

7th EUROPEAN BONSAI-SAN SHOW

OCTOBER 12th-13th
SAULIEU-FRANCE 2019

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www.european-bonsai-san-show.com – chenal.frederic@wanadoo.fr – Parc des expositions 21210 Saulieu



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► The magazine for bonsai enthusiasts • April/May 2019

#99

► WHERE ARE THE LATINOS?

PORTRAIT
OF A CHINESE
JUNIPER

PRUNING
A LARGE
AZALEA

BROADLEAF
ROOT
STRUCTURE

WATER HARDNESS
AND WATERING

POTS BY
CLAUDIA WAGNER

Belgium, capital of bonsai

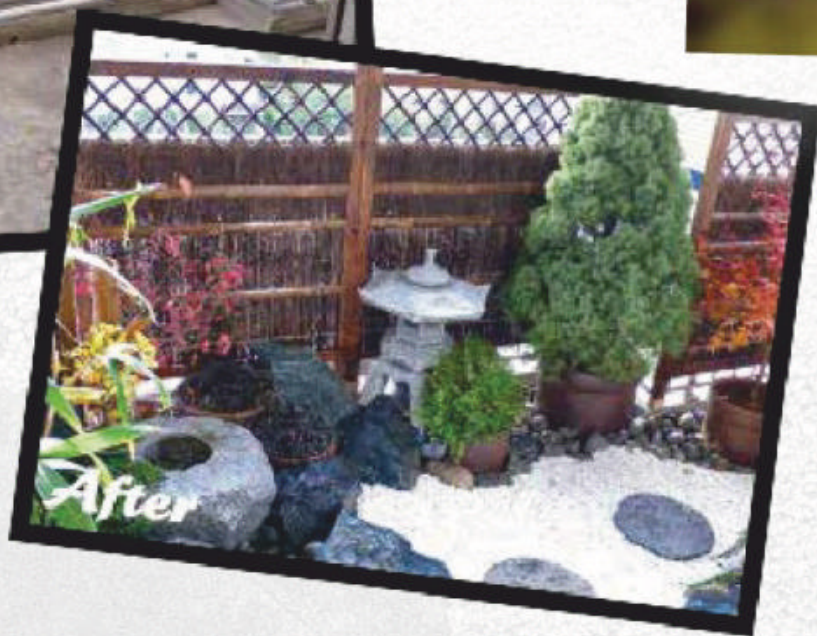


MY LITTLE JAPANESE GARDEN

SPECIAL ISSUE #16

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

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



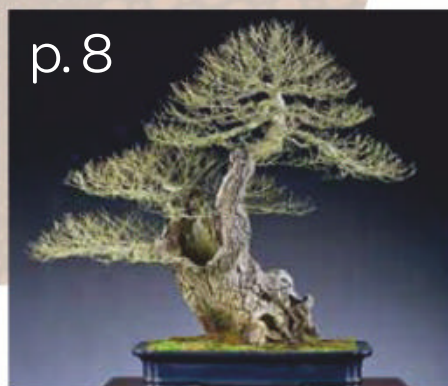
Bruno Heller is a bonsai tutor and professional.

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"We all have potential"

A happy anniversary

For one weekend Genk became the European capital of bonsai. Indeed all eyes were on its 20th 'Best of' 20 years Trophy that marked its 20th birthday. In just two decades, after a change in location a few years ago and a name modification the year of its anniversary, this Belgian show organised by the Bonsai Association Belgium has grown into the largest exhibition on the continent. Once again, The Trophy has put on a great show for an impressive number of visitors – proof, if any were needed, that bonsai can still draw the crowds. The secret of this success? Genk's central position in Europe is certainly a great asset, but obviously this was not the only reason. It was above all the high quality of the trees! Added to which were the excellent demonstrations, a large professional market, a spacious location, impeccable organisation, and a hospitable atmosphere. If The Trophy, at the beginning, knew how to capitalise on the name of the club's former president, Marc Noelanders, it has also known how to find its independence and acquire a fine maturity, much to everyone's delight.

Happy reading!

Michèle Corbihan

DIARY

IN BELGIUM • Mons

The Cercle montois du bonsaï (Mons Bonsai Circle) will celebrate its 35th anniversary at an exhibition to be held on June1– June2.

■ Salle Calva d'Havré,
rue du dépôt, 38
7021 Mons, Belgium
www.monsbonsai.be
Facebook : Cercle
Montois du Bonsai

• Enghien

The 6th Enghien bonsai show will include guests, Tony Tickle and Filip Haesen.

■ Parc d'Enghien, avenue Elisabeth, Enghien
7850, Belgium
Hours: 10.00 a.m. to 6.00p.m.
Entrance fee: €10.
Information and booking:
Joseph Bernard:
Josbernard@skynet.be
or Robert Philippe:
Philro100877@gmail.com



IN FRANCE

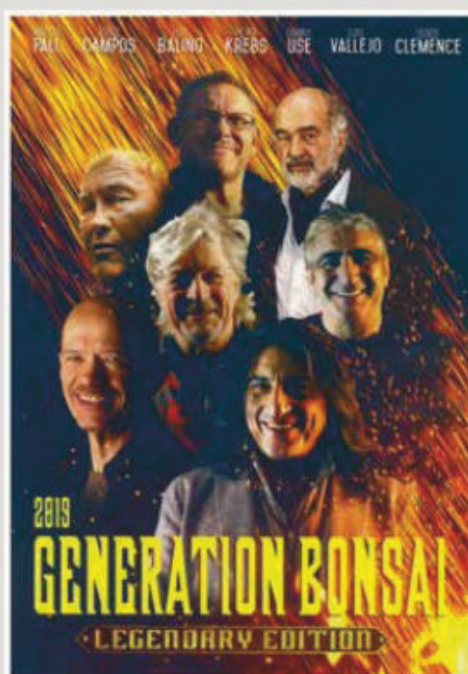
The largest Japanese park in Europe, in Maulévrier, Anjou, opened its doors on 15 March, after the winter break. This year, the Oriental park again offers a varied programme. Hanami, the cherry tree festival, on April 7, is one of the first events of this new season. The Japanese drum show will be held on 5 May, and evening promenades of music and poetry will also take place at the beginning of May. The national bonsai festival will be held a little later in the year on 14–17 September. The guest of honour will be Bruno Heller, a bonsai professional from Lyon, who will host the show and display some of his personal collection.

■ Parc oriental
49360 Maulévrier, France
www.parc-oriental.com

IN GERMANY

Generation Bonsai returns on 11–12 May to Minoru Bonsai at Neckargemünd (near

Heidelberg), for a legendary edition! Michael Tran, the organiser, has invited seven major European bonsai figures: Walter Pall, Jorge Campos, Luis Baliño, Peter Krebs, Danny Use, Luis Valledo and Serge Clemence, for a weekend that will go down in history! There will be demonstrations and workshops, as well as contests in which different artists, during a demonstration, must develop and display their concept of a tree's design. The different designs will give rise to discussions. There will also be talks on the history of European bonsai given by Danny Use, and on bonsai as art and bonsai in the 21st century. Peter Krebs and Tom Benda will give lectures on ceramics in bonsai.



■ Minoru Bonsai, Alter
Bammentaler Weg 10
69151 Neckargemünd,
Germany
www.generationbonsai.com
<http://minorubonsai.de>

IN CHINA

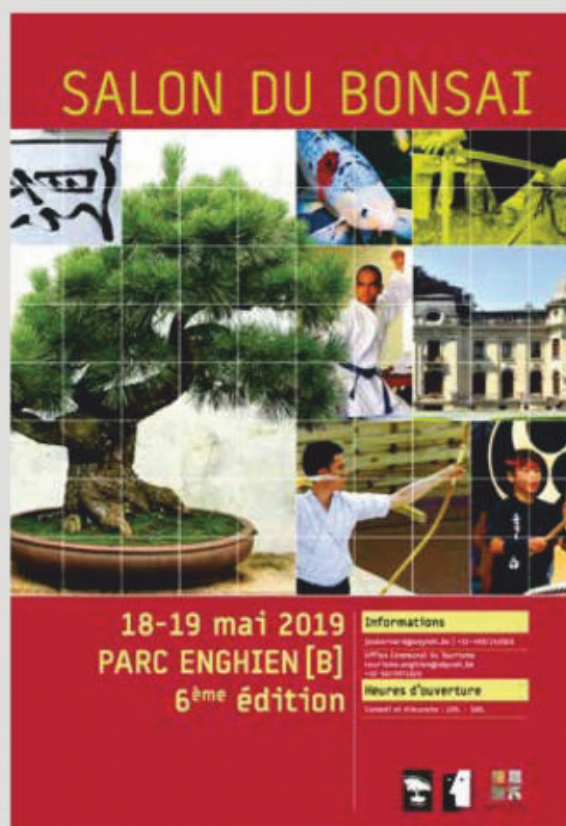
The 2019 Bonsai Clubs International (BCI) congress, will be held from 16 to 20 September, at the same time as the Bonsai exhibition of the Transportation Tourism Investment Zunyi China at the Chuangyuan Millennium Hotel, Xinpu New District, Zunyi City, Red Revolution Base in the Province of Guizhou. The invited demonstrators are: Glenis Bebb (AU), Lindsay Bebb (AU), Enrique Castano (US), David DeGroot (US), François Jeker (FR), Moshe Emergui (IL), Václav Novák (CZ), Mitsuo Matsuda (JP), Jack Sustic (US), Luo Minxuan (TW) and from China: Deng Wen Xiang, Liu Chuangang, Shi Peiyuan, Wu Dejun, Zhang Zhigang, Peng Nianlun, Zhou Yuanyuan, Wang Hengliang, Zheng Zhi Lin, Bian Hai.
■ www.zybc2019.com/en-us/index.html

IN ITALY

The 13th International Bonsai & Suiseki Meeting – Crespi Cup 2019 will be held on the 13 to 15 September at Parabiago, near Milan, Italy.
■ www.crespibonsai.com

IN POLAND

The national Polish exhibition will take place from 30 April to 3 May at the Książ Castle, near Wałbrzych. The invited demonstrators are: Vaclav Novack (CZ), Milan Roskos (SK), Tony Tickle (UK), Rafael Torrez (ES), Hugo Zamora Luna (MX), Franck J. Mihalic (US), Bogdan Pociask (PL), Jarek Lenarczyk (PL) and Bartosz Warwas (PL).
■ www.akina.pl



Gatherings

The Living Art of Bonsai (LAB) – at first hand

The Pacific Bonsai Museum – the bonsai museum at Federal Way on the West Coast of the United States (Washington) – launched the Living Art of Bonsai (LAB) in 2018, which is a multi-year-long experiment in four-part investigating the influence of inspired architectural settings, and the effect of collaboration resequencing, on the art of bonsai. The purpose of the project is to advance innovation and artistic expression in bonsai. Sessions can be followed on video streaming for an entry fee. The date for LAB 2 is 6 April, 2019 on the theme: The art of bonsai – containers and potting. LAB participants are Ryan Neil (bonsai artist), Austin Heitzman (stand maker), Ron Lang (ceramicist) and Aarin Packard (moderator, Pacific Bonsai Museum). The artists will meet at the Mary Lund Davis-design Wollochet Bay house in Gig Harbor, Washington, to reveal

new works in the experiment. Ron Lang will present two new pots pieces – one in response to the stand created by Austin Heitzman during the first LAB and the other, for a tree styled by Ryan Neil at the same session. Austin Heitzman will reveal a new stand made in response to Lang's container from the first LAB. A select group of art- and design-minded luminaries will be gathered to examine and discuss the new LAB works. Live video streaming will be available from 2.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m. local time, so that the public can watch the artists reveal their work, listen to the group discussion and ask questions via a moderated online chat.

■ Viewers can register (\$25 USD) on the website at <https://pacificbonsaimuseum.cleeng.com> and can benefit from a 20% reduction by using the code: BonsaiEspritLAB



Ryan Neil during LAB 1.



The stand created by Austin Heitzman during LAB 1 organised by the Pacific Bonsai Museum.



In our bookshop

Bonsai Inspirations 2

Harry Harrington

Bonsai4me.com and B4MePublishing

€30

A new edition of the second volume in the series *Bonsai Inspirations* by British writer, Harry Harrington, has just been published. This edition has been greatly expanded in regard to text and photos. The author has updated from over six years of experimenting and developing each of his trees. A new section is devoted to a large elm and is pictured on the dust jacket.

Harry Harrington also gives detailed descriptions of his work on dead wood – another new addition to the book.

A must-have!

■ Soft cover: 28 cm x 22 cm (11 x 8½in.). Code: Inspirbon2

News

The bonsai angels

“To watch over you and help you grow” Says it all. Bonsai Angels, created on the initiative of Englishman, Tony Tickle, was set up to recognise those individuals who work tirelessly to promote and further the art and horticulture of bonsai, be it at club, national or international level. Bonsai Angels is a not-for-profit undertaking supported by donations. Anyone may nominate an individual who is worthy of being called a Bonsai Angel. Christian Vos, a member of the Bonsai Association Belgium, the association’s organiser of The Trophy, at Genk, and president of the Fédération belge de bonsai (the Belgian federation of bonsai) since 2016, was named the first Bonsai Angel in February, 2018. Twelve more titles have since been bestowed. The last two were awarded in February 2019 to Antje and Willy Evenpoel, indefatigable photographer, who with much emotion, accepted the title on his and his wife’s behalf from Pauline Muth and Christan Vos. The thirteen Bonsai Angels, in chronological order, are Christian Vos (Belgium), Prajakta Kale (India), Sergio Luciani (Argentina), Ignazio Giambrone (Italy), Jorge Luis Guerra Pensado (Cuba), Michael Ryan Bell (USA), Jerry Norbury (The Netherlands), Pauline Muth (USA), Glenys et Lindsay Bebb (Australia), Ed Trout (USA) and Antje & Willy Evenepoel (Belgium). Who will be the next Bonsai Angels?

■ <https://bonsaiangels.com>



Willy Evenepoel, from Belgium, received the title of Bonsai Angel during the 20th anniversary of The Trophy from two other Bonsai Angels, Pauline Muth and Christian Vos, guests of Tony Tickle, the instigator of Bonsai Angels.

Exhibitions and Conventions

HARLINGTON, UK	7 April	‘Best of’ 20 Years Trophy Demonstrators: Masayuki Fujikawa (JP), Ryan Neil (USA), Vaclav Novak (CZ), Gabriel Romero Aguade (ES) and Cho Won Dong, Choi Song Ho, Her Youn Hang, Kang Sook Hoon, Kim Seok Ju and Lee Kwang Jong from Korea. Limburghal c.v., Jaarbeurslann 6 www.bonsaiassociation.be
HOUSTON, USA	11-14 April	Bonsai on the Bayou, the Lone Star Bonsai Federation and American Bonsai Society’s Annual Convention featuring Ryan Neil, Boon Manakitivipart, Will Baddeley, Enrique Castaño, Danny Coffey, Mike Serant, Brussell Martin, Dave Kreutz, Clark Long, Byron Myrick and Mark Rhyne. Venue: The Houston Marriott Westchase, 2900 Briar Park Drive, Houston, TX 77042 www.facebook.com/HoustonBonsai/
OLOMOUC, CZECH REPUBLIC	25-28 April	Annual Congress and Exhibition of the Czech Bonsai Association (CBA). Demonstrations by S. Papp (Hungary) and P. Slovak (Czech Republic) Email: info@cba-bonsai.cz www.cba-bonsai.cz
ARCO, ITALY	26-28 April	XVIII Arco Bonsai Trophy, Municipal Casino Displays from Italian bonsai clubs. Demonstrations by Mauro Stemberger and suiseki exhibition. www.arcobonsai.com
OSTENDE, BELGIUM	4 May	Vlaamse Bonsai exhibition Demonstrator: Yannick Kiggen. Venue: De Schelpe, Elisabethlaan 32, 8400 Oostende www.vlaamsebonsai.be
ALBI, FRANCE	10-12 May	European Bonsai Association Annual Congress in association with the French Federation of Bonsai to be held in Albi near Toulouse in southern France. Email: pierre.bedes@wanadoo.fr www.ffb.com
ENGHIEN, BELGIUM	18-19 May	6th Enghien Bonsai Show Guests: Tony Tickle and Filip Haesen. www.facebook.com/events/1956345621125368/
CHELSEA, LONDON, UK	21-25 May	FOBBs Bonsai Display: Royal Horticultural Society Chelsea Flower Show, Royal Hospital, Chelsea, London SW3 4SR Contact: Tony McKenzie, +44 (0) 7837 577680 Email: am.pm@talk21.com
PARABIAGO, ITALY	18-26 May	8th festival of satsuki bonsai Crespi Bonsai 37 S.S. del Sempione www.crespibonsai.com
OSHAWA, ONTARIO, CANADA	14-15 June	Matsuyama Bonsai Show, Oshawa Ontario Canada Oshawa, Ontario, Canada-combined with the Peony Festival; Children’s Arena Oshawa www.oshawa.ca/things-to-do/peony-festival.asp
WOJSŁAWICE, POLAND	22-23 June	9th Bonsai Triennale A project of the bonsai associations of Poland, Czech Republic & Middle Germany Arboretum Wojsławice, Wojsławice 2, 58-230 Niemcza www.bonsai-triennale.eu
BURY, UK	14-15 September	UK National Bonsai Show Castle Leisure Centre Bolton Street, Bury Greater Manchester BL9OEZ Demonstrators: Bjorn Bjorholm (US), Rafael Torrez (ES) Antony Smith (ZA) and Sonia Stella (FR). Email: nationalbonsai@gmail.com www.nationalbonsaishow.co.uk
SAULIEU, FRANCE	12-13 October	European Bonsai-San Show www.european-bonsai-san-show.com
2020		
GENK, BELGIUM	29 February -1 March	19th Trophy Demonstrators: Ryan Neil, Minoru Akiyama, Tony Tickle and Mauro Stemberger

Where are the Latinos?

Sergio Luciani, from Argentina, has noticed that Latin American bonsai artists aren't invited to give demonstrations in Europe – but can find no explanation as to why.

Author: Sergio Luciani



Pinus halepensis – 87 cm (34 in.) tall – and the Argentine artist Sergio Luciani, drinking mate.

Whenever there is a bonsai meeting, one of the subjects discussed is about the origins of the activity: is it Japanese, is it Chinese, are there special styles and particularities that make one school or another the new trendsetter? Plastic bonsai, naturalism, exaggerations, imported trees – all mingle in the conversations that go on at these events.

Last February I went to the 'Best Of' 20 years Trophy, organised by the Bonsai Association Belgium. It was my first time participating in what people usually call the greatest bonsai gathering in Europe, and I was really astonished. A very high-level exhibition with some really interesting trees, to which a section was added with works by Luis Vallejo – exquisite. Coming along with Marija Hajdic and her great *Carpinus* "Emperor", I was happy to meet up again with many bonsai friends with whom I've shared the stage in several countries. Greetings, hugs, conversations, laughs and in the middle of so many people I could recognise several Latinos who came from Brazil, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, me from Argentina and other Latinos that live in Europe. And as I talked to them, they asked me a question that keeps echoing inside my head and that I have no answer to: why are Latinos never invited to do demonstrations in Europe?

An unanswered question

It is true, there are some isolated cases who have managed to give a mini demo thanks to their promoting masters, but I could not answer, I don't understand what's going on. I thought, perhaps our Latino level doesn't fit with the refined European taste, but we work side by side with many bonsaists from the "old continent" in many other countries. I'd like to believe that if they keep calling us it is because we mustn't be so far off the required level. On the other hand, some Latin American artists have won prizes in several international contests, and are very well known – I don't want to give names so I don't forget anyone – but still, those able to get on a stage can be counted on the fingers of just one hand.

What's the matter with us Latino artists? Don't they want us? Have we done something wrong? Or is it just about money and reciprocity?

I don't think it is about reciprocity, because we Latinos have invited many European artists several times, we have seen them work and we respect their methods, even when their results vary. Is it the language? No, it can't be that either, as there are several Spaniards who are

invited. Is it that we live too far away? It could be, although I hope that isn't the reason.

Then there seems to be no possible logic to the situation. It may be the lack of information about our work – perhaps the circulation of images on social networks is not enough, maybe "nobody knows that we exist" – an ironic phrase.

Doing bonsai as we live

We practise bonsai in an open, dignified way, with no interest in crooked deals, and we encourage sharing. We favour a friendly approach to bonsai, without that fierce egomaniacal competitiveness that leads people to spend thousands of euros on imported trees to try to win a prize. We assist each other without taking account of ranks or titles. We exchange information and work as a group whenever we can. When you remove all the politics around bonsai, and simplify everything, you start to get the sense that making bonsai is something else, something nice to enjoy, to share. That one does bonsai as one lives. That in working together we go slower, but we get further.

Well, we will see what the future will bring. ●



© Michèle Corbihan

From 8 to 10 February, the 'Best Of' 20 years Trophy brought together the best of European bonsai and top-level demonstrators for a very special weekend in Genk, Belgium.

'BEST OF' 20 YEARS TROPHY Europe's biggest!

The 'Best Of' 20 years Trophy, in February 2019, was the 20th edition of the former Noelanders Trophy, in Genk, Belgium. Three amazing days brought together 10 demonstrators, 100 trade stalls, 130 trees and 5,000 visitors for what will be known from now on as the Trophy.

Author: Michèle Corbihan

Photos: Willy Evenepoel et Jörg Derlien, Bonsai Association Belgium, unless stated otherwise.

Having started out 20 years ago as a small club display, the bonsai exhibition organised by the Bonsai Association Belgium (BAB) has become the biggest in Europe! From 8 to 10 February 2019, for its twentieth edition, titled 'Best Of' 20 years Trophy, 5,000 visitors flocked to the aisles of the Limburghal in Genk, Belgium, to see the exhibition, the demonstrations and the extensive market of bonsai traders. An unrivalled success! A great weekend in an atmosphere of sharing and excellence, all organised by a handful of enthusiastic volunteers.



The organisers and invited demonstrators cut the ribbon to open the event.



The Japanese drums of the Tátake!-Taiko group opened the ceremony.

To the rhythm of the drums

The weekend started out quietly on the Friday when the doors opened to the first visitors at 1 p.m. It was not until the Saturday morning that the usual long queues would appear, with bonsai lovers coming from the four corners of the world: Japan, Korea, the United States, Argentina, India, Spain, Israel, Malta, Brazil, Australia, Austria, the Philippines, etc. But for the time being, these enthusiasts could see the exhibition preview from 2 to 4 p.m., and then from 6 to 9 p.m., when the event was inaugurated. It was an enjoyable moment, the atmosphere still calm before the weekend's big crowds.

The opening ceremony began to the sounds of the drums of Tátake!-Taiko, a Belgian professional taiko (Japanese drumming) group. Christian Vos, who is in charge of public relations for BAB, led the ceremony. "Organising such a huge event is only possible thanks to people with passion for bonsai, teamwork worldwide and the support of traders, demonstrators, exhibitors, visitors and



Best broadleaf: *Ulmus minor*, Andres Alvarez Iglesias. Height: 60 cm (24 in.).

much more," he emphasised. It is indeed hard to imagine that an event of this size could have been brought about by just a handful of volunteers working together. And yet ...

Trees from a museum

Danny Use, a Belgian bonsai artist and trader, graciously came to offer a helping hand for the selection and installation of the trees. Danny's aim is to push the standard of the exhibition and displays up even higher. So he selected 132 trees and shohin, beginning with trees from Luis Vallejo's bonsai museum in Alcobendas, near Madrid. "With Luis's trees as a basis, I selected trees with the same level of maturity," he explained.

And what a result! Magnificent. Visitors used to the previous editions could easily recognise the quality of the trees here, no longer bearing thick training wire, for example. Each bonsai was carefully selected and they all struck a harmonious tone. ►►►



Luis Vallejo came from Spain with trees from his museum in Alcobendas. An out-of-competition *Celtis sinensis*.



Best shohin: *Pinus thunbergii*, Andy Jordan. Height: 15 cm (6 in.).



Best conifer: *Pinus nigra*, Jesus Valero Belmonte. Height: 60 cm (24 in.).



Nominated broadleaf:
Carpinus orientalis,
Marija Hajdic.

►►► The broadleaves had very fine ramification, although Danny says that it's possible to do even better. Hornbeams, maples, *Prunus*, hawthorns and elms delicately displayed themselves in their winter bareness. Conifers sported their deadwood, varying from demure to dramatic, the feet of their patinated trunks covered in moss. They looked wonderfully natural and mature.

Winning prizes

The displays were very classic, aside from a few that strayed from the traditional codes. "A lot of work needs to be done on the displays, especially for the accent plants, many of which look as though they've been made by florists," remarked Danny Use. "It lacks maturity."

All the trees on show, aside from those presented by Luis Vallejo, were competing for prizes



Award from the ABFF (Asia-Pacific Bonsai Friendship Federation): *Pinus densiflora*, Jean-Paul Polmans. Height: 50 cm (20 in.).



Nomination for broadleaf and best tree of a BAB member: *Styrax japonica*, Cindy Verstraeten. Height: 95 cm (37 in.).

awarded by Masayuki Fujikawa, Ryan Neil, Václav Novák and Gabriel Romero Aguadé, the invited demonstrators. The judging panel granted over a dozen prizes. The three top prizes were awarded to Jesus Valero Belmonte for a *Pinus nigra*, Andres Alvarez Iglesias for his *Ulmus minor* and Andy Jordan for his *Pinus thunbergii* shohin.

Nine other prizes were attributed by bonsai associations and personalities – such as the ABFF (Asia-Pacific Bonsai Friendship Federation) which recognised a wonderful *Pinus densiflora* by Jean-

The prizes

- The prizes awarded by the demonstrating judges
- Winning conifer: *Pinus nigra*, Jesus Valero Belmonte
- Winning broadleaf: *Ulmus minor*, Andres Alvarez Iglesias
- Winning shohin: *Pinus thunbergii*, Andy Jordan
- Nominated trees
- Conifer: *Taxus baccata*, Ruben Ciezar Villanueva
- Conifer: *Picea abies*, Helmut Bachmann
- Conifer: *Pinus parviflora*, Andres Alvarez Iglesias
- Conifer: *Juniperus chinensis* var. *itoigawa*, David Benavente
- Broadleaf: *Carpinus orientalis*, Marija Hajdic
- Broadleaf: *Acer buergerianum*, David Benavente
- Broadleaf and best tree of a BAB member: *Styrax japonica*, Cindy Verstraeten
- Broadleaf: *Forsythia x intermedia*, Frank Jesse
- Shohin: *Pinus thunbergii*, Holger Göbel
- Shohin: *Pinus parviflora*, Andy Jordan
- BAB member: *Zelkova serrata*, Alain De Wachter



Carpinus coreana, Mariusz Komsta, non-competing.

Paul Polmans, from Belgium; and Franck Mihalic, an American who came with about twenty of his compatriots, and give a prize to German participant Werner Busch's *Ulmus minor* (another one). ►►►



Nominated conifer:
Taxus baccata,
Ruben Ciezar
Villanueva. Height:
110 cm (43 in.).

Antique pots

Alongside the trees, there were about twenty suiseki, chosen this year by a German, Holger Göbel, in the absence of his compatriot Gudrun Benz. And it was a mountain stone belonging to Benz herself that stood out.

Among the new features of this year's event was a display of antique and contemporary pots, showing the diversity of ceramic artists' talents, both Asian and European. It was the British ceramicist Alex Rudd – a pottery aficionado and founder of the European Bonsai Potter Collective – who selected and organised this exhibition of about a hundred pots! A beautiful rectangular pot by Koyo Kouichiro Aiba covered in a copper-green-based Oribe glaze, belonging to Alex Rudd, received a prize.



Nominated pot: Koyo Kouichiro Aiba – born 1944. Oribe-glazed rectangle with bamboo rim detail, owned by Alex Rudd.

The prizegiving took place during the gala dinner, on the Saturday evening, in front of two hundred guests. During the evening, the Koreans organised a lottery with all sorts of prizes on offer.

Ten demonstrators

Ten artists officiated over the three days in the lecture hall, which was sometimes packed: the four judging demonstrators – Masayuki Fujikawa (Japan), Ryan Neil (USA), Vaclav Novak (Czech Republic) and Gabriel Romero Aguadé (Spain) – and six Koreans who formed the Korean Dream Team. “Each time, we invite top-level demonstrators,” stresses Christian Vos. “Vaclav Novak has participated every year, either as an exhibitor or as a trader.” The four judges gave demonstrations on the Saturday and on the Sunday afternoon. Ryan Neil did an extra one on the Sunday morning, to repot a tree that he'd worked on on the Saturday. The demonstrations were fascinating, some artists being very talkative and others less so.

As for the Korean Dream Team, it led demonstrations as a group, on the Friday afternoon and then again on the Sunday morning, to create a forest of Hinoki cypress, among other things.

The work that was carried out was high-level, and the results were masterpieces. We were spellbound!

The show wasn't limited to the demonstrations room! A delegation from the potters' village in the city of Tokoname came from Japan to man a stall and present its members' work. Reiho (Katsushi Kataoka), Koho (Koji Watanabe) and Shuuhou (Hidemi Kataoka) took turns to show how they make a pot, working with a mould and by hand, up to the finishing touches.

Oscar Jonker's Bonsai Empire also presented short talks and demonstrations on their stand, notably with Tony Tickle and Mauro Stemberger.



Nominated suiseki: Mountain stone from Kamo river, Japan, owned by Gudrun Benz.



Ryan Neil on a *Juniperus chinensis*.



Masayuki Fujikawa on a *J. chinensis* var. *itoigawa*.



Vaclav Novak on a *Taxus cuspidata*.



Koho (Koji Watanabe from Kakuzan Toen) using a mould to make a pot on the stand representing the potters' village of Tokoname in Japan.



The Korean Dream Team did two demonstrations over the course of the weekend: Cho Won Dong, Chai Song Ho, Her Youn Hang, Kang Sook Hoon, Kim Seok Ju, Lee Kwan Jong.



Gabriel Romero Aguadé on a *Pinus sylvestris*.

The trade market attracted the crowds, with about a hundred stalls welcoming clients and offering everything a bonsai lover could wish for – and more.

Doing even better

This edition was crowned with success, as testified by the turnout! “We’ve created a serious problem for ourselves: how to do as well, or better, next year?” acknowledges Christian Vos. It seems there is no shortage of ideas, and barely had this edition concluded than the organisers were already looking ahead to the Trophy 2020. “We’re also thinking of making some room for new displays – it’s a trend that you see all over the world,” adds Christian. “We are already working in partnership with the UBE [Unión del Bonsái Español] and the European Bonsai-San Show, and we’re open to other collaborations.”

The dates have already been set for 2020: 29 February and 1 March, so as not to clash with the Kokufu-ten which will be attended by so many bonsai lovers. Take note! ●

The Trophy 2020

The Trophy 2020 will be held on 29 February and 1 March. Ryan Neil, Minoru Akiyama (Kobayashi's son-in-law), Tony Tickle and Mauro Stemberger will be its special guests.



Kim Seok Ju, Kang Sook Hoon, Her Youn Hang and Choi Song Ho created a forest of Hinoki cypress



The first convention of the UBE - Unión del Bonsái Español - in January, at Aranjuez, near Madrid, brought together Spain's finest trees. Art of the highest level! In a tokonoma, a hornbeam, *Carpinus turczaninovii*, by Germán Gómez Soler. Pot: Reiho.



UNIÓN DEL BONSÁI ESPAÑOL

The Kokufu in Spain?

On 26 and 27 January, Aranjuez, in the Community of Madrid, hosted the first convention of the UBE, Unión del Bonsái Español. The exhibition made a big impression!

Author: Isabel Ribeiro

“It’s the Spanish Kokufu!”

people could be heard saying as they wandered through its aisles. For its first convention, on 26 and 27 January 2019, the Unión del Bonsái Español (UBE), a young association, has demonstrated that the standard of Spanish trees is very high and worthy of the top Japanese exhibitions. It was in Aranjuez, at the Isabel de Farnesio cultural centre, that the more than 80 bonsai compositions were brought together, 70 of them competing for prizes. In organising the event, the UBE was able to rely on help from the bonsai club of Parla, near Madrid.

Two tokonoma welcomed visitors into the cultural centre’s entrance hall: one featured a hornbeam, *Carpinus turczaninovii*, by Germán Gómez Soler, and the other an *Eleagnus pungens* by Luis Vallejo. Plus a rather original exhibition of Japanese and Chinese collectors’ pots, made by Takao



Germán Gómez Soler, president of the UBE, inaugurated the exhibition with Cristina Moreno Moreno, Mayor of Aranjuez, and Masashi Mizukami, the Japanese Ambassador.



A number of collectors' pots were on display to the public, including a first-generation Tosui pot.

Koyo, Bigei, Syuzan, Gyozan, Yamaaki, Bikko, Souzan, Kutani, Fukuda, Sharaku ...

A large number of visitors looked on as the UBE's president, Germán Gómez Soler, inaugurated the exhibition on the Saturday. "Bonsai isn't just a passion, it's a whole life's work," he explained.

Variety and refinement

The exhibition grouped together trees by professionals or amateurs, and by members or non-members of the UBE. They had to obey strict criteria in order to participate: a finished tree, presented on a stand and with complementary features – accent plants or kakejiku – and a minimum of three elements for the shohin compositions. Three categories of tree were on offer: shohin (up to 25 cm / 10 in), chuhin (from 26 to 45 cm / 10 to 18 in) and dai (over 45 cm / 18 in). Only 59 bonsai compositions and 11 shohin ones were accepted. They came from all over Spain, and were assessed by the nine invited judges – Luis Vallejo, Hiroaki Suzuki, Sandro Segneri, Márcio Meruje, Gabriel Romero Aguadé, Germán Gómez Soler, Mariusz Komsta, Julio Cano and Juan Escohotado.

The shohin compositions were presented in a first large room done out in pale grey and dark blue, and gently lit. All of the compositions featured a variety of species, and all were very refined. Visitors were admiring of the beautiful ►►►



Top prize for shohin, composition by José Acuña Cruz.



Prize for best broadleaf, rock-planted *Acer buergerianum*, David Benavente.



Top prize in the dai category (over 45 cm / 18 in.), *Pinus pentaphylla*, Andrés Álvarez Iglesias.



Prize for best evergreen: with its delicate deadwood, this thyme, *Thymus capitatus*, by Juan Antonio Pérez, is the result of meticulous work.



Top prize for chuhin: *Juniperus chinensis* "Itoigawa", John Mora.

►►► way the trees were associated with pots by great Japanese ceramicists. "You see, the colours of the glazed pots mustn't be repeated, and the trees all work together, because you have to read the stand in the right way," a boy of about twelve explained to his grandfather. Having been won over by these compositions which are worthy of high-level exhibitions, I moved on to the next room.

Southern species

The colour scheme was the same for the large room where the dai and chuhin bonsai were on show. The conifers displayed their generous foliage pads, while others soared up gracefully in the bunjin style or offered up their delicate deadwood or moss-adorned bases to viewers' admiring eyes. The deciduous trees were leafless, but some carried fruit or flowers. The camellias were in bloom.

The owners' names weren't mentioned – a decision motivated by the wish to avoid influencing the judges, and to encourage the public to focus on the trees. But well-informed bonsai lovers could identify some of them.

One area of shelving displayed three out-of-competition trees by special guest Luis Vallejo. Among the total of 13 trees that were not competing was an admirable *Carpinus coreana* by Mariusz Komsta, with incredibly fine ramification. Its accompanying elements perfectly illustrated the winter season: a kakejiku depicting a man removing snow from his bonsai, and a tempai in the form



A beautiful winter display in the form of a delicate *Carpinus coreana* by Mariusz Komsta.

The main prizes

- Dai (over 45 cm / 18 in.)
Juniperus chinensis "Itoigawa", David Benavente
Pinus pentaphylla, Andrés Álvarez Iglesias
- Chuhin (26 to 45 cm / 10 to 18 in.)
Juniperus chinensis "Itoigawa", Xavier Massanet
Juniperus chinensis "Itoigawa", John Mora Williams
- Shohin (up to 25 cm / 10 in.)
José Manuel Frontán Salas
José Acuña Cruz
- Best deciduous tree: *Acer buergerianum*, David Benavente
- Best evergreen: *Thymus capitatus*, Juan Antonio Pérez
- Best conifer: *Pinus sylvestris*, Igor Arrate Some
- Green-T Prize: *Myrtus communis*, Sebastia Gesti Mier
- Lombrico Bonsái Prize: *Olea europaea* var. *syvestris*, Arturo Garza Mateo.

Buxus balearica by Luis Vallejo.
Pot: Koyo.



of a rural Japanese house, with wisps of smoke from an incense stick swirling out of it. “In Spain, bonsai lovers rarely use tempai to accompany their bonsai,” explained Mariusz.

This exhibition proudly proclaimed its Mediterranean character through the presence of plenty of species that are typical of southern Europe: *Quercus faginea* and *Q. suber*, *Olea europaea* var. *sylvestris*, *Myrtus communis*, *Fagus sylvatica*, *Thymus* ...

Women's choice

In a third room, lots of demonstrations were taking place: the Italian Sandro Segneri on a savin juniper; Japan's Hiroaki Suzuki on a Japanese juniper; Portugal's Márcio Meruje on a Scots pine; Spaniards Germán Gómez Soler and Gabriel Romero Aguadé with a myrtle and a savin juniper respectively. Whether one-person or collaborative, the demonstrations were carried out in front of a large and attentive audience. Each demonstrator had a different way of presenting their work. Sandro Segneri explained his plans at length so that the public could perceive bonsai with mind and heart, seeing the old man hunched with age that he was preparing to portray with his savin juniper. Hiroaki Suzuki, looking very elegant in his red trousers in honour of Spain, let the women in the audience choose which should be the front of his juniper ...

Packed into the central open-air courtyard was a market of about thirty traders from all over Spain, but also France and the Netherlands, offering small and large trees, pots, kakejiku, tempai, watering cans ...



One of the many demonstrators, Hiroaki Suzuki worked on a grafter juniper.



A demonstration by Sandro Segneri on a savin juniper.

Unión del Bonsái Español

The Unión del Bonsái Español (UBE), set up on 1 August 2017, has 138 members. The board, with Germán Gómez Soler as president, has ten members: five bonsai professionals and five amateurs.

Unión del Bonsái Español (UBE)

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48600 Sopela, Bizkaia, Spain

E-mail: ube@ubebonsai.es

Tel: +34 693 259 616

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Over 8,000 visitors

The packed demonstrations room, the dense crowds in the aisles, and the market stalls with customers thronging round, all illustrate how successful this first edition of the UBE convention was: over 8,000 visitors in one weekend, according to official sources. Among those for whom bonsai was a new discovery was an enthusiastic mother who advised her young son: “You have some plants at home, all you need to do is give it a try!” Of course, attaining a level as high as this exhibition's will require many years of learning and practice, but the excellence of the compositions here is sure to have motivated more than one person! Let's hope that this edition is the first of many. ●



The aisles thronged with people.



The Société de bonsaï et de penjing de Montréal celebrated its 40 years at its annual exhibition in the Montreal Botanical Garden during the last weekend of August, 2018.

THE SOCIÉTÉ DE BONSAÏ ET DE PENJING DE MONTRÉAL

The 40th exhibition

Author: Jean-Guy Arpin

The Société de bonsaï et de penjing de Montréal celebrated its 40th birthday at its annual exhibition in 2018.



Trident maple, *Acer buergerianum*, by Brian Donelly.

In 2018, the Société de bonsaï et de penjing de Montréal (SBPM, The Montreal Society of Bonsai and Penjing), celebrated its forty years dedicated to imparting knowledge about the living art, as old as time, of bonsai and penjing – forty years of constantly renewed interest, directly connected to the relationship between humans and nature. Our exhibition was held from 31 August to 2 September at the Montreal Botanical Garden. The number of visitors fluctuated according to the temperature outside, but was estimated to be around 3000.

For our 40th exhibition, we asked our mentor David Easterbrook to display one of his finest pieces in a tokonoma. He chose a magnificent American white cedar some hundreds of years old. Over forty exhibitors joined our friend David. About 80 pieces were displayed with all the trap-



pings one usually finds at any exhibition dedicated to doing things according to the rules of the art. The exhibitors were members of all levels, beginners, intermediate and advanced, who all contributed to the success of this annual exhibition by the diversity and quality of the pieces exhibited.

Every year the quality of the different items that are publicly displayed is noticeably higher.

Guided tours of the exhibition were on the agenda throughout the weekend in order to instruct visitors on the art of bonsai and penjing as well as explaining the displays of kusamono and suiseki.

Tours led by curator Matthew Quinn, for the penjing collection, and Éric Auger or the bonsai collection were also on the program for those who wanted to learn more and to see the magnificent permanent exhibitions belonging to the Montreal Botanical Garden. ●



Suiseki and gongshi, belonging to Jean-Guy Arpin.

In a tokonoma: an American white cedar, *Thuja occidentalis*, by David Easterbrook, the society's mentor.



American larch, *Larix laricina*, by François Calovi.



Kusamono, by Christine Lalibert.

A little history

The Société de bonsaï de Montréal (SBM) was created on 5 December 1978 at the initiative of Robert and Yolande Riopelle, Yves Bordeleau and Claire Kerrigan. Following the craze started by the Chinese and Japanese exhibition of penjing and bonsai during the 1980 Montreal international flower show, the number of SBM members exploded. A few years later in 1982, the society mounted its first exhibition, which became an annual event held at the Montreal Botanic Garden.

The support of David Easterbrook from Montreal – a bonsai expert of

international renown – cannot be emphasised too strongly. From the beginning he has been mentor to all the Quebec bonsaists and has always given his full cooperation and support to the society.

In January 1991, the Société de bonsaï de Montréal (SBM) became the Société de bonsaï et Penjing de Montréal (SBPM). As it is a Friend of the Montreal Botanic Garden, the SPBM carries out most of its activities there.

Today, the society has a membership of almost 400, and is continually growing.

<https://bonsaimontreal.com>



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Maria Simões

“What fascinates me is the dialogue with the tree”

Cabo da Roca, in Portugal, the westernmost point of Europe, north of Lisbon: this is where Maria Simões has set up her garden and nursery with her husband. One area is reserved for the bonsai that she is working on.

Interview: Isabel Ribeiro
Photos: Maria Simões and Thierry Lorillard, unless stated otherwise

The bonsai professional Maria Simões works on bonsai in her nursery, Verdeal da Roca, surrounded by luxuriant vegetation, in Portugal.

Esprit Bonsai International: You have a fantastic nursery, with beautiful bonsai. How do you relate to trees?

Maria Simões: I'm an environmental engineer. My training and, secondly, setting up the nursery, have given me a perfect knowledge of plants. That's why I don't suggest anything to a bonsai unless it's part of its nature. When I'm wiring, for example, in order to allow light to pass through to the thinnest branches, I use only the necessary quantity of wire, which I leave for the minimum amount of time, so as not to wound the plant. I orient the



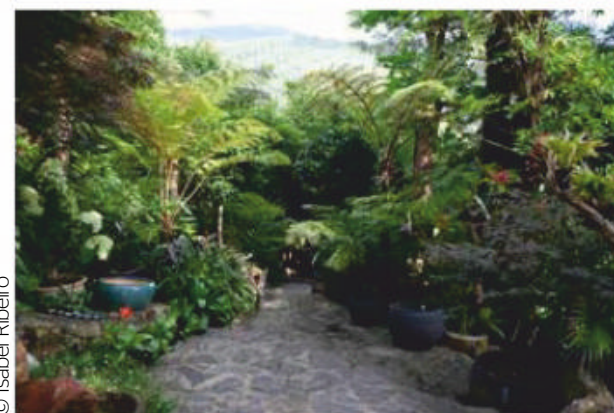
This tree heath, *Erica arborea*, which Maria Simões and Thierry Lorillard worked on together, received the 3rd Kawabe prize at the Jolis Matins de Juin, 2011, in Monaco. Height: 62 cm (24½ in.).

leaves with a respect for the direction of the energy, avoiding unattractive positioning. What fascinates me in bonsai is the dialogue with the tree, which allows me to be creative with a living being, and that helps me to develop in terms of aesthetics.

E.B.I.: Have you undertaken any training specific to bonsai?

M.S.: My solid technical and theoretic bases were put to good use when I started out in the bonsai world. I trained in Portugal from 1999, in the Luso Bonsai school. But in my country, bonsai is still in its fledgling stages compared to France or Italy. That's why I went to Salvatore Liporace's École Européenne de Bonsaï (European Bonsai School) in 2003. There, I of course came across some Italians, like Alfredo Salac-

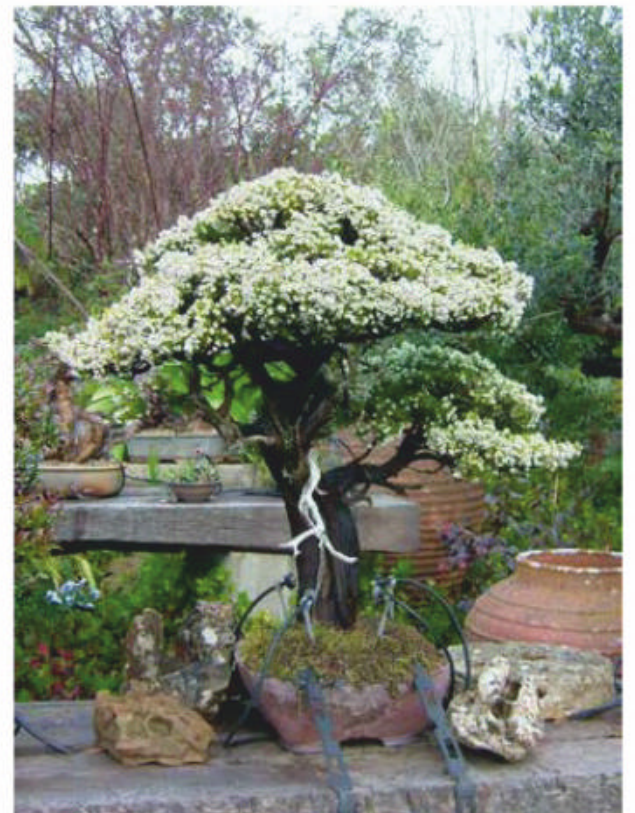
cione, but also some French, including Olivier Barreau. I was one of two women to sign up in the first year, but I was the only one to complete the training. Then I continued with short courses and demonstrations, to complete my training



An exuberant display of plants greets visitors to the nursery on a hill at Sintra, north of Lisbon.



Erica arborea in 2005, before work. Height: 75 cm (29½ in.).

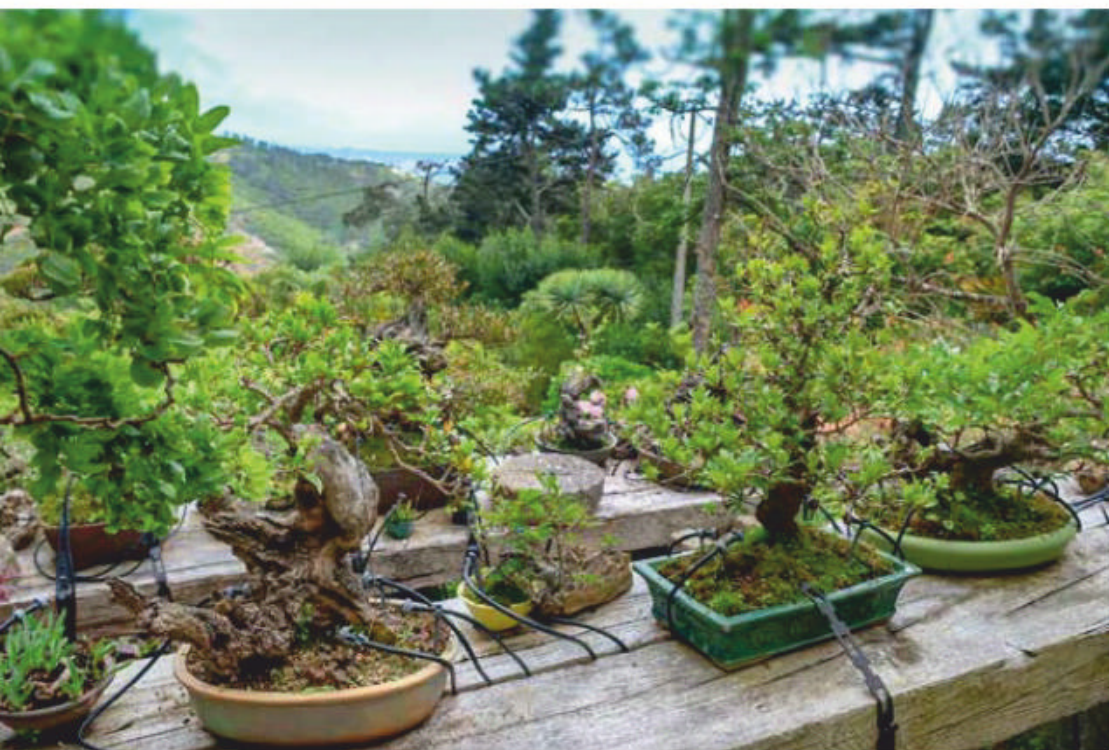


The tree heath in bloom, in 2015.

and specialise in aesthetics: working on junipers, again with Salvatore Liporace; bonsai design with Carlo Cipollini; dead-wood work with Kevin Wilson; and shohin with Hiroyuki Tanibata.

E.B.I.: Not many of your bonsai are trees of Japanese origin ...

M.S.: True, my bonsai are mostly Mediterranean. Scots pines, myrtles, heathers, cork oaks or rosemary: species that are better suited to the local climate than Japanese bonsai. To create bonsai with emotion, you have to look to images that are imprinted in your mind, that come from your own experience. I don't have any images of oriental plants, other than the ones I've seen in books, but I do have images of plants that I've been coming across since my childhood. ►►►



There are a succession of Mediterranean species on the shelves: cork oak, pomegranate ...



A carob, *Ceratonia siliqua* - another Mediterranean species.

▶▶▶ I have a preference for yamadori. I've collected several of them, and then gone on to prepare them: myrtles, junipers and heathers, with guidance notably from Gaby Becker and Michel Vachier, in France.

E.B.I.: Are your activities limited to Portugal?

M.S.: Actually, no. In 2005 I joined forces with Thierry Lorillard, who was a student with me at the École Européenne de Bonsaï, to set up the company Autrement Vert. We share the same passion for this art and we seek to be original in what we do – for instance, by choosing unusual species in exhibitions, like heather or myrtle, always preferring Mediterranean species. We share out the trees between us, but we make the decisions together. There are several specimens at my place, because

the Portuguese climate is more favourable: sunny and warm, of course, and with higher humidity than in the Mediterranean. This combination means that some travel is necessary, and is quite demanding: I have to attend to my nursery in Portugal, and the bonsai training courses, but also my journeys abroad for short courses, demonstrations or to give Thierry a helping hand. I speak several languages, which makes it easier to communicate with other Europeans.

E.B.I.: You've participated in a lot of exhibitions in Europe. Do you have a special memory of any of them?

M.S.: In 2011, Thierry and I took part in the Jolis Matins de Juin, in Monaco. There, Master Takeo Kawabe presented us with the third Kawabe prize for our tree heath, and the second prize for broadleaves for

our myrtle. I was especially emotional about the prize that Master Kawabe gave us, as he had chosen to attribute the award to a European tree that strayed from traditional Japanese codes. That tree heath was the result of seven years' work, which started at Salvatore Lipo-race's Studio Botanico in Italy, and then was done entirely by Thierry and me in Portugal. Our meticulous work on its structure and cultivation led to this great recognition by the Japanese master.



Maria Simões and Thierry Lorillard displayed this cork oak, *Quercus suber*, at the Crespi Cup 2015, in Parabiago, Milan.



To take the cork oak from Lisbon to Milan, Mira Simões went by plane and put it ... on the seat next to her!



October 2016: a cade juniper bought in 2004, after its third styling.



Myrtus communis, myrtle, 2nd prize for broadleaves at the Jolis Matins de Juin in 2011. Height: 55 cm (22 in.).



Pistacia lentiscus, bought in 2009. Height 42 cm (16½ in.), width 62 cm (24½ in.), depth 50 cm (20 in.).

E.B.I.: Are you also invited to give demonstrations?

M.S.: I've taken part in demonstrations abroad, such as at the Galician bonsai convention in 2016, alongside Michaël Tran and Alexandre Escudero. Unlike in France and Italy, I'm still almost unknown in Spain, despite my CV. Demonstrations given by women are certainly unusual in the very male-dominated bonsai world. However, I think that the public appreciates me: I like to remain accessible, to answer questions, and I like it when spectators come close while I'm working.

E.B.I.: Do you think that Portuguese bonsai could catch up with other European countries?

M.S.: The French and Italian bonsai enthusiasts have invested a lot in training in bonsai techniques and cultivation. Unfortunately, my Portuguese compatriots neglect this aspect. They want to cut corners, without taking the measure of investment in time and materials. Yes, Portuguese bonsai has only started recently, but the often-superficial approach to it, and the still-limited market, have made it a long road, and made awareness-raising

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To contact her

Verdeal da Roca
Azenha da Portela do Rio Touro
Estrada do Cabo da Roca no.1
Azóia, 2705-001 Colares
Portugal
Tel: +35 1917220426
Facebook: Verdeal da Roca

a slow process ... to the point that even in my own country, my skills and experience aren't valued in the way they should be, while I'm in demand elsewhere in Europe. Is this a symptom of a persisting macho mentality? I couldn't say ... ●



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The informal upright style

Author: Antonio Ricchiari

The informal upright style, or *moyogi* in Japanese, is one of the basic shapes in bonsai that allows for a less restrained interpretation. It is also the most common shape among bonsaists. This “informal” style is intrinsic to the shape of a bonsai, which is the aesthetic balance between harmony and the synthesis of codified rules. As a result, the style can be applied to any type of tree. It is a form that leaves plenty of room for creativity and talent.

The essential characteristic of the informal upright style is its delicate movement that starts from the trunk and is repeated many times up to the apical zone. The curves of the trunk create a sinuosity that holds the eye of the viewer by emphasising the concept of asymmetry. The style has a sturdy nebari and is aesthetically very balanced and harmonious.

The importance of the front of the tree

The choice for front of the tree must be made by concentrating on the space (*tachiagari*) between the start of the trunk’s thrust (the *nebari*) and the first branch. This area will be the most visible and will be the focal point that characterises the bonsai.

The *tachiagari* is of paramount importance, as the span of this very important space stabilises the starting point of the first branch, which is essential to the tree’s silhouette. The *tachiagari* draws the viewer’s eye to the movement, which is necessary for the entire tree. The movement must always be interesting and can be enhanced by the eventual creation ►►►



The trunk of this *Juniperus rigida*, with its needle-like leaves, has a lovely sinuosity and is a fine example of the informal upright style. Crespi bonsai collection.



The focal point of this Chinese juniper, *Juniperus chinensis*, in the informal upright style is between the nebari and the first branch and is called *tachiagari*. Crespi Bonsai collection.

►►► of a shari. This is why the choice of the front of the tree is so important.

The height of the subject should be six times the diameter of the trunk.

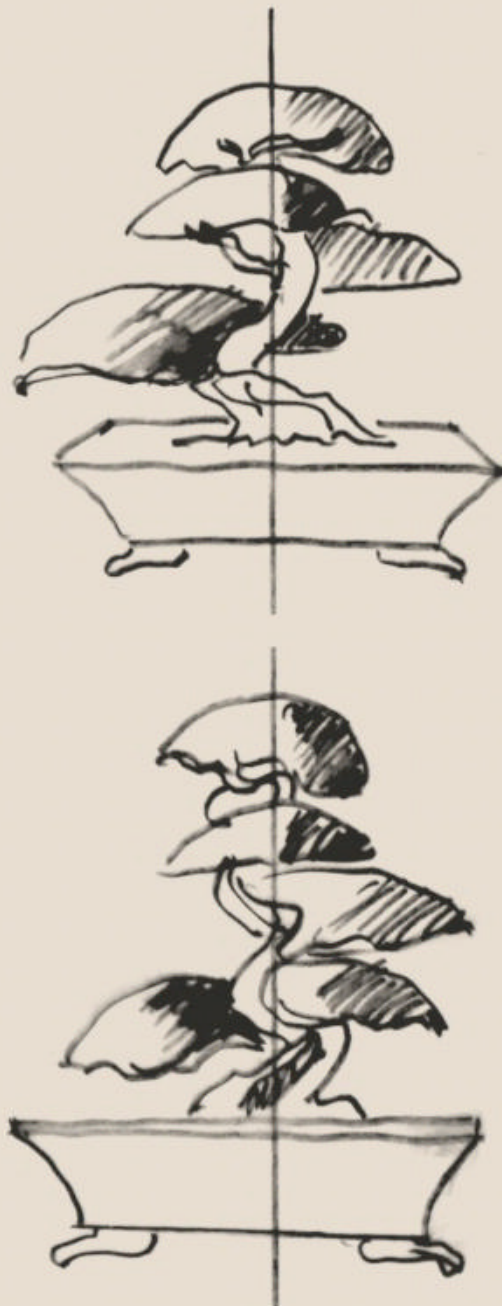
The general appearance

The principal branches always grow on the outside of the curve of the trunk, never inside. They incline downwards towards the tree's base to emphasise the impression of age. Therefore, the most important and most robust branches are the first ones that grow from the trunk's base, and give the tree the appearance of strength and power.

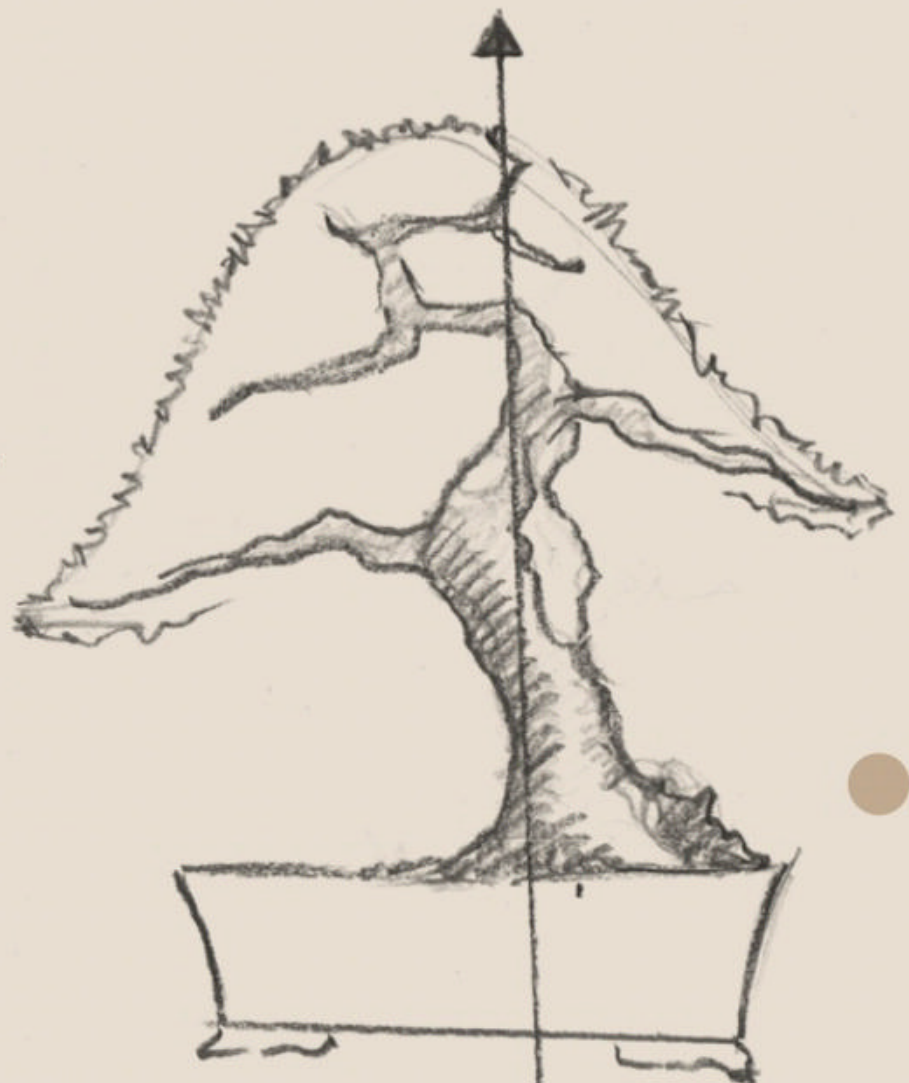
The tree's apex leans forward slightly at the front and must be perpendicular to the base of the trunk. The base (*nebari*) and the crown must be aligned perpendicularly in relation to the line of the substrate.

A jin could eventually be present on the first curve of the trunk, which would recall the first dead branch.

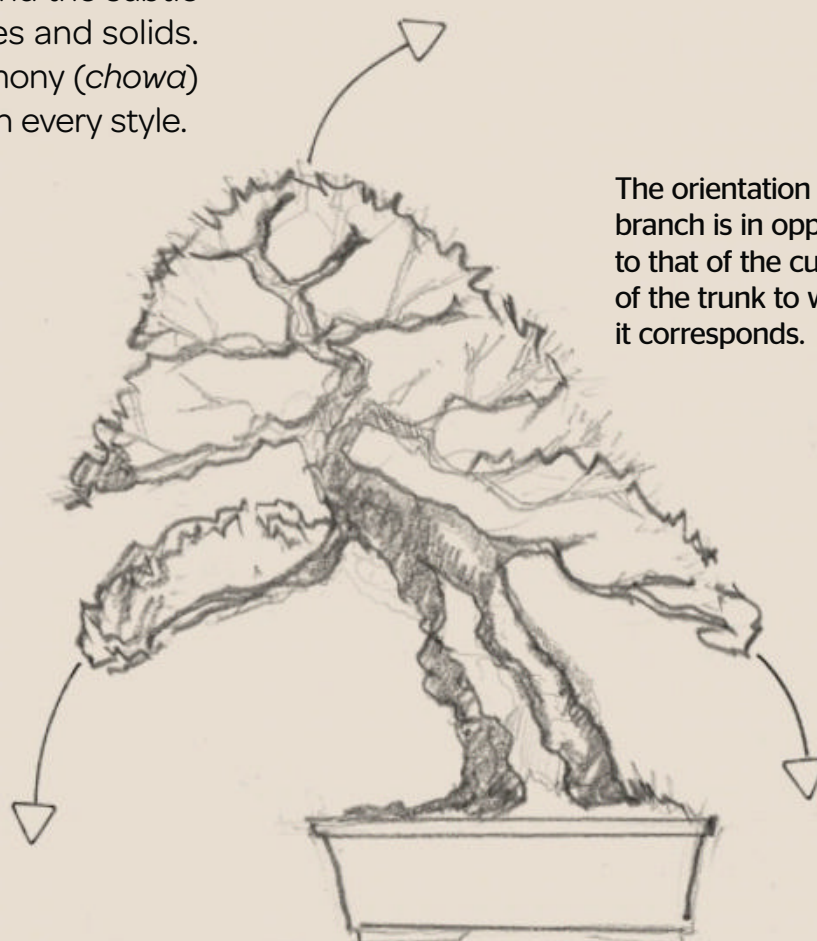
The tree must form a triangle showing the right balance between the foliage masses and the subtle play of empty spaces and solids. The concept of harmony (*chowa*) in bonsai is present in every style.



Ideally, the axis through the *nebari* and the apex is perpendicular to the base of the trunk.



In the informal upright style, the crown of the tree must have a plumb line to the centre of the trunk's base.



The orientation of each branch is in opposition to that of the curve of the trunk to which it corresponds.



The tree's silhouette highlights the perception of spaces.

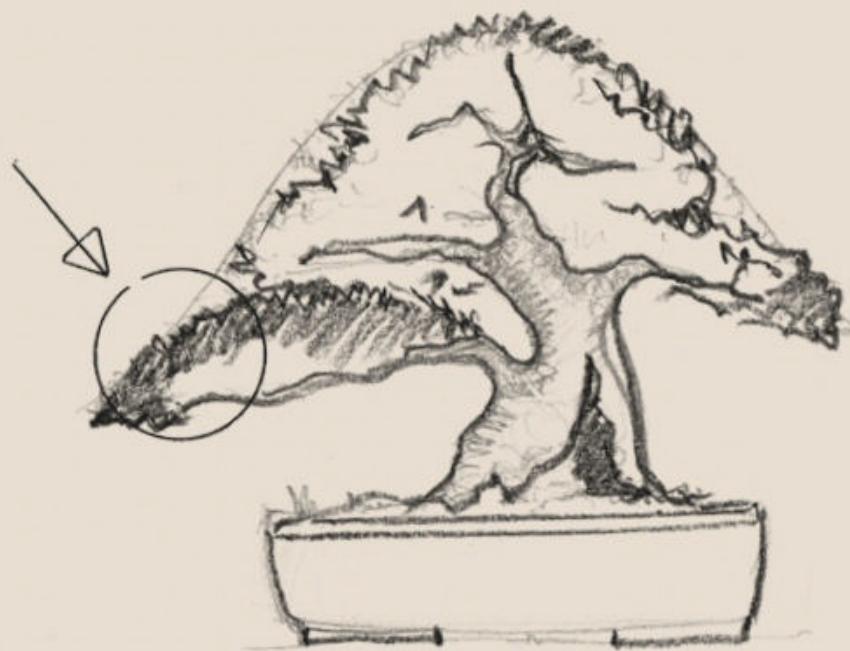
The position of the branches

The rules stipulate a starting schema based on a structure of five branches.

The number of branches during the development and interpretation of the shape can be reduced to three, or even to one to form the tree's structure. It is at this point that one can recognize the author's hand or the style of a bonsai master's school.

The first branch (*sashi-eda*) is without any doubt the most important and has a determining function. Its starting point, as with the other branches, is on the outside of the curve of the trunk. Its role is to enhance the trunk's movement. It can be placed on the right or the left of the tree which due to its development will be the biggest branch with the largest diameter.

In accordance with Japanese rules, its diameter is quarter of that of the trunk and must be situated at one third of the height of the trunk from the base. ▶▶▶



The function of the first branch is to balance the tree in relation to the nebari and in fact, it is called the balancing branch.



The shaping of the foliage pads is sketched out here.



The first branch gives the tree balance while the back branch gives it perspective.

The principal ramification stretches right down to just touch the nebari giving a shape that breaks the rules. Mario Pavone collection.

The triangle and proportions

The triangle concept is also applied to the *moyogi* silhouette as well as the concept of proportion. One must know how to obtain the right balance between the foliage masses and the empty spaces in relation to the size of the trunk; otherwise the result will be aesthetically unattractive.

▶▶▶ The second branch is of course opposite the first and is smaller in size.

The front branch must be in the upper part of the trunk. It should be quite short, so as not to distract the eye of the observer, and have a limited diameter so as not to weigh down the overall appearance of the tree.

The back branch is long so as to emphasise the perspective and depth of the tree. It must be visible from the front but must not be too preponderant.

The crown (*atama*) has a rounded appearance to emphasise the tree's age, and as a reminder, it must incline towards the viewer.

The branches incline in an elegant curve so that the foliage pads are distanced from the trunk. These are made up of the finest ramification in the classic diamond-tip shape. ●



A classic example of the informal upright style. Azalea, Mario Pavone collection.



The beauty of ramification. Elm, Paolo Sami collection.



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Gaia Garden
chemin des combes
17500 Villexavier
tel : 06 23 63 41 99
gaia garden@outlook.fr



The root structure of a deciduous tree

The base of a tree or its root flare contributes to the harmony of a bonsai. The surface roots, well anchored in the soil, are constructed very early on.

Author: Gilbert Labrid

We are often reminded of the importance to be given to the quality of a bonsai tree's root structure, and even more so for deciduous trees than for conifers. A deciduous tree is usually better constructed in the long term by successive pruning and repeated pinching than by wiring. From the start the most important thing is the nebari or the anchoring of the bonsai in the soil, which should give the impression of tranquil strength beneath the gentle shade of the branches.

1 Positioning the front

No matter how the tree was acquired, the construction of a bonsai is governed by the roots. This is essential, because the aim is to show the tree's best side where the visible roots are harmoniously distributed in relation to the tree's shape.

It is best to intervene as soon as possible to correct obvious defects. The older the tree and the more it has been worked on as a bonsai, the more difficult, limited and repetitive the interventions become to find an acceptable base and to reconstruct the balance.

Work on roots is intermittent, and is carried out at best once a year.



This plant, a Japanese maple, has been cultivated in a pot for the last 3 or 4 years. In the form of a double trunk, the division is 5 cm (2 in.) above the root flare. The plant has lengthened without any change in size and the diameters of the trunks are almost identical. The root system still has to be constructed.



Two areas are problematic. The junction point of the two trunks will thicken over time. If we keep both trunks, their junction will have to be at the back of the tree to hide the swelling. The anchoring (circled), is well positioned, bearing in mind the angle that is needed for the trunks. This will be the front of the tree.

2 Eliminating verticality

This task involves removing any tendency by the roots to return to a naturally vertical anchoring position whose purpose is to stabilise the tree in its natural habitat. After removing the taproots, cultivate the tree in a pot to limit regrowth. Refine the quality of the substrate to densify the rootlets, which are useful for the ramification. Ensure recovery by monitoring growing conditions and encourage roots to grow close to the surface by adding a ground cover such as peat, moss or sphagnum moss etc.



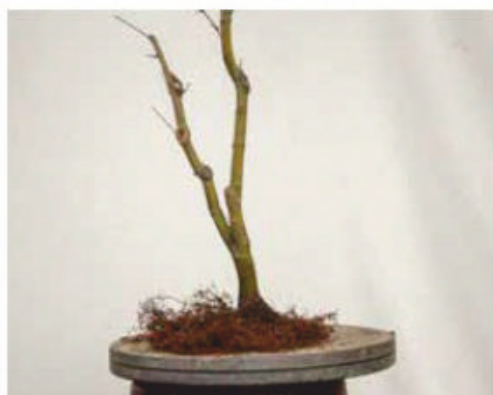
At the back of the tree, there is no root starting point (marked by the arrow), which will prevent movement towards the interior. One must create roots at this point.



The earth is removed and the exposed roots are clearly seen. The vertical roots must be eliminated and the horizontal rootlets preserved, and then given a well-drained habitat to encourage regrowth.



The following year, the plant, cultivated in a buried container to prevent taproots, has developed a fine, dense root system without large roots.



Numerous roots populate the chosen level: now we can place the plant in a flat pot to highlight the root spread. The diameter of the trunks are beginning to differentiate.

3 Balancing strength

In the course of time, during successive repottings, we focused on balancing the strength of the roots in relation to the growth of the branches. It is essential to control and reduce roots that are too strong, and which correspond to “sacrificial” branches or to areas to be developed. Otherwise, one risks being overwhelmed by an excessive growth of anchoring roots, which would ruin all harmony.

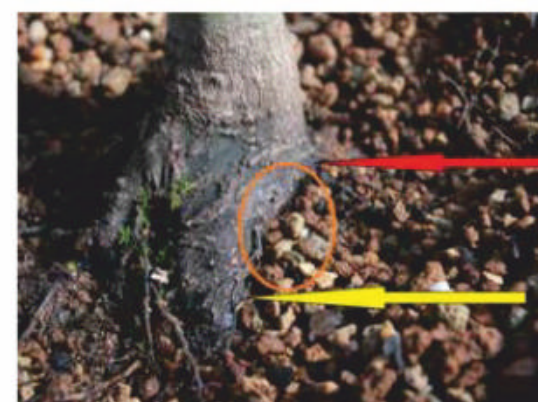
For older trees that have been cultivated as bonsai for several years, defects develop with age, and one sees too late the result of past neglect. To modify and make up for past mistakes, one has to resort to grafting and that is another story. ●



The following year: numerous branches have densified at the top of the tree. There are very few strong branches and no over-strong branches at all. One must control the roots and the anchoring.



Everything seems to be going well; the nebari is gently spreading. The roots are individualising at the front of the tree and are starting to cling to the soil - a tendency that needs to be corrected to encourage movement that is parallel to the surface.



Corrections to be made will be apparent when one repots. If they are not made, the anchoring will become unbalanced both front and back and will affect the general harmony: a root (in yellow) has tripled in size and must be reduced. Two roots have grown on at the back on the left (in red). There is nothing in the space at the base at the back of the tree (in orange).

Concerning anchoring

Whatever the subject, when starting work, one must establish a level that will define the anchoring of the future bonsai.



For this young maple the yellow line, in my opinion, shows the best point at which to create a nebari.

Chinese juniper

An emblematic bonsai species

Juniperus chinensis, is without doubt the most cultivated species in bonsai, most probably because it is easy to cultivate, has many varieties and is easily obtainable.

Author: Jérôme Hay

Juniperus chinensis: a Chinese juniper that is easy to cultivate as bonsai. Originally from Japan, it is very common in bonsai collections.



J*uniperus chinensis* is the most cultivated species in bonsai. Two very popular varieties in Japan with “soft” scales are *sargentii* and *itoigawa*. In our regions, a popular variety is also *Juniperus X media pfitzeriana*, which is a hybrid of *J. chinensis* and *J. sabina*. Their availability, or more accurately, the rarity of Japanese species on the market, their colour, their density and all the techniques that are available today, make them one of the easiest and commonest species to cultivate.

A little botany

A monoecious species, the Chinese juniper carries male and female flowers on the same plant. In bonsai cultivation, flowering and fruiting are unsightly and stresses the tree. Excessive flowering pro-

Juniperus chinensis var. *sargentii* is still the ultimate image of bonsai. A species that has been worked on for hundreds of years, has bluish foliage in winter.



Cultivation

Family: *Cupressaceae*

Genus: *Juniperus*

Species: *chinensis*, and all its varieties (itoigawa, sargentii etc.) and cultivars.

Substrate: good drainage with large-grain sand, zeolitic tuff or kiryuzuna.

Exposure: Outdoors all year in full light and airy situation. Protect them when temperatures drop to -8 or -10° C (17-14° F).

Fertilisation: solid, low-value organic fertiliser topped-up in spring and autumn with organic liquid fertiliser.

Spraying and watering in season supplemented



It is not easy to distinguish between bud and leaf : the end of a bud is more defined.

duces an impressive amount of pollen, which often results in poor nourishment and excessive abiotic stress.

It is difficult to differentiate a bud from foliage: in short it is a pile of scales that eventually drop revealing the branch. The evergreen foliage ends in small distinct buds. Young pointed leaves become acicular when adult. When stressed, this species of juniper can present rigid foliage, a defence mechanism borrowed from its needle-leaved cousins. The leaves in decussate pairs form an arabesque interlacing pattern.

Dead wood

The exfoliating bark peels away in strips and is brushed to enhance its coppery reddish-brown colouration. Oiling it will bring out all the colour nuances.

Dead wood is intrinsic to junipers. Its fibre, texture, whiteness and hardness create veritable sculptures which underline the perpetual combat between life and death. Maintaining dead wood requires cleaning followed by an application of jin seal diluted by 50% to disinfect and whiten the wood. One can tint the liquid with a little Chinese ink to obtain a more natural colour. ►►►



Juniperus chinensis 'Blauw' - a very interesting variety that combines the assets of the 'sargentii' with a permanently bluish colouration. It is a pity that bonsai lovers do not show much interest in it.



Juniperus chinensis var. *itoigawa* is much admired for its foliage, which is one of the finest and most compact. Shohin, height: 15 cm (6 in.).



Juniper offers many possibilities in work on dead wood. Branches can be sacrificed to add character and even age to the tree.

A large family

Juniper can be found practically everywhere on the planet, which has resulted in many species and sub-species.

They can be impressively long-lived. In their natural state, although they are found in lower regions, they thrive in mountainous areas at altitudes of up to 4,500 metres (about 15,000 feet) and are accustomed to extreme conditions. They can cope with poor, sandy calcareous structures and adapt to cold, wet winters and to dry, hot summers. Junipers originated mostly from the northern hemisphere. They are extremely hardy and slow-growing. Their size and span vary according to their exposure.



Positioning a branch by screwing a bracing wire to the trunk reduces the impact of wiring but does not damage the plant.



Juniperus chinensis var. *sargentii*. Shari offers endless possibilities.

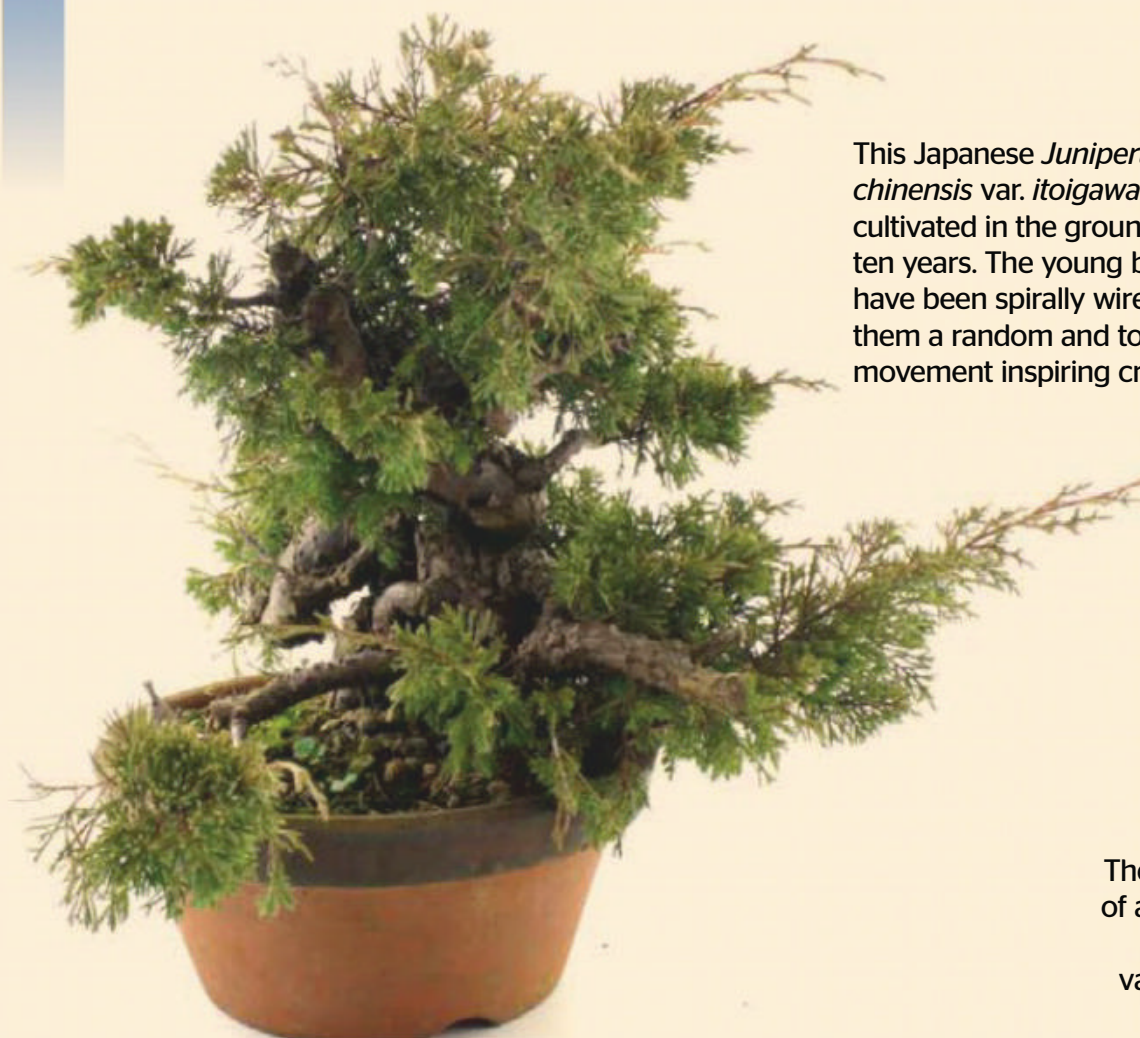
Propagation methods

From seed is affordable and requires an easily created stratification. When the seeds have pre-germinated, sow the seed in a mixture of 2/3 sand and 1/3 peat. The seedlings will soon show. The disadvantage of this method is that the choice of variety does not guarantee the genetic accuracy of the subject.

Taking cuttings is far from being the best propagation method, because it produces identical plants – clones, in fact. At the end of autumn collect a few twigs 15–20 cm (6–8 in.) long and push them about 5 centimetres (2 in) into containers filled with zeolitic tuff and fine akadama, planting them a few inches away from each other. Humidity must be well reg-

ulated in a shady area away from strong contrasts in temperature. If the twigs are still green after about a year, roots will have formed and the plant can be repotted.

Air-layering is still a good propagation method; it is easy and not too risky. One can air-layer large sections. Clean the bark in a suitable place and remove a ring of bark of about 3 cm (1¼ in.). Wire it tightly



This Japanese *Juniperus chinensis* var. *itoigawa* has been cultivated in the ground for over ten years. The young branches have been spirally wired to give them a random and tormented movement inspiring creativity.

The fine trunk of a *Juniperus chinensis* var. *itoigawa*.



A repotting tip

When repotting, the strategy here is to only very rarely cut the root back. One curls it back and takes all the root lengths back to the interior under the nebari. This method is much less invasive than cutting. Juniper characteristically eliminates superfluous roots by devitalising them. It thus produces its own humus that is indispensable to its food supply, without drawing on its reserves at the start of the growing period.

in the centre. Wrap damp sphagnum moss round the debarked ring, and hold everything together with black plastic tied at both ends. During the season, ensure that the interior of this package stays moist. Roots will form in less than a year.

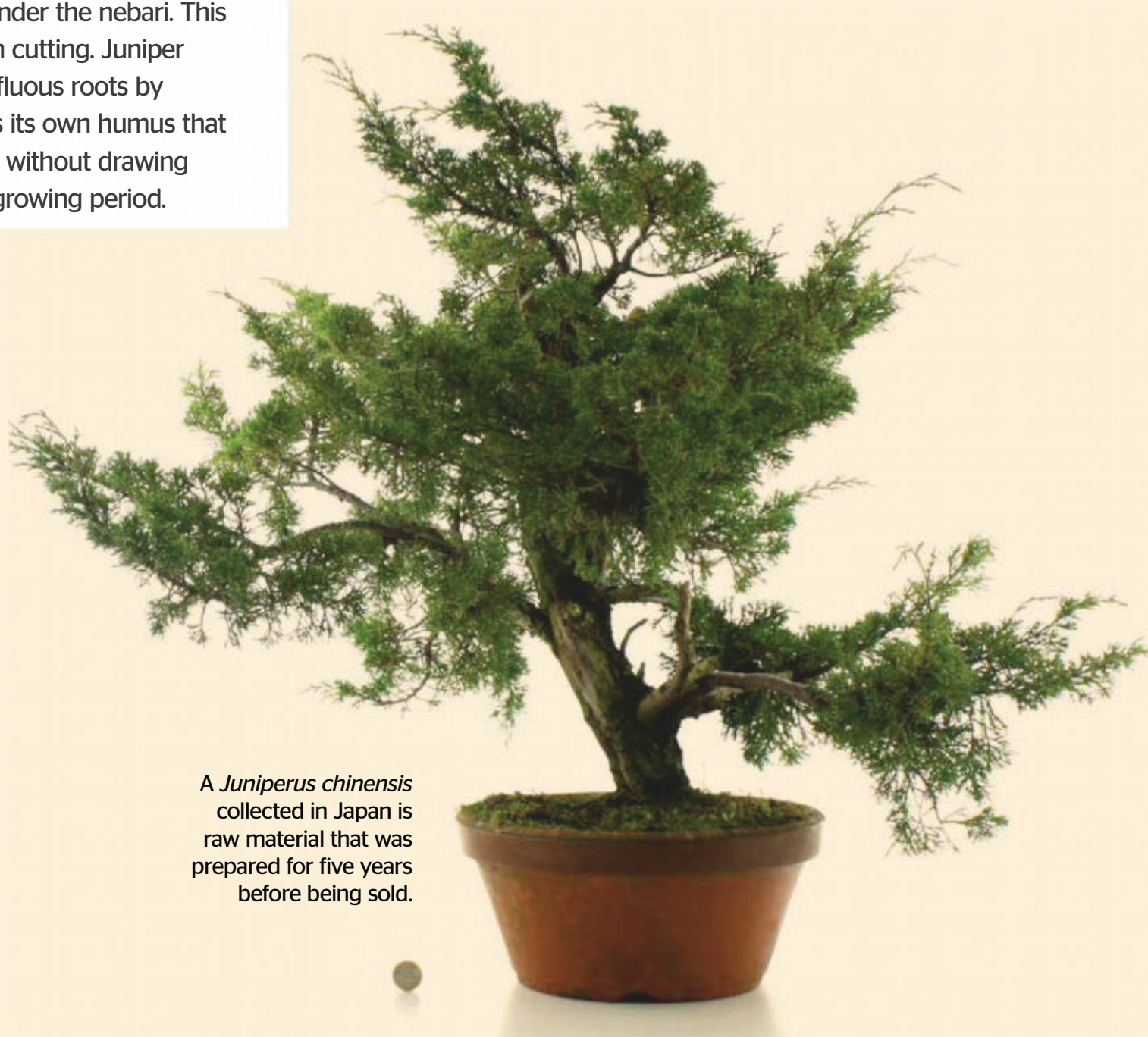
Purchasing is an even better way of procuring an interesting variety that has quality and style. You will also get professional advice on a young plant or an established bonsai.

Caring for the tree

How junipers are watered, depends on the substrate. This one is made up of kiryuzuna, akadama and zeolitic tuff, which has good drainage and allows the root structure to rapidly warm up and to breathe. Always water with rainwater; it is the best water to use as it does not affect the pH levels. Spray the foliage often to improve interaction and metabolism.

As with all conifers, *Juniperus chinensis* can wait to be repotted. The best practice is every two to five years according to need. It should be carried out at the end of autumn before the frosts.

A good solid fertiliser will provide regulated nourishment. This can be complemented by applying liquid fertiliser with a slightly higher dose of nitrogen and iron from spring to summer. In autumn we double the dose of solid fertiliser and complement it with a liquid fertiliser that is weak in nitrogen but with higher levels of potash. A small intake of magnesium (such as Ryusan Mg)



A *Juniperus chinensis* collected in Japan is raw material that was prepared for five years before being sold.

is recommended, because if it is lacking, juniper has a tendency to turn brown in winter;

Pinching is done with the fingers throughout the growing period to obtain a compact, dense appearance. We remove the scales by pulling in one sharp movement. Every four years, we lighten and aerate the plant by cutting the foliage with scissors. And we can take advantage of this to wire and reposition the branches. This work is best carried out in autumn when temperatures are not too low.

Diseases and insects

After our own mistakes, pests and disease could destroy all our

efforts. Juniper is quite robust.

Some pests such as juniper scale – microscopic insects less than a millimetre, with a white carapace – burrow between the scales. This can be effectively treated by spraying the plant with jin seal diluted to 3% in water and can be used preventively twice a year.

Pear rust is the most widespread cryptogamic disease in our region. Difficult to eradicate, this fungus can be treated by spraying with Bordeaux mixture in autumn and at the end of winter.

The rust settles in juniper wood and preventive treatment as a barrier is still the best way to protect the tree. ●

The European beech

A demanding forest tree

The European beech, an emblematic but exacting species in European forests, is often found in bonsai collections.

Text: Louis-Victor Bourdeau

Classification

Nom commun: European beech

Famille: Fagaceae

Genus: *Fagus*

Species: *Fagus sylvatica*

The European beech is a deciduous forest tree that, in ideal conditions, can grow to a height of 35 metres (115 ft) with a trunk measuring 1,80 metres (5ft 10 in.) in diameter. It is easily recognized among most deciduous trees by its distinctive bark that is smooth and thin, which is rarely crackled or fissured, except in a few older subjects.

Anatomy

The leaves grow alternately and are oval with five to nine pairs of veins. They are dark green on top and light green on the underside and are 5 to 10 cm (in.) long. They differ from hornbeam leaves by the presence of a silky down that gradually disappears.

Beech foliage is marcescent – the leaves remain attached for part of winter particularly on young trees. Although many hypotheses have been put forward there is still no real explanation of this phenomenon in beech trees. One theory is that the

leaves fall late in spring and decompose in the soil at a time when the tree has an increasing need for more organic matter.

The light brown buds about 1 to 3 cm ($\frac{3}{8}$ – $1\frac{1}{4}$ in.) long are very slender and pointed.

The tree flowers after about 20 years. The species is monoecious – male and female flowers on the same tree – and the flowering, which is not very



© Gilbert Labrid

Away from other trees, the beech can reach a size of majestic proportions. This deciduous tree is an essential presence in European forests.



When the buds open, young beech leaves are covered with a characteristic down.



In summer, the smooth trunks and gentle foliage provide beneficial shade.

impressive, consists of clusters of hanging flowers for the male and globular clusters for the female.

After fertilisation the flowers develop into beech nuts. These have a hard spiny cup-like covering containing a seed. When these seeds fall they form an essential link in the forest food chain.

Distribution

A major forest species in Europe, the European beech is found nearly everywhere on the continent from Scandinavia to Sicily, from England to Turkey, on mountainsides and in meadows. It can live for 400 years and more rarely, for 500 years.

Its habitat

Beech has particular needs. Its roots do not tolerate great differences in humidity and soil compaction or flooding. Rainfall should be very homogeneous throughout the year. It tolerates cold up to -30°C and its bark can be suffer sunburn when violently displaced or if it has been severely cut. The species loves shade, which in fact, is indispensable to it when it is still young (it is a sciophilous plant).

All these requirements make the beech tree one of the rare European species representative of the ultimate stage in the forest formation cycle. This is made up of trees that tolerate shade while young with a tendency to dominate other adult species. Pine and spruce are two other species that do this and they are quite often seen in association with beech in mountain forests.

Man and tree

Beech wood is remarkable and its many uses depend on the variations in quality according to its provenance and the conditions in which the tree was growing.

The wood is hard and homogeneous and is used to manufacture many things such as toys and

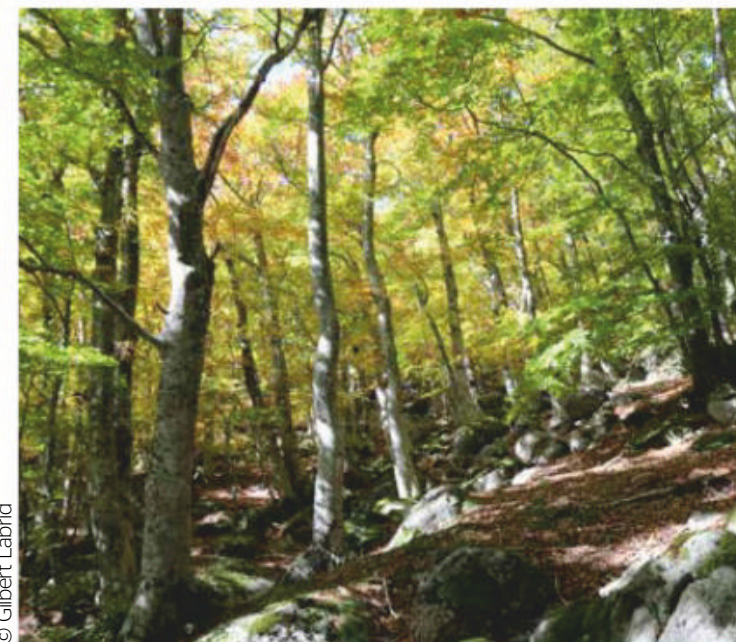
Descriptor

The European beech, an indispensable species in European flora, was classified in 1753 by Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) one of the most important naturalists of the 18th century, known for his classification of living species. The Swedish naturalist is considered the father of the system of flora and fauna nomenclature known to this day. His major work *Systema Naturae* - published in 1735 and then expanded and modified over 35 years - is an important body of work that

had a profound impact on the science of natural history. It was in this work that Linnaeus introduced the nomenclature for binomial species (*Fagus*, genus, *sylvatica*, species). It is extraordinary to think that the spirit of this work is steeped in religion, where all living species were created by God - a far cry from Darwinian evolution - that brought about a nomenclature system still used today, despite the huge advances that have since been made in biology and genetics.



A spruce and beech forest at the end of autumn. The combination of spruce and beech leave little room for other species.



Autumn in a beech forest - a unique atmosphere of shade and colour.

furniture. It also provides the best firewood ever. The twisted parts of the tree are used to produce firewood and the straight trunk is used for timber.

Beech is also an ornamental tree. Spectacular and majestic when it is allowed to grow freely, it is not suitable for small gardens. A very great number of cultivars have been selected as ornamental trees for their aspect or the remarkable characteristics of their leaves. ●

Who would think that, even when covered in frost and subjected to Arctic temperatures, trees are actively preparing for the spring?

A perpetual renaissance

In winter, trees are dormant, awaiting their reawakening. It is a sort of return to life that they repeat every spring.

Author:
Louis-Victor Bourdeau

Winter in regions with temperate climates is often associated with nature being at rest. Plant life seems to be suspended, and the vital spark extinguished. It is sometimes only by seeing buds that you can tell the difference between a dead broadleaf and the same type of tree with its winter look. Although trees seem to have become completely inactive, some phenomena will occur in the spring that will condition many aspects of their life and demonstrate

their great adaptability. Being fixed to the spot, trees can't seek shelter to wait for better weather. And it's in winter that they prepare for the spring. It is through waiting and resting that they display some of their most fascinating behaviours – not very spectacular, granted, but truly amazing nonetheless.

No growth

In order to isolate themselves from conditions that are detrimental to their growth, trees have adopted two strategies: dormancy and quiescence.

Dormancy, the better known of the two, is an absence of growth, where the tissue virtually stops



Direct sunlight, rising temperatures and lengthening days are all traps that trees need to avoid falling into, so as not to resume growth too early. It's better for them to wait patiently in the snow.



Although it is a conifer, the larch behaves like a broadleaf. Its soft needles, very efficient for photosynthesis, allow it quickly to replace the energy it has used for springtime budding.

expanding. During this period, life doesn't come to a complete standstill, but it does slow down a lot. The buds, which contain the growth for the following spring, are protected from hoarfrost by tough scales that produce growth-inhibiting hormones. There are mechanisms that prevent the tree from being damaged by the cold: reserves built up during the growing period are distributed, serving as a sort of antifreeze for the tissue.

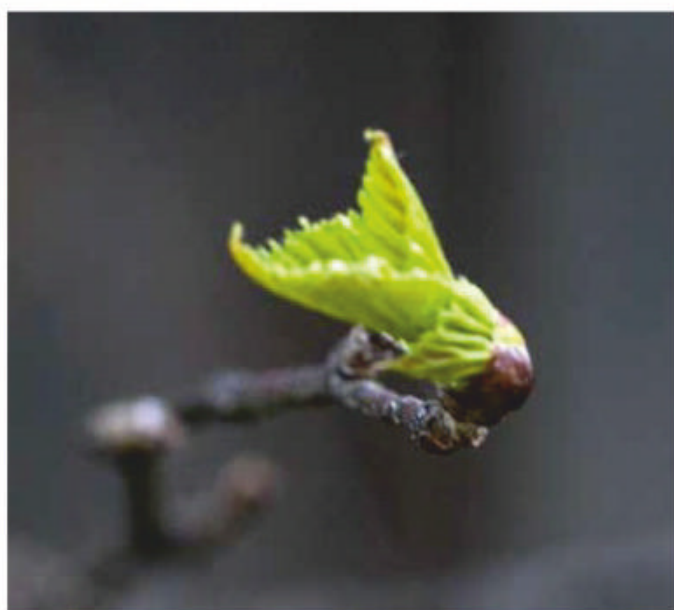
This dormancy is necessary for trees that live in areas where winters are cold. They would not be able to revive in the spring if the dormancy hadn't lasted a certain length of time. This aspect is surprising, as a minimum number of days below 10°C (50°F) are required to break dormancy. Understandably, several days of higher temperatures in the middle of winter must not be able to break the dormancy, as this could have grave consequences at the point when the cold inevitably returned. Trees do all they can to defend themselves against this

risk and "count" the number of days during which the temperature has not exceeded a certain limit. Beyond a certain number of cold days – which varies according to the species – dormancy is broken and budding can occur.

Reawakening made possible

Quiescence is the second phenomenon that comes into play if the conditions for the tree's reawakening have not yet come together. Here again, the tree functions at a vastly slowed-down rate. This waiting strategy is a form of precaution and protection. But the hormones that inhibited growth during the dormancy period are gradually eliminated, and the tree can therefore potentially revive. To finally bring quiescence to an end, the tree will "count" again, this time measuring the daylight hours and the sum of higher temperatures over a long period. The spring can begin at last.

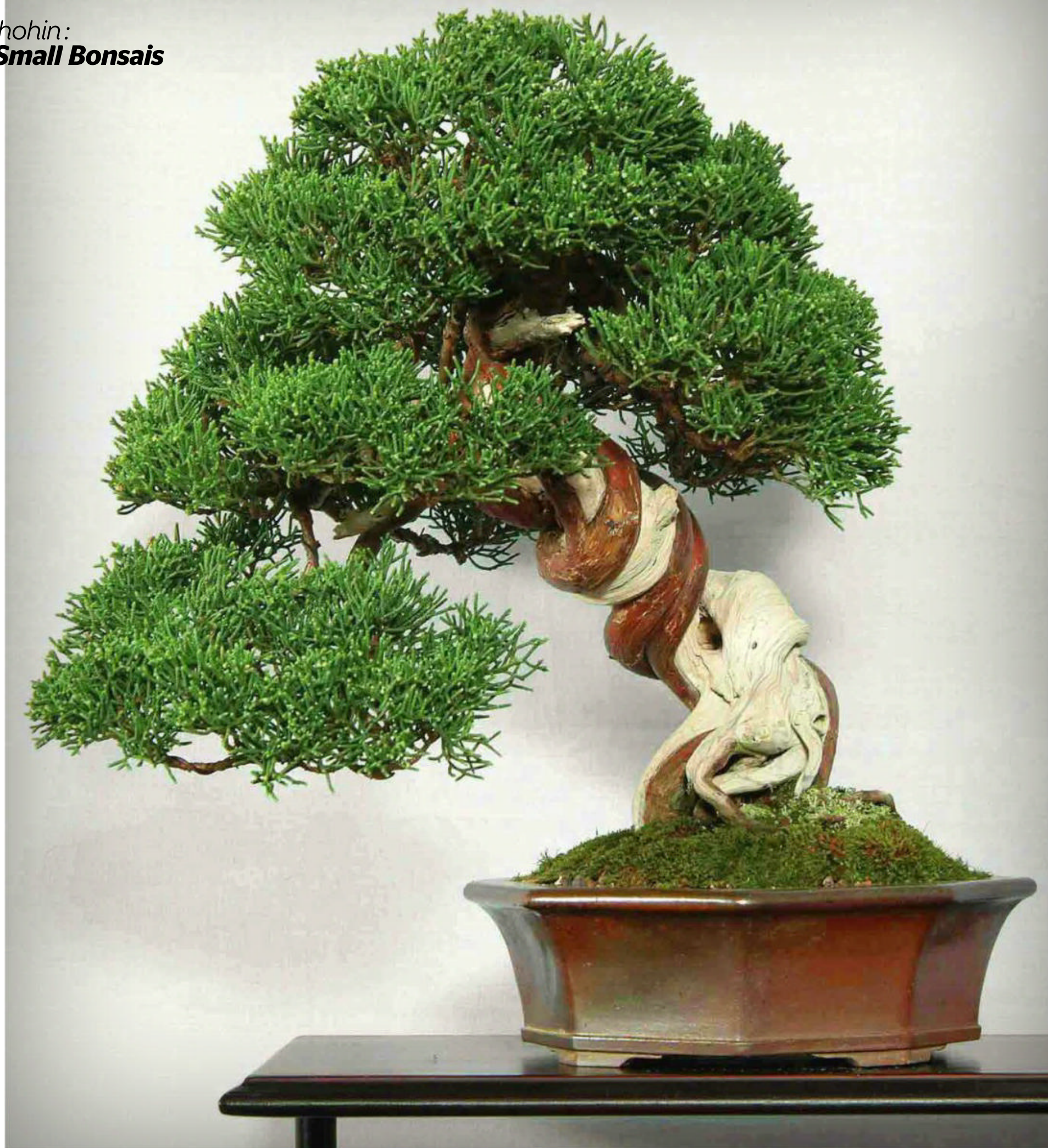
Counting, waiting, protecting themselves: all terms that we more often attribute to animals, or even humans. While trees are stationary organisms, they are far from inert. We now know that they display sensitivity and abilities that are just as unexpected as they are complex and sophisticated. "And yet it moves": this statement attributed to Galileo during his trial could be adjusted in relation to trees, to: "And yet they feel". Humans often make use of trees, treating them as a material, but trees have the capacity to feel and to express. They react so strongly to their environment that, through this incredible dormancy–reawakening–growth–dormancy cycle, they re-enact the mysterious cycle of life and death every year, throughout their life. And they do so regardless of their age, and with a vigour that is being perpetually renewed. Every spring, the spectacle of this inspires a wonder of which I personally will never tire. ●



When at last all the right conditions have come together ...

Different strategies

Broadleaves and conifers have not adopted the same strategy to deal with the rigours of winter, although many of their mechanisms are comparable. Broadleaves lose all of their foliage, while conifers withstand the winter season with at least the needles that they have produced during the year. The strategy employed by conifers allows them to be operational more quickly in the spring, by taking advantage of photosynthesis as soon as temperatures have risen, and without expending energy to produce new growth. They are thus generally able to colonise colder and more hostile environments than broadleaves can. Of course, there are exceptions – but that's another story ...



Not long after its first styling in my hands. In the following year the tree went on to receive a nomination at the Noelanders Trophy in the kifu category, best shohin at the Best of British Bonsai Exhibition and best chuhin at John Hanby's Newstead bonsai awards!

A Chinese juniper's success in Japan

This lovely Chinese juniper from the UK endured various setbacks before its photo arrived in the hands of the judges of the Gafu-ten, a high-quality shohin exhibition in Japan, where it won an award.

Author: John Armitage

The story of this juniper, which was a prizewinner at the 2019 Gafu-ten, started long before Peter Warren brought it to my garden and offered it to me. From what I can gather the tree is a grafted juniper: a yamadori trunk probably of the Tohoku type of juniper, grafted in two places with a variety of Itoigawa foliage. It was in 2008, shortly after my first visit to Taisho-en, the nursery of the Urushibatas, when Peter arrived in my garden with the tree. It was also at the time that my interest in smaller-sized bonsai was rapidly increasing.

Remarkable foliage

Rather than being cultivated from a cutting like so many small-sized Itoigawa junipers, the tree had outstanding natural deadwood and a very nice twist of the live veins. I understood the quality of the tree and jokingly asked if it came with a trophy cabinet. I was not able to let Peter leave my garden with the tree. It was the most money I had ever spent on a tree and I was filled with a great deal of trepidation. I was almost scared to prune, wire or repot it. ►►►



In 2010 the tree deserved a better stand. On a new stand created by Doug Mudd, the juniper won the best shohin award at the British Shohin Association exhibition.



A yamadori trunk with Itoigawa foliage grafted onto it.

Another change of stand, again made by Doug Mudd. For me, the juniper was looking at its best.

▶▶▶ There are many variations within the Itoigawa strain of juniper foliage. Some of them are more likely to put on juvenile foliage than others, some send out strong growing tips, but on this juniper the foliage grew without any noticeable growing tip. It almost inflated like a balloon rather than sending out shoots.

Blackened foliage

Over the years I have had the tree, it has been seen many times in the UK. Possibly too much, but it remained my favourite tree and I was always pleased to show it off. I had been planning on showing the juniper once again at the Noelanders Trophy in 2016. One month before the exhibition I had moved the tree into the polytunnel for protection. Due to personal circumstances, I had not been as diligent in its care as I should have been and over the space of a few days the juniper was hit by a severe case of juniper tip blight. Every growing tip was covered in a black mould. This not only rendered it un-showable for the trophy but also killed a large part of the crown of the tree. I had to withdraw it from the exhibition and wait for it to recover. The mould itself was treated quickly with dilute lime sulphur but the damage had been done. Juvenile foliage grew on the tree for the first time but even then, in a smaller amount than other Itoigawa that were also affected by juniper tip blight.



Due to the traumatic nature for both the tree and me of its being affected by blight, no photos were taken at that point. Here in mid-2018, the tree had recovered some strength. It had a small amount of juvenile foliage, and it was now time to try to get it back into shape.

Size issues

Over the years the tree has been exhibited at many shows with some success. Strangely it has often bridged the categories of shohin, kifu (above shohin) and even chuhin categories, because of which it has come in for criticism. For my own part, I shape a tree so that it is well proportioned regardless of height. At exhibition I do not take a tape measure in case a tree is 1 centimetre (half an inch) too tall, and simply enjoy the display and the exhibition. I let the show organisers who make the entry guidelines and judge the exhibits worry about that.



Not a refined styling, more to reset branches in position so that they could continue to grow.

A two-year convalescence

It took over two years of unrestricted growth before I felt that there was now enough foliage to recreate the tree. A larger pot had helped but no pruning had taken place up to this point. Again, the tree had not put on any noticeable growth tips but the tree had still grown out of proportion. The styling at this stage was focused on rearranging the foliage and filling the gaps in the crown so that new foliage can fill its "bald spots". Where it was safe to do so, long unramified branches were cut off, but at this stage little was removed. I was grateful for the summer of 2018. An unusually (for the north of Great Britain) hot summer coupled with plenty of water and a robust feeding regime saw the tree making huge progress in the latter half of 2018. So much so that the tree was exhibited again – over three years since it was last shown. ▶▶▶



1 Having studied the tree on display something was troubling me. The first branch! Funnily enough, right at the start, Peter Warren had suggested that part of the first branch could be removed. Filled with trepidation, I hesitated and allowed the tree to stay as it was. Now I was about to take the plunge...

There are many variations in Itoigawa juniper foliage.



October 2018 at the Autumn Shohin Exhibition in Doncaster, UK. Yet another change of stand. I was so happy that it had recovered the way it had that the pot was changed to a Walsall Studio Ceramics one made by Mark Jones.



2 ... even so, I had to make sure I was doing the right thing.



3 The relief. The tree appears much more compact and the height has been reduced. It is now the closest to conventional shohin proportions it has ever been.

The moment of glory

The Gafu-ten exhibition is the high point in the calendar of shohin bonsai growers. A few years ago, the organisers created the World Shohin Photo Award. It is a way for overseas shohin lovers to submit photos of either individual trees or multi-tree displays for judging. This was my third year of entry and the first time I had entered an individual tree as opposed to a display. And the tree won the prize! ●



After gently reshaping the branches I am happy I have done the right thing. It is no longer hidden in my garden as it was just three years earlier.



The entry picture that I sent to the Gafu-ten, which earned it a prize in January 2019.



Water contains minerals which make it harder or softer depending on the concentration of calcium and magnesium. This influences the health and appearance of bonsai.

© MICHELE CORBIHAN

Water hardness

The hardness of water relates mainly to its calcium and magnesium content. These elements can be damaging to plants, and not only on an aesthetic level. But solutions do exist.

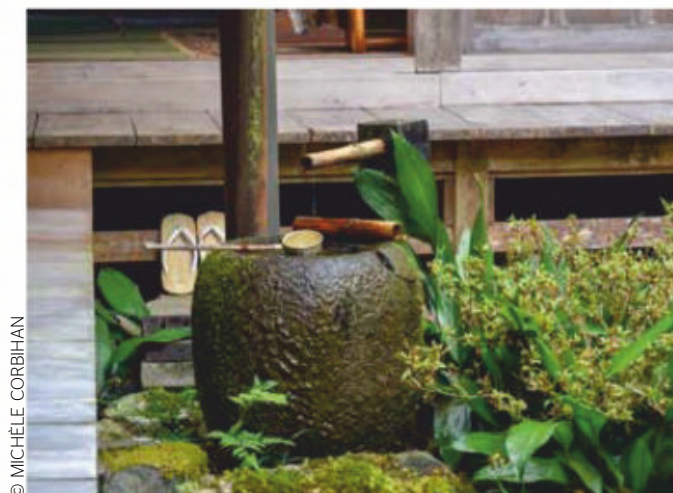
Text: Peter Warren

Hardness and mineral content are among the main parameters for the quality of water used for watering, besides its pH and the consequences of the latter for bonsai growth (see *Esprit Bonsai International* 97, pages 62–65). The more alkaline the water is, the more likely it is that nutrient absorption issues can occur and the health of the tree can suffer as a result. Water and soil that are too acidic can also cause similar issues. One of the causes of differing pH levels is the amount and type of mineral content in the water.

Lime deposits

It can be said that one reason Japan has had such success with growing bonsai is down to the purity of the water which is filtered as the melting snow and rain passes through the mountains into the aquifers. Water is a very good solvent, which means that it picks up and holds on to lots of chemical compounds that it passes through. Across the South East of England there are large chalk deposits underground and the largest aquifer is actually called the Chalk. Any water that passes through the ground and into the aquifer picks up large amounts of calcium carbonate on its way through, making it mineral-rich, or hard water.

Total hardness is a measurement of the cations in water and can be created by minerals with a positive charge. The primary components of hardness are calcium Ca^{2+} and magnesium Mg^{2+} ions. Dissolved iron Fe^{2+} and manganese Mn^{2+} also satisfy the definition of hardness, but typically make up only a very small fraction of total hardness. Hardness is not bad for our health, but considered more ►►►



© MICHÈLE CORBIHAN

Japan's water is very pure, which contributes to the success of bonsai cultivation.



© CÉLINE DHARDVILLE

The formation of a white deposit around the tap indicates the presence of lime, and therefore hard water.

Water in Japan

For the most part the tap water in Japan does not contain large amounts of calcium or magnesium, and is considered very soft, one of the reasons that Japanese tea never tastes as good outside of Japan, nor does Yorkshire tea taste the same outside of Yorkshire.

►►► of a nuisance as it causes a build-up of deposits on glass and kettles. The presence of some dissolved mineral material in drinking water is typically what gives the water its characteristic and pleasant taste, which is why Evian and Badoit are bottled and exported, but London tap water isn't.

Inside the pot

How does hardness affect our bonsai? There are some aesthetic considerations that are a pain to deal with but do not affect the health of the tree, such as the accumulation of deposits on the surface of pots. This can be seen as a white film that

Substrate CEC

One of the most important aspects of substrate composition is the consideration of CEC, or cation-exchange capacity. This is the ability of something within the soil mix that has the capacity to hold on to and then give up cations. Akadama for example, imported from Japan, has a very high CEC and is very good at holding on to cations; whereas pumice, readily available throughout the world, has a lower CEC. Our main interest in CEC is for the adsorption of nutrients, that is for the akadama to hold on to the chemicals in the fertiliser as they percolate down through the soil rather than washing straight out of the bottom of the pot. If the akadama is holding on to an excessively high amount of Ca^{2+} or Mg^{2+} cations due to standing

hard water within the pot, then the adsorption of other cations can become a little more difficult. In order to ensure that this doesn't happen, a well-aerated substrate and one which can allow good drainage of excess water is essential. A well aerated soil with organic fertiliser and moderately hard water results in a naturally well-balanced and pH-buffered soil where all cations are present in the most ideal ratio. Only in excessively hard-water areas will build-up of salt deposits and subsequent adsorption issues and pH levels become an issue that would require a substrate with a very low CEC that would allow very little adsorption of Ca^{2+} or Mg^{2+} , but then more frequent application of fertiliser to compensate for inability to hold on to it within the soil.



© ANTONIO RICCHIARI

Cation-exchange capacity (CEC) indicates the capacity for retaining chemical agents. Akadama has a high CEC.



© ANTONIO RICCHIARI

Pumice has a lower CEC than akadama.

results when hard water has evaporated, leaving behind the calcium or magnesium which accumulates and forms an unsightly layer around the feet or the pot lip. This can be easily removed with a stiff nylon brush and rubbing with a bit of diluted vinegar to get rid of stubborn stains. For very thick deposits, the use of a rubber sanding block with fine grit can help if not used in an aggressive way. Wire brushes should be avoided entirely. For many of us who appreciate aged pots, removing the patina and character of a pot is a crime, and so care must be taken with the removal of deposits; however, the best practice is to ensure that they do



After cleaning the pot with a nylon brush and diluted vinegar, spraying it with camellia oil will protect it.



Since calcium and magnesium deposits on leaves due to hard water act as a sunscreen, spraying hard water on leaves is to be avoided.

not build up in the first place. A light regular cleaning will protect the more valuable pots, finishing with a light spray of camellia oil or silicone lubricant which helps to prevent build-up.

Build-up of deposits on the pots is purely an aesthetic issue, but exactly the same process can occur inside the pot and also on the trunk and foliage. Excessive build-up of salts within the growing medium can lead to poor absorption of nutrients and then subsequently poor health; but realistically, given good bonsai practice, this is unlikely to happen during three to four years, which is the longest most soils are left before repotting. In extreme situations and for certain species occasional pH corrective measures should be taken, such as acidifying the water or the soil (see the article on pH in *Esprit Bonsai International* 97).

On the trunk

The biggest issue for hard water and build-up of deposits occurs on the trunk and the foliage, which is both aesthetically displeasing and can affect plant health. One of the most underestimated effects of the use of hard water is the effect of the deposits on foliage and their reduction of photosynthesis. An easy analogy to help with the visualisation of this issue is that of a visit to the beautiful Côte d'Azur in the middle

of summer. For us sun-starved Northern Europeans, factor-50 sunscreen is essential to stop the excessive absorption of UV rays which can cause burning and cancer. Sunscreen has chemical compounds which block or absorb the UV rays, stopping them from hitting the skin where they can cause problems.

Calcium and magnesium deposits on the foliage act as a sunscreen and reduce the amount of incident light on the foliage. Therefore the amount of photosynthesis is reduced, and likewise the amount of energy production. It may only be a reduction of 5%, but for those of us in areas where sunlight is scarce, every photon counts. One way to reduce the effect of this is never to mist or spray the foliage with hard water. For visible deposits of calcium on the trunk and nebari, use a diluted vinegar solution and a soft nylon brush. For pines and other species that develop desirable flaky bark, just use a vinegar spray and avoid the brushing.

Measuring hard water is difficult for amateurs, but you will know just how hard your water is from the residue on your taps, shower or by contacting your water company. It is possible to measure the TDS or total dissolved solids of water, which is a test of electrical conductivity, but not hardness. It gives you an idea of how many ions are in the water but not exactly what they are. ►►►

Reverse osmosis

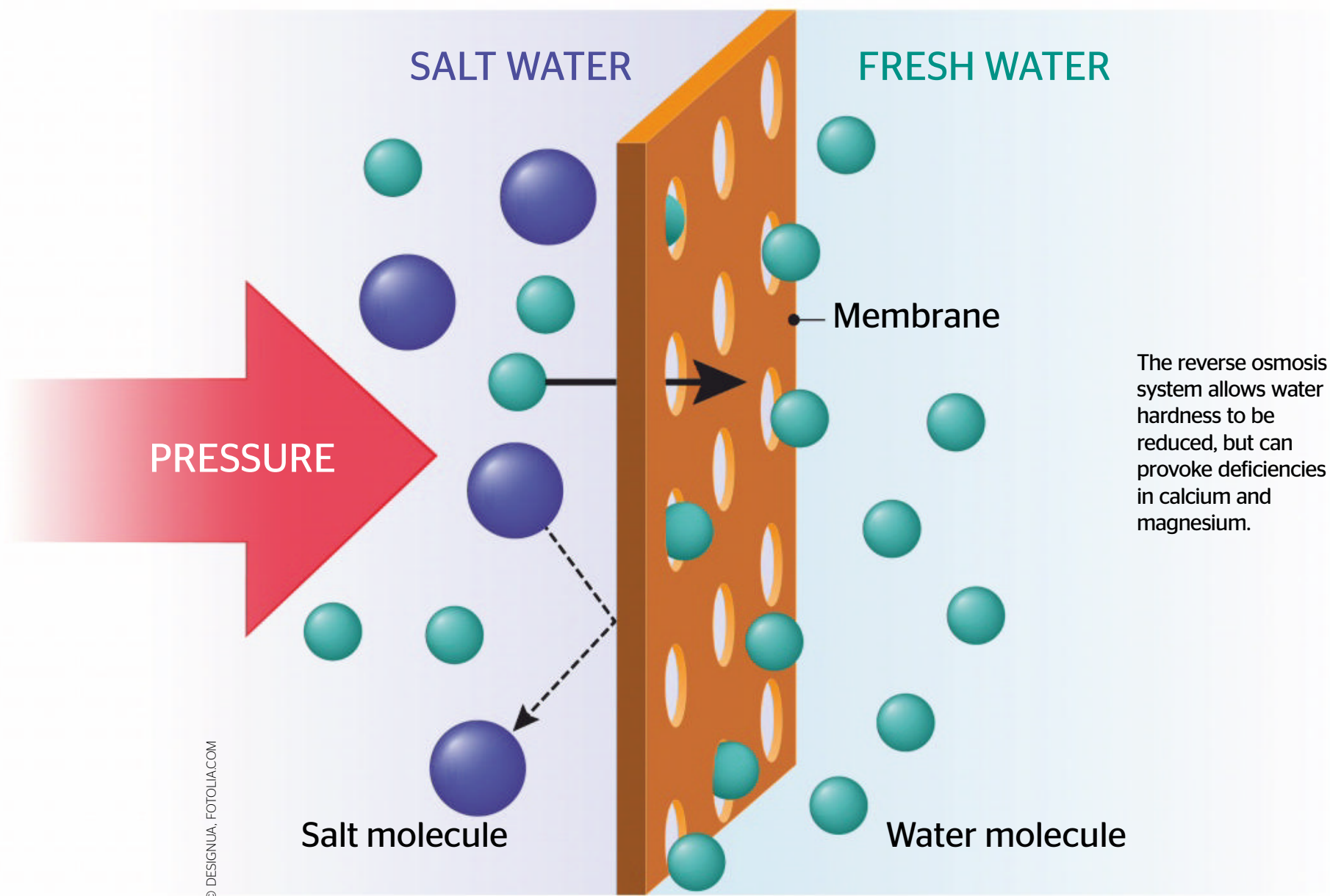
Avoiding excessive hard water can be a very costly process if water purification is used. Water softeners are promoted in areas that suffer from hard water and that will reduce the amount of Ca^{2+} or Mg^{2+} in the water, which is beneficial for household usage such as showering, laundry and cooking. Most water softening procedures however require large quantities of sodium, which is exchanged for the calcium and magnesium, resulting in softer water that is high in sodium, which is even more dangerous for plants. The best way to remove excessive hardness in water for horticultural purposes is to use a reverse osmosis system; however, this can be a time-consuming and wasteful process as well as potentially causing calcium and magnesium deficiencies.

A reverse osmosis system uses a variety of filters and processes to produce pure water without any contaminants or minerals in it. The most

A reverse osmosis system uses a variety of filters and processes to produce pure water without any contaminants or minerals in it.

complex systems can have six or seven stages to produce the purest water, although for most horticultural uses two or three stages would be sufficient, and there are some specifically for the purpose that can be found in hydroponics stores. They are incredibly wasteful, however, with anything up to 60% of the water input going to waste, so only 40 litres of usable water is produced per 100 litres, and the speed at which this is generated is at 20 litres per hour for the most basic system.

REVERSE OSMOSIS





A reverse osmosis system uses between two and seven filters. Although they are effective, such systems are time-consuming and wasteful.

Rainwater

For the majority of enthusiasts, the best way to overcome a serious hard-water issue is the collection and use of rainwater in large quantities, or taking preventative steps such as regular pot cleaning, occasional acidification of the soil for acid-loving species, avoiding spraying the foliage, and finding the cultivation techniques and soil mixture specific to your own environment. Relatively hard water is not impossible to use and grow bonsai with success, but in order to reach the highest possible level and to maximise the potential, then steps can be taken to overcome any issues that can arise with harder water. ●

The best way to overcome a serious hard water issue is the collection and use of rainwater in large quantities, or taking preventative steps.

Collecting rainwater to use for watering plants remains the best solution.





This venerable satsuki is probably about 80 years old. It has an impressive nebari and the trunk features a very old shari. Despite its advanced years its foliage growth is still vigorous. It is in full bloom in June and one must remove the flowers without delay. Height: 75 cm (29½ in.)



Bonsai and women

Flowering trees are very popular with Japanese girls and women. The accepted idea is that bonsai is carried out principally by men and ikebana by women. Some bonsai artists such as Yamada or Kaori are trying to encourage more women to practice bonsai with the help of trees with feminine appeal – those with flowers, berries, other colours, or with slender, elegant trunks.



The back view of the tree.

Pruning azaleas in flower

Azaleas in flower are magnificent, but the flowers must be removed before they die so as not to exhaust the plant. Appropriate pruning is called for – shown here on an 'Osakazuki' variety.

Author: BonsaiTranslations

In Japan, the most common azalea is the 'Osakazuki' variety, which flowers at the beginning of June. The plant seen here was collected from an old garden on Kyushu Island. A bonsai seller from Osaki sold it to a member of my local club about fifty years ago. I took over its upkeep seven years ago, and every year, my entire family enjoys its wonderful flowers. However, at the height of its flowering, one must prune the tree and remove the flowers.



Enjoying the flowers as a family! This bonsai is my eldest daughter's favourite. Every year, she helps me remove the flowers before pruning.

Pruning and flowers

When cultivating an azalea, we must ask ourselves the following question: this year, do I want to make the trunk thicker or to produce flowers? The answer determines when to prune the tree.

In the years the trunk is growing, one prunes before the flowers open, so that the tree's energy is concentrated on the trunk, which will thicken more rapidly. On the other hand if one wants to enjoy the flowers, one should prune when the tree is at the height of its flowering and before the flowers fade. It is better to prune very old trees before they come into flower, in order to preserve them. However, one must know how to enjoy the flowers from time to time!

It is very sad to have to remove the flowers when they are so beautiful, but it has to be done. If the flowers are left too long, the tree uses considerable energy to produce seeds. ►►►

A family art?

Bonsai should be a family affair. I have too often met people who have inherited bonsai trees that they lose the year after they lose a parent through lack of interest or knowledge. Children's education is not a subject often associated with bonsai. In Japan, bonsai trees were traditionally valuable assets. Children knew they must not play near the trees so as not to break them and were often scolded for doing so. The baby-boomer generation has resulted in less interest being shown in this hobby, which is losing a great many adherents. I prefer an inclusive approach. Some tasks such as this one are perfectly suitable for children.



If your children show an interest in bonsai, encourage them!

A popular variety

When visiting the temples in Japan, at the beginning of June one can admire banks of pink flowers. Most of the flowers are the azalea variety *Rhododendron indicum* 'Osakazuki', which is the most popular and widespread here. This native species is called satsuki in Japan and used to grow on the banks of rivers and mountain streams.

The variety is sought after for its bright pink flowers which contrast well with the green of the foliage and grey of garden rocks.

Many old Japanese gardens have enormous specimens. With the rapid growth of Japanese economy after the Second World War, many of these specimens were collected from the temples and ancient gardens and distributed throughout the country by bonsai merchants. The variety's name 'Osakazuki' -大盃- bears no relation to Osaka, the town. The first *kanji* (character) 大 means 'large' and the second 盃 means 'cup', as the shape of the flower is very similar to that of the traditional sake cup.

Note a difference in the script: the variety is written as Oosakazuki in Japan, but everywhere else it seems to be written as Osakazuki.



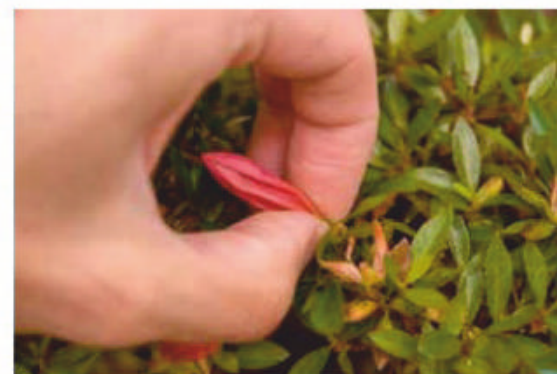
To remove a flower ...



... simply pinch at the base of the petals ...



... making sure you also take the ovary with it.



It is important to remove the flowers before they open ...



... as well as the pistil and ovary of flowers that have dropped.

Analysing the branches

An extremely old shari circles the trunk and ends three-quarters of the way up the tree. The two branches above the shari are very fragile, so the pruning must be adapted to protect them. Note how the bark is covering the shari, which shows that, despite the dead section, the tree has continued to grow.



Above the shari, a branch that has been dead for some years.



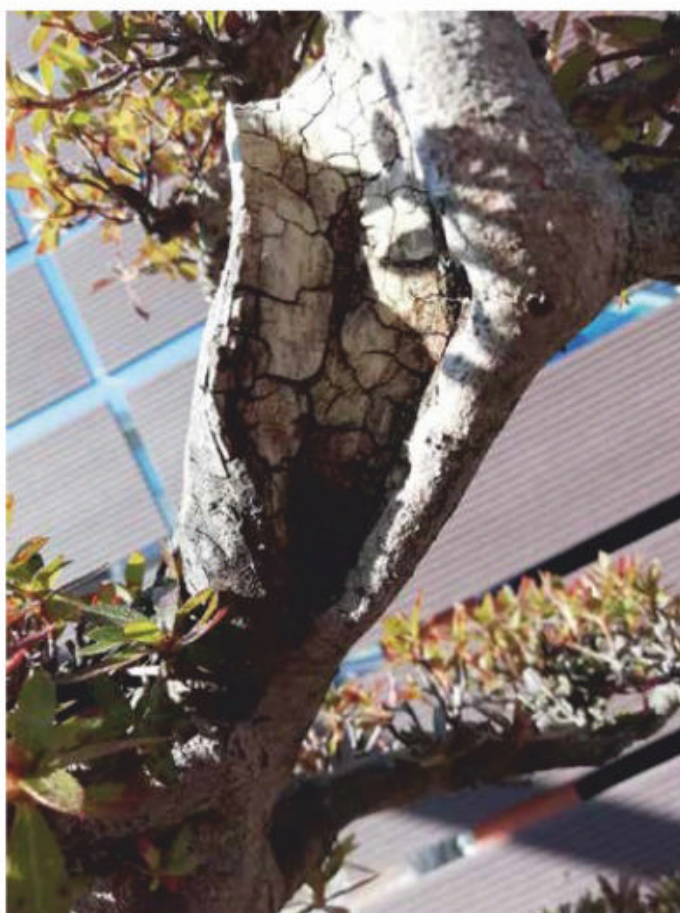
All the flowers have been removed.

Shari and jin

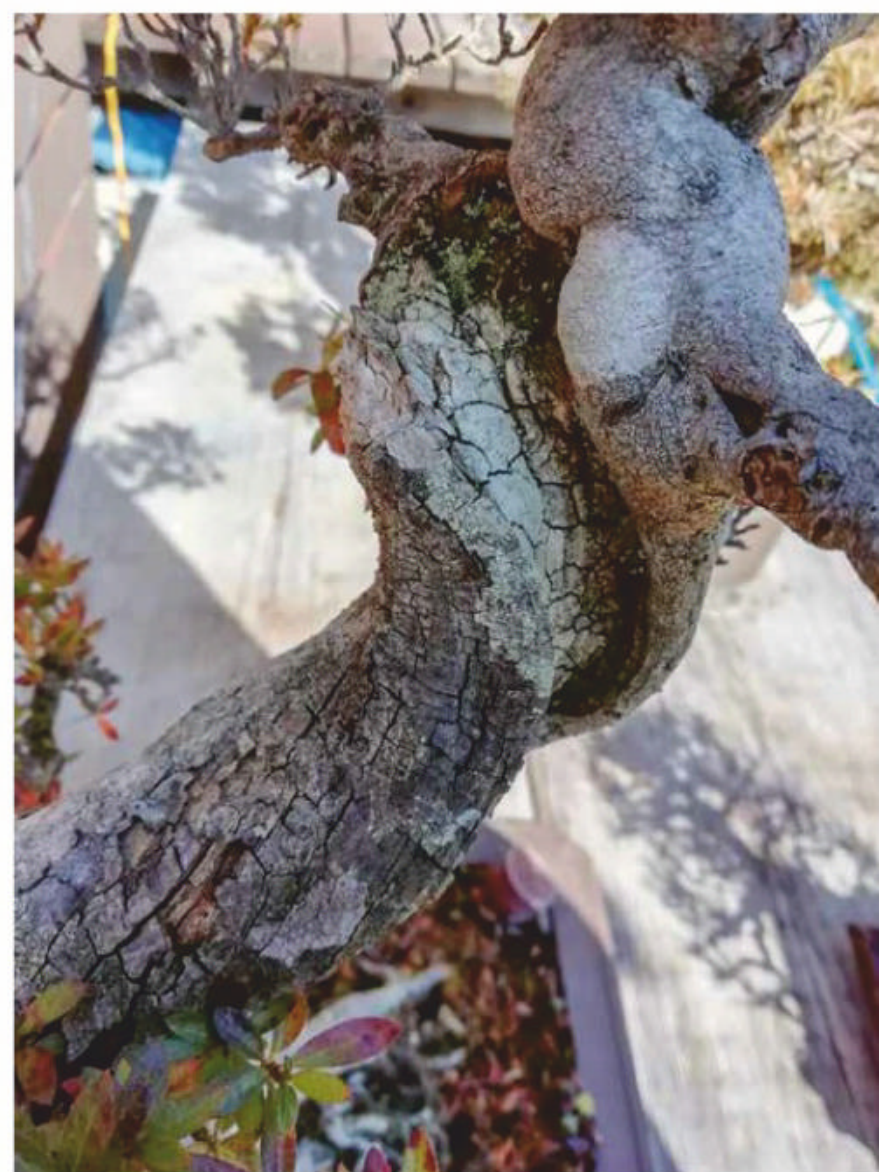
Dead wood on azaleas is not normally very popular, for the simple reason that its soft wood does not guarantee the durability of dead wood. It is difficult to keep an azalea with dead wood healthy.



The living vein is swollen and seems to want to cover the scar. This is an excellent sign. The tree is still very vigorous.

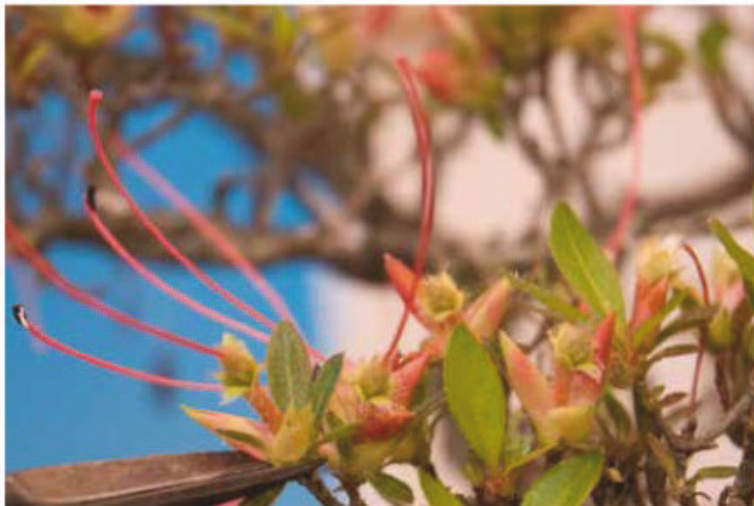


In winter one treats dead wood with calcium polysulphide (lime sulphur).

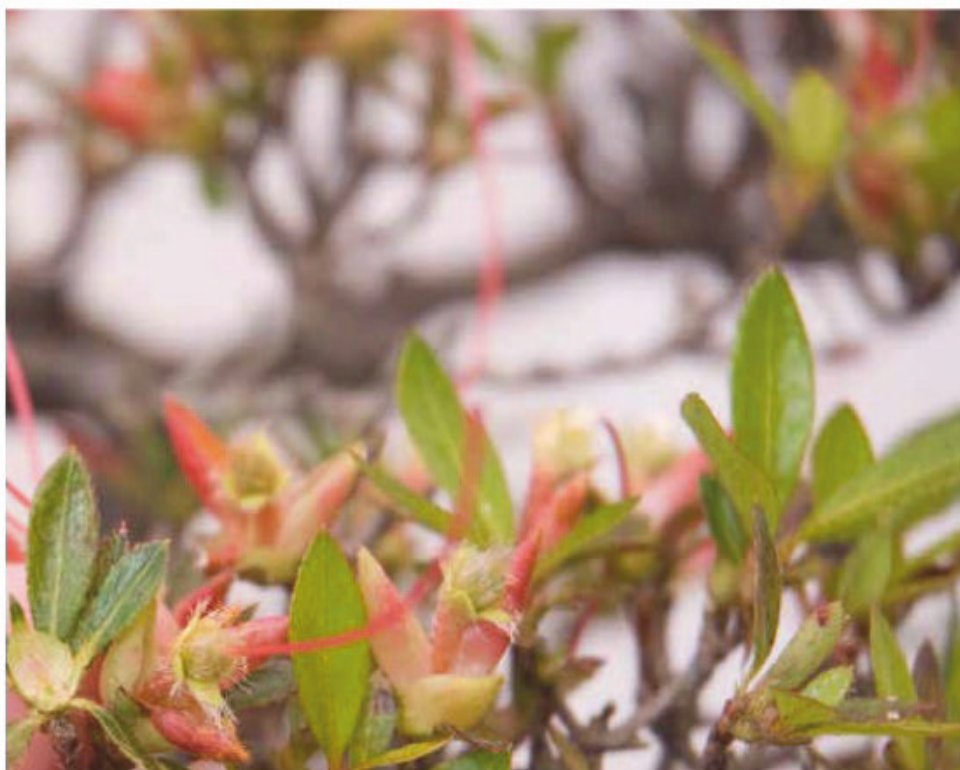


Seen from above: the shari makes its way up the old sinuous trunk. The small upper branch on the left right on the end of the dead wood, may well die in the years to come. Therefore the tree must be rebalanced with a new branch at that place.

A little cleaning



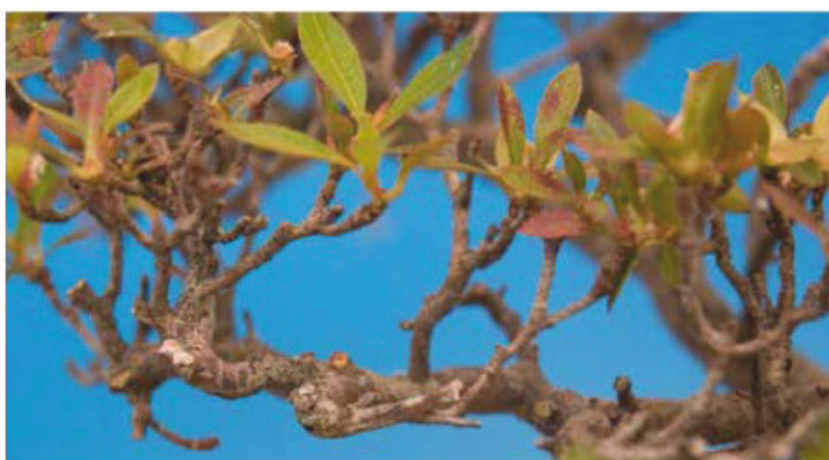
① When the flowers have been removed, if necessary, one must cut the ovaries away with scissors.



② Removing an ovary containing future seeds.



③ It is important to prune away all the dead branches.



④ Leaving the dead wood is an invitation to mould, parasites and disease.



⑤ This bit of dead wood is useless.



⑥ It is cut away.



⑦ The branch is now neater.

Two pruning techniques

There are two pruning techniques for azaleas. The first is called “two buds and two leaves.” This method is used to allow a flower-producing tree to continue growing and it consists of cutting away all the leaves of the previous year and leaving only two new leaves per branch. However, our tree is already fully constructed and we do not want

it to get bigger, which brings us to the second technique. In this case, we must concentrate less on each branch and more on the shape of the pad we wish to keep. We are going to create space to let in the light, and cut back the surplus foliage protruding from the shape. Therefore, many new shoots must be cut, although they will grow again in summer.

Giving light to the foliage

Before pruning, the foliage pad seems perfect. But if it stays like this at the beginning of summer, the sun will not penetrate into the interior as the branches will lengthen and fill out, which is not desirable. We want to keep all the energy at the base of the branch.

The crown of the tree is often the most vigorous. However, because of the shari, the upper part of this azalea, is weaker. In fact, the top part of an old azalea is often weaker than the base. So one has to be gentle when pruning the crown



This pad looks perfect.



On closer inspection, it needs more light.



After pruning. Old leaves are still present. We can prune them next, or leave them until autumn when they will fall naturally.

We are going to create space to let in the light.



As to the crown, the branches protruding from the shape are cut at the base.



Next, we give light by removing excess twigs to allow the sunshine in.

Adjusting the branches

It is important to remove all the shoots that are not part of the tree's shape and to adjust the length of the branches.

When the tree is young, it is possible to prune much more severely. In this case, the branches are already fully grown. It is now simply a matter of maintenance procedure.

As azalea wood is soft, it is important to use cut paste to cover the wounds. ▶▶▶

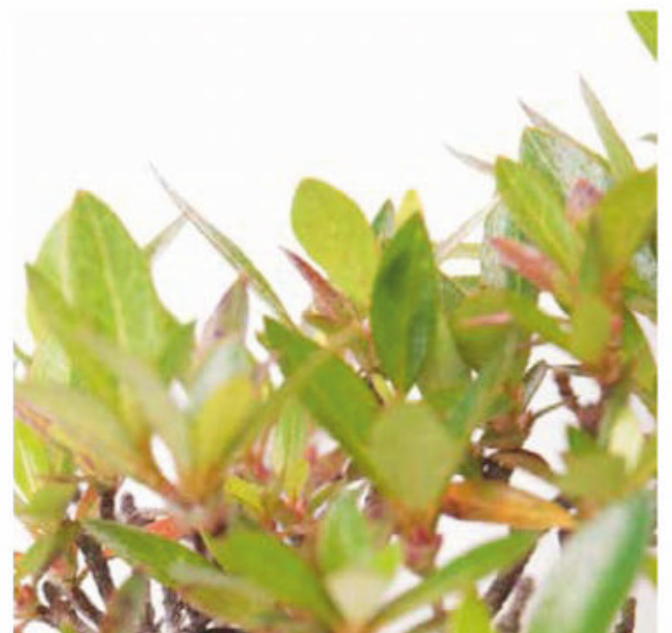


Here and there the branches are overlong. In order to prevent their growing, the tips of several branches are cut, which will promote back budding.



Growth hormones

Growth hormones are emitted at the extremities of the branches. Interior growth is stimulated by pruning the branch tips.





Typically, branches that grow near the base, under the pads or in places that protrude from the design must be pruned.



Every year there are new shoots at this spot.

A light prune

In most cases, it is advisable to prune azaleas much more severely than shown here. And it would have been if I had pruned the tree at the beginning of May. With bonsai there are always basic rules, which must also be adapted to suit the tree. Over the years, one comes to understand better the rhythm and the condition of our trees. ●

*Adapt the pruning
according to the
condition and age
of your trees.*



After the work. Height: 72 cm (28 $\frac{3}{8}$ in.).
The tree is ready for a very hot summer.

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This wonderful Slovenian mugo pine by Nik Rozman, a young bonsai artist, has already acquired a perfect track record in European exhibitions. February 2019: Düsseldorf Bonsai Museum prize at the 'Best of' 20 years Trophy in Genk, Belgium.

A Slovenian pine's **journey**



A beautiful pine collected in 2010 has been making it to the podiums of Europe's top exhibitions ever since its first outings. It is the product of work by a talented young Slovenian artist.

Author: Nik Rozman

The story of this mountain pine, *Pinus mugo* – a prizewinner at the European Bonsai-San Show 2018 and then at the 'Best of' 20 years Trophy in Genk, Belgium, in February 2019 – began around a hundred years ago in the mountains when a small seed sprouted roots. The small seedling grew strong and over the years got hammered by the forces of nature. Until one day in 2010 a young kid crossed its path. That boy was me at the age of 18. Having already been hooked on the wonderful art of bonsai for a few years, I was wandering in nature looking for some nice material out of which I would be able to make a nice bonsai one day.

Fragile deadwood

When I first laid my eyes upon the pine I saw the wonderful old and fragile deadwood going all the way along the trunk. The trunk itself did not possess much movement, except for the upper part, but that was convincing enough for me to decide to attempt collecting the tree. During the collecting process I noticed there was a nice compact root ball which



1 The tree was collected in the Slovenian Alps in winter 2010. Nik Rozman was only 18 years old at the time and had already fallen in love with bonsai.



2 Measuring 5 metres (16 feet) in length, the crescent-shaped root gives an indication of the tree's size in the past. It must be cut back.



3 The deadwood is this pine's main asset.



4 Tired and happy with the catch of the day, Nik Rozman not giving much attention to the rain.

would be very helpful and ensure greater survival chances. Alongside the finer roots there was another one, not much bigger, but its shape made it apparent that it had once been much bigger and sometime in the past the majority of it had already rotted away. Also it was almost 5 metres (16 feet) long which indicated that the whole tree used to be much bigger. Having secured the majority of the roots I could cut the long one without worry. ▶▶▶

▶▶▶ And the pine was out. After returning home I immediately began planting it into a temporary container which was a bit bigger than would be necessary due to the fragile base of the tree – the container also had to support the trunk. For the soil mix I used pumice with a part of baked loam which I use for all my collected yamadori still today.



5 2010. The tree is happily planted in its first container in a mixture of pumice, kiryu and akadama. It must have been under 40 cm (16 in.) tall at this stage.



6 A few months later, the tree is looking very healthy. Fortunately it has survived!

The first repotting

Obviously the tree survived and after two years it was strong enough for the first step which was repotting. Before doing any work on the crown I repot all my collected trees to remove all of the old soil and to reveal any hidden parts of the trunk, including the nebari which is in most cases still under the soil. So by repotting the pine I planted it into a smaller pot and lifted it up somewhere close to the future position.



2012. After first repotting in a smaller pot and with adjusted angle.

Natural deadwood

All the deadwood on the trunk is natural and no work was done to it. The only deadwood made by Nik Rozman is the long jin on the left, which points downwards from within the crown.



A 2013. The tree is vigorous enough to withstand initial styling. It will be in the literati style.



B After the first styling. The structure is set and the planting angle is slightly adjusted.

Literati style

A year later, in 2013, it was finally time to do the first styling. Since collecting this tree, I always knew I would go for a literati bonsai with a small foliage mass, drawing more attention to the natural deadwood. Therefore a few long branches were cut back, making it possible to make a few more minor deadwood features including the jin flowing from the crown towards the floor. What was left of the foliage was wired and nicely compacted. So, the

bone structure was set, and now the tree needed to grow strong and mature until it would be ready for the next step. Since the angle of the trunk was again slightly altered during the first styling, I repotted the pine again in 2015, disturbing the root ball as little as possible and planting it into a temporary bonsai pot which was still way too big. The same year the lowest branch on the left was also removed since the crown was getting too big for my idea of the future design. ▶▶▶



C 2015. The tree is planted in a temporary bonsai pot that is slightly too large, so as not to disturb the roots too much. Notice the bunch of wires holding the tree in position. It was still quite unstable at this point.



D The crown was getting too big for Nik's design, so he cut off the low branch on the left.

Refining the styling

By 2017 the tree had been unwired for quite a while and had developed nicely. It was time for the second and detailed styling. All the branches were wired including the smaller ones, but no bigger wire was necessary any more. After the work I noticed that the tree really had potential to make it to the big exhibitions across Europe. But first all it needed was a nice pot to go with the whole design. Finding the right one proved more difficult than you might think.



The crown in 2017 without any wire on it.



After the second styling, more detailed than the first one.



The pot is by British potter John Pitt. Plant and pot united: it's a perfect match.

The final pot

For a long time I thought about what to use. Do I use something elegant, a more rugged pot, or maybe even a stone? Not being able to make up my mind, the answer came of its own accord when I walked by the trading stand of one of Europe's finest potters, John Pitt, and saw one of his round pots. Immediately I knew that this was the one.

Second styling: All the branches were wired including the smaller ones, but no bigger wire was necessary any more.

So in spring of 2018 the big day came when the pine, which had been brought from the mountains eight years ago, would get its final bonsai pot and would become complete, so to speak.

The first prizes

For its debut exhibition I decided to bring it to our local 8th International Bonsai Exhibition which is organised every two years by the Slovenian Bonsai Club (which I am also the president of). My tree got a lot of attention there and sure enough it was judged the best conifer bonsai of the show! After a rest during the summer I thought it was time to take it to the big stage. I took the pine to what is one of the most prestigious exhibitions in Europe at the moment: European Bonsai-San Show in Saulieu, France. And to my surprise it was awarded Best of Show (jointly with three other trees). ●



Nik Rozman can be proud of his mugo pine's achievements.



October 2018, the mugo pine was awarded Best of Show at the European Bonsai-San exhibition in Saulieu, France, jointly with three other trees. Height: 85 cm (33 in.). Pot by John Pitt.

Cultivation

Family: *Pinaceae*

Genus: *Pinus*

Species: *Pinus mugo*

Common name: Mountain pine

Substrate: Pumice, kiryu and akadama in a 60-15-25 ratio

Cleaning: Cleaning of the old needles is done once every two years, leaving only one year's worth of growth. Timing is not important.

Exposure: Full sun

Watering: It prefers a limited amount of water, and crown misting is preferable if possible. Just like the conditions where they grow in the mountains.

Fertilisation: Solid organic fertiliser once a month, starting in March and continuing through to October. In the years in which I plan to exhibit the tree I hold off from applying fertiliser until June - until the new growth has stopped growing.



There are cracks along the full length of the deadwood, developed without human intervention.



Working from a small former garage not far from Fribourg, German potter Claudia Wagner aims to make every pot she creates unique. This mini pot is her signature.

Claudia Wagner

“No pot is like another”

Claudia Wagner’s eyes sparkle when she talks about her work as a potter. The German ceramicist works hard on glazes to obtain a unique finish on her oval or rectangular pots.

Text: Xavier Dreux.
Photos: Claudia Wagner





Claudia Wagner's pots are colourful, mainly rectangular, and come in all sizes up to 50 x 50 cm (19¾ x 19¾ in.).



Lovers of red will be charmed by this pretty pot. Dimensions: 11 x 8,5 x 3,5 cm (4¼ x 3⅜ x 1⅝ in.).



Claudia's husband, Thomas, works with ash glazes. A superb example is shown here on an oval pot with carved feet. Dimensions 43 x 32 x 6,5 cm (17 x 12⅝ x 2½ in.).

Esprit Bonsai International: What was your initial contact with ceramics?

Claudia Wagner: In 2008 I took a pottery course and I tried out many different techniques. To begin with, I made anything from jewellery to fruit bowls, and then went on to bonsai pots. It was my husband Thomas who motivated me because he wanted a pot for one of his bonsai trees and I have been making them ever since. I was fascinated and I am still taken by all the possibilities that clay has to offer. These days I focus on bonsai pots and suibans for suiseki.

Pottery is still a hobby for me. I am a hospital nurse and between my work and my family life, there is not much time left over to work as a potter.

Nevertheless, it gives me so much pleasure to imagine and create bonsai pots and I hope it continues for a long time.

E. B. I.: What work methods do you use today?

C. W.: I only work by hand. I don't use either a wheel or a mould. I particularly like making oval or rectangular bonsai pots. All the knowledge I have acquired over the years is self-taught. Thomas and I do a lot of research on glazes in order to find unique

finishes. None of my pots look alike. Each is a unique work.

I set up my workshop in a small garage, where I have my kiln which I can fire at 1250° C, the minimum temperature required to make pots frost-resistant.

E. B. I.: How has your work as a potter evolved?

C. W.: When I look at my first pots, I can only smile – so many mistakes and breakages and glazing problems – but the evolution has been positive and over time, my

pots have improved, especially the shapes and the glazes. The evolution is ongoing. I still love to try out new techniques and continue learning and experimenting. This is why pottery is so marvellous and exciting.

E. B. I.: What do you like most about pottery?

C. W.: There is so much potential in raw clay. I love the actual material and handling it. The way in which clay responds during the entire process brings fresh ►►►



Even if Claudia particularly likes making rectangular and oval pots she also makes round slab pots. Dimensions: 25 x 7 cm (9¾ x 2⅜ in.).



The potter shapes her pots by hand without wheel or mould.

▶▶▶ possibilities at each step. It is fascinating to watch how clay behaves and develops while work on it. The diversity of its appearance during the manufacturing process means using different techniques to take advantage of these qualities that are developed by the changing states of the material as work progresses.

E. B. I.: What do you like least about it?

C. W.: Certain stages when working with clay are less fascinating and attractive than others; I cannot pretend otherwise. But these are a part of the process. For example, preparing the clay and kneading it before using it takes a lot of time and energy. And of course, I dislike loss, failures or setbacks. But this is an inevitable part of the learning process in a discipline such as ceramics.

E. B. I.: How do you manage your orders for custom-made pots?

C. W.: I receive many orders for custom-made pots. There are a few that



Glazed oval pot. Dimensions: 34 x 26 x 5 cm
(13 1/8 x 10 1/4 x 2 1/4 in.).

A mirror activity

Claudia Wagner shares part of her work as a potter with her husband Thomas, who in turn shares his work as a bonsaist with his wife. Thomas glazes some of the pots Claudia has made while she helps in the care of her husband's trees. This reciprocity is very helpful to Claudia in her conception of bonsai pots and particularly in the choice of glazes. "My husband and I have bonsai trees, but it is more his hobby than mine, which of course, is focused on pottery," she explained.



Juniperus sabina in a pot by Claudia Wagner, who also helps her husband Thomas in the care of his trees.



A fine example of an unglazed rectangular pot. Dimensions: 45 x 33 x 10 cm (17¾ x 13 x 4 in.).



Glazed rectangular pot. Dimensions: 26 x 20 x 6,5 cm (10¼ x 7¾ x 2¼ in.).



Contact

Claudia Wagner

Email: info@claudi-schalen.de

www.claudi-schalen.de

I can't fulfil, because unfortunately, like many potters, I am limited by the size of my kiln and my pots can't be larger than 50 x 50 cm. Most of my bonsai friends know exactly what they need, and many clients come to me with their trees so that we can then choose exactly the right container. Of course, I like to take advantage of my experience in the choice of pot, but in the end, each person must choose their bon-

sai pot themselves. After all, the bonsai will have to live with and enjoy their tree in its pot for a long time.

E. B. I.: What are your sources of inspiration?

C. W.: I don't really have definite sources of inspiration. Above all I want my pottery to be attractive and remain a source of pleasure. I try to imagine a pot a few days

before making it and whether or not it will be glazed. A client's specific requirements also give me direction and inspire me to try out new ways.

That said, I often look at the pictures of old Japanese pots in the book by Kunio Kobayashi, and I read many books on the art of Japanese pottery. But I like to allow myself some freedom when thinking up and making my pots. This year will see a dream come true. We are going to Japan at last to admire and meditate on the art and culture of Japanese bonsai and its bonsai pots.

E. B. I.: Do you have a favourite among your pots?

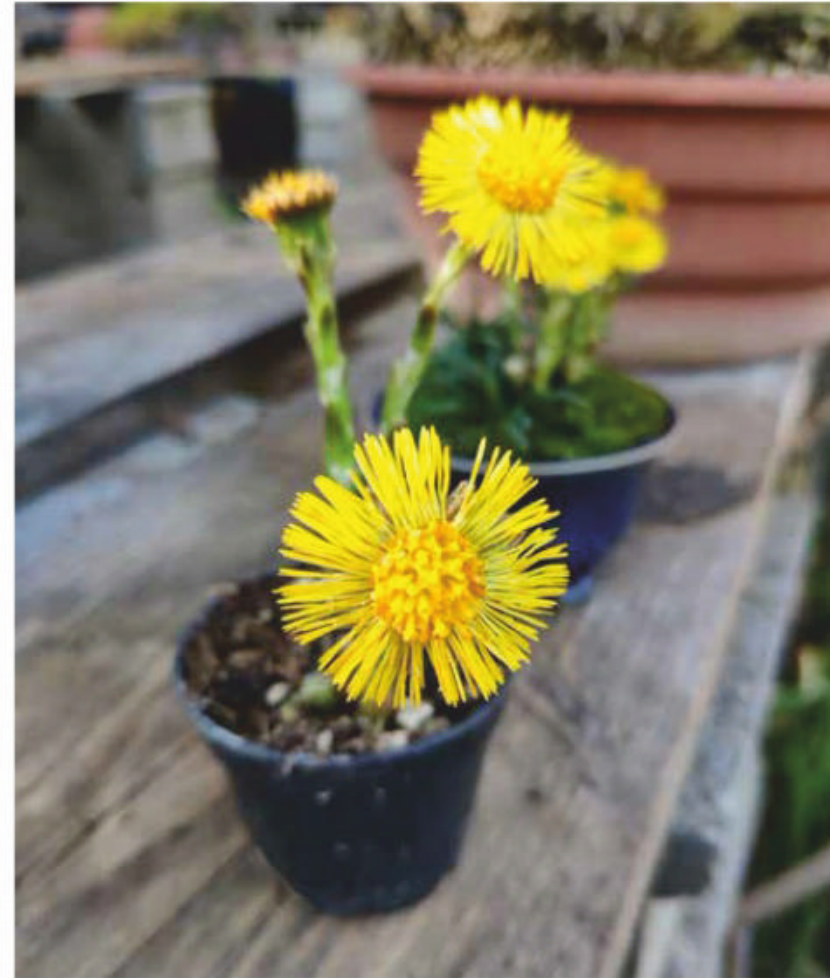
C. W.: All my bonsai pots are my little treasures. Each one was made with much passion and love. ●



Brown-glazed pot. Dimensions: 44 x 35 x 9,5 cm (17¼ x 13¾ x 3¾ in.).



A little shitakusa, with coltsfoot flowers for the end of winter: a perfect bonsai companion plant to be shown at an exhibition such as the Trophy in Genk, in Belgium.



Coltsfoot belongs to the *Asteraceae* family with a characteristically daisy-shaped flower.

Coltsfoot defies winter

To brighten up winter, coltsfoot adds a little sunshine with its pretty yellow meadow flowers. It can be paired easily with dwarf ophiopogon or with the little *Centaurea* (knapweed).

Author: Xavier Dreux

Few flowers in our gardens or in the countryside can boast of being early bloomers. Coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*) opens its first flowers in early February. Its yellow flowers, which look like dandelions, continue to bloom successively for several months.

Coltsfoot is a pioneer, rhizomatous plant that likes to grow in sunny or semi-shady spots in relatively rich and somewhat calcareous clay soils. One finds it on roadsides, in wastelands or in damp, freshly tilled ground. This low-growing annual plant is an adventitious perennial and can live for many years

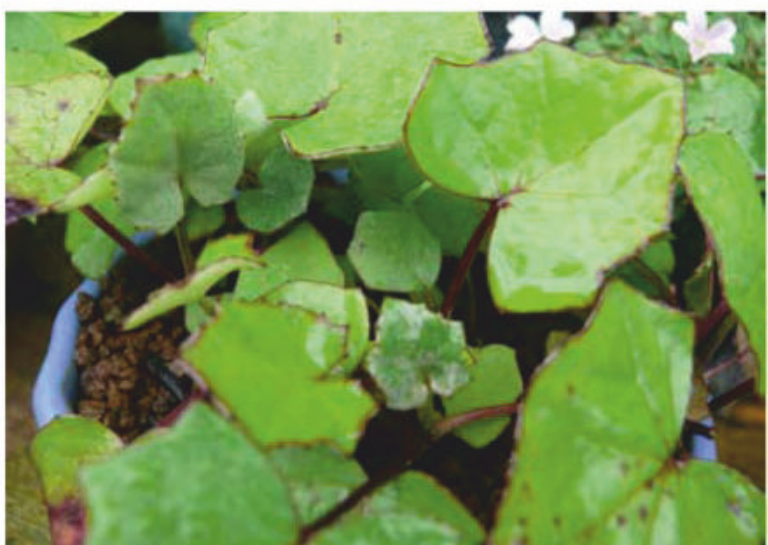
Growing straight up from the ground, the stems, topped by a yellow capitulum, can measure up to 20 centimetres (8 inches) high. When it has finished flowering, the plant puts out beautiful, light-green leaves of different sizes, which can grow to about 15 centimetres (6 inches) in diameter. A white down covers the backs of the leaves which are hexagonal, almost round, and serrated. It is a deciduous plant and the leaves disappear in autumn.

Propagation is from seed or rhizome division.

It is a medicinal plant, and is used to relieve coughs as indicated by its Latin name *Tussilago* (*tussis* meaning cough),



The stems grow straight out from the ground.



Coltsfoot has pretty leaves that are also interesting, as much by their shape and downy undersides as by their colour – green, edged with red.

and it also has emollient, astringent and soothing properties. The flowers and the leaves are edible but care must be taken: The plant is part of the Asteraceae family and contains an alkaloid that is toxic to the liver.

Kusamono and accent plants

Coltsfoot's main appeal is that it flowers at the end of winter, and is a boon for those exhibitions held early in the year. However, the leaves are also interesting and can add an almost exotic touch to a summer composition.

The leaves are naturally large, but when grown in a pot, can easily be made smaller by regularly removing overlong leaves throughout the season.

Coltsfoot roots are very active and in a pot will rapidly become densely tangled. Don't hesitate to prune the roots and to regularly divide the plant to keep it healthy.

Repotting it in pure akadama or adding a little rough sand is appropriate. However, one must keep the substrate fresh, even wet, which is not always easy if the substrate drains too well.



Coltsfoot flowers in spring combined with a small *Centaurea*.

Possible confusion

In photos of Kokufu-Ten exhibitions, one can often see small yellow flowers as accent plants blooming near top quality bonsai. These are not coltsfoot, but *Adonis amurensis*, which also flower very early in the season. This species belongs to the ranunculaceae family and has fine, fern-like foliage. It was when I was searching for *Adonis amurensis* that I came across coltsfoot, a local field plant, and at the same time, discovered Ian Young (bonsaieejit.com).



Even if the coltsfoot flower can be mistaken for that of *Adonis amurensis*, the leaves are very different.



Coltsfoot roots develop a powerful rhizome that in nature can grow up to 2 metres (6½ feet) long.

Experimenting in order to progress

Many coltsfoot kusamono have flourished in my garden for some years. I have always favoured fairly large pots so that the plant can grow fully and propagate. This year I tried putting a plant into a smaller pot to create an end-of-winter shita-kusa. As a contrast to the yellow flowers, I chose a ceramic pot with a violet blue glaze, made by the potter Sami Amdouni from Marseille. In such a small pot, one has to keep constant watch on root behaviour. The roots of its companion, a green dwarf ophiopogon, develop just as fast. The experiment will tell us if this type of composition in a small pot is viable in the long term. ●



Hosen-in

A National treasure pine

In the gardens of the Hosen-in temple, near Kyoto, one can admire a listed ancient white pine in a delightful, evolving garden. The tree is weak but benefits from all Japan's traditional methods of protection.

Author: BonsaiTranslations



The garden of the Hosen-in temple, north of Kyoto, is home to a white pine, listed as a National treasure. One can glimpse the pine from the garden gate.

Between nature and town

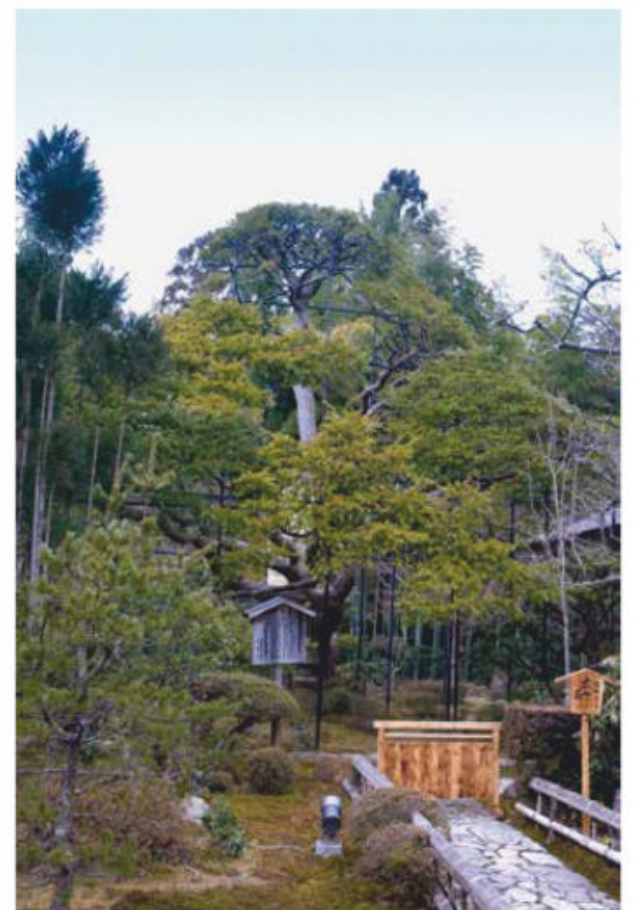
The town of Kyoto is in a hollow surrounded by mountains to the north, east and west. The separation between nature and town is often marked by temples and gardens, before the wildness of nature. The Ohara region, north of Kyoto is made up of many temples of which Hosen-in is one.

When I was a child in Canada in the 1980s, my mother had just one book on bonsai, written by a French writer, Rémy Samson. I remember reading a passage in the book about a very old white pine in the Kyoto region. The memory remained buried in my unconscious until recently, when it mysteriously resurfaced and made me think that now I live in Japan I must do my best to find that tree.

Searching on the Internet, I found three pine trees in Kyoto that were over 600 years old. One of them, at the Hosen-in temple, well north of the town of Kyoto, was said to be over 700 years old. Not knowing quite what to expect, I set off to find the tree that was hidden away in the small garden of a temple.

Hosen-in is located in Ohara village in the Sakyo district and can be reached by bus from the Kyoto station. It is a temple complex situated high up at the foot of a mountain, and from the village bus station, it is about a ten-minute walk to get there. The Hosen-in temple is the last at the end of the road and is hidden away in a natural setting that has been landscaped for over a thousand years.

As I arrived at the entrance to Hosen-in, I caught sight of the object of my research



When entering the garden, one can only see the right side of the *Pinus pentaphylla*, which seems to be in good health, but as one gets closer, different colours appear in the foliage and certain areas are pale, while others are darker.

– my legendary white pine was just a few steps from me. Holding my breath, I entered the garden.

Over 700 years old

The white pine is here in all its glory. It is listed national treasure from Kyoto. The sign under the tree states 700 years, but the sign itself seems pretty ancient, and I imagine that the tree is very much older.

The monk in the garden told me that three years ago, the tree became weak and that the white part died very recently. I am actually disappointed that the dead ►►►



The white part of the weakened tree died recently.



A complex support system. It is almost impossible for a pine to grow into this shape without support for its branches. The shape is a man-made creation – an ancient example of interaction between human and tree.

Pines in Kyoto that are listed as national treasures

There are three renowned pines in the Kyoto region. The first, called *Rikushunomatsu* (boat on land) can be found at the Kinkakuji temple and is over 600 years old. The second, also 600 years old, is called *Ryuyunomatsu* (gliding dragon), and the third, is this 700-year-old pine in the garden of Hosen-in.



A drawing showing the tree's architecture as it was in the past.

▶▶▶ wood has not been better preserved. The old branches have been cut flush to the trunk. No doubt this was done so that the wounds would heal over with the *makikomu* (wound cover) technique. We will see in twenty years' time if that was the right decision.

I glanced through the brochure, which shows a picture of the tree in its former splendour. It is not a photo, so it must have been painted a very long time ago. I can only speculate as to what may have caused the decline in the tree's health. The region has been violently hit by torrential rain and typhoons, and hundreds of fallen trees can be seen along the way. Or perhaps temperatures of over 40°C that have become the norm in summer

– due no doubt to climate change – have fatigued the tree. I feel privileged that I was able to enjoy this tree, but will future generations be able to enjoy it too?



One can also admire the temple's pine interior. The entrance ticket includes a traditional tea in order to open one's spirit to the garden.



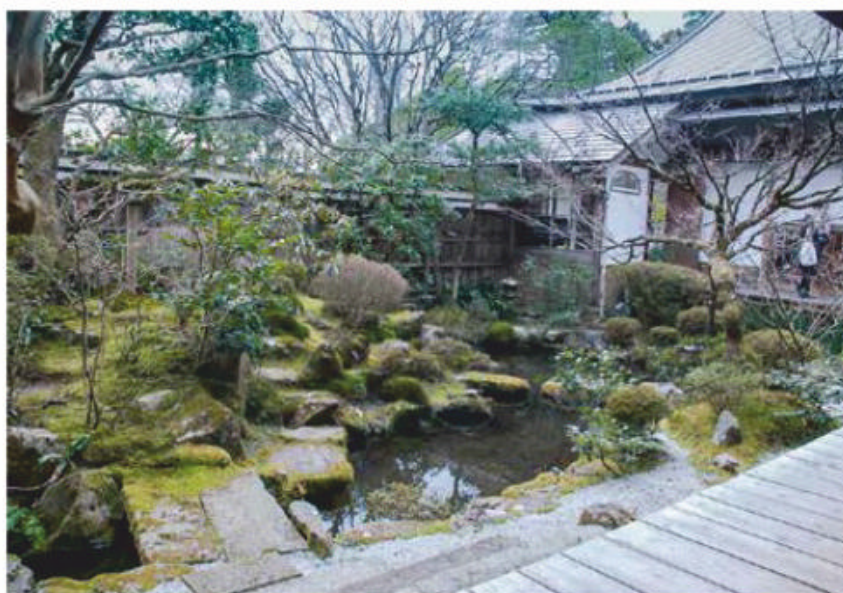
The garden is made up of many parts. The entrance to the temple is on the right, and behind me a path leads to the rock garden.



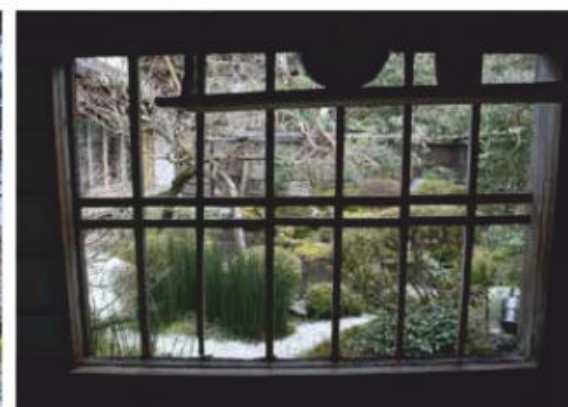
Part of the temple garden is composed of bamboo and several maples.



A room in the temple gives onto the back garden adjacent to the mountain. In the centre of the room is a traditional *irori* (fireplace).



This garden from the Edo period has a pond in the shape of a heron taking flight.



Inside the temple picture windows and small details frame the magnificent garden, and carry us away in its serene beauty.

A bamboo forest

The first temple, built in 1016, served as an inn for the Buddhist monks from the neighbouring temple. The first room in the temple gives onto the back garden, which is very natural and represents an extension of the mountain behind.

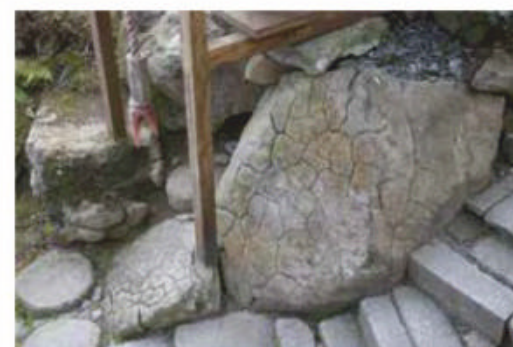
The stones are moss covered and the trees are tall and slender. A simple pot with an orchid and a tea cabinet flank this landscape. The room also has an *irori*, a traditional Japanese fireplace.

Another room allows one to contemplate a garden made up of a bamboo forest and a number of maples. This was called *Bankanen*, which translates as "difficult to leave". This garden is lit up in spring and in autumn to better admire the colours of these seasons.

The eastern side of the garden was constructed in the Edo period. One can see here a pond in the shape of a heron spreading its wings and a hill that represents a tortoise, the symbol of longevity. This part of the garden is also home to a *Camellia japonica* and a *Shorea robusta*; both plants are 300 years old.

The garden extension

A new part of the garden, Horaku-en, was opened in 2005 and represents the sea and mountains at the beginning of the world. Many special rocks were brought from all over the country to construct it. Some came from Mount Tengu in Nagano. These are precious rocks called *kikkouishi* (tortoise stones) that have dried out and fissured due to the retraction of mud containing calcite. ●

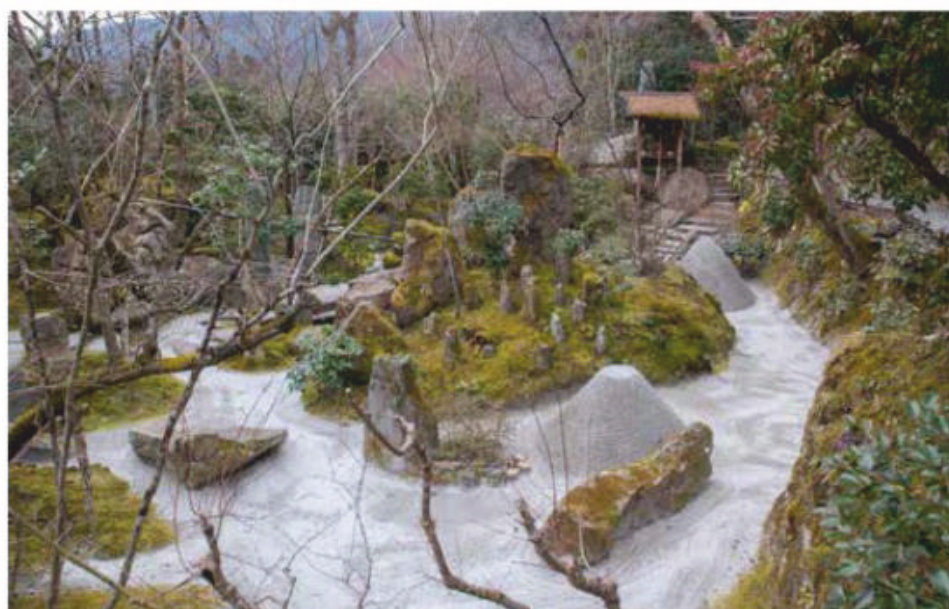


Tortoise stones in the new garden symbolise clouds.

Address

Hosen-in

187 OharaShorinincho, Sakyo-ward
Kyoto 601-1241, Kyoto Prefecture
www.hosenin.net



Horaku-en, the temple's new garden that opened in 2005 represents the beginning of the world.

■ ■ ■ By an association of materials, lines and colours, the way that plant matter is arranged will give life to a composition. The details will give it an artistic dimension.

The subtleties that make for a style

Author: Soazic Le Franc

Although, in Western countries, flower arranging isn't considered as a proper art form, and although it is often mistaken as merely decorative and classified as a hobby, enthusiasts who practise ikebana know that it is no such thing, and recognise that ikebana has to be learnt, just like music or drawing. But technique alone is not enough, and some additional subtleties are needed in order to attain the ephemeral art of plants, which is an art all the same.

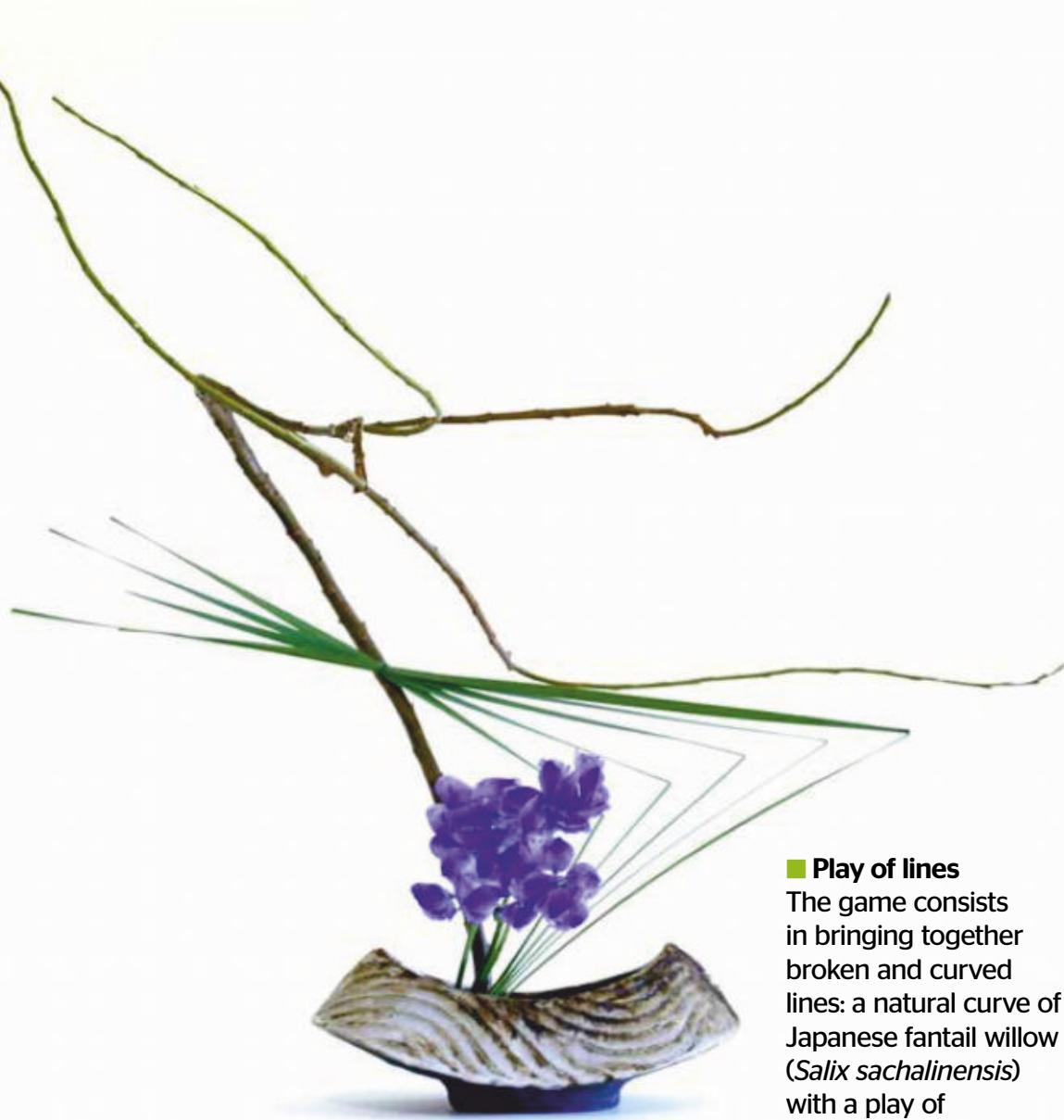
Taking care over the details

Art develops over time: a different period will bring a different style, and the technique that is mastered at a particular moment is not definitive, because it has to evolve. Sometimes this is difficult to understand, and some people think that obtaining diplomas is a guarantee that you will have acquired techniques, which is the only useful gage in ordinary teaching – that is, the kind of teaching which is aimed at the widest audience. “Ordinary” is the word that can lead to making ikebana a hobby rather than an art...

“The devil is in the detail!” It is these details that are so important in crafting a composition that is the materialisation of its creator's wishes. This conviction is something that I, along with my friends who teach at Asphodelinh, strive to put across.

Choosing the materials

Subtleties are no trifling matter. When a composition features only a small number of elements, it is imperative for them to be well chosen, and for them not to cancel each other out, but rather to bring out the best in each other. The plant matter, the container, colour, dimensions, lines: we can play on all these elements to make a difference. A dark green leaf will sing out more with a yellow or orange flower than with one that is dark red and which will make it look somewhat sad. On the other hand, green-and-white



■ **Play of lines**
The game consists in bringing together broken and curved lines: a natural curve of Japanese fantail willow (*Salix sachalinensis*) with a play of structured lines in *Dierama*. The subtlety is enhanced by the vase: brown form and lines. Arrangement by Soazic Le Franc, ceramic container by Françoise Blain.

variegated foliage like that of *Pittosporum* will go better with a dark flower, and a heathland or broom atmosphere will call for camellia, mimosa or hydrangea rather than anthurium, because the former three also express Breton rusticity. These subtleties apply solely to the choice of material to use.

There are other, more complex subtleties that are learnt year after year, throughout a long training curriculum. These come from teaching given by a master: so a leaf strip will be bent right round to give a clean profile; several small flowers will replace one large one; and flowers will lose their arrogance by hiding behind leaves. Preference is given to a slanting line



■ “Sensu” (“Fan”)

Winter is the time for using flowers that come from exotic islands. Despite being called “birds of paradise”, *Strelitzia* can appear aggressive: in the bare clump of forsythia, and behind the *Chamaerops humilis* leaves, they are playing hide-and-seek. It is an oversized arrangement, and the bush is sculpted into a fan shape. Winter arrangement by Soazic Le Franc.

that suggests movement, rather than a static vertical one. An arrangement with lines obeying the classic dimensional rules of two-and-a-half times the height and the length, etc., will prove far more elegant at large scale and with empty space: the famous “*miz-ugiwa*” of the traditional schools, which includes a transitional part between the container and the point where the materials spread out, sets off the entire composition much more successfully.



■ Rikki

Subtly borrowed from the Ikenobo School: the container has been carefully adapted so that the straight parts of the ferns, *Helianthus*, *Pyracantha* and reeds stick up before spreading out. Arrangement and ceramic container by Danièle Danioux, Asphodelinh studio.

Poetry and lyricism

It would take too long to describe everything that goes to constitute a style; and styles themselves evolve over time, through hard-working and experienced hands.

This pursuit that has fascinated me for such a long time is not just about flowers in pots surrounded by kimonos, nor a minor art that takes up my time to please a few ladies, but a full-blown art form, with everything that this implies in terms of poetry, lyricism and expressing my personality. ●

■ ■ ■ Having worked with us since the beginning, Marcel Vrignaud is handing over to one of his students who has become a teacher. A good time to look back over our collaboration.

A rewarding collaboration

Author: Marcel Vrignaud



■ **Oasis Dream**
Traditional landscape. Mossy pine branches, leaves and fruit of *Rhodea japonica*.

In 2003, when Michèle Corbihan approached me to contribute to the first issue of *Esprit Bonsaï*, I would never have imagined that our collaboration would last 15 years without interruption, and that 90 issues would be published with my name on them!

I had previously had opportunities to write articles on Ohara ikebana, accompanied by photographs, for various horticultural or gardening magazines, including France's best-known: *Mon Jardin & ma Maison*. Most of these magazines folded after a few issues, and the collaborations came to an end for lack of readers! It should be noted that at that time there was a lot of competition, and the public weren't yet as motivated

as they are these days about ornamental gardens. Since then, there has been a considerable boom in garden centres. Interested members of the public would then attend local horticultural societies which would publish their own journals for their members.

The collaboration with *Esprit Bonsaï* has been rewarding for me in various ways: it has obliged me to research themes that I otherwise would never have investigated, to create personalised arrangements, and above all to spread the word among the public about the various aspects of my school of ikebana, taking care to vary the themes of the articles in each issue.



■ **Volcanic Eruption**
Modern sculpture.
Deadwood, moss and anthurium.

My thanks go to Michèle Corbihan and her team for putting their trust in me and accompanying me every step of the way throughout this long journey.

A handover period

In the 1960s, during a three-and-a-half-year stay in Japan to study ikebana, I had the chance to visit several bonsai exhibitions, but without going any deeper into this art. As fate would have it, I met Rémy Samson, whose mother Colette Baumann did ikebana. Rémy Samson's first public exhibition took place in my classroom, in Paris, which gave me an opportunity to understand the discipline better. Ever since the first issue of *Esprit Bonsaï*, I've always taken great pleasure in deepening my knowledge of the bonsai world – even though I'm not a collector myself – thanks to the various articles.

After dedicating more than five decades to teaching and promoting ikebana in France and Europe, I've decided to stop part of my activities and leave the many teachers that I've trained to continue the work.

Esprit Bonsaï will soon be celebrating its 100th issue. My collaboration will come to an end at that time. One of my students, Damien Dufour, Master of Ikebana in Toulouse and founder and teacher of the France-Sud (Southern France) Ohara School, has agreed to take over from me. I thank him and hope that he will enjoy writing about and promoting our School to *Esprit Bonsaï* and *Esprit Bonsaï International* readers as much as I have. ●



■ **Tormented Forest**
Realist landscape.
Deadwood and various conifers.



■ **Circle of Hell**
Gypsophila, Heliconia, yellow glory lily, fern, *Anthurium*.

The Passion Bonsaï Club de Valbonne is aptly named! Ever since its creation in 2004, it has worked unceasingly to motivate and unite lovers of the art of bonsai and to allow each one to share their experience.

Text and photos: Isabel Ribeiro, unless otherwise mentioned

In 2004, Denis Martin, wishing to share his experience with other bonsai-loving friends, created the Passion Bonsaï Club in Valbonne – a beautiful village in the Côte d’Azur region – and was its president until 2012. It grew rapidly and attracted bonsai enthusiasts throughout the area who were looking for a club. The club, presided over by Julien Macaluso since 2017, has now expanded to thirty members.

“Our association is not elitist!” asserts Denis Martin, the club’s honorary president. In fact it welcomes beginners as well as advanced bonsai enthusiasts. Elisa, for example, inherited some magnificent trees



▲ The club’s latest exhibition, the En Yu Ten, was held in November 2017, in the Salle du Pré des Arts de Valbonne, and attracted many visitors.



▲ The Passion Bonsaï Club de Valbonne (Alpes-Maritimes) knows how to develop the potential of its members. Every two or three years this dynamic team organises a major exhibition.

PASSION BONSAÏ CLUB

“We all have potential”

that were collected by her husband, but she did not have the knowledge needed to maintain them. She is now supported and advised by the club’s instructors. Fabrice has followed a completely different path. He followed courses at the Académie Bonsaï (Bonsai Academy) where he trained with a Japanese master, at the end of which he joined the Valbonne club. Members at different stages “all have the opportunity to lead a workshop if they wish and to give a theoretical course. We all have potential that we can share. This is also the spirit of the club,” added Cédric di Maggio, the club’s former president and current secretary.

Five in-house trainers

The progress of each member has been made possible thanks to the mentoring by our instructors whose objective is to train the

club’s members as well as to motivate the most advanced to exhibit their bonsai trees, but without putting themselves forward in any way. “There are no ego clashes in our club. We meet up to enjoy being together.” This is Denis Martin’s credo and is why the success of one person gives pleasure to the entire club. The club has two N2 (level 2) instructors from the Fédération française de bonsaï (French federation of bonsai) – Denis Martin and Stéphane Delage – and three N1 (level 1) instructors, Michel Fornasero, Cédric de Maggio and Jean-Michel Singer.

In addition to the bi-monthly meetings on Thursday evenings, the club offers four themed workshops per year. The one in autumn is dedicated to deciduous trees and led by Jean-Luc Roussin. The winter session is given over to conifers and is moderated by Olivier Barreau. Added to these are a repotting work-



© CÉDRIC DI MAGGIO

▲ Working on box: the winter workshop led by Olivier Barreau.



© CHRISTELLE BOUJGE

▲ Evening workshops are offered twice a month: experimenting here on small olive trees.

► “The River Li” a shohin display exhibited at the Bonsai Festival in Andora, Italy by Cédric di Maggio N1 instructor and former president of the club.

shop held in spring in the garden of one of the members; and in June, to close the season, the last workshop is devoted to grafting or air-layering and is led by an external instructor nominated by club members.

A large exhibition

The Passion Bonsaï Club de Valbonne is not “sectarian”. Denis Martin



© DIDIER OURS

▲ Trees being worked on. This cork oak was presented at the En Yu Ten to show the different stages in bonsai.

has always encouraged members to enjoy exchanges with other clubs and to follow courses and additional training. Moreover, Cédric and Christelle have registered at the Toulon Bonsai Academy (in the Var) where they are following a course given by the Japanese master, Yuk Akanuma. Other members are going beyond our borders to take courses given by Carmelo Bonanno at the Bonsai Time School in Camporosso, in Italy.

The Passion Bonsaï Club, also holds a major exhibition every two or three years – a fairly long period which gives members time to bring many of the club’s trees together, and also those from other clubs in the Provence-Alpes Maritimes-Côte d’Azur (PACA) region and from Italy. An original feature of the club deserves mention: a few trees that are in the process of being worked on are also exhibited in order to give enthusiasts, or just visitors, an idea of the work involved before a tree is finished. At the same time as these are displayed, demonstrations are also offered in which foreign clubs or professional bonsaists participate.

The latest exhibition given by the Passion Bonsaï Club on 4 and 5 November 2017 was called the En Yu Ten, which translates as openness and sharing a common passion among friends, and is a fine exemplification of the club’s philosophy! ●



▲ Michel Fornasero, a member of the Passion Bonsaï Club, is an N1 instructor and sumi-e artist.



▲ *Acer buergerianum*, trident maple, En Yu Ten 2017.

Useful information

Passion Bonsaï Club
16 Rue de la Mairie
06560 Valbonne, France
Workshops: 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month, from 8.00 p.m. at the Salle du Val de Cuberte
Contact: bureau@passionbonsai.org
Website: www.passionbonsai.org
Facebook: Passion Bonsaï Club de Valbonne



BONSAÏ SECTION

136 p. – 16,7 x 24,7 cm Mini Bonsaï L'érable japonais Code : MINIBONS 24,00 €	134 p. – 16,7 x 24,7 cm Mini Bonsaï Le Genévrier Code : MINIBONS2 24,00 €	134 p. – 16,7 x 24,7 cm Mini Bonsaï Les Azalées Code : MINIBONS3 24,00 €	134 p. – 16,7 x 24,7 cm Mini Bonsaï Le Zelkova Code : MINIBONS4 24,00 €	144 p. – 16,7 x 24,7 cm Mini Bonsaï Ilex, malus et petits fruits Code : MINIBONS5 24,00 €	134 p. – 16,7 x 24,7 cm Mini Bonsaï Le Pin noir Code : MINIBONS6 24,00 €
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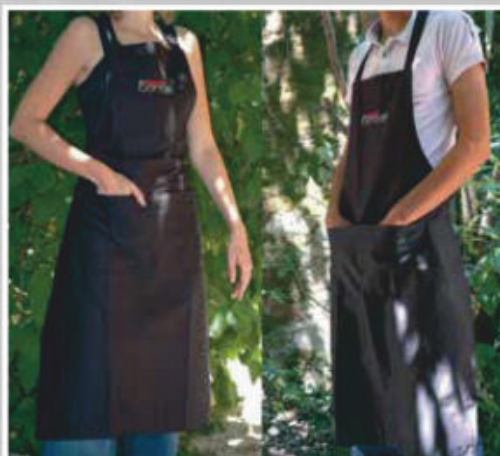
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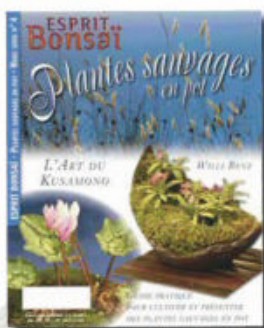
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