

Esprit Bonsai

#82

INTERNATIONAL

エスプリ盆栽

► The magazine for bonsai enthusiasts June/July 2016



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cutting leave
p.38



Pinching out
broadleaves
p.48

Pacific Bonsai Museum

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A club with established values

Editorial

A museum visit

I love museums. Depending on the themes they cover, they can be places for art, history, or technical or scientific subjects. They let us admire, think and dream. They are inspiring places that nourish us. Museums dedicated to bonsai are rare enough to deserve to be highlighted. In Europe, I don't think it can be far from the truth to say that there are fewer than a dozen ...

But let's cross the Atlantic to see what's happening in the United States. During my trip to Portland (Oregon) last September for the Artisans Cup exhibition, I had the good fortune to discover the Pacific Bonsai Museum, which is located in Federal Way, near Seattle (Washington). It's a magnificent place where the beauty of bonsai mingles with that of trees in nature, and it becomes hard to say which is more transcendent. Giant trees surround and protect small ones on stands ... the small ones seem even tinier, and the large ones even more gigantic. Besides the museum's superb collection, of which you will get a glimpse within the pages of this issue, I was also very struck by the natural setting, which forms a beautiful harmony with the bonsai. It is a lovely place that instils a sense of peace and serenity. Beauty nourishes and calms us and makes us joyful. For bonsai lovers, a museum where the object of their passion is given centre stage is a godsend. So if you are ever passing through the area, near Seattle, don't hesitate to go a little distance out of your way, to spend a few hours deeply immersed in another dimension ...

Happy reading!

Michèle Corbihan

On the Web

LES AMIS DU BONSAÏ MORLAIX

<http://club.quomodo.com/les-amis-du-bonsai-morlaix/accueil.html>



In French. Set up in 1994, the club Les Amis du Bonsaï Morlaix (Friends of Bonsai in the northwestern French town of Morlaix) has just joined the Fédération Française de Bonsaï (French Bonsai Federation – FFB). Its website is

a model of efficiency: beginning with the homepage itself, Web users can find informations about the club's aims, the dates and locations for meetings and the latest news. Next come a presentation of the Board and the meeting room, and a very useful contact form. Then follows a photo-laden summary of the seasons from 2014 to early 2016: exhibitions, workshops, outings. A technical section deals with different possibilities for creating bonsai, grafting, how to choose a pot and how to prepare for an exhibition. This new site is very well conceived and needs only to develop, for example by making the photos larger.

BONSAÏ CLUB DE MONTPELLIER

<http://bonsaiclubmontpellier.fr/>



In French. The club of Montpellier and Saint-Georges-d'Orques, which will host the FFB's annual convention in 2017, has a very attractively presented website. From the first page, the spirit – or, rather, philosophy

– that infuses the club's activities is clear: respect for trees and instructors or demonstrators who provide knowledge. Then comes the practical informations, with a calendar of meetings and details of their locations. Next are the sections dedicated to bonsai, with tools, books, magazines, different styles and a very useful French–Japanese glossary. There are also some reports of club workshops and exhibitions. Lastly, a very detailed schedule of tasks to be carried out on bonsai offers month-by-month guidance for hobbyists to cultivate their little protégés successfully.

MICHELE ANDOLFO

<http://www.andolfo.it/index.html>



In Italian. The design of the Italian artist Michele Andolfo's website is slightly disconcertingly based around black and red, but this matches his personality well.

A whole page is dedicated to his life and how

he sees bonsai. He applies a simple but effective three-phase methodology: study, design, realisation. It certainly is art, but there is no improvisation here ... A gallery with overly small photos shows some of his creations, as well as the design drawings for each tree or sketches of how it looked before work began. The rest of the site is devoted to his school, Andolfo Bonsai Studio, which is well known in Italy and elsewhere in the world, as well as to a few videos without commentaries on how some of his trees have evolved.

Philippe Massard, parlonsbonsai.com

DIARY



A Japanese festival in the Alps

Aix-les-Bains, in Savoie, southeastern France, will dress up in Japanese style from 16 to 22 June for the Matsuri festival. The tourist office and the Japanese Consulate in Lyon have joined forces to offer a picturesque festival combining the traditional and the modern. The town will be punctuated with numerous cultural, nature-related, gastronomic and youth activities.

A Japanese garden will be set up in Avenue Charles de Gaulle, where a grand master of the tea ceremony will introduce the public to this unique ritual. In the presence of the Japanese master Yuji Akanuma, the Académie de Bonsaï will display a hundred of its members' trees and offer demonstrations of the art of bonsai. The ikebana society based in the Aix-les-Bains youth club and the Sogetsu school will exhibit flower arrangements.

On the Saturday and Sunday, it will be time for a full-on fête. After all, Matsuri is a Japanese traditional popular festival

during which participants throw themselves into all sorts of ever more bizarre activities. Also on the cards will be video game tests, a sale of Japanese literature and haiku books, origami and calligraphy workshops, a kendo demonstration, an exhibition of traditional Japanese art and a manga area.

Worth highlighting

are the showings of the films *Sweet Red Bean Paste* (directed by Naomi Kawase; known in French as *Les Délices de Tokyo*) and *Tokyo Story* (by Yasujiro Ozu; known in French as *Voyage à Tokyo*), as well as concerts by various artists.

■ Information: Aix-les-Bains tourist office, +33 (0) 4 79 88 68 00 www.matsuri.aixlesbains.com

In far southeastern France

The Yamadori 04 bonsai club is organising its exhibition in Sainte-Tulle, in the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence department of southeastern France, on 18 and 19 June. The regional new talent competition will select the person to represent the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region, which borders Italy and the Mediterranean, at the 2017 national convention of the FFB, due to be held in Montpellier. Professionals will be in attendance.

■ Salle Gaston Vachier, 04220 Sainte-Tulle, France From 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Free admission.



GATHERINGS

European Bonsai-San show in east-central France



In central France

The FFB's national exhibition of mame and shohin will take place this year in Couzeix, near Limoges, on 24 and 25 September. The Bonsai Club du Limousin, which is organising the event, has invited Koji Hiramatsu, a Japanese master who specialises in mame and shohin, to lead workshops and carry out demonstrations. Professionals will be present.

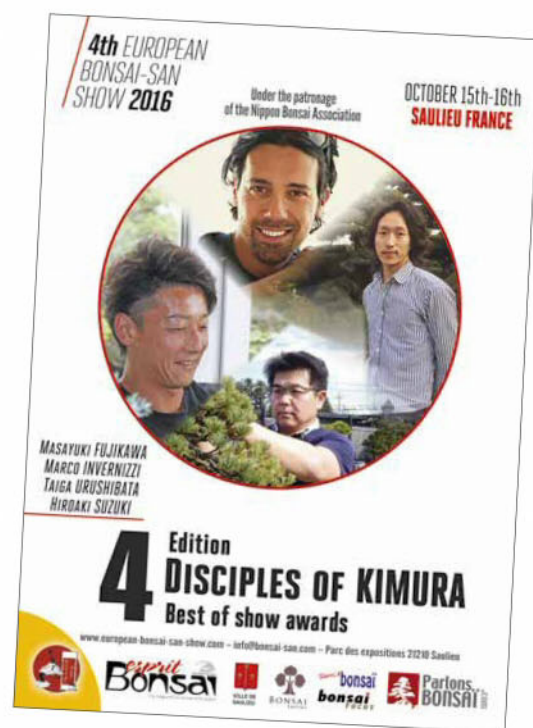
Centre culturel de Couzeix
87270 Couzeix, France
From 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Admission €5, FFB members €3.

In Brittany

As part of the French Ministry of Culture and Communication's "Rendez-vous aux Jardins" initiative to reveal private and public gardens, Jérôme Hay is opening his Japanese garden – the Jardin du Levant, in the French department of Ille-et-Vilaine, Brittany. For the occasion, Renato Carta, a Belgian bonsai professional who specialises in pines, will lead two days of training on the art of bonsai.

Le Jardin du Levant
Lieu-dit Les Haies
35370 Saint-Germain-du-Pinel,
France
www.lejardindulevant.fr/

For its 2016 edition, the European Bonsai-San Show is returning to Saulieu, east-central France, with a very enticing programme. Besides the top-quality trees that will be on display, four of the Japanese master Masahiko Kimura's pupils will be invited to this major bonsai weekend. Marco Invernizzi (originally from Italy), and Masayuki Fujikawa, Taiga Urushibata and Hiroaki Suzuki (all from Japan), will come to Burgundy, with their master's agreement, to offer demonstrations and judge the trees in the competition. The figure four is key for the organiser, Frédéric Chenal: for this fourth edition, not only will four of Kimura's pupils be present, but four main prizes will be awarded for the best trees in the exhibition. A prize for the best bonsaist will also be presented for the first time, rewarding the work of a bonsaist who is able to demonstrate the development of a tree from the raw material to the finished tree that is displayed at the European Bonsai-San Show 2016. Yet another innovation will be the ten or so prizes awarded by the event's commercial partners. *Esprit Bonsai* will assign the prize for best large broadleaf tree. As is the case every year, a large market of professional



stalls will offer everything bonsaists need to satisfy their passion. The event has received support from the Japanese organisation the Nippon Bonsai Association. It promises to be a very emotional gathering!
www.european-bonsai-san-show.com/

Sakka Ten in Rome

For its tenth edition, from 28 to 30 October 2016, the Sakka-Ten has chosen the romantic setting of Rome and the theme "Autumn – Melancholy". The city's botanical garden will be the backdrop to the event, which is organised every two years by Nippon Bonsai Sakka Kyokai Europe. Master Kunio Kobayashi, a regular at the Sakka-Ten, will be guest of honour.

What is original about Sakka-Ten is that it offers an exhibition that follows the rules of Japanese tradition, without competition and without indicating the trees' names or owners, so as to allow the trees to be contemplated freely. The bonsai are always carefully arranged to form a harmonious group. The exhibition comprises trees by members of the association. Numerous talks and demonstrations are due to take place over the two days.

www.sakkakyokai-e.com/



In our bookshop

Bonsai Shohin Passion

Roland Schatzer
In English



Although shohin is very fashionable, non-Japanese books on the subject are rare. *Bonsai Shohin Passion* should therefore be of interest to

many of those who love these small trees. Roland Schatzer has been passionate about shohin for a very long time, and this book is the fruit of his experience with his collection, which comprises more than 500 pieces. One of the ways that this book is original is in its approach. The author does not start by tackling general aspects of styling a shohin, but begins instead with examples, species by species. So we follow the creation of a trident maple, Japanese maples and over forty other species. Some fit onto a double-page spread, others extend to six or eight pages to give a more detailed view of the technique and development of the trees over the course of time and interventions. After a chapter on the different options for pots, the author lingers over photographs of branches (life-size) and of leaves, so that readers can see the relationship between trees in nature and how difficult their leaves are to miniaturise according to the species. The usual subjects relating to working on bonsai, and more particularly on shohin, are covered in depth: how to reproduce them – by air-layering, seed or cuttings; substrates; repotting; working on nebari; pruning; wiring; creating deadwood and shari; tools; pinching back junipers; overwintering. Anyone who loves larches and azaleas will find a great deal of detail on styling these species. Although displaying bonsai in exhibitions is complex, displaying shohin is even more so, because of the number of trees that have to be shown at the same time. The author offers clear and well-illustrated explanations of many examples to help readers to understand how to exhibit shohin on stands. These explanations are born of his experience and sensitivity. This is a book to place in any shohin-lover's hands. Hardback, 24.5 x 17 cm (9 x 6¾ in). 360 pages. Code: SHOHINPAS – €49

Exhibition and convention

BOURG-LA-REINE, FRANCE	4-5 June	Northern Region Bonsai-Ikebana Exhibition Salle des Colonnes, 51 bd du Maréchal Joffre, 92340 Bourg-la-Reine
HLOHOVEC, SLOVAKIA	3-5 June	National Bonsai Exhibition Slovak Bonsai Association Exhibition and trade area. Vlastivedné múzeum, Františkánske nám. 1 - 920 01 Hlohovec http://bonsai-sba.sk/narodne-vystavy/14-nv-hlohovec/
ST ALBANS, UK	4-5 June	Mid Herts Bonsai Club Annual Show Kingsbury Barn, Kingsbury Mews, off Branch Rd, St Michaels Village, St Albans Hertfordshire, England. http://midhertsbonsaclub.co.uk
BRISTOL, UK	12 June	2nd Bonsai With Love event Charity Event in aid of M.E. (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis); organised by Dan Barton. Failand Village Hall, Oxhouse Lane, BS8 3TS
BIRMINGHAM, UK	16-19 June	Gardeners' World Live National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham Halls 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20 plus outside areas. In conjunction with The Good Food Show
HAMPTON COURT, UK	5-10 July	RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show Hampton Court Palace, East Molesey, Surrey
ALYTUS, LITHUANIA	2-4 September	International Black Scissors Bonsai Convention, in collaboration with 5th Japanese Culture Festival. Many international demonstrators from Europe and the USA. Info: info@bonsai.lt and robertbonsai@hotmail.com or blackscissors.lithuania@gmail.com www.bonsai.lt/convention-2016/
STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN	3-4 September	Annual meeting of the Swedish Bonsai Association. Exhibition, demo and workshop under the leadership of Mauro Stemberger. East Asiatic Museum, Stockholm.
MAULÉVRIER, FRANCE	10-11 September	Salon National du Bonsaï Special guests: Alexandre Escudero et Hiroyoshi Yamaji Salles des Fêtes, route de Mauléon 49360 Maulévrier www.parc-oriental.com
BEVEREN, BELGIUM	17-18 September	Vlaamse Bonaivereniging autumn meeting, exhibition, demonstrations www.vlaamsebonsai.be/
SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO	30 September - 2 October	The Bonsai Shohin of Puerto Rico previously known as "Puerto Rico Shohin Study Group" The main speaker will be Suthin Sukosolvisit. www.facebook.com/PRSSG
WASHINGTON, D.C., USA	14-16 October	Celebration of: - the 40th anniversary of the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum - the reopening of the renovated Japanese Pavilion - World Bonsai Day, and - Annual US National Arboretum Bonsai Festival. 3501 New York Ave NE, Washington, D.C. 20002
KYOTO, JAPAN	21-24 November	36th Taikan-Ten, Miyakomesse, Kyoto 200 displays and sales area. 9-1, Okazaki Seisyoji-cho, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto

Down with dodgy demos!

Bonsai demonstrations are often controversial and vary widely. Here, bonsai artist and demonstrator François Jeker takes on the subject and gives his vision of it.

Author: François Jeker

It's the year 2000. A demonstration at an important international convention. A fantastic Scots pine. Literati. Over a metre tall. A majestic yamadori. Trunk of 7 centimetres' (2¾ inches) diameter, nearly straight, with only subtle movement. Perfect nebari, nicely star-shaped. Aged bark, crackled and multilayered. And a well-endowed apex, fine ramification, lively movement and small needles.

All that was needed was to put oneself at the tree's service and enhance what nature had already done: wiring the apex to tidy up the foliage would have been enough.

But the two demonstrators considered that this wouldn't be spectacular enough. That they need to do something showy ...

They brought out a ghastly machine that made lots of noise and produced lots of wood chips, to hollow out the full length of the trunk. The hollow trunk was next filled with thick training wire, then had raffia wound round it. These fairground strongmen then went into action: with one foot on the trunk, pulling it with both hands, they managed to twist it, despite its age and rigidity. The result? Spectacular indeed. The tree was now no more than about 20 centimetres (8 inches) tall, with a very twisted trunk. Fantastic.

Except that the tree was dead within three weeks. Does this kind of demonstration have anything to do with bonsai?

Fairground entertainers and anti-demonstration fundamentalists

Fortunately, these spectacular but criminal demonstrators ended up disappearing from the scene. Or evolving ... They

gave way to showmen who could tell amusing stories for three hours, cut off two branches and apply three tensioning cables, without styling the tree or explaining their plans.

Anti-demonstration fundamentalists, on the other hand, think that all demonstrations are sacrilegious, and that all demonstrators are scoundrels who have no idea of what bonsai is really all about. For them, in the grand scheme of things, anyone who dares to fully wire a tree within one day deserves to be excommunicated and then burnt at the stake!

At its peak?

Fortunately for most, these days, in major international events, there are increasing numbers of intelligent demons-

trations that attract more and more people. Demonstrators, starting with the Japanese and Chinese, work quietly on their trees, almost as if they were at home with a student. They take their time and don't take risks. Their trees have been prepared for several weeks before the occasion: they have good ramification, the unnecessary branches have been cut off, the nebari has been cleared, and trunks have been planted for a good orientation.

They explain as they work. Some their techniques. Some their designs. Some what they can safely do now and what they might plan for future years to bring the tree to maturity. Some their artistic or philosophical approach.

There is no pretence of "making a bonsai in a day". Essentially, it is a respectful and enriching educational exercise, in the purest tradition of bonsai.

Then, sometimes, there is a moment of grace. After the explanations, there is silence. The demonstrator in extreme concentration, in intimate dialogue with the tree, and the public palpably on tenterhooks. A magical moment when, as the demonstrator's fingers work away, the only thing that really matters is revealed: the tree. ●



Tohru Suzuki in a state of intense concentration during a demonstration. His precise gesture is reminiscent of a Samurai wielding his Katana.



The Spirit of Shohin exhibition brought together some 40 small bonsai on 2 and 3 April at the Hillside Events Centre, Wisley, UK.

The shohin spirit reaches the Brits



Shohin exhibitions in Europe are rare enough to be worthy of note. In early April, the first edition of the Spirit of Shohin took place in Wisley, UK, with a Japanese master as guest of honour.



Taiga Urushibata was president of the Spirit of Shohin judging panel and led workshops. He loves old Chevrolets, and has one in Japan. This 1957 Bel Air belongs to fellow hobbyist Steve Hale.

Author: Graham Walker
Photos: Mark R. Cooper

On 2 and 3 April 2016,

shohin was in the limelight at the Hillside Events Centre, at the Royal Horticultural Society's headquarters in Wisley, in the English county of Surrey. For the first time, British Shohin Bonsai, in collaboration with Sutton Bonsai Society, were organising an international exhibition, dedicated to small bonsai.



Best in show (most points overall)
and best chuhin/kifu display:
Taxus baccata, John Pitt, UK.

Aside from the trees on display, the “headliner” for the weekend was the internationally famous young bonsai artist Taiga Urushibata from Japan, ably assisted and translated by Maarten van der Hoeven from Holland. Taiga Urushibata ran a workshop on both days of the event, with several participants working with him on their trees for two days. His vision and attention to detail ensured that all those who participated in the workshop came away inspired and with much-improved trees over the weekend.

Mame, shohin and pots

The exhibition hall allowed for 36 displays of mame, shohin and chuhin/kifu, together with displays from two leading UK bonsai potters: Ian Bailie and Andrew Pearson (Stone Monkey). The standard of the displays achieved in the exhibition ▶▶▶



Mame display merit award: *Pinus parviflora*, Bruno Wijman, Holland.



Best mame display: *Eleagnus pungens*,
Acer buergerianum, Ritta Cooper, UK.



Best shohin display: *Juniperus chinensis*,
Ulmus parvifolia, *Acer buergerianum*,
Chaenomeles speciosa, *Zelkova Serrata*,
Mark and Ritta Cooper, UK.

►►► was much higher than previous shows for small bonsai held in the UK, some visitors saying they had not seen better displays outside Japan. There were significantly more mame exhibits than at our previous shows, emphasising the growth in popularity of the smaller trees.

Ten prizes were awarded by a judging panel that comprised Taiga Urushibata, Maarten van der Hoeven and four other bonsai specialists from Holland and the UK, the score being aggregated to give each of the section winners. Any exhibits with equal points were re-judged by all the judges. This multi-judging panel approach has been used successfully in several major UK events recently, thus ensuring a fair and equal representation for all exhibitors. Each judge's result sheets, with any comments, were displayed for all exhibitors to see as soon as the overall results were available, thus making the system transparent.

An inspiration

Alongside the Events Centre, the Royal Horticultural Society had erected a marquee to house the numerous traders that had been invited to participate in the event. Visitors were able to purchase all their bonsai-related products ►►►

The awards

Best in show (most points overall): *Taxus baccata*, John Pitt, UK.

Best mame display: *Eleagnus pungens*, *Acer buergerianum*, Ritta Cooper, UK.

Mame display merit award: *Pinus parviflora*, Bruno Wijman, Holland.

Best shohin display: *Juniperus chinensis*, *Ulmus parvifolia*, *Acer buergerianum*, *Chaenomeles speciosa*, *Zelkova Serrata*, Mark and Ritta Cooper, UK.

Shohin display merit award: *Pinus parviflora*, *Eleagnus pungens*, Mark and Ritta Cooper, UK.

Best chuhin/kifu display: *Taxus baccata*, John Pitt, UK.

Chuhin/kifu merit award: *Satsuki azalea*, *Acer palmatum* 'Arakawa', *Ligustrum obtusifolium*, Pete and Ted Goodhead, UK.

Best tree/pot combination: *Pinus parviflora*, antique Chinese pot, Bob van Ruitenbeek, Holland.

Best shitakusa: *Saxifraga* sp., Andy Jordan, UK.

Taiga Urushibata award: *Pinus parviflora*, *Eleagnus pungens*, Mark and Ritta Cooper, UK.



Best tree/pot combination: *Pinus parviflora*, antique Chinese pot, Bob van Ruitenbeek, Holland.



Taiga Urushibata award and shohin display merit award: *Pinus parviflora*, *Eleagnus pungens*, Mark and Ritta Cooper, UK.



Andy Jordan is the winner of the award for best shitakusa, with the accent plant of this shohin display.



Japanese flowering quince shohin (chojubai), Fiona Wallace, UK.



Best shitakusa: *Saxifraga* sp., Andy Jordan, UK.



Shohin display, Bob van Ruitenbeek, UK.



The workshop participants listened very attentively to the Japanese master and watched closely.



Even the best have something to learn from Japanese masters: the British bonsai artist Tony Tickle took part in Taiga Urushibata's workshop.



A number of traders had stalls in a marquee offering tools, pots and plants for visitors to buy.

▶▶▶– from trees to pots, tools, display items and even potting medium – from those traders present.

With the event being held at the Royal Horticultural Society gardens, there were many visitors to it who may have come to see the gardens in general. We hope that at least a few of them felt inspired after seeing the show to enter the fascinating world of bonsai culture and all it entails.

Our thanks go to Sutton Bonsai Society and to the Royal Horticultural Society for their hard work and assistance in helping British Shohin Bonsai to stage such a successful and prestigious show at Wisley. ●



The potter Andrew Pearson, of Stone Monkey, chose to develop a concept through different forms for the display of his pots at the exhibition.



This display of shohin pots by the British potter Ian Baillie shows how diverse his work is.



Formerly Pacific Rim Bonsai, the Pacific Bonsai Museum boasts about a hundred bonsai that are among the finest in the United States. The museum changed name when it became a non-profit organisation in 2014.



Kathy McCabe is executive director and is standing here in front of a tree by Toichi Domoto.

PACIFIC BONSAI MUSEUM

One of the United States' best bonsai museums

Author: Michèle Corbihan

The Pacific Bonsai Museum – in Federal Way, near Seattle (Washington, USA) – holds one of the United States' finest public collections of bonsai. It became a non-profit organisation in 2014. We visited it in autumn 2015 and met Kathy McCabe, the executive director and Aarin Packard, the new curator.

Set up by the Weyerhaeuser Company in 1989 as Pacific Rim Bonsai, near Seattle (Washington), the collection became the Pacific Bonsai Museum in 2014. "In 2014, the Weyerhaeuser Company decided to release the collection, so we are now organised as a non-profit organisation. They gave us the trees and the facilities. So we are now a free-standing organisation; we are not associated with an arboretum or a botanical garden: that is another unique factor about us," explains Kathy McCabe, the museum's executive director.

The museum was established in 1989 by Georges Weyerhaeuser, Sr, CEO of the Weyerhaeuser ►►►

Chinese juniper on Sierra
juniper (*Juniperus chinensis* var.
sargentii/J. *occidentalis*) from the
USA. Artist: Kenneth Sugimoto.





Japanese white pine, *Pinus parviflora*, from Japan.
Artist: Kenneth Sugimoto. Bonsai since 1970.

Chinese Hackberry,
Celtis sinensis, from
the USA. Artist:
Ben Oki. Bonsai
since 1962.



The museum
presents one
major exhibition
every year. In
2015, visitors
could discover the
world of wiring.

►►► Company – a timber company. He wanted to honour the centenary of Washington state and to honour the Weyerhaeuser Company's trading partners.

The museum welcomes more than 30,000 visitors a year. From the start to the autumn of 2015, they had come from 46 states of the United States and more than 20 countries around the world.

The trees come from many different countries, as Kathy McCabe explains: "We have trees from the US, Canada, Japan, China, Taiwan, Korea. Really no other public collection in the United States has trees from so many countries. We have about a hundred trees. Usually we have 60 on display at any given time."

Most are donated, but some have been purchased, in order to form a more balanced collection.

A large number of the trees are kept outside. They are superbly staged, shown off to their full potential. Bonsai stand alongside American giants such as sequoias, and the natural setting offers a magnificent green backdrop to the structures that house other bonsai. Some exotic trees are sheltered in a greenhouse.

An exhibition on wiring

The museum presents a major exhibition on a specific theme every year. In 2015, the spotlight fell on wiring. The aim is to broaden visitors' awareness and help them to understand and admire: "We're showcasing quite a few trees that have evolved to that state where they don't require wire any more – they're wireless. And we brought in artist Ken To, and he creates miniature bonsai out of wire. So there's the foil: trees without wire, trees with wire. Then there's an interactive station for adults and children both to try their hand at wiring. You can take a branch, wire, unwire and really get a chance to see what it feels like to use the tools of a bonsai artist. And we have some artefacts from John Naka."

There are about six people on the museum's staff: most of them are focused on gardening and working on trees, while two are specific to marketing, fundraising and other kinds of administration. There are also about twenty volunteers. "It takes a big crew to keep up the daily care of the trees and the grounds," Kathy McCabe admits.

David De Groot was the curator of the museum from the time of its opening in 1989, and he retired in 2014. Aarin Packard, the new curator, answered our questions on the museum and his plans for it.



Ulmus parvifolia, Chinese elm, from China. Artist: Jiu Wei Huang. Donated by Robert Cho from his own collection.



Larix laricina from Canada, American (Eastern) Larch. Artist: Nick Lenz, Leverett, MA.

E.B.I. – What do you think about this collection? Is it balanced, or do you need some other trees to balance it?

A. P. – That is a question that all museums are always asking themselves: how collections are planned. This collection is, I think, one of the top two in the country. The quality of the trees here has always been known throughout the country

The curator: Aarin Packard

Aarin Packard is originally from Southern California and has been the curator of the Pacific Bonsai Museum since October 2014. He replaced David De Groot, the collection's original curator, who retired that year after 25 years' service.

Before that, Aarin Packard was assistant curator of the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum in Washington, D.C. from 2006.

He has a master's in Museum Studies from the George Washington University in Washington, D.C., providing him with a background in exhibitions and the management of museums and collections.

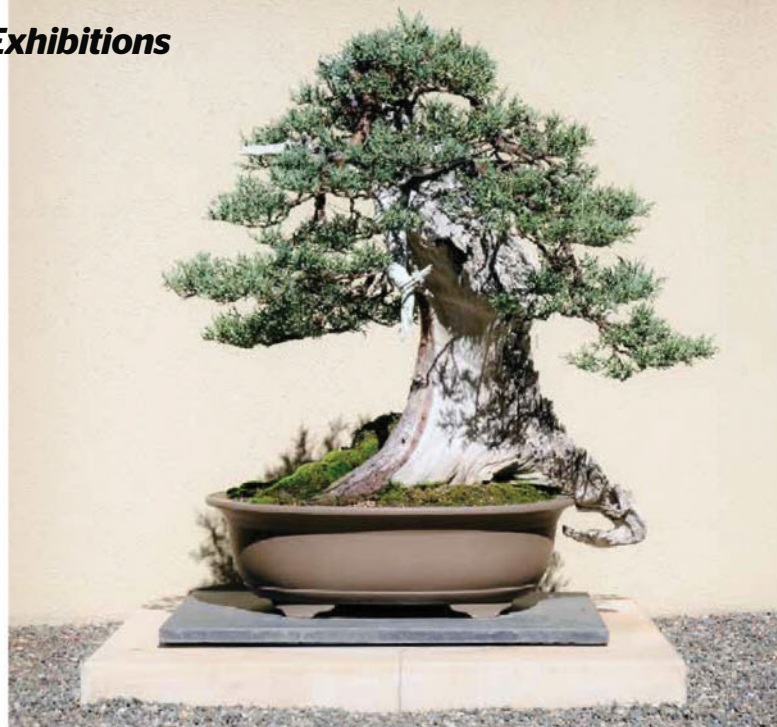


Aarin Packard is the museum's new curator, since October 2014.



Japanese maple, *Acer palmatum*, from the USA. Artist: Warren Hill. An astounding 59 trees occupy this dramatic forest.

as very high level. The collection as a whole is very high level. We have the most geographically diverse collection in the country, with trees from six different countries. The trees are predominately in the traditional Japanese style, and specifically the American trees are in the traditional style you would see in the United States in the 1970s and '80s and through the 1990s. I see our need as to emphasise native plants – so trees that grow here in the United States and specifically in the Pacific Northwest. We have a lot of them, but they are still developing. And then also American artists – emphasising them, primarily the new generation of artists. We actually had our very first acquisition as a museum this year: the first tree we got was one from Ryan (Neil). That was his first tree that has ever gone into a permanent public bonsai museum. So for both of us – for Bonsai Mirai and the Pacific Bonsai Museum – it was a very significant event, because that shows the direction that I want to take the collection in: more modern and American bonsai, building that up, because we have a very good representation of traditional trees. ►►►



Sierra juniper, *Juniperus occidentalis* var. *australis*, from the USA. It is the first tree that Ryan Neil (Oregon) has in a public collection. The nickname of the tree is Captain Hook.



About sixty trees are on display. The others wait patiently indoors, in a greenhouse or under a shade.

▶▶▶ Personally, in addition to American, I would like to see some more Chinese trees, because we do have some from Japan that are very nice, but a little bit more diversity in the Chinese trees as well, especially with them growing so rapidly in their interest in bonsai and penjing.

E.B.I. – In general, bonsai are continuously evolving. What is the approach here, at the museum, concerning the evolution of bonsai?

A.P. – My approach is to try to balance the personal choice – so much so that I don't want to go in and just start changing things because I just want to change it. So if there is a valid reason – the tree has changed so much in the last twenty years – and you need to go in and redesign, restyle, that's a very necessary component to bonsai. That is very well understood in Japan, whereas in the West – and maybe more specifically in the United States – it's not a concept that people understand very much, because people are just still trying to establish their bonsai for the first time. For me, to see that from a historical perspective: yes, I will go in

Practical information

Pacific Bonsai Museum
2515 S 336th St
Federal Way, WA 98003
USA
Tel: +1 253 353 7345
Website: <http://pacificbonsaimuseum.org/>
Executive Director: Kathy McCabe
Curator: Aarin Packard

and change trees that I think merit that; but I think it's also necessary, if you don't need to do that, to leave the tree alone. If you can find a better design, or the tree is just offering something different over time, then I think it is reasonable for the curator to go in and to adjust and to continue to manage these trees.

E.B.I. – What is your goal for the museum?

A.P. – My goal for the future is to build this museum's reputation to a very international level and regard for the quality of their bonsai, the quality of the collection itself and also the exhibits that we produce. Also for this place to be a sort of driving force for advancing bonsai into the 21st century – really taking bonsai and trying to interpret it in a way that is relevant to people of my generation who live in this current age, so it's not so much limited in tradition. There's a respect for the tradition, but in the same sense there's a looking forward to taking bonsai and making it something very contemporary and relevant. So you don't necessarily have to be interested in Japanese culture or gardening or something else; you can be interested from an artistic perspective, from a design perspective, from a conservation perspective. There are so many different angles you can come to bonsai from, and I think we've only just started to explore how else we can get people to look at bonsai in new ways.

E.B.I. – That's why you present such unusual exhibitions as the one about wire?

A.P. – Yes, exactly, it's something to make people aware of why we use wire in bonsai and that there is a function to it. But ultimately it's almost for myself too: asking the question of why I think the way I do, and then using some of my own thoughts from my own bonsai studies – because I'm never done studying, I'm always learning, trying to do better and understand bonsai better. It's about how we understand bonsai and why. So presenting some things that are a little different than what people think. Not so much that people think that it's not



Tucker oak, *Quercus John-tuckeri*, from California.
Artist: Sadao Ukimaru.
Bonsai since 1940.



Surinam cherry, *Eugenia uniflora*, from China. Artist: Xueming Lu. Bonsai since 1961.



A greenhouse is essential for tropical trees.



Trident maple, *Acer buergerianum*, from the USA. Artist: Toichi Domoto.



Blue Atlas cedar, *Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauc', from the USA. This tree is ready to go and compete at the Artisans Cup, Portland (OR).

bonsai, but putting more of a modern or contemporary spin to get people thinking about it a little bit differently.

E.B.I. – What are your projects for the museum?

A.P. – My general format is to do one major exhibit a year where we will be typically looking at a component of bonsai. So this time it was wire, but the next exhibit will be looking at display and how we present bonsai and the traditional objects that we use in display and how we can reinterpret those in a modern, contemporary way. We are also taking five of our bonsai to the Artisans Cup, and two of these trees are going to be presented in an exhibit here. So it's going to be very exciting to see people's reactions to it. I've been working on this concept for almost four years – even back when I was in Washington, D.C. – because the Artisans Cup originally was supposed to take in place in 2013. So it's been building in my head for a long time. ●



Ken Fujiwara

“It was love at first sight”

Although he does not come from a long line of Japanese professionals, Ken Fujiwara is gradually making a name for himself in the bonsai world. With Guy Maillot, he has founded a bonsai school in France.

Interview: Louis-Victor Bourdeau
Photos: Guy Maillot,
unless otherwise stated
Translated from Japanese: Guy Maillot

It was more or less by chance that Ken Fujiwara, a young Japanese master, came across bonsai. Trained in the Japanese tradition, he often lends his support at a bonsai school in France.



A shohin-sized *Juniperus chinensis* 'Itoigawa'.

Ken Fujiwara is one of the rare young Japanese bonsai professionals who does not come from a family of bonsai artists. At 36 years old, he has already visited France many times, but is still not very well known among European bonsai enthusiasts.

It was during a session at Guy Maillot's new Maillot-Fujiwara school, that I was given the chance to meet this young Japanese master with an unusual career path.

One hot day at the end of summer, I duly arrived at Relevant in the Ain department (eastern France) to take part in a course on conifers given by Ken Fujiwara. Originally from Miyagawa, a small town in western Japan in the Mie district, Ken Fujiwara is far from having the stereotypical seriousness and austerity that are sometimes attributed to Japanese masters. He is cheerful, fun-loving and has a great sense of humour.

Esprit Bonsai International – How did you discover bonsai?

Ken Fujiwara – I have always loved plants and growing them. But the story of how I started on the bonsai road is amusing. Over ten years ago, I was travelling in Indonesia and ran out of money. I was soon repatriated to the Japanese embassy, and while waiting to be sent back to Japan, I came across a bonsai tree in the Embassy premises. It was love at first sight.



Displaying a Japanese white pine, *Pinus parviflora*. Height: 88 cm (34½ in) – as the main tree and a *Juniperus chinensis*. Both plants come from Ken Fujiwara's garden.

E. B. I. – How did you find an apprenticeship?

K. F. – When I got back to Japan, I had no work, and for a year, I squatted at a girlfriend's house – she became my wife, by the way – and after researching on the Internet, I found an announcement by the Toru Suzuki, Daiju-en garden, who was looking for an apprentice. Without any bonsai experience, or parents who could recommend me or stand guarantor for me, I boldly went straight over there without making an appointment. They gave me a test and then accepted me. I think they felt sorry for me! At Daiju-en, I was apprenticed to the master, Toru Suzuki, for five-and-a-half years. It was really hard! As an apprentice you worked from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. with very few days off.

E. B. I. – How did you become established?

K. F. – At the end of my apprenticeship in 2009, my senpai, or hierarchical superior – a sort of apprentice supervisor – gave me a few clients whose trees I worked on, and I started to work on a daily basis, going to my clients' homes to maintain and improve their bonsai trees. Four years ago, I decided to ►►►



Many conifers are displayed on the nursery's shelves – mostly Japanese black pine and red pine.



Juniperus chinensis 'Itoigawa' styled by Ken Fujiwara. Height: 24 cm (9½ in).



Pinus parviflora styled as a literati. Height: 60 cm (23¾ in).

▶▶▶ set up my own garden. It is quite difficult to establish a bonsai business when it is not part of a family affair. But now I have my own nursery in Nagoya.

E. B. I. – In Japan what does your daily work consist of?

K. F. – My garden is not very big and I don't have a large stock, so I have specialised more in bonsai trees that are already finished. I try to enhance and to improve them.

E. B. I. – Have you a favourite species?

K. F. – I like species such the Chinese juniper or Japanese black pine that need major work, and which allow me to really change their appearance. For deciduous trees I am very fond of the Trident maple.

E. B. I. – What do you seek to express through your trees?

K. F. – I like traditional bonsai, but I also like to be artistically creative. I would like my work to fall between the two – tradition and the natural side to bonsai and artistic innovation, but not excessively so.



This *Pinus thunbergii* with very dense ramification is of very high quality. Height: 65 cm (25½ in).

E. B. I. – In the setting of the Maillot-Fujiwara school, you have worked with species native to Europe. What do you think of these?

K. F. – I have been very pleasantly surprised. I have seen sabina juniper, mugo pine and Scots pine. There are some really interesting European trees that can be worked on as bonsai.

E. B. I. – What gave you the opportunity to come to France and to teach?

K. F. – When I was an apprentice at Daiju-en, I worked with Kentaro Shino, who came to France a few years ago to host workshops with ▶▶▶



Four years ago Ken Fujiwara established a nursery in Nagoya. The junipers in the background are impressive.



Pinus thunbergii in Ken Fujiwara's garden. Height: 38 cm (15 in).



An unusual composition for this group of *Acer palmatum* which consists of two groups of the kabadachi (multiple trunk) style. Height: 38 cm (15 in).

The Maillot-Fujiwara school

Ken Fujiwara and Guy Maillot created the Maillot-Fujiwara school in 2015, with the aim of teaching Japanese techniques. The course is structured to run in a four-year cycle and addresses every bonsai species – conifers, deciduous trees, and flowering and fruit trees – as well as mame and presentation. It also covers all the aspects of bonsai such as cultivation, plant health and styling techniques. And of course, under the guidance of the master, they are all applied to the trees belonging to the participants. This opportunity allowed me the great pleasure of watching Ken Fujiwara's dexterity and his precise gestures. What a wonderful profession to be able to reveal the beauty in each tree by using skills and experience that, at the moment, only the Japanese possess at this level.



Ken Fujiwara shows his great sense of humour – an unusual quality in the sometimes austere bonsai world.

▶▶▶ Guy Maillot. He introduced us, and we formed a solid connection. At first, I would come over occasionally, at the end of winter, to lead workshops, and it all went well from there.

E. B. I. – You have travelled quite a bit. Do you feel that approaches differ in other countries?

K. F. – I went to Washington, in the States, and there is quite a different mentality. People like a show – a spectacle. I feel that in France people are more sensitive to the natural aspect of bonsai and have a certain respect for tradition.

E. B. I. – How have you adapted when teaching French students?

K. F. – I would say that one of my greatest difficulties is the local climate, which I am not very accustomed to. I cannot work with trees here as I do in



The professional French bonsai artist, Guy Maillot (on the left) set up a school with Ken Fujiwara as principal instructor, at Relevant in the Ain Department.



The young Japanese master working on a shohin – a *Cryptomeria japonica* – with students of the Maillot-Fujiwara school.

Useful address
<http://www.bonsaifujiwara.com>

Japan; I have to be far more careful. I am three times as careful here as I am in Japan!

E. B. I. – What advice would you give to beginners?

K. F. – First of all, one has to learn how to water. It is of fundamental importance. One has to understand in what way trees are thirsty. It is the basis for everything else. Then, one must learn how to cultivate. From an aesthetic point of view, one needs to study as many beautiful trees as possible and learn how to train the eye. ●

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Satsuki azaleas: with or without flowers

Spring is peak season for Japanese azaleas. This is the time to attend to them, before and after flowering.

Author: Gilbert Labrid

The Japanese word satsuki is the name given to the fifth month of the oriental lunar calendar (June in the solar calendar). It refers to the flowering period. It is quite easy to take care of these bonsai, as long as you are mindful of some of the plant's characteristics. The first condition to ensure that cultivation runs smoothly is a humid atmosphere. Azaleas hate dry atmospheres and the wide temperature variations that result from them. Good results can be achieved by protecting them from drying winds and scorching sun in the summer, not forgetting that they also need to be watered regularly. They can most easily be suitably sited in regions with an oceanic climate. The second condition is their preference for acidic soils (pH 5–6). Kanuma is a frequently used Japanese soil. It is advisable to mix it with river sand (30%), crushed pine bark or akadama (20%) for improved drainage. The best time for repotting is March/April. The third condition is a good balance between the interventions made and how vigorous the tree is. Although azaleas don't like dryness, neither do they tolerate excessive levels of water which cause roots to rot if the earth remains constantly damp. This is why good drainage is just as essential for their soil as is a good capacity for retaining water. ●



1 Full flowering should not be encouraged too frequently in azaleas. The trees' reserves are quickly exhausted and their inner branches weaken and die. For regular annual flowering, leave only one flower bud in three. To construct ramification, remove all flowers every year until a good silhouette has been achieved.

The apex is the weak part of the tree, to be pruned in moderation.

Remove three of every four flower buds.

- Keep a watchful eye over the branches situated beneath the apex. Don't let them grow too much; otherwise they will suck up all the energy intended for the apex.
- The lowest branches are the most vigorous ones: hard prune them to keep them compact.



2 The flowers are delicate. To keep them in good condition, don't leave the tree out in the rain or in direct sunlight. Avoid applying fertiliser during flowering.



3 As soon as the peak flowering period has passed, it is very important to remove all the flowers and seed pods. If this is not done several years running, the branches will grow weak and eventually dry out.



4 To ensure consistent flowering for several years, leave only one bud per branch end.



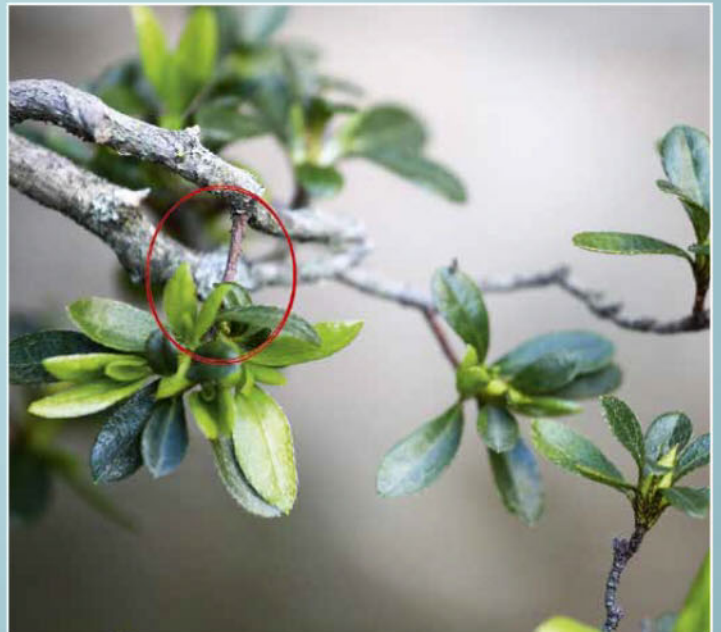
5 The upper part of this azalea is weak. The new shoots need to be made stronger and then cut back.



6 Remove all the buds by breaking them off with your fingers. Cut back the new shoots that grow in the middle.



7 The lower branches can be pruned more harshly. There are a lot of new shoots.



8 Select the well-positioned shoots and remove the others: that is, those that are at the bottom or the top of the plant, or that start from the base of a branch, from scars, from the trunk, etc.

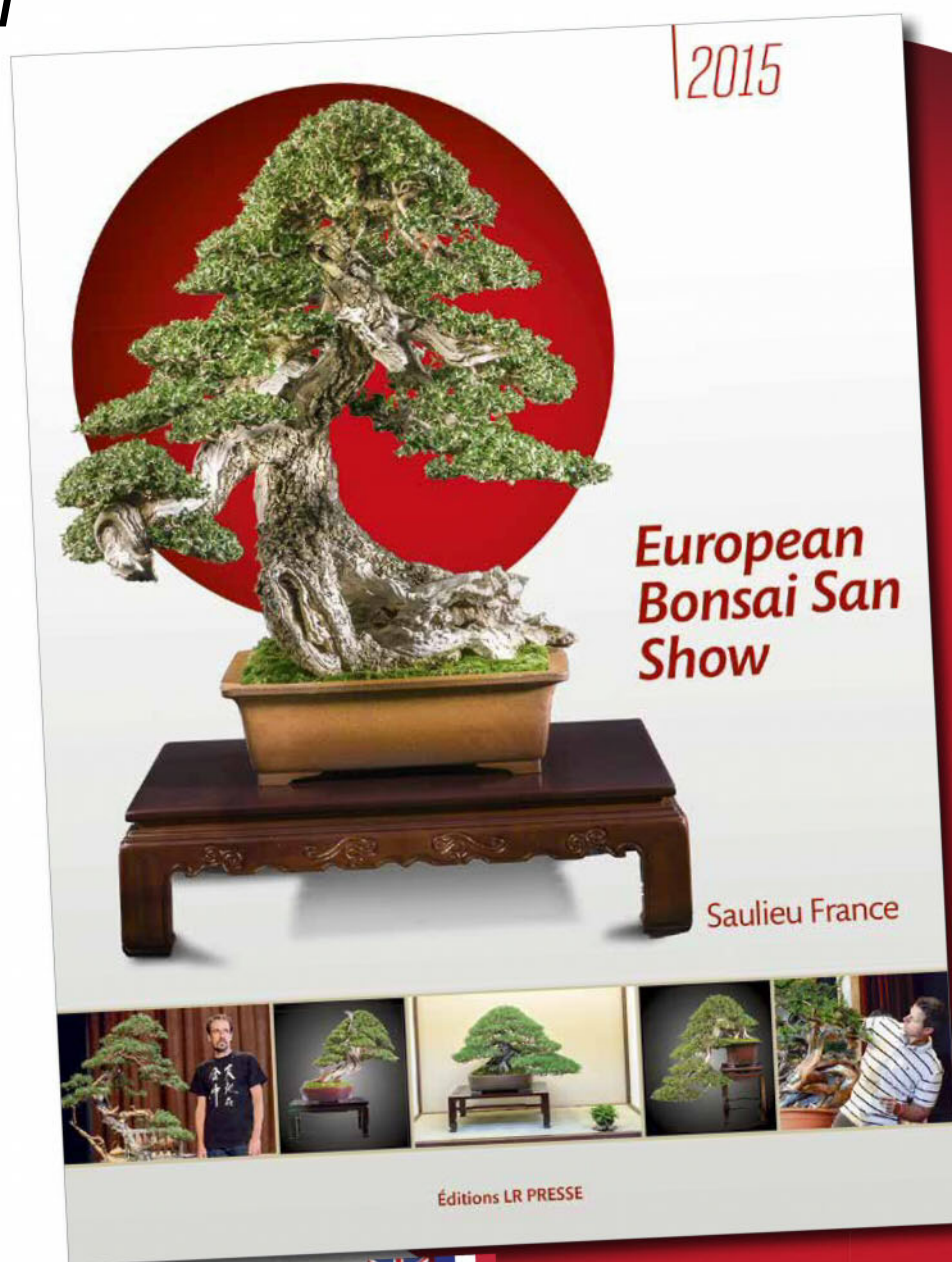
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Repotting bonsai

Author: Bruno Mazza

The purpose of all plants is to develop unceasingly, and more or less rapidly, to reach their reproductive phase.

Those living in a natural habitat can freely extend their root system in the search of nutrients and water that will allow them to grow as best they can within their environmental framework, regional temperatures and rainfall levels.

Plants grown as bonsai have the same functions and are identical in every respect. Because their needs are the same, bonsai artists must ensure that the care they give their trees in their small pots will guarantee them the best quality of life.

Why repot?

Bonsai trees are made to be very small, and to be kept small for a long time; this applies to both parts of the tree aerial – the trunk, branches and vegetation – and the underground root system. The measurements of the two parts must correlate, and pruning both is indispensable for preserving the plant's reduced size.

If pruning the aerial part of the tree is carried out at any given time, because it is always visible, pruning the roots can only be done when the plant is repotted. This is fundamental to maintaining balance between the different parts of the tree, and because it is only carried out occasionally, it must be exploited in the best possible way. With the passing seasons, bonsai grows

and produces new roots that end up filling all the space available in its small pot. Root development restricts the tree's absorption of water and nutrients and the root ball becomes compacted and it is difficult to water the plant correctly. To avoid this, the bonsai tree must be repotted at the right time for the plant to function correctly and remain healthy and strong.

When to repot

The frequency of repotting depends on the species, the plant's age and the pot's dimensions. Young plants are much more active than the more mature ones, whose functions slow down progressively, and as a result, they produce far more roots.

In general, deciduous trees produce roots faster than conifers, and some deciduous trees such as Buerger maple, hawthorn, hornbeam, cotoneaster and wisteria etc., grow a great quantity of roots and must be repotted every year.

However, most deciduous trees, even those that are still at the formative stage, are repotted every two or three years, whereas conifers will be repotted every four or five years.

The quality of the substrate, fertilisation and watering, climate characteristics, and the bonsai's upkeep will all have a bearing on the production of a higher or lower quantity of roots.

Apart from the calendar, which is a very useful indication, there ►►►



1 Repotting a Buerger maple. Prepare the pot with mesh and aluminium wire to anchor the tree.



2 The root ball is compacted and it is time to repot.



3 Untangle the roots. Cut the roots making sure there is a balance between the root system and the foliage.



4 Place large grain size pumice at the bottom of the pot.



5 In the centre of the pot make a mound of substrate.



6 The roots of deciduous trees can be washed without any risk. This operation provides a very clear view of the roots.



7 Test to see if the tree fits into the pot and cut away the roots that exceed it.



8 Now the root ball fits easily into the pot.



9 Fix the root ball with the wire.



10 Add the substrate and remove pockets of air with a stick.

▶▶▶ other signs that suggest the need to repot a plant:

- progressive weakening;
- reduced budding, particularly on the inside areas of the branches;
- weak shoots that produce leaves or needles that are smaller than usual;
- faded foliage colour;
- a root ball that is too compacted, which does not allow water to penetrate or oxygen to circulate;
- a root ball growing outside the pot. Roots develop and end up by growing round the bottom of the pot, where they form a thick sole, which gradually pushes the root ball up.

Whether deciduous or conifers, the best time to repot is at the beginning of spring, when there are no longer late frosts. Deciduous trees must be repotted just before the shoots start to swell. Whereas conifers, even when the new shoots are not more than 2 cm (¾ in) long, can be repotted without much difficulty.

Repotting at the right time is certainly recommended, but one needn't push too hard to strictly adhere to the advice given in manuals about the frequency of repotting, particularly with more mature plants.

Preparing to repot

Before removing the plant from its pot, it is advisable to let the substrate dry out a little more than is usual to make untangling the roots easier.

Check that repotting is necessary and prepare the work materials:

- the pot: place plastic mesh over the drainage holes and fix with aluminium wire. If using the same pot, it must be cleaned to remove any traces of potential disease, and to clean off unsightly calcareous deposits that have gradually built up.
- wire to fix the root ball to the pot and to stop the tree from moving during rooting;
- The potting mix (see *Esprit Bonsai*, no. 74).



11 Finish by watering copiously.

Unpotting and root pruning

At last the plant can be removed from its pot to untangle the roots and at the same time remove the old substrate.

The roots are only cut when they can be clearly seen. The largest of the roots must be cut away to



A These two Scots pines were placed in a training pot after they were collected. The larger of the two received its first styling two years ago. It will now be repotted in a temporary pot conceived for the pine's bunjin shape.

encourage the production of radicles which absorb nutrients and water.

When cutting the roots, one must estimate what will be the best relationship between the roots to be preserved and the foliage (present in conifers), or the budding shoots (for deciduous trees), in order to achieve a balance between the aerial part of the tree and the roots, and to encourage good growth.

It is difficult to specify the number of roots to prune, because no plant is the same and each will have its own characteristics and peculiarities.

As a guideline, pruning roots should generally be:

- more drastic on young plants and those in the process of being styled.
- more restricted on older plants whose styling is advanced.

Concerning deciduous trees

It is better to completely remove old substrate from deciduous trees and to clean the roots with a jet of



B In the 4-5 years of its rehabilitation, the tree has produced many roots.



C The root ball is carefully untangled.



D The two pines are separated.



E The height of the root ball has been considerably reduced and flattened so that it will fit into the pot.



F The nebari is defined and bad roots are cut out to improve it.



G The pot is ready with the mesh, wire and substrate.

water. By doing this one can see the state of the roots and intervene knowingly without causing any damage.

The root ball of deciduous trees can be reduced by 60 to 65% without causing the plant to suffer. At the same time, one can cut the branches to keep the volumes balanced

Concerning conifers

The reduction of the root ball must not exceed 50%. It is imperative to preserve the substrate and the micorrhizae inside the

root ball. Conifer roots must never be washed, as this could kill the plant.

Repotting

Finally, we can start the actual repotting process:

- put draining materials such (pumice or something similar) with a slightly larger grain size than the rest of the substrate to ensure that excess water will drain away easily after watering;

• make a mound of the substrate in the pot; ►►►



H Taking into account that the substrate still needs to be added, the roots are pruned so that the root ball fits into the pot.



I The root ball is correctly positioned.



J Everything is solidly fixed.



K The rest of the substrate is added.



L The plant is watered abundantly. The repotting is finished.

▶▶▶ • place the root ball on the mound in the best position and height and press down;

• holding the plant in position, fix the root ball solidly to the pot with the anchor wires;

• fill the pot with substrate making sure that it penetrates well between the roots;

• water copiously using a watering can with a finely holed rose until the water comes out through the bottom of the pot;

• lightly cover the substrate's surface with sphagnum moss cut into pieces, particularly for deciduous trees, as this will retain moisture and encourage surface radicles.

After repotting

The plants must be kept sheltered from direct sun and wind for three or four weeks; they can then be moved little by little to a more favourable place; they must be

carefully watered and fertiliser may now be gradually added.

After repotting, particularly if the plant has been severely pruned, one must take into account that it will need time to recover its balance and to become fully functional again. During the first season, the foliage will not be very vigorous; the following season it will have developed well, and in the seasons after that, it will increase further to stabilise and then it will tail off. So we have to assess the time needed for the tree to recover, and to intervene accordingly, so as not to hinder the plant at a time when it must be left alone. Where conifers are concerned, the

time needed to recuperate and for a strong foliage to revive, is double that of a deciduous tree. ●

THE EVOLUTION OF BONSAI STRENGTH IN THE YEARS FOLLOWING REPOTTING



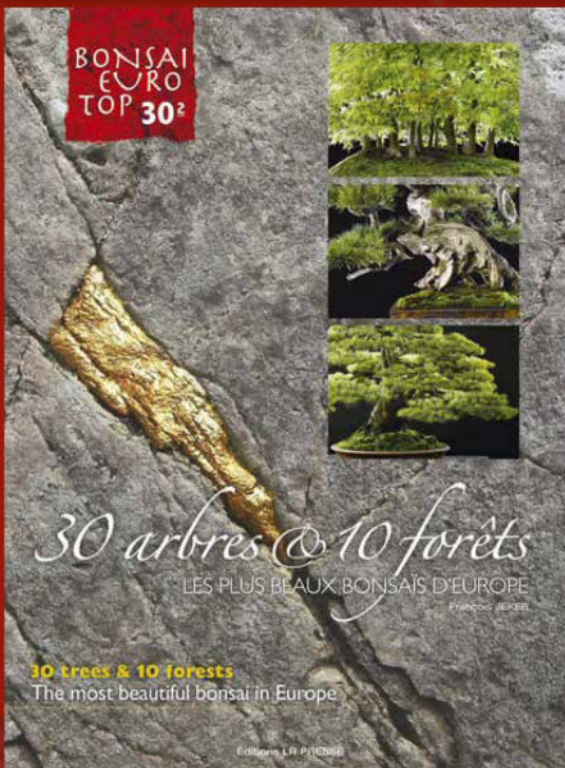
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Back budding on Scots Pines

To encourage budding lower down on the branches of a Scots pine, action must be taken at the right time and one needs know which shoots to prune.

Author: Xavier Dreux

Maintaining pines is often a difficult process for beginners to grasp; and between “metsumi” (bud pinching) and “mekiri” (bud trimming) confusion can reign. The simple method given here will acquaint beginners with the cultivation of Scots pines and show how to achieve effective back budding.

1 Balancing strengths

As is the case with all pines, one can see in a Scots pine the varying strengths in different parts of the tree. The strongest buds are generally found on the highest part of the tree and at its extremities. The weaker buds are on interior branches and on the lower areas.

The bonsai practitioner must constantly ensure that the tree's vigorousness is balanced. Harder pruning is needed on the stronger parts and much lighter pruning (or even, none at all) on the weak parts. If we reduce or remove branches and shoots in the stronger sections, the tree will redistribute its energy to its middle and weaker areas.

2 Pruning shoots

Before taking any action, a tree must be in peak condition. This is achieved by cultivating it in an appropriately sized pot with a good substrate and good supplements (plenty of well-balanced fertiliser that has been added in previous years). In order to style the branches to



Encouraging budding lower down on the branch gives a pine good densification and balances the tree's strength.

create primary, secondary and tertiary ramifications, we must first prune the new shoots. The bud becomes a candle; the candle lengthens and the needles start to show, and then open out from one single shoot. This is the best moment to prune all or part of the shoots. Depending on your area and climate, the time varies between mid-May and the end of summer, but most often will be around mid-June to mid-July. Start by pruning the strongest shoots, and then, ten or fifteen days later, prune the middle area. Don't intervene on the weakest parts of the tree. New buds will form where the cut has been made, and also on older shoots further up.

3 Retracing one's steps

On the strongest parts of the tree, particularly the crown, it is possible to go further than simply pruning new shoots.

You can retrace your steps, by pruning a few branches higher up. However, this can only be carried out if you



- ① The candles continue to lengthen. The needles, although visible have not yet opened. One needs to wait before intervening.



- ② These shoots are ready to be pruned. It is important that the cut is clean and straight; otherwise, this could result in two buds of different strengths.



- ③ Buds are present lower down this branch where the shoots were pruned last year. They need to grow a bit more before you can prune the rest of the branch. However, it is advisable to remove the needles from the lower part (for exposure to the sun and to balance the different strengths).

did not remove the pine's needles the previous year. It is imperative that there are still needles on the branch; otherwise it will dry out irremediably. New buds will form in the axil of the remaining needles on the branch. This will not only result in a shorter ramification but will help balance the strengths in different areas of the tree. Don't hesitate to remove badly placed shoots and to modify the length of a branch.

4 And afterwards ...

After a few years work, the pine will take shape in response to the dense ramification of the foliage pads. By then, it will be time to go on to the next step – the styling and refinement. In autumn, the old needles are removed. At the same time, balance the tree's strengths by proportionately reducing the number of

A question of visual vocabulary

It is important with pines to be able to distinguish the difference between buds, candles and shoots, so that work can be carried out at exactly the right time.

The buds, visible in winter, are small and pointed. They lengthen and become rounded in spring. They are then called candles. The candles remain cylindrical, and the needles have not yet opened. As soon as the needles open and enlarge, they are called shoots.



Buds



Candles



Shoots



- ④ This branch was too large and too long. It has been cut at the first bifurcation and the shoots removed. The branch can eventually be restyled with the two buds close to the trunk.



- ⑤ On this small strong branch, everything has been cut back to a few pairs of needles. In this case, budding is not guaranteed, but the risk can sometimes be worth the candle. ●

needles formed that year, depending on the strength of the branch. Leave up to ten pairs of needles on branches of medium strength, and only three to five pairs on the strongest shoots. Don't intervene on the weak branches.

The branches are also selected. After this, one moves on to the wiring to style the pads and to ensure good exposure to the sun by thinning out the twigs. ●



The trunk of an old chestnut tree shows dinosaur like characteristics.

The hidden face of trees

Author: Gilbert Labrid

The wood in trees can sometimes assume strange aspects as if inhabited by capricious or malicious spirits.

Old fairy tales, stories and legends are always populated by a host of strange beings, who, when night falls, haunt the woods and take prisoner unfortunate wanderers who have lost their bearings. Once a human enters a forest, they are likely to get disoriented, particularly in certain seasons when not a scrap of light, or the smallest sound, can penetrate the dense foliage. In winter, it is even harsher and is pitiless. Survival is no longer an abstract theory, but a real problem to be resolved. The roots lay traps; the ground can give way beneath the turf and swallow

the unwary, and branches become talons to seize their prey. Forests in ages past were mysterious territories over which mortals had little control. Nowadays, all that space has been measured up, identified and made accessible. Yet, despite the facts, it is easy to see that a few nights spent alone in the heart of a forest, might still feed our imagination with atavistic fantasies.

Elven footprints

The myth of the 'Green Man' – the metaphorical connection between nature and humans – is present in almost all cultures. Ancient myths abound with tales of men and women being metamorphosed into trees and plants. Until quite recently, in Brittany, one lived with the elves, goblins and leprechauns who inhabited the plains and the forests. One sometimes caught a glimpse of them, but mostly they were recognized by their footprints and their work.

There are many stories of flowers, fruits and trees that have played a central role in some fundamental



Like a gargoyle on the side of a medieval cathedral, this branch surveys its surroundings with fearsome energy.



Attached to the old trunk of a chestnut tree, a goblin, wearing very little, is caught by surprise.



Old mulberry trees often have complex, hollow trunks from which emerge goatlike figures. Perhaps they are vestiges from the time when Pan, god of the forest, ruled.



human discoveries. Apart from the multiple legends, Newton, for example, comes to mind. His spark of genius came from the fact that he lay sleeping at the foot of an apple tree. The tree did the rest. Imagine if the apple had fallen before he awoke or after had had left. That would have been it for gravity – and for the apple! We have the tree to thank.

Weird faces

Walking through a forest at dusk, or in a thick mist, or better still, in falling snow, sharpens all our senses that normally are deadened by everyday distractions. It is in hollow trunks, in rotting branches, or in worm-eaten bark that one can discern strange faces, perverse devilries, and staring eyes. It is as if invisible entities were waiting for the life support to decay, to cast a final look on the strange world of humankind.

In one way or another, all poets have said this. I will recall a line by Paul Éluard: 'There is another world, but it exists within this one.' (*Un autre monde existe, mais il est dans celui-ci.*) ●



It is perfectly normal to encounter deer in a beech wood. But this is a new breed. Some decades ago, he gathered momentum into a leap that seems frozen in eternity.

There is no doubt now that eavesdroppers are everywhere, watching us.



1 Cut horizontally with sharp scissors, to avoid causing the leaves unnecessary damage.

The large leaves of trees such as Japanese hazelnut (*Corylopsis pauciflora*) prevent light from reaching the inner parts of the tree. Their leaves then need to be cut in half in the summer.

Letting the sunlight into your trees

Author: BonsaiTranslations
Demonstration: Miura Baiju-en

Large-leafed tree species are often appealing, but their foliage stops sunlight from getting inside them. In summer, the solution is to cut the leaves in half so that light can stimulate all-round bud growth.

Large leaves stop light from getting through to the inner parts of trees that have them. It is therefore necessary to allow the light to penetrate by cutting leaves in half in the summer. Trees that produce small leaves are highly sought after in bonsai. But sometimes we choose trees that are attractive for their bark, flowers or fruits, despite having large leaves. These trees are usually displayed without their leaves, when they are dormant during the period of vegetative rest. Among such



2 A little sap may seep out of the cut: this is perfectly normal.



3 Miura works from the top of the tree to the bottom.



4 It isn't necessary to cut the little leaves that grow inside the tree. On the contrary: they should be protected, while allowing light and air to get through.



5 After cutting all the large leaves, Miura inspects the top part of the tree to check the spacing. If the leaves are still too dense towards the top, they can be completely eliminated, as is done in the spring.



6 The tree looks a little odd after this task, but you can feel the air and the light getting in among the branches. This will stimulate the growth of buds inside the tree.

species are Chinese quince (*Pseudocystodonia sinensis*), beech (*Fagus*), yellow-flowering hazel also known as winter hazel (*Corylopsis pauciflora*), and various varieties of tree that bear miniature fruit such as peaches and oranges. Here, the bonsai master Hiroki Miura, from the Baiju-en nursery, presents three large-leaved trees – Japanese hazelnut, *Kadsura japonica* (a type of Japanese vine) and beech – to explain why and how to cut the leaves in half.

Why cut leaves?

There are three reasons for cutting leaves in half in the summer. The first is a basic rule in bonsai: light always needs to be able to reach the inner parts of the tree. This can be achieved by partial or total defoliation on small-leaved trees, and by trimming needles on pines and junipers. The aim is to protect inner branches and encourage other branches to grow by back budding – that is, to increase the number of branches in order to create a full ramification.

The second reason is that large leaves need a lot of water in the summer. By cutting them back, you reduce the tree's water requirements, making the tree more resistant to summer heat and drought. Greater resistance doesn't mean that you can forget about watering: summer is always a difficult period for bonsai. Finally, cutting the leaves in half encourages air to circulate between the branches. Air movement is important for bonsai: good air circulation prevents excessive dampness, which can cause problems of mould or disease such as powdery mildew in very humid regions.

The technique

Japanese hazelnuts have large, thick, oval-shaped leaves. They need a lot of water in the summer. The technique for cutting leaves is extremely simple, as it simply consists of cutting them in half! This hazelnut has the largest leaves of the three trees used as examples here, and is the best illustration of it. ►►►

Example: a Kadsura vine

Kadsura japonica is a vine that grows in the forests of Japan. This tree is sought after for its bright red berries, which are very similar to raspberries. However, its leaves are very long and cumbersome. The process is exactly the same as before.



1 *Kadsura japonica*, a Japanese vine, has large leaves that need to be cut.



2 Using sharp scissors, cut the leaves in half across the middle.



3 It is a straight cut.



4 Sometimes *Kadsura* leaves fold up in summer, like plum leaves. In this case, you can keep them folded when cutting.



5 Here again, work downwards from top to bottom.



6 The front of the *Kadsura japonica* after completion of the task. Height: 20 cm (8 in).



7 Rear view.



A This shohin-sized beech's leaves are too large to allow light to reach the inner areas of the tree.



B Each leaf is cut in half with a pair of scissors.



C The paler leaves at the top are new leaves that have come out recently. It is preferable not to trim them, as they may carry a greater risk of drying out.

D The tree now has plenty of space between its leaves for light and air. By carrying out this task at the beginning of summer, new leaves will appear in the centre, which is the aim of the exercise.



Example: a beech

Beech is a very popular species for formal upright styles. When beech bonsai are large, the leaves don't appear oversized; but for trees measuring less than 20 centimetres (8 inches), their large proportions are a little less appealing. Note how healthy this tree is: the leaves have no stains, browning or other flaws. ►►►

● Shohin: Small Bonsais



Quinces with this many branches are impressive, as it is not easy to obtain this result. This tree - height 20 cm (8 in) - was exhibited at the 38th Gafu-ten in the "large shohin" category.



Japanese maple leaves grow in pairs.



To keep both leaves and stimulate back budding, cut every leaf.



The outer edge of each lobe is cut off.

Why not to defoliate

Large-leafed trees take longer to produce their foliage than small-leafed ones. On a large bonsai, partial defoliation is therefore possible; but in the case of shohin trees, it is not desirable.

It is far more difficult to multiply ramification – that is, to bring about budding – on a tree with large leaves. Chinese quince, for example, is a tree on which it is very difficult to multiply the ramification.

This technique could therefore be used on a large bonsai in order to multiply the ramification. It is, however, extremely risky where shohin bonsai are concerned. Quince leaves act like a parasol for the tiny trunk and branches.

How to deal with Japanese maples

It is also possible to use this technique of cutting leaves in half on Japanese maples. You can fold the leaf and then cut across it. However, maples are very strong trees and their foliage grows very rapidly. Total or partial defoliation is therefore more suited to these species. Japanese maple leaves grow in pairs. If you have one slightly weaker branch, you can cut one leaf of each pair, to conserve the branch's energy. If you want to

To be avoided when ...

If you have any doubts about how healthy your tree is – for example, if it has been weakened by disease, parasites or overwatering – it is best not to embark upon this operation. If you want to display the tree at an exhibition in the autumn or winter, it will need to be defoliated, so you will not be able to use its autumn colours.

keep both – for aesthetic reasons, for instance – you can cut off the lobes of the leaves: this will cause back budding for both leaves in the pair, and may thus make new branches appear.

After-care

It is important to protect trees against strong afternoon sunlight in summer. You can cover them with a shade sail or muslin. However, it is important to remove the shading fabric in the evening so that both the dew and the morning sun can reach the tree. Note also that these trees are less thirsty: it is therefore important to slightly reduce the amount of watering. If the soil is damp, there is no need to water. Watering is needed when the soil is dried out. The colour of akadama soil changes when it is wet, especially if it is new. Don't forget that air circulation is very important for trees. It helps prevent excessive dampness near the trunk, which can attract a number of parasites. If your garden has solid walls around it, try also to place your trees in elevated positions. Space your pots out on their shelves. Lastly, summer sun can really help your trees to develop, so do as the song says: "Let the sunshine in!" ●



Almost a year has passed since the air-layering process began in 2015. It is time to separate the two parts. For some species, you have to wait more than two years.

Air-layering: first aid for marcots and trees

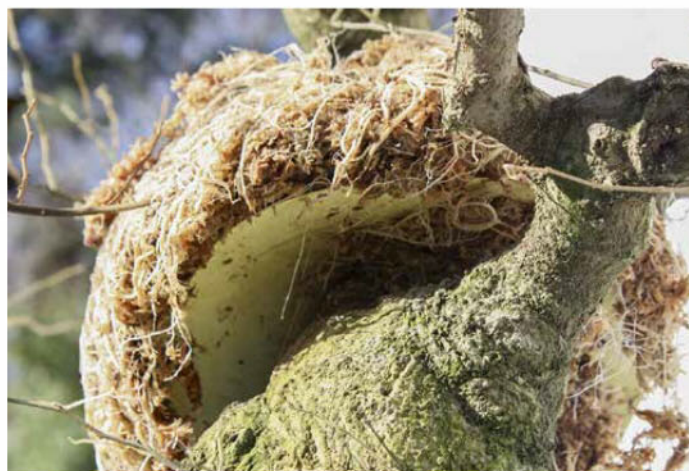
A few months after air-layering comes the time to separate the marcots from the tree. The marcots then need to be repotted, and the tree requires some initial work, including tending its wounds. This *Celtis australis* provides a practical example.

Author: Jérôme Hay

During the winter in early 2016, ten months after air-layering this *Celtis australis* (see *Esprit Bonsai International* issue 81), it was time to separate the marcots (air layers) from the tree. The best period for this to be done is around October, when sap descends to strengthen the roots. But this year's very mild winter weather had not halted growth. The *Celtis australis*'s root system had developed considerably and ►►►



❶ Carefully uncovering the marcot.



❷ The roots have developed well on the part above the plastic disc, which allows the cut to be made just beneath it.



❸ To definitively separate the marcot, the branch is cut just below the plastic disc.



❹ The procedure is repeated with the second marcot.

►►► even become so massive that it needed to be defoliated before work began.

I therefore opted to wait for the first spell of cold weather to remove the marcots. While some periods are particularly recommended for various stages of air-layering, it is most important to take account of the climate and of the plant's state – whether it is far advanced or lagging behind.

Cutting underneath the marcots

The first step was to cut through the plastic sheeting to uncover the roots, which had developed well above the disc. Then I sawed through the branch just beneath the marcot: this should be done in an area up to 3 centimetres (just over an inch) below the disc.

The awkward angle of access and the lack of visibility didn't allow great precision at this point, but

not to worry: cuts can be improved at a later stage. For now, it was most important to take care not to damage the roots, which were still very fragile.

Repotting marcots

Once both marcots had been removed, I repotted them in a training pot, not forgetting to gently comb through the roots so as to orient them in the right direction. The roots at this stage are small and delicate, and do not yet serve to stabilise the trees. It can therefore be risky to tie them. It's better to anchor the trees in place by screwing them to the pot, after working over and healing the cuts.

If the pot is a ceramic one, you can cut out a PVC platform which you can then screw to the middle of the cut. This platform will both stabilise the tree and guide the roots in the right direction.



The upper part of the tree, which will be repotted.



A Having removed the air layers, work can start on the parent tree.



B The tree is repositioned in the pot, according to the side of it that has been selected to make the front.



A branch cut off during air-layering that requires repotting.



C The unusable branches are cut off. To get off to a good start, it is crucial to remove all branches that are not thick enough or are growing from an unsuitable point.

After repotting the trees in a mixture of akadama, pumice and sphagnum, water them generously. Take particular care to keep them sheltered until they have started to grow again. If the plants seem to have been slowed down by the severing operation, you can use a root stimulant as soon as they start to take, to reinforce the roots. A fertiliser that contains high levels of phosphorus and potash may even prove essential.

Taking care of the parent tree

The parent tree, stripped of its branches, now had a bare appearance which merely needed some tweaking. First of all, though, I needed to take advantage of the air-layering process to repot it and heal the large cuts. ▶▶▶



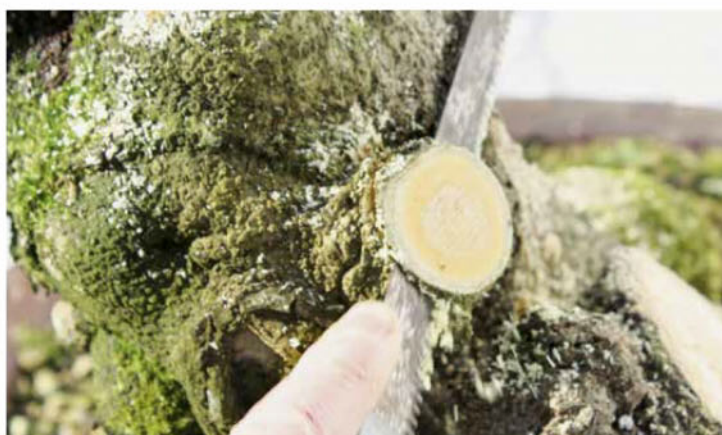
D This branch is well positioned to create the tree's eventual apex. The over-long parts can be taken back.



E A sap-drawer is kept.

▶▶▶ Thus began a lengthy process that will not be complete for another few years. Repotting first of all allows the tree to be positioned at a new angle, to facilitate the work to come. But it also allows some of the soil to be changed, which is beneficial in terms of drainage and nutrients, and at the same time to get a view of the roots in order to pace the work.

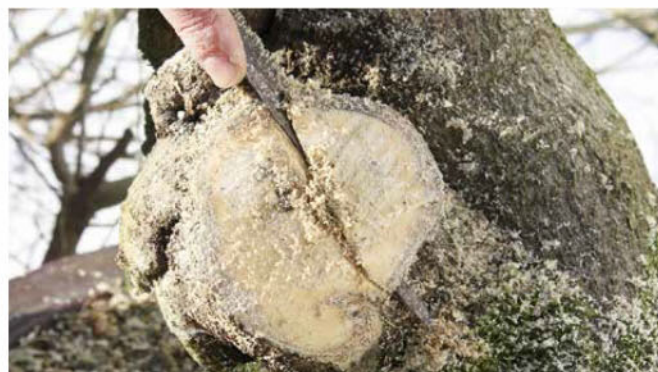
It's best to avoid going too deep, so as not to cause the plant unnecessary stress. In particular, severing roots may slow down rising sap, which needs to be kept flowing vigorously to allow buds eventually to break through.



1 All the cuts are worked over, one by one.



2 The wounds are cleaned, using a knife.



3 Large cuts also need to be worked over, both to aid the healing process and to improve the tree's appearance. Here, I am making notches on the cut to lessen its visual impact.

Healing cuts

First you need to adjust pruned areas and work over the cuts with a grafting knife, to remove any torn or shredded tissue. A clean cut will heal very quickly. Then the wounds need to be dressed with cut paste, and aluminium foil needs to be applied to keep temperature and humidity stable – even if this is admittedly a rather unattractive form of decoration.

The results are spectacular. But the wounds on this *Celtis australis* are enormous: it will take several years for them to heal fully. This waiting period provides an opportunity to carry out some other work. ●



④ An angle grinder is used to pare back the corners.



⑤ The cambium produces a kink in the cut: a sign that it is still active, which will help the wound to heal.



⑥ Working round the edges of the cut with a knife, to make it clean and tidy.



⑦ The cut paste should slightly spill over onto the bark. A useful tip: to make it easier to apply the paste, make sure you dip your fingers in water beforehand.



⑧ Lastly, some aluminium foil is applied, to protect the paste and set off the healing process.

The *Celtis australis* has been pruned and its wounds dressed.



A week later, a few buds are already breaking through.

Deciduous trees Pinching out buds in spring

Author: Gilbert Labrid

Pinching out deciduous trees in spring is an important task as the internodes need to be reduced to encourage a tree's densification. Each species has its own characteristics in regard to pinching.



Spring is the time to pinch out deciduous trees to achieve shorter internodes. To do this effectively, use tweezers which will help to remove the terminal bud with precision.

The main purpose of pinching out deciduous trees is to keep the internodes fairly short in order to construct compact shapes. Indeed, when the internodes lengthen, ramification becomes messy and construction work will be pointless.

To achieve this objective, buds need to be pinched out before they open, which will allow the buds behind to sprout. Use tweezers to open out the new leaves and remove the central shoot. If you wait until the bud can be pinched using your fingers, the internodes will already be too long and pinching the buds will not be effective.

For bonsai trees that have already been constructed in a multi-trunk style, the aim is to balance the thrust of the trunks and the branches. It can be seen that the largest buds are also the first to develop, before the weaker buds beneath them, which are slower.

The younger the tree, the greater the difference between the stronger and weaker buds is.

The aim of pinching out buds in spring is to obtain a mature tree, with an even distribution of strength between all the buds.

AN ADJUSTABLE TECHNIQUE

If a tree is left to its own devices, it will produce new shoots with many pairs of leaves that will grow along the length of the new shoot. As the tree strengthens on the outside, the internal buds will weaken and smaller twigs will die, leaving bare branches with poor ramification.

If the tree is still being constructed, let the new shoots lengthen and then prune them back to one

pair of leaves, this will strengthen the branches and the trees.

If you are refining a tree, you need to wait for the first leaves to open and then pinch the end of the shoots with tweezers before they lengthen and unfurl into extra leaves. This will prevent the straight shoots from extending and will force interior buds to open.

However, it doesn't stop there! Later, in summer, the large outside leaves will shade the new interior growth, so the size of the exterior leaves needs to be reduced or removed to let the sunlight in. The buds on the inside of the tree will have now grown into small branches and the tree is closer to achieving the objective.

• JAPANESE MAPLES

Pinching out young buds on maple trees differs according to the characteristics of the shoots of each variety.

Maples with red shoots sprout with irregular strength, except for the Seigen, which despite its red shoots, sprouts with an even distribution.

Slow-growing maples (Yatsubusa) are generally well balanced. The problem with these trees is their very dense ramification, which makes effective pinching more difficult.

If there is no intervention on the new shoots in spring, the internodes of the strongest sprouts will lengthen and the tree will become very dishevelled.

On the other hand, pinching out the stronger shoots late, accelerates interior sprouting. ►►►

After repotting

Take care: A tree - even an established tree - that has just been repotted (and has had its roots severely cut back), cannot be given the same treatment. It is better not to pinch out too strongly, otherwise you risk compromising the growth of new roots. Limit yourself to maintaining an evenly distributed balance among the various parts of the tree and do not allow one part to dominate the others.

Acer palmatum, a variety of maple with green leaves in spring.



1 The apical shoots are the strongest and are the first to open.



2 To balance the strength of the branches, pinch out the central shoot as the first leaves appear.



3 When the leaves are opened - two pairs can be seen here - the internodes will not be reduced.



4 At this stage, it is too late. Notice the length of the first internode. It can be pinched when many more leaves have strengthened the stem.



5 Let a shoot grow until it has five or six pairs of leaves. This will increase the leaf branch's strength and improve the growth of the interior shoots.



6 Cut away above the first pair of leaves pair near the base.

***Acer palmatum* 'Atropurpureum'**, a variety with red leaves in spring



The strength of the shoots on this *Atropurpureum* is unequal. When possible, only keep the weakest (the smallest).



Pinch the shoot as soon as it opens. The internodes have already lengthened.

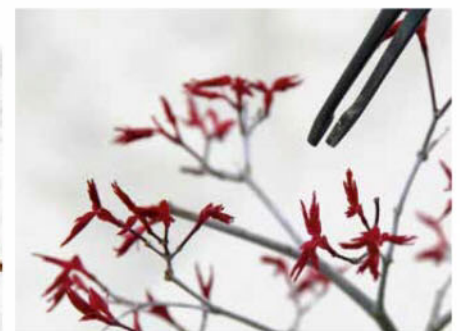


It is not always easy to tell if the terminal bud is leaf or flower; flowers open simultaneously. Removing the flowers gives the tree more energy.

***Acer palmatum* 'Deshojo'**

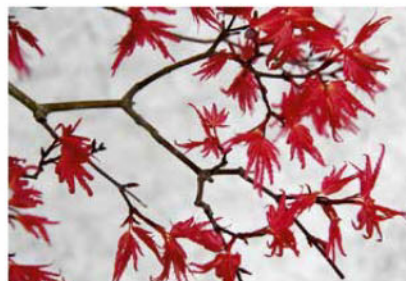


Acer palmatum 'Deshojo'. At the tip of the branches, the leaves have already opened, whereas the buds in the centre are only just beginning to swell.



Check the tree regularly - daily - to pinch out the shoots as they open.

***Acer palmatum* 'Seigen'**



A Unlike the other red varieties, the Seigen's shoots all open at about the same time, with identical vigour.



B The moment the buds appear, you can select the shoots (red arrow) which will replace the branches that are too thick (yellow arrow) or badly positioned.



C By masking the shoot to be removed, you can visualise the space to be reorganised with the replacement shoot.

***Acer palmatum* 'Crispifolium' :**
a slow-growing variety



A *Acer palmatum* 'Crispifolium'. The new shoot has not caused uncontrolled growth. There is little space between the buds.



B Length has been limited and has remained fairly compact. The shoots that appear on the crown are removed.



C For precision, pinching is done using scissors.

***Acer palmatum* 'Kiyohime'**

The Kiyohime has a tendency to be weak at the top and strong on the bottom branches, which is the complete opposite of other *Acer*. The lower parts can be pruned more strongly, but take care with the top of the tree.

When the leaves first open in spring, they are light yellowish green in colour. Slender and textured, they deepen to a middling green as they get older. In autumn, the leaves turn a golden orange with bright red outer edges. The leaves are slightly longer than those of other dwarf varieties. Its growth structure is made up of many branches that form a small, compact plant.



The crown is not as dense as the lower parts. This is characteristic of the Kiyohime. When winter pruning, and when pinching out, be careful not to disproportionately weaken the crown of the tree



Limit yourself to keeping the shape by removing only the strong shoots, particularly on the bottom part of the tree. When the leaves unfurl in spring, they are often light green, with their edges outlined in red.

Dwarf *Acer*

There are many varieties of *Acer* that are naturally small. 'Kiyohime' is well known for its leaves and its fine, dense twigs; 'Kotohime Yatsubusa' is a tiny tree, and the more unusual 'Mikawa Yatsubusa', has leaves that are scarcely 1 cm ($\frac{3}{8}$ in) long. These varieties are not so easy to maintain, but as bonsai, the results are often worth the trouble.

• TRILOBATE MAPLES

Buerger Maple, *Acer buergerianum*



1 There are many varieties of Buerger maples; some are more colourful than others in spring - the best time to pinch out shoots.



2 Using tweezers is indispensable for more precision.



3 It is difficult to perform this action precisely with one's fingers. One risks disturbing the budding of the secondary shoots.



4 At this stage, there is little point in pinching out. It is better to wait and then use scissors on a stronger shoot.

• DECIDUOUS TREES WITH SMALL SHOOTS



**Hornbeam,
*Carpinus***



1 Shoots on the *Carpinus betulus* are very small and compact. When the buds sprout, the one at the apex takes all the energy. This growth has to be curbed.



2 Once the apical bud is removed, the shoots behind will develop.

3 Shoots on several leaves are allowed to grow before one or two are cut out depending on their size and position.

Hackberry, *Celtis*



1 The terminal buds are not very visible in this *Celtis*.

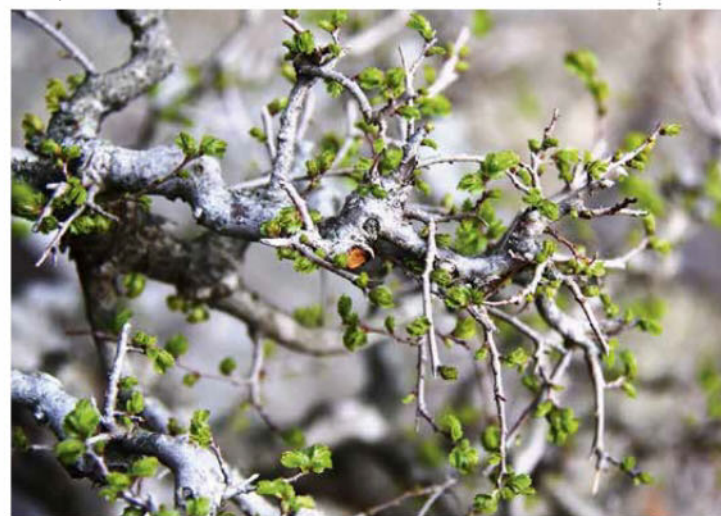


2 The shoot is already too long for pinching out to be effective.



3 One must now wait until maturity before pinching one or two leaves.

Elm, *Ulmus*



A Elm shoots are very small and impossible to pinch out when they start to sprout.



B They are allowed to grow freely on many leaves until the leaf branch has matured.



C Cut back one or two leaves depending on the tree's orientation and the required direction.



**Montpellier maple,
*Acer monspessulanum***



A The shoots of the Montpellier maple are often in a group three at the apex. Only keep two avoiding those that droop or those that grow too vertically.

B The terminal bud is enclosed in very tightly furled leaves and is difficult to reach.



C One could use one's fingers, but it will not be as effective as using tweezers.



D The tweezers' spring-like mechanism allows one to part the young leaves without damaging them. The shoot can be easily removed without damage.

Zelkova, *Zelkova carpinifolia*



1 Zelkova, like elms, are impossible pinch out when they are in bud..



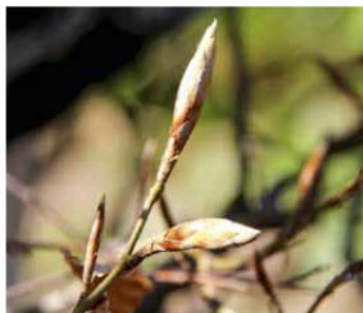
2 Let them grow until there is a set of 6 - 8 leaves.



3 Using scissors, remove all the shoots that do not conform to the shape of the tree.

• DECIDUOUS TREES WITH LARGE BUDS

Beech, *Fagus sylvatica*



A The terminal buds on this beech are still swelling; it is not the moment to pinch them out.



B The best time to break off the shoot is as soon as the leaves appear and before they unfurl.



C As the leaves are very intertwined, one pinches out the middle stem using one's fingers, so there is no risk of cutting the leaves in half.



D The bottom of the shoot is firmly held while giving the point a half twist which breaks the stem while the leaves remain intact.

Oak, *Quercus pubescens*



1 The terminal buds on an oak are often in groups of three. If these are to be kept, one of them must be removed, and the pinched out to unblock the shoots below.



2 First remove one of three shoots. The buds swell and can be dealt with.



3 Using tweezers, the first leaves are pushed aside and the central stem is gently broken off.



4 This shoot has a set of 6 to 10 leaves. The number is reduced by pinching them out to release many other secondary shoots.

• FRUIT TREES

Quince, *Cydonia sinensis*



A On quince, pinch out the apical shoots from the moment they come into bud.



B Be careful not to remove the flower buds, which unlike stone fruit trees, open at the same time as the leaves.



C To strengthen the branches, let them grow and prune back the leaves.

Apple, *Malus*



1 *Malus* flower buds and leaf shoots appear at the same time.



2 At this stage one can see the first shoots sprouting at the ends of the branches.



3 Pinch out with scissors being careful to avoid the flowers close to them. Or remove the flowers to allow growth and strengthen a weak leaf branch.



4 To prepare for next season's flowering, allow the branches to grow until August and then take them back to the first formed buds.



This marcot has been in place on this field maple since April 2013. It has taken three years, and several setbacks, to finally get some results. In March 2016, work begins on separating these two shohin.



The marcot on the upper part of the field maple. Here you can see healthy, vigorous buds that are ready to break – a sign of good health.



The scar forming on the half-cut made in 2013.

Air-layering to produce shohin

Creating two shohin from a single tree: a good way to make the best of a relatively uninteresting field maple. After air-layering, a half-cut and a lot of patience, the time has come to separate the two bonsai.

Author: Jérôme Hay

How do you get the best out of a tree that you know will never become a fine bonsai in its own right? Producing shohin from it can offer an interesting solution. In an earlier issue of *Esprit Bonsai International* (see no. 73), I explained how to combine an air layer and a half-cut at the base – a technique used by the Japanese master Hiromi Tsukada – to obtain two shohin from a rather ordinary field maple.

The initial plan, devised with Tsukada – who is a true connoisseur of Japanese maples – involved taking advantage of the nebari and working on the primary branch to create the tree's future apex. The technique of cutting halfway through to induce healing seemed a good option. After that, the air-layering method would be used to



Removal of the cloth from around the marcot reveals that the marcot's root hairs have taken over the peat moss.



A cut is made just underneath the plastic ring.



Two blackish marks are visible in the centre of the tree, indicating the bridge that has formed inside the wood.

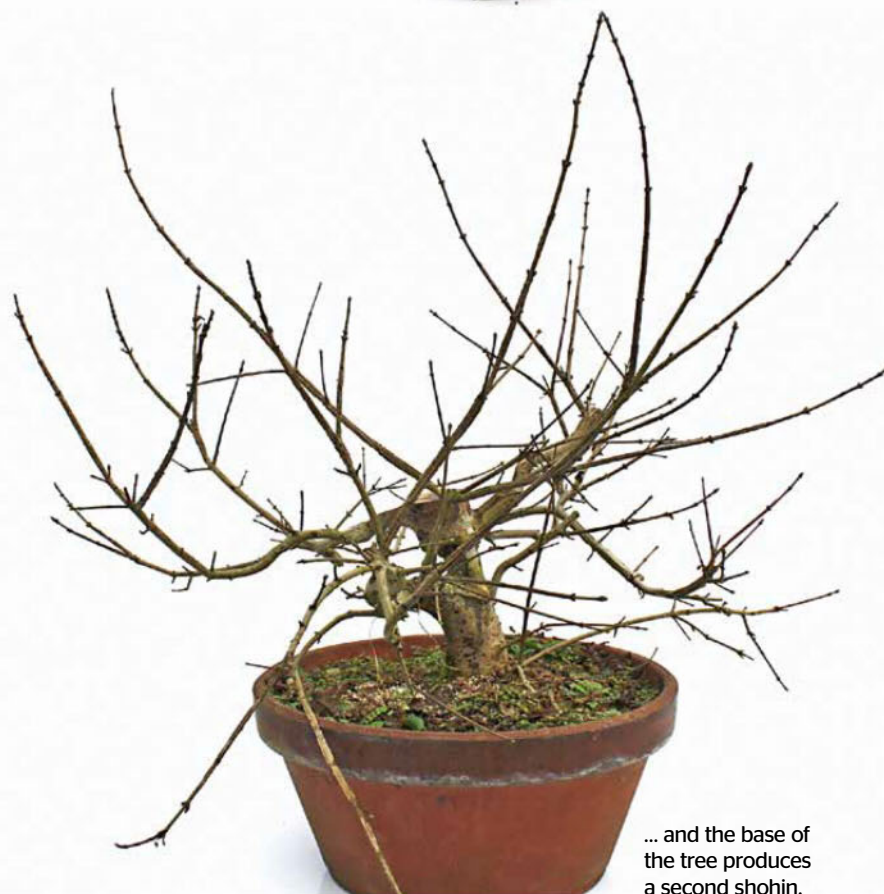
produce a second shohin with the top part of the tree. These interventions, carried out in April 2013, were followed by a few years of waiting before a satisfactory result could be observed.

Difficult beginnings

Although field maple is not a difficult species where air-layering is concerned, it yielded no results in the first year. In October 2013, after removing the top layer of black plastic, I noted that the roots had failed to colonise the mixture of peat moss (sphagnum) and akadama under the translucent plastic. I then took the decision to undo the air layer to check the working area. A slight callus had formed. But I couldn't see the bridge – the string of cells that normally restores the downward flow



The detached marcot allows a first shohin to be created ...



... and the base of the tree produces a second shohin.

of sap. Disappointed, but not defeated, I put the air layer back together again – because, despite it all, the healing process was coming along well.

The following season, the tree seemed to take off well ... until in mid-June 2014 I observed some discolouring on the upper part, together with a loss of vigour. The lower part didn't seem to be affected by this. I therefore tried to rectify the situation by applying a stronger, more iron-rich fertiliser. But only the lower part seemed to benefit from this treatment, while the upper part showed no noticeable improvement. ►►►



When the half-cut is almost healed, the cut is continued right through with a saw.



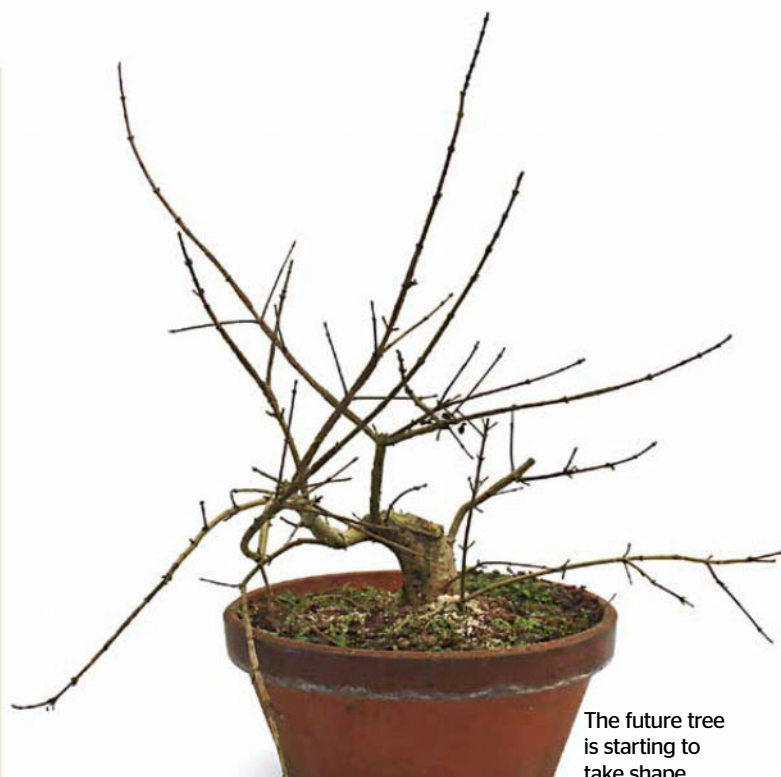
The healing process works in all directions, and can be remarked here on the upper part of the cut.

How to encourage successful healing

The healing process as brought about by Hiromi Tsukada's technique (see the article in *Esprit Bonsai International*, no. 73, pp. 54-59) allowed the final cut to be pre-engineered. Despite the considerable size of the wound, healing could begin because of how cleanly the piece of wood had been removed. The upper part drew sap upwards, thus amplifying the phenomenon and causing the cut to heal more successfully and more quickly.

Worth remembering:

- a cutting angle of about 30° is best for redirecting the sap flow.
- working over a clean wound by smoothing the surface with a grafting knife allows problems with the development of wound-covering tissue to be avoided. If the cambium is properly incised, it should not become infected, since a sharp knife will not destroy many cells.



The future tree is starting to take shape.

▶▶▶ As the autumn of 2014 approached, I could still see no roots appearing on the surface of the polythene sheeting. Feeling rather hopeless, I undid the air layer and once again saw that the roots had not started to take. Disappointed, I decided to start again from scratch, by changing the soil, which seemed too damp, as well as the plastic around the upper part, which was still alive despite its worrying condition. Having cleaned the girdle, I replaced the original mixture of akadama and peat moss with peat moss alone. Instead of plastic, I opted for porous woven cloth that allowed air and water exchange to be regulated. I put the tree in the shade, under a sprinkler. During this period, the healing process was gradually progressing.

Time and patience

The next spring, in 2015, things went even more haywire. The lower part took off quickly, while the upper part continued to deteriorate. Foliage started to be displayed in the lower part, while above the terminal buds were turning black and not going anywhere. Others further back, which were clearly suffering from chlorosis (Editor's note: discolouring of the leaves due to a lack of chlorophyll), timidly started to break. But on the most basic level, the fact remained that – despite lagging significantly behind – the upper part was still alive.

The tree survived the season without further incident. However, the difference between the lower and upper parts was striking. In October 2015, I undid the upper part of the air layer yet again. I was relieved to see fine root hairs running through the



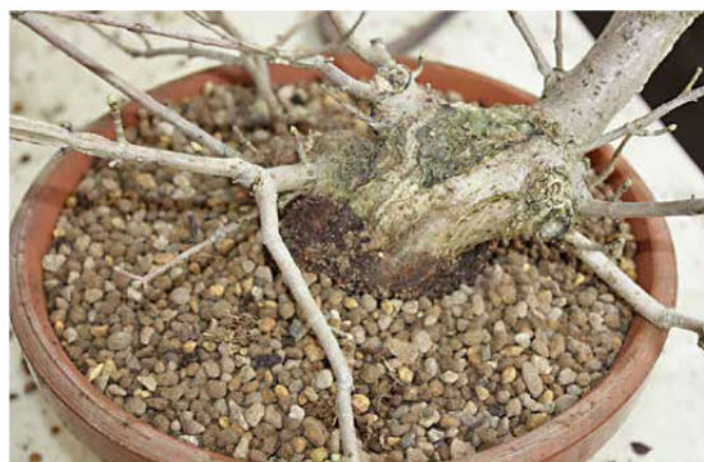
Pots are prepared to hold the trees, by arranging fastening wires to hold them firmly in place.



The root ball is carefully loosened ...



The tree is placed in its pot.



The soil is covered, after securing the tree with the wires.

peat moss. As the proverb says: "All things come to those who wait."

Repotting at last

In March 2016, I decided to separate and then repot the two trees. After sawing through the trunk below the plastic collar, I carefully untwisted the coiled peat moss, making sure not to damage the delicate roots. Without going too far, I tried to get a glimpse of the beginning of the root system, which was evenly spread. I then placed the marcot in a round training pot, which meant that I did not have to favour any particular viewpoint as the eventual front of the tree.

Since three years had passed since work had started on the marcot, I took advantage of ►►►



The cut on the lower part is worked over one last time. At this point, in early March, the plant is starting to grow again and the cut fills with sap in just a few minutes.

● *Spotlight*
on Broadleaves



The cuts are meticulously worked over with a grafting knife, including on the dead parts.



Finally, cut paste is applied; then the plant is pruned back.



The two shohin after completion of the task.



►►► the opportunity to repot the lower part. It hadn't been possible to do this during the air-layering process: constraining the tree's root system would have weakened its reserves. I repotted this part in a round training pot with the same considerations as for the layered part. Since the two trees were equal in size, I used two identical pots, much smaller than the pot that had been used previously. Before and during air-layering, it is important to choose a sufficiently large training pot to spur on the root system and thus enhance the resource supply.

Ensuring the right supplies

This repotting exercise lasted for over an hour. Reworking a root system that is long and thick means having to think carefully about each cut. I ended up removing more than a third of the root system, so as not to impede the recovery process. Since root hairs are at the ends of thick roots, it can prove complicated to encourage them while cutting off thick roots.

So, this season, the two trees started from the same point, both having been repotted. Care needs to be taken to supply what they need to stay equally strong. They need to be regularly pinched back, and should be styled next autumn through a small amount of wiring. Depending on how vigorously they grow over the course of the year, they may be able to be placed in their final pots in spring 2017. ●

Why the near-failure?

It can be difficult to identify the reasons why air-layering has failed, especially if the task has been carried out correctly and the plant has been watered the right amount. Even when all the right conditions for success come together, you still have to deal with the unexpected – the aspects that you cannot control. It may be a question of a structural abnormality that is temporarily serving as a survival strategy. In this case, a bridge that is invisible to the naked eye will form inside the xylem, rather than on its surface. Since it serves the lower part, it doesn't allow the upper part to create a root system. What is more, it cannot advance because it uses a pre-existing structure: the xylem. Constrained inside the structure, the cells cannot develop. In the long term, this defect leads inexorably to the sap supply being throttled until it completely stops circulating. The plant then has no other option than to create its own root system.

I have witnessed an even more extreme situation in the past. The bridge, which consists of phloem, had transformed into cambium and become strong enough to split the wood. In the most extraordinary way, it had created the space it needed to develop.



The two trees in late April.



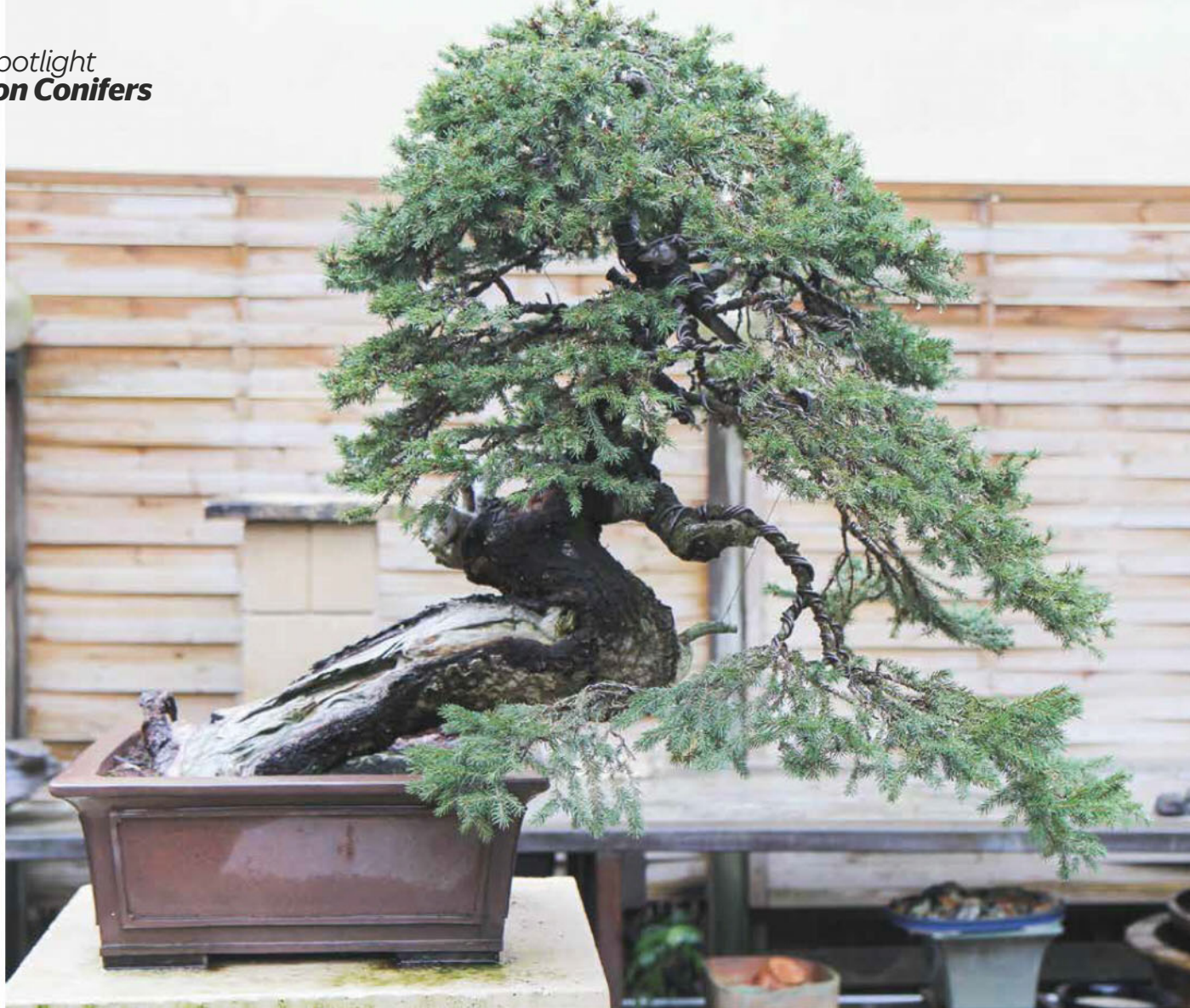
The upper part has flowered and produced fruit: proof that balance has been re-established in the vital functions.



Some chlorosis can be observed. But the colour of the veins – which are greener than the ends of the leaves – indicates that this will improve.



One month after it was applied, the cut paste is cracking because of the healing process that is happening underneath.



This beautiful spruce yamadori has undergone 15 years' work. It is time to repot it and revisit its design, among other things, to help bring it to maturity.

Bringing a spruce to maturity

The reward for fifteen years' patience. A tree needs a certain amount of time to mature: it can't be rushed. This spruce is starting to reach a good level of maturity. Spring 2016 is a decisive stage for perfecting it through a few adjustments.

This spruce yamadori, *Picea abies*, was found in the Alps in 2001 and worked on for five years in situ – digging to gradually delimit the roots, and cutting off unnecessary branches – before being collected in 2006. In 2010 it was ready for initial styling, and then in 2013 further work was needed, including to develop its look. Now, in spring 2016, the spruce needs to be

Author: François Jeker



The spruce in 2007, a year after it was collected.



In 2007, the branches were shortened and their angles corrected using bracing wires. A first phase of work was done on the deadwood.



Initial styling was carried out in 2010 on a perfectly prepared tree.



In spring 2013, the tree's growth needed to be taken into account by removing weak parts and restyling it.

repotted, and a little more intervention is required to bring it to maturity. It is a truism that bonsai is a school of patience. We learn that our time isn't the same as trees' time, and that we need to willingly adapt to the rules that nature imposes upon us, starting with that of passing time. Bringing a bonsai to maturity first and foremost means accompanying the tree, taking account of its evolution and forgetting techniques and rules. Perhaps even forgetting yourself and placing yourself humbly at the tree's service.

Preparing the roots

Repotting is essential for two reasons. When watering, it is difficult for the water to get into the root ball if it has become too compacted. Also, a Belgian friend gave me a superb antique Tokoname ►►►



Repotting is also a good time to improve nebari.



The spruce's root ball is very healthy but too compacted.



For example, shortening an aerial root ...



... and cutting it back while leaving lateral roots.



Almost 3 cm (over 1 in) of the soil surface is removed, revealing new roots. This one is cut back at a bevelled angle, taking care to preserve the lateral roots.



The stump is cut back using concave branch cutters, always taking care to preserve as many lateral roots as possible.



Cut paste will protect the wound. Now a first large stump, on the right, needs to be corrected.



The root on the left and the base of the trunk on the right have been exposed by the work on the surface of the soil.



The other stump, which made it impossible to plant the tree at the correct angle in the antique pot, needs to be corrected.



It is cut back with concave branch cutters.



The wound is protected with cut paste.

►►► pot by Kakuzan, but two stumps of roots prevented the tree from being positioned towards its front. In spring 2016, I embarked upon this tricky repotting exercise with my friend Cedric: it's better to have someone help you when the tree is so heavy, and not to take any risks.



Now it's time to attend to the underneath of the root ball, which needs to be brushed, in particular removing the soil that was directly beneath the trunk. This is important for the tree's health.





The roots are cut back one by one, automatically leaving ramifications behind.



This technique allows the stress suffered by the tree due to repotting to be greatly reduced.

Placing the tree in the pot

The tree is ready to be placed in its pot. A mound of soil is prepared at the bottom. Placing the spruce on top of this "pyramid" will make it easier to make precise adjustments to the planting angle. The tree is securely fixed with thick wire so that it doesn't move any more. If, when you pick up the trunk, the pot comes with it, this means that it is well secured. The rootlets and the precious absorbent hairs run no risk of being damaged when the tree is being moved from one place to another or by strong gusts of wind in the coming months.



Adjusting the angle of planting in the pot is an important moment. You need to take your time to position the tree well.



Secured with 4-mm (0.16-in; AWG 6) wire, the tree is not going anywhere.



Next, the tree is "flooded". When the water emerging from the drainage holes runs clear, it means that the dust residue has been removed from the soil.

Improving deadwood

With time, the veins that fed the large severed branches have dried out. The bark needs to be removed, down to the living wood, to allow nature to age the wood. Also, the visible areas of the large stumps need to be adjusted. Work begins on a first stump. Using a branch splitter, a bundle of fibres about 4 millimetres ($\frac{1}{8}$ inch) thick should be detached: this way, the internal structure of the wood will be ►►►



Using a blunt tool, pull away the bark from the dead areas. About 2 to 3 mm (less than $\frac{1}{8}$ in) of the living areas need to be damaged, to speed up the healing process and encourage a healthy scar to form.



The upper part of the stump is trimmed back in very thick splinters. Use a large but very narrow branch splitter. If you use a wide one, you will cut rather than splinter off the pieces, and the traces of these cuts will be very difficult to put right.

►►► revealed. If thinner slivers are pulled away, the surface of the wood will become “gnawed” and transform into a formless rasp with lots of little teeth. A saucer-shaped router bit will make the wood’s movements more readable, especially by creating contrasts between the very deep cracks and others that are barely visible.

Refining the design

The angle of planting has been changed during repotting: the tree has been made slightly more vertical and the front has been shifted by 30 degrees. Because of this, the underneath of the branches and the outlines of the empty spaces are no longer coherent. Neither is the overall silhouette of the tree. The apex is too bushy and heavy, and its inner structure no longer visible. Lastly, the lowest branch has not been pruned for four years in order



The time has come to analyse the tree in detail before improving its design.

to stimulate its vigour and block the spruce’s apical growth. It is now strong enough to be completely wired, right down to the smallest shoot. The empty space above this low branch will be reduced, to make the tree appear more majestic. And the branch itself currently looks too heavy.

A beautiful outline

These flaws have been corrected. The apex is transparent, with small new empty spaces. The first branch has been lifted and is now composed of three distinct foliage masses to give



This router bit has three functions: it gouges out cracks more deeply, as can be seen here; but also, if used against the wood grain, it can quickly remove a large quantity of wood. Finally, used flat, with the top of the bit against the wood, it polishes.



Extended polishing with a wire brush eliminates the marks of the router bit and gives an aspect of age to the work.



The result is acceptable, but now nature will work on the wood and give it a patina.



The work is complete – for now. The spruce is entering a new cycle.

it a light appearance. The angle of the branches is coherent. The tree’s silhouette is denser and rounder on the left, and more airy on the right. This session concludes fifteen years of work and careful maintenance; and it will all need to start again soon: gradually removing the training wire, cutting off the weakest parts, pruning all the new

shoots each year, and assisting the ageing process of the deadwood. And in five or six years, structural pruning will need to be repeated, and the tree will need wiring once more ... But none of this matters much when you are fortunate enough to live day to day with a tree like this. ●



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A sturdy spruce



This Japanese spruce displayed at the Noelanders Trophy received the joint top prize.

Re-imagining a tree

This section sets out to analyse the choices made by an artist through trying out other options - to show why the choices were apt, and to teach us how to admire ...

Although it now belongs to the Spanish professional Luis Vallejo, this powerful spruce was created by the talented Japanese master Masahiko Kimura, who gave it its dynamism.

Author: François Jeker

This spruce, *Picea glehnii*, is characteristic of Masahiko Kimura's work. Just as it is easy to recognise a painting by Vincent Van Gogh, Claude Monet or Auguste Renoir at first glance, Kimura's touch is immediately visible in this tree. The aesthetic principles that have made this Japanese master's reputation are all visible here. The tree currently belongs to Luis Vallejo and is on display at the bonsai museum in Alcobendas, near Madrid, Spain. It was awarded a prize at the last edition of the Noelanders Trophy.

Masahiko Kimura's choices

Although it has an impressive, twisted trunk, this tree could appear static and somewhat heavy. Kimura has used his talents to give it extraordinary power and energy, through various tactics. The first trick is achieving dynamic balance, with a primary branch on the side towards which the tree leans. This effect is accentuated by the empty space above this primary branch, which looks like an outstretched arm with an open hand trying to find something to lean on. Another involves the trunk and the foliage pointing in opposite directions; the trunk leans towards the left and the foliage is oriented towards the right. Lastly, the tree is very asymmetrical, with a large gap between the primary branch and the balancing branch, short foliage on the right that follows

the forms of the trunk and jin, and a wider green mass on the left. One third to the right, two thirds to the left.

Option 1: the primary branch on the right

With the primary branch on the right to visually counteract the weight of the trunk as it leans to the left, the tree's power, energy and movement all fall by the wayside. It would be almost a crime to imagine the tree this way.

Option 2: more foliage on the right

By lengthening the foliage masses on the right, the upper part becomes symmetrical and no longer follows the curve formed by the jin and the base of the trunk. Here again, part of the tree's power vanishes, as do its unity and compactness.

Option 3: removing an empty space

If the empty space above the primary branch is removed, there is no longer a sense of an arm reaching out into the void to find something to lean on. The effect of dynamic equilibrium is destroyed. The rhythm of empty spaces, which were larger in the lower parts and gradually smaller moving up towards the apex, is also lost. ●



1 Stabilised by the primary branch being on the right, the tree loses all its energy.



2 By broadening the foliage masses, the tree becomes symmetrical.



3 The dynamic effect of the primary branch disappears without a space above it.



Hiroki Miura, of Baiju-en in Osaka, offers an introduction to some potters who are famed for their shohin pots.

Shohin pots by leading potters

As with pots for other bonsai, shohin pots also have big-name potters associated with them. Hiroki Miura, a Japanese master and shohin expert, throws some light on several potters who made their mark on history.

Author: BonsaiTranslations
Pots presented by Hiroki Miura, Baiju-en

Some creators of bonsai pots are famous – such as Tōfukuji – but what about those who made shohin-sized pots, or are still making them today? Of course, Tōfukuji also produced some little pots, but certain potters are better known than others for small-scale work. The All Japan Shohin Association has published a list of the most famous shohin potters in its 40th-anniversary book: *Yuuga, Shohin Bonsai*. The members of the shohin bonsai club based at the Baiju-en nursery in Osaka own many pots by well-known artists. Hiroki Miura, the club's president, presents some of these artists and their creations.

Fukuhou Sansyuu

Birth name:

Fukuji Sugiura (born 16 March 1930)

In Japan, potters use a name associated with their workshop, rather than their true surname. Fukuhou was a major shohin bonsai enthusiast, but he had trouble finding the perfect pots to use in exhibitions. In February 1970, he therefore decided to produce his own pots.

His style is considerably influenced by Kouou Heian. He used clay from the Mikawa area, to the east of Aichi prefecture. It is said that he had to wedge (knead) his clay four hundred times in order to obtain a homogeneous consistency. Fukuhou also made his own glazes.

Since he also practised bonsai, his pots are very easy to use with trees. Unfortunately, though, his output was not extensive, since his career as a potter was very short.



Shallow oval pot in mauve and blue by Fukuhou Sansyuu.
Length: 8 cm (3 $\frac{1}{8}$ in); width: 7 cm (2 $\frac{3}{4}$ in); height: 2.7 cm (1 in).



Deep rectangular painted pot by Daisuke Sano. Length: 8 cm; width: 7 cm (2 $\frac{3}{4}$ in); height: 3.5 cm (1 $\frac{1}{2}$ in).

The stamp is that of the workshop which made the pot.



The artist who has painted the pot, signs it: in this case, Daisuke Sano.

The patina of time

Bonsai pots become more beautiful through being used. Frequent watering, bad weather and passing time endow them with a real sense of nobility. Glazes acquire a patina, and their crazing (a network of fine cracks) becomes more prominent. As the pot matures, it acquires the marks of experience.



Daisuke Sano

Birth name:

Daisuke Sano (1919–2000)

Daisuke Sano was a painter of pots who started working in 1949. He did not make his own pieces, but instead ordered them in and painted them before firing. His main professional activity was designing Yuzen kimonos – silk kimonos, hand-painted by highly skilled craftsmen. He was therefore very adept at depicting flowers, birds, mountains and people.

The superb pot shown here, on which a traveller is taking a moment to contemplate a magnificent tree, is a good illustration of his talent.

Daisuke Sano's brother, Ichitarō Sano, began making pots in 1965. This marked the start of their collaboration.

Daisuke Sano's pieces are so popular that they are commonly referred to as 'Daisuke Bachi' (Daisuke pots). ▶▶▶



This very simple-looking pot by Suzuki Shuuzan looks like something from an ancient armoury. Diameter: 7.5 cm (3 in); height: 3.5 cm (1½ in).



Suzuki Shuuzan

Birth name:

Syunji Suzuki (1928–1987)

Suzuki Shuuzan had some knowledge of bonsai and his pots bring out the best of trees without stealing the limelight from them. His ancient-looking styles arise from a Chinese influence. He also imported his clay from China. He added his own special mixture to it in order to create unique masterpieces. Suzuki Shuuzan's pots are made using the "tataratsukuri" technique. He is known for his large hand-built pots that employ this method. He was an accomplished ceramist and won many prizes, both for his bonsai pots and for his other work.

There are not many bonsai pots by Suzuki Shuuzan, as they have always been considered luxury items. The potter worked exclusively to order and never mass-produced pieces.

Suzuki Shuuzan had only one apprentice: Sensyu. The apprentice's pots have become as famous as those of the master.

The "tataratsukuri" technique

"Tataratsukuri" is a pottery technique that consists of stacking several layers of perfectly flat clay. A block of well-mixed clay can be cut with a wire to make a perfectly flat layer. The various sections of the pot are put together in this way.



Lotus pot by Isseki Miyazaki. Length: 9.5 cm (3¾ in); width: 8 cm (3¼ in); height: 3.5 cm (1¼ in).



Isseki Miyazaki

Birth name:

Atsushi Miyazaki (1919–1984)

Isseki Miyazaki started working as a professional potter in 1955. He made curved suiseki stands and became a very well-known artist in the suiseki world. After studying under the painter Mera Michihiro, he turned his attention to tea plates and cups. It was not until 1965 that he started making pots.

He was an accomplished artist, skilled at making porcelain pots and square pots using the “tataratsukuri” technique. In the early years he placed too much emphasis on his talents, resulting in overly detailed pots. As with bonsai, empty spaces are very important in pottery. Atsushi Miyazaki adapted his approach and made numerous pots in many

forms. He was a true pioneer and experimented with many different porcelains in bright reds and greens.

This pot is a good demonstration of Isseki’s speciality: mountain and waterside scenes. He was a very modest and agreeable

Only during exhibitions

Valuable pots for shohin bonsai are used only during exhibitions. The tree is cultivated in a pot that has exactly the same shape and dimensions as the presentation pot. It is switched to the valuable pot before the exhibition. This way, fragile antique pots are preserved.

man, well liked by many people. He was highly dedicated to what he did. He studied shohin bonsai in detail in order to produce his pots. Through his new styles of pot, he had a profound impact on the evolution of this art. ●



Inside the soldanella's bell-shaped corolla, purple lines enhance the delicate mauve of the flower.

The soldanella is a mountain plant and has all the elements needed for a beautiful kusamono, as can be seen in this *Soldanella alpina* 'Alba' in a ceramic pot by Dan Barton (UK). Photo and enhancement: Robin Jehan de Guernesey.



A fresh and charming mountain dweller

Originally found on rocky mountain slopes and meadows, soldanella makes a good accent plant that evokes both its native habitat and the season.

Text: Xavier Dreux
Photos: Xavier Dreux,
unless otherwise stated

It is while we are thinking about our bonsai trees, and the feelings that we want them to inspire when we exhibit them, that we should think of the composition of our accent plants so that they play their accompanying role to the full. And this starts from the time one selects the plants. Soldanella is an excellent choice for an effective accent plant. It is suitably sized, good-natured and keeps its shape well in a pot. It also symbolises the mountain, its native environment, as well as marking the season.

The advantages of this little plant do not stop there. It is quite easy to grow and its foliage becomes smaller with time, which gives it the sort of maturity that is required for shitakusa.

But its high point is in spring when the soldanella is in flower. Its dome of shiny round leaves is then topped with delicate, fringed bell-shaped flowers whose heads bend humbly towards the ground. These floral wands grow about fifteen centimetres (about six inches) above the plant's leaves.

Be careful of the sun

A hardy ground-cover perennial, soldanella likes a semi-shade exposure. Some varieties can tolerate a little more sun, except during the very hot months. This mountain plant likes a cool, well-drained, compost-rich and slightly acid (lime-free) soil.

Even though the substrate should be moist during the growing period, solda-



This *Soldanella* sp. 'Spring Symphony' was divided and planted in this Japanese pot in February 2013. This photograph was taken a few weeks later.



After three years of growth without being repotted, the maturity of this shitakusa can be seen in the small leaf size and the foliage density.

nella does not like damp conditions particularly in winter; be sparing when watering. As a precaution, take care to leave the root collar above soil level, and why not add a layer of gravel on the pot's surface, which will not only protect the plant but also recall its natural habitat.

It is a slow-growing plant, but can be easily propagated by stock division, or by seed germination. Seeding, of course, could result in variation as much for the leaves as for the flowers. To retain the characteristics of a variety, it is better to propagate by division. Varieties such as *Soldanella* sp. 'Spring Symphony' cannot be faithfully reproduced except by division.

Recalling a mountain setting

Soldanella evokes both springtime and the mountains. It grows high in the mountains on rocky grasslands, and so for exhibitions from April to May, it is the perfect companion plant for a mountain tree – a pine displaying impressive dead wood, a larch with drooping branches, or again, a twisted juniper with shari whitened by harsh weather conditions.

There is a feminine side to these little round leaves, which could balance a display where the main tree is very masculine, or accentuate the slender elegance of a pine literati or Japanese maple.

Find these plants at flower markets or at alpine and rock plant nurseries. ●



A delicate *Soldanella minima* in a pot signed 'Magic Ceramics' Photo and enhancement: Ian Young (Ireland).



The flowers of *Soldanella montana* are a deep purplish blue.

VARIETY	CHARACTERISTICS
<i>Soldanella montana</i>	Purplish blue flowers. Shiny leaves, height 10 to 30 cm (4 to 12 in). The leaves are a little large but the shorter petioles are close to the soil and have a density that would look attractive in a kusamono..
<i>Soldanella alpina</i>	Lilac flowers with drooping heads and fine purple lines inside the corolla.
<i>Soldanella pusilla</i>	As its name suggests, this soldanella is very small. It is appealing as a very small accent plant, but it is difficult to make it flower.
<i>Soldanella</i> sp. 'Spring Symphony'	A hybrid from <i>S. carpatica</i> and <i>S. pusilla</i> produced by Edrom Nurseries (UK). Abundant flowering, easy to grow and stronger than its parents. In a small pot, the leaves can easily be kept small.
<i>Soldanella minima</i>	More difficult to cultivate and slow growing. Naturally small leaves. Wonderful plant.
<i>Soldanella alpina</i> 'Alba'	White flowers and quite rare; relatively difficult to find depending on the country.

■ ■ ■ To celebrate the arrival of spring here is an Ikebana for you to create step by step - *Chaenomeles* and magnolia are combined to form a fresh, delicate composition.



Harusaki: stepping into spring

Author: Soazic Le Franc

For a light-hearted start to spring create an Ikebana. A few flowers and branches and one or two flower holders, a flat-bottomed Japanese vase and a little care and attention are all that is needed for an elegant, very Japanese, free-style composition that is easy to achieve. You can wander around any garden to gather a few plants – so long as you are allowed to!

In my garden at the moment, *Chaenomeles*, or Japanese quince and magnolia are in flower. The colour combination of the two plants is appealing and all I have to do is to study them before choosing and then cutting quite large branches with secateurs.

Similar compositions can be made using forsythia and tulips, or with many other species, provided the principal branches are not too straight. The placing of the flowers is very important, because they are not only there to display their beauty. In this arrangement they seem to be showing their amazement and delight at the arrival of spring. ●

1 After removing the dead flowers from the main branch of the *Chaenomeles*, it is measured in relation to the vase; here, it is three times the length.



2 Four magnolia flowers will be used.



3 The longest of the magnolia branches is the same length as the vase.



- 4** The smallest magnolia branch measures the width of the vase.



- 5** The end of the branch must be cut at an angle...



- 6** ... and it is often slit.



- 7** The *Chaenomeles* branch is pressed onto a spike of the flower holder placed in the vase.

Materials

For this arrangement, which I have called 'Harusaki', I have used two flower holders, two *Chaenomeles* branches and four sprigs of magnolia.



- 8** The branch held by the flower holder is then pruned to emphasise the main line, and anything that obscures it is cut away. The first branch is placed vertically to enhance its angle.



- 9** The second, shorter *Chaenomeles* branch is pruned and placed into the second flower holder. This branch is also angled and rests against the first with an intermingling of buds.



- 10** When arranging the magnolia flowers, the most open blooms are placed in front ...



- 11** ... and the unopened flowers are placed behind the branches.



- 12** A second open magnolia bloom is placed in front.



- 13** The final closed flower is placed behind. Once the arrangement is finished, water is added to the vase and the *harusaki* is finished.

■ ■ ■ In March this year, the Ikebana Senshin Ikenobo school exhibited flower arrangements by its students and instructor, Murette Renaudin, at their annual public show.

An Ikebana exhibition in Toulouse

Text: Murette Renaudin
Photos: Bénédicte De S' Martin

Ikebana, the art of living flowers, pays tribute to the plant world by laying emphasis on nature through the seasons. The 2016 spring exhibition of the Senshin Ikenobo school, in Toulouse (South of France), must have warmed many hearts during those cold days when plants were late opening. Large, natural compositions, as well as traditional styles, were proudly presented at this festive occasion. ●



■ A large double rikka (masculine element on the left, feminine, on the right). *Clivia* and *Anthurium* flowers highlight the shy buds opening on the birch branches. The mountain aspect of the arrangement is symbolised by Yew, *Malus* 'Everest', azaleas, gold cypress and camellia. Arrangement by Murette Renaudin.



■ The Ikebana school of Senshin Ikenobo, held its spring exhibition in March 2016 in Toulouse. The tokonoma celebrates the year of the monkey and the doll festival with an arrangement of naturally styled white peach blossom in bud. Arrangement by Murette Renaudin.



■ Running water, symbolised by the weeping willow, is emphasised in the green and white tones of this composition, and is given additional freshness by a mix of arum, variegated aspidistra leaves, and the leaves of *Iris ochroleuca*, camellia and *Leucadendron*. Arrangement by Murette Renaudin.



■ This seika emphasises the elegance of these strelitzias (bird of paradise). Arrangement by Murette Renaudin.



■ **Seika.** A legendary and deceptively simple camellia composition. Arrangement by Marette Renaudin.



■ **Representing fire,** a giant arrangement in the tea room alcove. An old apple branch is splashed with the light of forsythia flowers and red lilies. Photinia gives depth to the composition. Arrangement by Marette Renaudin.



■ **Suiban.** The lake is featured here. Crab apple and osmanthus flowers are enlivened by spring narcissus. Moss represents the earth. Celadon vases. Arrangement by Martine Pantel.



■ **Representing the mountain,** this large composition is made up of a pine branch, nandina (a lucky new-year charm) and gold cypress. Vase: Rizu Takahashi. Arrangement by Marette Renaudin.



■ **A natural style.** A twisted hazelnut branch is given pride of place, while anemones and viburnum add the finishing touches. Arrangement by Hélène Najean.

**L'Arbre dans la Main
(A tree in the hand)
at Villeneuve d'Ascq
has just celebrated its
30th anniversary. Its
fifty-odd members are
united in its values of
sharing, interacting,
humility and good
humour.**



▲ The bonsai club L'Arbre dans la Main in Villeneuve d'Ascq, has been built on the values of sharing and interaction for the last 30 years.

Text: Cinthya Arenas
Photos: Florence Deleu

L'ARBRE DANS LA MAIN **A club with established values**

L'Arbre dans la Main (A tree in the hand) at Villeneuve d'Ascq has just celebrated its 30th anniversary. Its fifty-odd members are united in its values of sharing, interacting, humility and good humour.

The bonsai club, L'Arbre dans la Main (A tree in the hand) in Villeneuve d'Ascq, near Lille, turned thirty in April 2016. For the last three decades "the club has been deeply committed to several important principles. Our main aim was to make our passion accessible to everyone with a ridiculously low subscription rate (20 euros) and free workshops,"

In October, 2011, the club exhibited its bonsai trees in the centre of Lille's science campus, Lille 1.



explained Eric Desplanques, who has been the club's president for the last three years. He continued, "Sharing and interaction are also part of our fundamental values, which enable us to grow within our passion. The principle of sharing is reinforced by the Fédération française de bonsai, to which the club has belonged since its inception – we have even included this affiliation in the statutes." In another example where club members and other bonsai enthusiasts share, is through "an agreement that we signed with our friends in the Ardents Amateurs de Bonsai (Ardent bonsai enthusiasts) club in Liège, in Belgium. We share workshops, information etc."

"Humility, good humour and friendship are also values which we hold dear," the president added.

Some fifty members

A member for 20 years, the current president, knows the club

extremely well. "I joined in 1996 and was soon taking an active part holding various positions in the office. I replaced Albert Delforge who was the club's president for 20 years. I am very lucky to have a dozen or so people who are extremely active in various aspects in the running of the club."

With fewer than ten people at the beginning, the club now numbers about fifty members. "We have a good ratio of women, even though the majority are men, as is the case with many bonsai clubs. The percentage of women is a little over a quarter, but equality is very much respected in the office!" Members are between 17 and 70 years old.

A genuine training

« Our members work on all types of trees; we even have a specialist in chestnut trees – Yves Ingels – who creates mame bonsai. We are very proud of them!" explained the



▲ A workshop in June 2013, led by Hiromi Tsukuda: reflections on a white pine.



▲ An English Oak (*Quercus robur*) by Florence Deleu at a regional exhibition, 2015.



▲ Scots pine, by Ghislain Leherte. This tree is shown on the poster for the 2016 Fédération française de bonsai Congress, organised by the club.

president, whose own passion is for hawthorn.

To help them move forward in their art, the club's members are solidly backed by having

instructors immediately to hand. "We are fortunate to have quite a dense nucleus of trainers, with three at level 2, Florence Deleu, Jean-Luc Gueusquin and myself; and at level 1, Roselyne Ingels, Angélique Bourceaux, Michel Buseyne, Dominique Huberlant, Ghislain Leherte and Marc Decalonne."

To be trained and to train is at the heart of the club's accomplishments. "We attach a great importance to training. In the last few years, we have initiated many teaching projects, where each member works with the same tree (maple, juniper etc.)."

There are also external instructors. "We regularly call on our level 3 friends from the FFB. For a long time now, we have progressed under the watchful eye of our friend Thierry Font, and in the last few years we have worked a lot with Francisco Ferreira and Ruud Halink."

Meetings and weekends

The club offers two types of meetings. "The first are on the first Tuesday, of every month. After a discussing the trees that some of the members bring, we then have a theory class given by a level 1 or level 2 instructor. The second meetings are workshops that are held at the weekend, where we work on the trees." The workshops are generally

run during the best months to work on trees – end of autumn, winter and the beginning of spring.

The beginners are not overlooked either. "We try to start the beginners off by suggesting they first concentrate on many trees: a tree that is already a little advanced that they must look after following our advice, and keep in shape in both senses of the term! – and fairly inexpensive nursery trees, on which they can practise; again following our advice."

The Fédération française de Bonsai Congress, 2016

Eric Desplanques has a very nice way of defining bonsai: "It is an all-encompassing passion which combines both creativity and cultivation in both senses of the word; it is the opening onto another world and openness with others."

The big event this year: "The Fédération française de Bonsai National Congress to be held on 28 and 29 May, which has taken up much of our energy in the last two years. It is exactly

ten years ago that we organised it on the same site."

And the members' own projects: "In 2017, we are going to put the emphasis once more on training and attaining bonsai levels. We encourage our members to pass the levels, not to gain prestige as such, but because it leads to even more work – which in turn makes everyone work harder, even those who do not pass!"

The passion for bonsai flourishes within a framework of respect and sharing. The Arbre dans la Main club seems to have all the qualities for its members to continue to evolve in their art for many years to come. ●

Useful information

L'Arbre dans la Main

Meetings on the first Tuesday of every month at the Maison Delesalle in Villeneuve d'Ascq

President: Éric Desplanques

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

► The club organised the Fédération Française de bonsai Congress in 2006, and will do so again in May, 2016.





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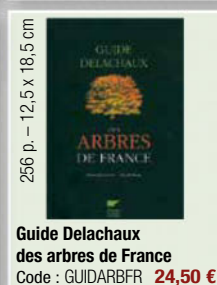
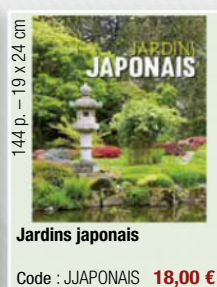
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SPECIAL ISSUE #16

My little Japanese garden

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

Bruno Heller, a specialist in the field, offers guidance to inspire you to create your own project.



Bruno Heller is a bonsai tutor and professional. The winner of numerous prizes awarded by Japanese grand masters, he is also a renowned specialist in landscaping and planting for small spaces.



Text and photos: Bruno Heller

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