a resistance to the forces of levelling.



A little greenery is pretty among age-old stones. But this hackberry's "natural" evolution has caused it to overgrow the space allocated by technocrats who clearly lacked forethought or good sense. A bit of air, please!



A totally incongruous situation for this magnificent *Magnolia soulangeana* relegated to a miserable corner of a car park. What a depressing contrast between what "gives" and what "sells"!

plant age, while preserving their unique characteristics. In all sorts of urban zones, these individuals are bravely resisting the pressures of built development. Relegated to the far ends of outdoor car parks, squeezed between imposing tower blocks, forgotten on tiny squares, these arboreal survivors are all the more moving for their strong affirmation of their ability to adapt to the lamentable constraints that are imposed upon them.

A hundred years' life expectancy

These trees are prisoners of urban traffic, and their condition does not seem as awful as that of the humans around them. Even so, the life expectancy of trees in cities is barely more than 100 years, mainly because of the ground being cluttered with mains, waterproof surfaces, packing down of soil and all sorts of pollutants. Also, the eye of the health and safety brigade is always upon them: at the slightest visible sign of deterioration, tree service technicians will sever a weak branch from the offending specimen, or cut the tree down entirely if it has the misfortune of displaying a hollow trunk. As if the greatest danger in cities were of trees falling on passers-by!

On the website of the city of Paris, for example, even though the French capital is less disfigured by contemporary urbanism than certain other cities, it is frightening to note that only two hundred trees are listed as "veteran trees". A mere two hundred, from the hundred thousand or so throughout the city!



Traditional rows of trees accompany wide mineral avenues, more for their utilitarian role than to re-establish a link with the original setting.



In Japan, looking after each expression of nature still remains a lively concern.

To rectify this clash between city and countryside, in the United States in the 1960s – and since then in Australia, Europe and elsewhere – cities have been created along enormous axes, with groups of detached houses mingling with a false rurality that masks economic activities with "luxuriant" vegetation. Alas, this staging cannot stand up to the vicissitudes of our century. Gigantic fires, provoked by climate change, have swallowed up houses, trees and rustic settings in one fell swoop.

It turns out that the French humourist Alphonse Allais was wrong. It is not best to build modern cities in the countryside. ●



In autumn, broadleaves need particular attention to prepare them for winter. This *Acer palmatum* is used as an example here. Height: 27 cm. Front view.

Autumn preparations for a Japanese maple

Trees build up reserves in the autumn in order to face the winter. Broadleaf shohin, such as Japanese maples, need a little preparation to help them to stock up their energy and preserve their good structure.

Author: BonsaiTranslations
Demonstration: Tomohiro Masumi

The maple's autumn colours are at their height, and broadleaves have not yet started to dry back. This is the perfect moment to start autumn maintenance work. The maple that Tomohiro Masumi works on here is impressive: its trunk seems enormous and the nebari is superb.



Acer palmatum rear view.



2 Halfway through, the tree's apex is visible. Note the long, thick branches of the tree's apex. Growth is always strongest at the top.



1 Working from top to bottom, simply cut off the leaves on their stem, a centimetre from the base.



3 Japanese maples tend to produce long twigs. This indicates that the tree is in good health. However, the twigs will not help the tree's structure. The tree needs to be condensed every autumn so that the following year's growth does not upset its balance too much.

The summer heat has been and gone, and trees are donning their autumn colours again. It is time to prepare deciduous trees for their long winter sleep. Normally a tree will lose its leaves naturally after the slowing down of chlorophyll production in the autumn. Carbon and nitrogen together with starch are transformed into energy reserves for the tree, in a way that is very similar to the fat reserves built up by hibernating animals. When trees are very small, as is the case with shohin, there are some slight differences at this stage. First of all, shohin do not shed their dried leaves as easily as trees in nature do, because they are not necessarily exposed to the gusts of wind that tend to strip larger trees. Another risk is that the drying of the leaves may weaken the twigs that they are attached to. Shohin bonsai will also stock up their energy in their trunks. However, they are so small that the little energy they have needs to be stored without any wastage. In central Japan, the time for working on broadleaves in the autumn is around mid-

November, but this can vary considerably between Okinawa, in the south, and Hokkaido, in the north. Japan's latitude is from 26 to 46 degrees north, so there is a very significant variety of climate. Therefore, determining the ideal moment requires careful thought. When broadleaves start to dry out, the sap is absorbed inside the trunk. If you cut them back too early, not all of the nutrients contained within the leaves will have been transferred into energy within the trunk. If you cut them back too late, the energy is already stored in liquid form and when the branches are cut, the sap will flow out of the cuts. This means some waste, which is a problem. If you are uncertain of the right moment to do this sort of work, try to make adjustments as the years go by.

Deleafing

Tomohiro Masumi starts off by cutting all the leaves off the tree. The tree needs to be stripped right back so that its interior can be inspected. ►►►

Examining the tree

The master inspects the tree. To do this, you need to place the bonsai at eye level and step back to a distance of 50 centimetres. Look for the branches that do not form part of the tree's structure, and for dead branches. See whether there are insects, wounds or any other sign of weakness in the tree. Mosses are also harmful if they extend up the trunk.



Now that the tree has been defoliated, it needs to be closely examined to detect structural anomalies as well as insects.

Covering wounds

You will often see large scars towards the tops of trees, because when a tree grows too quickly, it has to be cut back. These scars can be unattractive. In this case you should use the "Makikomu" technique, which translates as "engulfing". In normal situations, there should never be more than two branches springing from the same point, but to cover the scar you need to let several branches grow around it. Also bear in mind that the branches are very vigorous.



Vigorous branches are normally removed from bonsai, but here they will serve to cover the scar.

Cutting off dead or overly vigorous branches

Dead branches need to be removed. Looking after an accomplished tree such as this one also means cutting off thick branches and leaving the slim ones. Thick branches serve only to thicken a trunk or cover a scar.



This dead branch inside the tree has probably suffered from a lack of light while it was growing. The dead section must be cut off. This is a common situation, but can be avoided by reducing the foliage during spring and summer. Another technique consists of cutting leaves in two to allow sunlight to pass through.



Stocky little twigs are easy to identify, because they are longer and thicker.



Masumi cuts off the ends of the thick twigs.



This vigorous little branch also needs to be cut off.



This allows the tree's vigour to be made more balanced.



Three branches spring from the same point; a vigorous branch is removed.



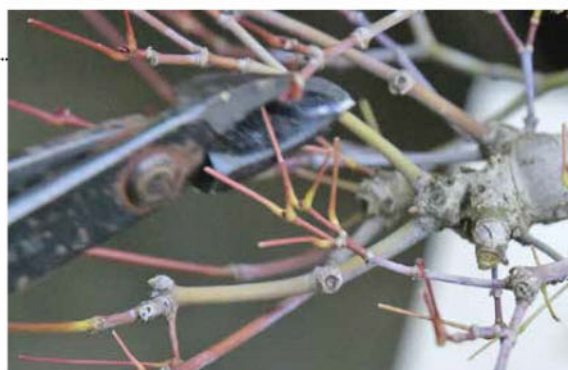
It makes way for two more delicate branches.

Two branches from a single point

When three branches spring from the same point, the most vigorous one needs to be cut off, because there should never be more than two branches coming from the same place. Japanese bonsai strives for a natural state of balance. Having more than two branches growing from the same spot gives an unnatural appearance that looks rather like a spider or a crab. ►►►



This branch is vigorous but well placed, because it counterbalances one of the others and is offset. However, keeping it would lessen the taper: the base should be bulky and it should slim out gradually towards the extremities.



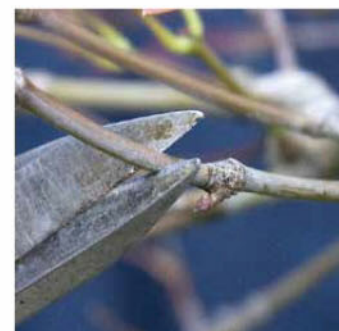
Since the position is good, a less vigorous twig needs to be found so that it can take over.



Looking under the cut, this twig comes into view. It will be the future branch. The branch is thus rebalanced and slims out towards its end.

Cutting in the right place

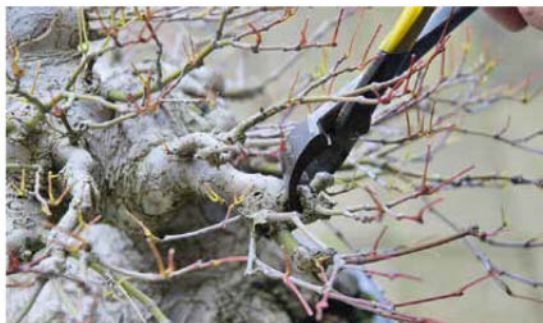
Cutting should never be done at random, because you always need to think of what the tree will do next. New leaves appear at swollen intersections. Here, you can see the bud which will be the branch's future. The cut is made slightly higher up. Too close to the bud, and there is a risk that it will be damaged.



The branch is cut off at a point above the swollen part.

Keeping the taper

One of the main branches is unbalanced. It needs to be cut shorter to improve its taper. To do this, Masumi uses a flat-ended branch-cutter and makes a diagonal cut near the twig which will be the new extension of the main branch.



Tomohiro Masumi cuts off this branch to improve the taper of the main branch.



The way he makes the cut is as important as its location. By cutting diagonally like this, the taper is improved.



Note also that the cut is very close to the new extension. This technique aids healing.



Healing always happens from the outside to the inside of the wood. Since the new branch's growth is stronger, the healing will happen in the direction of this arrow.



The scar is then covered by cut paste to protect it and aid the healing process.



Masumi removes the black soil from the pot and nebari with tweezers.



Then, he uses a brush to give the base a thorough clean.



He also washes the pot.

Cleaning the nebari

Cleaning the nebari is an important stage not only in terms of its maintenance, but also for its development. At this point, Tomohiro Masumi removes all of the black soil on the nebari and in the pot. Black soil, which is a mixture of dissolved fertiliser and substrate, is harmful for the tree, because it causes rotting in the nebari and trunk. If this earth is not removed regularly, the base of the nebari may not develop with a good taper, but instead in a ball shape, which is not a desirable look. The base of the tree and the pot also need to be cleaned. Bonsai pots can become discoloured by pesticides, especially sulphur. Indeed, sulphur, which allows the elimination of insects' eggs and fungus, tends to stick to pots and bleach them.

Ready for winter

After some gentle wiring of one of the upper branches using copper wire, the work is complete. The tree is now ready for winter, and the year's growth has been kept in check. This stage is crucial for keeping the tree's thickness under control. Bear in mind the most important point: good shohin trees have imposing trunks with very delicate branches. This Japanese maple is a good example of that. ●
Tomohiro Masumi of Koju-en in Kyoto, Japan :
<http://www.kyoto.zaq.jp/kojuen/0index.html>



Rear view.

The Japanese maple, *Acer palmatum*, after work is complete. Front view. Height: 26 cm.



Getting the best out of **flowering and fruiting**

Flowering and fruiting are important stages in a plant's life, and all the more so in bonsai where they offer a magnificent display. However, getting them to reach their full potential isn't easy, hence the need to resort to fertiliser.

Author: Jérôme Hay

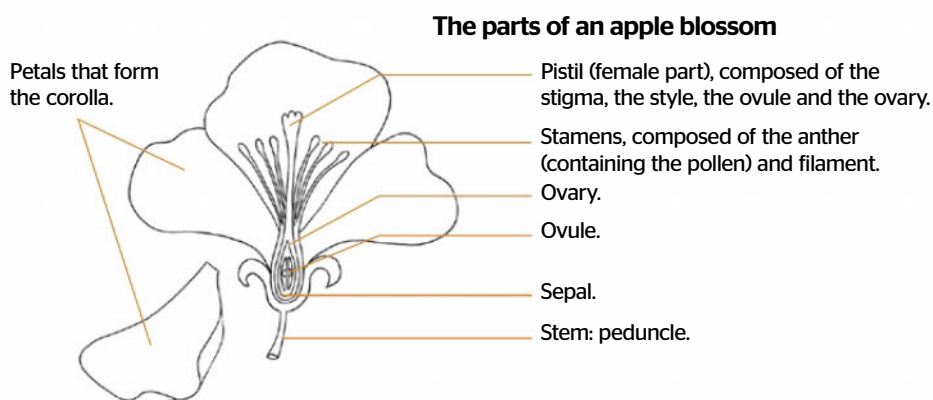
Flowering and fruiting are aspects that dominate choices of species to cultivate as bonsai. While they are temporary attractions, they give not just a seasonality, but also a working rhythm and an objective. But plants' aptitude in this regard can vary a lot depending on the species, cultivation methods and climate. To gain some control over them, you need to be methodical and committed, to know the plant's cycle and, more often than not, to use fertiliser.

What is a flower?

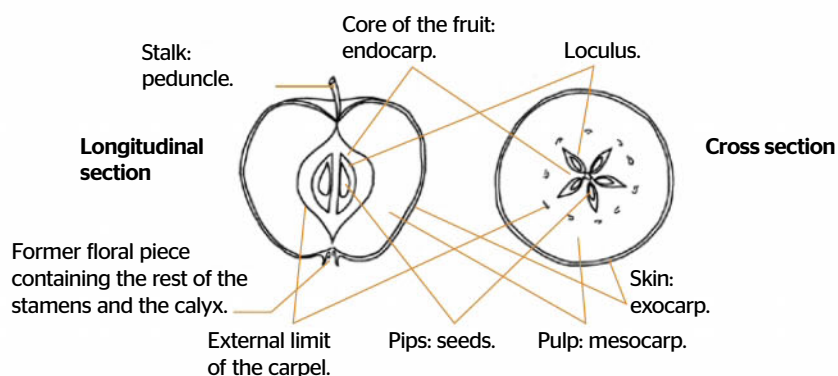
Flowers are the plant's sexual organs. They are complex and are themselves composed of several organs. The most interesting part for us are the petals, which are modified leaves. These have the role of protecting the most sensitive organs and, through their colour and their sweating surface, attracting pollinating insects that will fertilise them using the pollen that they carry from flower to flower.



The appearance of flowers and fruit on a bonsai depends on a number of parameters, which you need to understand in order to remedy, for example by using fertiliser.



The parts of the fruit of an apple tree: the apple





A bonsai's flowering should be spread across the whole plant and at the same stage of maturity, with strong colouring.

What is a fruit?

Fruit are envelopes whose aim is to produce seeds. They offer protection, and can have less obvious roles, such as attracting animals that will eat them.

For the sake of preservation, some seeds are designed to resist multiple attacks. This state of the seed up to the point when germination is triggered is called dormancy.

The more effective the protection, the more complex the means of germination. Digestion of the fruit by an animal removes this protection and also has a second purpose: propagation of the seed. A fruit that drops to the ground will only travel a few metres and settle near the tree that produced it. When carried in the digestive tract of a bird or other animal, the seed will travel miles.

The colour code of fruit is not straightforward to understand. While the colour of flowers attracts pollinators, that of fruit can attract or, on the contrary, be a strategy to avoid being eaten, as can its particular smell or toxicity. Lastly, by decomposing, the fruit produces the first nutritional elements for the seedling after germination.

In bonsai cultivation

Both flowering and fruiting are interconnected with the plant's cultivation method and way of functioning. While the phases are the pillars of the growth cycle, they are not vital for the plant, but rather for the survival of the species. The quantity of flowering or fruiting can be irregular depending on a number of parameters.

While a total or partial absence of blossoms does not kill the plant, it does create an imbalance in its activity: excessive growth and redirection of the sap to other jobs, which risks disrupting certain types of work we might want to do or, on the contrary, might help us with others. It is important for it to be our interventions that provoke the imbalance, and not the plant that starts it off or gets one step ahead. ►►►



This azalea's flowering is sparse. The blooms are not at the same level of maturity, and their shapes and colours are sometimes distorted.

▶▶▶ In addition, a surplus of flowers weakens and impoverishes the plant, but also creates imbalance and accentuates underlying problems.

Fruiting, which is a consequence of flowering, brings about the same results, but with a lesser impact since it happens at the end of the growth cycle – not to be confused with leaf fall, which is the start of a phase of dormancy as protection against a period of unfavourable climate. Often, these two activities – the end of the growth cycle and dormancy – happen together, but this is not always the case, as shown by spring flowering: for satsuki, for example, the end of the growth cycle is in June or early July and the dormant period is from October to March.

It is essential to aim for stable flowering. The work that needs to be done is different depending on whether the aim is to limit or to induce flowering. Regulation of the quantity of flowers is achieved manually by pruning. However, flowering can only be sparked off by chemical intervention.

If there is only partial flowering or none at all, you need to try to determine the causes of this. Several aspects can drive such a withdrawal: the juvenile stage, climate, stress, disturbance, or external factors.

Understanding the absence of blooms

• The juvenile stage

Where plants that have never flowered are concerned, if the species is native and you know how to cultivate it, the plant may not be sexually mature. Plants grown from seed take several years



This rather old azalea bonsai is not flowering.



This apple bonsai is flowering and fruiting at the same time - which is an anomaly, undoubtedly caused by the fact that there is less and less distinction between the seasons.



Solid organic fertilisers are available in several forms: balls, grains, pellets ...



They should not be applied in a way that impedes soil drainage, because fertiliser decomposes into fine particles that build up.

before producing their first flowers. They are then at the juvenile stage, during which they focus on their growth and development. To alleviate this problem, horticulturists systematically resort to grafting, because plants grown from grafts do not have a juvenile period and flower from the first year.

Cuttings can also offer this advantage, but less reliably so. Twigs taken as cuttings are the same age as the parent plant; if the latter flowers, the young plant, which is a clone of it, will do likewise. However, after a year or two, a fundamental change happens and the young plant goes into a period of growth and development, like for a seedling. It will then tend not to blossom any more, or to do so only a little, for a certain length of time.

• Climate

The climate has been changeable for the last few years. This is a disruptive factor for the generation of flower buds. An overly hot, cold or dry climate, or rapid major changes in temperature, can cause flowering to be aborted. Only equip-

ment such as sun shading or a greenhouse, and increased monitoring, will allow these variations to be regulated.

• Fertilisation and other factors

The absence of flowering can also be justified by incorrect fertilisation. Chlorosis causes a yellowing of the leaves and also acts on flowers. A lack of water brings about hydric stress which first causes the flowering or the fruiting that is getting under way to be abandoned. Lastly, there are a number of external factors that can be responsible for the absence of flowering: birds, rodents, insects, but also diseases (rot, the fungal disease *Monilinia fructigena*, etc.). All of these complications can be easily remedied with monitoring, good sense and care.

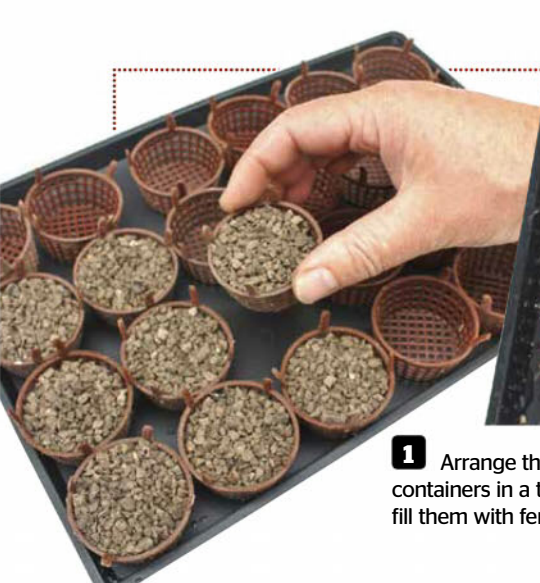
Inducing flowering

• Watering

Plants need to be given the means to blossom. They often lack the necessary resources to ►►►



These fertilisers are light and attract various animals, hence the use of baskets which are available in various shapes. Personally, I prefer containers that are placed upside down, because the ones that stick in the soil stand a few millimetres above its surface: the fertiliser doesn't have the same humidity level as the substrate, and is only released intermittently.



1 Arrange the containers in a tray, and fill them with fertiliser.



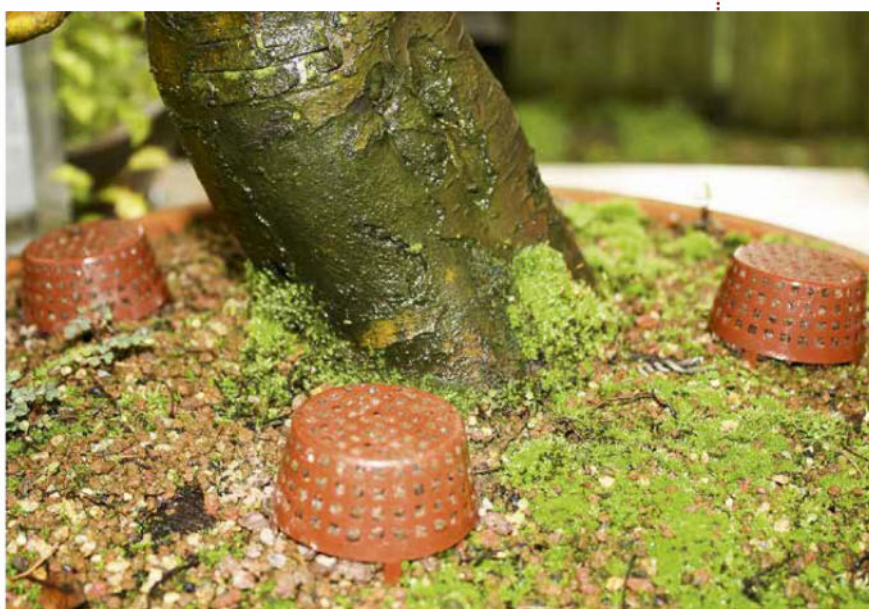
2 Water.



3 The fertiliser swells up. Leave it to rest overnight.



4 All of the liquid needs to be absorbed.



5 Place the containers on the surface of the pot.

►►► initiate flowering. First of all, water: regulating watering is important for the creation of flower buds, for causing flowers to wither, and then for making fruit develop. The water carries nutrients and is one of the main constituents of flowers and fruit. Particular attention needs to be paid to watering during the period when buds are being produced. For spring flowering, you need to water diligently in August and September; and for summer flowering, in April, May and June.

• Flower boosters

While watering is good, you need to pay attention to plants' needs by applying fertiliser. At the juvenile stage, they will not produce flowers, because they are too young; it is possible to shorten or even eliminate this phase. Using fertiliser that is specially intended for flowering is not enough to

obtain flowers. Some cases require resorting to products that are not fertilisers, but flower boosters. Because plants can't get all their nutritional needs from the three primary elements N, P and K, these boosters provide hormones that play a part in the plant's activity.

Hormones and Co.

• Plants' needs

Other elements, called microelements, are important for feeding plants, as are the complex molecules that are hormones. The best-known hormones are auxin, which aids responses to external stress, and cytokinin, which revives the metabolism and activates photosynthesis.

The biochemical composition of plants varies depending on whether they are healthy or stunted



If you don't have baskets, you can use a paper coffee filter as a container for solid fertiliser.



Put the fertiliser in the filter.



Fold over the corners.



Fold over the edge to make a sort of sachet.



Keep the filter and fertiliser in place with a toothpick stuck into the soil.



Just like baskets during the fertilising period, these filters can be removed, dried out and then reused.

and sick. A diagram has been drawn up of the elements and hormones that are necessary for plant health. From this, it can be deduced that if a plant that is in bad condition is supplied with all the necessary elements, it will return to healthy activity. Based on this conclusion, it is easy to experiment with two plants – one that is flowering, and one that is not. Such a trial allows a product to be created that makes up for whatever is lacking.

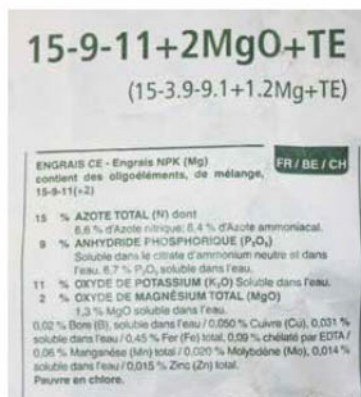
• Stimulating plants

On paper, this sounds simple, but the reality is more complex. While NPK fertilisers and microelements can easily penetrate a plant's cell barrier, it is another story entirely for complex elements such as hormones. Indeed, plants produce these, but do not use them up. A low rate of these molecules indicates that the plant is in poor condition. Artificially adding these components tricks the plant: it thinks that it has produced them itself, which induces it to synthesise its hormones, because it has resources to do so. The plant then returns to its normal way of functioning.

Phytostimulants (biostimulants, anti-stress products, growth stimulators) are used to stimulate plants. Their composition varies: hormones, fertilising matter, mycorrhizas, microelements etc., depending on the laboratory and cultivation procedures concerned.

You have to be cunning to get the complex molecules through the cell barrier, by getting around it or by changing the path of assimilation: leaves and roots are the easiest. But that's without counting on the chemical agents and elements that allow hormones to be absorbed. There has been progress over recent years in studies on how to get past the cell barrier so that products can act on the heart of the plant organism. These products – phytostimulants – allow slumps to be alleviated and problems thus to be resolved. They give plants impetus to recover; however, depending on the product, they can lead to dependency. It is therefore worthwhile to seek out the underlying causes of their condition, which are often simple: soil, fertiliser, water and cultivation method. ►►►

Organic liquid fertiliser and flower boosters are part of the fertilising schedule.



The NPK figures on the packaging signify the quantities of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium that the fertiliser contains.



A graduated watering can, a measuring jug or a syringe can be used to manage the dilution of these fertilisers.

What fertiliser consists of

Nitrogen, N, mainly affects the growth of all the above-ground parts of the plant. Crucial in the spring to instigate growth, it should be applied sparingly, because an excess of it is detrimental to the development of flowers, fruit and roots. Phosphorus, P, reinforces the plant's immune defences and its resistance to stress, and contributes to root development. Potassium, K, helps encourage flowering and

a good development of fruit and seeds. On fertiliser packaging, the letters NPK are followed by three figures that represent the proportion of each of these elements. For example, a fertiliser with an NPK of 9-4-8 contains 90 grams of nitrogen in every kilogram. For the last few years, calcium (Ca), magnesium (Mg) and microelements have been added, all of which are also essential for plant development.

Apple trees as an example

In terms of fertiliser, there is a difference between base fertiliser, fertiliser for flowers and flower boosters. The amount applied to bonsai needs to be adapted according to the season, so you need to follow their growth cycle.

Take apple trees as an example. They flower in the spring, at the same time as the budburst. From April onwards, feed them with organic base fertiliser, NPK 6-6-5, which will satisfy their needs for four months. Depending on what work you want to do on the plant, you can adjust to a multipurpose liquid fertiliser NPK 4-3-4 – which the plant can absorb immediately, unlike for solid fertiliser – every fortnight until July.

August is the period when the following year's flower buds form. For all other non-flowering spe-

cies, the same fertiliser is used as in April, and in the same doses. For apple trees, the dose is halved and it is supplemented with a fertiliser that is specially intended for flowering, NPK 4-0-8.5, every fortnight until the leaves fall. This fertiliser has two aims: building up the flower buds, and feeding the fruits.

If the plant does not blossom, or only does so sparsely, a flower booster is used. This is effective in the long term and should be applied upon each watering for a whole growth season, until the end of flowering. The doses needed are very low: 2 millilitres for 10 litres.



For large collections of trees, there is little option but to resort to a metering pump such as Dosatron: this pump is connected to the watering hosepipe and supplies the liquid in doses according to a regulator and the water pressure.

Diluting fertiliser

In general, fortnightly fertilisers can be diluted to be applied upon each watering, but those that are intended for every watering cannot be made more concentrated so as to be applied every fortnight. Plants prefer being fed on every watering, regularly and in low concentrations. If you have

the choice, you can divide the concentration of a fortnightly fertiliser by 14, to adapt it for use on each watering. Don't prepare over-large quantities of the solution, because organic fertiliser changes over time and can be absorbed by microalgae or bacteria, which distorts the doses and gives off very unpleasant odours.

In the next issue:
pruning to improve
flowering and fruiting.

Fertilising a satsuki

The flowering period varies, but the amount of fertiliser applied always needs to be adapted according to the growth cycle. Satsuki (Japanese azaleas) flower later than apple trees. Start with a modest supply of nitrogen in February to feed the flower buds and encourage the azalea to turn green again after the winter. This also helps it gradually return to being active. In terms of organic fertiliser, I recommend Hanagokoro NPK 4-5-1 or a fertiliser intended for flowering at NPK 2-3-4, until they blossom. The low proportion of nitrogen allows them to be fed without initiating growth that could impede flowering.

During flowering, remove the remaining solid fertiliser or temporarily stop applying liquid fertiliser, for maximum blooming and to slow down the growth.

After flowering and maintenance pruning, in mid-June, apply a stronger fertiliser, around NPK 6-6-5, to re-create the foliage mass.

In August, supplement this with a liquid fertiliser, NPK 4-0-8.5, every fortnight until October.

Different dosages can apply to different liquid products: carefully study their composition, concentration, oxidation and transformation by referring to the product's label.

With good, frequent fertilisation in small doses, your bonsai will blossom well and grow plenty of fruit. ●





Ficus deserves for bonsaists to take an interest in it. For it to stand the test of time and develop attractively, it needs to be placed in a very sunny position all year round. *Ficus microcarpa*.

Ficus: an outcast worth rediscovering

There is no denying it: while it may be appreciated by beginners, ficus is not popular among bonsai lovers in the Western world. Despite this, it is an attractive species that reacts well to bonsai styling.

Author: Gilbert Labrid, except where stated otherwise

Ficus is an unloved species in the amateur bonsai world, perhaps because it is one of the so-called “interior” types that are mass-produced in the Far East to satisfy the demands of major retail chains. Like all members of its genus that are imported from southern China in industrial quantities, it has led to a massive misunderstanding on the part of the general public, which is detrimental to a proper awareness of what bonsai really is. For purely commercial reasons, people have been led to believe that it is possible to keep trees living inside their houses on a permanent basis. At last, nature has been domesticated, like a nice, cheap decorative object that anyone and everyone can afford!

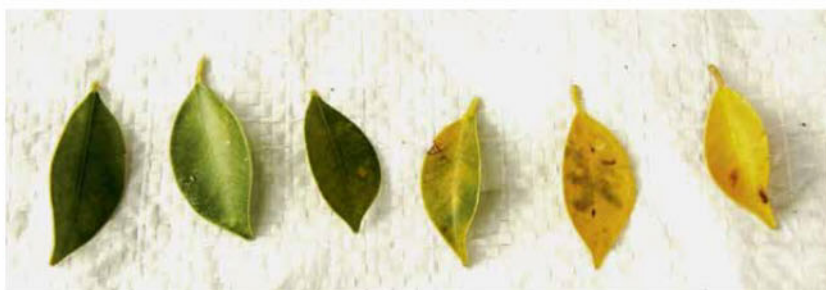
But it is both more simple and more complicated than that.



One of the characteristics of tropical fig trees is that they develop spectacular aerial roots that resemble the creepers clinging all around the temples of Angkor.



In spring, as the days grow longer, the old leaves turn yellow and are replaced by vigorous new growth. Total defoliation is carried out in early summer, after the tree has been brought out into direct sunlight. *Ficus retusa*.



Leaf development: as ficus trees are evergreen, many of their leaves turn yellow and fall off in spring and autumn.



Their strong, fibrous roots are very tough and difficult to cut cleanly. When in too confined a space, they have trouble ramifying.

A tropical tree

Ficus is the Latin name for the genus of fig trees. Nearly all varieties of ficus are tropical or subtropical, with evergreen foliage. Only one type thrives in mild temperate climates, and that is our well-known *Ficus carica*, which sheds its leaves in winter and produces figs.

In nature, these trees can grow up to 25 metres tall in favourable conditions. More often than not, they are squat trees, dominated by rounded or even spread-out crowns, which cover a huge area thanks to the aerial roots that they develop. Their trunks display imposing buttress forms at their bases, and can reach several metres in diameter.

In tropical areas, the trunk is often surrounded by a network of roots that develop above ground because of the ambient humidity, which can reach 100%. *Ficus* is a very resilient species, with good resistance to dryness in the air around it, but it does need heat and light, because it does not tolerate temperatures below 0°C. *Ficus* trees can cope

with poor soil, even if it is dry and rocky, and their powerful root systems make them able to grow in difficult terrains.

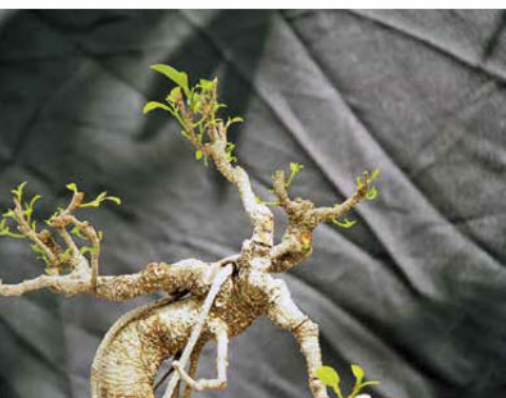
Slow but easygoing

The leaves are shiny, pointed, between 5 and 20 centimetres long, and dark green, changing to a soft yellow to ochre colour when they fall.

The roots are strong and grow back vigorously after pruning, as long as they are in well-drained soil, because excessive damp is harmful to them.

Ficus trees react to hard pruning of their branches by producing shoots, including on old wood, which, with a bit of patience, allows an old structure to be replaced. They grow slowly in dry temperate zones, but this is made up for by their great longevity: over 500 years! They are less sluggish if subjected to repeated pinching, which leads to untidy ramification, but it is quite easy to structure this in an ordered way.

Their trunks are covered with smooth, grey bark. Their branches are flexible and can be steered ►►►



Three weeks after defoliation, in early summer, a host of buds are sprouting anarchically. They need to be thinned out gradually, keeping only the lateral growth.



Repeated pruning avoids chaos and helps direct new growth. Since ficus is a vigorous species, it is possible to intervene every month (or more often) in our climates.



Large wounds have trouble closing up and take several years to heal.



A month after total defoliation in early June, it is time to correct new growth through pruning.



Cutting back vigorous growth restores a clear base for new shoots.

▶▶▶ by wire training or tensioning. Repeated pruning is a more “natural” way to bring order to fine, dense ramification.

Ficus trees tend to take on an appearance that conforms to a very classical model. Depending on the site where they stand, they will be more or less strictly vertical.

When cultivated as bonsai, they adapt to broad-leaf forms, while still adopting their own character thanks to the quality of their ramification, trunks and bark. From this point of view, the species is aesthetically very interesting, because it is possible to coax it into all sorts of shapes – “broom”,

upright, clasped-to-rock, cascade or group – with high chances of success.

Styling

You can resort to sowing seeds if you want young plants to style. Marcotting branches and taking cuttings are techniques that are not only possible but also straightforward, as ficus plants produce new roots quite quickly.

• Pruning

After hard pruning, this species puts out plenty of new shoots. This allows the creation of an archi-



Ficus natalensis (of African origin) on volcanic rock, created in 2007 by Fabrice Decroix from a seed sown in 2002.

texture that suits the trunk's form, even if it does demand quite a bit of time.

Maintenance and structural pruning are carried out in late spring, when the plant is brought out of its winter shelter. Large wounds heal very slowly.

• Pinching

These slow-growing trees take a long time to ramify, so pinching techniques are used to accelerate the process. You can put them into action several times up to autumn, taking advantage of the summer temperatures and sunlight – which means June onwards in the south of France, for instance.

Around May/June, it is time for total defoliation, so as to stimulate new growth that will make the structure denser by crowning it with small leaves. Of course, this should only be done on sturdy trees that are well fed and placed in direct sunlight.

If you don't fancy this procedure, you can regularly remove the largest leaves to allow light to get through to the inside of the crown, while limiting evaporation.

Plenty of sunlight

In winter, ficus plants require very sheltered positions where the soil can warm up quickly, while receiving a maximum amount of light. They are perfectly able to tolerate fairly low temperatures, in the order of -5°C, as long as the substrate is not damp and the cold spell does not last long (two to three days). In regions where winter is long

and harsh, it is crucial to protect the tree to avoid disappointment in spring. A cold greenhouse in the South or a simple shelter can suffice, but a veranda, a heated greenhouse or a spot in front of a south-facing window are preferable for the time it takes for the bad weather to pass. Direct sunlight does no harm: quite the opposite!

In spring and autumn, ficus trees need a very sunny position to encourage new buds to come out, while at the same time minimising the size of ►►►



When leaves grow back in direct summer sunlight, the young leaves take on a reddish colour.

Spring water or tap water?

The quality of the water used is of some importance. If it is mains water, or “tap water”, it is best to leave it to settle for at least a day after collecting it, to allow the dissolved chlorine to oxidise, because this is enemy no.1 for roots. The lime that is present in so-called “hard” water has fewer drawbacks, other than the visual factor because of white traces left on pots or foliage after evaporation.



© all photos: Fabrice Decroix

Ficus rubiginosa, originating from Australia. Cutting from 1998 on the left; plant grown from seed in 2004 on the right. Natural length of leaves: 20 cm.



Ficus thoringii, originating from South Africa. Sown in 2006.



Ficus Burnett-Davies, from seed sown in 2004, clasped-to-rock since 2010.



Ficus sycomorus, originating from South Africa. Created in 2006.



Ficus craterostoma, originating from the southern half of Africa. Seed sown in 2004.



Ficus platypoda, originating from Australia. Sown in 2002 and 2006.

The consequences of overly light or overly irregular watering are well known. Ficus plants can cope with long intervals between watering, and if water is lacking, their leaves will turn yellow and fall off without any major impact on their survival. Conversely, too much water can cause an anarchical proliferation of large, limp new leaves (especially in winter), a risk of root rot (if the substrate is too cold) and above all an increase in the size of internodes, which destroys any hope of tight ramification.

Neutral, well-drained soil

The one vital characteristic for soil for this type of tree is to ensure that water can run away easily. Good development of roots requires a well-drained substrate, which allows greater control over the amount of water and fertiliser that is applied. The soils that meet this criterion are those with a neutral pH such as akadama, pumice, sand etc. They can be used alone or mixed together, with the addition of compost if you want to increase water retention.

Repotting may be needed to make watering easier, to improve growth or to change the tree's position. In general, the condition of the roots should be checked every three to four years. The

▶▶▶ their leaves and the internodes. Too much shade hampers foliage renewal, which dangerously weakens trees before the winter.

In summer, the position of trees poses no major problems as long as they are watered generously. There is no need for protection against direct sunlight in the hottest periods of the day (except in the South), even for small trees.

A permanently shady position is not advisable, as the leaves and internodes will then become oversized and will thus disfigure the overall appearance.

Water, but not too much

Watering is an essential factor that dictates the tree's survival, but it also has a part to play in the aesthetic aspect, by regulating the size of leaves.



Ficus lingua lingua,
originating from South Africa.



Ficus racemosa,
originating from
Australasia.
Created in 2001.



Ficus abutilifolia,
originating from
South Africa.



Ficus macrophylla, originating
from Australia. Created in 2002.
Original leaf length: 40 cm.



Ficus cordata salicifolia, originating from South
Africa. Created in 2007. © Fabrice Decroix



Ficus sycomorus gnaphalocarpa,
originating from Africa.



Ficus religiosa,
originating from
India. Cutting
from 2004.

best time to do this is at the end of spring, in May or June.

Ficus's flexible and springy roots require the use of particularly sharp tools to make clean cuts through their tissue.

From March onwards, you can start to feed ficus trees with organic fertiliser. If the leaves are too large, defoliation should be carried out in early May, placing the tree in direct sunlight. Sometimes a second defoliation exercise can be carried out in July, as long as regrowth is supported by a balanced organic fertiliser.

Beware of mites

Ficus plants are not susceptible to fungal diseases. Their roots can rot if the substrate is too compact or permanently damp.

Few parasites are interested in the hard leaves of this species: scales (mealybugs) can appear following an overdose of nitrogen in spring. More worryingly, mites attack young leaves in the dry atmosphere of apartments, which causes deformities and discolouration of the leaves. Even if

treated, these traces will not totally disappear within the season, unless the affected leaves are removed. Treat with suitable products.

Pots

The right shape for the pot depends on the bonsai style concerned, according to classical criteria. Both glazed and unglazed pots are well suited to ficus plants, which keep their foliage for much of the year. Colours range from blue to ivory, but it is best to avoid overly bright greens, which are redundant alongside the shade of the leaves. ●

Varieties of ficus in bonsai

Among the dozens of varieties of ficus, some are of no interest for cultivation as bonsai, mainly because of the large size of their leaves. Generally, all that can be found in retail stores is the *retusa* and *microcarpa* varieties that are produced in China. The varieties shown here have been chosen for their vigour and for the possibility of rapidly reducing leaf size. By permission of Fabrice Decroix, Les Jardins du Bonsaï nursery (www.lesjardinsdubonsai.com).



This Taiwanese juniper needs to be restructured. Good cultivation techniques were needed to prepare it. It has developed a mass of vigorous foliage that provides ample material for it to be styled.

There are times when a tree needs to be restructured in order to recapture the wild side of its species. That is the case for this Taiwanese juniper, worked on by Sandro Segneri. A change of front is in the offing.

Boosting a Taiwanese juniper's spontaneity

Author: Guillaume Billaud
Demonstration: Sandro Segneri

This juniper, which was grown in open ground in Taiwan, was imported in the 1990s by Danny Use (a Belgian bonsai professional and artist) and remained in his personal collection thereafter. Four years ago, I had the opportunity to buy it, because Danny wanted to part with the large trees in his collection.

The tree's very complex inner structure caught my eye. I thought that it could do with a major restructuring. For that purpose, to bring out the best of the tree, I called upon the very talented Italian bonsai professional Sandro Segneri. I had a feeling that Sandro would be interested by this very tortured-looking tree, and that feeling turned out to be right. It is worth emphasising that this tree escaped a fashionable Japanese phenomenon that is very widespread in Europe: removing live veins and only keeping a single vein to sustain the plant. Because of this, the juniper has retained a natural appearance that is in line with the original work on the island of Taiwan.

The tree's dimensions are: 85 cm tall; trunk 20 cm in diameter; nebari 30 cm in diameter; 80 cm breadth.

Bringing back spontaneity

Sandro Segneri explains his approach for restructuring bonsai: "When I work on a tree, I always start by analysing its appearance on the basis of the seven aspects of Japanese aesthetics: asymmetry, naturalness, austerity, mystery, freedom from habit, tranquillity and simplicity. "I look at what is already present in the tree, then I search for what's missing in it. I try to enhance the plant by providing it as far as possible with whatever it is lacking.



To develop the tree's design, it is essential to tidy it up so that its structure and details can be seen clearly.



This juniper's internal structure is complex. The branches have a lot of curves.

Why weak foliage needs to be removed

On junipers, weak foliage should not be retained, because it can't grow stronger. It continues to consume the tree's resources without ever becoming usable. It is a common error among beginners to keep weak foliage, because that's what is needed on the majority of trees, but not on junipers. These are built up with young foliage and only with strong foliage. In addition, preferential treatment should be given to ramified foliage that puts out long shoots.

"This tree lacks asymmetry, which is a predominant concept in our lives and in nature. The tree needs to acquire an asymmetry that should be found in the trunk, the crown and the overall look. As far as the trunk is concerned, I had to look at the tree from the back so as not to be distracted by the helmet of foliage and to be able to define the focal points. These focal points are often angles, which need then to be shown off at their best during shaping. "The other important point to work on with this tree is austerity, the sense of age. The tree has a nice trunk movement with two veins and a shari, then an attractive curve back in the apex. But the rest is flat and characterless. The shari needs work to bring a flow to the reading of the tree, and the different parts need to be made more in keeping with each other by giving a more aged look to the flattest ones. The jin will also help to obtain this result. "The naturalness aspect also needs to be worked on. That is found in the 'spontaneity' of trees that you see in nature. This tree looks like a bonsai that has been produced by cultivation in open soil, and we need to put that right, to give it the spontaneity of a tree in the wild."

Tidying the tree

Before carrying out any styling work on a juniper, you need to thoroughly tidy the tree so that you can see all its details and judge what it will be possible to achieve. This juniper is no exception to the rule, with its imposing foliage. It is only once the tree has been tidied that design concepts will be able to emerge. This tree offers numerous possibilities. Its angle of planting needs to be changed to make the stiff area right in the middle of the trunk disappear and to create more movement in the line of the trunk. For this purpose, the front will also be modified. Sandro proceeds by trying out several options before making his final choice. His main aim is to bring out the "heart" of the tree, the internal structure of which is very tortuous. Tidying the foliage consists of removing the weaker areas as well as all the little branches that droop downwards or are poorly positioned. This operation has several objectives:

- thinning out the structure before applying training wire

- allowing light to enter the branches to allow interior budding
- balancing the tree's forces
- encouraging ramification.

Cleaning the live vein and deadwood

Begin by peeling away the bark from the live vein. For junipers that have a lot of deadwood, Sandro prefers to peel off the bark so as to bring out ►►►



After removing the bark, sandpaper on a flexible band is preferable to cardboard-backed plates for finishing the cleaning process of the live vein.



The live vein is marked out and new volumes are created on the trunk's shari. With time, the veins will swell and will greatly enhance the aesthetics of this area.



The work on the live vein extends right down to the nebari.

▶▶▶ the reddish colouring of the live vein. This accentuates the contrast between the living and dead areas, which can be interpreted as the plant's wabi sabi. Using a sharp, flat blade, such as a retractable utility knife, is particularly effective for rough removal of flakes of bark. Fine-grained sandpaper is used for finishing. Sandro specifies that marking out the boundary between living and dead areas of the trunk is a very important task. This is also the time to create new deadwood, jin or shari, with hidden deadwood that emerges. You can also cut down the live vein, which will cause it to swell. It cannot expand over the external parts and therefore needs to increase in volume. Deadwood is cleaned manually with a nylon brush or with the help of an electric rotary tool, which is faster and does not risk damaging the wood's patina. Before carrying out this procedure, water the wood generously, then spray on water while the nylon brush is rotating.

Choosing the front

Sandro explains that this juniper needs to express its full power and beauty through a change of front and planting angle. In its current state, the plant is stable, lacks dynamism and has a very straightforward direction. The choice of the future front will resolve three key problems for the tree:

- its dynamics and depth
- the stiffness of the central part
- enhancement of the placement of the nebari and tachiagari (collar).



The juniper before structural pruning. Sandro focuses his attention on the left side of the tree.



The branches are pruned back in such a way as to create long jin.

Structural pruning

Once the front has been decided upon, Sandro sets about structural pruning and removing large branches. He focuses his attention on the left side of the plant. Here, the foliage is too symmetrical, and cutting off large branches in this area

enhances the plant's dynamism and consequently its direction, which is supported by the change of front. Sandro also spends time removing ungainly or poorly placed branches and those that will not be useful for the future structure. The branches are cut off here so as to create a number of jin.



The branch is stripped using jin pliers, then it is crushed so that the living layer can be pulled away easily afterwards.



The work on the deadwood in the tree's apex is very important because of the complexity of the structure in this area.



The branch is heated up and simultaneously bent into the desired position.



Don't hesitate to apply very strong heat to the area that is to be bent.



The jin in the area on the left have been bent downwards in a few minutes thanks to this technique.

Directing the deadwood with fire

Changes in the angle and overall movement of deadwood can be achieved using a blowtorch. For this, you need to heat up the area that you want to bend and then, using pliers, give it the necessary movement. Once you have obtained the movement you are looking for, cool down the area with a sponge soaked in cold water: this will fix the twist. Take care to protect the plant's foliage well during this procedure, otherwise you will burn it.



1 Water is sprayed abundantly on the trunk before jin seal is applied.



2 The jin seal is prepared: 70% jin seal, 30% water and a few drops of India ink.



3 The jin seal mixture is applied to the deadwood with a brush. Its yellow colour will change to grey as it dries.

Creating deadwood

During the removal of branches on conifers, it is advisable to create jin. For this juniper, the creation of a number of jin on the left side of the plant will have the outcome of increasing the plant's dramatic impact.

The branches are debarked, then split, and the wood fibres pulled one by one, to give relief to the deadwood. Then Sandro adjusts the movement of the jin, using a blowtorch: he accentuates the downward movement, like a tear running down a cheek. The plant thus expresses a new dramatic effect.

Finishing with jin seal

Once the wood has been cleaned and dampened, it is treated with jin seal diluted 30% with water, together with a few drops of black India ink to prevent the wood from looking overly white when it dries. Many more years of passing time will be needed before the jin acquire ►►►



Three bonsaists apply copper wire all over the tree to train it into shape.



Sandro does the styling at the same time as the wire is applied. The tree thus takes shape gradually as the work progresses.

▶▶▶ the patina that is necessary to express the longed-for wabi sabi.

Wire training and shaping

Wire training demands a considerable length of time because of the tree's volume. No fewer than three bonsaists are needed for six hours to complete the wire application exercise. This is a crucial stage for the quality of the future styling. The juniper is wired all over, right down to the smallest ramifications. For Sandro, the most important thing is to use the right gauges of wire and place them in the right direction relative to the chosen twists. He considers that all work on trees should be "artistic", which means that it must be executed in an aesthetic manner without botching any step. Wire training is part of this.

The plant's focal points

When developing a project, Sandro tries to bring out one or several focal point(s) of the plant, because it is very important for the viewer's eye to discover the tree's secrets, but not straight away. This is why he chooses here to mix the foliage and the dead part of the tree. The plant's focal point is at its heart. The inner structure, which is very tortuous, is therefore revealed and a few small areas of foliage are integrated.



The first branch is already in place as the wiring proceeds towards the apex.



The tree's eye and its deadwood tears.



This focal point is half-visible in the apex.



A fine team for an exceptional tree: Joël Pouzet, Alexandre Escudero, Sandro Segneri and Patrick Boselli.

Another focal point is also emphasised in the upper part of the plant by the foliage and a large opening. Sandro explains that highlighting all of these focal points will make this juniper a very valuable tree – one that is moving and that tells a story to the viewer.

A little aesthetic analysis

The styling work is now finished. Let us return to the aspects of Japanese

aesthetics and see what has been done and what remains to be done. Asymmetry has been achieved by adjusting the tree's lean and removing a large area of foliage on the left-hand side. Removing the foliage in this area is the key aspect of the work that has been carried out. Asymmetry thus immediately appears, and the tree's dynamic is there. Austerity has come through small shari in the tree's young areas, but also by creating jin from the foliage cut off the

left-hand side. The fact that these jin point downwards brings a sense of age and austerity to the tree. The deadwood conjures up the tree's history. The tree's natural aspect has developed considerably. At the outset, it looked like a tree that had been cultivated in open ground. Now, it has the character and appearance of a mountain tree. Time will work its magic and further enhance the whole. ►►►



Front view
of the juniper.



Left side.



Back view.



Right side.

►►► Wabi sabi is not there yet, of course. The tree's appearance today is the result of two days' work, and the human hand is still visible. But through cultivation over the next few years, the tree will recover its spontaneity and naturalness, and above all become less ordered. It is this disorderliness that will give the tree the spirit of nature. Bonsai is a journey. Here, we have created a structure, enhanced certain points, but it is time and nature that will do the rest.

This tree does not embody a spirit of tranquillity at first glance. But the movements of its trunk, its jin and its shari are not counter to this spirit of tranquillity. Yes, this tree is very marked by what it has gone through, but its tranquillity is found in its present, in the green areas: the foliage indicates renewal and quietude to come. This styling exercise has not been simple to achieve, but simplicity will come in the future, when the work will be further

honed. Now, the tree needs to do its own work, and we need to leave it free to do it, to live its life as a tree; then, in return, it will give us the essence of bonsai: nature close at hand, right at our fingertips. It is with this in mind that it is possible to create beautiful bonsai, and above all to experience a beautiful bonsai. ●

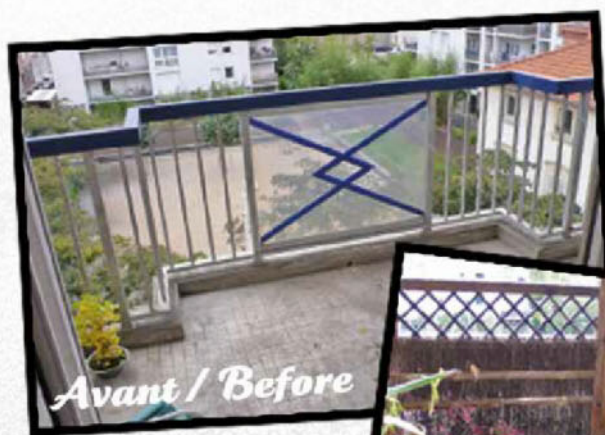


MY LITTLE JAPANESE GARDEN

SPECIAL ISSUE #16

At a time when urban life is enjoying a flirtation with the yearning for nature, little Japanese gardens are inviting themselves onto balconies, roofs of apartment blocks, and indeed into any small outdoor areas.

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A very natural raft



The five trunks of this *Pinus pentaphylla* by Manfred Hagen were originally branches.

Re-imagining a tree

This section sets out to analyse the choices made by the artist through trying out other options - to demonstrate the significance of the choices made, and quite simply to learn how to admire ...

This raft-style *Pinus pentaphylla* has a wonderfully natural feeling. Its leafy canopy inspires a sense of serenity and rest. Empty spaces, structure, movement: a beautiful composition.

Author: François Jeker

At first sight, what is striking about this *Pinus pentaphylla* by Manfred Hagen, a talented German amateur bonsaist, is its light, natural appearance. Manfred has been working on this raft-style five-needle pine from Japan for many years. He has cleverly played with the overall dissymmetrical composition, the empty spaces and the irregular masses of foliage. He has succeeded in creating a gentle movement towards the left, while preserving the raft's dignity.

Manfred's choices

The biggest trunk is straight, but its apex is positioned towards the left. Each of the other trunks then leans more than the previous one. This movement is enhanced by the first branch on the right, which is very high up, and the first on the left, which is very low down; by the foliage, very dense on the right and very light on the left; and by numerous empty spaces. Manfred has created a composition with two groups of trees separated by a large void: the small group, on the left, seems far away, while the two large trees on the right appear to be in the foreground. This improves the perspective. This two-copse arrangement does not detract from the overall impression, which resembles a classic bonsai: in fact, if you imagine a single large trunk instead of the five small ones, you arrive at the design of a single tree, with a single apex and branches on either side.

Also worth noting is the unevenness of the foliage masses: the underside is not horizontal or clearly defined, and the upper side does not follow a strict curve.

Option 1: without the empty spaces

The empty spaces on the left have been replaced by thick foliage. This has various immediate consequences: the tree now looks heavy, the movement towards the left has become barely perceptible and the effect of depth has been destroyed.

Option 2: strictly defined foliage

The underside of the branches is harshly horizontal. The bundles of needles on the upper side follow a neat curve. The original tree was somewhat bushy, with needles sticking out beyond the outline, which is what made it look natural. In this option, the tree looks as though it has just come out of the hairdresser's and needs a good gust of wind to make it less orderly.

Option 3: empty spaces on the right

The dense foliage on the right has been thinned out with three empty spaces, which makes the whole more symmetrical. The movement towards the left is much reduced. ●



1 With greatly reduced empty spaces, the appearance of lightness has gone.



2 The pine has lost its natural look with very clearly defined foliage lines.



3 The movement has lost its energy with empty spaces on both sides.



The ceramicist Sabine Besnard instils her pots with a sense of freedom. She has set up her studio at the bottom of the garden at her family home in Viroflay, just outside Paris.

Sabine Besnard

Playing with colour and texture

Based in Viroflay, near Paris, Sabine Besnard is a ceramicist who produces elegantly restrained creations, in cleverly honed colours.

Text: Anne Royer
Photos: Sabine Besnard



In her little studio, nestled at the end of the garden of her family home, Sabine Besnard fashions elegant pieces in stoneware and porcelain. A professional ceramicist for barely five years, she lives and works in Viroflay, right next to Versailles, outside Paris. At 54 years of age, seated at her potter's wheel, her gestures bring back memories of her childhood.

Because Sabine's passion for pottery is not a new thing. She discovered a fondness for clay as a teenager, and asked her parents to sign her up for classes in throwing on the wheel. "It's the material, the clay, that I really liked. I was fascinated with making an object from start to finish. It's something that I've always been drawn

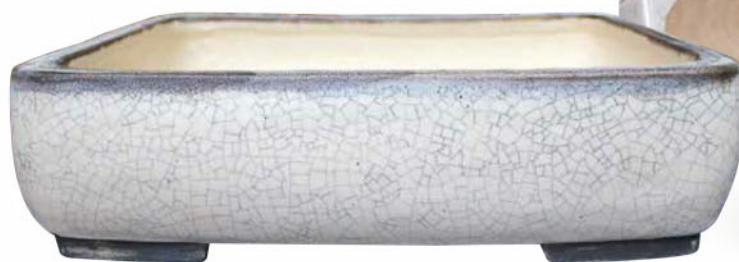


On this pot in glazed black stoneware, Sabine plays with textures by leaving the lower part completely bare. Diameter: 10 cm.



Sabine likes working on the wheel, a technique which gives her more freedom in the shaping of her pots.

This pot in white stoneware was designed for a maple. Dimensions: 46 × 31 × 5 cm.



This bonsai pot has a distinctive white glaze with an attractive crackled effect. Dimensions: 38 × 28 × 10 cm.



to," she recalls. At her parents' large home in Lyon, she even had a wood-burning kiln to fire her pieces. As a young woman of 20, she flew the nest to study graphic design at the École Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Strasbourg. Focused on her studies, she left the potter's wheel behind and embarked on a diploma course in surface pattern design, before becoming a textile designer for a few years.

Getting back into pottery

Thirty years later, married and with four grown-up children whom she had spent her time looking after, she was living in a detached house in Viroflay. It was then that she decided to take up pottery again. A short course in raku with Brigitte Moron, in the Ardèche, south-central France, encouraged her to set off on a quest to recapture her first love. "It was such a pleasure to rediscover clay, and to be completely available to do so." Back in the outskirts of Paris, she enrolled at the Atelier de la Cour Roland, in Jouy-en-Josas, which offers classes in visual arts

and craft. "I saw that I could still throw," she says. "I was only at amateur level, but progress is fast. It's a question of practice." Very quickly, her passion was revived. And three or four hours' practice per week was no longer enough. "So I decided to set up a studio at home. That's how I started out, with a wheel and an electric kiln," she summarises, coolly.

These days, she produces an ever-widening range of bonsai pots, but also pots for companion plants (kusamono and shitakusa) and vases for ikebana, as well as bowls, cups, plates and various other items of tableware. For her, ceramics is also "a way to share what François loves doing", François being her husband. A bonsai enthusiast of twenty years' standing, he has opened the doors of the bonsai world to her. With him, she has discovered trees, visited numerous exhibitions and even gone to Japan to visit nurseries.

The freedom of accent plants

Although she sometimes finds the "very codified" aspect of bonsai pots unfortunate, because it "doesn't give enough freedom", she likes to play with

material effects and colours. "At the same time, this strictness is interesting, and it lets you learn a lot," she acknowledges.

Ultimately, Sabine does like trees but she prefers flowers. "You have more freedom with pots for companion plants, in their shapes, their glazes, their colours ..." ►►►



When making pots for companion plants, Sabine has more possibility to give her creativity free rein. Diameter: 10 cm.



This deep-red shell was formed using a press mould. Diameter: 10 cm.



The crackled glaze gives an aspect of age to this white stoneware pot. Dimensions: 22 x 3 cm.

Sabine uses an electric kiln to fire her pieces twice: a first firing at 980°C, and a second between 1200 and 1300°C.



►►► To stimulate her creativity, she passes spontaneously from one type to the other: from bonsai pots to vases, from vases to pots for companion plants, and from utilitarian to bonsai. "You always have to make holes in bonsai pots ... Sometimes it annoys me, so I don't make a hole and I put flowers in it. I redirect the original object a bit!" she confesses with a laugh.

To create her bonsai pots, Sabine finds inspiration in books and exhibition catalogues. "I get inspired mostly by old objects," she adds. "And I really stick to the Japanese proportions of a classic pot." This respect for Japanese culture stems largely from a stay in the United States, where her interest in Japan was born. Shortly after finishing her studies, she lived for four years in Washington,

with her biochemist husband: "There was an international community there, it was a melting pot of lots of people ... And especially a large Japanese community. We spent time with the women, who taught us the tea ceremony. They were eager to help us get to know their culture."

A very Japanese aspect

Since she keeps to similar dimensions for her whole range of products, Sabine uses plaster press moulds. As she cannot adjust the diameters of the pots, she plays with their heights, according to the trees they are intended to accommodate. She specifies: "For a thrown pot, there is a bit more freedom of choice. I sometimes have very fixed ideas, to the nearest cen-

timetre." So she takes care in drawing the piece before she starts to make it. She mainly uses this technique for tableware, but also, occasionally, for bonsai pots.

Her pieces give off an air of quiet elegance, a rather Japanese style. "Where form is concerned, I like relatively simple things," she confirms. But in textures and colours, she displays intense creativity. From her training at the school of decorative arts in Strasbourg, she has retained a strong sense of colour and materials. Ever since, she has had a keen interest in decoration and home interiors: the copious research she has done in this area provides an inexhaustible source of inspiration.

Black stoneware and white stoneware

Each technique has its own creative process. Pots for companion plants are produced by hand, using a potter's wheel. Sabine thus allows herself to be guided by the material. She also uses a method that she learnt from the Japanese master ceramicist Rizü Takahashi, which consists of hollowing out and sculpting a block of



These tiny porcelain pots are remarkable for their incredible delicacy. Dimensions: 4 x 3 cm.



Practical information

Sabine Besnard

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Facebook: Sabine Céramiques



This black stoneware shell form was created by hand-moulding.

clay until the desired result is obtained. Meeting Takahashi when she was still a beginner was an important moment for her, and it left her with “a great freedom with clay” and “lots of ideas for [her] work”. “The various techniques help me with my creativity. And, like for all potters, it’s Christmas every time you open the kiln! Sometimes you find things that you weren’t expecting at all, and you have to learn to accept that. And even so, sometimes it all works really well,” she concludes with a smile.

Sabine uses a black stoneware which has “a very high level of plasticity and responds well to wheel work”, and has a greater or lesser degree of grog depending on the project. “This black clay is really beautiful,” she enthuses. “I love it for its coarseness, which allows contrasting effects of matte and gloss, and of black and colours.” For some pieces, she prefers a white stoneware, or even porcelain, which is “fascinating to throw, like cream”. Her porcelain pots – which are suitable for mame, for example – are distinguished by their beautiful colours and singular delicacy.

Freedom in colours

In Sabine’s expert hands, the pots are adorned with crackled whites, bluish greys, nuances of green and blue, and sooty blacks. Gentle, natural colours, but

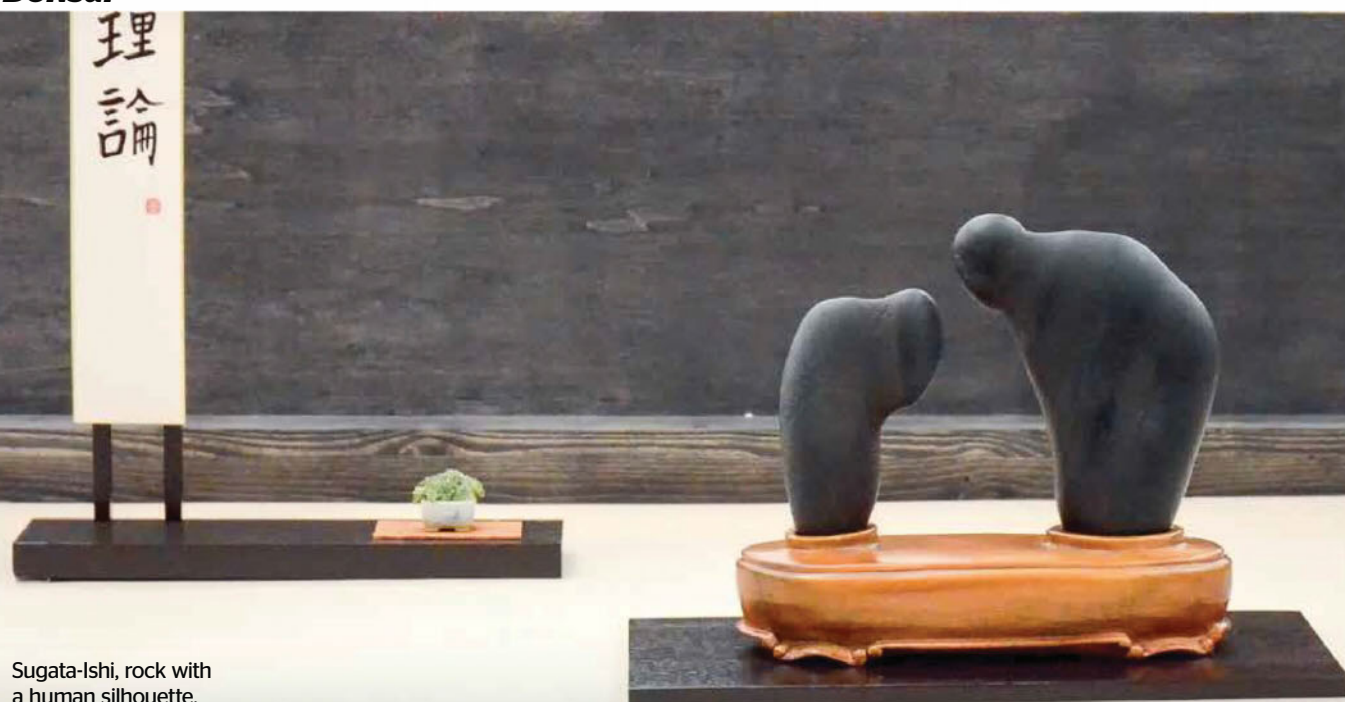
enriched with an infinite range of shades and patterns. Sabine’s colours, for which she develops the recipes herself, form a sort of vibrant mosaic on the dark stoneware. “I like it when you lose your gaze in the glazes, when it isn’t the same all over, when the colour traces pathways ...” she says. She refuses to apply her glazes in a uniform way. She uses a glazing cabin, which allows her to apply some glazes with an airbrush and gives her more freedom in the patterns and blends of colours. “For some glazes, which are applied thickly, I do

it by dipping,” she explains. Before adding: “I also like to leave the clay bare, and not necessarily glaze it, to give it an aspect of passing time.”

Brimming with ideas, Sabine Besnard continues to experiment and create new pieces, in her pretty garden in Viroflay. “These days, pottery represents a big part of my life ... It’s time-consuming and very demanding work. I have more ideas than I have time to carry them through. But that’s when you have to forge ahead!” ●



Sabine enjoys experimenting with glazes to create coloured patterns. Dimensions: 10 × 5 cm.



Sugata-Ishi, rock with
a human silhouette.

Suiseki: a different kind of stone

Author: Michèle Corbihan

Suiseki, or viewing stones, are exhibited and admired. A report on some beautiful stones displayed at the tenth Crespi Cup, near Milan.



Yamagata-Ishi,
mountain rock.

Suiseki occupy a significant position at the Crespi Cup, The International Bonsai and Suiseki Meeting, which is a very fine European exhibition at Parabiago, near Milan, Italy.

Although the 11th edition takes place in September 2015, here we look back at some particularly beautiful stones that were exhibited at the tenth edition, in September 2012. That year, there were about 40 suiseki in the competition.

Suiseki, also known as viewing stones, are stones that are displayed to delight the eye. They evoke a landscape, a mountain, or a human, animal or vegetable form. They must not be carved or altered, and are displayed on a *daiza* – a wooden stand – or on a bed of sand in a *suiban* (flat stoneware dish), depending on their shape and the subject they suggest.

Suiseki: an art to be cultivated and one that is complete in itself. ●



Sugata-Ishi, Daruma-shaped rock. Daruma are wishing dolls that are hollow, rounded and armless. They are figurative representations of Bodhidharma, a Buddhist monk who founded the Chinese Chan school, which became Japanese Zen.



Dolgore-Seok, Korean rock.



Iwagata-Ishi, coastal rock.



Yagata-Ishi, house rock.



Yamagata-Ishi, mountain rock.



Yadori, shelter rock.

■ ■ ■ Giant ikebana are large-scale arrangements that are created for exhibitions. Figurative or abstract, they are technical feats that can only be achieved by highly skilled experts.

Ikebana thinking big

Author: Marcel Vrignaud

In Japan, given the considerable number of people who practise ikebana, each school organises a large exhibition at least once a year, in which its most talented masters show off their skills. The principle is to display exceptional pieces of a sort that basic practitioners will never be able to produce in their whole career. Large-scale compositions, or giant ikebana, play an important part among these creations. They are usually made by groups of about a dozen eminent professors, most of whom are male, because the feat

of creating them often requires a certain amount of physical strength and the use of hammers and saws ... In *Esprit Bonsai International* 77, I described the preparation of one of these short-lived exhibitions and how they unfold, attracting as they do several tens of thousands of visitors.

In the Ohara School, large compositions are classified in two categories: landscape and abstract.

Reconstituting trees

Where plant settings are concerned, the principle is to reconstitute a portion of a landscape in which the mountains are represented by deadwood and roots.

Trees and shrubs are reconstituted from a skillfully orchestrated assembly of conifer or broadleaf branches, with less-developed plants at their bases: grasses, flowers, aquatic plants, herbaceous plants. The arrangements are composed in large, shallow ceramic dishes.

This technique allows a natural scene to be represented by giving it perspectival effects that are close to those in nature.

The main structure most often features conifers, pines, cypresses, junipers and spruces, with roots, creepers and flowering branches such as those of Japanese quince trees, camellias, cherry trees, plum trees, forsythia and wisteria – without forgetting maple, which is highly sought-after in springtime compositions.

Incorporating objects

The second category of large compositions comprises abstract assemblies that employ organic elements along with a diverse array of decorative objects. The arrangement as a whole no longer refers to nature as the first category does, but instead repre-



■ Giant ikebana is an impressive technical feat. This example is an abstract creation by the Iemoto of the Ohara School of ikebana.



■ Wood can be painted in giant ikebana.



■ Deadwood and roots imply a mountain landscape.



■ Abstract structures bring out unexpected beauty in plants.

sents an abstract sculpture in which can be found a random selection of mossy wood, bamboo, creeping wisteria, woodchips and metal chips, bark, bleached wood, tropical fruits (bunches of bananas, lotus seed pods, pandanus, coconuts etc.), cactuses and succulents as well as all sorts of objects: minerals, feathers, shells, corals, string ... Some woods can be stained, painted or covered with hammered copper.

Giant ikebana does not use natural flowers objectively, but takes modern fashions in flower arranging into consideration by using a form of expression that displays new and experimental techniques. It is the artist's duty to bring out the unknown and unsuspected beauty of plants.

Like all arts, ikebana went through a period of development after the Second World War. Heavily influenced by avant-garde paintings and sculptures,



■ Marcel Vriгдаud and Professeur Morishita pose in front of a very contemporary composition.

the Japanese ended up applying the form of expression imposed by Western modernism to their art of flower arranging.

Thus, a whole range of materials are used and beautifully brought together with living plants. ●

■ ■ ■ An alphabetical journey through definitions of words that inspire the author to whimsically share her love of ikebana.

An ikebanist's ABC

Author : Soazic Le Franc

A is for the "art of flowers". As you draw close to the cauldron of flowers and taste the magic potion, you might well tumble in, intoxicated ... You may be trapped, but do you really want to get away? Why would you? It's so delicious to plunge into the rosewater and swim in an ocean of flowers.

B is for "Buddleia, from Buddle, the British botanist". I can see one in my neighbour's garden, with several butterflies gathering its nectar ... though the butterflies are few – a sad sign of this age of insecticides. Will this shrub lose its name as the "butterfly bush"? Buddleia, I enjoy you every summer and I know that you, at least, will not disappear, because it is said that you are somewhat invasive! Watch out.

From container to den

C is for "container" or "ceramic". The earth element is represented in ikebana by the ceramic container – a dish or vase – which is the product of a combination of earth and fire, as in the volcanic eruptions that terrified early humans. Seeking to preserve their foodstuffs, our ancestors went from fired clay to crystallised silica so as to create utensils capable of holding water. These days, containers are made in all types of materials: metal, clay, glass, plastic, composite materials etc. Sometimes ikebanists don't even use one.

D is for "den" or "dumping ground". When you practise the art of flowers, it is crucial to have a special place where you can leave all sorts of treasures, and where you can put what you have learnt in classes into action, because you might not always feel like repeating the exercise that you have just seen demonstrated ... Let's deal with that tomorrow ... or not! A place where you can devote your full attention to creating a future masterpiece, with a floor strewn with leaves, twigs and flowers that have been inadvertently cut off.



■ K is for "kumo". The *kumo* is the cloud that comes in tow with branches of ivy and a few white *Dendrobium*. Arrangement by Sylviane Touboul, Asphodelin studio, Sarzeau.



■ I is for “ikegaki”, meaning “hedge”. This late-summer composition is made up of goldenrod and phlox, framed by twigs of mock-orange that have already lost their leaves because of a lack of water. Arrangement by Soazic Le Franc.

A little hideaway rich with all kinds of emotions: the joy of success, the frustration of a poor decision or a bad tool, could do better, let's sleep on it ...

From ephemeral to hibernal

E is for “ephemeral”. Ours is an ephemeral art, and we know it. That is why it needs to be intense to be beautiful. Our art is a burst of brilliance, like the birth of a rose that languishes in the sun and dies the next day. Whatever you do, don't tell me that the arrangement has lasted for a fortnight or more ...

F is for “flower”. What would I be without you – you, who have made such a mark on my life for ... I don't know how long. Fragrant, colourful little thing, I want you to go away. When I leave you, I feel great, and then you catch up with me again. But make no mistake: it won't be long before I stop flirting.

H is for “garance”, the French word for madder. This plant, from the Rubiaceae family, is cultivated in the south of France for the red dye that was used to colour military trousers, among other things. Those poor young men, who stood out so obviously ... But who knows what the flower looks like? After checking, it turns out that it is completely insignificant: it's from the root that alizarin and purpurin are extracted. Garance is also the name of the heroine of the film *Les Enfants du Paradis* (Children of Paradise), played by Arletty. What a pretty name, and what a pretty colour.

H is for “hibernal”, or wintry. In the West, there is something refreshing about thinking of winter during the summer, because our winters are seldom very cold ... and our summers seldom very hot! Winter is the time for modern compositions, as plants bear their simplest apparel: stripped naked, they offer up their most beautiful lines. ●



■ J is for “jeu d'aiguilles”, the French name of this composition which means “needle game”. The structure of glued-together pine needles, with a very low focal point of red amaranths and needles, is very modern, and has no container. Arrangement by Soazic Le Franc.

It doesn't matter if their trees don't stick to the usual criteria, because the members of Le Bonsaï Rochelais, in La Rochelle, meet up mainly for the pleasure of working together on their bonsai.

Text: Cinthya Arenas
Photos: Le Bonsaï Rochelais

"Good spirits

and the joy of being together" are the characteristics of Le Bonsaï Rochelais, the bonsai club in La Rochelle, on the west coast of France, as one of its founders and its first president, Bernard Loiseau, explains. "We practise bonsai for our enjoyment, even if our trees don't fit classical Japanese criteria."

Indeed, Le Bonsaï Rochelais was born in November 2000 following the meeting of three people who wanted to share their passion: Bernard Loiseau, Monique Bodineau and Paul Prouteau. "Paul and I came



▲ Enjoyment and sharing could be the motto of Le Bonsaï Rochelais' members. Standing, from left to right: Paul, Jean-Paul, Alice, Michel, Raymond, Andrée, Jean and Pierre. Crouching: Suzette, Josette, Bernard and Jean-Philippe.

LE BONSAÏ ROCHELAIS Bonsai for enjoyment

respectively from clubs in Poitiers and Nantes, and Monique was just starting out. Since there was no club in La Rochelle, we decided to create one," comments the cofounder, who is now its vice-president and a retired employee of the SNCF, France's national state-owned railway company.

Discussion and sharing are what's important

Although the club began with only three people, its former president explains that it grew rapidly: "Following a fair that we took part in, we shot up to twenty members in the third year. We were lucky enough to have an even balance of men and women at one point, but now there are fewer women!" The La Rochelle club now has twenty members, a third of whom are female. The members' ages vary from 35 to 77, with the average somewhere between 50 and 55. Two names have featured from the outset: "Paul Prouteau,

our former treasurer, and me." But the club's spirit has remained the same since the beginning, and that's what its members love about it; the proof: "In general, people leave the club when they move home. Otherwise, they stay."

Some clubs think that it's their trees that are what makes them important, but this one's former president, who is now its vice-president, sees things differently: "I say that if you like your tree, it doesn't matter if it doesn't tally with what people are usually looking for in bonsai ... What counts is that we all like it. That the person who is looking after it likes it."

And he continues: "It's the exchange between the club's members that's important, and that is what defines us. New points of view are just as important, because everyone has a different way of thinking, and everyone has a contribution to make. It's important to draw people towards what's most beautiful, but sharing is just as beautiful."



▲ La Rochelle's splendid municipal greenhouses host the meetings of Le Bonsaï Rochelais once a month.



▲ The club's exhibition was held in the municipal greenhouses of La Rochelle, and in collaboration with them, in June 2015.

Hawthorns and tamarisks

The La Rochelle club's spirit also seems to involve "going off the beaten track. Not having a wonderful tree to show it off to everyone, but rather to share it," explains the vice-president, even if he does add: "Some people in our club have amazing trees. I'm thinking of Pierre Bournac, who makes really beautiful clasped-to-rock compositions, and others."

To each club its trees: "We have native trees, even though in this region we are not spoilt for yamadori. We do still find lovely hawthorns, tamarisks, field maples and holly oaks, among others. Some people have other species like pine and beech. I prefer oak and trident maple."

Members are taught by Jean-Philippe Faury, "the current president, also and more importantly the club's instructor and an excellent theoretician", and through the Fédération Française de Bonsaï (French Bonsai

Federation – FFB): "For the training sessions, we call upon the FFB who organise workshops every year either just for us, or with other clubs." This is how Jean-Bernard Galais, a Level 3 coach, came to lead several workshops. Georges Pons also taught sometimes when he was still living in Saintes. The members also share things: "Jean Haudry, former president of the club in Grenoble, came to see us and he taught us a lot, too."

In a haven of greenery

The setting for the La Rochelle club's gatherings is very pleasant, since they take place in the city's municipal greenhouses – magnificent glasshouses that have existed for three years and are focused on sustainability. "For the last two years, we've had a wonderful welcome from the people who work in the greenhouses. We hope to be able to stay there as long as possible," explains Bernard Loiseau.



◀ Japanese maple, Raymond Tran Giac.

Practical information

Le Bonsaï Rochelais

Rue de la Bergerie, 17000 La Rochelle, FRANCE

Meetings: 3rd Sunday of the month, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon.

President: Jean-Philippe Faury.

Contact: Raymond Tran Giac, Secretary, by email: raymond.trangiac@bbox.fr



▲ Hawthorn, Bernard Loiseau.

It is a real collaboration, the club's last exhibition having been held in June 2015 at the same venue. As for the next exhibition, that will take place in June 2016 during the tree festival, again in collaboration with the municipal greenhouses.

For Bernard Loiseau, creating bonsai brings "peace, the pleasure of seeing your trees, of looking at them, of tending to them whenever they are suffering." It is also what he shares with the members of Le Bonsaï Rochelais – a club that people don't leave, even if they arrived there "by accident". "I can't wait to get into the new club year, I'll be happy to see everyone again." And it seems certain that he's not the only one who feels that way! ●



◀ Japanese maple, people's choice award, Jean Haudry.



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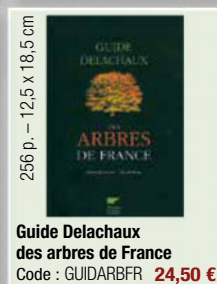
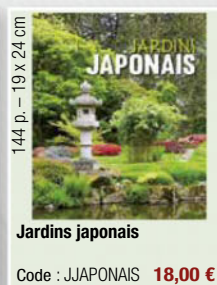
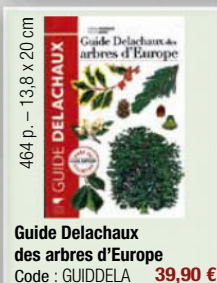
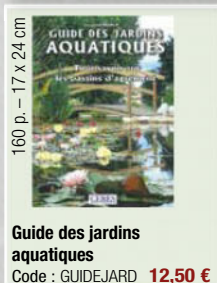
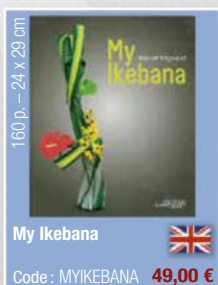
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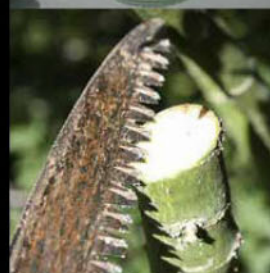
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- ▶ Bonsai Europa 2015: an amazing exhibition in the UK
- ▶ European Bonsai San Show: the French exhibition of 100 of Europe's best bonsai
- ▶ Interview with the American bonsai artist Michael Hagedorn
- ▶ The Spirit of Bonsai
- ▶ Getting Off to a Good Start: jin seal
- ▶ Bonsai Basics: when to work on bonsai, part 2
- ▶ Task of the month: working on nebari
- ▶ Treegazing by the waterside
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- ▶ Pruning for flowering and fruiting
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- ▶ Trunks in detail: their biological role
- ▶ Shohin: wiring and restructuring an impressive juniper
- ▶ Besides Bonsai: kokedama, step by step
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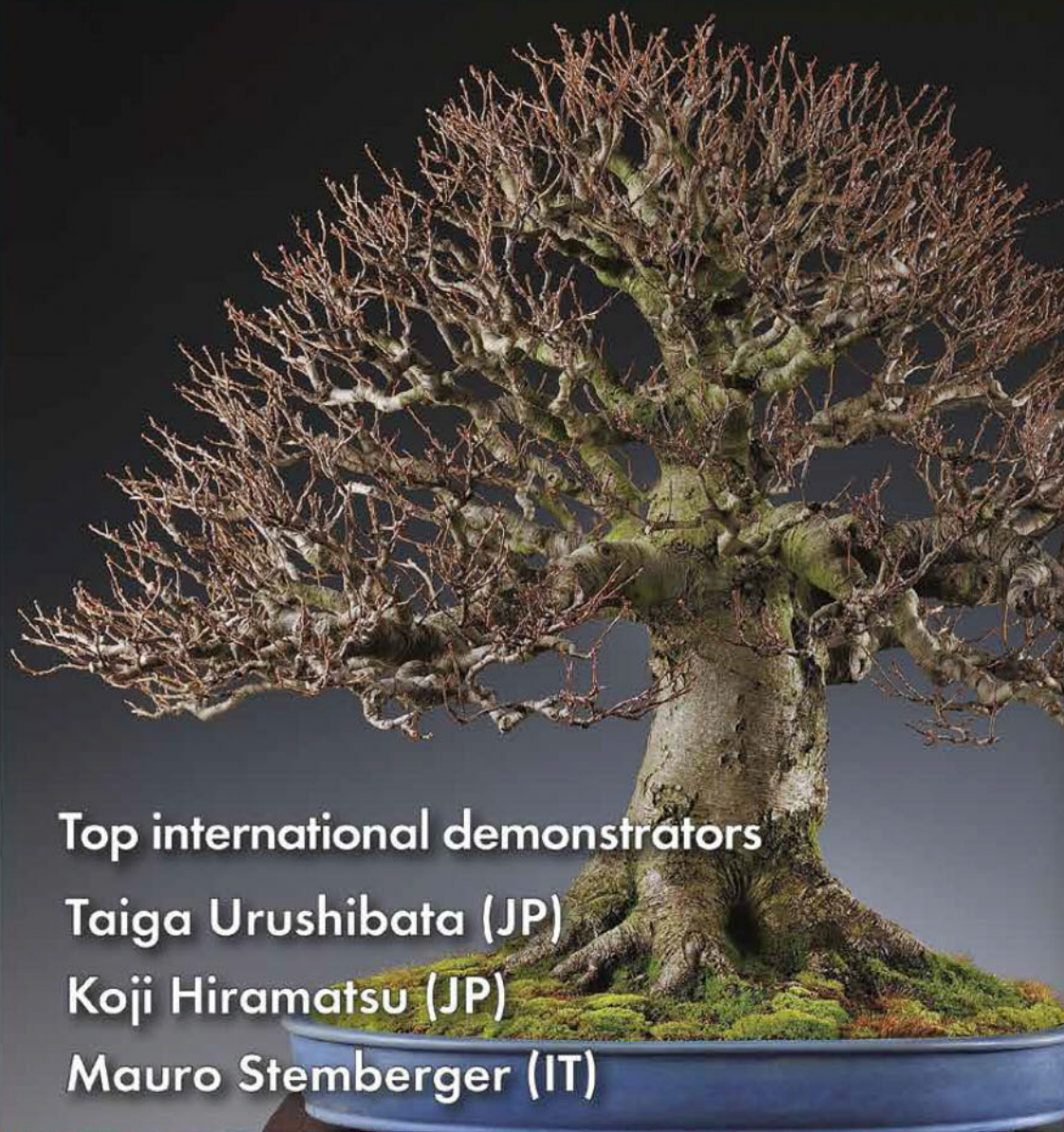
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