

Esprit Bonsai

#79

INTERNATIONAL

エスプリ盆栽

► The magazine for bonsai enthusiasts • Dec./January - 2016



Jin seal p.38



**Shohin
juniper's
foliage** p.42

The construction **OF A JUNIPER**

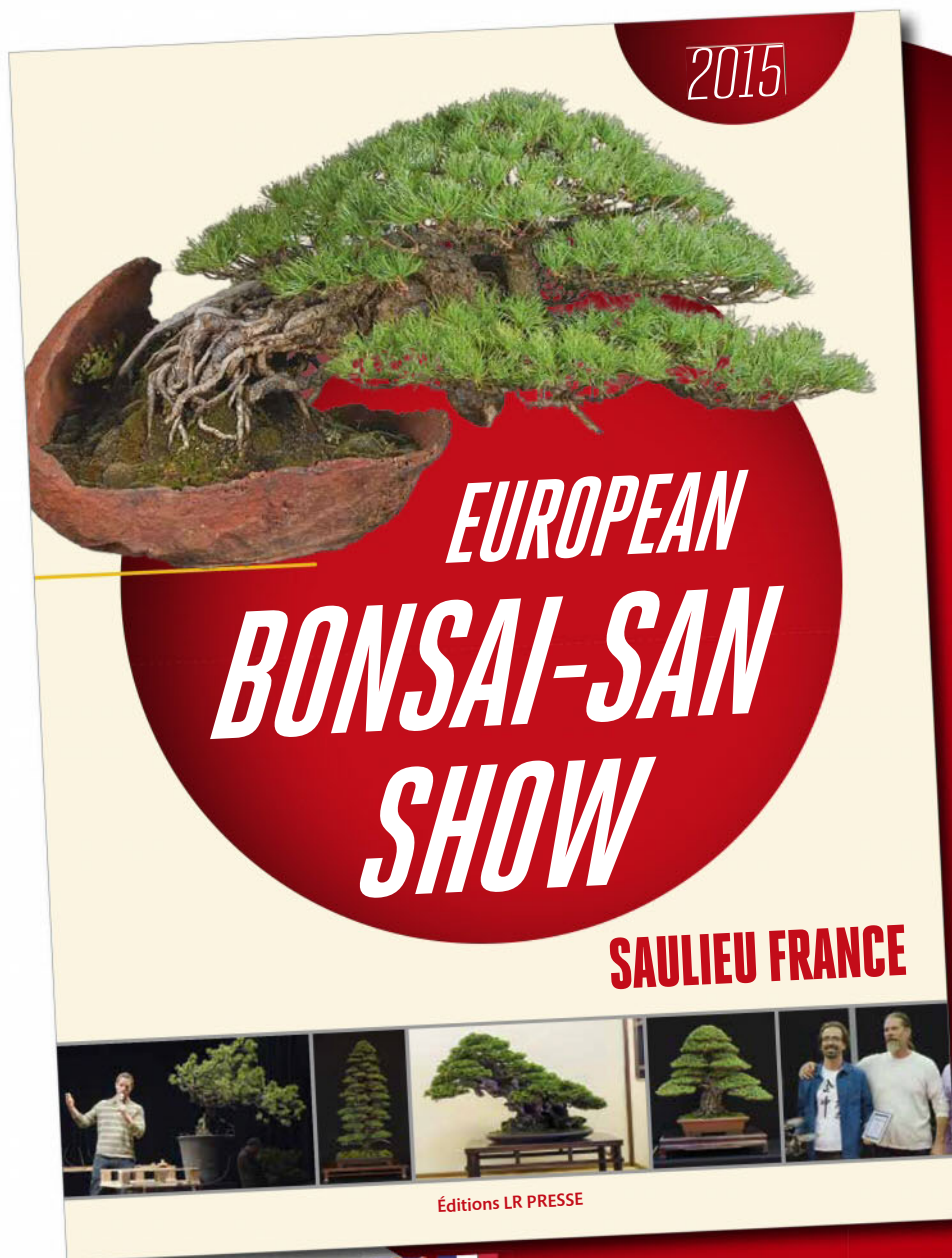
esprit Bonsai

INTERNATIONAL

presents



The trees of **David Benavente** and
Andres Alvarez Iglesias in Tokonoma



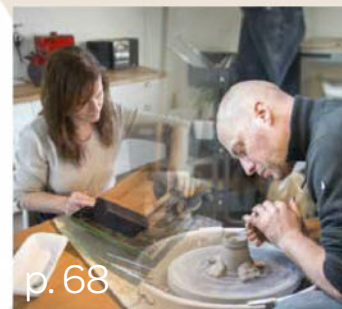
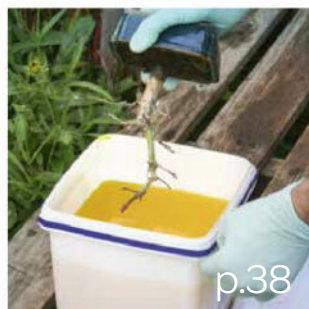
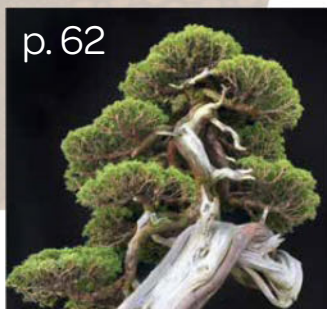
*100 of Europe's best
bonsai exhibited
in Saulieu*

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Editorial

Beautiful Bonsai

The beginning of autumn brought some rich events in the international bonsai world. We have chosen three, two of which are brand new, and as they were already announced two years ago, we have been waiting for impatiently. Starting with the United States with the Artisans Cup, this stunning exhibition, the brainchild of Chelsea and Ryan Neil, showed how a contemporary scenography can be designed to display bonsai to their full advantage. In Europe, Bonsai Europa 2015 was created by Tony Tickle who placed the United Kingdom among the countries that host top ranking bonsai events. Finally, in France, The European Bonsai San Show, organised by Frédéric Chenal, was once again a wonderful event of ever higher quality. These exhibitions demonstrate that bonsai is a creative art, that show the undoubted talent of professionals and amateurs alike. It must be emphasised that the events were initiated by individuals and not by associations. Ryan and Chelsea Neil, Tony tickle and Frédéric Chenal are professionals who want to put bonsai on the map, and to encourage the unity and development of an entire community. They are brimming with ideas and know how to put in train the means necessary to bring projects of this amplitude to life, and to ensure they continue. The results met the highest expectations and it is our pleasure to offer them to you. Happy reading!

And a happy year's end to you all.

Michèle Corbihan

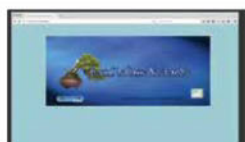


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On the Web

BONSAI IN NORMANDY

<http://www.bonsai-normandie.com/>



Here is a very attractive little bonsai club website of eye-catching brightness thanks to its graphics and unusual layout. Starting with the home page the essential information about the

functions of the Club de Bonsaï de Basse Normandie is laid out clearly and not in a jumble as so often happens.

A short introduction to the club makes you want to join, and all the practical information about meeting hours and times is just underneath.

The rest of the site prominently features the activities organised by the Fédération Française de Bonsaï and an excellent press-review section with articles about the club.

Finally, it has an unusual gallery that generously shares photos from events in which the club has participated.

MICHAEL HAGEDORN

<http://crataegus.com/>



Michael Hagedorn isn't the best-known of North American bonsai artists, but his blog is worth visiting regularly. It's the only way to keep up with what he's doing, since the blog is not divided by subject.

Contrary to what you might assume from the blog's name, Michael is not only interested in hawthorns, and you can't help but admire the photos of his trees of various and sometimes very unusual species, which never really transgress the Japanese rules. Reading his blog allows you to see the transformation of yamadori into refined trees. It also helps us discover well-known exhibitions in the United States, which are little known in France. He is also the creator of <http://www.portlandbonsaivillage.com/>, on the west coast, a place given over to bonsai creativity and innovation.

MARIA ROSA BONET

<http://kusamonobonsai.blogspot.fr/>



Maria Rosa Bonet is well known in Spain and in the small world of kusamono enthusiasts. She is also particularly active in a Facebook group of Kusamono fans that has a very strong following, and she has written a book on the subject, *Kusamonos*

Bonsaï, that was released at the beginning of 2015.

Kusamono are, of course, omnipresent in her blog created in 2012, but you'll also find other interesting subjects, such as articles from the Spanish magazine *Bonsaï Actual*, with which she has collaborated for a long time. In addition, you'll discover reports on Spanish bonsai exhibitions, where kusamono are prominently featured. Suiseki are also the subject of several articles.

Philippe Massard, parlonsbonsai.com

DIARY

The 2018 BCI Convention in France

The Bonsai Club International (BCI) convention will take place in Mulhouse in 2018, during the third annual Bonsai Euro Top 30 from October 12 to October 14. In addition to the 30 bonsai selected from the most beautiful trees in Europe, there will be thematic displays. These will include some of the oldest olive bonsai in Europe, a selection of trees created at the François Jeker studios in Froeningen, exhibitions of kusamono and ikebana, about ten ishizuki presented in collaboration with the FFB and an instructional exhibition prepared by the Tenkeï Bonsai Club of Mulhouse. There will also be numerous vendors... A unique event to mark on your calendar now...



Shohin in England

The British Shohin Association will hold its exhibition on April 2 and 3, 2016, in Wisley and will display mame, shohin, and chuhin. Whether members or not, all lovers of bonsai can nominate a tree for selection. Taiga Urushibata will host a workshop. Clinic and repotting service, sales stands. To exhibit contact: spiritofshohin@gmail.com
■ For information: britishshohinbonsaiassociation@gmail.com
RHS Gardens, Wisley Lane, Wisley Woking, Surrey GU23 6QB – Junction, M25 UK

Shohin Exhibition in Limousin

The mame and shohin exhibition organized by the Fédération française de bonsaï will take place September 24 and 25, 2016, in Couzeix (87), France.
■ Centre culturel 87270 Couzeix (France)

90th Kokufu ten

For its 90th annual exhibition, the Kokufu ten is thinking big. It will be held February 5-8 and 10-13, 2016. There will also be two series of 200 trees displayed to celebrate the event.
■ Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, Ueno, Tokyo





GATHERINGS

The Noelanders Trophy in January 2016



Taiga Urushibata.



Koji Hiramatsu.

For its second year in its new location, Limburghal in Genk, the Noelanders Trophy returns January 23 and 24, 2016, for its 17th annual exhibition. The Noelanders Trophy is the biggest bonsai exhibition in Europe. The new location allows for a more spacious presentation of trees and easy traffic flow in the aisles despite the crowd that will be present from the time it opens

on Saturday morning. This year's three guests of honor will be Mauro Stemberger (Italy), Taiga Urushibata (Japan) and Koji Hiramatsu (Japan). If Mauro Stemberger is a regular visitor at the Noelanders Trophy, the two Japanese guests of honour are something else entirely. A mischievous sprig, Taiga Urushibata is a very talented young master anchored in the bonsai tradition, but also with a leaning towards modernity. He apprenticed

with Kimura. He shows great respect for the tree during his demonstrations, never hesitating to give priority to the life of the tree and its integrity in an impressive way. Koji Hiramatsu travels regularly to France, the United States, China, and India to host workshops and conduct demonstrations. He takes on many responsibilities in Japanese bonsai associations in order to make his art known. A perfectionist, he is well known for his shohin expertise. He is also a specialist in black pines. In addition, the Noelanders Trophy is a large marketplace for professionals, which will be even bigger this year as the organisation has announced more than 50 additional booths for 2016. Drink and food stalls and parking are available on site.

■ Noelanders Trophy
Limburghal C.V.
Jaabeurslaan 6
B-3600 Genk
www.bonsaiassociation.be
E-mail: secretaris@bonsaiassociation.be

World Shohin Photo Awards

After the success of the first annual World Shohin Photo Awards, organised on the occasion of the 40th Gafu ten in Kyoto, its organizers – the All Japan Shohin Bonsai Association – will repeat it. All bonsai lovers are therefore invited to send a photo of their shohin bonsai by November 30 2015. These photos will be on display during the Gafu ten, from 7–10 January, 2016. Miyakomesse, Kyoto. Winners

will receive the 41st Gafu ten album and will be published in the Japanese magazine *Kinbon*. Registration fee: 6000 yen. Send one photo of 3000 x 2000 pixels, with your name, address, name of the shohin species, its height, and the name of its potter.

■ Information: Tomohiro Masumi (kojuen@kyoto.zaq.jp) or Koji Hiramatsu (syunsyou-en@shirt.ocn.ne.jp) <http://shohin-bonsai.or.jp>

In our bookshop

Principles of Bonsai Design

By David Degroot

Edited by the American Bonsai Society. In English

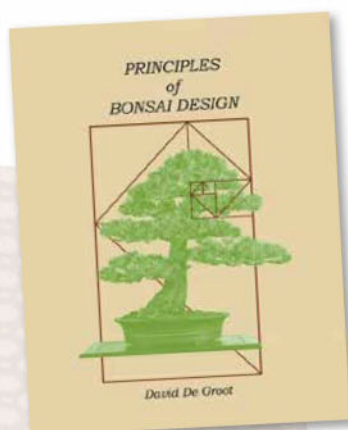
David Degroot has been the curator of the Pacific Bonsai Museum, near Seattle, (Washington, USA) for many years and has studied the art of bonsai in Japan. Suffice it to

say that he knows the subject well. This is his second book, in which he discusses penjing as much as he does bonsai. This book addresses advanced beginners and intermediates. The beginner risks getting a little lost, unless he or she is very motivated.

In fact, the author very precisely

details the shapes of bonsai, the aesthetic, the proportions, the balance, the placement of the tree in the pot, the structure of its branches and the dead wood. Based notably on the Fibonacci sequence and geometric demonstrations, he explains the reasons behind balance and aesthetic concepts. Likewise, he fully details bonsai shapes, Japanese as well as Chinese, including photos of trees in nature to illustrate and support his claims. The reader will learn to choose a tree by examining the integration of branches or its trunk, for example, then to create a bonsai in different shapes. This book's originality can also be found in a chapter about presentation. Here again, everything is meticulously detailed about the proportions to follow, the choice of bases or the companion plant, including kakemono. David Degroot's book is a true contribution to a body of literature that is often repetitive and a little unadventurous. Put this book in the hands of everyone who is curious to learn about bonsai!

Hardcover. 260 pages. Numerous drawings and photos. 22.2 cm (8 ¾ in) x 28.5 cm (11 ¼ in)
Code: DESIGNBON
41 €



Exhibition 2015

OVERUSE, BELGIUM

**November
28-29**

Bonsai exposition of FBBC
(Federation of Belgian
Bonsai Clubs), sales area

Exhibitions and conventions 2016

GENK, BELGIUM

**January
23-24**

Noelanders Trophy XVII
New Venue, Limburghal, Genk
See www.limburghal.be for venue info
<http://www.bonsaiassociation.be/en/trophy.php> for event information.

TOKYO, JAPAN

**February
5-8 and
10-13**

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

SURREY, UK

April 2-3

Spirit of Shohin
Royal Horticultural Society
grounds, Wisley GU23 6QB
Contact: antique.
netsule@gmail.com

GHENT, BELGIUM

**April
22-May**

Floralien exhibition Ghent
Ghent, Bijloke site,
8 Flemish clubs are invited
to present about 60 bonsai
as part of a major show at 8
historical locations all over the
city. <http://www.floralien.be/en>

SZÉKESFEHÉRVÁR,
HUNGARY

May 20-22

EBA (European Bonsai Association)
and ESA (European Suiseki
Association) Convention,
Budapest, Hungary.

ROCHESTER,
NEW YORK, US

**September
10-11**

5th US National Bonsai Exhibition
www.internationalbonsai.com

Convention 2017

SAITAMA, JAPAN

27-30 April

The 8th World BONSAI
Convention, Saitama City.
After 28 years, the World
Bonsai Convention will return
to its birthplace and mecca of
World Bonsai "Omiya Bonsai"
<http://wbff-bonsai.com>

ANCIENT ART in a digital world

Oscar Jonker (Netherlands) and Bjorn Bjorholm (USA) are bonsai professionals who are riding the wave of new communications tools, to share their passion and allow the younger generation to discover it.

Author: Oscar Jonker and Bjorn Bjorholm

Coincidentally (or not?), we both got interested in bonsai after seeing the *Karate Kid* series. The unique characteristics of bonsai all came together in a movie that everyone seemed to like, a lot. Too bad though, that in our first years (and quite possibly for many of us in the bonsai community) we got off to a slow start learning about how to grow them. The only way to get started was by reading books, not the ideal source to learn how to style and wire bonsai trees. If you were serious about learning how to grow bonsai, you had to find a teacher or a local club. Not very appealing to young people, unfortunately.

To bridge the information gap

With the rise of the Internet, and with it young generations that got used to learning online, books were quickly complemented by websites and YouTube movies. Bonsai Empire, a website created by Oscar, saw its visitor statistics grow to 4 million unique visitors over the last 12 months. Interest from young people is clearly on the rise, but still, information is not always professionally explained, and the beauty and esthetics of bonsai is hard to display in a book or on a website.

We're both 29 and shared the frustration that many beginners experience, and decided to try to find a solution; a better learning experience. Our goals were bridging the information gap, appealing to younger generations and providing insight in the fascinating Japanese bonsai world. Our recently introduced and entirely online "Bonsai Beginner's Course" was a first step on the way. Although an online course doesn't substitute a good teacher (not at all in fact), it does a much better job at explaining techniques and backgrounds than a book. And it does much better at displaying the beauty of bonsai.

Not only for beginners

With the success of our beginner's course, we are currently developing more advanced courses, which are expected to launch in March. These courses will be of interest to the intermediate and even advanced bonsai enthusiast. We hope to make this fascinating hobby available to a larger audience, while sustaining bonsai to future generations.

Find a trailer and a free lesson of the beginner's course at <http://course.bonsaiempire.com> ●



Bjorn Bjorholm trained under Keiichi Fujikawa, in Japan. He has made 45 videos that you can watch on YouTube: The Bonsai Art of Japan.



Oscar Jonker has created the Bonsai Empire website and written an e-book on bonsai that has been translated into 7 languages. He makes videos of demonstrations, bonsai artists' gardens, etc.



Bonsai shown as living art in a museum. The Artisans Cup featured American bonsai at the Portland Art Museum, 25 to 27 September 2015.

THE ARTISANS CUP

American bonsai - a new approach to bonsai

The Portland Art Museum, Oregon, USA, hosted an exhibition of a new bonsai genre. Bonsai has been publicly recognised as an art form within an innovative showcase. An art form certainly, but it is American bonsai and the form it has taken.

Author: Michèle Corbihan



Portland, Oregon, is a town situated on the west coast of America, and is accepted as the country's epicentre of bonsai art.

“It’s impressive. It is a totally new way,” Peter Warren, the British bonsai artist, summed up in a few words when commenting on the Artisans Cup presented at the bonsai exhibition held 25 to 27 September 1915 by the Portland Art Museum, Oregon, USA. Setting up bonsai in a museum



Art and design professionals worked together to create a breathtaking scenography.



Light tracks its way through the wooden structures.



By establishing the Artisans Cup, Ryan and Chelsea Neil have opened the way to a form of bonsai, immersed in the culture of humankind and nature.

as a living, changing art form, is to see bonsai in a new light, to question the nature of American bonsai and to pave the way for a new direction. It was this idea that guided and motivated Ryan and Chelsea Neil, the exhibition's founders and organisers, to produce a groundbreaking event. "When you look at bonsai, you say bonsai started in China as penjing, and then they went to Japan. And you look at Chinese bonsai and Japanese bonsai, they are very different and bonsai are Japanese. So then bonsai comes to the United States, and now we are trying to find an original American bonsai. At some point, it has to stop being bonsai. I don't know what it will become. Bonsai is Japanese, penjing is Chinese, what is the American? That is the question I ask myself."

A new perspective

It was a well-kept secret right up to the last minute. There was no hint of the exhibition itself.

If we already knew what trees had been selected out of the 71 shown, nothing had prepared us for the scenography. It was with much excitement, curiosity and impatience that we – journalists and exhibitors – pushed through the museum doors the day before the official opening on Friday 25 September; as we did so, our surprise was total. I was now convinced that I was to be part of a unique event, which would be a landmark date in the history of bonsai, and not just American bonsai.

The room was in semi-darkness. Only the trees were lit each with lights. Once inside the exhibition hall, we had to cross a mezzanine and go down a few steps to the exhibition itself, which enabled us to view the entire room, before appreciating the finer details of the setting. Introductory, explanatory texts on the art bonsai – its practice and its meaning – were set in an arrangement of upright panels in the mezzanine. Each tree had its own exhibition space, a sort of large recess similar to a modern tokonoma, and was accompanied by an accent plant or object. A metallic arch and dark wooden panels, arranged to allow light to filter through, separated the spaces from each other; the trees were placed on shelves of the same dark material. The only touches of colour came from the plants and were thus sublimated. It was a structured, semi-open space with mix of materials and colours immersing us in an industrial atmosphere. The trees



Chris Hornbecker exhibited his photographs and spent an entire night adjusting the lighting for the exhibition.



Chamaecyparis obtusa, Hinoki cypress, Mike Pollock. Pot: Ron Lang (USA). Stand: David Knittle.



Picea engelmannii, Scott Elser.

Tsuga mertensiana, Eric Schikowski. Pot: Chinese modern. Stand: Austin Heitzman (USA). Origin: Mont Hood, Oregon.

were arranged back-to-back in unaligned rows. A system of screens and spaces created a perspective through the trees and their recesses. Space deconstructed and decompartmentalised allowing unexpected tracks of light to reveal the trees from all sides – or almost.

Trees native to the region

Chris Hornbecker's photographs were hung at the back of the hall as if echoing the new perspective on bonsai and space.

The trees? For the most part, they were native species, pine, juniper, some *Tsuga* as well as cedar – styled trees and dead wood demonstrating the wild beauty intrinsic to the region. Broadleaf trees showed the diversity of styled native species, and were represented by olive trees, *Punica granatum* (pomegranate), beech, oak and more besides. There were also a number of oriental varieties some of which came from old imports, but



California juniper, *Juniperus californica*, grafted with *Juniperus chinensis* 'Kishu', Eric Schrader. Pot: Chinese antique. Stand: Eric Schrader (USA).

also from cuttings and seeding as importation is forbidden in the US. All the trees – high quality bonsai – were a flash photo of American bonsai that is taking shape not only in its diversity but also in its past, in its future and in its connection between the people of this country and the trees they form.

“An art open to all”

The Artisans Cup will be a standard of excellence. It was an original, unique and exceptional undertaking, but every detail was thoroughly thought out. Ryan and Chelsea Neil worked with architects, designers and a photographer – Skylab Architects, The DeSpains, Chris Hornbecker and the Official Mfg. Co – for months to make a coherent whole of the scenography. The aim was to “to introduce people not only to bonsai, but to his vision for a new American approach to it,” Ryan Neil explained. They pushed the barriers,



Engelmann spruce, *Picea engelmannii*, Scott Elser.

The prizes

First prize: *Juniperus scopulorum*, Rocky Mountain juniper, Randy Knight

Second prize: *Juniperus occidentalis* var. *australis*, Tim Priest

Third prize: *Juniperus scopulorum*, Rocky Mountain juniper, Amy Blanton (with Mike Blanton in memoriam) tied with *Pinus parviflora*, Japanese white pine, Konnor Jenson.

Best companion piece: Plants in a coastal mahogany container, Randy Knight.

as much for the trees as for the presentation itself. "We must be braver," Peter Warren emphasised. "Bonsai can be a very wild art form and we should be open to every thing. Things have been done with the same high quality in the understanding of artistic principles. This is been done with a grateful and fundamental knowledge of design and art, in the approach to space, light, shadows..."

The Neils borrowed the \$600,000 needed to mount the exhibition. It was a crazy, but courageous venture, where attention was paid to the smallest detail in every aspect of the exhibition, from its conception to the programmes, not forgetting the entry bracelet tags or the communication.

71 trees out of 300 entries

The 71 trees shown were selected from over 300 entries. Ryan Neil, and Michael Hagedorn,



Olea europea. This tree was collected in 1958 by John Naka who is considered the father of North American bonsai. Huntingdon Library, Bonsai Collection.



Buttonwood, *Conocarpus erectus*, Paul Pikel. Origin: Florida mangroves. Pot: Rob Addonizio (USA).



Randy Knight's Rocky mountain juniper, *Juniperus scopulorum*, took first prize. Pot: Chinese modern. Stand: Jason Eider (USA).



Second prize: *Juniperus occidentalis* var. *australis*, Tim Priest. Pot: Chinese. Stand: Japanese. This tree has been worked on for five years.



Troisième prix ex aequo : pin blanc japonais, *Pinus parviflora*, Konnor Jenson. Origine : Japon. Pot : chinois moderne. Table : Austin Heitzman.



Randy Knight, an emblematic figure in North American bonsai, receives first prize.

a professional bonsai artist (see page 24), based their choice on strict criteria: artisanship, artistic talent, quality of materials, quality of the bonsai, the tree's harmony with its container (or the absence of one), species and diversity in the presentation and work representative of the highest standards of bonsai being practised in the USA today.

The five judges were David Degroot (Washington), Colin Lewis (Maine), Boon Manakitivipart (California), Walter Pall (Germany) and Peter Warren (UK), who marked the trees and awarded three prizes. There were four winning trees, two of which tied at third place. The winners were announced during the Sunday morning brunch held at the restaurant on the 15th floor of the Nines hotel.



The five judges – Walter Pall (Germany), Colin Lewis (Maine), Boon Manakitivipart (California), David Degroot (Washington), Peter Warren (UK) – taking part at a discussion session.

What with the cocktails at the official opening and the guided tour of the exhibition by Ryan Neil himself and the brunch and presentation of the awards, all the activities of the weekend were centred on the exhibition and underlined the thought that went into its presentation and everything that proceeded from its organization (communication etc.).

Thus, we were afforded three discussion groups – the first with Ryan and Chelsea Neil, the second with all those involved in the organisation of the exhibition, and the third with the five judges – fascinating sessions, attended by many enthusiasts who gave the Neils a standing ovation.

Taking ownership of bonsai

Most fortunately, there were numerous visitors to The Artisans Cup at Portland Art Museum, some of whom came from the other side of the country taking three days to travel from east to west. A Frenchman also made the trip. There were many professional traders' stands set up in a marquee outside, a few yards away from the museum. Yamadori and bonsai tools, next to books, pottery, or shelves. Of particular note were the beautiful, original tables made by Austin Heitzman.

The Artisans Cup demonstrated that bonsai is a universal art and that the North Americans have taken it to their hearts and adapted it to their own culture and Nature. "The movement is under way" and events such as these are federative. The entire Portland region is set to become North America's bonsai epicentre, due to the motivation and investment of top-level artists such as Ryan Neil and others. Bravo, Ryan and Chelsea Neil for having had the courage to be the driving force behind the project, and bravo too, to all those from far and near who contributed to its resounding success. We will meet again in five years time in Australia, and in 2025, in New York at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA). ●



Tied third prize: Rocky Mountain juniper, *Juniperus scopulorum*, Amy Blanton. Pot: Chinese modern. Stand: Jason Eider (USA).



Acer palmatum 'Shishigashira', William Valavanis. Pot: Reiho (Japan). Stand: Chinese modern. This tree was a graft.

WEB SITE:
www.theartisanscup.com



The European Bonsai San Show, held annually in October at Saulieu, Côte d'Or in Burgundy, exhibits the most beautiful bonsai trees to be found in Europe, eight of which are displayed in tokonoma.



Specialist demonstrations were attended by interested and attentive visitors, who were captivated by what they saw and learnt.

European Bonsai San Show

An exceptional vintage in Burgundy

Author: Michèle Corbihan

The high quality of both demonstrators and the trees displayed, set the tone for a vintage year at the October 2015 European Bonsai San Show, at Saulieu in Burgundy. Although the event is now comfortably established, it held some wonderful surprises and breathtaking demonstrations of the art.

Frédéric Chenal, the organiser of the European Bonsai San Show, should be justifiably proud of the high praise received for his 2015 event. Visitors to the show were captivated by the quality of the trees, which came from the four corners of Europe, and by exponents of the art – Ryan Neil (USA), David Benavente (Spain), Mario Pavone (Italy), Matteo Martin (Italy) and the Spanish collective El Tim – who held them in thrall with their demonstrations. In addition, there was a specialist bonsai market of 50 stalls – indeed, between 17 and 18 October 2015, Saulieu, in Burgundy's Côte d'Or was the place to be.

Traditional displays

The weekend's fresh autumn weather did not cool the ardour of enthusiasts who appreciate a beautiful exhibition – there were too few however, to honour the quality of the event held. Those who did attend were delighted to meet up again and happy to enjoy the most beautiful bonsai exhibition in France.

A red carpet and black fabric now decorates the exhibition hall in this small Burgundian ►►►



1



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1. First prize for best tree in the show: *Olea sylvestris*, Jordi Ugena (Spain). Height: 61 cm (24 in). Pot Tokoname.
2. Second best tree and composition: *Juniperus chinensis* 'Itoigawa', Davide Cardin (Italy). Height: 57 cm (22½ in). Pot John Pitt.
3. Third best tree: *Juniperus sabina*, Leonardo Blanco, El Tim (Spain). Height: 80 cm (31½ in). Pot Chinese.



© Bruno Moyen

David Benavente, guest of honour and demonstrator, displayed a composition of four trees in tokonoma, which included a Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) and a Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum*). Height: 57 cm (22½ in).



© Bruno Moyen

This *Stirax japonica* grown by guest of honour, Andrès Alvarez Iglesias, was one of the four Spanish bonsai displayed in the tokonoma. Height: 97 cm (38¼ in).

First prize for
best composition:
Juniperus chinensis
'Itoigawa', Ian
Stewardson. Height:
50 cm (19½ in).
Pot Tokoname.



The prizes

Prizes were awarded in three different categories by the three judges – Ryan Neil, David Benavente and Andrés Alvarez Iglesias.

• Best trees in the exhibition

- 1st: *Olea sylvestris*, Jordi Ugena (Spain)
- 2nd: *Juniperus chinensis* 'Itoigawa', Davide Cardin (Italy)
- 3rd: *Juniperus sabina*, Leonardo Blanco, El Tim (Spain)

• Best compositions

- 1st: *Juniperus chinensis* 'Itoigawa', Ian Stewardson (UK)
- 2nd: *Juniperus chinensis* 'Itoigawa', Davide Cardin (Italy)
- 3rd: *Pinus sylvestris*, Giacomo Pappalardo (Italy)

• Best deciduous trees

- 1st: *Pseudocarya*, Joseph Valuch (Czech Republic)
- 2nd: *Prunus spinosa*, John Pitt (UK)
- 3rd: *Quercus cerris*, Jean-Paul Polmans (Belgium)

►►► commune. Red and black suits it so well, and it is a perfect combination for an exhibition that is dedicated to tradition in the exhibition of trees. Two rows of tokonoma were placed back-to-back in the centre and this year, displayed David Benavente's trees on one side and those of Andrés Alvarez Iglesias (Spain), on the other. There were a couple of new features at this year's show; two miniature gardens were placed decoratively at each end of the tokonoma rows. One held six of Frédéric Chenal's trees on a wooden support, and the other was a garden of land art by Stephanie Chenal, in which different coloured ceramic totems – created by the artist – were positioned and then surrounded by bonsai trees.

A winning olive tree

In all, there were 76 trees that came from France, Monaco, Italy, Czech Republic, Spain, United Kingdom, Belgium and Switzerland. Suffice it to say that the term 'international' is not loosely applied to this exhibition.



Third best
composition:
Pinus
sylvestris,
Giacomo
Pappalardo.
Height: 70
cm (27½ in).
Pot Chinese.

Moreover, the prize-winning trees also have a very cosmopolitan provenance. There were three judges this year: Ryan Neil, David Benavente and Andrés Alvarez Iglesias. Frédéric Chenal withdrew from the judges' panel to ensure impartiality in the results. It was not an easy choice and there was much discussion among the judges before they could reach an agreement on the nine prizes. The first prize was awarded to Jordi Ugena for his olive tree, which was a great achievement considering that, once again, the conifers far outnumbered the deciduous trees. It should be mentioned that not a single French tree figured among the 2015 prizewinners. ►►►



Second-best deciduous tree:
Prunus spinosa, John Pitt. Height:
82 cm (32¼ in). Pot John Pitt.



Third-best deciduous tree:
Quercus cerris, Jean-Paul
Polmans. Height: 55 cm
(21½ in). Pot Japanese.



First prize for the
best deciduous tree:
Pseudocystodonia,
Josef Valuch.
Height: 35 cm
(13¾ in). Pot
Japanese.



David Benavente (Spain) must work on this pine with the greatest finesse.



The Spanish collective will have taken hours to wire train and to style this pine.



Matteo Martin (Italy), on the right, has the task of explaining the tree's tortured aspect.



Styled by Mario Pavone (Italy), one can well imagine this pine at the edge of a cliff.



North American, Ryan Neil, stunned his audience with his technique, his rapidity, his presence and his generosity.

Insightful demonstrations

"These are the best demonstrations I have ever seen" could be heard up and down the aisles. Certainly, the enthusiasts present were dazzled by the demonstrations, as much for the quality of the work as by the information imparted. Ryan Neil the guest of honour was a star demonstrator. This very charismatic North American knows how to draw his public and conquer it with his simplicity: At every stage of his demonstration he would admit his stage fright and invite his audience to ask questions to help him get over it, of which they took full advantage! The other two demonstrators on the platform – David Benavente and the El Tim group on Saturday and Matteo Martin and Mario Pavone, on Sunday – followed suit with this interaction, even if they were less accustomed to it.

In this way, each of them showed the steps taken for the tree on which he was working.

Frédéric Chenal went from one to the other to translate English and Spanish comments and questions, while Sonia Stella contributed to the Italian translation.

Thus, we enjoyed a wonderful show, and its visitors were able not only to admire the wonderful artistry of the exhibits, but to take away real knowledge from the thoughtfully presented demonstrations.

Fifty specialist traders

The European Bonsai San Show is renowned for its market of professional traders – whose nationalities were even more cosmopolitan than the bonsai exhibited – and this year, comprised fifty stands with bonsai or potensai, ceramic pots, tables, stones, kusamono, figurines and kakemono and calligraphy as well as specialist books and magazines. It is one of the biggest markets in Europe in this field.

An added bonus was the tinsmith, Xavier Roura, from Barcelona, who sold and made, in front of an audience, charming watering cans in copper, while Jacques Le Maître sharpened tools of the trade.

A book to add to this exceptional event: *Esprit Bonsai International* has published a book to immortalise this weekend of October 2015 and to inspire those who were unable to attend. ●

Blog details

See details of the demonstrations on our blog and our Facebook page.
www.en.esprit-bonsai.com

Bonsai Europa 2015 is the new European bonsai event, of which the first was held in Bury, near Manchester (UK) in the hall of an eighteenth-century castle.

Exhibitions



The United Kingdom takes its place in Europe

Bonsai Europa has just created an event: a new British date to be added to the European circuit. This long-awaited exhibition took place in October at Bury, Manchester with a display of high quality trees and outstanding demonstrations.

Text: Michèle Corbihan
Photos: Michèle Corbihan,
unless stated otherwise



The organiser, Tony Tickle (in a white shirt), invited a good line-up of talented artists to give the demonstrations.

“Two years ago I had a dream,” were the opening words of Tony Tickle’s speech at the Bonsai Europa 2015 prize-giving ceremony. We too were looking forward impatiently to an event that the organiser and professional bonsai artist promised would be exceptional. Indeed, those who attended – 1500 of us including exhibitors and traders – were thrilled. For two days, 10 and 11 October, Castle Armoury played host to “without a doubt, the best show we have ever had in the UK,” the organiser affirmed. No exaggeration there! ►►►



Best tree in show:
shohin composition,
Mark and Ritta Cooper.

© Bonsai Europa



Best deciduous
tree: *Fagus
sylvatica*,
David Barlow.

© Bonsai Europa



Best evergreen tree:
Pinus parviflora
'Kokonoe', Mark
and Ritta Cooper.
Height: 60 cm (23½ in).

© Bonsai Europa



Escalonia, Ian Young. Height: 70 cm (27½ in).

© Bonsai Europa



Mark and Ritta Cooper, flanking
Tony Tickle, received two
prizes during the weekend.

Native broadleaf trees

Castle Armoury, a 19th-century building, situated in the centre of town, housed the exhibition. The exhibitors' stands in the entrance hall were attractively arranged in aisles; and the demonstration room on the first floor had with an adjoining bar that served snacks to cater to the needs of the audience and demonstrators. The entire setting was very appealing with as much old-fashioned charm as one could wish for.

Almost one hundred trees were exhibited on stands dressed in white. If pine and juniper, were in the majority, there was nevertheless, a considerable showing of beautiful broadleaf trees such as

thyme, *Escalonia*, *Eleagnus*, beech, oak, *Pyracantha*, hawthorn and pear trees, which was breath of fresh air to this type of event that unfortunately, is often overwhelmed by conifers. Several shohin arrangements were given prominence. There was no labelling to indicate the name of the tree, spe-

The jury's prizes

Best tree in show: Shohin display, Mark and Ritta Cooper.

Best deciduous tree:

Fagus sylvatica, David Barlow.

Best Evergreen tree:

Pinus parviflora 'Kokonoe', Mark and Ritta Cooper.

Best shohin display:

John Armitage.

Best creative display:

Larix decidua, Martin Nielsen.

Sonderpreis, Bonsai Museum

Düsseldorf: *Ulmus Minor*,

Will Baddeley.



Best shohin display:
John Armitage.



Sonderpreis, Bonsai Museum Düsseldorf: *Ulmus minor*, Will Baddeley. Hauteur: 52 cm (20½ in).



Acer palmatum,
Stephen Dodds.
Height: 65 cm
(25½ in).

cies or any other details – the intention was to appeal to the eyes and heart. The dim lighting was a small downside, as it made work difficult for amateur and professional photographers. There was also a display of other non-competing trees, which were styled on metal structures within a Zen space created for the occasion. Members of the Wirral Bonsai Society exhibited trees, and several suiseki stones completed the display. The trees were beautifully styled, and sometimes far removed, but pleasingly so, from the Japanese

codification, and which showed (if proof be needed) the very high standard of European and notably, British, bonsai. Most of the owners of the trees exhibited are, in fact, British, but Bonsai Europa can lay claim to its European dimension by the presence of a number of trees from other countries on the continent.

Transparency for the prizes

The event also carries five prizes (see box above for the winners), as well as the Sonderpreis awarded by the Bonsai Museum Düsseldorf. The jury was made up of the ten demonstrators, who made completely independent assessments. ►►►



Pinus mugo, Pavel Slovák. Height: 55 cm (21½ in).

© Bonsai Europa

The demonstrations in detail

You will soon find the demonstrations in detail on our blog and on our Facebook page.
www.en.esprit-bonsai.com



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© Bonsai Europa

Best creative display: *Larix decidua*, Martin Nielsen. Height: 70 cm (27½ in).

▶▶▶ “All the demonstration artists were my judges. I try to be as open, honest and as transparent as possible. What they did, was to choose three trees that spoke to them from each category.” Thus, Tony Tickle only knew the prizewinners as they were announced, at the end of Saturday afternoon. The big winners of the day were, without doubt, Mark and Ritta Cooper, who are well known for their shohin. They took the prize for ‘Best tree in show’, with their shohin compo-

sition, and the prize for best evergreen tree with a *Pinus parviflora* ‘kokonoe’ (Japanese white pine). Bravo to both for their beautiful work.

A new generation of artists

For the demonstrations, the organiser made a point of inviting a good line-up of artists, who although not so visible at the larger European bonsai events, are certainly not unknown, far from it! There were ten in all, mostly professional, with



José Redondo (Spain) works on a Scots pine, helped by Alex.



Andrew Campbell (United Kingdom) and his Scots pine.



Falco Hamann (Germany) works on a juniper.



Will Baddeley (United Kingdom) and Yannick Kiggen (Belgium), working four-handed on a yew.

THE DEMONSTRATIONS



Tracey Gibson (United Kingdom) works on a hawthorn.



Nik Rozman (Slovenia) with his Scots pine.



Ofer Grunwald (Israel) works on a juniper.



Bartosz Warwas (Poland) and his Scots pine.

the new generation of bonsai artists well represented including a woman, Tracey Gibson. She deplores that so few women are demonstrators and was delighted that Tony Tickle gave her the chance to add a feminine touch to a male-dominated field. The invited artists, all extremely talented and aged between 25 and 50, came from Britain, Poland, Israel, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Belgium and Germany. The number of Eastern European countries present was noticeable: "This area of Europe – the central area, Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Croatia – is catching on to the bonsai culture," commented Sandor Papp, a Hungarian demonstrator. Some of them work in the traditional Japanese spirit, as does Sandor Papp, but others such as Will Baddeley prefer a European style: "My inspiration comes from the trees I see in nature. I prefer a more realistic type of bonsai to a stylised tree. I am less inspired by the Japanese shapes." Large audiences attended the demonstrations, which were amply explained by the bonsai artists themselves.

Another event in two-years time

The occasion could not have been complete without the large market of specialist traders who came from all over Europe, to tempt bonsai enthusiasts with their wares of pots, trees, shelves and



Milan Karpisek (Czech Republic) works on a Scots pine.



Sandor Papp (Hungary), on the right, with his Scots pine.

tables, tools and divers materials, plants, books and magazines.

At the close of the weekend, the organiser exhorted everyone to publish their photos on their social media sites, to show those who hadn't come what they had missed. It is true; this first event was a roaring success and it is a pity not to have been part of it. However, absentees and others will be able to find the exhibits in a book to be published shortly, which will immortalise the event. The Bonsai Europa event, having lived up to the expectations of its success, will be repeated in 2017. Make sure not to miss it this time! ●



A composition of conifers
at the garden entrance.
The wooden building
houses the artist's studio.

Michael Hagedorn

“I want to share bonsai”

Interview and photos by Michèle Corbihan

Michael Hagedorn is the founder of Portland Bonsai Village, which is a collective for bonsai artists, and is the only one of its kind outside Japan. Originally a potter, Michael Hagedorn settled in Portland, Oregon (USA), after completing a bonsai apprenticeship with Shinji Suzuki in Japan. This bonsai trailblazer talks of his art and his connection to nature with humility and generosity.

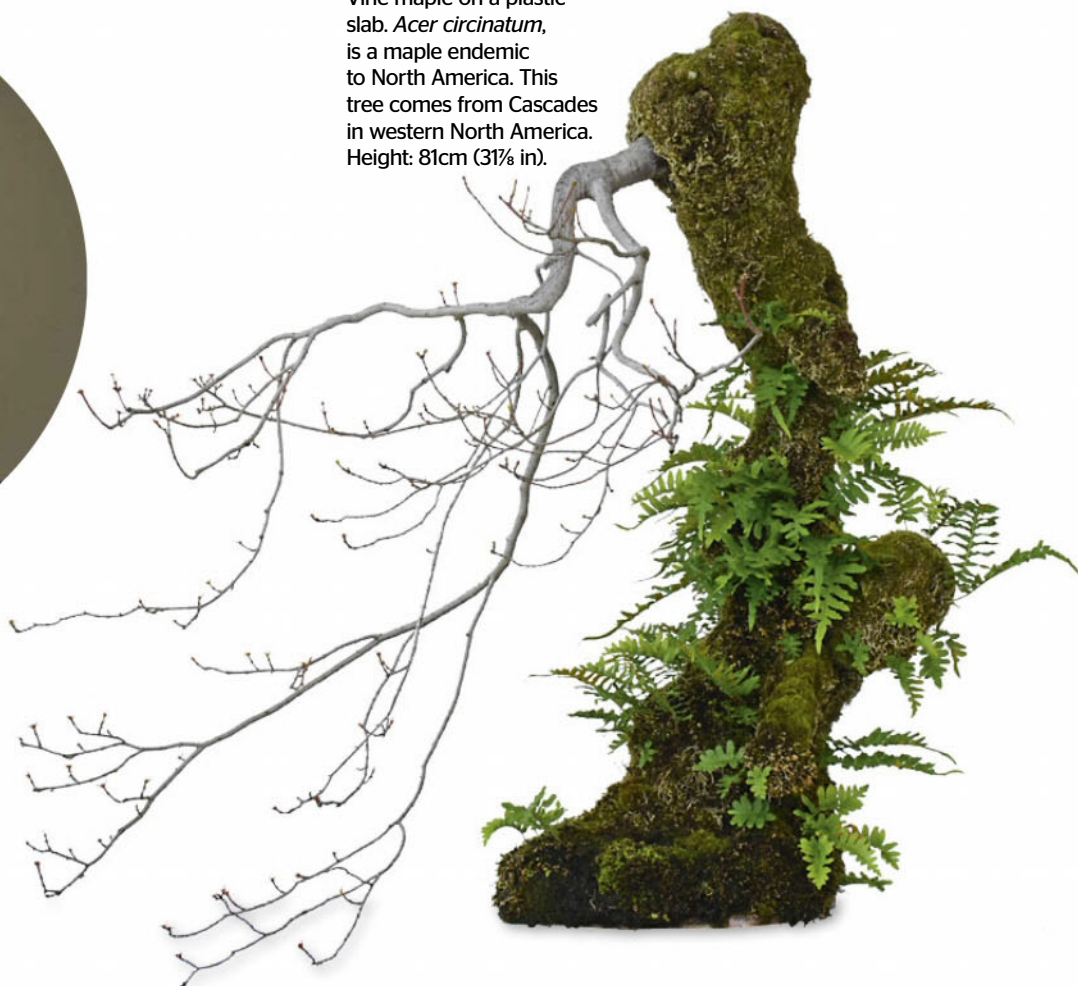
Esprit Bonsai International - What does bonsai mean for you? Is there a deeply spiritual aspect to it that draws you to Japan?

Michael Hagedorn - The Japanese have a very different understanding. Just at a very basic level, it's about the understanding of human relation to nature. It comes partly from Shinto, and partly from Buddhism. The western background had a huge shift around 1850, in the USA at least. The transcendentalists Thoreau and Emerson were beginning to see nature not as something to dominate, but as something but as something that we could have reverence and respect for.



Now established in Portland, Oregon, Michael Hagedorn is an unobtrusive and creative bonsai artist. His relationship with bonsai is marked with respect.

Vine maple on a plastic slab. *Acer circinatum*, is a maple endemic to North America. This tree comes from Cascades in western North America. Height: 81cm (31 3/4 in).



That was the beginning of a lot of things: Aldo Leopold and the land ethic, taking care of things.

Then on top of that, you build the meaning of four very subtle, aesthetic words – *wabi*, *sabi*, *yugen* and *shibui* – complex words that the Japanese use to describe their feelings about the history of an object. We don't have those words. The closest we can come philosophically to this idea is maybe the concept of entropy. And that is one thing that I write about in this book (*Post-Dated, The Schooling of an Irreverent Bonsai Monk*): a sort of understanding, an appreciation that all things will erode or gradually break down, and there is a beauty in that. We are probably connecting on the same level as the Japanese in terms of feeling. But it can be different how we explain it. As far as the personal goes and why I connect with bonsai, I guess it is because I pretty much grew up in the woods.

E.B.I. - Why did you go to Japan as an apprentice?

M.H. - I loved bonsai (laughter). When I went to Japan as an apprentice, it was

purely out of curiosity and out of unanswered questions about bonsai. It wasn't because I had fallen in love with Japanese culture. I had a great teacher of bonsai before I went over there. That was Boon (Boon Manakitivipart). I spend about three years in Japan.

E.B.I. - Were your questions answered?

M.H. - The easiest reply to that is I had to write a book when I came back about the questions that were answered. As I couldn't find anybody here who could answer my questions. I had to go to the motherland. They were kind of personal – philosophical questions really – and you probably would have to write a book too... Yes. To get the answer for my own needs and my own curiosity – for my own desire of being a certain kind of teacher. I needed to find it and I feel like I did.

E.B.I. - And perhaps a certain kind of human too?

M.H. - We start out trying to control everything. The further you get into bonsai, at the other end of the extreme, you're closer and closer to doing only what you

have to do. And that's a huge shift. That changes some things. One thing that I am currently very interested in, as an artist, is the relationship that we have with trees in an urban environment. Before I went to Japan, I lived in Arizona, in the middle of nowhere. There were rocks and stunted trees. It was very beautiful. It's where you might collect a bonsai. My feeling was that bonsai trees were redundant, more like a copy. But then I sensed that bonsai becomes more and more relevant the closer we get to an urban environment. I think we have a need for that. Not necessarily for bonsai but something that connects us to nature.

E.B.I. - What are your artistic influences? Why Jean-Pierre Larocque, for example?

M.H. - A lot of sculptures are additive sculptures – when you keep adding clay or other materials to your work. Jean-Pierre Larocque uses both additive and reductive techniques, to the point where you are uncertain which is which. A piece of art has its own historical presence, because of how it is created. This tree out here, ►►►



Michael Hagedorn in his studio bathed in light works alongside his two apprentices, Bobby Curttright (right) and Jorge Trak.

E.B.I. - Why did you stop making ceramics?

M.H. - Ceramics was fun. I enjoyed it. But it was never a truly deep love or passion. I was walking home one day and I realized I had been thinking about trees all day. I led a very simple life at the time: I didn't have a pet, or a partner. When I came back from Japan, everything was the same. Bonsai then became something I can't help sharing. I love teaching it, writing about it, blogging about it. It's all of it. It's something that is a very clear passion that ceramics never was.

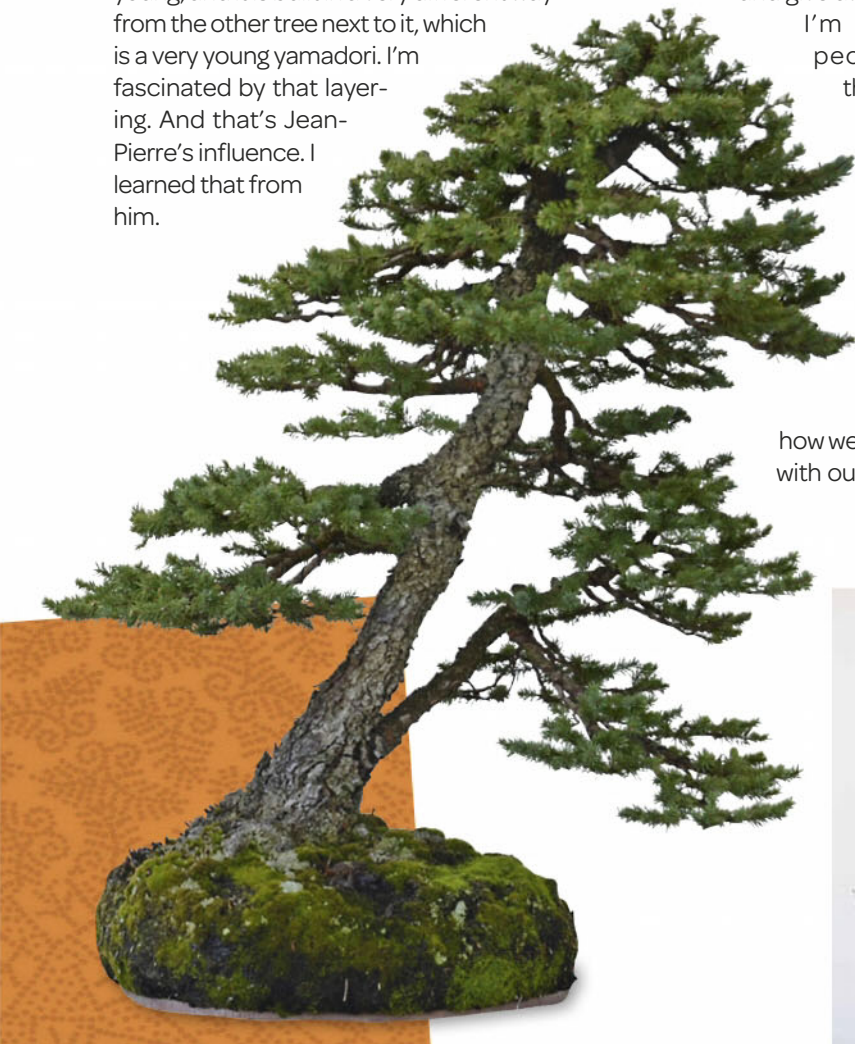
E.B.I. - What do you enjoy most about bonsai?

M.H. - The seasonality of bonsai. Bonsai pulls you into winter in a very interesting way. Because there are still things going on in winter with bonsai that we need to attend to. And so display with bonsai, even if it's outdoors, can really connect us with seasonality, which is really what a bonsai display is about. It's about showing how well we understand the turnings of nature. And that was something that I learned in Japan. My teacher Shinji Suzuki is a very keen observer of nature, and he is one of the three major masters in Japan who specializes in display. He has a very sensitive approach to his work with trees that I didn't see in the other masters.

▶▶▶ the first one in the white pot, has probably had three or four different artists working on it. There are layers of information to be read in a tree of that age. This would have started when it was very young, and it is built in a very different way from the other tree next to it, which is a very young yamadori. I'm fascinated by that layering. And that's Jean-Pierre's influence. I learned that from him.

Then there's Jean Giono. I was deeply influenced by the first work I read of his, *The Man who planted Trees*. That's how I feel – that sometimes bonsai are secret- ing small forests, which we then pass on and give away.

I'm influenced by people who work through their passion with generosity. Let's see, who else? Thoreau has a strong influence on me, just for his reverence for nature and for how we live and interact with our surroundings.



Engelmann spruce, *Picea engelmannii*. Spruce mainly found in rocky, mountainous areas. Height: 97 cm (38 ¼ in).



Rocky Mountain juniper, *Juniperus scopulorum*. Juniper native to the western part of North America. Height: 91cm (35 ½ in).

E.B.I. - What bonsai activities do you enjoy most?

M.H. - It really depends on what time of year it is. But in fact, I love them all! Oddly enough, I really enjoy working with young trees, and setting up the future for young plants. Also, I love creating a completely new vision with a yamadori. I love teaching. I love the sharing. One thing I'm really enjoying is trying to explore local natives – indigenous trees of the Pacific North West, in the mountains. We have a really beautiful maple here, a vine maple, and mountain hemlock. They're all very unique plants. I like exploring how to present these new species. I'm also playing a lot with the aesthetic of the rain forest, because that's what we have around here.

E.B.I. - What is so important about bonsai that led you to become professional?

M.H. - I have to do it – I can't help it (laughter). I have to fully commit myself! I've always been that way. If I wanted to do something, it didn't matter how much money I made at it, I would just live very frugally to achieve my goal. I want to share

bonsai the way my teacher shared it with me. That's the idea behind the Portland Bonsai Village (PBV). After my book, the PBV was my next big project. But that's more a community project.

E.B.I. - What motivated you to create Portland Bonsai Village?

M.H. - I was inspired by the Omiya Bonsai Village. Mainly, if you're an artist, a professional, and you live out in the middle of nowhere, you have no influence from your colleagues. You need people to bounce ideas off, colleagues to learn from and also to keep each other sharp. When I came back from Japan, I was jealous of Shinji because he always had colleagues around him. I was the only bonsai artist in Portland, so I started encouraging other artists to come and live here.

E.B.I. - Why Portland?

M.H. - I came here for the climate. It is great for growing trees. I was the first here, and then Matt (Reel) came, followed by Ryan (Neil). The three of us studied in Japan. There is also a very big nursery; it has been here for longer than I have. ▶▶▶



Mountain hemlock, *Tsuga mertensiana*, conifer found at high altitude in North America. Height: 73 cm (28 ¾ in). Width: 86 cm (33 ⅞ in).



Michael takes particular care when showing his trees. He adds the final touches before being photographed.



Shore pine, *Pinus contorta*. Found in Mexico, North America and Alaska. Height: 89 cm (35 in).

An attractive composition set on volcanic rock.



►►► We don't only have bonsai here; there are people who make stands and pots, and some of them are doing very inventive work. The other point about a collective is that you also share visitors. If people go to my yard, they might also go to somebody else's yard, and be tempted to buy something!

E.B.I. - In what way is your work in PBV pioneering?

M.H. - Outside of Japan, having a large bunch of artists living in the same place is not very common, and Portland is fairly unique outside of Japan. It is quite a pioneering undertaking to work together as a unit. We are also pushing the boundaries with our work at Portland. Ryan (Neil) is doing some very iterative work. I do some as well. We do a lot of veering, and there are some trees out there that are in plastic slabs, which is not very usual. There are some strange things going on in Portland.

Whether these become part of the tradition or not, is for people to decide. But there's a lot of experimentation going on here.

E.B.I. - In what ways would you like to experiment with bonsai?

M.H. - I want to explore other possibilities. It's important though to think of the art's boundary as being flexible, so you can push it a little bit. To push that boundary is a really significant and important thing that all artists have to do to keep the art vibrant and fresh. I'm trying to stay within the aesthetic boundaries of bonsai. If I show a tree on a plastic slab, I cover it up so you can't see the plant stick. Because plastic and bonsai doesn't sound good! (laughter). But 98 per cent of what I do isn't experimentation.

I'm very loyal to the profiles, the outlines, the aesthetic details of where to place a branch, how to find balance in



the tree. These are things that are really important to maintain in the tradition. You approach a certain tree, because of what that tree offers. If the tree offers a cascade option, you don't turn it into something else because you want to explore something. That doesn't make sense. Then you're dominating the tree.

E.B.I. - What does "American bonsai" mean for you?

M.H. - American bonsai is still in its infancy. All foreigners to Japan have a kind of a maverick approach to bonsai. We work with things the Japanese would never work with. It's a very exciting phase because there's a lot of exploration going on – experimentation.

The problem is, the "finding it" is really a challenge because individual artists are doing things so significantly different from each other that I don't see any clear voice. We're not quite at the refinement of the Japanese: that's also part of the American personality. We don't refine things until they are perfect. It will bring a breath of fresh air to bonsai. I'm still very curious to see what kind of fresh air that is.

I'm very interested in how the presentation of The Artisans Cup (for Amer-



Rocky
Mountains
juniper,
*Juniperus
scopulorum*
and *Juniperus
chinensis*
grafted. Height:
66 cm (26 in).
Width: 63,5
cm (25 in).



No bonsai is complete without kusamono. Wabi sabi is not taken lightly by Michael.



Michael Hagedorn was a potter before becoming a bonsai artist. Round pot. Height: 4,5 cm (1 ¾ in).



Rectangular pot. 5 x 48 x 33 cm (2 x 18 ¾ x 13 in).

Online

Discover Michael Hagedorn's book, *Post-Dated: The Schooling of an Irreverent Bonsai Monk*, at our online shop. You will soon be able to read this interview in full on our blog: www.en.esprit-bonsai.com Michael Hagedorn's web site : <http://crataegus.com/>

ican Bonsai) will go, because it says a lot about the intention behind it.

E.B.I. - What would be your advice to beginners?

M.H. - Stay away from books. Magazines, blogs: those are good. But most importantly, find a teacher whom you trust. Also, try and stay with that person for a while. Don't go for one to another too fast; that's not a good idea. Stick with somebody for a few years. And then you can move on, that's fine. The other thing is: don't have just three trees. Have fifteen

trees or something like that. Otherwise you beleaguer the trees; you can overwork a tree and never give it a rest. If you have enough trees to work on, trees will get a rest. ●



Chaenomeles japonica. Height: 38 cm (15 in). Width: 60 cm (23 ¾ in).



Ezo spruce, *Picea jezoensis*. Height: 120 cm (47 ¼ in).

Modifying nebari

Winter and autumn are the times to work on the large surface roots of nebari: don't wait for the spring repotting.

Author: Gilbert Labrid

Well before spring, the best period for repotting and work on roots is autumn and winter. At these times it is possible to make modifications to nebari without having to shake up the entire root system. Many surface roots should be removed, often for aesthetic reasons. Where poorly placed fine roots are concerned, you can wait for the spring to carry out the operation. But in the case of roots that are significant in size or position, it is preferable to intervene quite a while before repotting, so as to avoid depriving the tree of an essential part of its life-supporting system. Removing a large surface root just before bud break can carry a major risk for the parts that are fed by that root. For conifers, the risk is almost doubled. When you remove a root in autumn, and therefore several months before repotting, all the parts of the root system that are not affected by the operation continue to nourish the branches. Over the course of time, the sap circulation zones are redirected, with a good chance of preserving the crown in its entirety, damage-free. Work on the part that is beneath the surface of the soil is kept back for the next intervention, in the spring, but by that time the tree will have recovered some of its initial vigour. In this way, you can gently prepare for the bigger tasks that are to come, without disrupting the stability of your trees' root structure, and can improve their chances of future recovery. This procedure kills two birds with one stone: improving the nebari by allowing the better-placed roots to develop, and ensuring that the ramification will continue without too many risks. ●



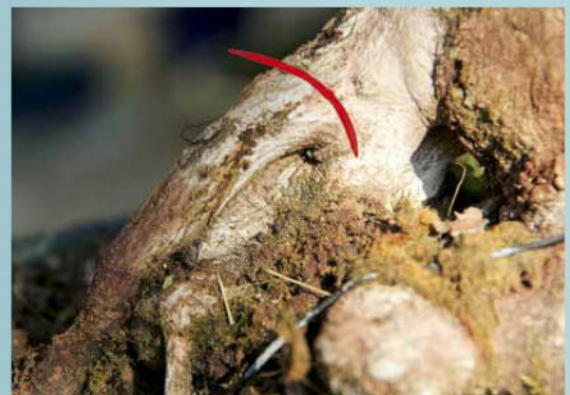
1 Autumn and winter are the time to take action on thick roots in nebari. Before setting to work on nebari, you need a clear vision of where you are heading. All obstacles, including moss that is very vigorous in autumn, must be removed.



2 Once the surface has been cleaned, you can intervene on surface elements that do not fit with your objective.



This relatively large floating root needs to be removed several months before repotting.



A thick root overlays the already broad base. It needs to be cut off at the point indicated in red, to give more movement and stop the swelling above.



Two high roots are no longer at the level of the nebari on this white pine, which was repotted a year ago in a new position.



6 In early summer, armed with a standard branch cutter, one root is severed, while a two-month wait is needed before severing the other.



7 The first root is dry; it can be made into a small jin. Before doing the same to the second, it will be necessary to wait a bit. The tree has not suffered at all from these removals.



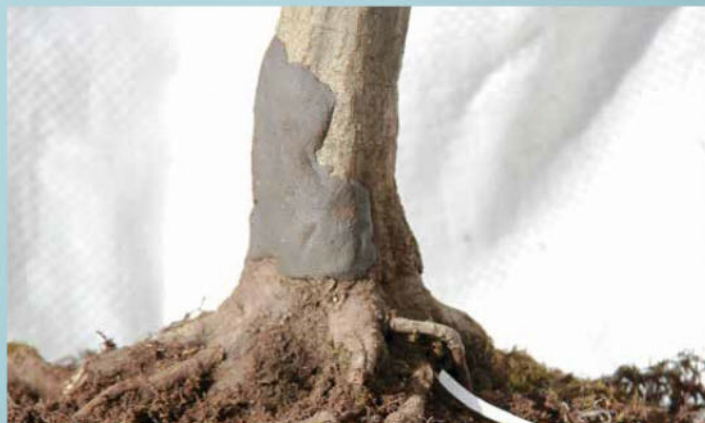
8 A typical case of a high root that masks interesting nebari. The white mark indicates the part that should be removed by the cut, so as to re-establish the trunk's taper.



9 The root is large and a saw is necessary. The cut is then tidied up with branch cutters and a craft knife.



10 The separated root will remain in place until March, in this position, retaining the root structure as it stands. The edges of the cut have been tidied up, so as not to leave any bulging scars.



11 Cut paste is applied to the wound. In a few months the trunk will have reacquired an attractive taper. The white mark indicates a root that should be shifted during the next repotting.

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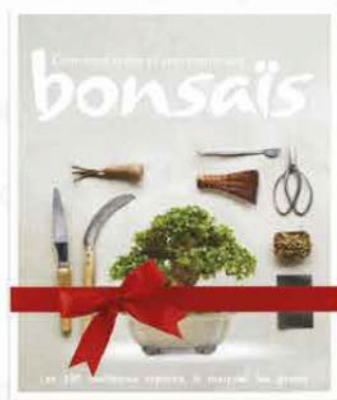
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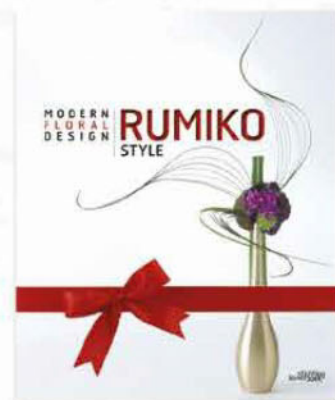
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When to work on bonsai

Part two

Author: Bruno Mazza

BETWEEN SPRING AND AUTUMN

• Pinching junipers

All varieties of juniper (*Juniperus communis*, *J. chinensis*, *J. phoenicea* L., etc.), if well cultivated (with the necessary sunlight, water and fertiliser), bud continuously from spring to autumn. New shoots should be pinched back with the fingertips every 10 to 15 days, or trimmed with scissors two or three times during the season.

If you choose to use scissors, then cut by inserting the scissor blades parallel to the stalk of the shoot.

• Pinching firs

As for firs, only large buds should be pinched, when they reach 2 to 3 centimetres (about an inch) long. Break them off with your fingers, halfway down. Leave small

buds to develop, to balance the energy of the different areas of the tree.

• Pinching broadleaves

Plants have a natural tendency to grow most in the areas that have the greatest amount of light, so that they can photosynthesise as much as possible. The bonsaist's task is to spread the growth as evenly as possible, to balance out the energy across all areas of the plant.

Pinching is needed for the most vigorous buds, to limit their development and encourage strengthening of the weaker ones. Usually you should only keep the first two buds, and remove the others. However, in particularly thick areas, it is better to leave only one, while leaving three or even four in the thinner areas.

This procedure should be repeated as and when necessary as the new growth comes out, and should

continue throughout the growing season.

Flowering and fruiting plants are a separate case, because they should be left free to grow. They should only be pruned at the end of summer, after the differentiation between flower buds and leaf buds has been established. Flower buds develop at the bases of branches that have grown during the year.

If you prune the branches before the buds are differentiated, which generally happens around the end of June, the reduction of the leaf surface area obliges the plant to increase the number of leaf buds and abandon flower buds in order to re-establish a balance in the existing foliage. ►►►



Juniper shoots are cut back by inserting the scissors parallel to the stem.



Do not cut at a perpendicular angle.



Break large fir buds off halfway, with your fingers, when they reach 2-3 cm (about 1 in).



The thickest areas of broadleaves need to be pinched back, so as to make the thinner ones develop.

Pinching of broadleaves is done throughout the growing season.



Pinching candles on vigorous pines, using fingers and a slight twisting gesture.



To finish repotting, put dried sphagnum, cut into small pieces, on top of the substrate.



The sphagnum retains the moisture in the pot, which encourages new roots to sprout.

IN SPRING

• Pinching pines

The months of May and June are a period of intense activity in pines. If you want make a pine into a bonsai, pinching candles and pruning new shoots are absolute musts. If small branches are not slowed down, they will continue to grow longer in all directions, seeking out as much light as possible. They will then be impossible to make more compact in order to create foliage pads.

The energy will then be concentrated around the thickest areas – the branches at the top of the tree and the ends of the other branches – as is the case for almost all plants, which will increase the energy in these spots, to the detriment of the thinner areas which will end up perishing.

To reverse this tendency, you need to cut off a greater or lesser amount of the candles. The period to do this is difficult to establish a priori, because it varies according to the specimens concerned and the geographical region. What you need to remember is that, on vigorous specimens, candles should be pinched when they have developed adequately, to somewhere around 3 centimetres (an inch and a quarter).

To pinch them back, take the candle between your thumb and index finger and cut it off, while gently twisting it. You should not use scissors, because if you do, the ends of the needles will turn black as they develop.

When candles do not open all at once, you need to pay careful attention and pinch them all back bit by bit, as they develop.

• Layering

When the plant is at the height of its activity, it is the right moment for layering. Sap is flowing abundantly and all the organs are working at a good pace, which encourages roots to sprout quickly.

Layering (also called marcotting) can be used to thin down an overly thick trunk, to create a new specimen by using an interesting part of an over-thick plant, to improve nebari that is not particularly attractive, etc.

The procedure takes advantage of the capacity many plants have of rapidly producing new roots at a point where a ring of bark has been removed.

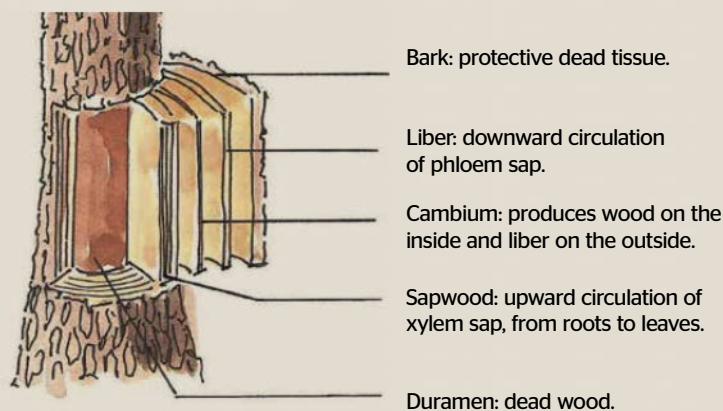
Layering is an easy method of multiplying numbers of plants. It is used a lot to produce specimens with good proportions and interesting characteristics, and quite quickly at that.

• Taking cuttings

Cuttings are a reproduction technique that allows plants with perfectly identical characteristics to the parent plant to be obtained. Again, this technique takes advantage of the capacity that certain species have – junipers and almost all broadleaves – to put out roots.

Pines are not recommended here, because they usually have too slow a metabolism for the cutting to take root before it dries out.

If the part destined for the cutting is well chosen, the new plant



Layering involves removing a full ring of bark down to the cambium. When the vessels in the cambium are severed, the plant reacts by producing tissue to repair the damage. Thus it forms a scar over the wound, and new roots will grow in the upper part.

will have good characteristics, but will need plenty of time in order to reach the appropriate dimensions for creating a bonsai.

IN SUMMER

• Summer repotting

Sometimes, for lack of time or by force of events, you cannot repot during the ideal period, which is generally at the end of winter. Some species can be safely repotted outwith this season, usually in June, by taking certain precautions.

This summer repotting is done when broadleaves are mature – that is, when they have finished developing and are completely fulfilling all their functions (first and foremost of which is photosynthesis). They change slightly in colour (growing darker), as well as in texture – they become more resistant, and rubbing them between your fingers makes a sound similar to rustling a sheet of paper. This is the best time for an “off-season” repotting.

In summer, roots should only be cut back by a maximum of 40 %, while in spring they can be cut back by up to 60%. In addition, it is likewise advisable to cut back the foliage, by defoliating to a greater or lesser degree, so as to improve the water balance – between absorbed and evaporated water.

After repotting, it is important to protect the plant from direct sunlight and wind for a few weeks, and to shelter it in a bright spot.

To ensure the substrate has the right level of moisture, which encourages the plant to sprout and develop radicles, on the surface where it dries out most quickly, cover the soil with a layer of small pieces of sphagnum; these can be left permanently in place.

If you work carefully, broadleaves generally withstand being repotted out of season without any problem at all. For conifers (pines and junipers), since their repotting period is longer, the need to

repot them in June is eliminated, and all the more so since June is the month when candles develop and new needles and shoots are put out; and it is dangerous and not right to stress plants without good reason.

• Pruning new shoots on pines

During June, and sometimes up to mid-July depending on the climate and the specific characteristics of each plant, new shoots on pines should be cut back with scissors. These new shoots are buds that have become candles and have sprouted needles.

The aim of pruning new shoots is to keep the lengthening of the branches under control, to encourage dormant buds to be roused and consequently to form dense, compact ramification, as well as reducing the length of needles.

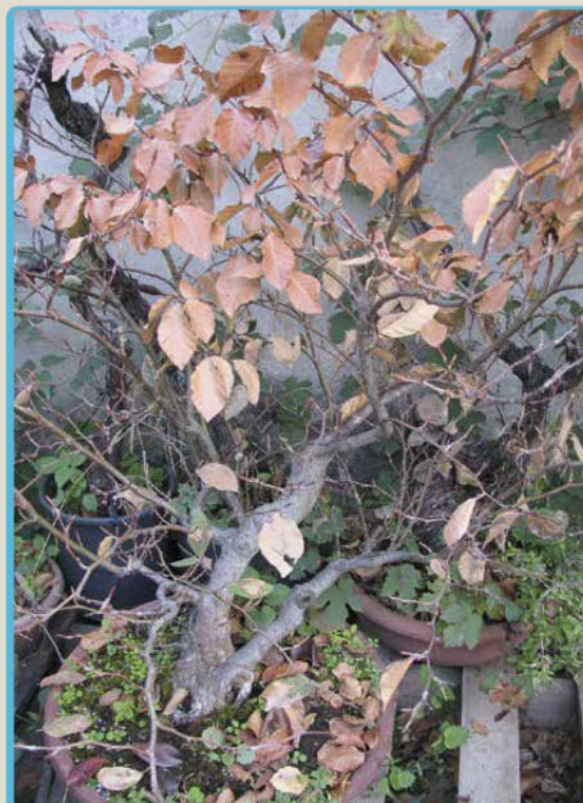
• Summer dormancy

As high summer temperatures start to arrive – above 32-35°C (90-95°F) – almost all plants stop or considerably slow down their growth rate. Metabolism, photosynthesis, transpiration and gaseous exchange undergo major changes, forcing the leaves to put mechanisms in place that can reduce the absorption of heat and can dissipate it as much as possible through stomata. Plants stop growing and go into a state of rest. When conditions return to “normal” for them, all their mechanisms start to work normally again.

During this period, full attention needs to be paid to watering: often, very high temperatures and wind will dry out the substrate very quickly and literally burn the dehydrated leaves. The leaves begin to go dry (turn brown) on their outer edges, and if the plant is not quickly watered, including being sprayed with a fine mist, they will end up drying out completely. ►►►



In August, below where new pine shoots have been pruned, buds will grow that will be selectively sorted in autumn.



This beech has suffered from the heat: its leaves are completely dried out.



However, by scratching the stalk with a fingernail, you can see that the branches are not dry. The buds are swollen, and they will come out in spring, without any problem.

It is easy to understand that in order to function properly, plants need a quantity of water that is at least equal to that used to carry out all their functions.

When the amount of water that is lost through foliar transpiration, evaporation from the substrate etc. is greater than the amount being absorbed, the leaves will wither.

If the imbalance is only slight and does not last long, normal conditions can quickly be re-established by watering, and no permanent damage will be recorded. Only photosynthesis and growth will be temporarily inhibited. Without watering, the loss of water will spread from the leaves to the trunk and right down to the roots, and the leaves will fall off within a few days.

As with leaf loss in late autumn, the loss of all leaves in advance through drying out is not always a sign that the plant is dead. If the buds for the following spring have been produced, and the dehydration has not affected the branches, trunk or roots, the plant will bud normally in the spring.

If the plant is rehydrated, it may even recover during the season that is already underway, and reconstruct its root system and buds.

IN AUTUMN

Fertilising

Once the hottest period is past, in late August or early September (depending on the region), temperatures return to normal, below 30°C (86°F), and plants then readopt their normal growth activity.

This is also the moment when attention needs to be focused as much as possible on fertilisation, which needs to supply the plant with the substances it needs to develop, consolidate new growth, reconstitute exhausted reserves and strengthen itself to best cope with the winter season.

In autumn, it is preferable to use fertilisers that are low in nitrogen,

which is better for encouraging vegetative growth, especially for young plants and those that are in the construction phase. The feed also needs to be rich in phosphorus – to stimulate root growth and prepare a good flowering for the spring – and in potassium, to strengthen the plant, increase the roots' assimilation capacity and consolidate the new growth that has been produced during the season.

Chemical fertilisers, which should be used with great care, can be put quickly to use by plants. Conversely, the nutrients of organic fertilisers need to break down by fermentation to be assimilated: this is why they can only be used by the roots 20 to 30 days after they have been applied.

Winter rest

Winter is the time when, after lavishing care and attention on plants, you can finally reap the rewards of your efforts and enjoy them: trees offer up bunches of little apples, orange kakis, a whole host of multicoloured berries and splendidly coloured leaves.

But there are still some small tasks that need to be done, to guide plants towards their rest period as best as possible:

- remove old pine needles
- those that have not grown this season – to allow light to penetrate between the branches and activate the reawakening of dormant buds;
- remove dead leaves on broad-leaf trees, to prevent stagnation of the moisture from creating problems;
- treat branches and trunks of broadleaves with jin seal to guard against disease and fungal infections (1 part jin seal to 30 parts water).

Experience and observation

Each plant is a unique specimen as far as its physiology, aesthetic appearance and energy are concerned,



Autumn fruits are a reward for the care lavished on bonsai throughout the year.



Winter has arrived, and this shohin laden with kakis is a joy for the eyes and the spirit.

ned, all of which can influence its reactions to intervention.

A plant's age can likewise deeply affect the speed and level of its response: the primary objective of young plants is to develop and grow, so that they can attain reproductive functionality as quickly as possible and accomplish the cycle of life.

A mature plant is more inclined to maintain its situation and keep itself going by slowing down its organs' functions.

Each situation is different and requires adaptation of the methods and moments of intervention. And each bonsaist's experience also plays a very important role. ●

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Jin seal is known as a jin bleaching agent, but thanks to its other properties, it also protects against disease and parasites. It must always be diluted before use.

Jin seal bleaches and protects



Jin seal is used to bleach jins and other deadwood, but it also protects wood from various parasites. Learn how to use it.

Author: Xavier Dreux



Jin seal diluted by 50% is applied to the shari of this *Juniperus* to bleach and protect the wood.

As its name suggests, jin seal, an orange liquid with a characteristic odour of rotten eggs, is used primarily as a sealant in the care of jins and other deadwood. But it also has the virtues of bleaching wood and protecting it against fungi, algae and moss.

A whitening effect

Traditionally, the Japanese use jin seal or *yokosai*, as it is called, for the maintenance of deadwood. This is a lime and sulphur compound (calcium polysulphide) that should be applied twice during the hot season. With a paintbrush or similar type of brush, apply the liquid (diluted by 50%) to the debarked, intricately sculpted wood. Once bleached, the wood needs to dry rapidly, preferably in the hot midday sun. After a few weeks, the wood should recover its natural colouring. Sometimes, however, the white can be too glaring, and to tone it down or nuance it a bit, bonsai enthusiasts will often add a few drops of Indian ink, or black gouache to the mix; or simply, will add more water to the diluted jin seal solution.

Some people also advocate cleaning the treated wood by spraying it with water after it has been left to dry for several hours.

Apart from its bleaching effects, lime sulphur's antifungal properties protect deadwood from decay.

Antifungal, antiparasitic, anti-moss ...

Now at the start of the cold weather, bonsai enthusiasts are preparing to overwinter their trees. Before bringing the more tender trees and those most sus-



Clean the trunk with water, using a toothbrush or bottle brush before applying the jinseal solution, diluted by 30%.



Dip the shohin directly into the diluted solution, so that the mixture reaches all the nooks and crannies in the rough bark. Drain well.



Place the bonsai at a slant on a plank of wood so that the liquid drains off well away from the pot.

ceptible to the cold, into the greenhouse, they need to be treated for parasites hidden under the bark, as well as fungus, moss and algae, which will quickly cover the trunks if precautions are not taken.

In specialist Japanese garden centres *yokosai* is the most usual treatment. Jin seal is diluted by 30% – 10ml of the seal to 300ml of water – and taking care to protect the ceramic container and substrate from the liquid, is sprayed onto the bonsai. It is good practice to brush away parasites and unwanted moss with a toothbrush or bottle brush, before applying the mixture; but be gentle with the fragile bark!

Smaller bonsai such as shohin and mame can be removed from their pots and dipped directly into the diluted solution. They are then placed on a wooden block to prevent the liquid dripping onto the ceramic pot.

For bigger trees, the mixture is sprayed directly onto the leaves and the trunks when the weather is dry and sunny. They should be left to dry for two or three days before being brought into the greenhouse. Ideally, bonsai should be treated in two stages: the first, after two

or three frosts at the end of November or beginning of December, and the second, in February.

As the jin seal solution is so corrosive, set aside a spray bottle for the sole use of the product, and make sure the bottle is thoroughly rinsed several times after use. As it dries, jin seal can block the holes in the nozzle. This can slightly bleach the trees, but eventually, they will recover their colour. In fact, this whitening effect is a desirable feature for certain species such as maple and Japanese beech. ●

Precautions to be taken

Jin seal must be applied in a very well ventilated space, or better still, outside. The product gives off a very strong, nauseating and persistent smell that hangs in the air. Wear protective clothing, as the liquid is corrosive and will permanently stain any surface it comes into contact with. It is also imperative to protect the bonsai pot and the substrate.

Jin seal can be sprayed onto the entire tree, even on conifers and cultivated trees.



Cardboard cut to size protects the bonsai pot. One can also tape the pot up with plastic.





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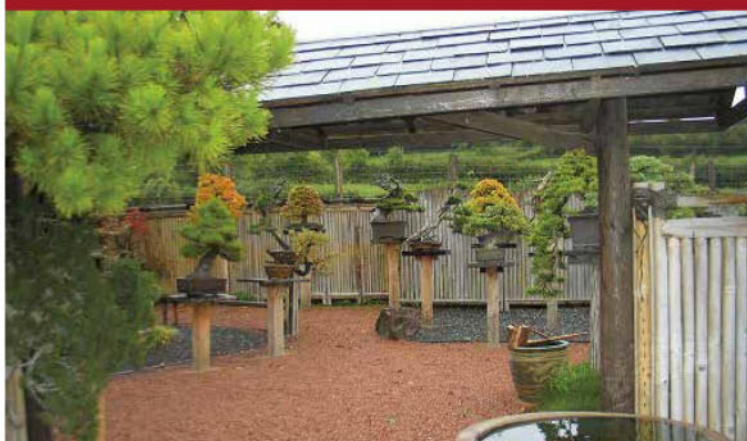
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WHEN NATURE TAKES OVER

Three trees perched on a concrete block tell the story of this place. Clinging on in the middle of the water like sentries, they remain where the trace of humankind is disappearing.

Author: François Jeker

Right at the far tip of the Island of Montreal, where the Saint Lawrence River splits in two, is Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue. All that remains of the old locks that used to allow boats to make their way up to Lake Ontario are blocks of concrete standing in the water. On top of them are a few paving stones and rusty mooring posts. Here, the deep winter frost and, in the spring, piles of ice washed along by fearsome currents show no mercy to human constructions.

And ...

On one of the blocks, three trees have grown, with no soil, proudly displaying their tall silhouettes which are reflected in the river at sunset.

These trees tell a wonderful story: that life is stronger than suffering, and that it feeds on adversity, overcomes it, and transforms it into stirrings of rare beauty.

They tell a story that echoes what our bonsai tell us.

These trees put us back in our rightful place: we are often under the illusion, the ridiculous pretence, of believing that we are at the centre of the universe, and that we own nature, and that we know how to tame it.

These trees tell us that we are no more than a tiny part of the living world, fragile and transient.●



In Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, at the tip of the Island of Montreal in Canada, only these trees survive, where locks have been swept away by the force of the Saint Lawrence River.



This venerable shohin juniper's foliage is far too dense. The empty spaces have disappeared, leaving a shapeless blob. The overly deep pot is not suited to the tree.

Restructuring a Chinese juniper's foliage

This Chinese juniper has been neglected. Its recent growth needs to be restructured, to bring out the best of its focal point and the beauty of its trunk's curves.

Author: BonsaiTranslations
Demonstration: Hiroki Miura, Baiju-en

This Chinese juniper, *Juniperus chinensis*, is a highly valuable tree, with complex forms to its trunk and beautiful deadwood at its apex – which are called “ten jin”, meaning “sky”. The tree is in the moyogi, or informal upright, style. In its current state,



The Japanese professional Hiroki Miura will restructure this tree, which has an interesting trunk and deadwood.



Miura indicates the ideal focal point for the tree. To highlight this area, the tree's front needs to be shifted slightly, as does its angle of lean.



the foliage is not particularly interesting, and the pot is very deep and wide, which reduces the tree's impact and general presence. Hiroki Miura, a Japanese shohin specialist, will remedy this situation. The juniper has been through a lot. A hobbyist brought the tree to one of Miura's workshops about ten years ago. After that, the tree changed hands several times before Miura acquired it. Following a few seasons in the nursery with appropriate fertilisation, exposure and watering, the foliage is nice and dense – proof of vigour – and the tree is ready to be worked on. ►►►

Seen from above, the foliage is spread too thinly and needs to be made more compact. The branches stretch out widely, but they need to be brought back inwards.



1 The foliage is also too high.



3 When cutting a branch off, you need to envisage the possibility of creating a jin.



4 With the branch severed, the focal point has already shifted.



2 Miura will cut off the lower branch at the point he indicates here. This tree's charm resides in its trunk's curves, and compacting the foliage will make the trunk appear much thicker.

A branch for a jin

Miura begins by cutting the base of the lower branch. This branch can be transformed into a jin, even if it is slender. Creating a jin involves lengthening and thickening a branch, which can take a long time. So, before cutting off a branch, you need to ask yourself whether it can be used as a jin. The rest of the branch is transformed into a jin.



5 The bark is removed with a pair of pliers.



6 Gouges are needed to put the finishing touches to the jin.

7 It is always good to adhere to the branch's direction of growth when creating details in a jin, to obtain a natural appearance.





8 Apply the training wire, making sure that it is neither too tight nor too slack.

Applying training wire

The technique of applying copper wire requires some practice, but it is not very complicated. You just have to start at the base of a forked branch, and stretch the wire along the two branches of the fork. The wire must be securely attached to the base, and the coils should be even spaced. Avoid crossing wires, leaving a gap between the wire and the branch, or bending the branch excessively. Chinese junipers have quite flexible wood in comparison to temple junipers, *Juniperus rigida*, which, as their Latin name implies, are very rigid and break easily. If you need more support for a branch, it is possible to double up the wire. In this case, the new wire needs to be positioned parallel to the first one, without the wires crossing. ►►►



9 You can double up the wire if needed, but always without the two wires crossing.

10 Miura applies the wire to the tree from the base upwards.



11 After wiring. Look carefully at where the wire has been placed.



Creating empty spaces

Once the wire has been applied, the branches need to be positioned – it is time for styling. The aim is to bring the foliage together in tiers and to create empty spaces between these. This balance between foliage and voids is what defines bonsai. Since shohin trees are small, it is common to group the foliage around the crown of the tree and reduce it to a single branch. In the moyogi style, the objective is to highlight the trunk's curves.



It is sometimes difficult to reach inner branches. Miura uses a pair of pliers and fractionally shifts each branch, in order to make the foliage more compact.

Reducing the reach of branches

In bonsai, we are always seeking to reduce the extent of branches. One way of doing this is by curving branches inwards. With small, flexible branches like this juniper's, this is quite easy. With larger trees, you need to do the bending before the branches have grown too thick, otherwise there is a risk that they will break.



Bending a branch allows its reach to be reduced.



It is now a matter of positioning the branches to balance out the foliage masses and the empty spaces.



Rear view.



Front view: the foliage positioned at the crown highlights the trunk's form.



Rear view.

Removing unnecessary foliage

After making the foliage more compact, Miura makes sure that there is none growing downwards. He aims to create an attractive form underneath the crown. Modern Japanese bonsai strongly encourages the quest for perfection. Some people find that this style produces trees that have a less natural look. Compared to trees in Japan about forty years ago, you can find completely new styles nowadays. Moyogi junipers are one of the best examples of this change in style.



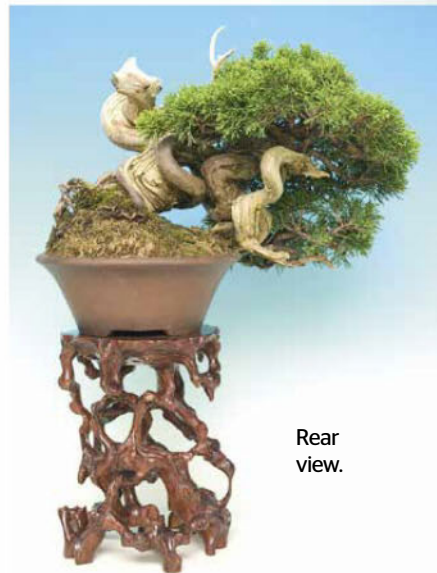
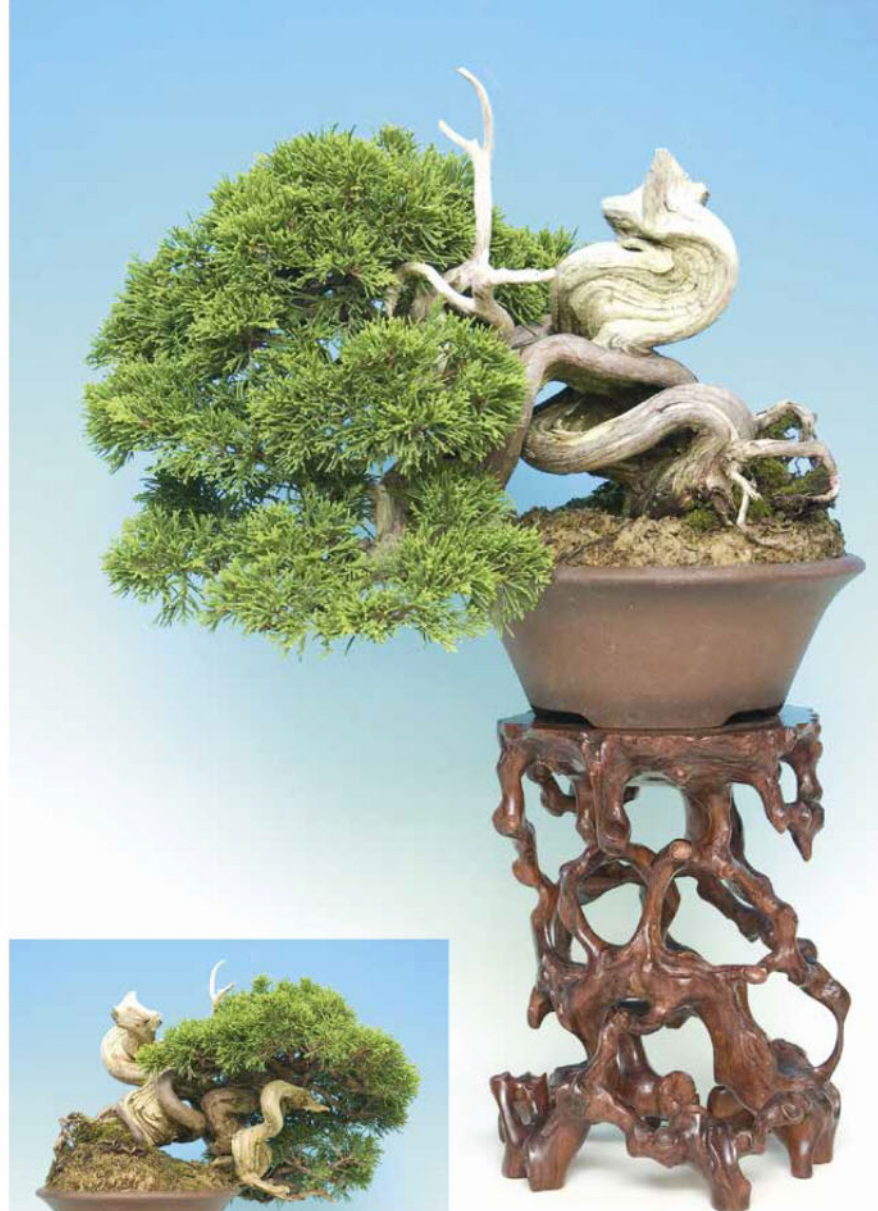
Miura makes sure that nothing sticks out beyond the base line of the foliage.

Thinning out in winter

Training wire is applied in late autumn, when trees are going into their dormant period and the wood is not too brittle. At this point in the year, there is much less sap circulation in the branches. Branch bending will therefore have less of an impact on the tree. It is at this time of year – in winter or late autumn – that the foliage needs to be thinned out so as to allow light and wind to enter. If the thinning out is well balanced, the new shoots will appear in these spaces in the spring and the foliage will have an even density.

Six months later

In late summer, the bonsai has gained a lot of volume, and the space between the branch and the apex has slightly disappeared. The tree has been repotted in a shallower pot. Miura has covered the soil with dried moss, similar to sphagnum. This is very effective for protecting roots from dryness after repotting, especially when you are switching to a smaller pot. The moss also prevents the substrate from moving or falling when the tree is being watered. It is not a decorative moss, however,



Rear view.

Six months later, the foliage has grown denser. The juniper has been repotted in a smaller pot, to emphasise the tree's focal point.

and it needs to be replaced by fresh, green moss before the tree is put on display. In September, the wire is still in place on the tree. It needs to be checked constantly, because it has a tendency to tighten around the branches as they grow. If the wire does bite into part of the branch, you can cut it at this spot only. Remember that creating and maintaining a bonsai is an ongoing task of refinement. The tree will be thinned out before the following spring, to allow the new foliage to grow. Our thanks to Hiroki Miura for this demonstration. ●

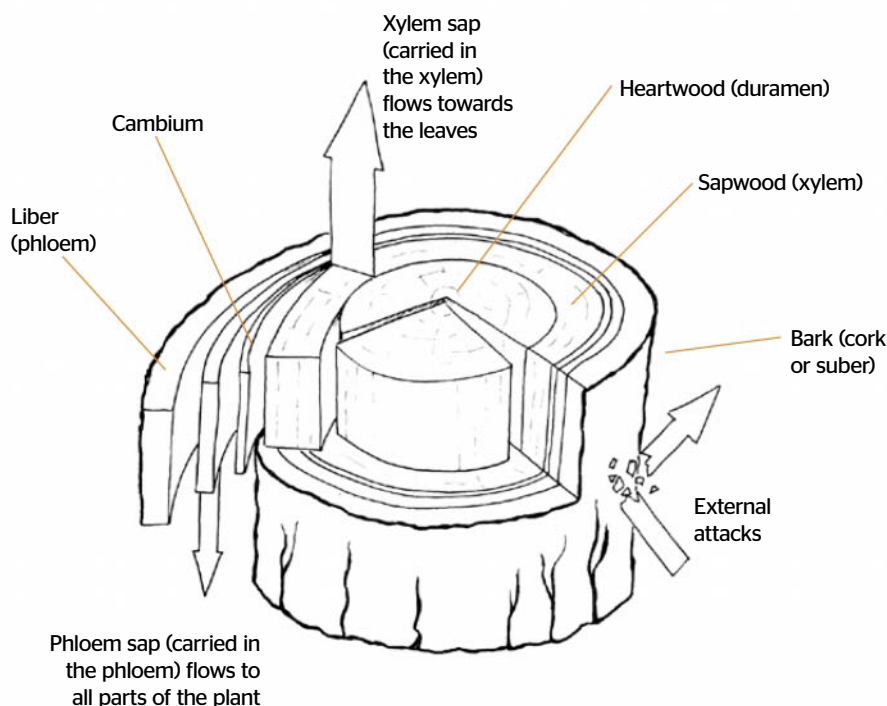
The trunk: sap's essential vessel

To truly master the various techniques of bonsai, it is vital to understand how trees work. Starting with the trunk, the crucial organ for sap circulation.

Author: Jérôme Hay

Plants are living beings. In their natural environment, they get by on their own. But in the case of bonsai, the tree depends exclusively on humans. Its organs are quite simple: roots, trunk, branches, leaves, flowers and fruit develop from bottom to top. All that the plant needs to stay alive is water, mineral salts, air, warmth and light. Its life cycle is also dictated by the seasons.

Plant biology, which is inseparable from the practice of bonsai, allows a better understanding of the various bonsai techniques, to master them and at the same time to avoid a whole host of mistakes and disappointments. People who have "green fingers" are ultimately those who know their plants – and the way they function – and who give them the attention they need.



Sectional drawing of trunk and sap

The trunk acts as a support for the tree and allows sap to circulate. It is a source of important information for bonsai techniques.



The bark, phloem and cambium are easy to detach. Underneath are the xylem and the heartwood.

Carrying sap, from roots to branches

Roots draw the water and mineral salts that the plant needs from the soil, while the trunk acts as a support and a circulation network. It divides itself into large and small branches so that the plant can take maximum advantage of air and light. Ramifications spread out in a fan shape, growing evenly in all directions, as long as they do not encounter any obstacles to their development.

The trunk allows xylem sap, which is composed entirely of water and mineral salts, to be carried from the roots to the leaves through the xylem.



On this cross cut are eight rings, representing eight growth cycles.

Phloem sap, which contains water and sugars produced by the plant through photosynthesis, travels through the trunk's phloem, from the leaves to all the other parts of the plant.

So, the fine layer of living cells that covers the surface of the trunk, between the bark and the heartwood, is composed of phloem, cambium and xylem. Its thickness can vary from a few millimetres to several centimetres, depending on the size and species of tree. The bark, phloem and cambium can be easily detached from the xylem and heartwood, which themselves cannot be separated from each other.

Wood: the plant's skeleton

On one side, this living layer produces bark that is not biologically active, which serves to protect the living area from various external attacks. Cork oak trees thus produce a thick bark that is able to insulate and protect the living tissue, even if there is a forest fire.

At the heart of the trunk, the wood is composed of cells that endure beyond the activity and development of the living part. This is the plant's skeleton: it maintains and supports the tree's very structure. According to the seasons, changes take place in the activity and water retention in the tissue, with the result that the cells densify and thicken out. This is visible in severed sections of trunk. From one year to the next, cyclical discolorations form rings.

Pruning

Of all the basic techniques, pruning remains the most important. It allows the bonsai to be kept under control and for it to ramify – that is, for its growth to be directed without necessarily cutting it off. It is too often thought that pruning is a method of bringing growth to a standstill. It is nothing of the sort: what would be the point in feeding the plant if only to remove the resulting growth?

While its primary outcome is thickening of the trunk, pruning must not be carried out to the detriment of ramification. This should be slowed down, but not ruined by being cut off. Pinching should be done regularly. To successfully guide growth, you need to be committed to this task.



This tree has not been pinched: pruning the branches would serve no purpose, because all of the material used to construct the branch would be cut off.

Cutting thick branches can lead to certain consequences, such as reorganisation of sap production. Indeed, it will disrupt the balance between what is supplied through the roots and what the leaves need, there being fewer of these after pruning. Pruning lays the wood bare and causes open wounds.

Without bark, phloem or cambium, the plant is exposed to wood-eating pests and diseases. This can have an impact on healing.

Healing

When deprived of phloem and cambium, the heartwood and xylem form a dead part. Without protection, xylem quickly dries out and in turn itself becomes wood. These two elements are subjected to attack from fungus, bacteria and insects which contribute to their decomposition.

Consequently, the live part needs to be taken advantage of as mouldable material. By stimulating it, it is possible to shape it. Wounds must be clean, and tidied up with a fine blade, however small ▶▶▶



Following the seasons

Plants have a life cycle that follows the rhythm of the seasons. And it is a deficiency in one of their vital elements that generates this cycle. In so-called temperate climates, the cycle is very obvious, because the plant becomes almost completely inactive in winter. This state is called dormancy.



This pine's scar has been completely covered with living tissue.

When carrying out major pruning, a few branches are left to grow, then to be sacrificed to speed up the healing process.

The plant continues to grow and advance across the dead part, which will eventually be completely absorbed.



▶▶▶ they may be. A clean cut will heal quickly. Because phloem and cambium never grow back on xylem or heartwood. They surround the wound and gradually cover it over. To ensure successful healing, it is best for no obstacle to come in the way of this process. Healing agents are indispensable for protecting the wood, but they must remain soft so that the living part can push them aside as it grows – Japanese healing agents all have this property.

When healing is proving a challenge, for example if the wound is too large, there are several options that can allow the cambium's progression to be stimulated. Aluminium foil can be placed over the healing agent. The impermeability of this material combined with the effect of sunlight creates a warm, moist atmosphere that encourages cell regeneration. However, some wounds can only be dealt with by resorting to grafts or using deadwood techniques.

Deadwood

Although it can be very beautiful, deadwood is equally fragile and sensitive, offering an open door to disease and insects and being subjected to the ravages of time. To reinforce a wound, a balance needs to be maintained between the living and the dead parts. In order to harden up the xylem



The active, living part is trying to cover this old deadwood.

or heartwood, the wound needs first of all to be dressed. Jin seal can be used, diluted 50% with water, and with a few drops of Indian ink added to it. This mixture allows the gash to be disinfected and insects to be repelled, while still retaining a natural colouring. To make the wood more resistant, it is possible to use a blowtorch on it. Under this heat, the ligneous cells of the xylem and heartwood will narrow and harden. Be aware, though, that the living part will not stop filling up this empty space: it is therefore necessary to scratch it back regularly to prevent the scar from forming.

Grafting

The idea of fusing two fragments of two different plants together may sound astonishing ... But for the plant, it is just a little wound that needs to be dressed. And if the dressing is quickly absorbed, and the branch has enough reserves to keep it going during the process, the graft will take!

Successful grafting cannot be explained simply by the mechanical aspect of the process. If that were the case, it would be sufficient just to put two living parts in contact with each other and keep them together until they healed. No; success resides in the stimulation and protection of the future plant. The plant must be operating at full capacity to increase the chances of success: so you need to ensure that it is not lacking anything, and avoid any stress.

Bark effects

It is possible to play with bonsai bark by taking advantage of the cambium's reactivity. Numerous finishes can be achieved by brushing, slashing, hammering, gashing or constricting ... the healing response will create bark patterns that give an aged effect, as well as swellings.



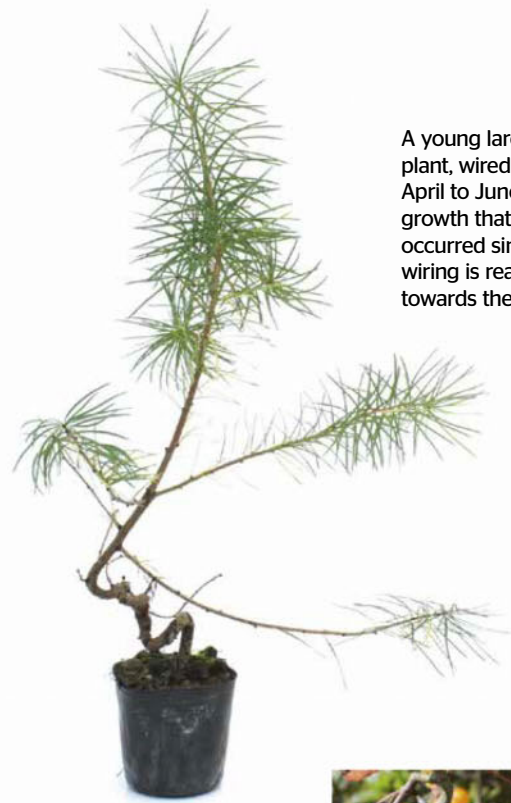
The technique of layering consists of diverting the descending sap to force the tree to sprout roots at a particular point.

Layering

During layering (or marcotting), rising sap still passes through the xylem, but its descent is disrupted by the removal of phloem and cambium.

In the cells that form the phloem, there are latent buds that may start to sprout depending on necessity. When large sections of branch are severed, a few months later a string of little buds will appear, literally piercing the bark.

This same process is used for layering. The phloem sap, disrupted by the absence of phloem and cambium, will accumulate because it cannot circulate. A globular cluster of latent buds, the beginnings of future roots, will then emerge from the upper cut.



A young larch plant, wired from April to June. The growth that has occurred since wiring is reaching towards the light.



The imprints of the wire are visible, because the plant has grown considerably.



Scars from wiring are not always ugly. After a few years, they can even offer some interesting perspectives.

Wiring

Plants develop in such a way as to make the most of solar energy. Wiring consists of countering this natural instinct. When you want to change the shape of a tree, it is therefore necessary to devise positions for the branches that the plant has the capacity to adopt. In the case of a cascade, the shape can only be maintained if the sap is circulating well. Because the cellular structure will fix the imposed form.

The season chosen to carry out wire training will have a major impact on the procedure. A plant that has had its leaves removed is easier to wire, but its form will only be able to be fixed when new foliage has appeared. Above all, the wire needs to be removed

as soon as it starts to mark the plant: it must not block the sap circulation, or else it risks causing unsightly scars. Wire training remains a regular task, because each of the year's branches will grow instinctively towards the light. ●

When two sections of bark are fused together, each of them retains its own characteristics.



Major bending

To bend a trunk, Enzo Ferrari, a Swiss bonsai hobbyist, uses a Japanese procedure: hollowing out the inner part and placing an aluminium wire, protected by garden hose, inside it. Then, he simply bends it... more or less.

Author: Enzo Ferrari

This mugo pine will make a handsome bonsai. But the problem of an overly straight part of the trunk needs to be solved. To do this, we will hollow out the trunk and prepare it for an unusual bending procedure.



The first stage consists of hollowing out the inner part of the trunk that is to be bent - with a gouge, for example.



Then, fill the hollowed area using pieces of garden hose which themselves contain 6-mm-thick (¼-in) aluminium wire.



Next, a layer of damp raffia served to retain moisture in both the bark and the deadwood area. On top of the raffia, self-amalgamating tape - not to be confused with adhesive insulation tape, which is completely different.

When you want to bend a trunk, it is not always effective or sufficient to use bracing wires. To avoid putting the tree's life – a mugo pine in this case – in danger, I scoop out the trunk so that I can bend it afterwards. If carried out properly, this exercise bears no risk for the future bonsai.

This mugo pine, which was collected in 2004, presents promise for being shaped as a bonsai. It would be interesting in the moyogi style. However, it has one blatant flaw: the upper part of its trunk is too straight. The work therefore consists of bringing down this straight part, to draw it as close as possible to the nebari. This rigid section comprises a live vein on the lower part of the trunk, and a dead part above.

In this case, the dead part of this straight section of trunk is far too thick for it to be possible to consider bending it without harming or damaging the living part.

Therefore, I opted for a special technique that is regularly used in Japan, and which consists of scooping out the part of the trunk (also a living part here) that you want to bend. Next, inside the cavity, you place 6-millimetre-thick (¼-inch) aluminium wire protected by some garden hose. Then you wrap the trunk in raffia, self-amalgamating tape – for its elasticity and resilience – and the inner ►►►



Lastly, wrap it all in some bicycle tyre inner tube.



Having several pairs of hands on the job is helpful for this sort of exercise: I shared this task with students from the Scuola d'Arte Bonsai, who offered valuable assistance.



I used a cabinetmaker's clamp and a ratchet strap to bend the trunk.



A crack appeared during the bending. In this case, you need to protect the wound with anti-parasite and antifungal treatments.

▶▶▶ tube of a bicycle tyre, to protect the tree during bending and afterwards.

Preparing for the bending

First of all, I used a router to make a big channel in the deadwood area, right down to the living part. Even though the area that is to be bent is completely alive – aside from the bark zone – the whole of its internal part can be scooped out without putting the tree in danger. Indeed, the main characteristic of the inner part is to make the tree stable. There is nothing against using a gouge or other tool to help you obtain a hollow area.

The actual bending

Once the tree has been prepared, you can proceed with the bending itself. In this particular case, I used two types of material: a cabinetmaker's clamp and a ratchet strap. Pointed areas of deadwood are ideal for fixing it all together, with the aid of bracing wires once the bending has been carried out.

As often happens during major bending of branches or trunks, a crack appeared in the living part. This is nothing to worry about, as long as you take some precautions immediately after you have completed the task, by applying anti-parasite and antifungal treatments.

A few months later

Seven months later, the tree was ready to start being styled. ●



The bending is done.



Detail of the bent area.



The tree before bending.



After bending.



The mugo pine in October 2011, after initial styling.



In October 2011, Nicola Crivelli and I did the initial styling work on this mugo pine. So the bending had not caused any damage to the tree.



In March 2014, the pine was still being trained, and looked nice and vigorous. The procedure had worked well.



Understanding how to prune flowering and fruiting trees

To obtain attractive and healthy bonsai, you need to bring flowering and fruiting under control. So you need to learn to adapt the various pruning techniques to the trees and to the seasons.

Author: Jérôme Hay

It is autumn fruits that give fruiting bonsai their charm. To obtain a good result and avoid exhausting the tree, you need to learn about how it functions, so that you can prune flower or fruit buds judiciously.

Pruning is a necessary evil in bonsai cultivation. As soon as the first flowers appear, it is crucial to keep an eye on the flowering, and the same for fruiting, so that neither puts the tree's health or aesthetic appearance in danger. In fact, flowers can upset the balance of the whole plant: if there are too many, they cloud the perception of the tree, make the pads disappear, cover part



Flowers appear on *Eleagnus* in October.



Fruits of the *Crataegus cuneata* hawthorn. It is best not to leave flowers, and therefore fruit, on a bonsai that is being styled, so as to avoid exhausting the tree.

of the pot or trunk ... Flowering and fruiting can adversely affect the functioning of the plant. The energy requirements of flowers and fruit entail a permanent state of stress that leaves little margin for the unexpected.

Flowering plants produce flower buds and blossom in different seasons. This variable temporality obliges bonsaists to bring forward or put off intervention, to allow blooms to flourish fully. Pruning also allows the flowering to be evenly spread out, by selecting the buds. Ultimately, it serves to keep the competition between flowers and leaves under control, so that the former do not end up buried beneath the latter. In the same way, fruiting can put the plant and its aesthetics in danger. Learning how to adapt pruning to the species and season is therefore indispensable.

Structural pruning

Pruning techniques are identical to those of other tree species. But when styling a bonsai, it is best to forget about the flowering, even with a grafted plant, a cutting or a layer. Aborting it allows you to focus on the bonsai's style and structure, while remaining attentive to the placing of future flowers in the composition.

For trees that are grown from seed, let them grow and then cut them back once per season, even if the main branches have already been selec-

ted. Regular pruning or pinching prolong the period of juvenile sterility. And cultivation in open ground makes them more vigorous, which considerably shortens the sterile period.

Looking after flowering trees and shrubs

Flowering trees and shrubs can blossom over and over again without being pruned, and even do it better that way. In the end, the main aim of pruning is to control the plant's development, tidy it up, give it some air, in order to improve its exposure and encourage the development of future buds. Pruning allows the production and quality of flowers and fruit to be kept under control.

With the exception of species that produce flowers on small branches (azaleas, cotoneasters) or on old wood (*Cercidiphyllum*, *Cercis*), flowering bonsai trees are not expected to follow as strict a code as conifers are. Apple trees, cherry trees and wisteria require a keen awareness of pruning techniques for flowers and fruit. For example, if you pinch back wisteria below the second or third leaf throughout the growing period, there is a serious risk that it will not flower again in the following season. To optimise maintenance pruning of flowering bonsai, you therefore need to target the ideal period, but also to take account of the species and the form of flower production. ►►►



Satsuki "Jukokan". Spring-flowering trees (azaleas, quince trees ...) are pruned after blooming.



Callicarpa blooms in summer and is pruned in late winter, in March.

Concise pruning calendar

Pruning and flowering times of the most common flower-producing plants. Pruning should be done in accordance with the species and the position of the flower buds.

Flower buds form ...

... along branches or on short ramifications:

- For those that flower in the spring on shoots from the previous year, pruning should be carried out after flowering (*Prunus mume*). It is still possible to cut back the branches in late winter, after the flower buds have filled out. At this stage, you can select and balance out the future flowering.
- For those that flower in summer, on shoots from the current year, pruning should be done in late winter and is quite short.

... at the ends of long shoots:

- From the previous year, prune after spring flowering (lilac, *Aesculus*).
- In the summer, on the current year's shoots, a short prune in winter (*hydrangea*, *Lagerstroemia*).

... at the ends of short shoots:

- For spring flowering on the previous year's shoots, pruning should be done after flowering (*Raphiolepis*).

- For spring flowering on new and fast-growing shoots, do not prune, or do so after flowering (*Acer ginnala* – even if it isn't a flowering plant, you can spot the flowering).
- On the current year's shoots for summer flowering, prune in late winter.

... at the ends of dwarf branches from the previous year:

- Prune after spring flowering (satsuki azaleas); from August onwards, no more pruning, until the next flowering.
- In the case of specialised branches on spring-flowering trees and shrubs (apple trees), since the buds are identifiable, you can intervene at several different periods. Either cut extensions back short just once in late spring, or do so regularly during the season. Pruning is to be done in winter when, depending on the pinching approach that has been used, you may only need to do some bud selection.
- If the wood is more than one, two or three years old, pruning should be carried out after flowering (*Cercis*).

▶▶▶ As a general rule, spring-flowering trees and shrubs should be pruned after flowering. Those that flower in the summer, however, should be pruned in late winter. In practice, pruning can be prove far more complex than this ... But there are some constant factors that can help in the choice of species and pruning method (see box).

Pips or stones

Where fruit trees are concerned, there is a distinction between those that produce pome fruit (with pips) and those that produce stone fruit. The pruning techniques to use depend notably on the shape of the buds and the behaviour of the plants. So, on flowering trees, flower buds are very often round or egg-shaped. They can be solitary or multiple (in twos or threes), at the ends of shoots, in the axils of leaves or indeed grouped together on specialised branches (fruit branches, bud clusters, etc.). A bud can contain a single flower (magnolia, pomegranate tree), several (apple, pear) or a group of flowers that form a bunch (wisteria, *Parthenocissus*).

Trees that bear pome fruit have a complex flowering procedure and are most common in our collections. Apple trees flower naturally, varying in abundance from one year to the next, but their crowns spread out and their branches get into more and more of a tangle. By selecting the buds and limiting the extent of branches, and therefore the plant's vigour, you can obtain trees that bear more flowers but that are also more symmetrical. Light penetration is then improved, encouraging the formation of uniform fruits.

Lovers of flowering bonsai seek first and foremost to obtain balanced flower production. Anti-



Malus 'Van Eseltine'.
The pruning techniques for apple trees and pear trees, which have complex but largely similar flowering processes, are likewise very similar.

icipating the consequences of this or that type of pruning is thus beneficial for the structure and maintenance of trees. It is best to know about apple trees buds and growth from the outset.

The details you need to know

• **darts, which are juvenile fruit output**, are easy to recognise. They are very short shoots, more or less perpendicular to the branch that they spring from. During the growing season, a fruit dart will have a bud at its extremity, together with a group of leaves arranged in a rosette, which supply the provisions that are essential to the formation of future flowers.

In winter, darts appear in the form of short, ridged shoots that terminate in a pointed bud. Several years may pass before they form flower buds. The terminal bud then develops only a rosette of leaves, every spring. In some varieties such as flowering apple trees, however, the terminal bud can transform into a flower bud from the very first winter. It is then called a "tip bearer".

Darts should not be pruned. Except when, during formative pruning, you need to cut back an apex or a scaffold branch before a dart: in this case, you cut it

This fruit spur, a short twig growing more or less perpendicular to the branch it springs from, has a bud at its extremity. It should not be pruned back.



Spurs are darts or twigs that have evolved. They produce flowers the following spring, and should not be pruned.

off as well. But when removing a twig, shoot or fruit branch before a dart, it is better to keep it intact.

In some varieties, particularly pear trees, you can come across early fruit spurs. They form a bud or thorn at their extremity. If you have to keep them, avoid pruning any that terminate in a bud, but cut back to one or two buds any that display a thorn.

• **Spurs** produce flowers the following spring. They are mostly found on pear trees. They evolve from a dart or twig that is two years old or more. They can be recognised in late winter by the large round bud that develops at their extremity. These spurs should not be pruned: they offer the promise of flowers for the following spring.

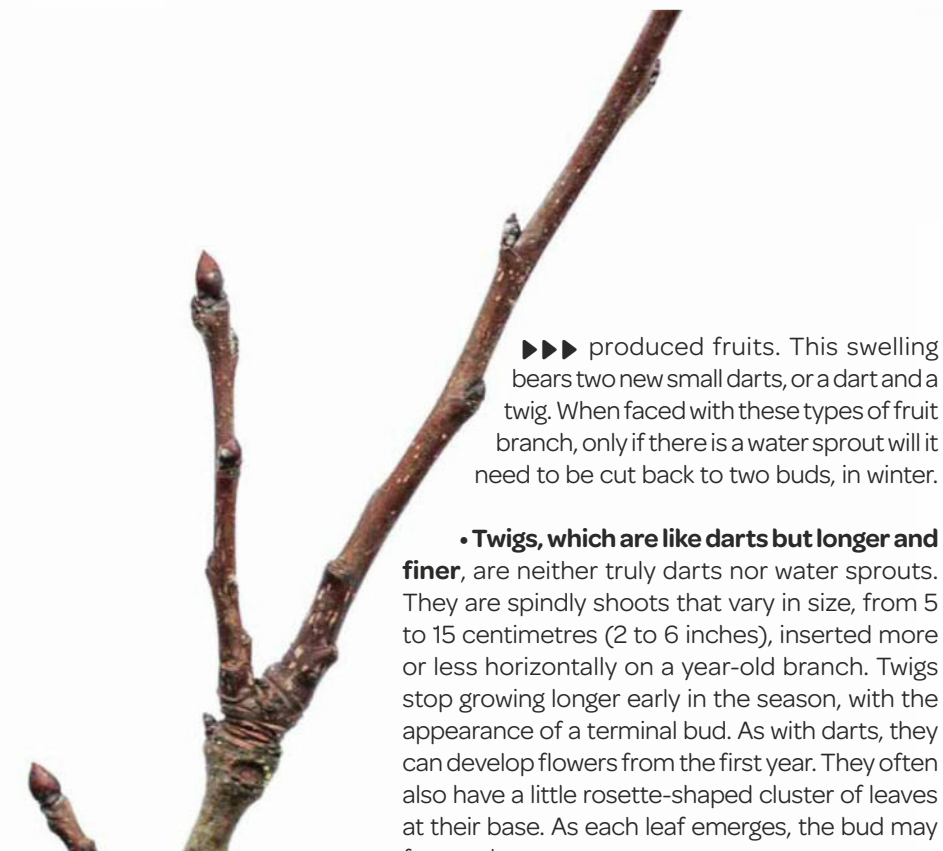
• **A bourse shoot** consists of a swelling on a spur after fruiting. On pear trees, you can see a swelling at the extremity of the darts or twigs that have ►►►



On pear trees, at the end of a dart or twig that has produced fruit, you can see a bourse shoot: a swelling that will bear new small darts, or a dart and a twig.



On this twig, the buds underneath are developing thanks to slowed-down sap circulation.



A twig on the left and a water sprout on the right. To encourage a twig to transform into a dart, you can bend or partially break it.

▶▶▶ produced fruits. This swelling bears two new small darts, or a dart and a twig. When faced with these types of fruit branch, only if there is a water sprout will it need to be cut back to two buds, in winter.

• **Twigs, which are like darts but longer and finer**, are neither truly darts nor water sprouts. They are spindly shoots that vary in size, from 5 to 15 centimetres (2 to 6 inches), inserted more or less horizontally on a year-old branch. Twigs stop growing longer early in the season, with the appearance of a terminal bud. As with darts, they can develop flowers from the first year. They often also have a little rosette-shaped cluster of leaves at their base. As each leaf emerges, the bud may form a dart.

Twigs can be bent or partially broken, to encourage them to transform into darts. In this case, the sap distribution is modified in favour of the buds that are positioned before the bend. The slowed-down sap produces more floriferous branches. In winter, these buds transform into darts. You can then prune the twig above the second or third dart, to obtain a shorter fruit branch.

• **Fruit branches** are short branches that have darts or spurs that may or may not be accompanied by twigs, or sometimes even by water sprouts. They can form naturally, over several years, from a

spur or twig and are generally composed of several floral elements.

• **Water sprouts** allow the tree to continue the ramification of its apex and branches. As growth begins, they also serve to draw sap. They can grow longer throughout the growing season. On a year-old upward branch that has not been pruned, buds at the ends are very large and will generate new water sprouts at the end of the following spring.



Fruit branches are short branches with darts or spurs that may or may not bear twigs or water sprouts.

Water sprouts allow the tree to continue the ramification of its apex and branches. They can continue to grow longer throughout the growing season.



Ilex serrata 'Leucocarpa' blooms in summer and is pruned in March.

Coming soon

In our next issue, the rest of the information you need on pruning pome and stone fruit trees and others ...

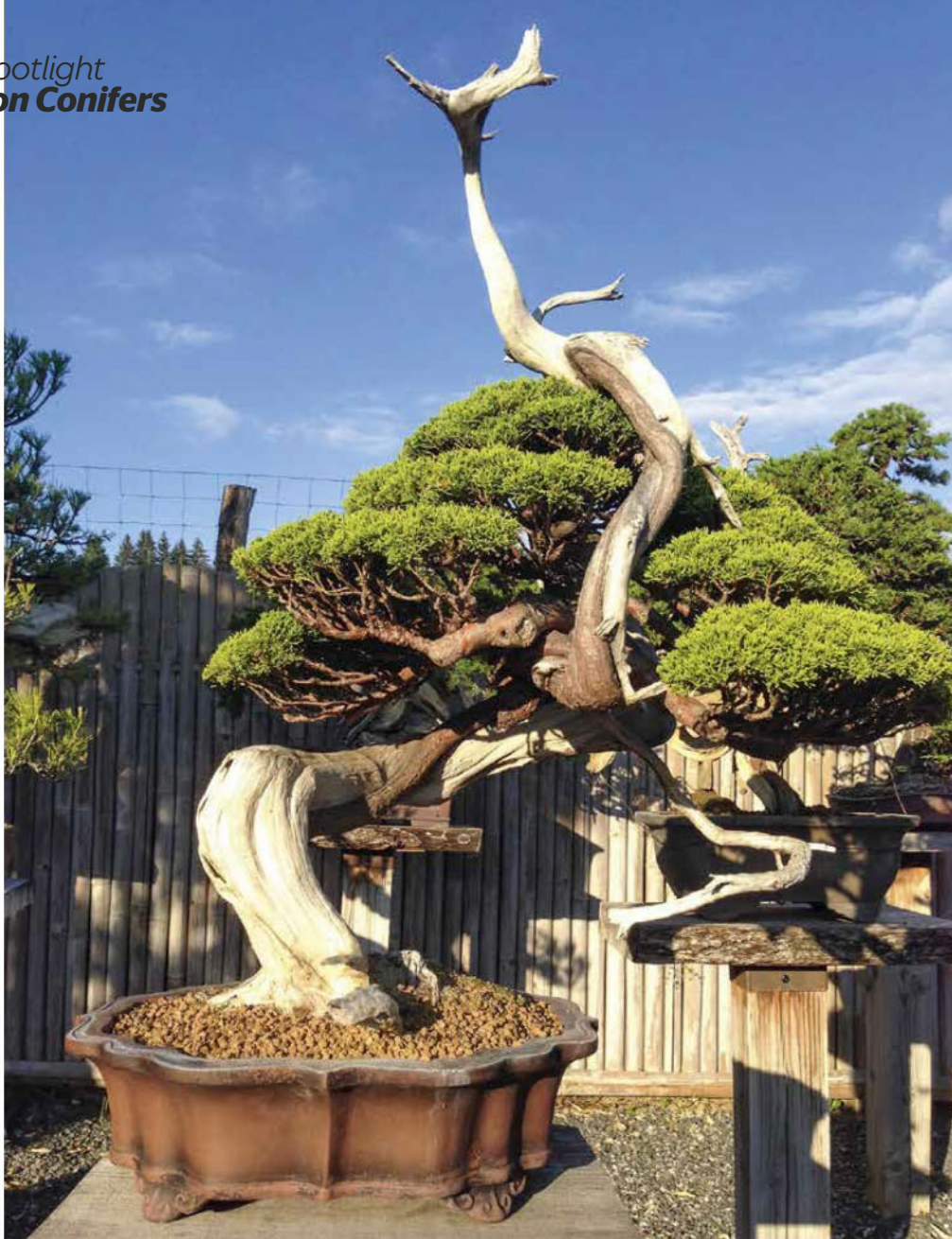
The middle buds will transform into darts, while those in the lower part remain latent.

Bud development

The following year, tip-bearer branches will bloom and develop fruit, but remain relatively distant from the beginning of the branch. This allows the fruit to be well exposed. Latent buds at the base of the shoot will serve as replacement organs during dormancy. Being supplied with sap, they will tend to sprout upward branches, twigs or darts. Cutting the branch back will allow them to evolve.

Pruning thus allows shorter branches to be obtained, as well as better-distributed flowers that are closer to the base of the shoots. There is not one single method of pruning, but different techniques that each have their own impact on growth. Winter pruning probably remains the best known and the most commonly used, but summer pruning has many advantages.

Lastly, pruning is not an insignificant operation. It needs to remain at the service of a very clear objective. It also needs to be adapted depending on your region and environment. ●



A juniper needs regular care to reach maturity. However, a growing tree and a mature tree require different methods, particularly when pruning, wiring and repotting.

To keep a juniper healthy and bring it to maturity, it is essential to cultivate it correctly, and know how to modulate size, wiring, substrate and watering over the course of the years.

Stages in the construction of a mature juniper

Author: Frédéric Chenal

When bringing

a juniper to maturity, it is very important to carefully follow every stage of its development and know how to supervise its growth, its pruning, wire training, watering and repotting, which are all crucial to the tree's success.

Growth

Growth is one of the most important factors in the development and health of a juniper throughout the construction of a bonsai. The tree's vitality depends on the constantly rising sap that thickens the pads at the ends of the branches. Harsh pruning can restrict a tree's development, and the results will be the opposite to what was desired.



A juniper is formed by allowing the sap to rise, which thickens the pads. At the beginning, everything must be allowed to grow.

The whole tree will be affected; it will lose much of its vigour, and there will be a general decrease in growth. In winter, the leaves turn bronze, which is a perfectly normal phenomenon for junipers when they are exposed to the cold.

Pruning

Pruning for shape consists of selecting primary and secondary branches to construct the overall style for the bonsai project. This is done in winter, and only in the first phase of the tree's formation. We will not discuss the project's aesthetic creation at this stage. The next pruning matures the tree and is undertaken at the end of every June for the rest of the tree's life. This involves regularly thinning the bonsai's interior branches to give space and light to the foliage which it needs to grow. The sap drawer must be replaced when it becomes too large at the end of a

branch. Prune it at the intersection of two lateral growths; another shoot at the end of the branch will take its place and take on the role of a new sap drawer. All these successive actions are repeated throughout the tree's construction, as well as when it reaches maturity.

Wiring

The purpose of wiring is to train the direction of the branch in accordance with the style chosen. It is also important to understand that wiring must orient the greenery correctly so that it trains the foliage to face outwards. In the tree's first years, wiring is also used to give volume to the branches – the more spread out the pad, the more light is let in to facilitate the development of new buds and growth of the existing ones. When wiring a new bonsai project, you do not need to wire all the greenery to the end of the branches. In fact, this would have the same ►►►



A sap drawer is placed at the end of each pad when the shape is well established; and more when the tree is being formed.

While the tree is still being shaped, foliage sprouting from the main branch is completely removed, as well as shoots and growth under the branches. Only the lateral shoots are preserved for the styling of future secondary and tertiary branches.



Note that the end of each sap drawer's shoot is not pruned. It must be remembered that a juniper in training is never pinched.



On a mature tree the procedure is the same, but is more detailed and more precise. Mature trees do not get pinched during cultivation.



After pruning: the aim is always to let in light and give space to the established and styled foliage.

▶▶▶ effect as overpruning and would restrict the bonsai's vigour. The next step after the second wiring and when the tree has reached full strength, you will need to wire all the branches and carefully add the finishing touches to the positioning of the foliage. All wiring after this, take progressively longer to achieve, as the number of branches and the density of the foliage increases, and even more precision and care is required to achieve the desired result.

Positioning

The tree must be able to breathe and given sufficient space for its size. It must also have as much light and sun as it needs. It is of paramount importance to turn it regularly so that growth is balanced on every side.

Watering

Watering is imperative for the tree's survival. The frequency and the amount of water given govern the bonsai's growth, the length of its foliage and the distance between the offshoots. Juniper likes water, but must dry out between two waterings. Watering is the most technical part in mastering the art of bonsai. It requires a lot of knowledge and a year-by-year observation of the results obtained.

It must be adapted to seasonal requirements and the desired results. It is important to spray a juniper and wet the leaves. This refreshes the tree in hot weather, provides water in a way other from absorbing it from the soil, and prevents against insect proliferation. The best time to spray a tree is either early in the morning or at the end of the day when there is no sun.

Substrate and repotting

In the same way that pruning differs with the tree's growth, the substrate also changes as the tree develops. In the

first stages of a juniper's evolution, it is important to favour a substrate made up of large mineral grains such as Akadama-pumice. This type of substrate facilitates alternate water and airflow in the soil, and gives maximum drainage for optimal root development and therefore, rapid leaf growth – the more the roots grow, the more the foliage grows. In its first years, juniper must be repotted every four or five years depending on its growth. If the tree puts on, between 3 to 5cm (1¼ to 2in) during the season, it does not need repotting, if growth is less than that, the tree must be repotted.



On a tree that is in the process of being styled, the wiring's role is to give volume to the branches, to open them up, and to let the light in to encourage growth.



Wiring trains the greenery in the required direction and for shape. The foliage is stretched upwards and outwards.



The visual effect of a mature juniper corresponds to a half-open hand with the foliage spreading upwards. This is what one must aim for until the tree has reached complete maturity.



A mature tree viewed from underneath. Each branch is positioned in the right direction.

When the juniper reaches maturity and age, the substrate's mineral grain size should be smaller. In this way, the juniper will develop smaller but more numerous roots, and will produce shorter internodes and foliage. At this stage, the tree will only need repotting every six to eight years. By the time it reaches full maturity, when the branches are compact, when there is no wiring and the pads have thickened, a different substrate must be adapted to the age of the tree, which must have the opposite effect to the preceding methods. Why must we do this? Because at this point, growth must be slowed while preserving the health and vitality of the juniper. The juniper can now live with a very compact substrate provided the fertilising and watering techniques have been perfectly mastered.

Constant work

Juniper is a substantial tree that requires a lot of hands-on work and care. It is usually associated with a tortured character, to illustrate the interrelationship between life

A mature tree does not need to be frequently repotted, provided it receives appropriate care.



and death – life that is sustained and developed and turned into something wondrous, and death, which enhances that life by holding it in its power before destroying it. ●

An authoritative *Murraya exotica*



Xiao Geng Wu's *Murraya exotica* was exhibited at the 2015 world convention of the BCI (Bonsai Club International) in Guangzhou, China.

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 these choices, and quite simply to learn how to admire ...

This *Murraya exotica* seems to have sprung from a Chinese calligrapher's brush. The movement of the branches contrasts well with the very straight trunk, and is what gives the tree its potency.

Author: François Jeker

This tree is the work of the Chinese artist Xiao Geng Wu, a member of the Zhongshan Penjing Association, and is directly inspired by his native country's painting and calligraphy. You can see the movements of the brush in it: a strong vertical stroke for the trunk, and lively, energetic movements for the branches and the apex. The pot, the little figurine and the stone also demonstrate respect for Chinese art.

Xia Geng Wu's choices

What is most striking when you first see the tree is its straight trunk, without any branches in its lower section, while in the upper part there are extraordinary branch movements with a strong taper. All of this is made visible by a defoliation that leaves no room for error ... This outcome has been achieved through the well-known technique of "letting grow and cutting back" that first emerged in the 1930s in Guangzhou, China. The speedy evolution of these trees is helped by the region's hot, humid climate. Also worthy

of note are the beauty and refinement of the empty spaces.

Option 1 With a twisting trunk

In the West, we have a tendency to reach for the trunk twisters or the training wire the moment we spot a straight section of a tree. This tree is proof that a rigid zone lends potency to a bonsai, especially if it contrasts with areas of great movement. It may help to understand this if you compare a straight trunk to the taught string of an archer's bow, ready to let all its energy loose.

Option 2 A triangular form

By lengthening the first branch on the right and aligning the branches above with the straight trunk, the tree's original rounded silhouette disappears, and with it, the tree's natural appearance.

Option 3 A low branch

With a low branch on the right, the tree becomes more ordinary and loses its originality and potency. ●



1 With a twisting trunk, the tree looks limp.



2 The murraya loses its natural appearance when given a triangular form.



3 The trunk abandons its sense of authority with a low branch.



Veerle and Jurgen Robyns - De Keersmaecker, founders of Makisada Ceramics, a couple in life and work. Now a full-time ceramicist, Veerle works in the studio that they have set up at home. Jurgen working at his potter's wheel.

Makisada Ceramics

Potters' love



The Flemish ceramicists Jurgen and Veerle Robyns - De Keersmaecker live and work in Meldert, Belgium. Inseparable in both life and work, they create their bonsai pots with respect for tradition.

Author: Anne Royer
Photos: Makisada Ceramics



This pot is adorned with vivid orange-red, one of Makisada Ceramics' trademark colours. Dimensions: 14 × 12.5 × 5.5cm (5½ × 4¾ × 2¼ in).



Jealously guarded by the couple in their private collection, this pot was one of Makisada Ceramics' very first creations. Dimensions: 13.2 × 3.2cm (5¼ × 1¼ in).

This past summer, to live out their passion to the full, the pair left their "buzzing" hometown near Aalst for Meldert, a small rural community that is likewise located in the province of East Flanders, not far from Brussels. In their new house, an entire floor is set aside for the pottery workshop. "It's a dream come true to work for ourselves," muse the loving couple in unison.

A rich collaboration

As devotees of traditional techniques, the two ceramicists state that one of their primary goals is to "use zero means of mass production from concept to delivery". You can search as hard as you like: there are no moulds in the workshop. Each pot begins with a drawing, or an image that is etched on its creators' minds. "Authenticity is quite important for the both of us," emphasise the pair. "The time-consuming process of creating a new work is part of the fact that our creations have a soul. They are patiently formed and all glazed by hand."

Makisada Ceramics also carries out commissions. Thus begins an exciting research process, in constant communication with the client. "We make a first design on paper and offer our client a wide range of possibilities (colour, shapes, orna-

ments, clay...)... We always find the way to the work our client has in mind. Sketching, resketching, in search for the right bonsai pot." Additionally, they offer personalised pots... a good idea with Christmas only a few weeks away.

Their collaboration has spawned bonsai pots with sleek lines and precise designs. Veerle produces "soft, feminine, delicate" pots, often hand-built. Jurgen, on the other hand, prefers the potter's wheel, and likes to create attractive cracks in his pots by using a burning torch on the fresh clay, or spends hours drawing dragons to decorate Makisada Ceramics' creations.

But while they both make their individual mark and use their own preferred technique, Jurgen and Veerle want to be able to swap their work when concentration or creativity starts to dry up. Seeking each other's perspective on their work always proves beneficial. "We complete each other in our skills and interests," they say. "It's great to have an important joint interest to keep our two minds glued together in a creative way."

Ecology and Buddhist philosophy

It has taken two to establish Makisada Ceramics. The company logo features two intertwined lotus flowers. "The lotus is one of the most significant representations of Buddhist teaching, with its roots deep in the mud while its stem reaches up to show its pristine incarnation of natural beauty," explain the couple. "This pattern of development signifies the progress of our soul from the mud of our modern mass production society."

Ecological awareness plays a key part in Makisada Ceramics' artistic and business plans. To make their glazes, Jurgen and Veerle favour lead-free formulas. Similarly, they choose biodegradable packaging materials for the pots they dispatch. ►►

A taste for nature and Eastern cultures unites this couple. For five years, Jurgen and Veerle Robyns-De Keersmaecker have been sharing daily life and love, but also a passion for ceramics. From their native Belgium, these two Flemish potters have even created Makisada Ceramics, a flourishing small business.

At 40, Jurgen works as an analyst in a bank. When he isn't playing with figures, he is manipulating clay and glazes, supervising firings of his bonsai pots, or setting new designs down on paper. "In the evening he just needs to put his fingers in the clay in order to find the balance in his daily life," says his wife, with a smile. Veerle, 39, has recently decided to dedicate herself entirely to ceramics.



A working drawing that will help in the creation of a new piece.



This dragon pot will have glaze applied with a brush before being fired. Dimensions: 21 × 8.9cm (8¼ × 3½ in).

►►► “Don’t expect fancy colours and plastic waste. We keep it austere and true to the real fundamentals of our work.” And they add: “During the whole creation process we keep our utmost attention to our environment.”

The appeal of oriental cultures

Both share artistic talent and a strong attraction towards oriental cultures. “The interest for Eastern culture and the urge to create from mud got us closer to each other. We didn’t just share love for each other, but also for creativity.”

Jurgen has been interested in Japanese culture since his childhood. He learnt calligraphy and drawing, and practised karate for sixteen years. At the age of 15, he discovered the art of bonsai. He became hooked, and thereafter never ventured too far away from his *Serissa foetida*, keeping it right next to his bed.

Veerle, for her part, developed her musical talents. She played the organ for eleven years. Later, she encountered and embraced Eastern philosophy, in which she “found the oxygen to deal with the hectic life we all live”.

Already united in their passion for photography, Jurgen and Veerle have discovered ceramics together over the last few years. They learnt the basics at the local art school, then rounded off their

All of
Makisada
Ceramics’ pots
are formed
and glazed
by hand.



training with private classes. The two enthusiasts soon invested in a kiln and a potter’s wheel to set up their own home studio.

Craft techniques

In the perfectly organised studio, Veerle likes to work in silence, while her husband lets himself be soothed by traditional Japanese music or Mongolian overtone singing. With their hands in the clay, both search for the “inner peace” that they consider crucial to the creation of beautiful pieces.

They use a wide variety of clays – from grey to dark brown, with or without grog, depending on the project. Jurgen and Veerle manage to create lovely bright colours, such as an orangey red and a minty blue-green. These discoveries are the fruits of endless experimentation. The glaze range then continues with matt and gloss variants of the same colour. “We’re

quite adventurous when it boils down to making glazes,” they explain. “You never know what you’re going to get before you take it out of the kiln... The depth of colours is often the result of many tests and layering.”

Here again, the two ceramicists favour craft techniques. “Rather than spraying or immersing, we are truly convinced that painting the glazes with a good Chinese brush is the best way to keep control over your colours. Furthermore it gives us a more authentic feel about the handcraft we deliver.” Most pieces are then fired at 1250°C (2280°F) to make them frostproof.

Where design, texture and decoration are concerned, Jurgen and Veerle remain restrained but elegant and precise. A carefully controlled crack, discreet clusters of bamboo, varying shades of brown... the two ceramicists put their all into the detail. The workshop’s trademark: a dragon, Veerle’s Chinese astrological sign, which



Nothing is wasted at Jurgen and Veerle’s, as they manage to create striking motifs by mixing leftover glazes. Dimensions: 13.6 × 6.7cm (5½ × 2¾ in).



The two ceramicists found inspiration in an old Japanese book to come up with the design for this attractively cracked pot. Dimensions: 15 × 16.2cm (5% × 6% in).



The combination of a delicate orchid and the rugged look of this pot for an accent plant offers an interesting contrast. Dimensions: 6.1 × 4.5 to 5.5cm (2% × 1% to 2% in).

makes an appearance on some pots. It is also systematically engraved into the bases of the pots.

Aside from being steeped in Eastern culture, the Belgian couple source their inspiration first and foremost in nature. "During our walks through the forest we are constantly looking for the right colours and textures. We're just like kids when we find something new, and it's this feeling that inspires us the most." Finally, travel nourishes the pair's creativity. "Our trips to Asia and France were the most inspiring to us."

An ongoing challenge

Next January, Jurgen and Veerle will take part for the first time in the very prestigious Noelanders Trophy. An important step and a baptism of fire for the cou-

ple, who can finally see the "Makisada dream" taking shape.

In the meantime, they are already sending their creations all over the world, including to American, Australian and French bonsaists. Their driving force is of course their passion for working clay. But it is also a sense of challenge, the constant tension that runs through the "joyful process" of ceramics: "The moment you close the kiln door is the time the excitement starts. Opening the kiln after firing the pots is like opening a Christmas present. You never know what you're going to get. Sometimes it's sheer joy, sometimes... disappointment. Sometimes you win. Sometimes you learn." ●



A primitive-style pot.
Dimensions:
13.5 × 10.6 × 3.5 to 6cm
(5% × 4% × 1% to 2% in).



The time has come to choose the glaze that will finish off these two pots, which have been made to order.



A play of textures between the glaze with its ashy tinges and the base that has been left unglazed. Dimensions: 14.2 × 11.8 × 4cm (5% × 4% × 1% in).



Practical information

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Kokedama, which are small balls of substrate covered in moss and plants, are very fashionable. Whether traditional or sophisticated, they are hard to get away from. Created by Young Choe.



Kokedama: moss balls are right on trend!

Author: Carlos Hebeisen

Kokedama has become very fashionable, even among florists in the West. These pretty balls of moss lend themselves to all your ideas and creations.

The origins of kokedama, also called “poor man’s bonsai”, stem back to an ancient technique: nearai, which consists of removing the pot from an arrangement with luxuriant roots to present it on a tray.

It was in Fumiko Kato’s garden in Omiya (Japan) that I saw kusamono for the first time. That was just 20 years ago now. At the time, nobody in Europe was talking about kusamono or kokedama. These days, kusamono is a subject in its own right, like bonsai and suiseki. The “Kusamono” Facebook group has grown very large – even if the quality of the contributions can still leave something to be desired. Over the course of these last few

years, there have also been various bonsai exhibitions in which an area has been set aside for kusamono – for example, at Hallein near Salzburg in Austria.

Also at florists’

Kokedama could already be seen in Japanese florists’ shops twenty years ago. Arrangements were enhanced by taking them out of simple terracotta pots to replant them in a ball of moss. Kokedama is the “simple and effective way” to achieve kusamono: the raw material is inexpensive, the time commitment required is very reasonable and the demands in terms of maintenance are relatively modest.



Kokedama has its source in *nearai*: in this case, *Equisetum* and *Hakonechloa*.

Kokedama was as yet unknown in Europe in 1995. The wave of kokedama that came from Japan passed first through Holland before continuing on its way to the United States. In France, too, various florists have recently become interested in the subject, and display kokedama with indoor or outdoor plants in their boutiques.

Nowadays there are two approaches to kokedama: on the one hand, the more traditional method, and on the other a "lifestyle/mainstream" movement – the main objective being to enjoy the pleasure of creating something yourself. Each method has its own rationale.

Alone, or in hanging gardens

For "lifestyle kokedama", it is mainly indoor plants that are used, so that the kokedama can be displayed inside all year round. A wide selection of plants is available for these purposes, but compared to outdoor plants the choice remains fairly limited. For display, you can use all manner of household and kitchen objects: plates, saucers, glass or metal cake stands.



Fritz Baier is displaying kokedama in a tearoom in Salzburg, Austria.



For his creations, Fritz Baier dares to use all sorts of containers.



Young Choe is a professional kusamono and kokedama artist.

Foregoing the use of Japanese accessories allows you to achieve a typically Western design. And while the options and combinations are limited, you can still produce something very satisfactory.

Another variation: moss balls as "hanging gardens" for the home. The concept of these hanging kokedama gardens is not at all new, either: the Gardens of Babylon already existed 600 years before Jesus-Christ!

Infinite variations

Two of my friends are typical of the "Kokedama" family. Fritz Baier is currently exhibiting his kokedama in a favourite tearoom, in Salzburg. For this display, he has exclusively employed objects that are used in a café. For the clients, it was something new that provoked numerous animated discussions.

Young Choe is a kusamono artist who studied calligraphy in her native country of Korea, before moving to the United States. She went to Japan to learn the art of kusamono with Keiko Yamane, a female kusamono master. Young is also currently working for the US National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. She often uses half-balls of moss for her kusamono, and also works partly with shrubby plants.

So, kokedama allows people to go in very different directions. ●

How to make kokedama

The principle of kokedama is that of setting a plant, indoor or outdoor, in a ball or half-ball of soil covered in moss.

The substrate used is a mixture of keto (black peat), sphagnum and akadama. With added water, this mixture can easily be formed into a ball. It is the substrate that holds the plant.

To create half-ball kokedama, you need to use a special drainage net underneath. Here again, the plants can be fixed with two fine iron wires. To finish it off, the ball is covered in moss and wrapped in string so that the fragments of moss do not come apart during watering. This way, the moss ball can immediately be submerged in water.

During the hot season, kokedama need to be soaked in water every two days, or else every three or four days. Outside, kokedama should not be placed in direct sunlight; if the climate is fairly cold, they need to be protected during the winter. Kokedama can be displayed on driftwood, bark, or ceramic or glass saucers. They can alternatively be hung on a string. If quite some number are hung together, it is called a "string garden".



All manner of novelties are allowed for displaying kokedama. Created by Young Choe.

■ ■ ■ Ikebana expresses the metamorphoses of the plant world that come with seasonal changes, prompting us to contemplate nature so as to live in closer harmony with it.

Ikebana at the rhythm of the seasons

Author: Murette Renaudin
Photos: Bénédicte de Saint-Martin



■ **Rikka**
Blueberry branches taking flight, symbolising the end of spring or beginning of summer. *Pandanus* leaf, *Asplenium*, Solomon's seal, little carnations, cockscomb, sunflower and hypericum.
Arrangement by Murette Renaudin.

Zen Buddhism considers that the inner and outer worlds form part of the same greater “whole”. Humankind cannot exist without nature, and a life spent shut up indoors is utterly degenerate. Temples, the original receptacles of ikebana, remain well-kept havens where people can retain direct contact with the plant universe (mountains, gardens, etc.). In practice, the changing seasons underpin this notion of flowers’ life-enhancing properties that allow us to be inwardly transformed. The words of Bernard Bleyer, a master of kyudo (traditional Japanese archery), illustrate this idea very well:

“As a reflection of nature, the seasons do not just descend upon us like calendar dates. Have you noticed the way autumn encroaches, modestly but with determination? The new season is born in an imperceptible inner world, but one that is nonetheless there, if you pay the slightest semblance of attention to it. Birds make no mistake about it; in the rosy glow, they pluck the first rays of the dawn star. This primordial gentleness brushes against our bodies and perhaps makes them quiver under its caress. Change operates in nature by permeation; something emerges out of an inner realm and we have only to gather it up and make it our own.

The richness that comes from nature is an invitation. Our activity is imbued with it. Let’s pay more attention to it.



■ Natural style in a suiban

In this refreshing high-summer or early-autumn composition, grasses evoke the wind, while clematis, astrantia and small ferns suggest the cool of the undergrowth. Arrangement by Marette Renaudin.



■ Shin Seika, cascade style

Composition created from a creeper, clematis flowers, and begonia and Iris orientalis leaves. Arrangement by students on the course in Japan 2015.

A sublime invitation

The lush green of spring inspires and enthuses us. Watch a storm shuddering in a springtime twilight. Drenched trunks sway to and fro, sketching invisible traces on the bluish-grey of the sky. Surges of wind caress the changing tones of the advancing night. The last calls of the blackbird to its mate ring out. Streaming with falling rain, the trees dance; their bases have already disappeared into the deep shadows. As night sets in, invisible songs begin their magical dialogue; the hoot of an owl drifts into the distance. Look: the darkness is a window, with rustlings and whispers arising from it. Slowly calm is established, like a gentle tide, despite some mysterious commotions. Look: in the morning, nature is revived, sparkling with the night's water. Vivid colours gleam out under the luminous grey of the clouds. What a sublime invitation.

The summer turns leaden, dragonflies and butterflies come and go among the already-dry long grasses. They are in festive mood, while we trundle lethargically along in real but quite legitimate idleness. This is a time when we can discover gentle, effortless vigilance.

Soon you will see large trees in the intense cold, nobly spreading out their weary branches amid the gusts of icy wind.

Introspection

Viewed in its state of powerful abundance, nature invites us to lean towards our inner selves and become conscious of the undeniable link. As the season progresses, we are filled with it; when night steps up, can your individuality stop it in its tracks?

Our activity works at a deep level. What is more, our unelaborated introspection leads inevitably to



■ Nageire, large composition

Composed of azalea branches, hypericum, agapanthus and Lilium martagon, this natural style may be a herald of the end of the year and the arrival of winter. Arrangement by students on the course in Japan 2015.

what unites us. Nature, in its immense neutrality, expresses love for us through its beauty and sincerity. It gives without expecting anything in return. It is fully present within itself, and fulfils its mission. Could we not engage ourselves in this neglected revival?

Our studies are entirely filled with everything that makes nature beautiful. Our repeated gestures are tinged with the spices specific to our bodies: those of the wind encroaching among the trees, and of the clear water as it follows the forms of the stones in a stream, and of free-flying butterflies riding on sunbeams. It is our proud backs moving forward, like morning sunshine crossing the quiet mountain-side; it is feeling as though our stomachs are full of dancing flames.

The act is born through hands that match what is within us – without convention or affectation. The application of our chosen discipline unfolds continuously, not as an afterthought, but as a whole that is interlinked with boundless recognised value.” ●

■ ■ ■ The letters from L to U file past, each opening a door into the art of ikebana, like a photo album that gives glimpses of memories. A second alphabetical journey.

The ABC continues

Author: Soazic Le Franc

Lis for “lierre”, French for ivy. Known as hederá in Latin, edera in Italian and iedra in Spanish, the Old French ierre became lierre through a contraction of the definite article, l’. It is one of my Four Gentlemen, along with broom, rush and butcher’s-broom. It is useful in many forms: leaves, creepers, interweaving networks stuck to trunks and shrubs, it is a “right-hand man” for the art of flowers. It does not suffocate trees when clinging to them, as is often thought. However, it does weigh them down, and that is when the drama starts ...

M is for “murmuring flowers” – the title that the Asphodelinh association has given to its springtime exhibition in Sarzeau, southern Brittany: the interplay of flowers, lines and hands, which Asphodelinh has been dedicated to since 2008–2009, has come well beyond the “murmuring” stage of more or less vague sounds repeated under the breath. The “Linh” have clearly demonstrated their capacity for floral expression by staging flowers, leaves and branches over the three intense days of the exhibition.

From nageire to orange

N is for “nageire”. Fearsome, petrifying nageire! A classical composition in Sogetsu ikebana, which involves a tubular vase and a single, lone branch of wood; it is a difficult, often fruitless and even depressing exercise at the first attempt. I consider it to be the initiation rite for future artists, because it immediately brings the resolute, zen side to the fore. Nageire is a very beautiful arrangement. For other schools of

■ S is for “soumu”: plant dream. A neo-rustic autumnal arrangement in a blown-glass vase, with lemons and skimmia berries from the garden, and bouvardia flowers. Arrangement by Soazic Le Franc.





■ T is for “tanchiku”: bamboo. Lines and volumes of bamboo for a surprised lone protea! Arrangement by Soazic Le Franc.



■ U is for “ukairo”: crossing. A play of crisscrossing lines of *Ruscus* (butcher's-broom), *Aspidistra daibuensis* and *Callistemon* (bottlebrush). Arrangement by Sylviane Touboul, Asphodelinh.

ikebana, it is the name given to arrangements in tall vases in general.

O is for “orange”. A very strong, vibrant and ever-warm colour, associated with the setting sun and the shades of autumn; a secondary colour that is no longer red but not yet yellow, or the reverse; a colour that is defined in both the literal and the real sense: pumpkins are associated with Halloween, and oranges are harvested in January. Pretty, good girls sported “reddish blond” hair, but the witches who were burnt were “ginger” ... there is much to say about the colour orange.

From pannier to rules

P is for “pannier”. In Japan, panniers or baskets are made from woven bamboo splints. They are, or used to be, used as containers by several schools of ikebana. The Sogetsu school abandoned them long ago. It is difficult to find antique Japanese baskets in France that are affordable. Weaving baskets and other objects is still a living art in Japan, with grand masters; it is a delight to create an arrangement even in an ordinary basket, even in one made of willow!

Q is for “question”. With the first ikebana lesson comes the first avalanche of questions, to which we try to give precise answers in words that are unfamiliar to the uninitiated, because you have to assimilate these new terms in order to start off on the right footing. The first moribana seems very simple to execute

without all these new words that surround it! ... The following classes, after reflection on and confusion around the vocabulary, also bring their portion of questions ... So I sometimes feel as though people are not listening to the answers.

R is for “rule”. We follow the rules that have been laid down by the Sogetsu school to teach the arrangements that are perfected in textbooks as soon as students have received their diplomas. But to develop your own compositions, you can have your own style. So we each take our own path along the Way of Flowers, all heading in the same direction ... That is what characterises us and makes us different from other ikebana schools ... ●

The Bonsaï Club d'Anjou is an old club that has succeeded in retaining its members through a real effort to accompany newcomers and by everyone progressing.

Author: Cinthya Arenas
Photos: Bonsaï Club d'Anjou



▲ The Bonsaï Club d'Anjou, in Angers, offers solid training to newcomers and to all its members. The open days at its premises in the spring are an occasion for it to display its activities.

For the 25 years of its existence, the Bonsaï Club d'Anjou, based in Angers in the Maine-et-Loire department of western France, has always managed to give its members a desire to progress, most notably by setting up a bonsai school. Established in 1990 by Guy Floch, "The club was born in the wake of the development of bonsai in France. We are lucky that it has worked from the outset, with between twenty and thirty members every year," explains Joël Maussion, the club's president, who joined seven years ago.

A school for starting out

The secret of the club's longevity is undoubtedly linked to the school



▲ Patrick Hueber (left), a club member, leads practical sessions: here, autumn pruning of a Japanese maple.

BONSAÏ CLUB D'ANJOU A club with a school for beginners

that it founded around ten years ago for new members: "In fact, it was thanks to that that I started, and these days I take my turn helping to train newcomers. These classes are for people who are starting out, to give them all the rudiments of bonsai. That's often what's missing for beginners. Lots of people are interested in bonsai, but don't have the basics."

"People sign up to the club and then they can benefit from the school. There are four theory classes, each two hours long, and then practical training. The club buys small, equal-sized trees from nurseries. Each person has a tree and works on it in front of other club members, who help them."

There is no waffling at meetings, even if conviviality and friendship are on the cards. A schedule that is put in place at the start of every year is scrupulously followed. It includes

exhibitions, classes, get-togethers with other clubs, and outings – notably the annual collecting trip on land owned by private individuals who have given their consent. Also specified is the work to be done during meetings: "In general, depending on the period: March repotting, autumn pruning, etc. We avoid sticking with theory alone."

Practice at meetings

Meetings always include a practical element. Members work on their trees, which are often species native to the region: "beech, ash, oak, Scots pine, maritime pine and nursery-grown resiniferous trees such as black pine. We also work on the full range of trees and shrubs for hedges and on yews, but we avoid exotic trees."

The members are equally keen to have training: "We are lucky enough to have Patrick Hueber in the club.



▲ Meetings are always practice sessions, as with this styling and pruning of a trident maple.

He is also a Level 1 coach [for the Fédération Française de Bonsai (French Bonsai Federation – FFB)] and is our technical adviser. He gives classes with other members. We rely on the FFB's support. Once a year we also go on a training course with one of the FFB coaches. Sometimes we get together with other clubs for training."

An exceptional setting

Another point may explain the club's longevity, according to Joël Maussion: "We have the good fortune that the town council lends us a venue in a wooded park at Rue du Château d'Orgement, where we can work on our trees. We also have an equipment room at our disposal, where we can leave our tools, substrate or



▲ This oak, which was collected from nature, has been brought to a meeting by one member for other members to study and discuss.

training wire – all the material necessary for working on trees."

There, members have access to a library dedicated to bonsai: "We have lots of books and magazines, including *Esprit Bonsai International*. We function like a municipal library: members borrow and return their books. Everything is self-managed and works very well."

Every year, the club's open days take place in April in the same venue. This allows members to present their work and perhaps to find future new enthusiasts. The dates for 2016 have already been set: Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 April.

Motivated members

This year, the club has 26 members, seven of whom are women who, although small in number, "are very, very active participants!" A third of the members are between 20 and 40 years of age, two-thirds being over 40, and a few retired.

The president speaks proudly of how everyone is involved and "Some, like Béatrice Pipino, Josette Chapelain, Jean-Louis Dechet, Patrick Hueber



▲ This *Acer palmatum*, which belongs to a club member, is displaying its autumn colours.

Practical information

Address: Jardin de l'arboretum
9 rue du château d'Orgement, 49000 Angers, France
Contact via the club's website:
www.klubasso.fr/accueil/accueil.php?idc=49L1
Open days 2016: 23 and 24 April

and Alain Gaggione, have been there for over ten years, always with the same passion."

Another of the club's characteristics is its democracy, according to Joël Maussion: "I took over five years ago from Alain Gaggione, who himself had been president for three years. The president changes every two or three years – it's more democratic. Everyone then sees the importance of supporting the other members. We do that whenever possible. This year, I was due to pass the torch, but nobody came forward, so I stayed."

Another of the club's many assets is its members' faithfulness. Joël Maussion supports this statement: "I often say that our club belongs to us. The club is us; without its members, the club would be nothing at all." ●



◀ This pretty little apple tree was displayed during one of the club's open days.



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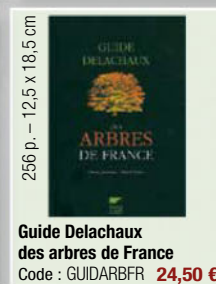
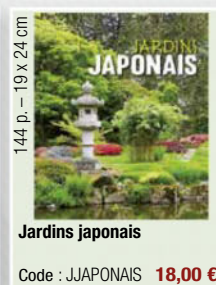
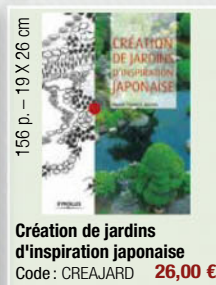
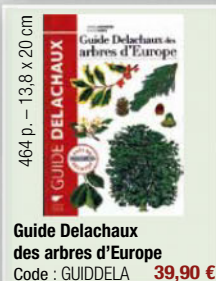
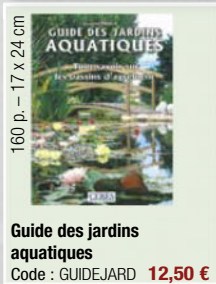
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- ▶ The Spirit of Bonsai
- ▶ A good start with well-sharpened tools
- ▶ Bonsai Basics: diseases and parasites
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- ▶ Task of the Month: Working with the roots of deciduous trees
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- ▶ Deleafing and restructuring a broadleaf shohin
- ▶ Re-imagining a tree
- ▶ Tree-cleaning this month
- ▶ Kusamono with Keiko Abe
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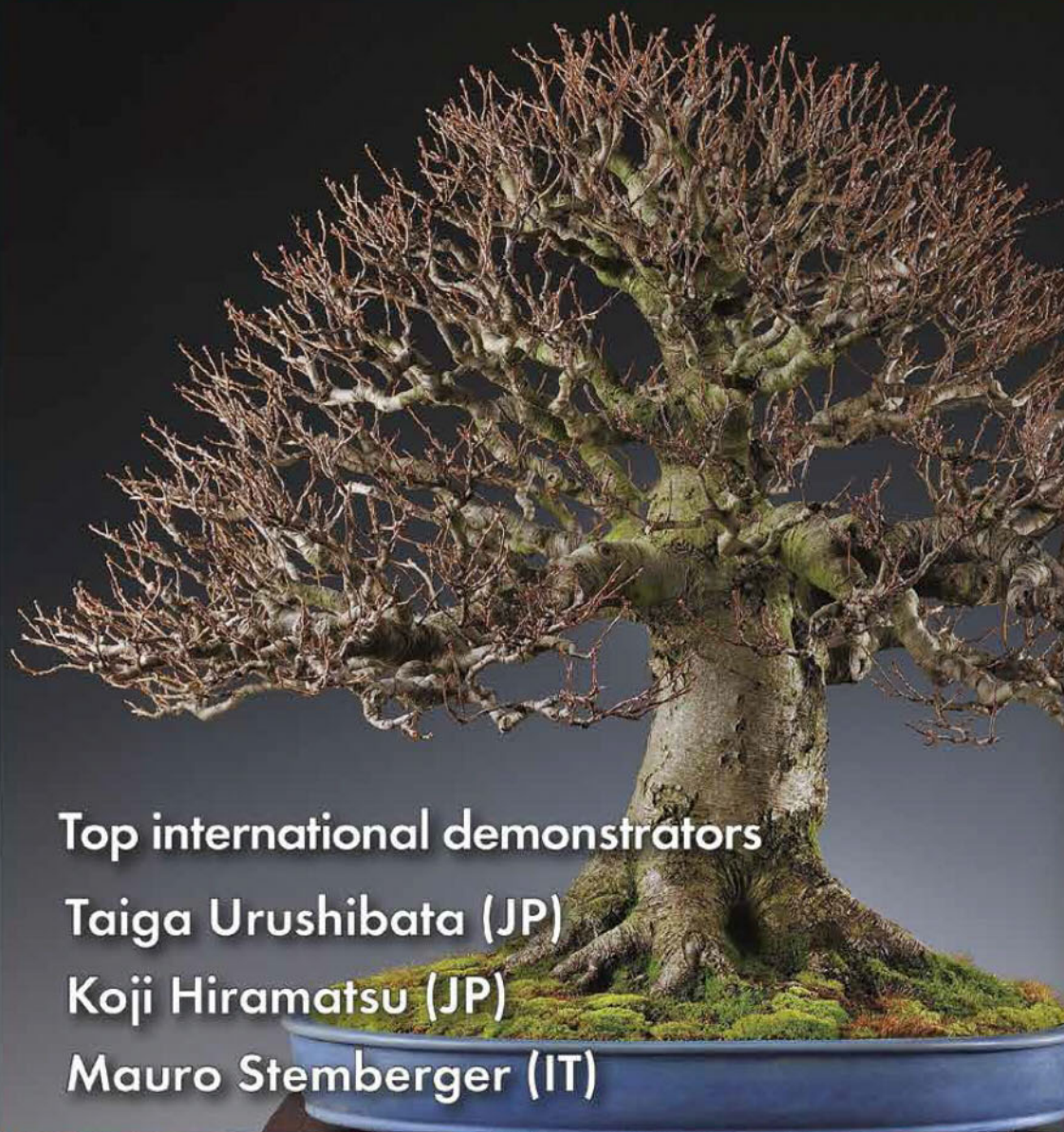
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