

# Esprit Bonsai

#85

INTERNATIONAL

エスプリ盆栽

► The magazine for bonsai enthusiasts • December/January 2017



**Mediterranean  
species** p.50



**Starting out  
with a seedling**  
p.34



## A 4-star event in Burgundy

**Bonsai  
Basics**

► **Work diary: winter** p.29

Price: €11.50 - USD13.50  
£8.90



Wonderful exhibition • International demonstrators • Many traders

# Noelanders Trophy XVIII

EBA & ESA Convention 2017

international BONSAI show  
4 - 5 - Feb 2017

Friday February 3  
Opening ceremony  
on invitation only



Top international demonstrators

Mitsuo Matsuda

Daisaku Nomoto

Salvatore Liporace

David Benavente

- Magnificent bonsai and suiseki
- EBA New Talent Contest (NTC)
- More than 80 bonsai traders

Info :

[www.eba2017.be](http://www.eba2017.be)

[www.bonsaiassociation.be](http://www.bonsaiassociation.be)

[www.ebabonsai.be](http://www.ebabonsai.be)

[secretaris@bonsaiassociation.be](mailto:secretaris@bonsaiassociation.be)



Registration of trees :

[ebatree@eba2017.be](mailto:ebatree@eba2017.be)

[trophytree@bonsaiassociation.be](mailto:trophytree@bonsaiassociation.be)



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#### 4 News and resources

#### The Spirit of Bonsai

#### 7 Accidents of birth

#### Exhibitions

#### 8 European Bonsai San Show: A four-star event

#### 14 Sakka Ten: The romantic melancholy of a Roman autumn

#### Trees and People

#### 20 Carlos van der Vaart

"Bonsai is about creating with no rules"

#### Task of the Month

#### 26 Wiring broadleaves

#### Bonsai Basics

#### 29 Work Diary: December, January, February

#### Getting Off to a Good Start

#### 34 Getting the most from an unprepossessing young plant

#### Treegazing

#### 36 A slumbering cade on the Cap de Creus

#### Shohin: Small Bonsai

#### 38 Displaying shohin harmoniously

#### Techniques in Detail

#### 44 Repotting a weak pine

#### Spotlight on Broadleaves

#### 50 Cultivating and working with Mediterranean species

#### 56 *Elaeagnus*: Easily tamed anarchy

#### Spotlight on Conifers

#### 62 New beauty for a classical tree

#### Re-Imagining a Tree

#### 66 A pine of restrained power

#### Potters and Pots

#### 68 Ian Baillie Pots with Scottish spirit

#### Besides Bonsai

#### 72 Mondo grass adapts to suit your needs

#### Ikebana

#### 74 Sogetsu: All kinds of intrusions

#### 76 Senshin Ikenobo: Earth to heaven

#### Clubs and Enthusiasts

#### 78 Matsugawa bonsai club 30 years of passion

### Editorial

## Getting rid of labels

Label: a little word with a whole world of significance behind it. Labels provide information about composition: they are crucial on foodstuffs and clothing, for example. They give us indications and instructions, and can also influence our reactions or cause us to form preconceptions. Speaking figuratively, it is all too easy to stick a label on someone we don't know, just because we don't like their hairstyle or the colour of their jacket. Ultimately, it is easier to make assumptions without trying to find out more. It is comfortable to stay within the standard moulds, not to ask any questions, to listen to whoever shouts loudest or whoever has spoken last, and to fall in line with the majority view – even if, deep down, being honest with ourselves, we realise that sometimes that is not where real comfort lies. In the bonsai world, these literal and figurative meanings are often intermingled. The trees at Sakka Ten, the exhibition of the Nippon Bonsai Sakka Kyookai Europe association, are as anonymous as it is possible to be: no labels, or at least hardly any. There are two reasons for this. The first is to avoid distracting visitors with information that will not ultimately help their own emotions flow as they contemplate the trees. The second is to avoid giving too much prominence to the trees' owners, as this is not a competitive event. It is an interesting decision, and certainly not universally welcomed by visitors, because it strays from common custom and takes away their bearings. Although not so much, in the end. Here's wishing you an enjoyable read and a happy festive season.

**Michèle Corbihan**

LR PRESSE



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# On the Web

## MATT REEL

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



In 2014, after eight years apprenticeship in Japan with bonsai master Shinji Suzuki at Obuse in the prefecture of Nagano, Matt Reel returned to the United States and set up professionally in Portland, Oregon. As well as learning bonsai skills, while at the Taikan Bonsai Museum, he

acquired a highly developed aesthetic sense when displaying trees. The Shinji Suzuki garden is certainly the most beautiful garden to visit in Japan, and one can easily understand how it influenced Matt's vision. His portfolio consists of before-after photos and shows the shaping of both Japanese trees and of North-American yamadori.

## A LANDSCAPE SCULPTOR

[www.bonsai-rocks.com](http://www.bonsai-rocks.com)



If you love penjing, landscapes and rock plantations, this site is for you. For some years, Arnaud Desbois has been giving us little glimpses of his work on his Facebook page, but in the last few weeks, we have been allowed at last to see all his work on his website.

His artistic researches have led to a combination of stone sculpture with bonsai. These creations are quite elaborately displayed in the garden. He has a very modern website, and I would suggest that you take the time to watch the video presentation incorporated into his home page.

## MIURA BAIJU-EN

<http://miurabajuen.com>



In a secluded spot in the mountains not far from Osaka, you will find Baiju-en, the nursery belonging to bonsai master Hiroki Miura, who is the second generation to work in the nursery founded in 1970 by his father. He was a pupil of the master Yuko Hirose, who is currently president of the All Japan Shohin

Bonsai Association, and a highly influential figure in the world of Japanese bonsai. Hiroki Miura is a renowned specialist of shohin and is very involved in training bonsai enthusiasts, not only in Japan, but the world over.

By **Guillaume Billaud**, [bonsai-shohin.com](mailto:bonsai-shohin.com)

## NEWS

The Bonsai Club Chalossais, is a bonsai association that has just seen the light of day in the Landes department, in France and has been set up in Poyanne, a village about 25 kilometres from Dax. The aim of the Chalossais club is to teach novices and enthusiasts how to cultivate and maintain bonsai and how to collect

good bonsai material. Yoann Ruffray is the association's president. Planned projects are courses with professionals and exhibitions. The club will be affiliated with the Fédération Française de Bonsai in January, 2017.

■ 07 85 59 55 77  
[bonsai.club.chalossais@gmail.com](mailto:bonsai.club.chalossais@gmail.com)

# DIARY



## 8th World Bonsai Convention

The 8th World Bonsai Convention organized by the Nippon Bonsai Association will take place in Saitama City, Japan from 17 to 30 April 2017, and will be a huge event. Twenty-one artists from all over the world of whom 13 are from Japan. Masahiko Kimura, Hiroshi Takeyama, Kunio Kobayashi, Shinji Suzuki, Minoru Akiyama, Shigeo Isobe, Chiharu Imai, Taiga Urushibata, Kenji Oshima, Isao Omachi, Takashi Sakurai, Masayuki Fujikawa and Mitsuo Matsuda will give the demonstrations. About 300 very high quality trees will be exhibited, as well as suiseki at the Saitama Super Arena, and many other activities are scheduled. Masahiko Kimura will give the last demonstration on 27 April between 4.00 and 6.00 p.m. at the Omiya Sonic City Large hall. The famous potter Gyozan Nakano will also give a special demonstration.

Over 170 trading stands will be open from 28 April.

■ Website: [www.world-bonsai-saitama.jp/en/](http://www.world-bonsai-saitama.jp/en/)

## Satsuki in Brittany

The Satsuki Flower Trophy – "exhibition of bonsai Azaleas in flower" – is returning for its third show on 20 and 21 May 2017 at Saint-Germain du Pinel in Ille-et-Vilaine, West of France. There will be activities and demonstrations during the weekend. This will be a great opportunity to meet up again with bonsai artists and collectors.

■ For more information: [contact@lejardindulevant.fr](mailto:contact@lejardindulevant.fr)  
Website: [www.lejardindulevant.fr](http://www.lejardindulevant.fr)

## Bonsai Europa 2017, Manchester

Bonsai Europa - the big bonsai meeting organised by Tony Tickle in the United Kingdom – is returning for its second annual exhibition on 7 to 8 October 2017. The show will be held at the Castle





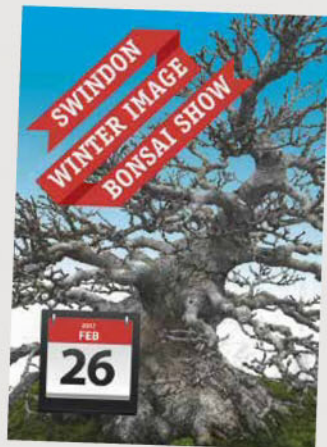
Leisure Centre in Bury, near Manchester. On the programme is a display of 150 trees with lectures and demonstrations given by well-known bonsai artists, invited for the occasion, and 25 professionals.

■ Website:  
[www.bonsaieuropa.com](http://www.bonsaieuropa.com)

## Swindon winter image bonsai show

The yearly Swindon Winter Image Show by the Swindon & District Bonsai Society will be held on 26 February 2017 in the Grange Leisure Centre in Swindon, Wiltshire, UK. About a dozen associations will exhibit. Special guests will bring their superb bonsai and there will be about 15 traders.

■ Grange Leisure Centre, Grange Drive, Stratton St Margaret, Swindon, Wiltshire SN3 4JY. United Kingdom  
<http://swindon-bonsai.co.uk>



# GATHERINGS

## Noelanders Trophy 2017

For its 18th edition in 2017, the Noelanders Trophy, the largest and most prestigious European bonsai exhibition, will team up with the European Bonsai Association (EBA) convention and with that of the European Suiseki Association (ESA). Suffice it to say that, Genk in Belgium is the place to be on 4 and 5 February 2017. Mitsuo Matsuda, Daisaku Nomoto, Salvatore Liporace and David Benavente will be the invited demonstrators and competition judges for the trees shown. We can expect to see over one hundred trees selected for the Noelanders Trophy exhibition. The EBA exhibition will display trees of club members from the 19 national associations belonging to the European federations. Participants in The new talent

competition will be contested by participants from European countries, who will each work on a conifer for a few hours. There will be over 80 professional trading stands. The Noelanders Trophy is organized by the Bonsai Belgium Association who by selecting trees of the highest quality has, over the years, become the finest European exhibition. Drink, food stalls, parking.  
■ Noelanders Trophy Limburghal C.V.  
Jaabeurslaan 6  
B-3600 Genk  
[www.bonsaiassociation.be](http://www.bonsaiassociation.be)  
E-mail: [secretaris@bonsaiassociation.be](mailto:secretaris@bonsaiassociation.be)



## Global bonsai summit in China



On 7 to 8 December, the town of Nanxun, an

hour's drive to the west of Shanghai, will play host to the "Bonsai Without Borders Global Summit China 2016" (BWB). Some 200 international artists and famous exponents of Chinese bonsai from all over the world will gather here together, and seventy artists all working on a *Juniperus chinensis* var. *sargentii*, will give a simultaneous demonstration. A small special Chinese exhibition of some 50 to 70 trees by Chinese artists will be displayed for the occasion. This unusual and exceptional event is combined with the Black Scissors Global Bonsai Artists Summit. It will be a "Carnival of bonsai artists from all over the world", declared Su Fang, president of the China Penjing Artists Association, and initiator and organiser of the event.

"This will be a rehearsal for an even larger event – the 2018–2019 W1Bonsai World Cup – a historic moment and the beginning of a new era for bonsai". The list of artists for the BWB exhibition, is long and impressive and includes notably, Jean-Francois Busquet, Laurent Darrieux and Olivier Barreau from France, Kunio Kobayashi among others, from Japan, Mauro Stemberger and Salvatore Liporace, from Italy, Bjorn Bjorholm, Solita and Frank Chase Rosade and William Valavanis from North America and Tony Tickle from the United Kingdom, and many, many more whose names you will find on our blog.



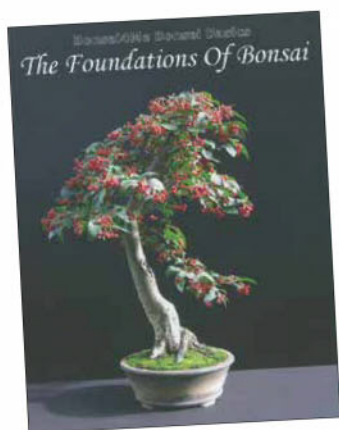
Su Fang is the initiator and organiser of the global bonsai summit in China.



## In our bookshop

### The Foundations of Bonsai

Harry Harrington  
Bonsai4Me publishing  
18 €



With fifteen years of solid experience, UK bonsai artist Harry Harrington offers 23 chapters of all one needs to know to care for a bonsai. The book was originally conceived as a guide for

beginners to watering, repotting, fertilising, displaying, styles, wiring and pruning, as well as diseases, without overwhelming them in a world of technical detail, but giving the essential points for a good beginning.

The purpose, of course, is to give beginners all the basics: to teach them first how to keep their trees alive, and then to help them evolve and to understand that bonsai is a school of patience of observation and of time shared with the tree.

It is a question here of the "interior" bonsai, exotic species and the exterior of conifers and deciduous trees. We learn not only how to repot, but also when to repot by observing the budding on the tree, for example. We are also taught that water is not a routine, and that overwatering as well as too little water, can have regrettable consequences for a bonsai. Beautiful photos of the author's garden and trees – with a few of his daughter Alice – and a few sketches accompany the text. It is a book to put into the hands of beginners so that bonsai does not come across as being too technical and difficult, but rather as a poetic adventure – a meeting between plant and man.

*Paperback. Full colour pages (photos and sketches). 120 pages. 280 mm x 210 mm (11in. x 8¼ in.).*

CODE: Foundbon

## Exhibitions and conventions

|                             |                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| KYOTO, JAPAN                | <b>5-8 January 2017</b>      | 42nd Gafu Ten<br>The largest exhibition of high quality bonsai shohin: displays of 150 compositions.<br>Organiser: All Japan Shohin Bonsai Association<br>Tel. 81-46-269-9891                                                    |
| GENK, BELGIUM               | <b>3-5 February</b>          | Noelanders Trophy and EBA/ESA Convention<br>Contact: +32 491562526<br><a href="http://www.bonsaiassociation.be">www.bonsaiassociation.be</a>                                                                                     |
| TOKYO, JAPAN                | <b>4-8 et 10-13 February</b> | 91st Kokufu Ten<br>The finest bonsai exhibition in the world, with 200 bonsai exhibited at the Metropolitan Art Museum, Ueno.                                                                                                    |
| SWINDON, UNITED KINGDOM     | <b>26 February</b>           | Swindon Winter Image Show<br>Grange Leisure Centre, Grange Drive, Stratton St Margaret, Swindon, SN3 4JY<br>10.30 a.m. – 4.00p.m.<br><a href="http://www.swindon-show.co.uk">www.swindon-show.co.uk</a>                          |
| BIRMINGHAM, UNITED KINGDOM  | <b>12 March</b>              | Federation AGM together with FNBC Annual Boot Sale<br>Birmingham Botanical Garden, Westbourne Rd., Birmingham.                                                                                                                   |
| AALST, BELGIUM              | <b>1-2 April</b>             | 40th edition of the Vlaamse Bonsai Exhibition, Demonstrations, professional trading stands, workshops...<br><a href="http://www.vlaamsebonsai.be/">http://www.vlaamsebonsai.be/</a>                                              |
| SAITAMA, JAPAN              | <b>27-30 April</b>           | The 8th World Bonsai Convention<br><a href="http://wbff-bonsai.com">http://wbff-bonsai.com</a>                                                                                                                                   |
| MONTPELLIER, FRANCE         | <b>27-28 May</b>             | Fédération française de bonsaï convention<br><a href="http://www.ffbonsai.com/">www.ffbonsai.com/</a>                                                                                                                            |
| MONACO                      | <b>9-11 June</b>             | "Les Jolis Matins de Juin"<br>International bonsai exhibition organised by the Bonsai Club de Monaco, at the Jardin Exotique in Monaco.<br><a href="http://www.lesjolismatinsdejuin.fr/">http://www.lesjolismatinsdejuin.fr/</a> |
| SAINT-JEAN-D'ANGELY, FRANCE | <b>9-10 September</b>        | Fédération française de bonsaï - shohin and mame convention<br>Contact : +33 (0) 5 46320043<br><a href="http://www.ffbonsai.com">www.ffbonsai.com</a>                                                                            |
| BURY, UNITED KINGDOM        | <b>7-8 October</b>           | Bonsai Europa 2017<br><a href="http://www.bonsaieuropa.com">www.bonsaieuropa.com</a>                                                                                                                                             |
| MULHOUSE, FRANCE            | <b>12-14 October 2018</b>    | Bonsai Club International (BCI) convention                                                                                                                                                                                       |



# ACCIDENTS OF BIRTH

Snow, cold temperatures and strong winds make life tough for trees at high altitudes. Here is one that has derived its beauty from these challenges – a lesson in life.

Author: François Jeker

**N**obody gets to choose where they are born. Why did I take seed here, right next to the summit? I could have been born low down in the valley, where the climate is so much gentler. From my vantage point I can see the flowering pear trees and the soft green shoots sprouting on the willows near the river. Perhaps tonight the breeze that rises up towards the mountain peak will carry a whiff of that blossoming to me.

As for me, I'm still standing here in the snow. A larch nearby, tricked by last week's unexpected mild spell, had had the impudence of budding too early; last night the frost was so harsh that it was split right through the trunk. There was a sudden snap, and then the apex creaked sinisterly as it drooped down towards the stream and finally fell, as if in slow motion, onto the spruces below.

## Stronger than ever

Still, this winter has been less severe than usual. Yes, it has been longer, but there haven't been any of those dreadful winds loaded with ice crystals that tear through even the thickest bark.

There have been no avalanches either. And the thick blanket of snow has protected the young trees that took seed last year. All that we have to fear now is rockslides caused by the mild spell – tons of stones hurtling down the slopes with a terrifying din.

It was a rockslide that tore off my head and all the bark on my west side. Fortunately my roots were relatively sturdy. They've been entrenched here for nearly a hundred years, in this mixture of stones, minerally altered rock, and just a little

organic soil. If it weren't for those roots, I wouldn't be here any more.

Slowly but surely, despite my injuries, a little branch took over, growing upwards and forming a lively arc pointing to the sky. Now I have a new head. Am I still recognisable? I've had a new lease of life, but I've had to fight for it. Perhaps I'm stronger now than ever. Are these sorts of trials and tribulations necessary to learn what life's all about?

## Understanding the message

The icy winds from the west have sculpted my deadwood, revealing the complex, winding tracks of old sap channels. Maybe they reveal my very soul.

Perhaps, like the weathered face of an old shepherd who knows how to tell a fine tale, I likewise recount a story of life and beauty born out of the ability to overcome pain.

I'm ready now. I'm waiting for him. Sooner or later, he was bound to find me. It has taken thousands and thousands of past circumstances for this man to stop in front of me today.

I'm about to start out on a new life. Perhaps he is, too. He will magnify my beauty, and I will give him something of my energy. No doubt one day, in a magnificent pot made in some far-distant place, I will emerge from anonymity and be admired. Perhaps they will understand the message I carry. ●



Rooted on a mountaintop, this tree has been carved by the elements. Someone will notice it and unveil its beauty in a fine pot.





© MICHELE CORBIHAN

# EUROPEAN BONSAI SAN SHOW

## A four-star event

More than 100 beautiful trees, four followers of Kimura as special guests, and a festive atmosphere: the European Bonsai San Show is reaching for the stars in the European bonsai world. Report on the excellent fourth edition.

The fourth European Bonsai San Show attracted a large number of visitors to admire the trees and four of Kimura's followers. Held in Saulieu on 15 and 16 October 2016, it was a major gathering.

Author: Michèle Corbihan

Photos: Bruno Moyen, unless stated otherwise



© MICHELE CORBIHAN

Hiroaki Suzuki, Taiga Urushibata, Marco Invernizzi and Masayuki Fujikawa made good use of their teaching skills to enlighten hobbyists over the weekend.

**Visitors** and participants alike were full of praise for the European Bonsai San Show 2016: a calm, friendly atmosphere; a very high standard of trees; and intelligent, highly instructive demonstrations. As everyone who came to the Saulieu exhibition complex on 15 and 16 October can testify, this was a top-quality event. Frédéric Chenal, who organises the show with



Luis Baliño was awarded a prize as guest of honour, showing eight of his trees in tokonoma. *Picea jezoensis*.



his wife Stéphanie, had focused this fourth edition around the number four. So, the invited demonstrators were four followers of the Japanese master Masahiko Kimura: Masayuki Fujikawa, Taiga Urushibata, Hiroaki Suzuki and Marco Invernizzi – three from Japan and one from Italy. The event was sponsored by the Nippon Bonsai Association.

## Divulging knowledge

These four demonstrators weren't there for star treatment; their aim was to divulge their knowledge. So they were already working hard on Friday, the day that the exhibition was set up, giving advice on displaying trees to those exhibitors who wanted it. Friday was also the day when all the trees on show were brought into the studio of our photographer Bruno Moyen, so that we will be able to publish a book on the European Bonsai San Show 2016.

When the doors to the exhibition opened on Saturday morning, there was a very long queue of visitors waiting there under a grey sky. It took more than an hour for all of these early birds to get in. As always, the exhibition centre's floor was covered with a red carpet, while black fabrics helped to show off the trees on their shelves.

On eight tokonoma placed at the centre of the tree area were bonsai by Luis Baliño, from Spain. Kei Bonsai Kai – the school of Danny Use of the Ginkgo Bonsai Center in Ghent, Belgium – prepared an unusual display by staging some beautiful trees in front of a backdrop made of landscape photographs.



## 115 trees on show

The standard of trees was even higher than in previous years. Many regular visitors commented on this. This year's display featured no fewer than 115 trees! Exhibitors came from France, of course, but also from the UK, Belgium, Denmark, Poland, Italy, Switzerland, Monaco and Spain. Conifers ►►►

European Bonsai San Show and Carlos van der Vaart award for the best chuhin/ kifu conifer: *Pinus sylvestris*, Jose Luis Crespo Almajano. Height: 40 cm.





European Bonsai San Show award:  
*Juniperus chinensis*  
"Itoigawa",  
Xavier Massanet.  
Height: 39 cm.



European Bonsai San Show award:  
*Myrtus communis*, Antonio Ponce  
Navarro. Height: 78 cm.



European Bonsai San Show award for  
best bonsaist: Martin Nielsen for his  
*Larix decidua*. Height: 45 cm.

## The prizes

Guest-of-honour prize: display in tokonoma, Luis Baliño  
Guest-of-honour prize: special display, Kei Bonsai Kai, the school of Danny Use  
European Bonsai San Show award: *Pinus sylvestris*, Jose Luis Crespo Almajano,  
*Myrtus communis*, Antonio Ponce Navarro,  
*Juniperus chinensis* "Itoigawa", Noel Garcia Suarez,  
*Juniperus chinensis* "Itoigawa", Xavier Massanet.  
Best bonsaist: Martin Nielsen for his *Larix decidua*.  
Best new style, *Bonsai Focus* award: *Buxus sempervirens*, François Gau.  
Best shohin conifer, Maarten Bonsai plaza award: Jordi Ugena.  
Best deciduous shohin, Carles Vives

award: Carlos Fernandez de Betoño.  
Best shohin composition, Parlons Bonsaï award: John Armitage.  
Best big size conifer, Laos Garden award: *Juniperus chinensis* "Itoigawa", Fabio Mantovani.  
Best big size deciduous tree, *Esprit Bonsai International* award: *Fagus sylvatica*, Sebastien Laboa Puy.  
Best match of bonsai and stand, ACB Maker Rémi Guillot award: satsuki, Matteo Martin.  
Best match of bonsai and pot, Greg Ceramics award: *Ulmus minor*, Davide Cardin.  
Best chuhin/kifu deciduous tree, Medibonsai award: *Zelkova serrata*, Alain de Wachter.  
Best conifer chuhin/kifu, Carlos van der Vaart award: *Pinus sylvestris*, Jose Luis Crespo Almajano.

▶▶▶ were in the majority, as is often the case. Mugo pine and Scots pine, white pine and black pine, spruce, larch, Chinese juniper, savin, cypress, yew and even bald cypress – there was a very broad range in terms of both species and style.

As for broadleaves, some of them were sporting their autumn colours, while others showed off the beauty of their bare branches. *Prunus spinosa*, maple, azalea, honeysuckle, myrtle, beech, quince, box, wisteria alternated with resiniferous trees. And all the shohin compositions were gathered together in the same aisle.

While the four guests assigned four prizes to trees in the exhibition, it was the professional partners who awarded all the other prizes – ten in total – with no instructions or restrictions from the organisers. *Esprit Bonsai International*'s editorial team opted for the prize for best big size deciduous tree. Our choice went to Sebastien Laboa Puy's ▶▶▶





European Bonsai San Show award:  
*Juniperus chinensis* "Itoigawa",  
Noel Garcia Suarez. Height: 64 cm.

Best big size deciduous  
tree, *Esprit Bonsai*  
*International* award:  
*Fagus sylvatica*,  
Sebastien Laboa  
Puy. Height: 85 cm.



Best shohin conifer, Maarten  
Bonsaiplaza award: Jordi Ugena.



Best new style, *Bonsai Focus* award: *Buxus*  
*sempervirens*, François Gau. Height: 69 cm.



Best big size conifer, Laos Garden  
award: *Juniperus chinensis* "Itoigawa",  
Fabio Mantovani. Height: 75 cm.



Best deciduous shohin, Carles Vives  
award: Carlos Fernandez de Betoño.



Best shohin composition, Parlons  
Bonsai award: John Armitage.





The demonstrators were installed in the middle of the room.



The four demonstrators worked both separately and together on the trees, the focus being respect for the plants rather than putting on a show.



At the end of the demonstration, from left to right: Taiga Urushibata, Masayuki Fujikawa, Hiroaki Suzuki and Marco Invernizzi.



During a talk, Peter Warren gave an account of the history of bonsai pottery in Japan.

## Saulieu book

The catalogue of the European Bonsai San Show 2016 will be available in late December, priced €24.90. Purchase by mail order or in our online shop: [www.en.esprit-bonsai.com](http://www.en.esprit-bonsai.com)



►►► *Fagus sylvatica*, for its natural appearance and the beauty of its bark.

A very special new prize is worth highlighting: that for best bonsaist. It is intended to reward an amateur's work on a tree displayed at the European Bonsai San Show 2016. To put themselves forward for it, candidates had to present photographs showing the full sequence of work they had done on the tree since the beginning – potensai, yamadori, cutting etc. Of the twelve applications, it was Martin Nielsen's that was given the prize for his work on a larch (which you can read about in our next issue).

### Working on trees takes time

On Saturday and Sunday, all the demonstrations were given by followers of the Japanese master. Unlike in previous years when the demonstrators worked on a raised platform, this time the organiser opted for a low stage in the middle of the room, with chairs set up around it. This arrangement allowed spectators to move about freely, with a full scope of 360° around the demonstrators, to have a better view of what they were doing, and sometimes also to move in closer.

Marco Invernizzi set the tone in the morning: "The demonstration this morning will be a special one. We will show how to prepare bonsai material. Working on bonsai is not a show. We are not here to impress you. We are here to share knowledge

and to respect the material. It takes many years for a tree to become refined like this beautiful antique pot. We all need to make you understand that we have to work on a tree slowly. It is important to respect the tree and prepare it, because a tree in a pot is not bonsai material, but a prepared tree is."



Best match of bonsai and stand, ACB Maker Rémi Guillot award: satsuki, Matteo Martin. Height: 68 cm.





Best chuhin/kifu  
deciduous tree,  
Medibonsai award:  
*Zelkova serrata*,  
Alain de Wachter.  
Height: 48 cm.

Over the two days, the four masters worked on the trees alone, in twos and threes, and even all together. The focus was on the work that was being done on the trees, rather than on individual performance. It was a fine demonstration of what the art of bonsai is all about.

Peter Warren, from the UK, translated the Japanese explanations into English, while Frédéric Chenal translated from English into French.

On Sunday morning, Peter Warren gave a fascinating talk on the history of Japanese bonsai pottery, revealing its Chinese influences.

## Quality and cheer

This year, the trade stands brought together more than fifty suppliers offering everything that a bonsai hobbyist could want or need.

As an independent entity with no ties to any professional or community organisations, the European Bonsai San Show has managed in just a few years to bring together all the ingredients of a high-quality event on the art of bonsai. It gains credibility from both its independence and also its objective, which is to promote bonsai. Bravo to the organisers for their determination and for believing



Best match of  
bonsai and pot,  
Greg Ceramics  
award: *Ulmus minor*,  
Davide Cardin.  
Height: 52 cm.

in what they do. They deserve congratulations for their warm welcome and for the cheerful atmosphere that permeates this exhibition.

Even though Frédéric Chenal is waiting for the final assessment of this edition before announcing plans for a fifth edition of the event, it curiously seems that the region's hotels are starting to fill up for a weekend in October 2017. ●





# SAKKA TEN

## The romantic melancholy of a Roman autumn

Sakka Ten, the exhibition of Nippon Bonsai Sakka Kyookai Europe, took its place in the greenhouses of Rome's botanical garden from 28 to 31 October 2016.

Late last October, Rome – one of the most romantic capital cities in the world – hosted Sakka Ten, the biennial convention of Nippon Bonsai Sakka Kyookai Europe. The theme was autumnal melancholy. Set against the backdrop of a magnificent botanical garden, it was a great success.

Author: Michèle Corbihan



Demonstrations and talks were held in the orangery, formerly a greenhouse for citrus plants.

**Although** there was nothing autumnal about the weather in the Italian capital in late October, it was nonetheless in Rome's botanical garden that Sakka Ten – Autumn Trees 2016 took place. True to Japanese tradition, the theme of this international convention on the art and cultivation of bonsai was "Autumn: Melancholy". From 28 to 31 October, the exhibition by Nippon Bonsai Sakka Kyookai Europe (NBSKE) occupied several old greenhouses in the garden to display its members' trees, suiseki and kusamono, as well as offering talks and demonstrations, with Japanese master Kunio Kobayashi as guest of honour.

Rome's botanical garden is situated in Trastevere, a lively and very colourful historical district on the





A Japanese maple in a state of autumnal melancholy – the theme of Sakka Ten 2016. Height: 70 cm (27½ in.).



A mugo pine displayed in a tokonoma. Height: 60 cm (24 in.). Width: 80 cm (32 in.).

west bank of the Tiber. It is managed by the Department of Environmental Biology at Rome's "La Sapienza" University. To reach its various greenhouses, you have to meander down beautiful pathways, past huge palm trees thronging with rose-ringed parakeets, and alongside the Fountain of the Tritons. Making your way across the park in the Roman sunshine to go from one place to another is a real delight because the areas are so varied.

## Bonsai and ancient ruins

A good number of those who made the effort to come were not members of the association. A weekend in Rome, among bonsai and Roman ruins, is certainly not an unpleasant prospect. Even a group from Monaco had succumbed to the temptation.

The Sakka Ten weekend started on Friday with a workshop for members of the association, led by the invited Japanese master. At the end of the evening, everyone gathered in the greenhouse where the large bonsai were on show for the traditional opening ceremony.

All the officials were there: Kazuyoshi Umemoto (Japanese Ambassador to Italy), Loretta Gratani (director of the Sapienza University of Rome botanical garden), Naomi Takasu (director of the Japanese Cultural Institute in Rome), Lorenzo Agnoletti (President of NBSKE) and Pepe Cosimo (President of Shizuka Bonsai and Suiseki, the Roman organisation that hosted the event). There were also numerous members of the association, who had come not only from all over Italy, but also from Germany, Spain and Switzerland. The official speeches were given in Italian,

## The botanical garden

Rome's botanical garden is situated on the slopes of the Janiculum, in what were once the gardens of the Palazzo Corsini, in the city's Trastevere district. These days it is managed by the Department of Environmental Biology at "La Sapienza", Rome's university. Covering 12 hectares (30 acres), it constitutes one of Europe's biggest parks. It is home to 3,000 different

species of plants, distributed across various themed gardens: the bamboo grove; the Japanese garden; the Mediterranean forest; the collection of palms; the garden of medicinal and aromatic herbs ... Two thousand square metres (21,500 square feet) of greenhouses present plants from the five continents. Fountains are dotted about here and there, such as the Fountain of the Tritons.

unfortunately without any English translation. Then two children unfurled the flags of Japan and Italy that were fixed to the building's ceiling, symbolising fraternity and cooperation between the two countries. Next it was time for the ribbon to be cut by Kazuyoshi Umemoto and Kunio Kobayashi, opening the exhibition to visitors. ►►►



Japanese master Kunio Kobayashi (right) and Kazuyoshi Umemoto, Japanese Ambassador to Italy, cut the ribbon to signify that the exhibition was open. Beside them are Loretta Gratani, director of the botanical garden, and Lorenzo Agnoletti, President of NBSKE.





A larch with stunning deadwood. Height: 69 cm (27 in.).



A very natural pine. Height: 90 cm (35 in.).



The light plays with the beautiful colours of this *Cotinus coggygria*. Height: 68 cm (27 in.).

## Deciduous trees set the tone

At the back of the greenhouse, two tokonoma had been installed: one with a mugo pine, the other with an olive tree. To the sides, about thirty bonsai were assembled in nicely arranged groups. Each tree was positioned so as to integrate well into the overall staging. Of course, it was the deciduous trees that brought a touch of autumnal melancholy to the show. A *Cotinus coggygria* sported glowing red leaves, a Japanese maple dropped the last of its orange apparel, while beyond an elm was adorned all in yellow. A pomegranate tree still bore a few yellow leaves that were like

## Joining the association

Becoming a member of Nippon Bonsai Sakka Kyookai Europe is not simply a matter of signing up to an association. You have to be co-opted by an existing member in order to be accepted.

Also, in the association's exhibitions, trees can only be displayed if their owners have worked on them for at least five years.

ornamental settings for its fruit, and the foliage of two others remained intact, offering a pretty green setting for their red fruits. An olive tree with little black fruits confirmed – in case there were any doubt – that autumn had arrived.

Aside from a leafless larch that indicated the onset of winter, the conifers punctuated the group with their green foliage and their fairly discreet deadwood.

The displays were put together with care, and the consideration given to the choice of stands and companion plants was clear to see.

There were no labels near the trees to give information to visitors: the emphasis was placed fully on harmoniously exhibiting the trees, rather than being distracted by reading.

Another special thing about Sakka Ten is that no prizes are awarded: the trees are not competing against each other.

## A blaze of colour

A good fifteen shohin exhibits were installed in another, smaller greenhouse, with the same care taken over consistency across the series of com-



*Ulmus minor*,  
simple but  
charming.  
Height: 75 cm  
(30 in.).



A pomegranate tree in its autumn attire. Height: 70 cm (28 in.).

positions. Here, aside from the accent plants, it was a *Cydonia* with branches ranging from green to yellow, a *Pyracantha*'s fruits on an *ishizuki*, and the amazing purple berries of a *Callicarpa* that set the tone. This time, however, a few of the trees had labels fixed to them.

Kusamono and suiseki were also in the limelight at Sakka Ten. The former, nestled in a pretty ►►►



The colours of *Callicarpa* berries - shohin in this case - are beautifully extravagant.





A shohin juniper.



Shohin *Cydonia* and *Rhus* in harmony.



A shohin ishizuki.



About fifteen suiseki were on show, one of which was in a tokonoma.

contemplation. This can seem a strange feeling for many Westerners who are unfamiliar with Asian culture.

## Seeking harmony

The demonstrations and talks took place in the orangery, a 1930s building situated near the Fountain of the Tritons. The theme of autumnal melancholy ran through several of these. Edoardo Rossi (from Italy) began on Saturday with a talk on cultivating bonsai in the autumn. Hartmut Münchenbach (from Germany), assisted by Xavier Redon (from Spain), discussed a Scots pine, with a particular focus on the tree's habitat. At the same time, Alfonsina Zenari did a demonstration on kusamono.

▶▶▶ little greenhouse, demonstrated that a composition of grasses is sufficient in itself, and can achieve a considerable size. From red vine leaves to dog rose to red and golden grasses, a whole array of vibrant colours blazed out among the soft or deep greens of other plants. Fantastic!

Around twenty stones were on show in a fourth space where a very handsome suiseki was enthroned on a tokonoma. The stones, in the form of objects, landscapes and even a chrysanthemum, were evocative and encouraged silence and





Displayed on its own, this vine suffices in itself. Height: 90 cm (35 in.).



The simple beauty of a kusamono.



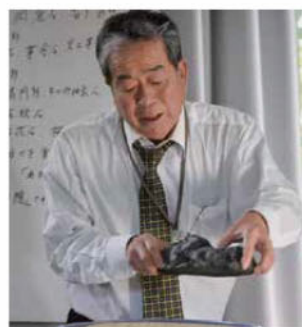
Kunio Kobayashi gave a simultaneous demonstration on two trees. One was with Edoardo Rossi ...



... and the other with Lorenzo Agnoletti.



Hartmut Münchenbach worked on a Scots pine.



The Japanese master gave a talk on suiseki.



Alfonsina Zenari revealed the secrets of how to create a kusamono.

A little later, the Japanese master Kunio Kobayashi set about explaining how to display suiseki, using sand in a suiban (shallow tray), among other things.

On Sunday, two teachers – Aldo Tollini and Giangiorgio Pasqualetto – held the audience's attention on the theme of "Autumn: melancholy from East to West".

The day finished with Kunio Kobayashi working on two pines, assisted by Edoardo Rossi for the first and by Lorenzo Agnoletti for the second.

Monday was devoted to a class for NBSKE members on kazari – the art of presentation – given by the Japanese master.

The search for harmony that infuses Sakka Ten is very inspiring, making it always a pleasure to visit. The NBSKE's aim is to keep Japanese tradition alive and discover all its aspects.

Sakka Ten takes places every two years, in a different town and indeed country each time. It is therefore organised by the bonsai association in the host town. This year, that was Shizuka Bonsai and Suiseki.

The next Sakka Ten is a date for the diary: 2 to 5 November 2018, in the Spanish municipality of Alcala de Xivert-Alcossebre – between Valencia and Barcelona. ●





Carlos van der Vaart decided to divide his time between bonsai and interior design, his other job.

# Carlos **van der Vaart**

## “Bonsai is about creating with no rules”

Carlos van der Vaart, 53, is a true creative who has won numerous prizes for his trees. An interior architect, he loves yamadori and feminine trees, which he attends to in his workshop in Maassluis, The Netherlands.

Interview: Anne Royer  
Photos: Carlos van der Vaart

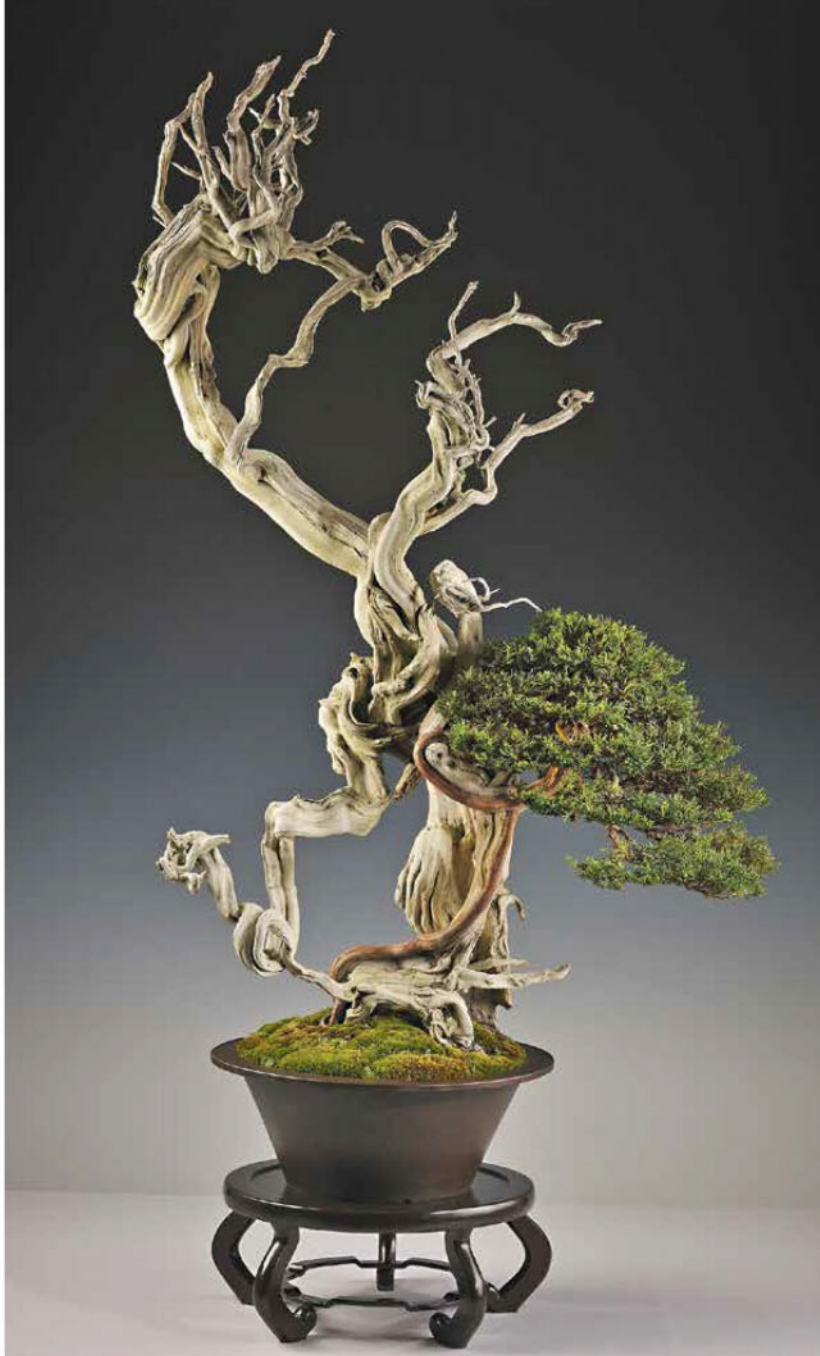
### **Esprit Bonsai International – How did you become passionate about bonsai?**

**C.V.** – I was always interested in Japanese art and culture. I started bonsai in 1994. My very first tree was a pine. Of course, it died, for lack of proper care. I read book about bonsai, before joining a club. Then I started to do competitions, I was invited to do demonstrations ... To learn, I worked in local nurseries. I tried to understand bonsai. At that point, the question emerged: do you want to go professional or not?

I'm an interior architect for a living, as a part-time job. For me, it's perfect. I can choose to do only what I like to do. If I don't want to do it, I don't. It's a very lucky position to be in.

In 2007, I started my business in bonsai. I was more and more involved in yamadori trees. For many years, I collected them everywhere in Europe: Sweden, the Dolomites in Italy ... There are so many





This Dutch bonsai artist very much enjoys working with deadwood, and has become an expert.



This tall juniper is Carlos's favourite tree. It even became the emblem of the studio. Height: 150 cm (60 in.). Pot: John Pitt.

beautiful places in Europe. Now, I buy my trees in Spain. And I keep collecting trees one or two times a year, just to enjoy nature. I also started a school in Holland, which is going very well.

**EBI – You like to say that “bonsai has become a way of life”. In what way has the art of bonsai changed your life?**

**C.V.** – I always loved Japan and nature. There was a time when I was torn between bonsai on one side and my work on the other. You have to love trees to do it the way nature meant it.

I was a member of a club which doesn't exist anymore. The goal was to bring the Japanese tradition in Europe. We invited Japanese masters and organised exhibitions, where everybody was mixed together. Amateurs' trees were displayed alongside masters' trees, with no names to identify them. It

was a completely different approach. Ego was not important; you could really see the beauty of the tree. It was a very big step in my journey and my exploration of the meaning of bonsai. ►►►



High-level students come to attend Carlos's workshops in his studio, in Maassluis, The Netherlands.





*Juniperus chinensis*  
'Itoigawa'. Pot:  
Japan. Height:  
110 cm (43 in.).



*Juniperus chinensis* 'Itoigawa'. Pot: Japan. Height: 60 cm (24 in.).

**EBI – What do you think are the essential qualities to become a talented bonsai artist?**

**C.V.** – Well, one is botanical, because a tree is alive. To help it mature, you have to know how to take care of it. Another thing is to know how to create. But before styling the tree, you must let it grow, so it can become stronger. To make a statue, you need a piece of stone. This is the same, you move step by step. Most people rush it and their trees die. You have to wait 10, 15, 20 years to gain maturity ... To own a tree is one thing, but to create and know how to work, that's another thing.

**EBI – When the time has come, how does your creative process work?**

**C.V.** – From the beginning, I had a completely different approach from most people. Because of my job, I always wanted to draw and create things. In front of a tree, I can see right away what I need to do. I look at the size of the trunk, taper, proportions ... I try to find the right balance. I always start by eliminating the things we don't need. It's easier to spot the elements you want to keep, the main bones, the character of the tree. Then, you think about the pot, according to the style, the height of the tree, etc.

There are so many rules. Some are good. First, you have to learn them all. Then you try to see the tree without these rules. Because bonsai is about creating with no rules. You always have to find a way to be free in your mind to find the essence of the tree. The most important thing is to look at the trunk, because you can't do a thing about it. You can always adjust the rest. So I look to the basics and I start from those.





Juniper from  
Kyushu. Pot:  
Japan. Height:  
90 cm (36 in.).



*Juniperus sabina*. Pot: Japan. Height: 35 cm (14 in.).

**EBI – Do you sometimes find yourself without any idea or solution for a tree?**

**C.V.** – There are always a few possibilities. But you have to be creative, to try working without boundaries. If you always follow the rules, it's impossible. Just do the best you can do – I believe in that. If you feel like sticking to the traditional way, just go for it. If not, be creative. But be sure that you follow nature, or it can get artificial. If you have a curved root, it means that the branch will curve as well. Nature is always repeating itself.

To move forward, you have to find solutions. If you see the tree right away, there is no challenge. Sometimes it's difficult, sometimes it's not. Personally, I always see what I have to do. The more experience you have, the more easy it gets. With time, you learn everything. ►►►





Mugo pine. Pot: Japan.  
Height: 80 cm (32 in.).



Detail of a mugo pine. For several years, Carlos van der Vaart collected his own yamadori, which he prefers to work with.

**EBI – What varieties of trees do you like the most?**

**C.V.** – My favourites are pines and junipers, and all the evergreens. You can create so much. It's endless. I've always been crazy about them. They have beautiful varied colours and good ramification.

I'm also crazy about yamadori because they're old and they have character. A tree from a nursery is completely different from a yamadori. Yamadori have flaws, and that's what makes them interesting.

**EBI – You like to work with deadwood. What's your secret to find the right balance?**

**C.V.** – I only work with deadwood when it's relevant. It's really beautiful and allows me to be creative. Sometimes, I have to reduce it because it can be too much, too bulky. Deadwood is very important, but it can't be too big if you want a really good balance.

**EBI – Do you think a tree can ever be completed?**

**C.V.** – Normally, a tree doesn't come to an end because it grows old. But some junipers can sometimes get too mature if you bring them to the



Carlos won many prizes with his trees, which he attends to in his workshop.

maximum maturity. They can grow so fast. Then, you have to go back. A tree is always in motion. It doesn't care about being a bonsai, it just wants to survive. It's really important to always get the energy in balance. You need to have only strong parts instead of weak parts. Sometimes, you can do better. And sometimes, you reach the top and everything is perfect.

**EBI – How would you define your style, your "touch"?**

**C.V.** – I love bunjin style. The trunk has to be thick but not too thick ... Everything has to be perfect





*Juniperus procumbens*  
"Nana", in an  
antique Chinese  
pot. Height:  
40 cm (16 in.).

because you can't hide. I think my style is female. I like curves and round forms. In Japan, white pine is female, black pine is male: you style the trees in a completely different way. I like to be creative and find harmony, in a female way. And I always stay close to nature, to avoid being too artificial.

**EBI – What projects or dreams would you like to achieve in the next few years?**

**C.V.** – When I started, I wanted to own really good trees. My trees got better and I became a professional. Then I wanted to own one of the best trees. Now, I have 20 or 25 masterpieces in my collection. For example, I bought two junipers in Japan, among the best I've ever seen. You can only dream of such trees. I worked on them, I displayed them during exhibitions and I won prizes. But this is not my goal any more. I'm happy to find good trees, but I don't seek to own them. I have everything I ever wanted. In my shop, there is always a special tree that I would like to keep to myself. But there is always someone who wants to buy it. They are not necessarily the expensive ones, but the ones with movement and good branches. Now, I want to get back to basics. Start from scratch with a tree and make it grow. This is the real essence of bonsai. ●



Scots pine. Pot: Japan. Height: 70 cm (28 in.).



# Wiring broadleaves

If you want to wire train broadleaves, winter is the perfect period. Trees have shed their leaves, and there are fewer other tasks demanding attention, so you can take your time over it.

Author: Gilbert Labrid

**W**inter is the best season for wiring trees. It is a period when you can spend long stretches of free time to focus on the task, which is often considered a tedious one. Broadleaves can be wired at this time of year, though it is not compulsory to do so, as these types of trees can also easily be styled through precise pruning. The absence of leaves in winter makes it easier to get an overall view of the tree and to manipulate the wire between the branches. Wiring allows adjustment of the position of a whole branch or just a part of it, bringing it into the open and avoiding it overlapping with or crossing over other parts. The wiring possibilities that are available are somewhat limited by certain constraints related to the nature of broadleaves. In contrast, this method of styling is much more widespread for conifers, because their flexible wood allows it to be used intensively. The first constraint is to do with the relative hardness of the wood as soon as it is a few years old. Only the youngest parts can be manipulated without risk of breakage. For other parts, extreme caution is needed. Broadleaves' fine, soft bark is the second matter that demands careful consideration. Putting pressure on any given point for too long will irreversibly leave an imprint on the bark. The fact that the living tissue grows quickly increases the risk of scarring, and it is also for this reason that it is preferable to remove wiring as soon as spring approaches. To keep these risks to a minimum, the bark can be protected by wrapping it in a strip of raffia or fabric; but it is best to wind thin paper or fabric around the wire, which will have a cushioning effect for a certain length of time. It is important to make sure that the wire does not cut into the bark, and to avoid leaving it in place for more than two months. It is best to redo the wiring if the desired positioning has not been achieved. Always keep firmly in mind that any marks left by the wire will not disappear: they will always leave a visible trace, which anyone with a sharp eye will be guaranteed to spot. ●



**1** Winter is the time to examine trees' architecture without being bothered by foliage. Training wire can be applied if necessary.



**2** The training wire must be strong but flexible. If it isn't copper-coated, it can be used as it is. Copper wire is not recommended for broadleaves. It is too strong and solid for fine bark: too stiff to avoid leaving marks.



**3** Classic wire wrapped with soft paper lets you work efficiently while protecting delicate areas.

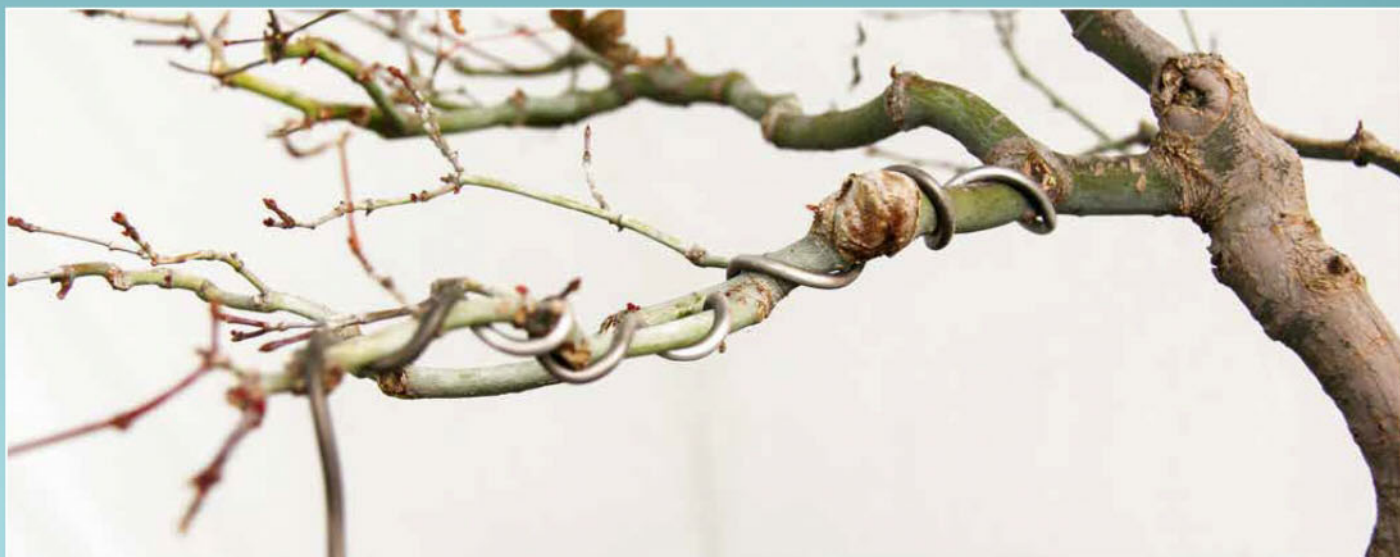
## Other things to do

Wire conifers and put them in a sheltered spot.

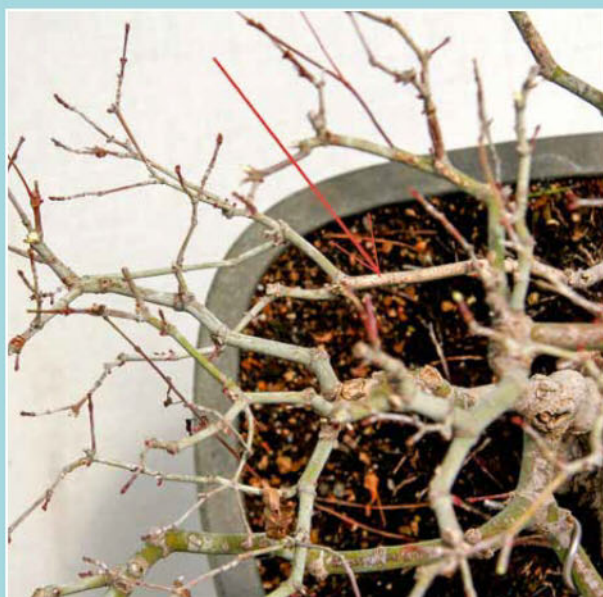
Prepare material for repotting.

Use soap and oil treatments against parasite eggs and larva.





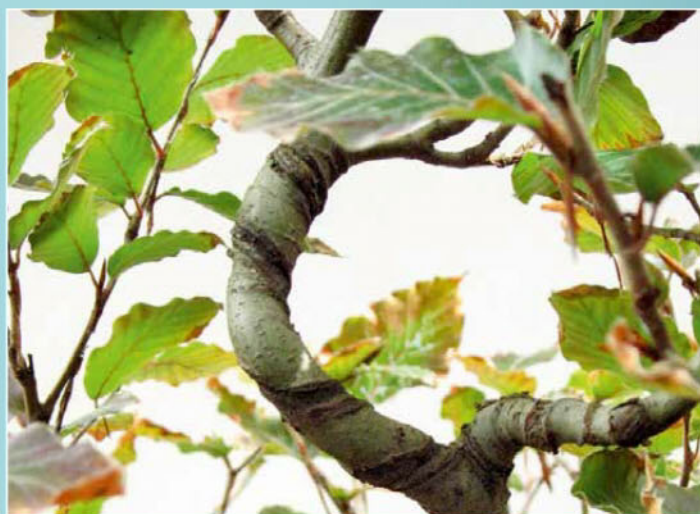
4 Any unprotected wire should be checked regularly and removed after two months.



5 The branch marked in red needs to be repositioned in an open area, instead of being underneath the upper branches.



6 Having been shifted slightly, the branch now occupies the free space to the back, between the two trunks.



7 The wire has not been removed in time, and new spring growth has caused marks to appear on this beech tree's bark.



8 While wiring can allow you to modify the position of a branch in space, it cannot create broken lines or sharp angles. Only well-executed pruning can give decisive results.



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# Work Diary

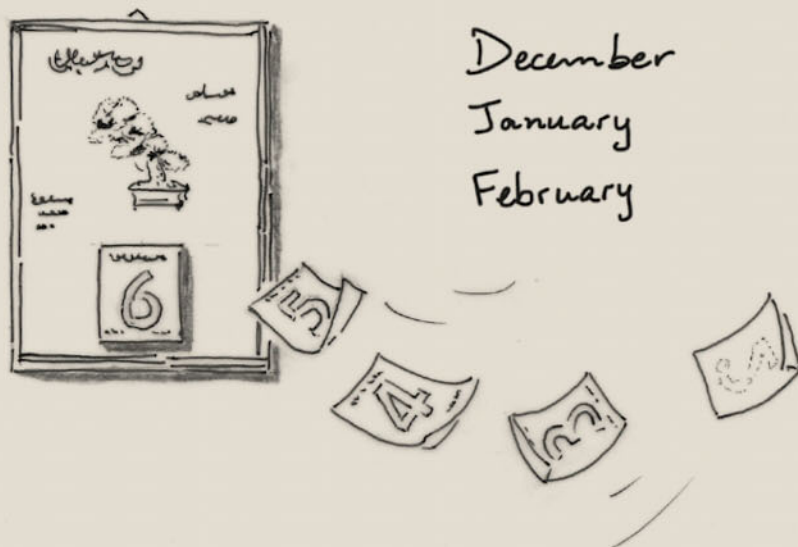
## December, January, February

Author: Bruno Mazza

**W**ith the drop in temperature and shorter days, the growing season has come to a halt. Plants are gradually entering winter dormancy and organ function is reduced. This might also seem the case for the bonsaist, but this is not so. There is intensive work ahead. Trees must be adequately protected, and during winter and before the upcoming spring, the first shaping must be carried out on new subjects, and the shape of mature trees must be corrected or perfected.



It is easy to imagine the damage that such a heavy snowfall could have done to the bonsai if they had not been sheltered. This polyethylene-covered cold frame will quickly dislodge snow if the arch is sufficiently steep.



### Winter protection

With the exception of tropical species, which in our regions in winter, must be taken indoors or to a heated greenhouse, all other species, provided they have been correctly cultivated, can overwinter outdoors without problems. At night, when the cold is more intense, the substrate can freeze, and it is very important that it should thaw during the day. Healthy roots can support being frozen for as long as five or six days, but beyond that, there is a very high risk of the roots suffering permanent damage.

Knowing the conditions of their regions, bonsaists will take all the necessary precautions against this happening, and to keep their plants out of danger. Shelters must be made against:

- very strong winds
- persistent freezing
- snowfalls – so that branches are not broken if there is heavy snow

An unheated cold frame, covered with transparent polyethylene is an excellent and affordable solu-

tion. This will provide good shelter from heavy rain, snow and strong winds, provided it is firmly anchored to the ground. This type of greenhouse must be sensibly monitored (open and closed) to adapt to weather conditions (intense cold or heat). In areas that are not subject to frequent freezing, it is possible to protect a small number of plants by putting them in the ground and covering the pots with dry leaves, or covering all the plants with a horticultural fleece, which is both practical and effective.

### Plant dormancy

Plants that grow spontaneously in our latitude have an annual cycle – from the start of spring to the development and hardening off of new shoots in summer to winter dormancy. It is the drop in temperature and the shorter days in autumn, that halt the growth cycle.

Once reserves have been accumulated and the buds are readied for the following spring, ►►►





In autumn, ginkgo leaves turn a uniform lemon yellow.



This zelkova shohin 18 cm (7 in.) high has golden autumn leaves. Afterwards in winter, when the branches are bare, it is sheer delight.

▶▶▶ photosynthesis is gradually interrupted and the plants lose their leaves. Before sheltering them for the winter, the trees should be exposed to the first frosts to inhibit budding until spring.

## For the colours to change

The general green of leaves in spring and summer is due to chlorophyll – the green pigment – that allows a plant to absorb energy from the sun and to photosynthesise. In autumn, when temperatures fall and light decreases with the shorter days, the concentration of chlorophyll in the leaves weakens – moderately to begin with, and then more significantly, which allows other pigments in the leaves to show:

- Carotenoids in trees (such as ginkgo, zelkova and certain maples etc.) will gradually turn leaves from yellow to brown.

- Reds, on the other hand, are due to the presence of anthocyanin, a pigment produced during photosynthesis, and which during the growth period (certain maples, *Rhus*, rowan (sorbus) etc.), is transferred to the ramification and then carried to the leaves in autumn when the chlorophyll decreases.

- Other species (chestnut, white oak etc.) are characterized by brown leaves in autumn, due to the presence of tannin.

For perfect autumn foliage and wonderful colours, it is essential during the growing season to ensure that plants are:

- appropriately exposed to plenty of sun in order to photosynthesise, but it should also be possible to put them in the shade in exceptionally hot weather.

- correctly and regularly watered, because dry spells will parch leaf edges and irredeemably damage them.

- provided with a good thermal amplitude between day and night.

## Protection from disease

Even while dormant in winter, when all functions are very slow, plants must be appropriately sited to prevent problems from occurring. A cool, dry spot is essential to prohibit moss formation or the development of infections.

From the time they stop photosynthetic activity, deciduous trees do not need very much light and can be placed near each other, but allowing for an adequate air flow. Conifers on the other hand must be given plenty of space and ventilation.

The careful removal of old needles is a good way of preventing excessive humidity and allowing the air to circulate.

Anything that is a potential source of disease or infestation must be removed to prevent the infestation.



Maples turn red in autumn due to the presence of anthocyanin.



The Japanese maple has stunning colours in autumn. Good exposure and adequate watering are essential to achieve these hues.





In autumn, the leaves of the trident maple turn from yellow to red, a range of colours due to weaker chlorophyll activity.



When the flowering period is over between the end of August and mid-September, *Lagerstroemia* leaves rapidly turn from red to violet in October.



Due to the presence of tannin, hornbeam leaves turn brown in autumn.

from spreading. Whether now or in the future, dry, sick or rotting leaves, needles, moss, twigs and other bits from the plant must be removed and burnt.

As a preventive measure and also as a treatment, the bark must be carefully cleaned – particularly that of deciduous trees – by using a brush and then by applying jin seal diluted in water (1 part jin seal to 30 parts water), and taking care not to contaminate the substrate.

The composition of jin seal (sulphur and lime) will stop the formation of moss and the invasion of destructive insects that could lay their eggs in the cracks of the bark.

## Fertilising

The plants do not need fertilising during the dormancy period. Fertiliser is given to trees that are in training after they have sprouted, and conversely, come back to it in autumn for mature trees.

## Watering

In winter, trees need minimal watering. Those that have lost their leaves are completely inactive. However, the substrate must be kept moist, because even though sap circulation has slowed right down the roots, the trunk branches and buds still need to receive water. Winter watering is done preferably late morning, so that any excess water in the pot can drain out in the afternoon, before the onset of a cold night. Conifers are a little more

active, but the amount of watering needed changes very little.

## Prepare for repotting

It is best to schedule repotting for after mid-February when usually, frosts are less likely to return. Winter is a good time to prepare the materials necessary for repotting – pots and substrates etc. ►►►





Mugo pines often have jin, as they grow in rocky environments at very high altitudes, and there is always a strong possibility of injury.



It was probably a rockfall that injured the trunk of this mugo pine, a wound that was the origin of the shari. Ice, heat, violent winds, fungus and above all the incomparable passage of time, have ravaged the wood, giving it a weathered appeal.



It no doubt needed over a century to cause the deep fissures in the trunk of this mugo pine. It lived at an altitude of over 2,000 metres (6,500 feet) in an extremely hostile environment, which strongly conditioned its growth.

## Dead wood

When looking at certain bonsai species one often notices eye-catching areas of dead wood along the trunk. The dead wood is either natural caused by a traumatic event or weather conditions, or has been created by the bonsai artist to look natural.

Dead wood on bonsai is intended to give the impression of age and/or to give it dramatic intensity and to evoke its powers of endurance.

'Jin', 'shari' and 'sabamiki' are the Japanese terms mainly used for dead wood.

– Jin what is left of a dead branch on the trunk with the passage of time.

– Shari is the scarring from a wound to the trunk, after its wood has been destroyed by bacteria, or insects, or natural events.

– Sabamiki is a quite large, hollow part of the trunk, which is the result of an old and deep shari.

Jin, shari and sabamiki are also techniques used to:

- shorten the length of a branch.
- to reduce the height of a trunk to improve tapering.
- to improve unsightly and uninteresting parts of the tree. ●



Dead wood is the most remarkable part of junipers. It is the result of the tree being subjected to extreme conditions and adapting to them. It is the feature that allows one to picture the tree's life story.



The sabamiki on this yew was rapidly created. I achieved it over two years on the still intact part of the dead trunk. With time it will quickly improve. Yew wood is not very hard and deteriorates easily.



Creating dead wood must be carried out with great skill, so as not to show that it was man-made, which would spoil its appeal.



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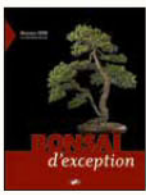
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# Getting the most from an unprepossessing young plant

One can buy an inexpensive young plant commercially. The material will no doubt be fairly modest, but one must know how to choose a tree and how best to exploit it.

Author: Gilbert Labrid

**The best** way to find good material to create a bonsai, is to go to a professional. However, plants that have already had pre-bonsai work done can often be expensive. For a more modest budget, one must resort to classic nurseries which can sometimes have pleasant surprises, but one can spend a great amount of time looking.

In addition, usable trees will be limited to broadleaf varieties, deciduous or evergreen, except in special cases. So, one should consider creating a small bonsai that will take a shorter time to evolve, with starting material that needs little preparation before working on it, contrary to large subjects or conifers.

## 1 Give priority to the base

For a reasonable price, one can find medium sized bonsai that are not especially interesting, but that have a good trunk base. Quite often, the crown can be air-layered to obtain a shohin and the base of the trunk can be used to reconstruct a small tree – two trees for the price of one!

By allowing it to grow after a severe pruning, is a good way to reconstruct a deciduous that has an interesting curve in the lower part.



Making a bonsai from a nursery plant is cheap, but one must know how to choose. This spruce lacks bottom branches (A) and does not have the right criteria for a small bonsai. It will be used to make up a group, or to be grown over rock, or to create a medium-sized tree.

## 2 The plant's angle

Choosing the right face and changing the plant's aspect is a way of improving the general appearance of a bonsai, even on an inexpensive subject there will be some detail that will allow one to fix the front aspect of the composition. Each subject must be studied without considering its present shape, but of that in the future.



This spruce is interesting because of its lower parts (A). The trunk will become larger with good tapering thanks to the presence of numerous sacrifice branches, provided one takes care to preserve them for quite some time.

1: One must choose between the two crowns. This one is very stiff and without a lower ramification.

2: This option should be kept as it has enough movement to give more suppleness to the entire plant.

For this, every angle of the plant must be examined. The appearance of many bonsai trees can be greatly enhanced, simply by changing the plant's angle.

### 3 The nebari and the trunk

The nebari and the trunk's movement are the first things to be dealt with, and then the branch formation. With deciduous trees, it is often advantageous to completely reshape the tree's architecture, which is quite easy to do due to back budding after a hard prune. An inexpensive subject will often have a poor branch structure, but to reject a tree for this reason could be a mistake. To avoid this, concentrate first on the base and on the trunk.

### 4 Look for vigour

One must assess the state of the roots, and when examining the leaves, the quantity and the strength of the shoots. The colour of the foliage and absence of small ramifications may indicate a root problem that could be difficult to resolve.

### 5 Examining grafts

Certain species or varieties are reproduced by graft. When the graft is placed high on the trunk, or if the visible scar is a protrusion, then reject the plant. Only those grafts where the scarring is light or hidden and there is no protrusion should be kept.

### 6 Correcting faults

Some faults can be hidden – others not. One must learn first of all how to distinguish the difference between the two categories. In some cases, one can turn a fault to advantage more easily than envisaged.



① A nursery *Acer palmatum*. Height 2 metres (78¾ in.).



② Pruning will reduce the tree by 1 metre. (39¾ in.).

1: The junction at the top of the trunks forms an ugly thickness. There are two solutions: either air-layer at exactly this point or remove one of the two trunks.

2: The two trunks are of the same thickness. Cut one back hard to slow its growth and let the other grow freely to increase its size.



③ A year later, the maple has the same problem. There is no tapering and the trunks' junction forms an open U.



④ By altering the angle at which it is planted, one can hide this ugly feature from sight, but the problem remains.

A: The base is better with an attractive anchorage.

B: The angle is now quite closed, which is much more elegant. If one were to choose this side and remove the trunk behind, the scar would not show.

Technique and creativity are the two supports to lean on when looking at the possibilities of the trees to be transformed. Looking for good material is often a tedious task, but it is necessary to train the eye while drawing important lessons from the future aesthetic evolution, but without risking a fortune if it should go wrong – for the tree of course! ●





# A slumbering cade on the Cap de Creus

At the tip of Spain, on the Cap de Creus, cade junipers spread across the rocks, battered by the force of the wind.

Text: Michèle Corbihan  
Photos: Anne Royer

At the Cap de Creus, near the northernmost point of Catalonia, the weather is so violent that shrubs have no choice than to grow along the forms of the rocks. This cade juniper is one of them.

**A**t the eastern extremity of the Iberian peninsula, in the north of Catalonia, where the land stretches out the farthest into the Mediterranean, is the Cap de Creus Natural Park. Its dry landscape is battered by violent, merciless winds and seas. No trees can survive here. The only shrubs are cade junipers and *Pistacia lentiscus*, dwelling among countless botanical species including pretty *Armeria ruscinonensis* and strange *Seseli farrenyi*, which is endemic to this biotope.

We are at the foot of the Pyrenees, a little north of Cadaqués and Portlligat, the little fishing village famous for being the location of surrealist painter Salvador Dalí's main home. The coast is wild and very craggy, harbouring beautiful creeks where the

colour of the water wavers between turquoise and deep blue. Rocks peep above its surface, forming folds that passers-by imagine to be populated by all sorts of weird and wonderful creatures.

## Pinned to the ground

At the base of the lighthouse, at an altitude of 87 metres (285 feet), cade junipers – *Juniperus oxycedrus* – cling to the rock. Although able to reach heights of 14 metres (45 feet), here they are often no more than 2 metres (6 feet) tall, forming bushes that make attractive splashes of green across the grey rock.

Here, a trunk emerges at the edge of a path. It seems to have been pinned to the ground, prevented by the tramontana and winds from reaching





The juniper has had no choice but to bow down to the tramontana, while leaving its trunk sticking strangely up beside the path.



The shrub has grown into a slender bush form.



Death rubs shoulders with life. The subtlety of the grey wood flirts with the vivid green of the foliage in the burning July sun.

towards the sky. Resigned never to experiencing the dizziness of heights, it lives a horizontal life, bathed in scorching sunlight during the summer.

Over there is a thicket with hollows in it – surely some sort of animals' lair. The juniper has allowed part of itself to die off under the destructive effects of the wind. Its slender dead branches spread out

horizontally like tangled embroidery threads. The grey of the deadwood blends with the colours of the rock and contrasts with the soft green of the foliage. The plant's extremities disappear into the surrounding vegetation, among grasses that form golden tufts in the blazing sun.

## Submissive shapes

A little further away, a shrub is trying desperately to climb up a rock that has offered it a few steps. In its struggle against the elements, it has left all the foliage from its base behind. At the moment its skeleton architecture is still crowned with green ... but how long will it last?

Away from the tourist traps of the Costa Brava, the Cap de Creus is an invitation to silence, meditation, and the observation of nature, of its resilience and adaptability to the elements. The forms that cade junipers take on are striking and intriguing. They seem to be not just tormented, but submissive. Anyone walking by cannot fail to be touched by them. These plants are up against forces that are stronger than themselves – and, as always, they survive by being able to adapt. ●



Will this plant manage to make it up the rocky steps? Given its deadwood, nothing could be less certain.

# The Cap de Creus

The Cap de Creus has been a protected natural area since 1985. It spans 8,769.5 hectares (21,700 acres) of land in northern Catalonia, together with the adjoining marine areas. Its landscape is very varied, mostly featuring scrubland.

The climate is damp Mediterranean. It is dominated by the tramontana, a northerly/northwesterly wind, which can rage relentlessly for days on end at the tip of the cape, at speeds exceeding 100 kilometres (60 miles) per hour. Easterly winds are also noteworthy.

As a Natural Park, the Cap de Creus is subject to strict regulations regarding the protection of its flora and fauna.

Information: <http://parcsnaturals.gencat.cat/es/cap-creus/>





# Displaying shohin harmoniously

For a beautiful shohin display, every element is carefully studied; two of which are the bonsai stand and the choice of scroll. A few tips from a Japanese shohin expert.

Text: BonsaiTranslations,  
in collaboration with Hiroki Miura  
Photos: Hiroki Miura

Displaying shohin is an art in itself. Apart from the type of tree, the choice of display shelf is important for a harmonious composition.

**To help us** understand the art of displaying shohin in a group, Hiroki Miura, a professional bonsai artist and expert in small shohin, gives us a few basic guidelines with examples taken from some of the best displays of the Baijukai group of bonsai artists from Miura Baiju-en in Osaka, Japan. We start with a simple group of shohin 20 cm (8 in.) high that is made up of six elements, and for this we use, a *Rokko*-style display shelf, named after the mountain in Kobe. The shelf can be used in two ways: its orientation is determined by the 'flow' of the principal trees.



The composition's six elements: 1. *Juniperus chinensis* 'Itoigawa'  
2. *Malus pumila* var. Beniotome 3. *Trachelospermum asiaticum*  
4. *Acer buergerianum* 5. *Woodsia macrochlaena* 6. *Lagerstroemia indica*.



A small display table is placed beneath the Asiatic jasmine to rebalance the height of the space.

## A visually attractive 'flow'

First, Hiroki Miura places the shohin. The trees positioned at 1 and 6 are the most important and serve to set off the composition. Look closely at the *Juniperus chinensis* in the first position. It is the orientation of its dead wood that creates visual flow, and is the starting point of our journey for this display. The palpable energy of the dead wood is so strong that the other trees in the group must calm this visual flow to create a restful space. This is the reason for placing the juniper at the highest point of the display shelf. The tree in the second position, a *Malus pumila* var. Beniotome, must act as a foil to the forcefulness of the first, and must play a subtle accompanying role so as not to rival it. In contrast to the principal tree, the *Malus pumila* has empty spaces and delicate fruit that soften the strength of the juniper's dense, bushy foliage. Hiroki Miura then places the third tree, a *Trachelospermum asiaticum* (Asiatic jasmine) on a *shita-ita* (a small display table) as the space between the jasmine and the top shelf is too large. Quite a substantial tree needs to be placed here to guide the eye from the second to the third position, but not so strongly as to lose the visual flow for too long. Small-leaved trees are suitable in this position. Note that this space is the darkest in the group.

## A display stand to restore balance

Hiroki Miura places stands under the trident maple and the juniper. There are many reasons for this. They either serve to alter the height of a space, or to balance the tree if needed. The trident maple needed to be a centimetre ( $\frac{3}{8}$  in.) higher. The jasmine was placed on a *ne taku*, a low rootstand, made from a block of wood, carved to

look like roots or a good *nebari*. The idea is to emphasise the strength of the trunk and the tree's base and to balance the force of its dense foliage. It is very difficult to produce a large *nebari* on an Asiatic jasmine, so the *ne taku* is a good way of simulating it. A base can also be used to enhance a bonsai, whereas its absence will reduce a tree's dominance in the composition. Hiroki Miura does not put a stand under the apple tree, but he does under the juniper. This is so that the fruit tree is not over-emphasised. As tree no. 2, it serves uniquely as a complement to tree no. 1, and is already a focal point as it has been placed at a higher level. The shape and size of a stand must be chosen according to the shape of the pot, and it must be slightly longer than the container. Note the similarity between the juniper's base and the stand itself, which gives it its fluidity. This is a very subtle stand, because the juniper is quite powerful in this group. Every detail is important when balancing a display. It is a refined, minimalist art, which is very close to traditional interior design. Similar types of stand should not be used in the same composition, which essentially is the same for the pots and for the different tree species. The group's harmony depends very much on the diversity of the elements. The accent plant is a *Woodsia macrochlaena*, a type of fern that turns yellow or bright ►►►



Using a stand absorbs the empty space above the maple. The stand under the *Juniperus chinensis* emphasises the tree's dominant position.





The finished display is a well-balanced composition.

▶▶▶ orange in autumn. In this composition, the grass must be very low in order to form two triangles between the display shelf on the right and the tree on the left. It must not attract attention and serves only to provide a visual transition from the right to the left.

## Other attempts

Displaying shohin comes naturally to a professional such as Hiroki Miura. Let's try to understand it by trying out a few infelicitous displays.

## Using five elements

Hiroki Miura continues his demonstration with a composition of five shohin elements and a smaller format of under 15 cm (6 in.) and uses an Akagi display shelf. He has applied all the rules mentioned above for the choice of supports. This type of arrangement can be stunning. "This group has two berry trees," explains Hiroki Miura. "Normally, we cannot use two fruit-bearing trees, but in this case, there is one on the stand on the left and one on the right, so it is acceptable. However, if the two were placed together, it would be visually annoying." The *Zelkova's* stand may also pose a problem. Hiroki Miura concurs that indeed the stand is too big for the pot but is within the limits of what is acceptable. It is sometimes difficult to find an accessory that perfectly adapts to a pot or to a bonsai. However, the quest for perfection is part of the pleasure of shohin bonsai. Collectors will own a great number of display shelves, stands, pots and other accessories, and shohin club members will lend them to each other for an exhibition.



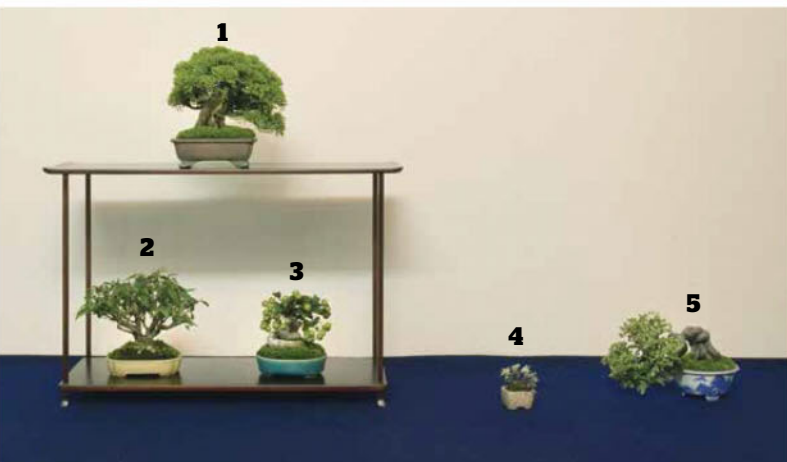
Swapping the maple and the *Lagerstroemia* upsets the balance of power. The eye is forced to the centre of the display shelf. Too large for its base, the *Lagerstroemia* acts as a visual magnet. The maple is much too small for its stand and is not strong enough to compensate for the force of the composition on the right.



The maple and the apple tree are swapped. The balance between the juniper and the maple is not bad, both having a fairly dense and green foliage, but the Asiatic jasmine and the apple tree are unbalanced – the apple tree is too large, and the red of its fruit is too close to that of the Jasmine's leaves and pot.

## Using three display shelves

The demonstration continues with a group of small shohin (10 cm, 6 in., and under). We will use three shelf types: *Mikazuki*, *Fuji* and *Warabi*. These shelves have different depths, and as such, they must not be placed in a straight line, because "placing the smaller stands to the front will make them seem bigger – it is important that everything is balanced," Hiroki Miura explains. The master places the group instinctively. The three principal trees are the juniper at the top, the pear tree on the right and the white pine on the left. Like the snail shell's spiral, the visual energy in this type of display follows the golden ratio. Placing display stands under the trees gives each a presence – a bit like underlining text. ▶▶▶



An Akagi display shelf holds: 1. *Juniperus chinensis* 'Itoigawa', 2. *Zelkova serrata*, 3. *Malus*, 4. *Artemisia schmidtiana*, 5. *Pyracantha*. Note the two fruit-bearing species.



A small display table is placed beneath the *Pyracantha* to give it height and a better visual flow, and the same thing for the *Zelkova*.



The Mikazuki, Fuji and Warabi, shelves display shohin of under 10 cm (6 in.):

1. *Juniperus chinensis*, 2. *Acer palmatum* 'Arakawa', 3. *Ilex serrata*, 4. *Pyracantha*, 5. *Chaenomeles*, 6. *Suiseki*, 7. *Pyrus pyrifolia*, 8. *Bulbophyllum drymoglossum*, 9. *Pinus parviflora*.



Placing a display stand under a tree adds presence to each.





The position of the trees is important. Here, the fruit-bearing trees are on the same side, on the left, which unbalances the composition.



The three fruit trees have been placed on the shelf in the centre. There are far too many trees with similar characteristics, which upsets the harmony.



Here the shelves have been reversed - the Mikazuki is on the left and the Warabi on the right: now the pear tree seems bare and the white pine becomes too dominant. It is very interesting to see how the simple curve of the Mikazuki shelf can provide bonsai with such an effective frame and presence.

▶▶▶ The composition is complete; let's play around with it a bit to understand the rules. The composition holds three fruit trees, which contradicts the preceding rule. Hiroki Miura explains. "Because this is the beginning of autumn and there are more berry or fruit trees. If their colour, shape and size are different, then there is not a problem, but one must be careful as to their positioning." This rule applies to all trees with similar characteristics. For example, we never put trees of the same shape next to each other, or juxtapose trees with foliage of the same tone.

## Using Kakejiku

In Japanese the word *Kakejiku* is translated as *kake* : hanging, and *jiku* : scroll. "When we create a shohin group, we try to recreate a mountain landscape. We think of a title for our composition. Therefore, these paintings form the background. A picture of Mount Fuji, or a steep cliff, or a Buddhist monk, will give a completely different atmosphere," Hiroki Miura explains. The choice of painting depends on the season. In Japan, people are impatient for the next season. Summers are too hot, so everyone dreams of autumn. It is the same



Without a *kakejiku* - scroll - The composition seems very sparse.



In Japan, if you want to see Mount Fuji, it is best to go in winter. Because Japan is so humid, the mountain is often hidden in the clouds. The driest month is in December, so of course, a painting of Mount Fuji is synonymous with winter.

when Christmas decorations appear at the end of October, when those for Halloween are over before 31 October. So, one must choose a painting that heralds the next season. The positioning of shohin bonsai is an exercise that requires practice. Try out different combinations, and take pleasure in the adventure. Learn the different displays such as Gafu-ten and from a master such as Hiroki Miura, which is of course, an excellent way to learn. ●



This *kakejiku* depicts *tsukimi*, the mid-autumn festival, a period in which the Japanese celebrate the harvest moon. In autumn, the moon is unveiled, and the silvery autumn grasses revealed.



Here the *kakejiku* shows a Buddhist monk who must wander the parish streets many times a year. His winter clothing is associated with the arrival of the forthcoming spring.



# Repotting a **weak pine**

This Japanese white pine is pining away because it has been neglected for a long time. Urgent intervention is needed on the roots and nebari to restore its vigour.

Author: Gilbert Labrid

**Working** on the root area of a pine that has been weakened by several years of substandard treatment is quite a delicate task, requiring patience and attentiveness. Imported pines like this *Pinus pentaphylla* deteriorate rapidly if you're not careful, because they struggle to adapt to the climate and to poorly executed and sometimes premature intervention.

A preliminary analysis allows us quickly to deduce that the tree was repotted after being imported several years ago. Not enough was done after this repotting to retain its strength, and several of its branches have died. There is no visible grafting mark. The tree was cultivated in the ground, as evidenced by the remaining fine black soil that is stuck to the roots in the centre. The exposed roots (above) have been uncovered by the removal of the old soil. An examination of the surface roots reveals classic flaws of trees that have been collected from nature or cultivated in the ground without any attention being paid to their nebari. Usually there are some traces, albeit subtle ones, of work to correct the nebari; but here, there are none to be seen. Perhaps this is another reason why the tree is weak.

To improve the tree's cultivation conditions, the rest of the old earth needs to be removed. Much as we might want to keep as many roots as possible, trees like this one often have old and damaged or poorly positioned roots that need to be eliminated entirely.



This *Pinus pentaphylla*, or Japanese white pine, was imported from Japan and has spent about a decade in a hobbyist's garden. Urgent work is needed on its nebari and roots. Height: 60 cm (24 in.).

Consequently, we need to take advantage of the little energy that the tree still has, to intervene as soon as possible and introduce some sense of order into the roots and nebari.

## 1 Analysing the pine

This tree displays a number of symptoms:

- it has too few branches and needles
- the branches are too slender, the needles are too dull in colour, and the exposed buds are too small
- the exposed roots are unattractive.

When will it be possible to repot this rather feeble specimen successfully? To be safe, it is important to bear the following points in mind:

- it needs to be transplanted at the height of the right season
- restraint is needed when cutting roots
- after repotting, the tree needs to be well protected and cared for attentively. ►►►



## 2 The nebari



**1** Front view. Two roots are firmly set above the current level of the soil. Underneath them, several exposed securing roots seem to be evenly distributed.



**2** Side view. The two upper roots have taken a vertical plunge. The trunk has thickened up at the level where they join it. This situation is untenable.



**3** Both of the roots need to be removed in order to strengthen and broaden the collar that is just above them. They cannot be used in their current position.



**4** The nutrient supply provided to the tree by these roots needs to be cut off. The roots' size indicates that caution is needed. Work begins by severing the first root, leaving a stump that will dry out within six months.



**5** Once the root has dried out, the little jin is cut back and the second root is detached from the trunk, again retaining a stump.



**6** The two floating roots have been removed. The nebari is no longer hidden, and the tree's anchoring system is exposed. However, the roots are in something of a muddle.





**7** Right side. The collar underneath the two jin has noticeably shrunk. It will take several more years to correct this problem with the taper. It would have been much simpler if these roots had been removed during the previous repotting exercise.



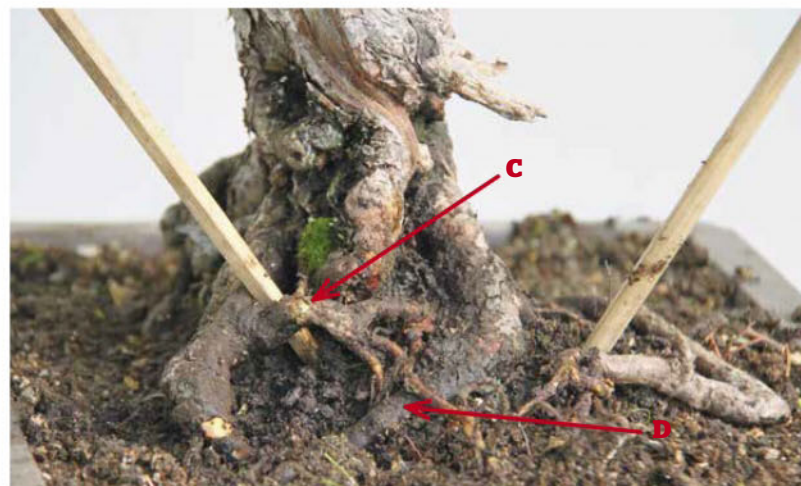
**8** Viewed from the back, it is just as messy as from the front.



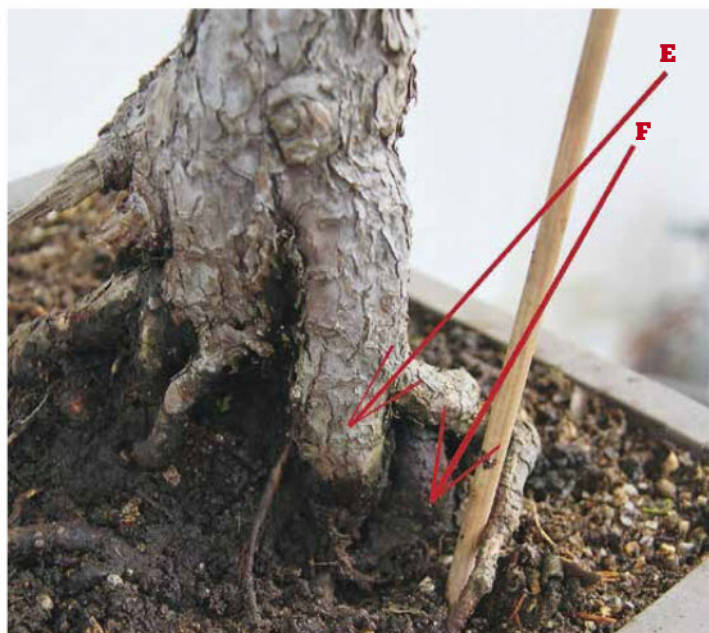
**9** On the left side, the situation seems less complicated, though harder to modify. Root B has divided into two. The arrow indicates the part that crosses over to the front. All of this needs to be carefully examined.



**10** At the front, two roots need to be dealt with as a priority: Root A has been bent into a V shape; it can't be used, and must be removed. Root B is anchored to the rear, and needs to be repositioned.



**11** Right side: Root C is too hard to be straightened out. It needs to be trimmed back. Root D turns back towards the rear and needs to be shortened if possible. Root A, indicated by the stick on the right, needs to be removed.



**12** Left side: the root that is pointing towards the front can be shifted. Roots E and F are braided together and plunge straight into the soil without any ramification. This is the absolute worst point of this nebari.



### 3 Repotting



**A** The tree has been taken out of its pot. There are lots of root hairs, proving that the previous repotting served a purpose. The substrate is not too fine, and the roots are not ruined. There doesn't seem to be any trace of the old soil.



**B** After gently untangling the root hairs, the longest part can be taken off, so that the focus can be turned to the base of the tree. Remember that the right-hand part is less dynamic than the left-hand part.



**C** Using fingers (or a stick), the upper part of the soil that covered the nebari is removed. The centre of the root ball, underneath the tree, has noticeably not been cleaned: some of the old earth is still there - fine, black and sticky. This can be removed with a jet of water, but for this frail specimen it is better to work with fingers and a stick, taking care not to damage the fine roots.



**D** The soil is cleaned and all the earth is removed. Residual moisture in the trunk has caused some of the roots to rot. The ones plunging down underneath the trunk, attracted by the damp, should not be ignored. Roots B and C need to be cut off for this reason, and root A likewise, because it passes across the rest. Investigating beneath the trunk, all the vertical roots are cut back, taking particular care over the finest ones near the trunk and the lateral roots.

### No grafting mark

Before removing the tree from the pot, we can see that there is no trace of grafting. In general, grafting is done at the level of the primary branch or just above the roots, indicated here by the yellow dashes. This white pine was either grown from seed, or collected. The red line represents the level of the soil where the tree spent a long time growing. The roots at this level have been kept, but without a good nebari developing.



The fact that this tree bears no sign of grafting shows that it was either grown from seed or collected.





**E** After cleaning and work on the roots, the tree is placed on the prepared substrate in the base of the pot. The root ball is securely fixed with wire and sticks of bamboo, so that the whole thing is held fast.



**F** All of the old earth has been removed: the spaces created underneath the trunk need to be filled with the new substrate. This is an important exercise, because the young roots will not grow if the gaps aren't filled properly. To get right into the deepest areas and the spaces between the roots, it is good to use a thin stick, twisting it around carefully to help the grains get through.



Work on the roots, pruning, styling and repotting are all done. At this point, the pine needs to be protected from the elements and requires plenty of care and attention.



The new substrate - a mixture of fine and coarse sand, pumice, and pine bark mulch - has very good drainage qualities.

## 4 The substrate

For the new soil, it is best to use a mixture with good drainage properties: fine and coarse sand, pumice, and pine bark mulch, in varying proportions depending on the region's climate. In very dry regions, akadama can be added.

In any case, it is best to use a mixture that is both absorbent and drains well. The substrate may look a bit coarse, but its properties make it a good mixture to help the tree recover its vigour.

Overly fine-grained mixtures will retain moisture well but without allowing aeration of the soil, and this causes fine roots to rot. Overly coarse soil drains very well, but does not retain enough water to enable young roots to grow.

What is needed is a compromise between these two characteristics, by adjusting the quantity and quality of the components. If you want to obtain a damper environment, you can add akadama, but you can also change the size and relative quantities of the ingredients. ●





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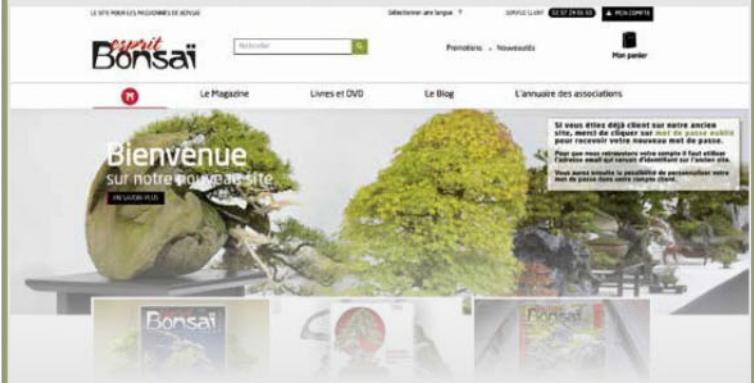
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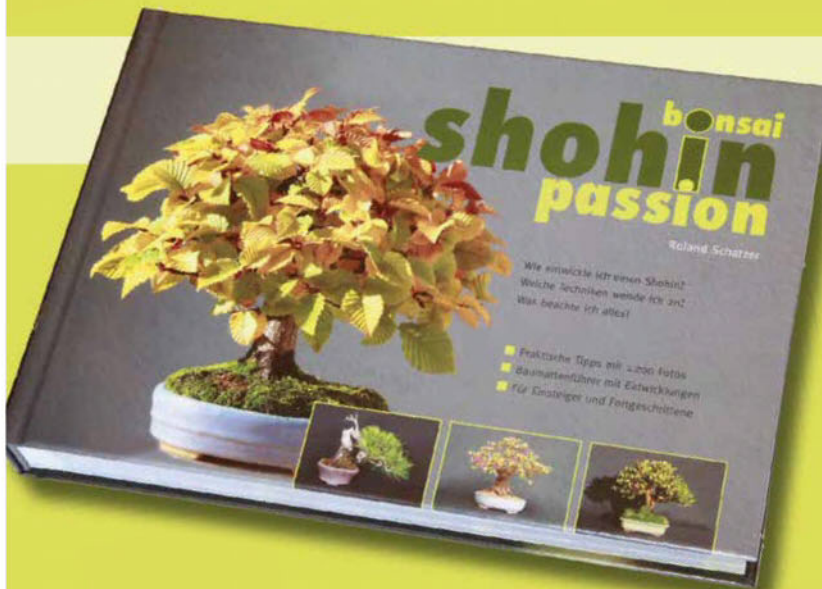
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There are many books about bonsai, various techniques, bonsai styling, bonsai cultivation. Those of you who are looking for *shohin* books will only be able to find some if you are fluent in Japanese. „Bonsai Shohin Passion“, fills the gap of *shohin* books published in languages other than Japanese, and offers a wide range of tips and advice on 370 pages, for beginners as well as for expert bonsai fans.

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**A** This picholine olive, a cultivar that is typical of the Gard (in France), was collected from an olive grove, before undergoing its transformation. Originally, it was about 2 m (78½ in.) high. The upper part of its trunk was removed and the tree was cultivated in pure pumice in a very well aerated growing box, and was allowed to put out new shoots freely.



**B** The same olive tree in 2016. In 2014, first work on it involved removing the dead trunk that was present before the tree was collected - work that was refined over a couple of years. After some selective pruning, the primary branches were very loosely wired. Ramification is still being created and in five years, will probably have doubled in volume. Height: 1 m (39½ in.) and 42 cm (16½ in.) wide at the base.

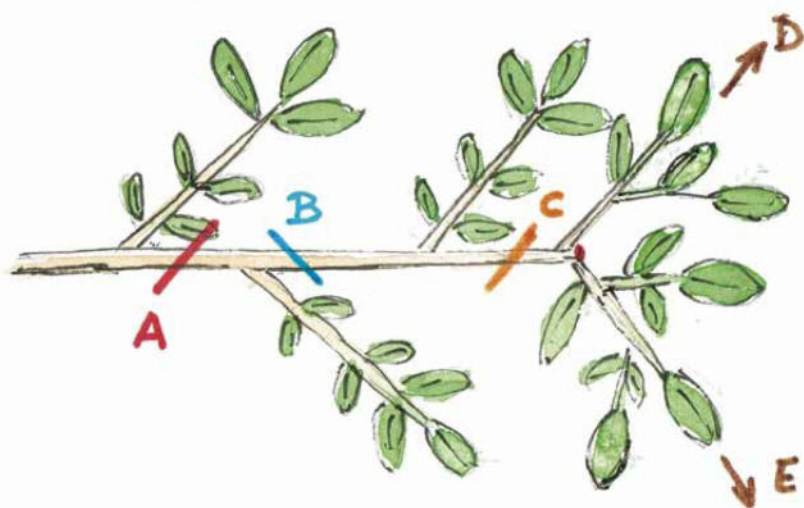
# Cultivating and working with Mediterranean species

The rapid growth and vigorousness of Mediterranean trees are undeniably attractive assets for bonsai cultivation. Whether wild or cultivated, the olive, along with holm oak, *Pistacia lentiscus* (mastic tree) and *Phillyrea* are a few such species.

Author: Patrice Bongrand

**With their** great strength and diversity, Mediterranean species offer the bonsaist plenty of ways of creating sublime bonsai. As the list of these species that one can use for bonsai, is quite long, in this article we will focus on a few evergreen species: wild and cultivated olive





© The branches have grown freely. They will now be relay pruned and styled. To create strong branch tapering, we prune at A and the little secondary branch will take over. We can also prune at B to orient the branch to the right. By pruning only at C, this primary branch will be finer with less tapering which is only admissible for the branches in the upper parts of the tree. Pruning too far from the base of the branch is inadvisable, because the tree will put out two branches (D and E) which would not allow for the creation of a good primary branch.

trees, holm oak, *Pistacia lentiscus* and *Phillyrea* – a wild species related to the olive. We will learn how to cultivate and to work on them while respecting the species and the tree.

## Cultivation

Mediterranean species are susceptible to root rot, and yet contrary to preconceived ideas, they love to be frequently and generously watered. As more often than not with a raw subject – a yamadori, for example – we are going to construct a completely new ramification, and good organic fertilisation of the soil and leafage is absolutely essential.

## Substrates

Substrates that are well aerated, have good drainage, are stable and are also water retentive are essential in the cultivation of all bonsai, and it is particularly true of Mediterranean species. For root recovery in yamadori or trees that are to be reshaped, using pure pumice (pumice stones) with a grain size of 3–6 mm ( $\frac{1}{8}$ – $\frac{1}{4}$  in.) in well-aerated growing boxes is effective. Later, when the tree is more advanced and ready to be potted in a bonsai pot, a mix of pumice and pozzolana to which about 10 to 15% zeolite is added, would be ideal.

## Fertilisation

A good organic fertiliser that is not too rich in azote (for example NPK: 4-8-10) and added to the

soil's surface in the corners, is absolutely essential. Fertiliser can be applied from mid-March to the end of July. It can also be given in autumn in September and October. For trees at the beginning of work or that are weaker, good leaf fertilisation with a diluted liquid fertiliser would be excellent.

## Watering

For positive results, that is, to obtain strong shoots particularly in summer, daily, abundant watering is necessary.

In the south of France at the height of summer, one can water the foliage, except when humidity is high, but continue to water the substrate until the water runs out from the holes in the pot. ►►►



Starting work: this wild olive was collected two years ago and at the time, much of the trunk, which was uninteresting, was removed. It is being cultivated in a well-ventilated container and selective pruning was already carried out in spring



As with most Mediterranean deciduous species, it has put out strong shoots at its base, and it is imperative to remove these with scissors, because the tree's strength must be directed to future branches which will form the ramification.





Work is just starting on this Phillyrea. Like the olive, Phillyrea is part of the Oleaceae family. Too little known to bonsaists, this is a very vigorous species, with a beautiful rough bark and very pretty long, oval slightly serrated leaves.



Like the olive, the greedy shoots at the base must be removed. First work done on the dead wood the previous winter, will be further refined in a year's time.

## Respecting the species

If we want to achieve natural trees, we must construct the ramification of an olive, as an olive, a holm oak as a holm oak, or a *Pistacia lentiscus* as a *Pistacia lentiscus*. When we get to know the specific functioning of these species, we quickly understand that there is a sure and harmonious way of working on these trees. Quite often a simple pair of scissors is enough, but one must bear in mind the specificities of each species and to enhance them by following their natural inclination.



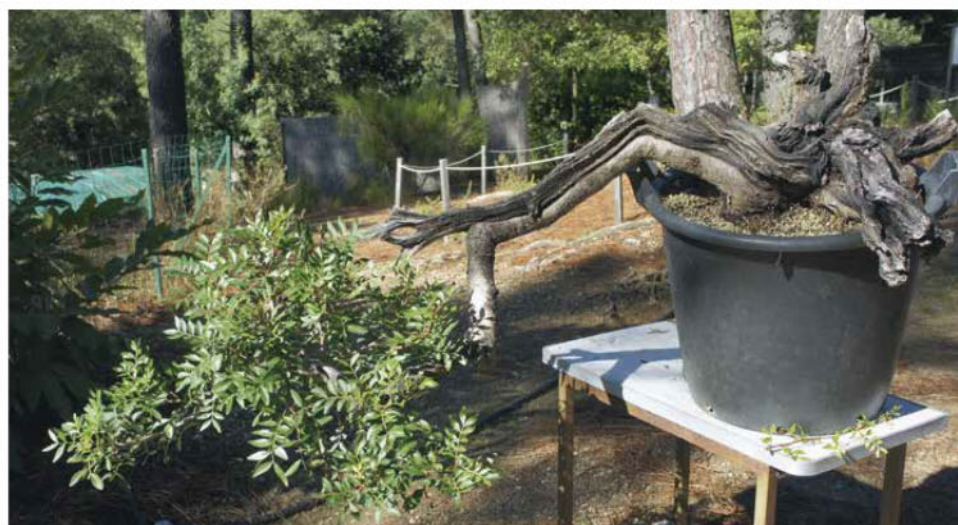
The *Pistacia lentiscus* (mastic tree) is a Mediterranean species with a great future and many assets: wonderful, very hard dead wood, extremely attractive bark, multiple very graceful leaves, and impressive vigour. This extremely old *Pistacia lentiscus*, collected in 2013, was found growing on a south-facing hill in limestone scree. Its collection took four hours of hard labour. To begin with, the tree had many trunks which will become beautiful natural dead wood. Length: 1,40 m (55% in.), width at base: 33 cm (13 in.).



New shoots put out everywhere on the lowest part of the old trunks and must be removed.



In two years, the tree has already been pruned many times. Here one can see the results of former pruning.



Although the tree is only at the beginning of its work, after an autumn pruning and the removal of unnecessary shoots from the trunk, it is already very promising.



The natural dead wood of the *Pistacia lentiscus*, is exceptionally beautiful. There is no need at all to apply jin seal!





Holm oak is another very promising species. This little tree with a double trunk has been worked on for four years. The trunk on the right already has an advanced ramification. The trunk on the left came up from behind and has no tapering; it was cut quite short at the time it was collected. A long branch was allowed to grow to reconstruct the length of the trunk.



This close up shows where the long sap-drawer will be cut - it is this little branch that will take over.

## For exceptional vigour

When working on and collaborating with a tree, one must know perfectly how it functions. Given the climatic conditions and the types of soil of their natural habitat, evergreen Mediterranean species have adopted strategies to maintain maximum health. They are exceptionally vigorous, with huge reserves in their trunks, mostly at the base at nebari level. This explains why, in their natural state, very old cultivated olive trees, wild olive trees, and holm oak, have large swellings at their base. In naturally dry regions, it is not difficult to find a yamadori, with a nice, fat trunk base.

## Yamadori

Giving new life to Mediterranean trees that have been collected from the wild is easier than it is for other species. These species, because they have naturally very strong reserves, even if they have few roots after being collected, they will put out new branches and leaves, and in six months, thanks to photosynthesis, will have created new roots.

To achieve this, after they have been collected, they must be placed in a small recovery cold frame and their leaves must be lightly sprayed every ten minutes. This is a prerequisite for the trees so that they continue to grow vigorously. Strictly speaking, before pruning can begin, a tree should be cultivated and monitored for at least two years after it has been collected.

## The spirit of the species

It would be a mistake, when working and shaping olive trees, holm oak or *Pistacia lentiscus*, to consider wiring them in order to lower long branches,

or to structure foliage pads in the same way as one might for certain pines. Doing this would be projecting a mental "artistic" image that would be disrespectful of the spirit of the species. The result would be a stereotypical "bonsai style" which would be nothing like the wild Mediterranean trees in their natural habitat. We must never forget that, in bonsai, it is these old trees that are the masters.

## Pruning

Natural results are obtained mostly by pruning techniques that enable one to construct the branches for a full ramification. Having allowed the tree to grow many branches freely, one can then choose the tree's future scaffold. They are ►►►



Notice the severe pruning that was made after the tree was collected. Cut paste has been applied, and one can see here the new branches where the pruning was carried out.

## Great strength

Even though the practice of the art of bonsai is a long-term commitment of years of collaboration with a tree, the vigorousness of Mediterranean species, is such that their rooting and ramification construction, are much more rapid than any other tree species.





Even if holm oak is a more masculine species, this tree is a fine example of what one can achieve in the manner of a literati. Although its ramification is not yet fully developed, its beautiful base, the graceful lines of its trunk and the delicateness of its branches, already express the natural beauty of the species.



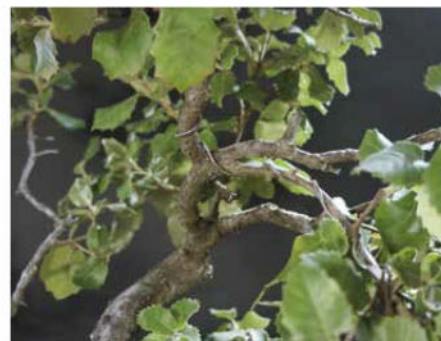
One can see here the fine nebari and beautiful bark on this bonsai.



Many bonsaists would remove the upward growing branches. However, their wonderfully natural expression fully reveals the essence of the holm oak that one sees in its natural habitat.



During the growing season, after the main ramification has been constructed, to increase foliage density, one can prune the branches in this manner.



A not-too tight and infrequent wiring is placed on this young branch to improve its position. This is an exception.

▶▶▶ pruned quite far back at the second shoot, and so on throughout the growing period over many years. So it is principally relay and selective pruning that will construct the new ramification.

Pruning Mediterranean species can be carried out many times during the growing season without weakening the tree. However, a word of warning: the more the tree evolves, and the finer and denser its ramification becomes, the less severe the pruning. Moreover, to ensure that the work is sustained and for a natural result, these pruning techniques must be combined with pruning to let in the light and some pruning to remove all badly placed shoots.

## Wiring

Despite what is written above, one can wire, but sparingly – not to shape the whole tree – but to position a few primary branches right at the start of the shaping process. However, be careful, because wiring can quickly mark these species. One needs then to rapidly undo the wiring, and if necessary, position the wire differently.

Wiring should only be used for opening out young primary branches, or eventually to position a few smaller branches. ●



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## Plant profile

Family: *Elaeagnaceae*

Genus: *Elaeagnus* - etymologically derived from an old Greek name combining "elaia" (olive tree) and "agnos" (sacred).

Common name: silverberry, oleaster, or Russian olive for *Elaeagnus angustifolia*.

Japanese name: *kan gumi*, *natsu gumi*, *nawa shiro gumi*

Habitat: Southeast Asia (Japan, China, Himalayas)



Although little used in bonsai, *Elaeagnus* is a species that can be styled into many different forms. This *Elaeagnus pungens* belonging to Jérôme Hay, 50, was displayed at the Noelanders Trophy XIV in Belgium in 2013.

# *Elaeagnus*

## Easily tamed anarchy

While *Elaeagnus* is commonly found in garden hedges, it's a different story where bonsai is concerned. This vigorous shrub grows messily but responds very well to pruning, among other things - making it a good candidate for pot-based cultivation.

Author: Jérôme Hay





*Elaeagnus* flowers are golden, 3 to 4 mm (about 1/8 in.) long, and have a subtle scent.



① This four-year-old, nursery-grown *Elaeagnus* plant constitutes interesting raw material for creating a bonsai.

**Although easy** to find in the shops, *Elaeagnus* is notably absent from the list of most-cultivated bonsai plants. While its vigour (similar to that of brambles and creepers) and structure do not seem very enticing at first, it is a shame to be put off by these characteristics. Perhaps the lack of attention it receives can also be partly attributed to its large, thick leaves, or to its chaotic, tangled growth pattern. However, *Elaeagnus* boasts a number of qualities that make it interesting for bonsai, which deserve to be better known.

Two very positive points are the colour of its foliage and its ability to adapt to cultivation in a pot. Among its other special traits are its discreet and extraordinarily fragrant blossoming, and its small edible fruits which ripen in the spring. Since its calendar is the opposite way round to that of common fruit trees, it is perfectly logical to consider it eccentric. Its almost translucent red berries with their thin scaly skin look like small cherries, and are more or less elongated depending on the species.

## Easy to find

Another interesting feature of *Elaeagnus* is its ash-coloured bark, which turns black and striated as it ages, not unlike that of conifers.



② The first task is to reduce its overall size. While it is initially just over a metre (3 ft) tall, the final bonsai will only measure about 30 cm (12 in.). Using secateurs, prune it back roughly to 50 cm (20 in.).

But its greatest plus point is how it reacts to being pruned. This naturally bushy evergreen shrub responds to pruning by quickly becoming more structured and developing dense, orderly ramification. What is more, it lends itself particularly well to wire training. From its first year, the wood is flexible ►►►





3 Once the plant has been trimmed, its structure becomes more visible. Study it well, looking at it from various angles.



4 Clean up the nebari to avoid any unpleasant surprises in relation to the length of the trunk, as it may extend below the surface of the soil. This is particularly likely if it is a nursery-grown plant.



5 This side will be the future bonsai's front, with a lesser lean to the trunk.

## Elaeagnus anatomy

### • Flowers

In the autumn, lots of small flowers open from the axils of the leaves. They are creamy white in colour, the shape of bells with four triangular lobes, strongly scented, and attract a lot of insects.

### • Fruit

In the spring, parts of the flowers still remain at the ends of the berries. Red when ripe, the latter are edible, and are rich in antioxidants, lycopene, minerals, and vitamins A, C and E. Ensuring that they are shown off to best advantage keeps the plant looking lively. *Elaeagnus* berries are very popular in Asia.

### • Leaves

Most of the species of this genus are evergreen, although

some are deciduous. All their leaves are leathery, dark green on the upper side and silvery underneath. The undersides of the leaves can sometimes take on a glossy, almost oily appearance.

The leaves, and likewise all the other parts of the plant, are lighter and covered with silvery grey scales when they first form. Many varieties' leaves have borders or are variegated, and they range in colour from yellow to creamy white.

### • Shoots

New shoots grow quickly. They are greyish, almost tomentose, and covered in silver scales. Some small branches turn into thorns.

►►► enough to take on whatever forms are imposed on it. Right-angle offshoots become more rounded with age, thus making the plant more homogeneous over all.

Very popular in Europe for creating hedges, *Elaeagnus* is easy to get hold of from a variety of places. Its widespread use as a garden plant makes it an accessible resource, whether bought as a young plant in a garden centre or sourced directly from a garden hedge.

In Japan, where it is imported from, it is cultivated to varying degrees, but is widely appreciated for its local origins and for the spirit of steadfastness that it inspires. Two species of *Elaeagnus* are cultivated in Japan, each relating to the region where it is produced: *E. pungens* and *E. umbellata*. In terms of variety they are very similar, although *E. umbellata* is less resistant to harsh winters than *E. pungens*. The latter has the advantage of having been crossbred to produce a range of variegated and colourful cultivars.

## Cultivation to correct flaws

*Elaeagnus* can be used for bonsai from mame (less than 10 centimetres – 4 inches – tall) to dai bonsai (more than 100 centimetres – 39 inches – tall). Its tolerance of intervention and its capacity to produce results very quickly make it a remarkable type of tree that should feature in any collection.

By pruning, it is coaxed into forms that are nothing like how it appears in nature. This is why specimens of this species in their natural state do not serve as aesthetic points of reference. It





⑥ Cut back the overly straight shoots with care and precision. The branches are not crucial at this stage, because even if one or two of them might have been useful, not many will be needed. If the composition is too one-way, there is a risk that it will look unfinished. Cutting off all the branches will encourage a balanced reaction and will cause plenty of young branches to sprout.



⑦ Severed branches can sometimes leave quite large wounds. Go over these a few times with concave branch cutters. These will scoop out the wound, which will then heal over. After two or three years, almost no visible trace of the cut will be left.

is perhaps another reason why it is seldom seen in bonsai.

And yet it is a species that reacts so well to pruning that it is one of the easiest plants to adapt to any and every style. Its vigour and speed of growth are the main reasons for this. If you study how it grows, you will notice that any pruning or other operations applied to it will always induce the same reactions. It is a predictable plant. It is easy, and crucial, to plan work in such a way as to keep the objective in line with the plant's reactions, which allows the bonsai to be kept healthy and for its beauty to be enhanced.

The evergreen leaves of *Elaeagnus* are out of proportion to the small scale that is concerned in bonsai, and they do not last more than two years. They become bruised, turn yellow, and fall off as soon as their productivity has diminished. Not all of them have the same level of maturity, and this gives the bonsai a weakened, frail or even sickly appearance.

Total and systematic defoliation allows good strong colouring to be retained and the leaves to reduce in size. This should be carried out before bud break: in late February or early March, depending on the region. Furthermore, this technique limits the internodes, removing the need for pinching back in the springtime. In addition, wire training is easier on a leafless tree.

## Species

There are a lot of varieties of *Elaeagnus*. Here, we will focus on just four of them.

*Elaeagnus pungens*, native to Japan, has notably produced cultivars such as 'Aureovariegata' and 'Maculata', with yellow-variegated leaves.

*Elaeagnus umbellata* is a small deciduous tree that is native to Asia. Its round berries covered in silvery dots are very good to eat. The plant's common name is Japanese silverberry, in reference to its appearance of preciousness.

*Elaeagnus angustifolia*, or Russian olive, produces long deciduous leaves and yellow flowers. Its berries resemble miniature kiwis. Its semi-evergreen leaves are between 5 and 8 centimetres (about 2 to 3 inches) in length, and are greyish-green on the upper side and very silvery underneath. They are long and blade-like, similar to those of the willow.

*Elaeagnus ebbingei* is a dark green evergreen hybrid, produced from crossing *Elaeagnus macrophylla* with *Elaeagnus pungens*.

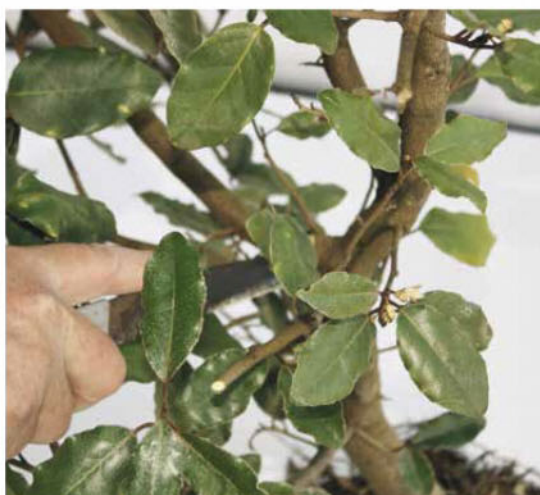
## How to obtain a plant

### • From seed

After harvesting the seeds, keep them in the bottom of your fridge over the summer. Sow them in the autumn in a mixture of sand and peat. Seedlings will germinate at the beginning of spring. ►►►



8 Remove all angular offshoots, keeping only the essential aspects of the trunk. It is important to keep the movement homogeneous.



10 The trunk's movement should have a sense of rhythm but without being repetitive. The closer you get to the apex, the more compacted the rhythm.

#### • Through a cutting

In June, take cuttings from semi-lignified young branches. Keep them in damp but well-drained soil. Roots will appear on them before the end of the summer.

#### • By grafting

Variegated varieties are very difficult to produce cuttings from, but grafting them is easier. This technique needs to be carried out at the end of the winter.

#### • By air-layering

If you find a plant that has pleasing features on one particular branch, you can air-layer it. Air-layering (or marcotting) should be carried out in the spring, when the berries are ripe and before the leaves have grown.



9 The final decision should be based on mathematical balance through a decreasing logical sequence

#### • By collecting

Collecting does not present any major difficulties. It should be done in late winter and the plant should be placed in a well-drained substrate mixture.

### Cultivating for bonsai

#### • Exposure

This shrub is equally happy in direct sunlight or semi-shade. However, in all seasons, it is better to put it in a position where it is sheltered from the wind. In regions with a cold climate – below  $-5^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $23^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) – it needs to be protected in a cold greenhouse.

#### • Watering

Water moderately and allow the underneath of the pot to dry out slightly between waterings. In mid-season, watch out for the foliage: rainwater isn't always enough, because dense foliage doesn't always allow water to pass through. In winter, make sure that the tree doesn't become waterlogged.

#### • Feeding

Apply fertiliser twice per year: in the spring and the autumn. In accordance with the species's flowering and fruiting period, it is advisable to start the season with a fertiliser that is rich in potash and phosphorus.

#### • Pruning

Pruning for shaping purposes is done in late winter, taking care to ensure that large wounds heal.

#### • Maintenance

*Elaeagnus* is a very vigorous shrub, and therefore needs to be slowed down. Total defoliation is carried out in late March, just before new shoots start to appear. Pinching back is put off until the summer (July or August) because of the defolia-





**11** The result after all the cuts have been made. Keep a few sap-drawers: they are important, because their shoots will allow cuts to heal. They also guarantee the sap supply, to prevent any dieback of cuts.

tion exercise. Growth should be pinched back to two leaves, leaving more scope in the autumn to maximise flowering.

#### • Wire training

Training wire should be applied in late summer, early autumn, or spring, after defoliation. On this sort of plant where new shoots often come out at right angles, wiring is practically a must.

#### • Deadwood

As with all trees that are seen to symbolise strength, deadwood is not recommended. All wounds therefore need to be made to heal successfully.

#### • Repotting

Since the root systems of mature trees are very dense, repotting should be carried out every two years, or at the most every three. One-third to two-thirds of the roots need to be removed. The soil must have good drainage qualities, comprising 100% akadama, or a mixture of 30 to 40% zeolitic tuf with akadama.

#### • Displaying attractively

The pot should be as dark as the tree, glazed with tinges or patches of brighter colours. All bonsai styles work well for this species, except perhaps forest or clump forms.



**12** Protect all wounds, whether small or large. Water the plant generously and put it in a sunny but sheltered spot, away from drafts and the cold.



**13** The final appearance, after work is complete. This is still far from anything that could be called a bonsai. After a year's growth, you will be able to choose the primary branches and start wire training. The root ball will need some work, and the plant will need to be kept vigorous by feeding and keeping up with maintenance tasks.

#### • Pests and diseases

*Elaeagnus* is very hardy if kept in good, healthy conditions. However, it is advisable to watch out for scale insects. While defoliation considerably reduces the risk of contamination by insects, it is a good idea to spray the bare tree with jin seal at a concentration of 7%. ●



The pine seen from the left: the empty spaces need work.



The pine seen from the back.



The pine seen from the right.

Over two years of being left to grow freely, this Japanese five-needle pine has regained its vigour. In autumn 2016, the time has come for it to be coaxed to maturity.

# New beauty for a classical tree

Sometimes trees require breathing space so that they can regenerate themselves. They need to be forgotten for a while, left to grow unhindered, and then given a new design – as with this Japanese five-needle pine.

Author: François Jeker

## **This old** *Pinus pentaphylla*

has been left to grow freely for two years, after a repotting that gave it a new sense of youth and vigour. It was simply watered and fed, but there was no pruning and no wiring. The primary branch and apex have grown in quite an unexpected way. Now, in the light of the new information that the tree has provided, careful work is needed to bring it to maturity and restore its beauty, while humbly letting it have its way.





Once it has been wired and had three large offshoots removed, a primary branch starts to show through more.



The depth branch (divided into two masses), the balancing branch and the front branch are all in place.

## First, analyse the tree

As it has filled out, the pine has lost large portions of its empty spaces and they have become incoherent: the small ones are totally invisible and the largest ones are too prominent. The primary branch and apex are now too heavy, and the secondary branches, with the beautiful taper that they acquired over thirty years of work, can barely be seen. The ends of the main branches are too rounded, and the smaller branches are poking upwards, whereas they should be pointing almost horizontally to give the branch's silhouette an outward and downward movement.

## Then prune the tree

The taper and movement of the branches need to be constantly improved, and the effects of apical growth need to be countered. The apex and primary branch require more drastic pruning, including cutting

off several branches that are the thickness of a thumb. All over the tree, any multiple offshoots that spring from the same point are cut back to two shoots. The only exception is at the ends of branches, where a maximum of shoots is needed to increase the density of the foliage clouds.

## Wire and position the branches

Next, the entire tree needs to be wired, branch by branch, right down to the smallest lignified shoots, using 1-, 1.5- or 2-millimetre wire. Thick wire is no longer necessary, because the biggest branches will not be modified. Then, from bottom to top, each branch is set in place mechanically, without thinking. The foliage masses on the lower branches will consist of large numbers of shoots, and will be separated

by extensive empty spaces. Then, working up towards the apex, the foliage masses will be smaller and smaller, and separated by more and more limited empty spaces. The apex will be made of isolated shoots, with no empty space. After analysing the overall effect, some important details can be rectified: the rhythm and gradient of the empty spaces can be better managed; the branch angles and the undersides of the foliage masses can be made more homogeneous; branches can be extended or shortened to prevent the silhouette from being overly rigid, avoiding a triangular shape, with some branches reaching beyond the silhouette and others recessed from it. After cutting off three thick offshoots, and work on positioning, it is clear that the primary branch features five clouds, placed as if to form a small



Now it is the turn of the second branch on the right.



A thick branch high up on the left has been brought down to make the apex look lighter.

tree: primary branch to the right, balancing branch to the left, depth branch to the back, and apex. Note that the primary branch on the right is lower, to give an outline that falls slightly outwards. After positioning each branch, the needles that point down underneath the clouds are torn off, to visually underline the clouds and show off the ramification. The depth branch is divided into two distinct masses and positioned very far back in relation to the silhouette, which thus becomes rounded on the left.

## Spot the flaws

Gradually, the tree takes shape, and the differences compared to how it looked before become more and more obvious. After this "automatic" phase, the tree needs to be reanalysed, to try to identify its flaws. Some are very easy to detect, while others require more detailed examination. A word of advice: take a photo of your tree, and flip it horizontally on your computer (left becoming right and vice versa). This will give you a whole new perspective on the tree: sometimes, the more we look at trees, the less we see them ... On this *Pinus pentaphylla*, the flaws are obvious:

- 1 – The second branch on the right clashes with the primary one just beneath it: a large empty space is needed in order to give the primary branch due prominence.
- 2 – This void is too large and incoherent. The branch underneath it needs to be brought up, and the one above it brought down.
- 3 – The depth branch is too low and almost at the same level as the primary branch on the right. It simply needs to be brought up a little.



After initial rough styling, the minor flaws now need to be corrected.

- 1: A space needs to be created to accentuate the primary branch.
- 2: This empty space is too big.
- 3: The depth branch needs to be raised.

## An anecdote ...

This tree was given to me nearly thirty years ago by someone who meant well but knew nothing about bonsai. The tree was twice as large, with an S-shaped trunk and no taper. So I cut off the upper part and reconstructed an apex with a lateral branch over the course of a few years.

In 1995, John Naka came to visit my garden. He carefully examined each tree and finally came to a halt in front of this *Pinus pentaphylla*: "Well done, you only have one Japanese tree. Keep doing yamadori with local species – that's what bonsai is really all about!"

## Achieving a natural look

And there you have it: the tree has acquired renewed beauty and is baring its soul thanks to its rediscovered openness. Almost too much, in fact ... The tree's growth needs to be anticipated, and it should be caricatured to some extent – for example, by exaggerating the voids. In two years, the plant will have regained its natural appearance and masked our excesses. ●





View from the front, after correction of the flaws.



View from the front before the work was carried out.



View from the right after styling.



View from the right before.



View from the back after styling.



View from the back before.



View from the left after styling.



View from the left before.

# A pine of restrained power



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After only 14 years of work, this Scots pine belonging to Spanish Jose Lluís Crespo Almajano, has already attained a fine maturity.



# Re-imagining a tree

The purpose of this section is to analyse the choice made by the artist, by trying out other options - to demonstrate the pertinence of the choices made, and to learn and admire.

This Scots pine belonging to Jose Lluís Crespo Almajano is powerful yet very serene, like a quiet but watchful animal.

Author: François Jeker

**J**ose Lluís Crespo Almajano collected this Scots pine yamadori himself in the Southern Basque Country. He started on its first shaping in 2002, and it was awarded a prize at the 2016 European Bonsai San Show. A nice reward for an exceptional tree, whose maturity and originality is worthy of the most beautiful of Japanese trees.

## The choices made by Jose Lluís

Right from the start, the yamadori was visually exceptional. The trunk thrusts to the left, with a powerfully graphic break and strong movement towards the right, which is enhanced by dead wood on the outside of the curve. Jose Lluís could have made this tree into a dramatic statement. Instead, he made a serene, yet astonishingly powerful tree, which has the appearance of a crouching animal ready to spring and release its energy. What are the concrete elements that give this impression? Certainly, it is the strength of the trunk, and then its compactness, the simple shape of the foliage, in particular, that follows the trunk's curve on the left, the significant gap between the principal branch and the balancing branch, the crown placed directly over the nebari, and the almost-absent empty spaces, which in this piece, become a quality.

### Option 1: A larger outline on the left

By slightly enlarging the branches on the left, the foliage no longer follows the trunk's movement and the branches overplay their balancing role. We lose unity, and above all, power. The almost unbalanced aspect, given by the very low first branch on the right of the first tree, is lost by the foliage that protrudes too far out on the left.

### Option 2: removing the low branch on the right

By removing the first branch on the right, the tree becomes more classic and commonplace. Its unique character has disappeared with the appearance of a large empty space on the right. Certainly the dynamic balance is still there with the first branch on the right, but it is very diminished. It is no longer a predator ready to spring, but an animal snoozing in the sun.

### Option 3: a lower branch on the left

By adding a lower balancing branch on the left, we are following a caricatural concept of option no. 2. All the tree's energy, and all its power and initial thrust have vanished. It's still a beautiful tree, but rather insipid and not very original. ●



1 With a larger outline on the left, the tree becomes too balanced.



2 The restrained power would disappear if the low branch on the right is removed.



3 By adding a lower branch on the left - the animal is now asleep.

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Scottish potter Ian Baillie's pots are very varied in terms of size and shape, as well as colour and texture.

# Ian Baillie Pots with Scottish spirit

Over the last four decades, ceramicist Ian Baillie, 65, has been developing a range of glazes inspired by the colours of his native Scotland.

Text: Anne Royer  
Photos: Ian Baillie



This pot was made to order for a semi-cascade yamadori hawthorn.  
Dimensions: 15 × 25 cm (5% × 9% in.).





This small round pot bears one of his signature glazes. Diameter: 12 cm (4¾ in.).

**Scotland** is the land of Ian Baillie's birth, and it still holds his heart. Creatively "getting into the zone" comes naturally to him here. The place this ceramicist and bonsai lover calls home is a former gardener's house, a stone's throw from Edinburgh. Inside are dozens of pots, two electric kilns, and the potter's wheel, which whirs gently.

"My Swedish kick-powered wheel, I bought it many years ago and I still use it today. It's easy to control, sensitive to use and never breaks down," smiles Ian. Now aged 65 – "but I feel a lot younger!" he exclaims – he has been making bonsai for nearly four decades.

## A former art teacher

The adventure began in 1974, when a young Ian, fresh from his diploma studies at Edinburgh School of Art, started to grow trees. Bonsai began to line up along the windowsills of his flat in the centre of the Scottish capital. A few years later, during a horticultural show, he encountered three friends who shared his passion. "We met regularly to share information and work on



This chuhin pot has an elegant cracked glaze. Dimensions: 12 x 27 cm (4¾ x 10 in.).



From the plainest shades to the most complex gradations, Ian takes inspiration from the Scottish landscape to build his palette of colours.

trees, photographs and practical tips," he remembers. The group evolved and grew until in 1978 it became the Scottish Bonsai Association, which is still going strong today.

During the same period, Ian was developing an interest in ceramics. Having studied drawing and painting – he was to teach art and design in Edinburgh high schools for 35 years – he saw learning pottery as an opportunity to make his own pots. At the time it was almost impossible to get hold of bonsai pots in the UK. "Using images from books and magazines, and from seeing a small number of Japanese pots as inspiration, I created my first attempts at bonsai pots," he recalls. His efforts met with immediate success, initially among his friends. This led the self-taught potter to quickly develop a more extensive output, aimed at the broader public.

## An exhibition in New York

During a stay in New York, Ian visited an exhibition that changed his life completely. "The standard of the trees on display was quite superb and all the trees were groomed and tastefully presented. It was done in the Japanese style with tokonomas, display stands and kusamonos – I had never seen this other than in photographs." For this Scottish potter, everything suddenly fell into place. "To see so many varied, high-quality pots chosen so carefully to complement the



Small pots for shohin.

different styles of trees was an education and this created a very strong impression on me and influenced how I would develop my own approach to ceramics."

John Naka was the star guest at the exhibition, and his demonstration had a profound impact on the young bonsaist. "He was working on absolutely enormous trees with huge trunks with powerful nebari. The trees were in wooden boxes measuring 1.5 metres long and 1 metre wide [about 5 by 3 feet]. At one point he stood on the edge of the box to work on the top of the tree! This was stunning because my idea of bonsai had been of what I was to later find out to be called chuhin."

Suddenly a new horizon opened up before him: "This experience made me question what I knew about bonsai but made me more ambitious about what I could achieve." ►►►



This lemon-yellow pot is now home to a *Celastrus orbiculatus*, or Oriental bittersweet. Diameter: 10 cm (4 in.).



Very recently, Ian explored new techniques to produce this amazing polychromatic shohin pot. Diameter: 10 cm (4 in.).



Shohin pots made of reddish-brown clay.



Ian makes many of his pieces on a potter's wheel.

## The hand of the potter

Ian has now retired from teaching, and he spends much of his time on ceramics. In the calm of his studio, he makes pots for chuhin, shohin and mame, as well as kusamono pots. Some he builds by hand, others he makes on his potter's wheel. They are fired in an electric kiln, at 1260°C (2300°F), to ensure that they are frost-resistant. "I have moved away from making large pots, as they are heavy and increasingly difficult to lift and move," Ian explains.

He goes on to say: "The recent rise in popularity of shohin has taken me in a new direction and I love the discipline of scale and detail as well as the more extensive colour palette in the glazes that are suitable for trees of this size." He plays with colours like nobody else – perhaps it's something to do with his painterly sensibilities. His pots are clothed in deep, balanced hues, inspired

by the Scottish landscape. Shades of sea green, forest green, moss green, a wonderful reddish-brown, sky blue, periwinkle, royal blue and metallic blue ... and not forgetting the metallic grey-brown that is one of his flagship colours.

If he wants to adapt to current trends – "yellow shohin pots are a real favourite at the moment" – he works on his colour range, which he considers as his signature. "I have always felt that it is important that bonsai potters have their own distinct glazes and so I continue to develop my own, carefully guarding the recipes, which take so long to formulate and trial." To achieve varied and unique effects, he takes great pains

to enhance his glazes by applying metal oxides. This way, no two pieces are alike. "I want them to show the hand of the potter in their creation," he emphasises. "This is important to me as it sets them apart from those that are mass-produced."

## Underwater landscapes

The fact that he practises bonsai himself gives him a better understanding of bonsai enthusiasts' needs and what they are looking for. He sticks to tradition where chuhin or large trees are concerned, and keeps his unglazed pots, made in dark reddish-brown clay, solely for conifers. Coloured pots, meanwhile, are intended for deciduous





Two hand-built rectangular pots with a beautiful blue glaze. Dimensions: 10 × 30 × 40 cm (4 × 12 × 16 in.).

trees. Small trees allow him greater artistic freedom. "In shohin there is much more room to push the boundaries, and I find this exciting and challenging," he says.

Over the years, Ian has developed a network of loyal customers who share his aesthetic sensibility. And while he does accept commissions, he still prefers to create his own ranges and allow free rein to his creativity, so as to "be able to offer lots of choice" to hobbyists all around the world.

Gardening, hiking, cycling, trout fishing: Ian spends much of his time outdoors, and draws on the rich variety of his Scottish environment to create textures and glazes for his pots. "My inspiration can come from many sources – faded, rusting paintwork, lichen growing on rocks or landscape during the changing seasons," he confides. A lover of deep-sea diving, he recently devised a range of blue glazes inspired by the colours of the sea and of underwater landscapes. But he also follows the great traditions of Chinese and Japanese pots: "Of course the enormous wealth of traditional glazes from the Far East has been a major influence."

## Breaking the bonds of tradition

A trip to Japan several years ago allowed Ian to immerse himself in the age-old tradition of bonsai and ceramics – perhaps the better to free himself from it. "Seeing so many beautiful, high-quality pots at close hand gave me a deeper understanding of their working methods and finer aspects of their work. Their aesthetics are so fundamentally different from those of the West

## Practical information

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These pieces echo the rustic style of Nanban pots, testifying to true spontaneity in the act of creation.

that it would be senseless and stifling for me to copy them too closely." Ultimately, he always needs to find the right balance between tradition, modernity and personal expression. "I attempt to create work which allows my own creativity to come through but still acknowledging the Eastern origins of bonsai," he concludes.

Even after four decades' work, his passion is undimmed, and his little workshop

still holds the same magic. As he enthusiastically explains: "There is nothing like the sheer excitement and anticipation at the opening of the newly fired kiln. It is fantastic and I never tire of this and it is a real joy when the pots turn out well." There is still plenty of creativity left in those skilful hands. As the potter's wheel whirls round, pot after pot takes form at the heart of the Scottish countryside. ●



The pot's sense of poise is down to the subtle shaking-up of its traditional oriental style by the European foot that Ian has added. Diameter: 12 cm (4¾ in.).



With its green, black or variegated foliage and its little flowers and fruit, mondo grass appeals to all tastes. This dwarf variety (*Ophiopogon japonicus*), pairs up nicely with a shell-shaped pot from Keramika Klika.

# MONDO GRASS ADAPTS TO SUIT YOUR NEEDS

*Ophiopogon japonicus* or mondo grass, as it is known, has an unusual appearance and many qualities as a companion plant.

Author: Xavier Dreux

**W**hether in the garden or as a companion plant for bonsai, mondo grass is a hardy plant and is used extensively in Japan. It borders car parks, edges paths, or acts as groundcover under niwaki trees in Japanese gardens. There are several varieties of ophiopogon that have very distinctive coloured leaves and that come in various heights.

Green or black, or variegated with white or yellow, all mondo grasses are flowering plants and at the end of summer show small fruit of extraordinary colours, which if protected, can stay on the plant all through winter. A word of caution though – the berries are poisonous.

## Given the vote of confidence in Japan

With its small straight evergreen leaves, it resembles a type of grass. However mondo grass is closer to another hardy plant, the liriopé (lilyturf), to which it is related. It is often put forward as a shade plant, but it also likes a sunny exposition provided the ground is cool. The same applies for when it is in a pot – the roots should be cool with the head in the sun or half-shade.

This hardy plant is rhizomatous and spreads slowly. When potted, its thick roots can push the plant out of its container, which calls for regular repotting and quite hard root pruning.





*Ophiopogon japonicus* can be seen all over Japan: beneath trees, in carpark borders and in front of houses.



A strong rhizomatous root growth can literally lift the plant from its pot.

In every Japanese bonsai collection one will find a little tuft of mondo grass. It forms a classic shitakusa, and has many qualities: It is a hardy, undemanding plant, it has flowers and bears fruit, and its foliage is small with sometimes astonishing colours. The green variety, 'snake's beard', can easily be an accent plant for all bonsai sizes, and will adapt itself to a shohin or to a large subject.

As it can be shown throughout the year, mondo grass is particularly popular for autumn and winter exhibitions.

## Green or Black

Used in every season the *Ophiopogon japonicus* is particularly good in winter when few other plants are present. It bears lovely blue or turquoise berries – incomparably distinctive – and because of its small size, it can be used without restraint. On its own it will attract attention, but it can also be a discreet companion to another plant in the starring role. *Ophiopogon japonicus* 'Minor' is a dwarf variety with dark green foliage. A few years of culture in a small pot – a little chance of its bearing fruit – and you will have a shitakusa that is ideal for all situations.

Another very original variety is *Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Niger' (black mondo grass). Not only is its foliage is black, but so are its berries. In the garden it has become all the rage and not only for Japanese garden enthusiasts. Formerly not present in classical gardens, it is now becoming increasingly easier to find as it is much appreciated by gardeners who use it as a contrast to plants with light or bright foliage.

The flower stems, smaller than the foliage, are made up of small pendulous

flowers of a light purple outside with a white interior and form a contrast to the plant's dark leaves.

Black mondo grass is a larger plant than the *Ophiopogon japonicus* 'Minor' and is not suitable for shohin. As a companion plant to large bonsai, it has greater effect when combined with plants with light-coloured foliage such as *Lysimachia nummularia* 'Aurea', a yellow-leaved Heuchera.

The leaf tuft takes time to densify, which in a composition, keeps the balance between the plants.

This variety can also be used alone when combined with a light-coloured pot. It is at its best when in flower and also in winter with its fruit.

The black variegated varieties are also quite large with finer leaves. They are used in the same way as the 'Niger', and although not as original, can lighten a composition.

If you do not have Japanese mondo grass, among your accent plants, do adopt this classic Shitakusa, which is usable throughout the year. ●



Black mondo grass (*Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Niger') in all its glory, spreads its deep black leaves over a pot by Sabine Besnard.



The *Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Niger' flowers between June and August.



A variegated variety, *Ophiopogon japonicus* 'Silver Mist', in a little, warm-coloured pot by Martine Geoffroy.

© Fabrice Decroix, Les Jardins du Bonsaï

© © Fabrice Decroix, Les Jardins du Bonsaï



■ ■ ■ When non-plant elements started to appear in flower arrangements, they signalled a revolution and a new modernity in ikebana.

# All kinds of intrusions

Author: Soazic Le Franc

**“Intrude:** to put forward or interpose (one-self, one’s views, something) abruptly or without invitation”. So says the dictionary. What we are concerned with here are metal or plastic elements intruding into ikebana, uninvited by nature. Some people love this; others don’t. But using components that are different from the natural elements in arrangements is a key characteristic of the Sogetsu school. Any course of training therefore necessarily includes a section on all kinds of intrusions.

## A freer approach

Sofu Teshigahara, the school’s founder, received a classical training in ikebana that began in his childhood. At 25, he was ready to bring something new to the art, by distancing himself from most of the old techniques and proclaiming that the plant world could cope with a freer approach where human creativity and imagination were concerned. “If you think about Sogetsu ikebana and its techniques, you realise that these techniques are very close to sculpture. ... Each flower has its own specific characteristics, just as each person has their own personality.” Much to the alarm of the Japanese flower academies, ikebana was undergoing a revolution: people were no longer taking second place to the plant world, but instead were subjugating it for their own expression. Modern ikebana was up and running.

When did manufactured materials first start to intrude? That is hard to say. Dry elements – flowers, leaves, tree stumps – had already begun to be used for landscape arrangements. As Sofu and his daughter Kasumi had travelled the Western world and observed its fledgling art of flower arranging, perhaps it was during that period – the 1960s – that the use of metal wires, fabric and so on became popular.

In France in the 1980s, the displays created by Eliane Boulongne and her team consistently drew



### ■ Mints

The little blocks of trimmed, polished polystyrene look like mints and give a sense of freshness. The placing of these “sweets” along with the plant mass, made of viburnum, respects the spirit of ikebana. Arrangement by Brigitte Léonard, Asphodelinh.





#### ■ Fraction

Lines of folded pandanus leaves and sections of dismantled crates mingle in this sculpture, with the plant elements visually dominating because of their colour. The composition is strong enough to work without flowers. Arrangement by Line Lediouren, Asphodelinh



#### ■ Watercourse

The play of plastic tubing and arum stems complements the tangled lines of the water pipe, which seems to disappear into the ball-shaped vase. Arrangement by Béatrice Piot, Asphodelinh.

admiration for their experimental approach in introducing new textures. This included the notorious use of an aluminium ventilation tube, which kindled a controversy between Sogetsu ikebana and modern Western flower arranging.

### Not-so-innovative innovation

Of course, over my thirty years of teaching, I have succumbed to all sorts of experiments with textures, starting with fabrics and moving on to metal mesh, strips and wires, rusted iron, aluminium, copper, and plastic in all shapes and sizes.

Then, one day, I'd had enough. What is more, many ikebana students were rejecting intrusions. So I pondered the situation and reached the conclusion that it takes more than the introduction of manufactured elements to be able to declare an arrangement modern, especially if the focal point in terms of mass or line is still there, along with its complement of foliage. So many elements have been tried all over the place, at home and abroad, and the result is an impoverishment of innovation!

It would be impossible to give an account of all the nuances of contemporary ikebana here. Many schools have adopted the modern style, even if the

human hand has acquired greater importance. But the fact remains that it is the plant world that leads the process, directing and orienting each arrangement. So it is clear that, in all periods, the art of ikebana has remained and ever will remain the fruit of subtle interplays. And I use intrusions from time to time, because that is part of the game that Sofu Teshigahara initiated. ●



#### ■ Power cut

A marriage of pandanus leaves and parts of a disconnected ventilation duct. Cut off but in perfect unison – no need for flowers! Arrangement by Solange Salaün, Asphodèle.

■ ■ ■ While the notion of earth and heaven is fundamental to ikebana, the terminology related to it has evolved over time, and can be confusing for those relatively new to the subject.

# Earth to heaven

Text and arrangements: Marette Renaudin  
Photos: Bénédicte de Saint-Martin

**December-January:** the wintery season and the transition to a new year. In Japan, the first three days of the year are a time for good resolutions. This is the moment to exorcise old demons and get back to a simple, peaceful life. Winter is conducive to rootedness. In nature, seeds are embedded deep in the soil, promising a beautiful blooming spring. Where practising ikebana is concerned, it's the time to return to the two fundamental premises of this art: on the one hand, the notion of "heaven", the realm of the gods; and on the other, that of the "earth", a symbol of rootedness – humanity being no more than a passing phase in the history of the universe. This concept has existed in all styles of ikebana from the very beginning, regardless of how they have evolved.

## Three parts

For *tatebana* in 7<sup>th</sup>-century temples, and likewise for 16<sup>th</sup>-century *rikka* – living landscapes offered to Buddha – the main part of the arrangement, named *shin*, signified honesty, sincerity and uprightness. Usually this would point upwards, towards the sky. The material for it would come from an alpine tree, the most popular being evergreen species such as cypress, juniper and pine.

The lowest part – *hikae*, which can be translated as "self-restraint" – symbolised a village nestled at the base of a low mountain, safely anchored against it. A shrubby plant with deciduous leaves was usually chosen for this part.

In the 17<sup>th</sup>-century *seika* style, these two heaven/earth parts dominated the arrangement. The *hikae* part then became *tai*. The third, intermediate part, named *soe*, was placed as if fleeing away to the rear.



■ **Rikka Sunanomono**, standing in sand  
Main element, *shin* and supporting elements: *Mahonia x media* "Charity".  
Other supporting elements: *Spiraea thunbergii*, azalea, pine, cypress, variegated holly. Herbaceous elements: gentian, chrysanthemum, fern.

Again, for the *shin*, the most popular choice was a mountain plant, suggestive of the cold season. Sometimes there was a preference for arrangements of chrysanthemums or narcissus, which are mythical flowers in Japan at this time of year.

## Elevation and rootedness

From the 20<sup>th</sup> century, social developments in living conditions and the presence of scholars allowed a transformation of styles. Freer arrangements started to take off, making broader and more flamboyant use of novelty plants. Ikebanists did not hesitate to use imported flowers that gave their arrangements a touch of eccentricity. Even so, the heaven/earth concept remained just as important to their creation. In 20<sup>th</sup>-century *moribana*, modern forms of transcription caused *shin* to become *shui* and *tai* to become *kyakui*. Frameworks for arrangements such as *shin-hikae*, *shin-tai* and *shui-kyakui* have thus retained this notion of elevation and rootedness right up to our contemporary era.





#### ■ Shinkatai

*Shin* : Mahonia. *Tai* : Leucadendron. *Soe* : exotic leaves.

The choice of a single plant species for these parts underlines this fundamental basis. Subsequently adding herbaceous elements, such as flowers and leaves, brings a feminine side to modern ikebana, making it more nuanced.

However, the aim of ikebana remains the creation of an intimate relationship between humankind and deep nature. The spirituality that emanated from temple arrangements gave way to the simple, restrained explorations of 16<sup>th</sup>-century ikebana, where the notion of *wabi* and *sabi* – extreme elegance alongside the ruggedness of nature – predominated.

In contemporary ikebana, this gave way to the principle of *kokoro*, or “heart”: a deep sentiment that allows the devotion to flowers without which all ar-



#### ■ Mini rikka

Variegated aspidistras. A successful way to show off a single plant that can be used in any season.



#### ■ Shinkatai

*Shin* : Asplenium leaves.  
*Tai* : anthurium and eucalyptus.

#### ■ Moribana, natural style

*Shui* : nandina  
*Kyakui* : narcissus, sweet william

rangements are somewhat sterile, however respectable they may be. A quote from Masanobu Fukuoka illustrates this conclusion well: “First and foremost, instead of cultivating flowers and celebrating the productivity of human hands, I think that we should be lamenting the loss of beauty in our own hearts.” ●

The Matsugawa Bonsai Club celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year: three decades of passion, work and wonderful exhibitions.

Text: Cinthya Arenas  
Photos: Matsugawa Bonsai Club



▲ Members of the Matsugawa Bonsai Club get together to work in their premises, and also to go on local outings and visits to gardens such as this one in Brixen.

## The Matsugawa

Bonsai Club in Alsace is one of the oldest bonsai clubs in France. "The club was created on the initiative of Marc Bricka, nurseryman at Harthouse near Haguenau (67) and was called Bonsai Club Harthouse. It was the first club in North Alsace and was an instant success," recounts Daniel Heckel, who has been the club's president since 1993. Three years after it was established it counted 200 members, many of whom also go to the Bonsai Centrum in Heidelberg in Germany, and to Pius Nötter in Switzerland to work.

In 2010, the club moved to Mertzwiller, to larger and more functional premises placed at its disposition, and free of charge, by the municipality. It became the Matsugawa Bonsai Club – "The River in the pines" – in deference to Haguenau's pine forests. Today,

# MATSUGAWA BONSAI CLUB 30 years of passion

the club is made up of some thirty members, mostly male, with an average age of forty-five.

## Technique and practice

Then, when Guy Dahl was club president, "it was the era of great exhibitions, many of which were held in Josephine's Pavilion in the Parc de l'Orangerie in Strasbourg, the biennial in the former customs house in Haguenau, among others."

This year, the club celebrated its thirty years in existence and also hosted the FFB's regional exhibition, "one of the best that the club has put on." Club member Fabien Muller won

the regional new talent competition that was held during the exhibition.

The club's tenth anniversary took place at the Orangerie, with Pius Nötter as guest of honour and the same for the twentieth, which assembled 60 Japanese azaleas from Manfred Roth, a professional from Germany.

The club's meetings are based on a yearly agenda. "A monthly technical course addresses the principal areas of knowledge needed to practice the art of bonsai. During a monthly workshop, the members work on their own trees. The idea is that, in order for them to progress, members should have autonomy over their trees." Assisted by the



◀ For its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Matsugawa Bonsai Club also organised the FFB's regional exhibition held in the Stéphane Grappelli Hall in Mertzwiller.





▲ Professionals such as François Jeker either come to the club or welcome members to their own gardens. Fabien Muller won the 2016 regional new talent competition.



▲ Workshops are held every month as well as technical courses.



▲ The association regularly organises exhibitions and takes part in various events such as this display at the botanical gardens in Saverne (France).



▲ The club's Bonsai Academy is a working weekend with a well-known professional. One of the club members, Jean-Claude Ubrig, worked on a box plant.

oldest members, Daniel Heckel runs the technical courses.

The beginners are "integrated with advanced practitioners, so that they can take maximum advantage of an exchange of experience". On their arrival, they are all assigned a mentor to guide them. They are also issued a starter kit made up of four or five trees of local species and easy to work on, which enables them to rapidly participate in the course.

## Local species

The club currently has one member at level 2 (Daniel Heckel) and one at level 1 (Jean-Marie Zagula). In 2015, he set up a "level 1 work group, whose advanced members combine their efforts in working towards the level 1 tests, and particularly, in preparing their trees." Species of every kind, preferably local, are worked on.

To find a tree – "the great pine forest which surrounds Mertzwiller and the North Vosges area, provides

the necessary raw material for this activity. Pines and spruce are legion, but so too are beech, hornbeam and some larch. Every year, under the aegis of the Office National des Forêts (ONF), the club organises alpine expeditions and a yamadori outing for its members."

Six years ago, the club set up the Bonsai Academy – "a weekend field trip in the middle of the North Vosges Regional and Natural Park with a renowned professional such as Walter Pall or François Jeker." Apart from benefitting from visiting bonsaists such as Oscar Roncari, Pius Notter or Gilles Vuillaume, club members also take part in training courses away at the premises of professionals such as François Jeker, Mark Noelanders or Jean-François Busquet.

One of the club's last works was "in 2015, when its members responded to an appeal by François Jeker for ishizuki (root over rock), which (perhaps) will be displayed at the Bonsai Club International exhibition to be held at Mulhouse in 2018. The piece is made up of members' plants: a mugo pine, two azaleas and many companion plants such as fern, mini hostas and mondo grass."

## At the international convention in 2018

For Daniel Heckel, it is the creation that counts, not the possession, because it is important to be a "creator of emotions".

In the upcoming years, "the club is preparing for the 1918 Mulhouse

international convention and is definitely counting on being represented at this show. It will also support it with all its energy so that the event presents a positive image of our region and of our communal fervour."

Love for the region and for bonsai is what motivates the club members, who want to bring bonsai to the fore and also the region, which is crammed with local species and passionately interested men and women who know how to cherish them. ●

## Useful information

### Matsugawa bonsai club

2, place de l'École  
67580 Mertzwiller, France  
Second Friday of the month: technical course  
Second Saturday of the month: workshop  
President: Daniel Heckel  
Email: [daheckel@numericable.fr](mailto:daheckel@numericable.fr)  
Website: <http://matsugawa-bonsai-club.fr/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/MatsugawaBonsaiClub>



▲ This ishizuki created by club members may represent the Matsugawa Bonsai Club in 2018 at the international convention at Mulhouse, East of France.





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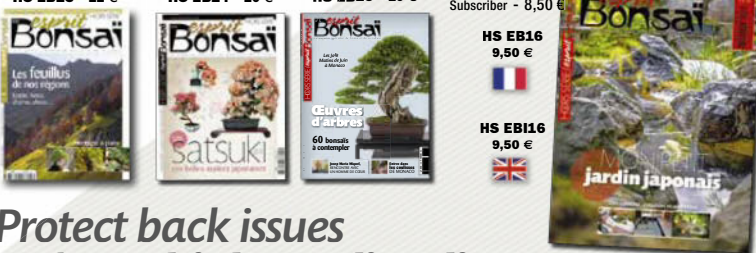
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January  
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- ▶ Interview with Croatian artists Marija Hadjic and Andrija Zokic
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**Saitama Super Arena**  
**Omiya Sonic City**  
**Palace Hotel Omiya**

## Sub Venue

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

## Host

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

## Co-host

**Saitama City**

## WORLD BONSAI CONVENTION

Bonsai events held in Japan were generally displays of Bonsai masterpieces. With Bonsai gaining international popularity, foreign events shifted to a more interactive style, with Bonsai demonstrations given by Japanese masters and enthusiasts exchanging information. These types of bonsai convention started off in America and European nations and kept growing in scale. In the midst of this growing popularity the first World Bonsai Convention was held in Japan, the home of Bonsai, in April 1989.

This convention was hosted by the Japan Bonsai Association at Saitama Prefecture, Saitama City (former Omiya City), where the Omiya Bonsai Village is located, and achieved great success as the largest convention with over 1200 participants. The World Bonsai Convention was later decided to be held every four years and has been hosted by America, Korea, Germany, Puerto Rico and China. Now, 28 years after hosting the first convention, it will be back in Japan in 2017.

## Registration Benefits

- 1 Demonstration**  
13 bonsai artists from Japan and 8 international artists will be invited to hold demonstrations.  
Take advantage of this opportunity to see the masters create bonsai from scratch and their techniques of pruning and wiring.
- 2 Reception Parties**
- 3 Japan Culture Workshop**
- 4 Free pass to Japan Bonsai Suiseki SHIHO-TEN**  
held at Saitama Super Arena
- 5 Free shuttle bus to other venues**

## Registration Fee

Regular fee **40,000JPY** (Tax included)

## How to Register

Please register at the official website or send the application form to the convention office by mail or fax. We will reply back with information.

The 8th WORLD BONSAI CONVENTION, SAITAMA CITY Official Website

<http://world-bonsai-saitama.jp/>

## Demonstrators



MASAHIKO  
KIMURA  
NIPPON BONSAI ASSOCIATION,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



HIROSHI  
TAKEYAMA  
WORLD BONSAI FRIENDSHIP FEDERATION,  
DIRECTOR



KUNIO  
KOBAYASHI  
NIPPON SUISEKI ASSOCIATION,  
CHAIRMAN



SHINJI  
SUZUKI  
NIPPON BONSAI ASSOCIATION,  
DIRECTOR



MINORU  
AKIYAMA



SHIGEO  
ISOE



CHIHARU  
IMAI



TAIGA  
URUSHIBATA



KENJI  
OSHIMA



ISAO  
OMACHI



TAKASHI  
SAKURAI



MASAYUKI  
FUJIKAWA



MITSUO  
MATSUDA



[EUROPE]  
WERNER M. BUSCH



[AFRICA]  
HANNES FRITZ



[INDIA]  
JYOTI & NIKUNJ PAREKH



[CHINA]  
ZHAO QINGQUAN



[ASIA PACIFIC]  
MICHAEL SIOW CHEE LONG



[AUSTRALIA / NEW ZEALAND]  
LINDSAY BEBB



[NORTH AMERICA]  
BJORN BJORHOLM



[LATIN AMERICA]  
JUAN ANDRADE