

'Best of'

20 years Trophy

by Bonsai Association Belgium
international BONSAI show
8 - 9 - 10 Feb 2019

Top international demonstrators

Masayuki Fujikawa (JP)

Ryan Neil (USA)

Vaclav Novak (CZ)

Gabriel Romero (ES)

Special Korean guest demonstrators

Cho Won Dong

Choi Song Ho

Her Youn Hang

Kang Sook Hoon

Kim Seok Ju

Lee Kwang Jong

- Major European bonsai exhibition
- Exhibition of suiseki and exclusive bonsai pots
- More than 90 international bonsai traders

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Limburghal c.v.
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Belgium
www.limburghal.be

BONSAI ASSOCIATION BELGIUM



Esprit Bonsai



エスプリ盆栽

► The magazine for bonsai enthusiasts • December/January 2019 #97

**A GOOD START
WITH SUPERMARKET
BONSAI**

► SPECIES
PROFILE:

OLIVE

**Notes for
Beginners**

**MATTERS
OF STYLE**

**THE
ALEPPO
PINE**

**JAPANESE GARDENS
IN PRAISE OF MOSS**

POTS BY
MARJAN MIRT

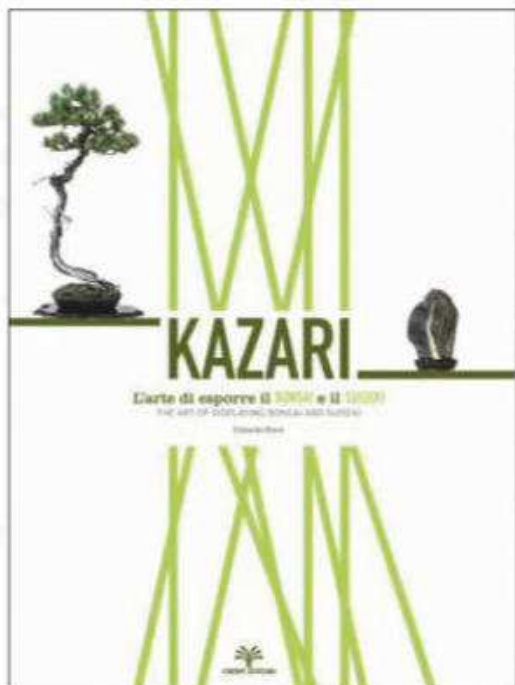
**World bonsai comes
to eastern France**

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No inspiration ?

DISCOVER OUR GIFTS IDEAS FOR CHRISTMAS



KAZARI THE ART OF DISPLAYING BONSAI AND SUISEKI

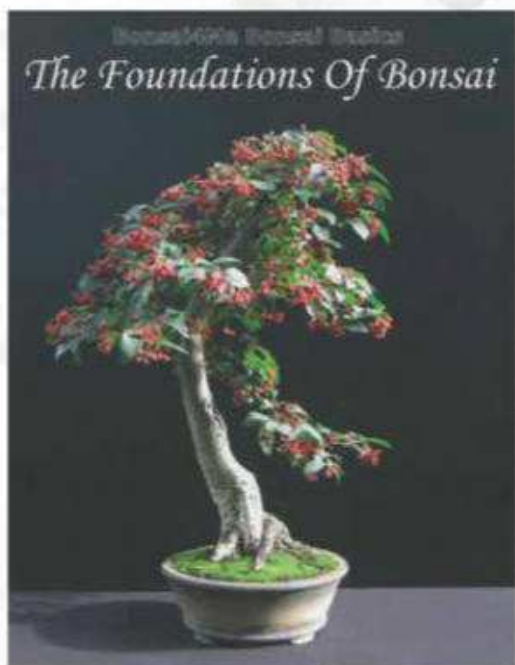
A book by Edoardo Rossi totally devoted to the art of displaying bonsai. It's exceptional because no book before has given such in-depth information on this subject. Kazari is Japanese for the preparations carried out to make things look beautiful. The Japanese have a very high standard of aesthetics and so it is with the display of bonsai, too.

ref. : KAZARI – €49,50
256 pages – 33 x 24 cm

CATALOG BONSAI SHOHIN FESTIVAL 2017

The catalog of the 2° Bonsai Shohin Festival exhibition in 2017. Through the pages of this catalog, dedicated to Bonsai Shohin Festival, you can find many ideas to increase your knowledge on shohin bonsai and enjoy the beauty of nature in miniature.

ref. : SHOHIN17 – €22,50
80 pages – 30,50 x 21,50 cm



THE FOUNDATIONS OF BONSAI

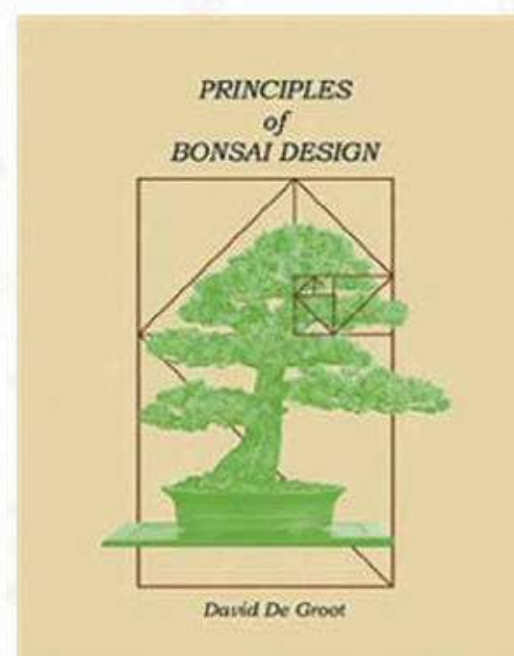
The ideal book for beginners to intermediate enthusiasts wishing to learn the best ways to keep their trees healthy and vigorous. From root-pruning to repotting, pruning to wiring to basic bonsai design, this book provides complete, straightforward and solid information from the author of Bonsai4me.com.

ref. : FOUNDBON – €20,00
120 pages – 28 x 22 cm

PRINCIPLES OF BONSAI DESIGN

The most complete bonsai tree design book we've seen in over 25 years. With over 500 photos and drawings, Mr. De Groot discusses aspects of art and aesthetics, traditional Japanese and Chinese styles, and new styles based on natural tree forms. Also covered are branch structure, deadwood features, initial styling, and container selection.

ref. : DESIGNBON – €41,00
260 pages – 28,50 x 22,20 cm



Otherwise you can please every 2 months with the digital subscription



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"We are multiplying exchanges"

There is room!

It isn't every year that a country gets to host a global convention. Because of scheduling complications and some organisational constraints, two major bonsai events took place at the same time, in different cities in eastern France, in October 2018: the World Bonsai Convention in Mulhouse, and the European Bonsai-San Show in Saulieu.

Let's leave aside the controversy, which is not constructive, and focus instead on the after – the attendance levels and the public interest in these two events.

There were plenty of bonsai lovers present, at both Saulieu and Mulhouse. Neither event overshadowed the other. It is pleasing to note that having more than one event on offer did not reduce either their quality or their attractiveness for bonsaists. So there is room for everyone!

As for the World Bonsai Convention, let's hope that it has the same impact on the public as a football World Cup, and people feel the urge to get involved. Of the 150,000 visitors who came to admire the bonsai, we can always hope that at least 1% of them will join the ranks of bonsai enthusiasts. That alone would mean an extra 1,500 people!

Happy reading, and happy end-of-year festivities!

Michèle Corbihan

DIARY

IN BELGIUM

The 6th Salon de Bonsai d'Enghien (Enghien Bonsai Show) will take place on 18 and 19 May 2019.

The Enghien show is gradually making its mark in the European bonsai landscape. Tony Tickle and Filip Haesen will be guest demonstrators. Amateurs and professionals are welcome to exhibit one or more trees and should contact the organisers, Philippe Robert and Joseph Bernard.

✉ Josbernard@skynet.be or philro100877@gmail.com
www.facebook.com/events/1956345621125368/

IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

• ExpoBonsai UK 2019

The second edition of ExpoBonsai UK will take place on Sunday 7 April 2019 from 10.00 a.m. An exhibition of quality bonsai by individual owners and a market of over 30 traders, the exhibition is just two-and-a-half miles from Heathrow airport, near London. Harlington Sports Centre, Pinkwell Lane, Harlington, UB3 1PB
https://expobonsaiuk.weebly.com/



ExpoBonsai UK
Sunday April 7th, 2019 - 10am

*An exhibition of quality individually owned bonsai
30+ traders*

Submissions open until 01/01/2019 to ebuk18@gmail.com

**Harlington Sports Centre, Pinkwell Lane,
Harlington, UB3 1PB**



Arcobonsai
TRIBUTO AI MAESTRI DEI CONVEGNI DI ARCOBONSAI

XVIII° TROFEO ARCOBONSAI
Confronto tra istruttori del bonsai
Confronto tra i Bonsai Club Italiani
Dimostrazione di Mauro Stemberger
Mostra Suiseki
Prenze proposte da A.I.A.S.

26-27-28 APRILE 2019

Centro Congressi
Casinò Municipale
Palazzo Marchetti
arco tn

www.arco-bonsai.com

• UK National Bonsai Show

The Bonsai Europa exhibition has changed its name – Brexit dictates – and returns on 14 and 15 September as UK National Bonsai Show. The concept, developed by Tony Tickle, stays the same – to offer a European show in the United Kingdom with talented demonstrators.

✉ Castle Leisure Centre
Bolton Street, Bury
Greater Manchester BL9OEZ
UK
Email:
nationalbonsai@gmail.com
www.nationalbonsaishow.co.uk

IN ITALY

• Arcobonsai

The 34th Arcobonsai convention will be held on 26 to 28 April 2019. Mauro Stemberger will be one of the guests of honour and will give demonstrations. On the agenda: a bonsai and suiseki exhibition by

amateurs and professionals. The 18th Arcobonsai Trophy will go to the winner of the competition between Italian instructors and representatives of Italian clubs. Arcobonsai also boasts one of the largest professional markets in Italy.

✉ Email:
info@arcobonsai.com
www.arcobonsai.com

• Shohin festival

From 22 to 24 February, 2019, the 4th shohin festival will welcome the Japanese master Hiroki Miura as their guest of honour. This exceptional exhibition will display trees in their winter dress. The trees, from Italy and other European countries, are owned by collectors or bonsai amateurs. Over one hundred exhibits are expected.

✉ Crespi Bonsai
S.S. del Sempione, 37 -
20015 Parabiago (MI) Italy
www.crespibonsai.com



IN FRANCE

• The FFB and EBA congress

From 10 to 12 May 2019, Albi will host the combined congresses of the Fédération française de bonsaï and the European Bonsai Association, along with the Association Française de Suiseki and the European Suiseki Association.

■ www.ffb.com

• The European Bonsai-San Show

The European Bonsai-San Show has invited Bjorn Bjorholm, Jan Culeck and Mauro Stemberger to its next edition that will be held on 12 and 13 October 2019. Mauro Stemberger will exhibit trees from his collection.

■ <http://european-bonsai-san-show.com>



Bjorn Bjorholm will be one of the special guests at the European Bonsai-San Show on 12 and 13 October 2019.

Ceramic pot competition

The Akiten exhibition, still in Brixen in North Italy, returns for its second exhibition on 2 and 3 November, 2019.

Akiten also holds the competition for bonsai ceramics. The competition is open to both amateur and professional ceramicists.

Participants may only present one piece for the competition.

The pot must have all the characteristics required for planting a normal bonsai or a grass bonsai. The jury will be made up of specialists who are at once artists and technical experts.

The three best ceramics will win:

1st: €1300

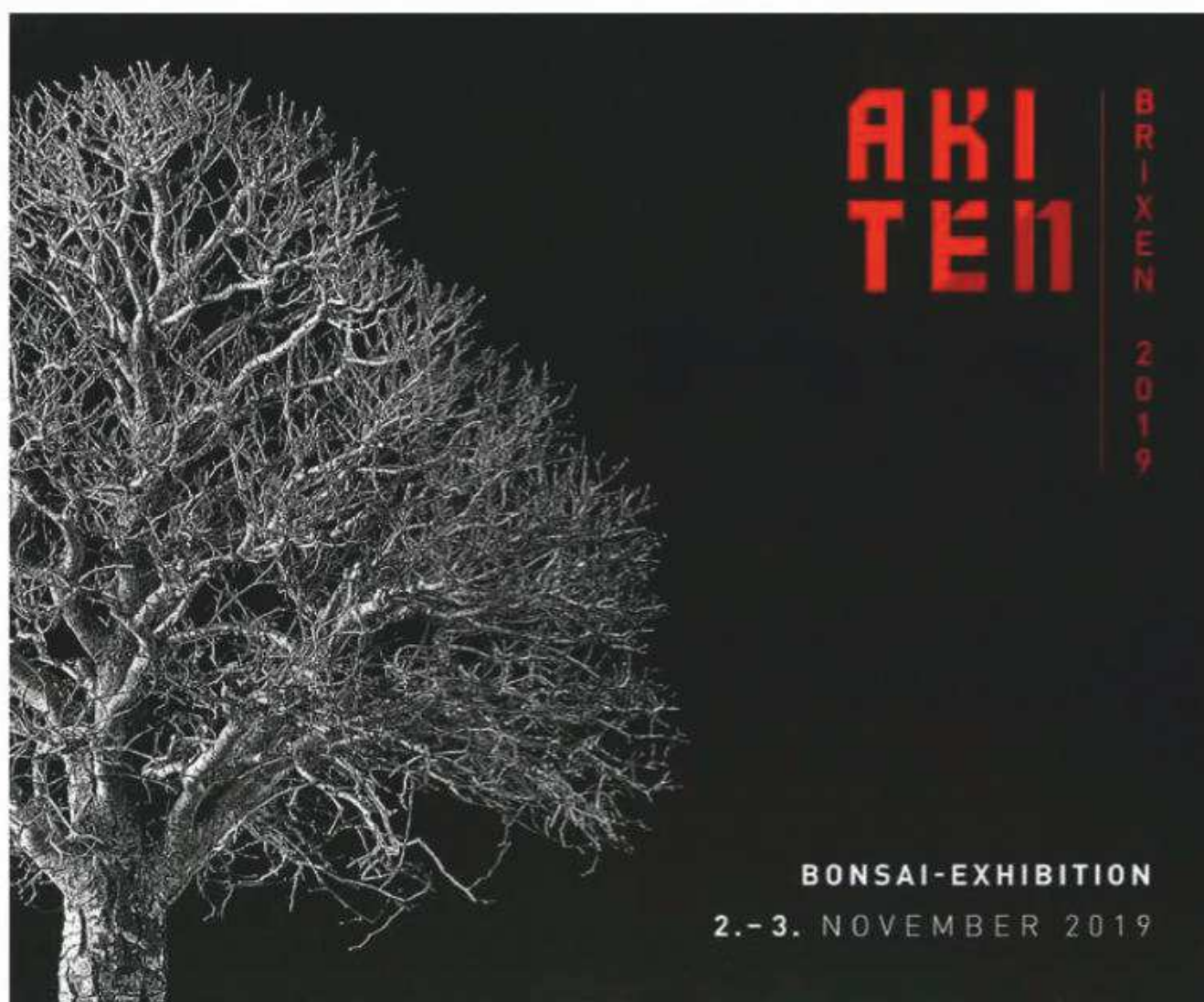
2nd: €400

3rd: €300

The three winning pieces will become the property of the Brixen Bonsai Club, who will then organise a raffle among the exhibitors at Akiten 2019. The exhibitors who win the pots must obligatorily undertake to show the pot planted with a bonsai at the 2021 Akiten exhibition.

Competition fee: 50 €.

■ Inscription: info@akiten.it
www.akiten.it



DIARY

IN SPAIN

The first convention of the UBE

The very new Unión del Bonsái Español (UBE) is holding its first convention on 26 and 27 January 2019 at the Isabel de Farnesio D'Aranjuez cultural centre in the suburbs of Madrid.

The two artists, Hiroaki Suzuki from Japan and Sandro Segneri, from Italy, will be the guest demonstrators. They will be joined by artists and UBE members, German Gomez and Gabriel Romero from Spain and Marcio Meruje, from Portugal.

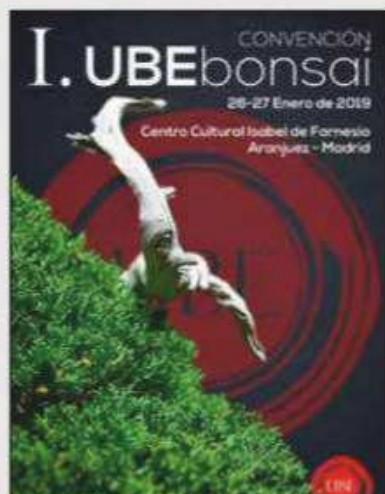
Luis Vallejo will be the guest of honour.

The UBE saw the light of day during 2017.

The association was created by and for bonsai lovers in order for amateurs and professionals to share common ground over and above all religious and political beliefs. Its aim is to promote and teach bonsai professionally by uniting, guiding and advising its professional partners, the artists and exhibitors. It wants to encourage collaboration with other associations both national and international who share the same objectives.

One of the association's goals is to organise a national and international exhibition which will be a meeting place with a market that will bring together the best trees of the moment – a sort of mirror from which to watch, share and learn.

■ Isabel de Farnesio, Aranjuez Cultural Centre (Madrid), Spain
Email: ube@ubebonsai.es
www.ubebonsai.es



Exhibitions and Conventions

ARANJUEZ, SPAIN	26-27 January 2019	The UBE (Unión del bonsai español) convention Isabel de Farnesio Aranjuez Cultural Centre Capitán, 39 28300, Aranjuez Email: ube@ubebonsai.es Facebook: Unión del Bonsai Español
GENK, BELGIUM	8-10 February	'Best of' 20 years' Trophy Demonstrators: Masayuki Fujikawa (JP), Ryan Neil (USA), Vaclav Novak (CZ), Gabriel Romero (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
MILAN, ITALY	22-24 February	4th Festival of shohin bonsai Exhibition of over 100 compositions. Guest of honour: Hiroki Miura. Crespi Bonsai S.S. del Sempione, 37 - 20015 Parabiago (MI) Italy www.crespibonsai.com
HARLINGTON, UNITED KINGDOM	7 April	ExpoBonsai UK Harlington Sports Centre, Pinkwell Lane, Harlington, Middlesex. UB3 1PB, Entrance: £5.00 Hours: 10.00 a.m. - 4.00 p.m. Email: markmoreland@live.co.uk www.ExpobonsaiUK.weebly.com
ALBI, FRANCE	10-12 May	The Fédération française de bonsaï (French bonsai federation), and the European bonsai association Congress. Email: pierre.bedes@wanadoo.fr www.ffb.com
ENGHIEN, BELGIUM	18-19 May	6th Enghien bonsai show Guests: Tony Tickle et Filip Haesen. www.facebook.com/events/1956345621125368/
BURY, UNITED KINGDOM	14-15 September	UK National Bonsai Show Castle Leisure Centre Bolton Street, Bury Greater Manchester BL9OEZ Email: nationalbonsai@gmail.com www.nationalbonsaishow.co.uk
SAULIEU, FRANCE	12-13 October	European Bonsai-San Show www.european-bonsai-san-show.com



Although the Alpine larch is native to France's mountains, it is more vulnerable to disease than the Japanese larch when cultivated in the country's lowland areas.

What is a native bonsai?

The concept of native trees seems obvious for those that are growing in the ground ... but when notions of time and region come into play, native bonsai are more difficult to define.

Author: Louis-Victor Bourdeau

In Europe, it is common practice for bonsai lovers to separate the species used for bonsai into two categories:

- Japanese ones that have been used for bonsai in their country of origin for many years

- European, or "native", ones, which we are used to seeing in the mountains and countryside of our home countries.

Both groups are well represented in European collections, and each of the two categories has its staunch advocates who defend only that one and not the other. This opposition, which has long fuelled debates held at European exhibitions, can offer an opportunity to question the notion of native species, as it is a far less obvious notion than you might think.

A question of period

The concept of native or exotic species is very relative, depending on whether you are talking in the long or short term. After the last ice age (10,000 years ago), in the lowlands of Europe, only two

species of conifers (common juniper and yew) were still present in their natural state. All the other softwood species arrived later and, with only a few exceptions, were introduced artificially, at least to some extent.

On the other hand, Douglas fir – the North American tree symbolic of conifer timber plantations that was introduced to Europe in 1827 – was indigenous before the last ice age.

Of course, there are numerous other examples which show us that for trees, the notion of exotic species is not only relative, but also arbitrary, depending on the length of time that is being considered.

Native on a balcony ...

Bonsai cultivation doesn't make this distinction between exotic and native any easier. A tree in a pot can easily be taken away from its natural biotope, unlike wild-growing trees. You might think that a tree which is native to your country will inevitably grow better than an exotic one. But is a Scots pine that was collected in

the Southern Alps native to the Paris region? Is a beech collected in a forest still native when it is being cultivated on a city-centre balcony? The answer is self-evident ... even if tree owners always have some room for manoeuvre in how they cultivate them and in offsetting climatic differences, obviously only as far as is possible. An olive tree from Provence will always be difficult to cultivate in Brittany – contrary to a Japanese larch, which will grow much better in this region's mild, relatively rainy climate than a larch from the Alps. Foresters have shown this to be the case.

So we come to realise the complexity of the notion of native trees, as much in nature as in pot-grown specimens. But if we take the point of view that a bonsai should represent a tree, the most important thing is perhaps to create and cultivate bonsai that set out to achieve an idealised, condensed representation of the species, while aiming for a sort of universality of the expression of nature. ●



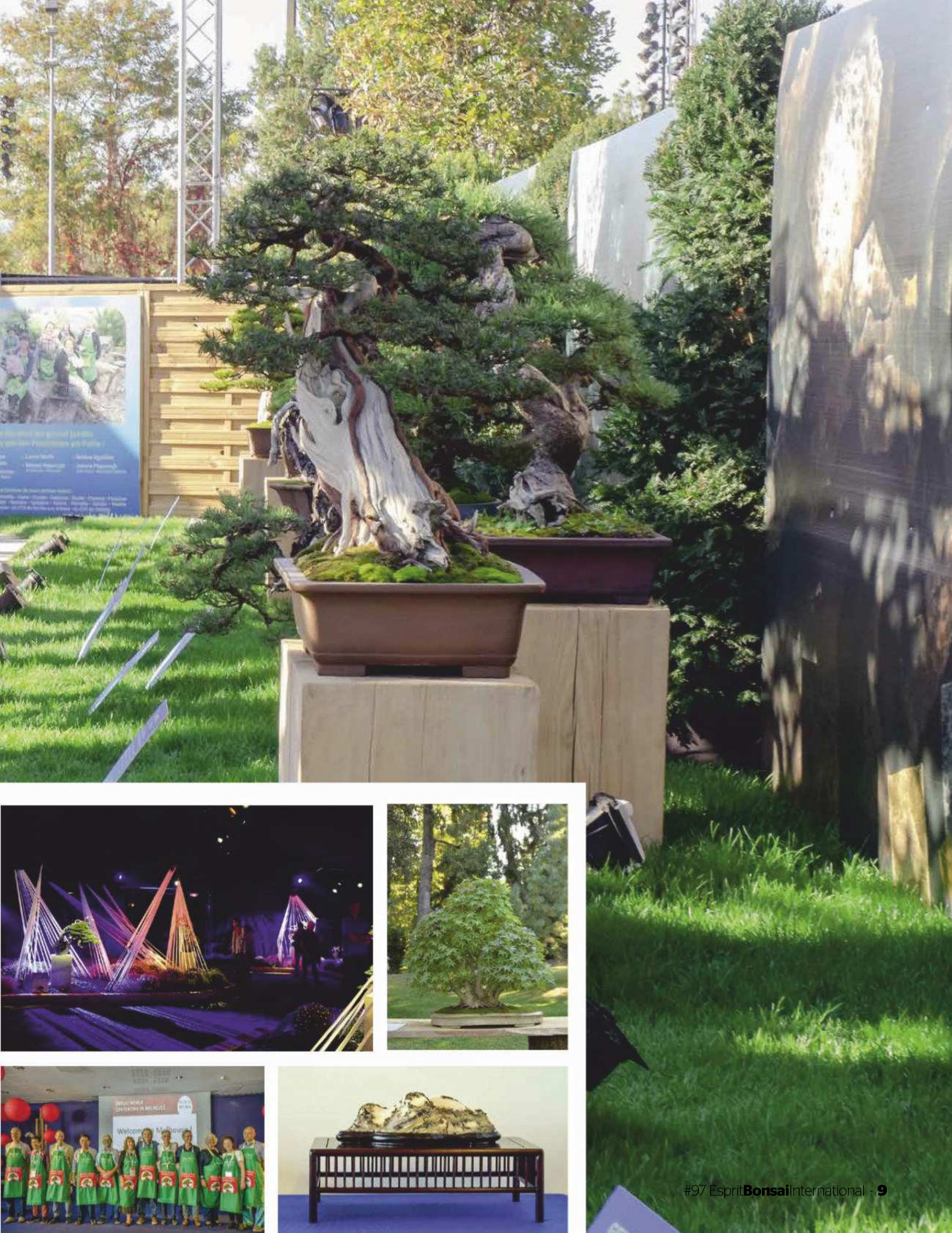
Mulhouse loves bonsai!

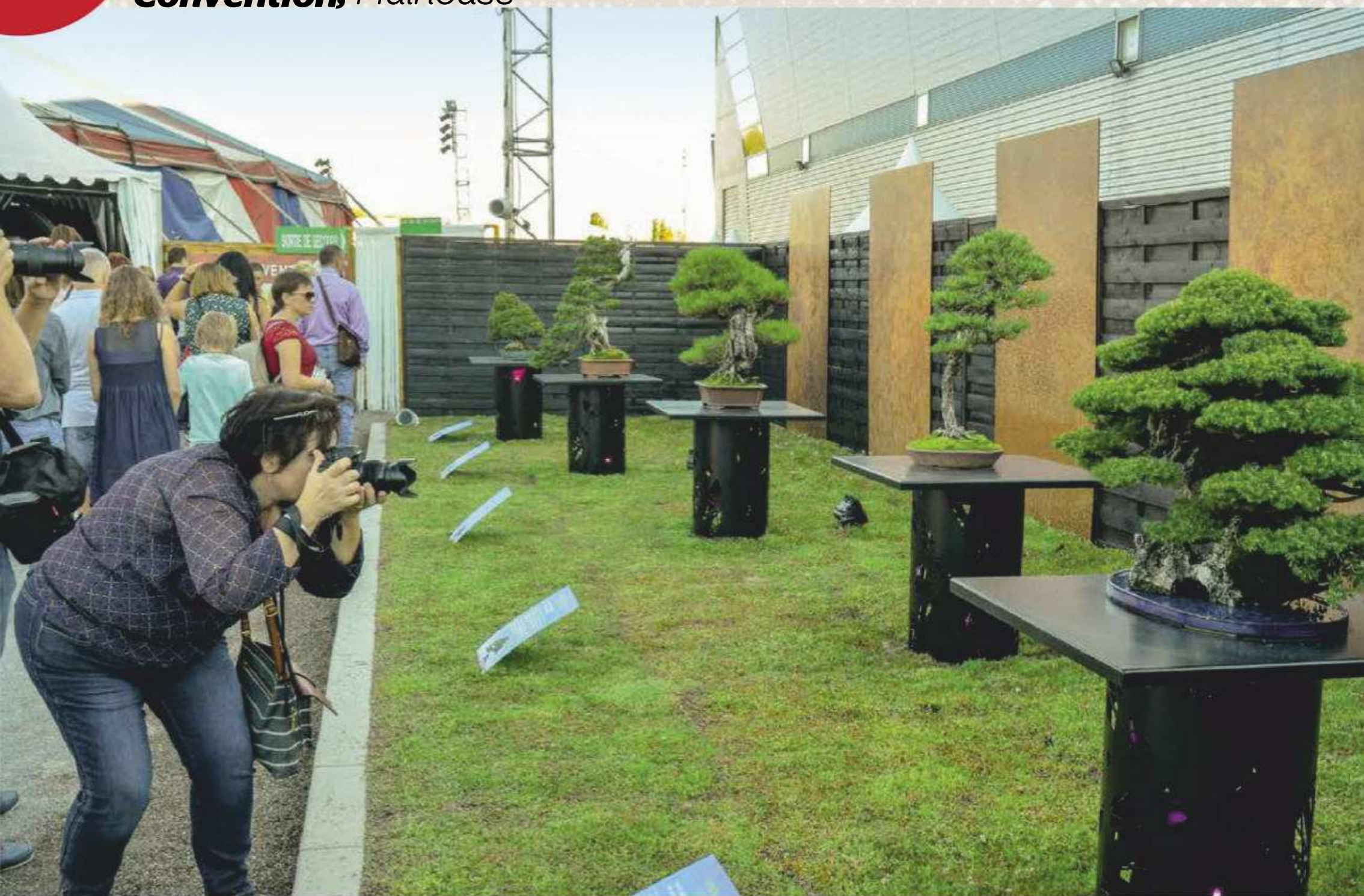
“Mulhouse loves Japan” – a full programme for the capital of the Haut-Rhin department in France, which this autumn, celebrated the diplomatic relations between Japan and France. At the Parc-Expo in Mulhouse, the “Journées d’octobre” (October Days) event was undoubtedly the highlight of the festivities between 4 and 14 October. page 10

The Folie’flore flower show, part of the October Days event, paid tribute to Japanese culture in its gardens by inviting ikebana and bonsai to be part of its scene with a display of ten ishisuki and the 30 bonsai trees from Euro Top 30. page 14

The Bonsai Clubs International Convention was held in the grounds of the Parc-Expo 12 to 14 October. This exceptional event brought together some twenty international demonstrators, an exhibition of top-level European bonsai, stones from the collection of Willi Benz, and a professional market.

At the same time, the congresses of the Fédération française de bonsai (FFB) and the Association française des amateurs de suiseki (AFAS) congresses were being held in the Museum of Fine Arts and in the Zoological and botanical Garden. The numerous visitors to the show were proof of their enthusiasm for bonsai. page 20





In October 2018, with bonsai as its theme, Folie'Flore attracted large numbers of visitors who were fascinated by the little trees. This themed garden was one of five settings for the bonsai stagings.

FOLIE'FLORE

Bonsai in the spotlight

Bonsai, and Japan more broadly, was the chosen theme for the 2018 edition of Folie'Flore - the flower-show part of Mulhouse's "Journées d'Octobre" festival. Taken out of their usual display settings, the little trees attracted lots of visitors.

Author: Michèle Corbihan

Lit with colour-changing spotlights, and set in rockeries, in urban gardens or in the darkness standing on the water's surface, the bonsai on display at Folie'Flore put on a great show. 147,612 visitors came to admire the 40 bonsai, as well as the Japanese-themed gardens at the flower show of the "Journées d'Octobre" (October Days) festival, which this year was held from 4 to 14 October. The chosen theme paid tribute to Japan and to the 160th anniversary of diplomatic relations between France and Japan.

Folie'Flore is a key gathering in the eastern French city of Mulhouse every October, and its



In the ishisuki marquee, the bonsai were made to cling to rocks that emerged from the water's surface.



The composition by the Arte Bonsai Club (from south-eastern France's Rhône-Alpes region) took the prize for best ishisuki during the World Bonsai Convention. A *Thuya orientalis* is set on this rock.

stagings of plants attract the crowds. So the bonsai needed to break away from traditional methods of display, to intrigue visitors new to the field. The bonsai were thus presented in five spaces with different atmospheres, all linked together by Japanese-inspired gardens that had been set up by the organisation Fleuriste en Folie.

Urban gardens

One marquee housed ishisuki – rock-planted bonsai – and visitors there found themselves plunged into darkness. There were about ten trees, all created by associations from the Fédération Française de Bonsaï (French Bonsai Federation) and selected by François Jeker as “the most beautiful in France”. They were displayed as if placed on the surface of a lake. The lighting varied, shifting from darkness to full light on each composition, and music set the tone.

The thirty other bonsai constituted the Euro Top 30 – Europe's 30 best bonsai – presented at Folie'Flore every four years, and again selected by François Jeker. For this third edition of the Euro Top 30, the scene was set with two urban gardens and a landscape of rockery and bamboo to showcase the trees. Since Folie'Flore doesn't close until 11.30 p.m., visitors could experience a genuine sound-and-light show in the evenings, with lighting effects that gave the trees a series of altered appearances in a play of light and shadow. Magical!

Coloured lighting



In an urban garden atmosphere, a *Juniperus sabina* by Paul Putseys (Belgium). This tree, collected in 2000, won a BCI prize for excellence at the World Bonsai Convention.



Trees set off by a land-art photo in the background. On the left, *Juniperus chinensis* by Didier Weiss (France). On the right, *Juniperus chinensis* by Paul and Lijdie Buedts (Belgium).



At night, there was a play between light and colour and the forms of the trees.

© CATHERINE KOHLER



Some bonsai were set amid rockery and bamboo, such as this *Juniperus chinensis* by Danny Use (Belgium).



The rockery garden looked completely different in the evening lighting.

The fifth staging of the bonsai was the “Jardin des Toiles” (“Cloth Garden”), a space conceived by the artists collective Vortex-X. Here, strips of fabric were stretched around the trees, with beams of light creating shifts in both the intensity and colour of the lighting. The bonsai were set against green, red and blue backgrounds, with dance music playing. The atmosphere was resolutely modern – attractive for novices, though perhaps a little less appealing for some more knowledgeable bonsai lovers. But here it was all about challenging received wisdom and showing that bonsai is accessible to all.

It is only a short step from bonsai to ikebana. Soazic le Franc had come from her native Brittany with two other ikebanists to present arrangements by the Sogetsu School.

Folie’Flore successfully met the challenge of drawing in the crowds with small, high-class trees in attractive stagings. Perhaps some visitors might want to go a bit further than simply admiring them. ●



A few ikebana arrangements from the Sogetsu School to round off the Japanese plant theme.



The “Jardin des Toiles” (“Cloth Garden”) – a daring, dynamic and offbeat display set up by the Vortex-X artists collective.



A different way of looking at bonsai: *Pinus sylvestris* by Joseph Byloos (Belgium).

For the visually impaired

An initiative directed at people with visual and hearing disabilities was undertaken in collaboration with Le Phare, a facility in the Mulhouse region that specialises in teaching the disabled.

Major efforts to raise awareness were made beforehand, along with the teaching team. For the blind, thermoformed sheets were made with a drawing of various bonsai: each surface (pot, moss, trunk, deadwood,

foliage) corresponded to different textures and each sheet also featured text in braille.

Blind people were able to touch some of the bonsai, which had been selected for the purpose. They struggle to conceptualise the reality of a tree, and this initiative generated some very emotional moments, especially among children who had their first chance ever to touch a tree all over.

By François Jeker



Activities were organised to allow visually impaired people to discover the trees.

World Bonsai Convention, Mulhouse



With a total of 270 trees, the BCI World Bonsai Convention, in Mulhouse, from 12 to 14 October 2018, was unquestionably one of the biggest bonsai exhibitions ever organised in Europe.

BCI WORLD BONSAI CONVENTION

Sharing a passion

Europe's finest bonsai and suiseki were brought together in Mulhouse from 12 to 14 October 2018, along with a dozen demonstrators for an exceptional event: the World Bonsai Convention – a place to share a passion.

Author: Michèle Corbihan

“Over the next three days, we will see the best bonsai and suiseki in Europe,” announced Glenis Bebb, president of Bonsai Clubs International (BCI), during the opening ceremony of the World Bonsai Convention in the eastern French city of Mulhouse. More than 3,000 enthusiastic participants made the journey – very long for some – to admire bonsai from all over Europe, as well as suiseki from the collection of Gudrun and Willi Benz and the many demonstrations given by a dozen international special guests. They came from Europe, China, Mongolia, New Zealand, Taiwan, Indonesia, Australia, Canada, Mexico, the USA etc.



The demonstrators at the BCI (Bonsai Clubs International) world convention pose for posterity.

Because the city's exhibition centre became the world capital of bonsai from 12 to 14 October. It was an exceptional event, since this convention had only taken place in Europe three times before. It took up residence in the setting of Folie'Flore, the flower-show part of the "Journées d'Octobre" (October Days) festival – a fair of trade and gastronomy – which this year celebrated bonsai. The convention was thus the culmination of 10 days of festivities, on the final weekend.

A rock planting

"It is an honour for us to welcome people coming from all over the world and sharing the same passion for the beauty of nature and trees," declared François Jeker, an international bonsai artist and the architect of this convention, during the gala evening on Saturday. On that evening, Glenis Bebb presented him with a special BCI award for his contribution to organising the event. The city authorities of Mulhouse were also heavily involved in the convention's preparation, along with the "Journées d'octobre".

The participants had plenty to do over the three days to indulge their passion, as there were numerous talks and demonstrations on continuous offer in the exhibition centre's conference room. It all began with the creation of an exceptional ishisuki – rock-planted bonsai – which was the outcome of a collaboration between John Wang (USA), Matsuo Matsuda (Japan) and Budi Sulistyono (Malaysia). The objective was to install some Scots pines on a piece of fossilised coral. An arduous task.

Like all the other demonstrations that were given at the convention, this one set out to be educational: "They will give demonstrations, but they will not take any risks for the trees. They just want to take a first step," explained François Jeker. ►►►



Esprit Bonsai International prize:
Ulmus minor, Werner Busch (Germany).



Three special guests at the convention
– Matsuo Matsuda (Japan), John Wang (USA), and Budi Sulistyono (Malaysia)
– worked together on an ishisuki.



This creation will mature over time and will become part of the Albert Kahn Garden, near Paris.



Working with other people means making some compromises on decisions.

Ten Spanish olive trees

Between demonstrations, a visit of the tree exhibition is called for. Different-coloured fabrics were draped over shelves in two adjoining spaces on the upper floor of the exhibition centre. In this sort of exhibition, you can only expect to see top-quality trees that have been meticulously crafted and perfected. Alternating conifers and broadleaves were each more beautiful than the one before. Added to these were 10 olive trees brought from Spain, 10 trees by François Jeker's students, and wonderful trees from the collection of the Spanish bonsaist Luis Vallejo, some of which are already well known. Bonsai from the Albert Kahn Garden, near Paris, were also on display for the occasion.

The convention's various awards were presented during the gala evening which took place in the setting of the prestigious Automobile Museum. Among the prizewinners, an innovatively displayed Scots pine by Tony Tickle (UK) took one BCI excellence award, as did a mugo pine by Enzo Ferrari (Switzerland). I was seduced by the delicate foliage of an elm, *Ulmus minor*, by Werner Busch (Germany), and awarded it the *Esprit Bonsai International* prize. Maryvonne Buchert, the Deputy Mayor, who was representing the city authorities, presented the City of Mulhouse award – which had been selected by Mitsuo Matsuda – to an olive tree by Juan Antonio Pérez (Spain). As for François Jeker, he picked out an olive tree by Didier Weiss to win the deadwood prize. ►►►



Excellence of bonsai design award, selected by Chase Rosade:
Picea abies, Christophe Hager (France). Pot by Erik Krizovensky.



City of Mulhouse award, selected by Mitsuo Matsuda:
Olea europaea, Juan Antonio Pérez (Spain). Pot from Tokoname.

The prizes

City of Mulhouse award, allocated by Mitsuo Matsuda to an olive tree by Juan Antonio Pérez (Spain).

BCI excellence award: *Pinus mugo*, Enzo Ferrari (Switzerland).

BCI excellence award: *Juniperus sabina*, Paul Putseys (Belgium).

BCI excellence award: *Pinus sylvestris*, Tony Tickle (UK).

BCI suiseki award: stepped terrace stone, François Buttin (France).

Best ishisuki award: Arte Bonsai Club.

Best deadwood award, selected by François Jeker: olive, Didier Weiss (France).

Excellence of bonsai design award, selected by Chase Rosade:
Picea abies, Christophe Hager (France).

Esprit Bonsai prize: *Ulmus minor*, Werner Busch (Germany).



BCI excellence
award:
Pinus mugo,
Enzo Ferrari
(Switzerland).
Japanese pot.



Best deadwood
award, selected
by François Jeker:
Olea europaea,
Didier Weiss. Pot
by Bryan Albright.



BCI excellence
award: Scots
pine, Tony
Tickle (UK).
Natural
stone pot.

In tribute to Willi Benz

Since kusamono often accompany bonsai – although that is not their only purpose – Othmar Auer (Italy) displayed a selection of kusamono from his collection at the far end of the demonstration room. His highly evocative compositions are characterised by a sense of poetry and lightness.

Gudrun Benz was invited to display a large number of suiseki from her late husband's marvellous collection: a major figure on the international suiseki scene, he passed away a few years ago. The BCI's president presented Gudrun with a special award in recognition of services rendered to suiseki.

No major exhibition is without its trade market. On the esplanade of the exhibition centre, a marquee housed the trade village, which also happened to be the obligatory route for reaching the upper level of the convention's exhibition and conference space. Some fifty professionals were selling pots, trees, tools, kakemono, books and magazines.

It is worth noting that participants in this convention also had access to Folie'Flore and to the convention of the Fédération Française de Bonsai (French Bonsai Federation).



Luis Vallejo (Spain) exhibited some of his trees, including this oak, *Quercus suber*. Antique Chinese pot.



Mountain lake stone. Origin: Japan.
Collection of Willi Benz.



The Italian kusamono expert Othmar Auer displayed about 10 of his works, including this very light and deceptively simple one.



Tribute was paid to the collection of the late Willi Benz by his widow Gudrun.



Glenis Bebb, BCI president, presented a special award to Gudrun Benz for services to suiseki.

Educational demonstrations

Back in the demonstration room, a fine array of talented bonsai artists rubbed shoulders over the three days of the event: Enzo Ferrari (Switzerland) assisted by Didier Weiss and Frédéric Celauro; Jean-François Busquet (France); Dirk Dabringhausen (Germany); Julian de Marco (Spain); François Jeker; Mitsuo Matsuda (Japan); Jean-Paul Polmans (Belgium); Othmar Auer (Italy); Soazic Le Franc (France); John Wang (USA); and Budi Sulistyo (Malaysia). The demonstrations set out to be very educational, as François Jeker announced, and the microphone was passed around between the demonstrators so that they could give plenty of explanations about their work and their approach.

On the Sunday afternoon, a final ceremony brought this rich and intense weekend to a close. Passion brings people together and builds bridges – the art of bonsai is an illustration of that. Every effort had been made for bonsai lovers to deepen their knowledge. Connections must certainly have been formed while looking at trees or commenting on demonstrations. A love for the beauty of nature and trees was very present over these three days in Mulhouse. Mulhouse loves Bonsai! ●



Julian de Marco (Spain).



François Jeker (France).



Enzo Ferrari (Switzerland).

Othmar Auer (Italy) – wearing glasses.



Dirk Dabringhausen (Germany).



Jean-François Busquet (France).



Soazic Le Franc, master of Sogetsu ikebana.

THE DEMONSTRATORS



Jean-Paul Polmans (Belgium).



Installed in the botanic and zoological gardens, some of the trees from the Fédération française de bonsaï congress benefited from being displayed in a very poetic, but unconventional, setting.

FÉDÉRATION FRANÇAISE DE BONSAÏ

A congress between garden and museum

Bonsaists and their trees found their way to gardens or to a museum at the Fédération française de bonsaï congress, held between 12 and 14 October this year.

Author: Michèle Corbihan

This was an unprecedented occasion when the trees, unbounded by walls, could be found outdoors at the congress of the Fédération française de bonsaï, (FFB) that took place from 12 to 14 October 2018. The weather was particularly fine for the season, which mitigated this infringement of the rules. It only concerned some of the trees as the exhibition was divided into three different locations, the Parc-Expo, the botanic and zoological gardens and the Museum of Fine Arts.

“When François Jeker proposed that we organise our congress here, at the same time as



Special mention of “Outstanding tree” went to this *Acer palmatum* by Gilles Hannauer, installed in the Mulhouse botanic and zoological gardens.

Outstanding trees

Each year, the panel of judges from the Fédération française de bonsaï awards the special mention for “outstanding trees” to the best trees in the exhibition.

Acer palmatum, Gilles Hannauer

Juniperus chinensis, Laurent Petitpain

Shohin display, Sébastien Joubert

Juniper over rock, David Viger

Composition, Eric Vieren

Forsythia, Dominique Merger

Five elements plus one composition, AFFAB

Three-tree composition, Ronan Le

Bras

Buxus sempervirens, Olivier Barreau

Black pine, Pierre-Yves Lidec

Hawthorn, Julien Bec

Fagus sylvatica, Stéphane Daniel

the Bonsai Clubs International Convention, we gladly accepted”, declared Philippe Massard, the federation’s president, at the opening ceremony of the BCI International convention. “This is a very different congress for us from the ones we usually organise.”

It certainly was a different congress with its multiplicity of locations and unconventional outdoor displays, and consequently, the lack of signage. Some felt that the outdoor installation was barely adequate and ramshackle; others liked this immersion of little trees among the big and thought it was “marvellous”. Opinions were many – like the locations.

An extra muros exhibition

Bonsai in the midst of trees in the botanic and zoological gardens! No traditional displays were possible here and the bonsai were placed on large wooden planks, against a backdrop of fraternal garden trees. It caused some concern to their owners, who were unused to this type of exhibition without any security to safeguard their protégés. No incident marred the occasion. The setting was poetic and peaceful, and the trees in the pots could commune with their large congeners.

A little further away, other trees had taken up position in the shelter of a greenhouse, which was appropriate for lightweight shohin and mame, for just a small breeze can destabilise them if they are not protected.

At the entrance to the gardens, photographs of bonsai from overseas were displayed in the shop window. As these Bonsai could not have been transported from Reunion, Martinique and Guadeloupe, this was a way for members of overseas clubs to show their trees to their metropolitan counterparts. ►►►



Special mention of “Outstanding tree” to this black pine by Pierre-Yves Lidec installed in the shade of some large trees.



Special mention of “Outstanding tree” to a *Buxus sempervirens*, by Olivier Barreau.



Special mention of “Outstanding tree” for a shohin composition shohin (elm and white pine) by Sébastien Joubert, Région Centre (central region). The pine teases a bear in the backdrop photo in the greenhouse where the composition was displayed.



Special mention of "Outstanding tree" to a *Juniperus chinensis*, by Laurent Petitpain, Région Est (eastern region).

▶▶▶ It is difficult to give an overview of the exhibition because of the fragmentation of the sites, but one can say that, once again, the trees were beautiful.

More trees were installed at the Park-Expo near the bonsai of the BCI exhibition, while the remainder of the troops were billeted in the Museum of Fine Arts along with suiseki from the AFAS (Association française de suiseki).

Stones on blocks

In the Villa Steinbach that houses the museum, a few trees were exhibited on the ground floor. Visitors also had the pleasure of viewing the permanent collection on the second floor – works of art from the 15th century to modern art, the main body of which are paintings executed between 1860 and 1914. The third floor was given over to the AFAS suiseki exhibition. The stones were magnificently displayed on white blocks which showed them off to perfection! The bright light of day enhanced the scenography that was worthy of ... a museum.



At the Mulhouse Museum of Fine Art. At the back, a near-view mountain stone (*Kinzan seki*). Provenance Vosges. Collection Yiri Ledecy. In the front, a distant mountain stone (*Enzan seki*). Provenance Cuissai, Normandy. Collection Pierre Chantry.

Prize for the best suiseki

A stepped terrace stone belonging to François Buttin, received the BCI prize for the best suiseki.

The prize was awarded to this stone, but Glenis Bebb, the president of the BCI, and the vice president were undecided as so many other stones, belonging to the same owner, were prizewinners. In fact, the prize could have been the reward for François Buttin's work and his entire collection.



© PIERRE CHANTRY

The BCI prize for the best suiseki: stepped terrace stone (*Dan seki*). Provenance Basque Country. François Buttin.

Getting back to the botanic and zoological gardens – in a shuttle bus provided by the municipality for visitors to the three congress sites – outside, in the shade near a greenhouse, contestants came face to face in the New Talent 2018 competition. Mathieu Coquard from the Rhône-Alpes was the winner and will have the pleasure of defending the colours of the Fédération at the EBA convention in 2019, in Albi (in the Tarn department).

One had to go to the Parc-Expo to the tent with the professional traders' village to watch the various demonstrations of the FFB congress. Alone or in pairs, Francisco Ferreira and Alain Arnaud, Michel Brohet, Ronan Le Bras and Pierre Rudelle, Jean Croizier, Jean-Marc Ladagnos and Bruno Simon all took their turn on the stage.

The poetry of bonsai

If merging the FFB congress with the BCI convention made sense, the atmosphere may have suffered a little because of the distance between the exhibition sites of the FFB's trees from the Parc-Expo, the nerve centre of the bonsai world convention. It gave the effect of the small being diluted by the large ... be that as it may, we will cherish the memory of the poetry of its bonsai backed against the large trees.

The FFB will be present again in 2019 at its usual annual meeting in Albi, where – in a more classic configuration this time – it will join forces with the European Bonsai Association (EBA). ●



The New Talent Competition 2018: Mathieu Coquard secured the title.



Francisco Ferreira and Alain Arnaud worked on a pine.



Michel Brohet with a pine.



Ronan Le Bras and Pierre Rudelle shaping a pine.



© DANIEL GAUTHER

Photos of bonsai from overseas departments allowed their members to participate in the congress with their trees. Bloodwood tree, *Haematoxylum campechianum*, Tropik Bonsai Club, Martinique.



The young and not so young, faithful regulars or newcomers thronged to the European Bonsai-San Show held on 6 and 7 October in Saulieu, in the Côte d'Or department.

EUROPEAN BONSAI-SAN SHOW

Proven loyalty!

Over the years the European Bonsai-San Show at Saulieu, has gathered together amateurs and professionals. The 2018 edition proved to be the greatest success, which bears witness to the bonsai world's attachment to this event.

Author: Michèle Corbihan



Frédéric and Stéphanie Chenal, the organisers, bring people to bonsai with their good humour and friendliness.

The 2018 European Bonsai-San Show was an eagerly anticipated event! The organisers were heartened by the many loyal participants who were present at the opening of the show on Saturday 6 October. As they have done every year for the last six years, the public flocked to the exhibition grounds, rewarded by the warmth of brilliant sunshine. Essentially, the recipe for this success was simple: an exhibition of high quality trees, demonstrations given by renowned international guests – Luis Baliño, Jorge Campos, Salvatore Liporace, Luigi Maggioni and Danny Use, and from Korea, SeokJu Kim, Sukhun Gang, Youn Hang Her, Gwangjong Lee, Songho Choi and Wondong Jo – as well as a large market of profes-



Best of show and Best big size conifer: Laos Garden, *Taxus baccata*, by Alberto Baleato Pumar. Height: 85cm (33½ in.).



Best of show: *Pinus mugo*, Nik Rozman. Height: 74cm (29½ in.).

sional traders. An added bonus was the friendly touch of the organisers, Frédéric and Stéphanie Chenal, who know how to pull this kind of event together without fuss, and to give it the necessary conviviality.

They were all there

“Are you going to Saulieu?” was the question on everyone’s lips for nearly a year, ever since Frédéric and Stéphanie decided to go ahead with the show despite the Bonsai World Convention in Mulhouse, coinciding with their usual date. They had to bring the European Bonsai-San Show forward a week to the first weekend in October 2018, so that visitors could go to both shows if need be and, no doubt, to communicate a little more.

The loyalty of the exhibitors and the trade professionals did the rest. They were all there and happy to share this great bonsai festival with visitors. The European Bonsai-San Show is also a friendly annual get together where enthusiasts exchange news, pay homage to those who are no longer here, talk about their trees, their projects, their problems and solutions, shop, and quite simply, enjoy and live the moment. ►►►

Show results

• Best of show

Juniperus sabina, Xavier Massanet.

Pinus mugo, Nik Rozman.

Taxus baccata, Alberto Baleato Pumar.

Juniperus chinensis ‘Itoigawa’, Guido Pozzoli.

• **The ABFF prize** (Asia-Pacific bonsai friendship federation), awarded by the Korean guests to: *Pinus uncinata*, Jesus Valero Belmonte.

• Partners prize

Best new style, *Bonsai Focus*:

Ulmus parviflora, Laurent Darrieux.

Best big size conifer, Laos Garden:

Taxus baccata, Alberto Baleato Pumar.

Best big size deciduous tree, *Esprit*

Bonsai International: *Acer palmatum*, Pierre de Meckenheim.

Best deciduous shohin, Bontxai: *Acer buergerianum*, Alexandre Escudero.

Best shohin conifer, Bonsai

Plaza: *Juniperus chinensis*,

Carlos Fernandez de Betoño.

Best match bonsai and table, Pascal Houdusse: *Crataegus monogyna*, Warren Radford.

Best deciduous kifu, Saruyama Bonsai: *Acer palmatum*, Guillaume Godderis.

Best shohin display, Bonsai Shohin Japan: Xavier Ladet.

Best Japanese tree, Yokoso Japanese gardens: *Pinus thunbergii*, Alexandre Escudero.

Best match bonsai and pot, Greg Ceramics: *Juniperus chinensis*, Enrico Pavin.

Best chuhin conifer, The bonsai Factory, Carlos Van der Vaart: *Taxus*, Luis Baliño.

Best European pot and tree combination, European Bonsai Potter collective: *Carpinus coreana*, Jean Paul Polmans.



Best of show: *Juniperus sabina*,
Xavier Massanet. Height: 45cm (17¾ in.).



Best of show: *Juniperus chinensis* 'Itogawa',
Guido Pozzoli. Height: 70cm (69½ in.).



Best deciduous kifu, Saruyama bonsai:
Acer palmatum, Guillaume Godderis.

The Burton style

Beautiful trees – over a hundred selected without concession by Frédéric Chenal – trees worthy of the Kokufu ten was sometimes heard in the aisles – what more can be said?

Conifers were in the majority, as they are so often, with some beautiful, fine and elegant styles.

The greatest surprises were among the deciduous trees: notably, some very attractive *Prunus spinosa*, a magnificent *Ulmus parviflora* belonging to Laurent Darrieux and shaped by him in the Burton style. There was a superb, large maple in the collection of Danny Use, a guest of honour that was not included in the competition, a very fine *Carpinus coreana* by Jean-Paul Polmans as well as other meticulously worked maples. Luigi Maggioni, an invited demonstrator,

displayed many shohin compositions, one of which was made up of three Brazilian trees, and the way in which it was displayed, denounced the situation in Brasil, as he would explain when giving a guided tour of the exhibition (See inset).

The jury consisted of the invited European demonstrators, Luis Baliño, Jorge Campos, Salvatore Liporace, Luigi Maggioni, and Danny Use, who awarded the four Best of Show prizes.

He rewarded, among others, the magnificent *Taxus baccata* by Spanish Alberto Belato Pumar (who also received the prize for best big conifer presented by Laos Garden) and a very beautiful and delicate mugo pine by the young Slovenian, Nik Rozman. The Koreans awarded the ABFF prize (Asia-Pacific bonsai friendship federation) to Jesus Valero Belmonte for his *Pinus uncinata*.



Best big size deciduous, *Esprit Bonsai International*: *Acer palmatum*, Pierre de Meckenheim. Height: 51cm (20 in.).



Best Japanese tree, Yokoso Japanese Gardens: *Pinus thunbergii*, Alexandre Escudero.

Shohin for Brazil

Among his shohin compositions, Italian Luigi Maggioni, displayed one in particular. With three trees from Brazil, metal cages, a few black or white bolts and some red sand, Luigi Maggioni depicts the destruction of the Amazon forest and the political situation in Brazil. The three trees represent one of the largest forests in the world that we are destroying. They are the last survivors positioned on cages, which are prisons in which the guilty (the black bolts), and also

the innocent (the white bolts), are incarcerated.

The king and queen lead the people to look at the last three trees. The people include a guilty party (black bolt) who should be in prison. It is a metaphor for injustice showing that the black and white bolts, innocent or guilty, are not always where they are supposed to be.

The red sand illustrates the blood shed in wars that continue to destroy the world today.



Display by Luigi Maggioni denouncing the destruction of nature and the political situation in Brazil.

Ficus nerifolia, *Calliandra selloi*, *Pithecellobium*.

An old Indian proverb accompanies the display:

"When you have felled the last tree,
When you have netted the last fish,
When you have polluted the last river,
You will then realise that money is not edible."



Best European pot and tree combination, European Bonsai Potter collective: *Carpinus coreana*, Jean-Paul Polmans. Pot: Bryan Albright. Height: 60cm (23½ in.).

ABFF prize, Asia-Pacific bonsai friendship federation, awarded by the Korean guests: *Pinus uncinata*, Jesus Valero Belmonte. Height: 75cm (29½ in.).

● Exhibitions

The partners gave away a dozen or so prizes. And *Esprit Bonsai International* honoured the *Acer palmatum* by Pierre de Meckenheim with the Best big deciduous tree award.

A large market

The demonstrations were grouped together in the afternoons. The demonstrators took their places in the middle of the conference hall, so that spectators could get close to them, and walk around them to watch from different angles, or to wander from one or other of the demonstrations.

The professional traders' market is one of the largest in Europe and is made up of potters, specialist nurseries, bookshops, tool retailers, cabinet makers – enough to meet every need.



The demonstration hall.



A tribute to Laurent Breyse, a much cherished bonsai artist and professional, who died in the spring of this year.



Danny Use created an ishizuki with a *Juniperus sabina*.



Luis Baliño, in blue and Jorge Campos, works on a pine during the weekend.



The Koreans – SeokJu Kim and Youn Hang Her, Gwangjong Lee and Sukhun Gang, Songho Choi and Wondong Jo – gave three demonstrations with their assistants.



Salvatore Liporace and Luigi Maggioni worked together for their two demonstrations over the weekend.

Best chuhin conifer, The bonsai Factory, Carlos Van der Vaart: *Taxus*, Luis Baliño. Height: 59cm (23¼ in.).





Best new style, *Bonsai Focus: Ulmus parviflora*,
Laurent Darrieux. Height: 100cm (39½ in.).

Among the absentees, there was one in particular, Laurent Breysse, artist and bonsai professional whom we greatly miss. His professional friends honoured him with a dedicated space.

Meeting in 2019

The European Bonsai-San Show is one of those events, which as part of the European bonsai landscape, seems an immovable fixture. There are very few in Europe for which this can be said, despite the multiplicity of bonsai exhibitions.

“It was an eagerly anticipated edition. We had as many entries, if not more, than we did for last year,” Frédéric Chenal concluded. “We are happy with the result. [...] We feel that there is a real demand, a real expectation.”

It could become a tradition – the date for the next European Bonsai-San Show was fixed even before the doors opened for this edition, indicating the permanence of the EBSS. The date is 12 to 13 October 2019. We already know three of the guests, Bjorn Bjorholm, Jan Culek, and Mauro Stemberger, who will bring several trees from his collection. The fourth guest is to be announced. ●



Acer palmatum ‘Seigen’, by Danny Use.
Height: 100cm (39½ in.).



Takeo Kawabe

**“We succeed
by learning from
our mistakes”**

Takeo Kawabe is somewhat of a UFO in the bonsai landscape: he refuses the title of master, as he sees himself as an artisan, and takes responsibility for his mistakes, which for him are the apprentice's rites of passage towards success.

Author: Isabel Ribeiro

The Japanese master, Takeo Kawabe, a former automobile engineer, lives near Tokyo. Bonsai has been his passion since he was 30 years old, but he still considers himself to be an artisan, who takes responsibility for his mistakes. He has perfected a grafting technique for juniper.

The garden belonging to the charismatic Japanese master Takeo Kawabe is in the suburbs of Tokyo near Omiya and in its discretion perfectly reflects the man. While on the Japan Tour organised by the Bonsai Time Club (Camporosso and Turin, Italy), we visited Takeo Kawabe, whom some of us would like to call “sensei”, but he quickly asserted, “I am not a master, only a bonsai craftsman.”

Takeo Kawabe warmly welcomed us and offered us tea in a room with walls covered with pictures of bonsai, in the middle of which was an old 1970 Kawasaki GS 650 cc. This former automobile engineer and passionate lover of motorcycles is a bonsai convert. At the age of 30, his unusual journey took him as an apprentice to Masahiko Kimu with whom he studied for 12 years. Since when, he has covered a lot of ground!

Learning from one's mistakes

As an introduction, Takeo Kawabe, invited us to question him on everything: his techniques, his tools, his tricks of the trade, and also his errors, which he recognizes and even lays claim to! “This is how one learns – by making mistakes, and yet more mistakes – until one succeeds!” Such humility was surprising from one of the most renowned actors in the bonsai world.

But Takeo Kawabe is like this – generous, voluble and modest. Today he is effusive, because he has before him true bonsai enthusiasts. “I often receive journalists, who interview me in my workshop, but it is only to film the trees I prepare, which will be extremely valuable once they are finished.”

One of his workshops is a bit shed-like put together out of scraps. He built it ►►►

His grafting technique



1 With his project sketched out on cardboard, Takeo Kawabe demonstrates his grafting technique on a juniper to a group of visitors.



In Takeo Kawabe's garden there are mostly conifers, amongst which are trees that will be awarded prizes at the largest Japanese exhibitions.



2 He sharpens the tools that he has made himself.



3 He inserts wiring thread into the scion's pot in order to attach it to the juniper after the graft has been made.



4 The cut made in the stock.



5 The scion peeled back on both sides.



6 Inserting the scion into the cut in the stock.



7 Grafting ribbon wrapped around the stock and scion.



8 A very personal technique for wrapping the grafting ribbon.



9 The grafting is complete and will be further covered with a layer of paste.

Takeo Kawabe wanted to show us the grafting procedure for *Juniperus chinensis* "Itoigawa" on a large juniper dotted all over with plastic pots from grafts already carried out. His knowledge, as always, is the result of many attempts, which at the beginning often failed, but which were eventually crowned with success thanks to his tenacity. He showed us his project for the tree, which he drew on the lid of a cardboard box. Then he set about sharpening his

tools and dextrously showed us step by step how to proceed. He chose a suitable plant, pierced its pot in which he inserted a wire. He then extricated the branch which would take the graft. After removing a layer from either side of the stem of the scion, with an assured gesture he made a cut in the stock branch and enclosed it. "Don't forget that the graft must be placed where it can receive the right amount of light and that the pot must be positioned to facilitate watering,"

he said in good pedagogic fashion. He fixed the wire to neighbouring branches to keep the pot in the chosen position, and then taking a strip of grafting ribbon, he held one end in his mouth leaving his hands free to wrap the graft in many layers of ribbon and to firmly knot the ties. A layer of paste and the operation was finished. Turning towards us with a big smile, he said, "Who would like a go?"



These *Taxus cuspidata*, collected by Takeo Kawabe after being prepared in situ, will become superb bonsai.

►►► entirely by himself, from the lifting bench with its pulley, to his work table, which holds the bonsai and which is made from a barber's chair. Everything is made so that Takeo Kawabe can work independently and lift and move even the heaviest trees alone. This space that he can also make waterproof is also used to sandblast dead wood. The Japanese master designs his own tools – scissors and gouges – that are carefully arranged and to hand in the second workshop where he does the grafting.

Some very old *Taxus*

Outside on the garden shelves are rows of mostly juniper, some pine, the odd small deciduous tree, and then ... some magnificent yew trees (*Taxus cuspidata*)! Dead wood, sometimes elegant, sometimes tortured, is present everywhere on these conifers. Takeo Kawabe has made it one of his specialities.

A few conifers were still in a raw state and others at various stages of preparation. The trees were carefully collected by him, and were prepared with patience before being removed from their natural habitat to continue their lives in special crates. "I am probably the only person to have achieved a good recovery for these old *Taxus* after collecting them!" He told us and explained that he had to make many attempts and many mistakes in order to succeed. But the results are obvious: these trees are future champions that will receive prestigious prizes at the most famous exhibitions.

The craftsman has made long studies of yew in the forests and has even excavated beaches after storms to find dead, denuded trees washed by the waters. When he gets them back to his workshop he analyses their structure, their development and their bearing. "This is how to proceed: one must first know trees in the wild before attempting to turn them into bonsai!"



Many *Taxus cuspidata* with superb dead wood, which has become Takeo Kawabe's speciality.



Contact

Green Age
1566, Mikura, Minuma-ku
Saitama-shi, Saitama
337-0033 Japan

A few deciduous trees can sometimes be seen among the many conifers.



On the left, a Tōhoku juniper, whose dead wood is the cover illustration for the master's book on his work.

“Faults” in trees

The craftsman calls himself impatient, but he respects the needs of each of his tenants and does not cut corners. “If you go too fast, what you will get is a dead tree.” What is the point of technique if one does not know how to keep a tree alive? His strict observance of the vegetation cycles enables him to correctly carry out this long-winded work. He gives his collected plants that he has transplanted many times, the time to recover their strength, before thinking of any aesthetic intervention. When finally a tree is at the

stage to be shaped, he has had time to discover the bonsai's personality, which he is committed to preserving.

His trees have character, and sometimes, they even have “faults” in the eyes of conformists – but so what? It is the tree that decides not people.

Takeo Kawabe shares his experience during the course of his travels both in Japan and abroad. He has a charged agenda and is very much sought after to preside over exhibitions or to give lectures. He never stops and he told us that it is Mrs

Kawabe who manages his schedule. He writes articles on advanced techniques that are presented as a series of images and published in Japanese magazines on bonsai. He has also authored a beautiful book in Japanese showing his work on his trees.

Takeo Kawabe's secret is his insatiable curiosity. Turning to us he said emphatically “Always be curious and never stop!” His words were punctuated with sweeping gestures, and then folding his rough, workman's hands, he smiled at us benevolently. ●

Preparing for overwintering

There are numerous overwintering preparations to be made before the onset of the cold weather - cleaning, preparing the greenhouse, preventive treatments etc.

Author: Jérôme Hay

If November marks the beginning of dormancy for plants, for us it is the beginning of intense activity. After turning colour in autumn, the leaves of deciduous trees drop. The dormancy period has arrived and it's time to prepare the plants for overwintering. The fertiliser input of a few months previously, has enabled the tree to build up reserves, and now that there is minimum activity, it is no longer required. In fact, it is important to start by removing any solid fertiliser residue and to thoroughly rinse the root ball with clean water to mitigate fertiliser build-up. It is essential to clean each plant.

A little cleaning

Crowding plants close together to protect them from the cold or placing them in a structure that is more or less sealed, could be harmful and propagate disease and insects. To help this problem, remove the remaining leaves on the tree. Avoid using scissors by moistening the foliage 48 hours beforehand. This will soften the petiole, making it easier to remove the leaf and preserve the future bud. The fruit must also be removed as these attract rodents and birds. Clean the trunk of moss by brushing, or spraying with a fairly strong jet of water to loosen it. You can also treat it with an iron-based product to completely eradicate it. However, this type of product can stain, and give a slightly rusty colour to the trunk. Dead wood must be brushed and treated with jin seal. The last step consists of cleaning the pots, and not forgetting to clean them underneath.

Good exposure

Exposure and overwintering conditions consist of a well-lit location with relative humidity and

that is not prone to excessive temperature spikes. A cold greenhouse although not mandatory, is the best environment for successful overwintering. Give the trees space when placing them so that the air can circulate. And avoid putting them directly onto the ground, unless it is concrete, to prevent rising damp and contamination from insects and disease. In a closed atmosphere it is important to remember to water the trees from time to time, particularly conifers, which need water even in winter. However, their evaporation capacity is limited, so water them sparingly. Leafless, deciduous trees tolerate poor lighting. It is the opposite for conifers that must be fully exposed to light.

Preventive treatments

The winter season marks the time for the first preventive treatments to disinfect and maintain the trees in optimal health during this period. Jin seal, with its insect repellent and fungicide properties keeps trees free of all contamination. It is applied as a spray in a dosage of 100ml to 1 litre of water for deciduous trees and 30ml to 1 litre of water for conifers. For obvious reasons such as odour and ease of application, it is advisable to carry out this treatment before putting the trees away. Bordeaux mixture is complementary. However, because its spectrum of activity against fungus varies, leave a couple of weeks between the two treatments to avoid any phytotoxicity. In both cases, protect the pot to prevent any run-off from the product, which could attack the microbial life of the substrate.

Regular monitoring

Regular monitoring to ensure correct temperatures during winter is of paramount importance. The greenhouse should stay open night and day, unless the temperature drops below 0°C. In very cold spells, if it is sunny and the temperature rises, don't hesitate to let in the air during these hours, in order to limit the thermic amplitude between day and night. Protection does not mean overprotection. At the height of the cold season, there can be as much dehydration as in summer. Water lightly when temperatures are above 0°C. Don't hesitate to spray your plants with an anti-stress product which will help it react against the cold in winter. Spraying with trace elements creates an effective and protective cutaneous barrier during the dormancy period. ●

1

Some tree care before overwintering is necessary. One must clean the surface of the pot to rid the bonsai of organic matter that has collected there as well as fertiliser residues.

2

Detach the moss from the trunk and branches with a fairly strong jet of water.



3 It is essential to remove the leaves from marcescent species - leaves that wither without falling - to rid the tree from any hidden insects.



4 The last fruit from fruit trees must also be removed so as not to attract rodents or birds for whom food is scarce in winter.



5 At the end of winter a cold greenhouse will protect the plants at the beginning of the growing season and prevent problems caused by late frosts.



6 After pruning lightly and before putting the trees away in a cold frame, one applies a disinfectant such as jin seal or Bordeaux mixture.

The cold greenhouse

The least expensive cold greenhouses are generally plastic tunnels or small cold greenhouses for the garden. They should be placed away from direct sunlight to avoid temperature extremes between day and night. They

allow for fairly slow temperatures with limited amplitude. However, they are not equipped against frost, at least for bonsai cultivation. This protection also maintains humidity at reasonable levels, which helps to keep the beauty and

vigour of certain trees such as semi-evergreens intact during winter. You will also benefit from a shelter and good working conditions during the coldest months.

Formation à la préparation aux expositions

Académie Bonsaï, école d'enseignement de tradition Japonaise élargi ses formations.

Elle propose, à partir du printemps 2019, une formation de 2 ans, à raison de 2 fois 3 jours par an (Printemps et Automne), sous la direction de **Maitre Akanuma**, axée sur la préparation aux expositions.

Elle s'adresse à des bonsaïka aguerris disposant d'arbres suffisamment avancés pour être exposés dans les 2 ans. Chaque participant fera évoluer ses arbres (5 à 10 selon taille) sur les 2 années afin de les préparer à une exposition. Chaque arbre présenté par le participant fera l'objet d'une analyse commune avec les autres stagiaires et le maître qui proposera les actions spécifiques à mener entre les sessions pour améliorer l'arbre et mener à bien son évolution vers la présentation.

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Outre l'adhésion annuelle à l'Académie de 40€, le coût d'une session de trois jours est de 330 € hors hébergement et repas.

Les lieux et dates seront arrêtés en fonction de l'appartenance géographique des postulants.
La première session est envisagée soit les jeudi 28 Février, vendredi 1 et samedi 2 Mars 2019 à LUNEL,
soit les 3, 4, 5, mars à CARCASSONNE. Une session ouvrira en Région Parisienne à l'automne 2019.



Pour tout renseignement complémentaire, vous pouvez contacter

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Matters of style

Author: Antonio Ricchiari

Style results from studying the form of a tree to create a bonsai. The concept of "style" relates to the various styles in bonsai (regarding the past, tradition, schools ...), and also to making a suitable choice of shape according to the species of tree.

Rules of style can be taught, but creativity and imagination cannot.

The search for a style begins with the raw material – the trunk, the branches, the proportions, the visual effect – and reaches the level of an artistic creative process. Nature creates trees, and bonsaists study their various forms to assimilate them and thus craft a bonsai. Style correlates with the tree's habitat: no two trees are alike, because each grows and develops in its own way.

The styles are Japanese in origin. The idea of codification came from a striving to classify the forms that trees take on in nature, through the passage of time and the weather events that they are subjected to.

The basic styles

There are over thirty styles in the art of bonsai, classified so as to encompass all the possibilities of trunk movement. The main five are the basic ones:

- formal upright (*chokkan*)
- informal upright (*moyo-gi*)
- slanting (*shakan*)
- semi-cascade (*han kengai*)
- cascade (*kengai*).

The position of the apex is dependent on the style:

- upright style: apex directly above the tree's base

- slanting style: apex on a slant in relation to the base

- semi-cascade style: apex at the same level as the base

- cascade style: apex lower down than the base.

When you have a clear idea of how to design and create a bonsai – do it! But please, don't be held prisoner by the rules! Although the rules are clear and well known, you can style a bonsai however you like. Leonardo da Vinci would study trees and plants, and would draw them, taking precise notes on their branch structure and on how they grew and developed.

In Japan, the styles came about for reasons of practicality and ease for bonsaists. It is thus simpler to refer to this group of styles rather than having to describe all of a specimen's characteristics every time.

So, there are five fundamental styles in the modern Japanese school. All the variations in shape that can be found in nature are derivatives from these five styles. To find an example of a shape, inspiration can come from an expression or evocation of nature.

Recurring triangular forms

In bonsai, the triangle is the basis of correct styling. This aesthetic is described as an "imperfect, impermanent and incomplete" form of beauty. The idea directly derives from a Buddhist concept: the three marks of existence. The definition

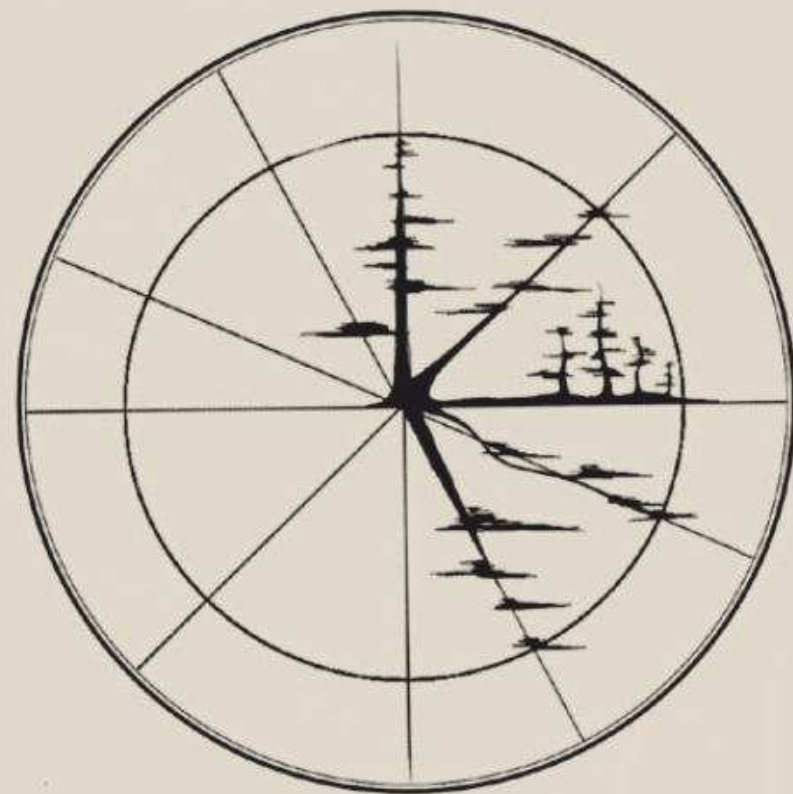
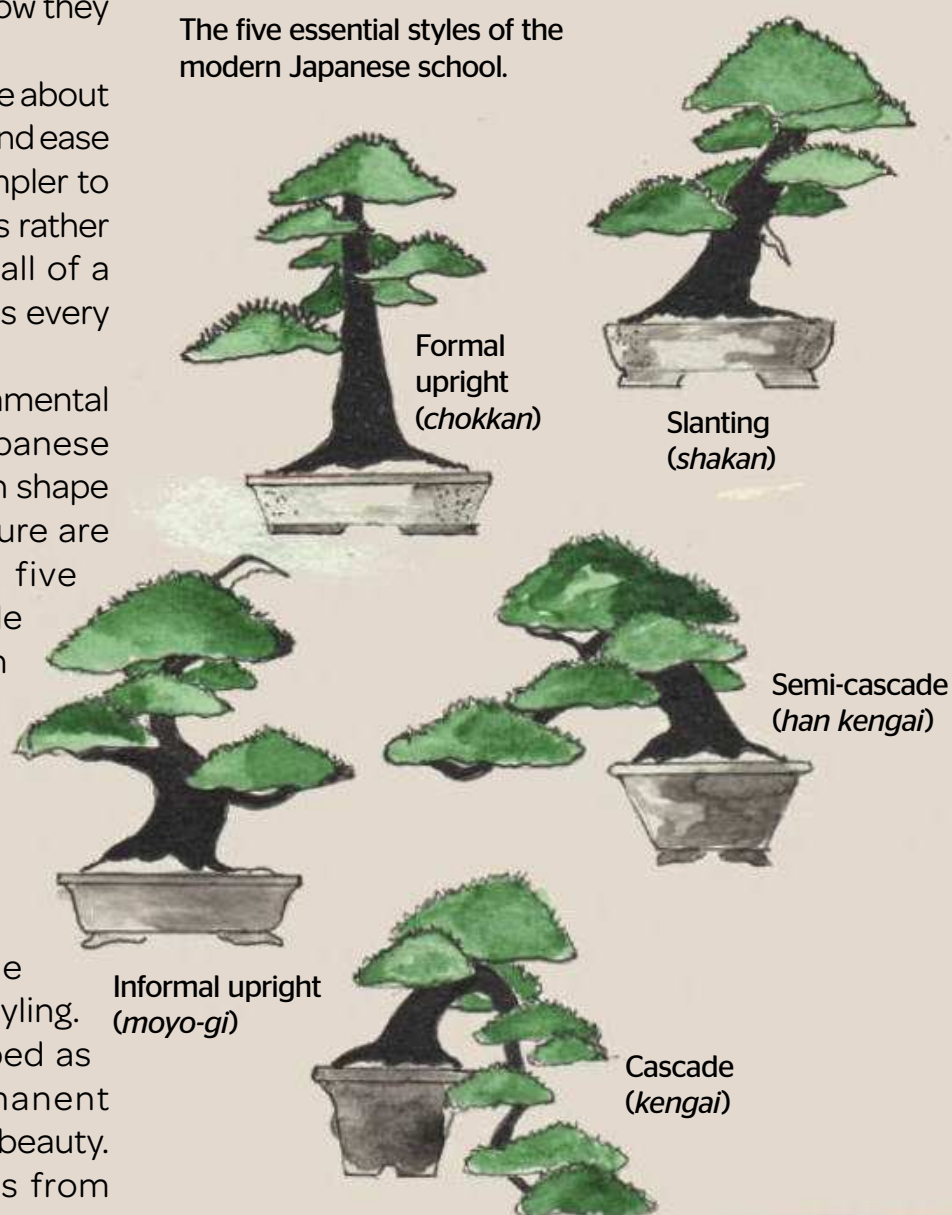
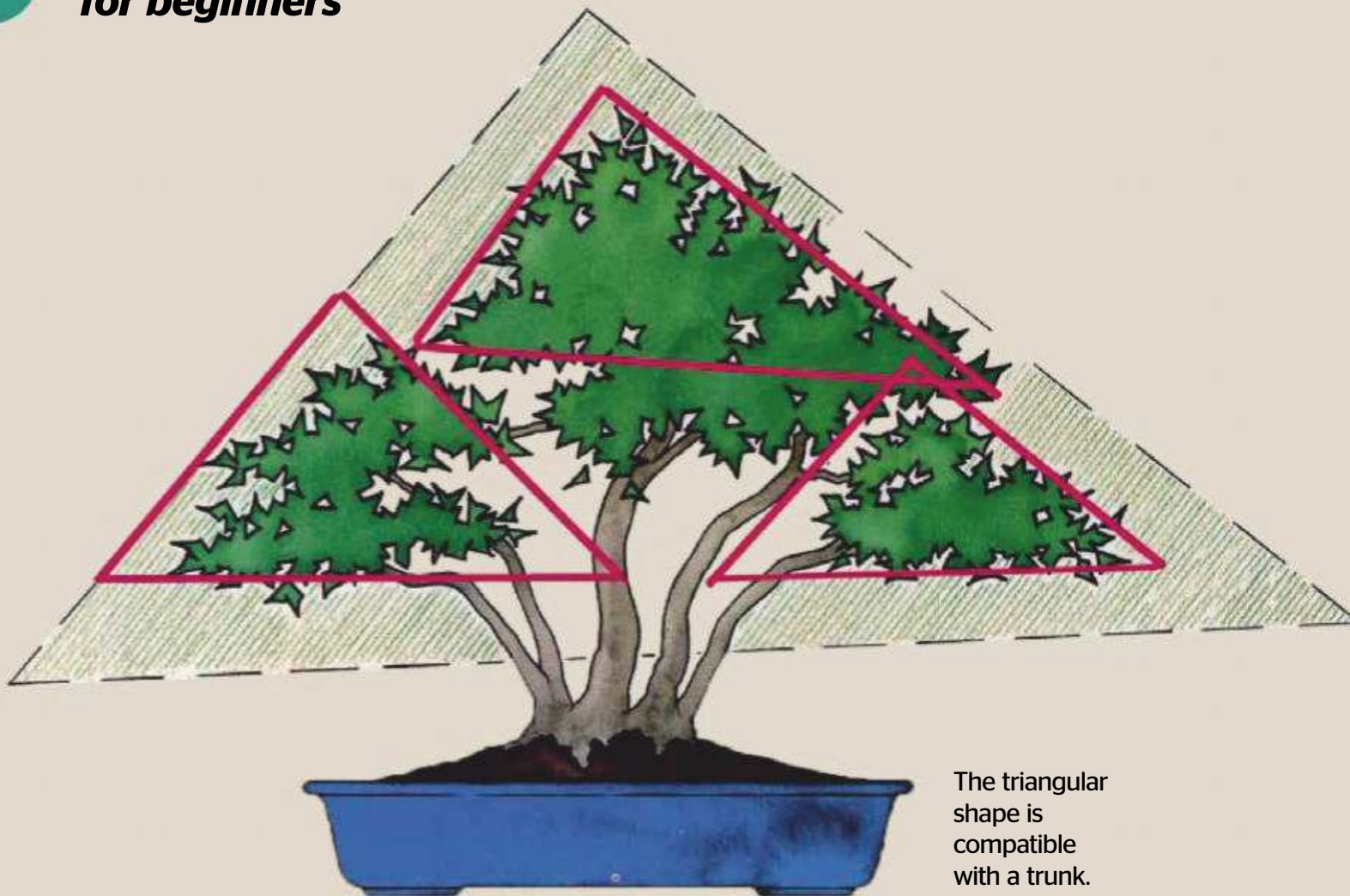


Diagram summing up the five basic styles and their angles of tilt.

The five essential styles of the modern Japanese school.





The triangular shape is compatible with a trunk.

of triangularity comes from its relationship to the essential geometrical forms such as the point, the circle, the cross and the square. In Greek and Roman culture, the triangle was the primary shape, and all other planar shapes could be divided into several triangles. The triangle therefore expresses the concept of simplicity. All things are expressed in a simple, natural way.

The scalene form of this geometrical shape – a triangle in which all three sides are different lengths – represents asymmetry. The idea of controlling balance in a composition between unevenness and asymmetry is an essential principle in bonsai aesthetics. Nature itself is full of beauty and harmonious relationships that are asymmetrical, even if they are subsequently balanced out. It is thus a dynamic form of beauty that is attractive and convincing.



The form of the triangle varies according to the trunk's movement.

Naturalness

Naturalness is the absence of artifice, with the full intention of effortless creation. It is essential for a Japanese garden's "spontaneous naturalness" to be sensed immediately by the viewer. This reminds us that the process of creating a bonsai is a conscious one, even if we are trying to create the feel of a tree. It is not raw nature as such, but a project with an aim. The nature of Eastern people is identified within this concept – this way of comprehending on the one hand Nature, with all its perfection, and on the other the limits of human intervention in interpreting it, with its own imperfections.

Visual weight

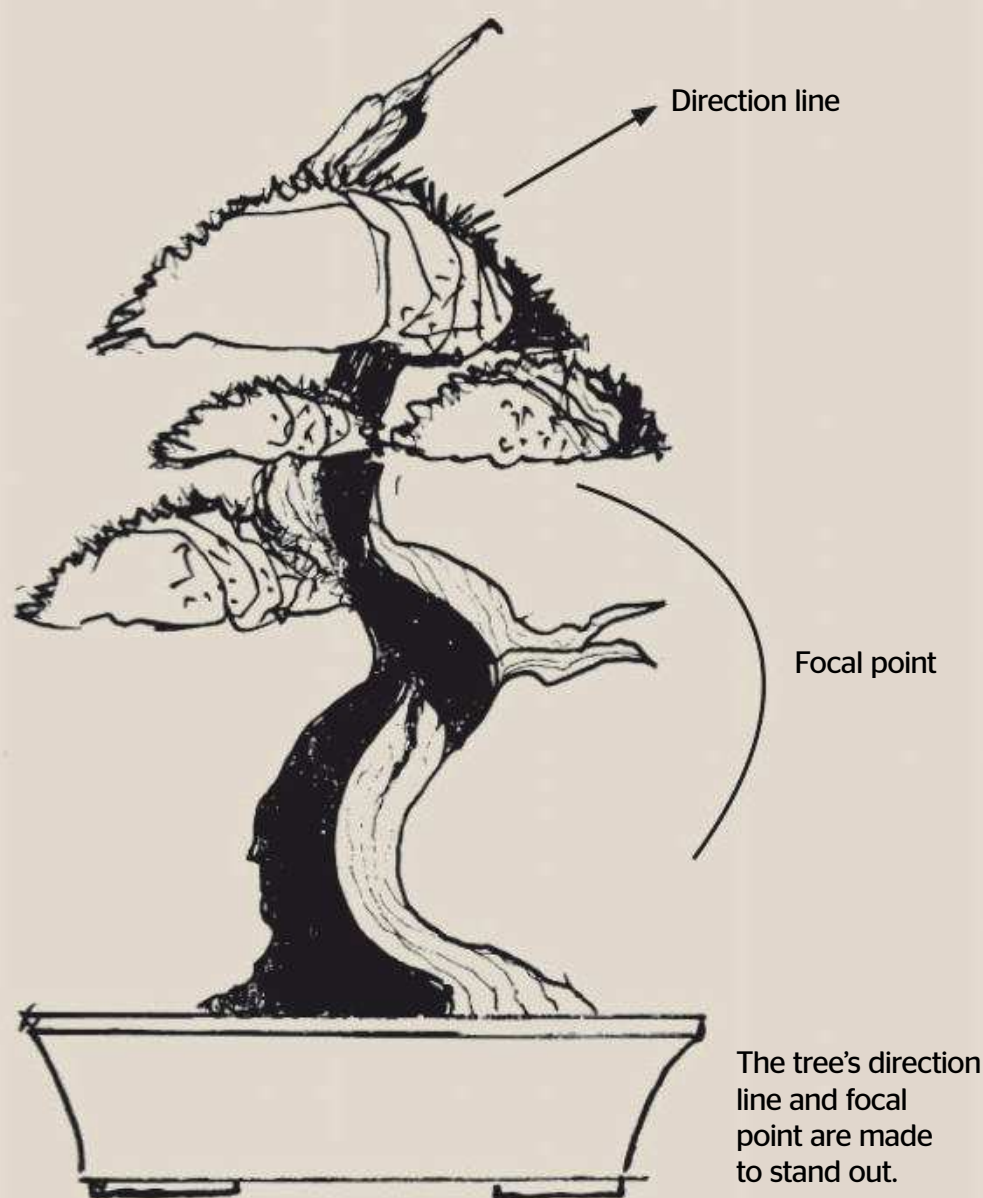
Any image is made up of one or more objects and/or figures which together achieve a state of balance, according to broadly accepted cultural conditions. Consequently, by using a series of triangles, the final shape must be a balanced one.

This set of concepts embodies triangularity – an important and absolute factor in creating bonsai, which is found in all the styles. A triangular, asymmetric silhouette gives dynamism to a tree and to its overall appearance, which is never static.

Triangular shapes, which vary according to the shape of the trunk, style and specimen, generate movement, energy, stability and aesthetic perceptions, depending on the styling. The triangular forms that constitute a foliage pad are part of the tree's shape. Varying just one of its component parts can lead to a change in the overall appearance of the tree, even if the trunk remains unaltered. It is through perfect positioning of these triangular elements that a tree can be given credibility (or "treeness"), while combining them with dynamism and strong lines. Without all of this, a bonsai is static and inexpressive. Triangularity is used again by bonsaists when styling the main branches three-dimensionally in such a way that they remain within a triangle whether they are viewed from the side or from above.

Choosing the first branch

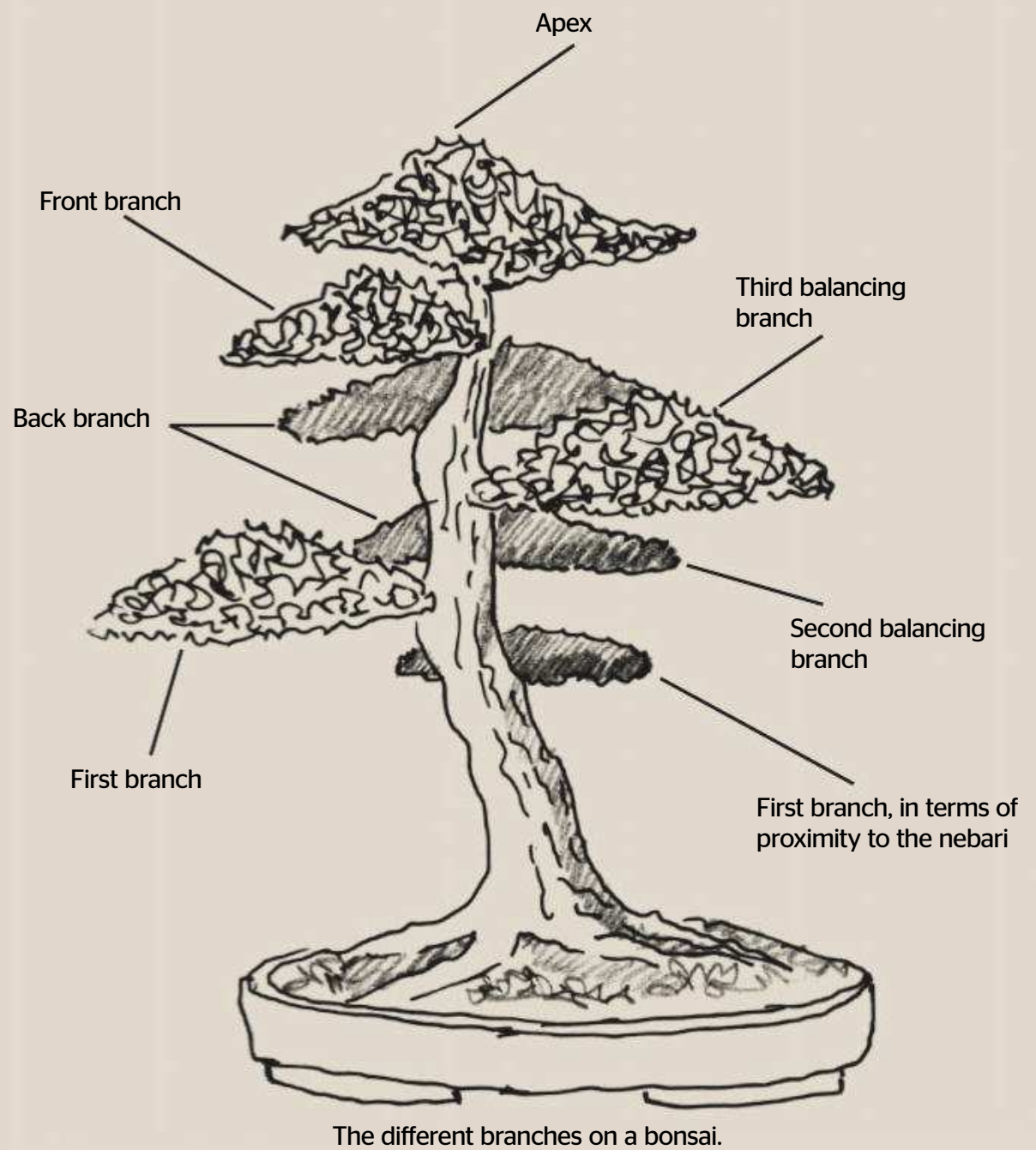
It is the first branch that determines the future bonsai's design. This is the one that influences the tree's height, as well as the positioning of the other branches. According to the rules, this branch should be the longest and sturdiest. Choosing it is not



A wonderful example of a juniper, displayed at the Crespi Bonsai Museum in Parabiago, Italy.

It is the first branch that determines the future bonsai's design.

easy, because the styling of the bonsai will depend on it. Several interpretations stem from this choice: representing a young or old specimen, a squat or airy tree, masculine or feminine ... without forgetting that the final result must look beautiful and balanced. ●



The first branch

The first, or lowest, branch (*ichi-no-eda*) can be positioned to either the left or the right, but never to the front or back of the tree. From an aesthetic and structural point of view, it should be the most important branch and should be found about a third or halfway up the tree. It is normally the longest and thickest branch, and its foliage pad should be the one with the most interesting characteristics.

The tree's silhouette shows off the weight of the first branch and the focal point that is determined by the trunk's shape. The tree in this drawing is about 20 cm (almost 8 in.) tall. The first branch should be about 7 cm (2¾ in.) up from the base. In the remaining 13 cm (5¼ in.), the other branches are positioned relative to the first one.



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Getting off to a good start with supermarket bonsai

Through lack of knowledge, ficus or Chinese elm, bought in a supermarket, regularly end up in the rubbish bin. These easy species require a little more care than being left year-round on a windowsill.

Author: Jérôme Hay

Although bonsai is a path to knowledge, there is a start to everything. As a beginner, you may have already succumbed and bought a bonsai and, as in most cases, you have acquired a ficus or Chinese elm, commonly found in supermarkets or garden shops. Commercial centres may be gifted in the art of seducing their clients – us unfortunately – but they are far from skilled in giving advice or in matters of cultivation. In fact, even if few of us admit it, we all began with a supermarket bonsai. Despite everything one may say about it, plants found in commercial centres can generate a passion for bonsai, by their availability and price.

1 Subtropical plants

If a bonsai is already part of your life, before you encounter the first difficulties, you should know that there are two types of bonsai: indoor bonsai and outdoor bonsai. The latter are trees that grow in our latitudes, are impervious to the cold, and are cultivated outdoors the year round.



Ficus retusa is among those bonsai that are called “indoor” plants and are often found in large commercial centres. A subtropical species, it nevertheless requires appropriate growing conditions.

Preconceptions

Although there is a preconceived belief that a bonsai is an indoor plant, because one has bought it indoors, the reality is rather more complicated: it shows that one has not yet asked oneself the right questions. The plant's appearance which charmed us into taking the step of buying it, took precedence over how it should be cultivated.

On the other hand, what are called “indoor” bonsai, those commonly found in large shopping centres, are in fact subtropical plants that also have parameters to be respected in order to survive: the right temperature, humidity and light. It would be wishful thinking to believe that all these conditions for the plant’s survival can be met, even minimally, inside the house.

Two very common species, the ficus and the Chinese elm, have completely different requirements, but are easy to cultivate. Bear in mind that translation errors often occur on the labelling. Do not rely on the scanty information they give.

2 The ficus

The ficus is a subtropical plant requiring a temperature of between 15°C to 22°C and freezes at below zero. It would therefore be better to keep it indoors. That said, during the summer period, it likes to be outside in a semi-shady spot. From mid-October – the adjustment period depending on climate – bring the plant indoors and place it in a well-lit spot, but away from direct sunlight.

The tree needs at least 12 hours of light per day with an intensity of 2000 to 5000 lux and 5000 to 6500 kelvin. This means that daylight during winter in our temperate countries is not enough. It is essential to use appropriate artificial light for a minimum of four hours a day. One can simply use a desk lamp with a light therapy bulb and a timer to meet the needs of the plant.

Watering can often cause concern as it depends on the substrate. Ficus are generally repotted in loam, which does not have sufficiently good drainage, which is indispensable. The substrate must always be moist, but not soaking wet. Akadama is the most suitable. The best time to repot is from mid-May to the end of June. The best quality water is rainwater. One can use tap water but it should first be run into an open container and left for 24 hours so that the chlorine can evaporate.

Ficus does not have a dormant period as such, so one can continue to feed it. A liquid, organic fertiliser would be the most appropriate.

3 Chinese elm

The Chinese elm, *Ulmus parvifolia*, more often than not, is labelled as an indoor plant and incorrectly named as zelkova. This species is used to a temperate climate. It is semi-evergreen. If exposed to the cold it becomes deciduous, but in milder climates it is evergreen.

It goes without saying that the Chinese elm must be cultivated outdoors. Although it can occasionally be placed indoors, in the long-term, it would be deprived of its dormancy period, which would exhaust it causing it to die. One must be careful when to buy. In winter, for commercial purposes, the plant will have been

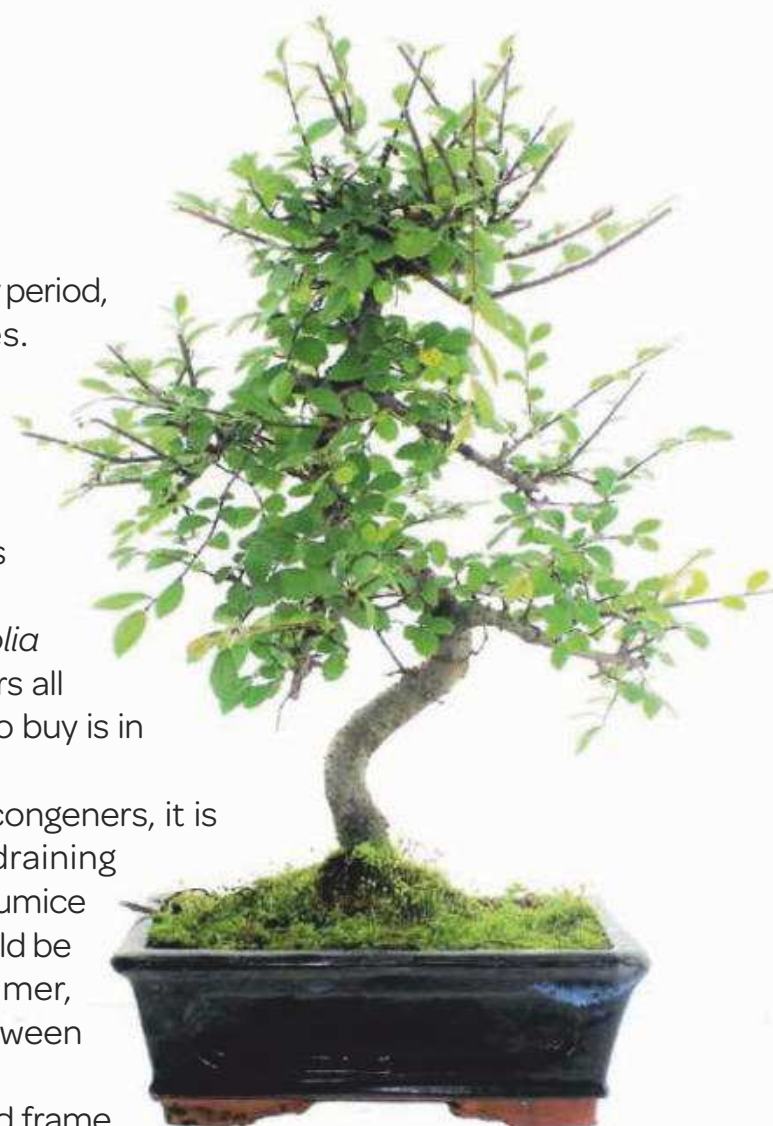
“forced” out of its dormancy period, so that it keeps its leaves. Immediately exposing it to negative temperatures, in its disturbed vegetative cycle, would be fatal for it, because for the tree thinks it is spring!

So as the *Ulmus parvifolia* must be cultivated outdoors all year round, the best time to buy is in spring.

In the same way as its congeners, it is essential to plant it in a draining substrate such as a mix of pumice stone and akadama. It should be watered copiously in summer, leaving larger intervals between watering in winter.

It should be kept in a cold frame and should not be exposed to temperatures below -5°C. With its restored vegetative cycle, it will lose its leaves in autumn and produce new foliage at the beginning of spring. Fertiliser input is in relation to its growth. Use either a liquid or solid organic fertiliser in spring and at the end of summer.

So, even with minimum knowledge, it is entirely possible to cultivate so-called “indoor” bonsai. ●



The Chinese elm, *Ulmus parvifolia*, is a plant used to a temperate climate and is easily found in large commercial centres.



Acclimatised to being outdoors, these Chinese elms are beginning to get their lovely autumn colours.

The olive

A tree between earth and rock

Emblematic of the Mediterranean Basin, the olive is not subject to Japanese codification. It has beautiful bark, impressive twisted trunks and a most attractive hardiness.

Author: Antonio Ricchiari

The hardiness of the wild olive and its old bark are much admired in the bonsai world.

The olive symbolises the essence and identity of the Mediterranean basin. Its history of thousands of years can be traced from cities in Ancient Greece to Moorish Spain and throughout the Roman Empire.

The vision of the olive in ancestral memory evokes a rural civilisation, a concept of earth and rock – one to be cultivated, the other for the construction of shelters. Lands where the olive is found are very often arid or desert, with dry shrubs and a few solitary trees.

No Japanese codification

The rhythm of life in this rural world seems linked to the slow growth of the tree. This is a world that shapes a landscape without violating nature, where cultivating the olive does not involve machinery. All is entrusted to a science thousands of years old and to the knowledge of rocks and earth.

The hardy, ruggedly beautiful olive is a heat-loving, typically Mediterranean species.



When studying a powerful old olive, the beauty in the pattern of its roots, of its wood and its branches, lead one to imagine the life of prehistoric man – a universe that can be envisaged by the observer who knows how to look at it.

In the Nebrodi Mountains in Sicily, especially dear to me from the times I have spent walking there, the olive plays a protective role and their roots hold the ground together. The ability of the species to survive and produce fruit, even in difficult conditions, is part of its identity.

Cultivation tips

Family: Oleaceae

Genus: *Olea*

Species: *Olea europaea*. There is an imprecise number of either cultivated or cultivar varieties related to the species *Olea europaea* L.

Soil: draining made up of 50% pumice stone, 40% loam, 10% river sand.

Watering: abundant.

Exposure: sunny and in a warm greenhouse if below 0°C.

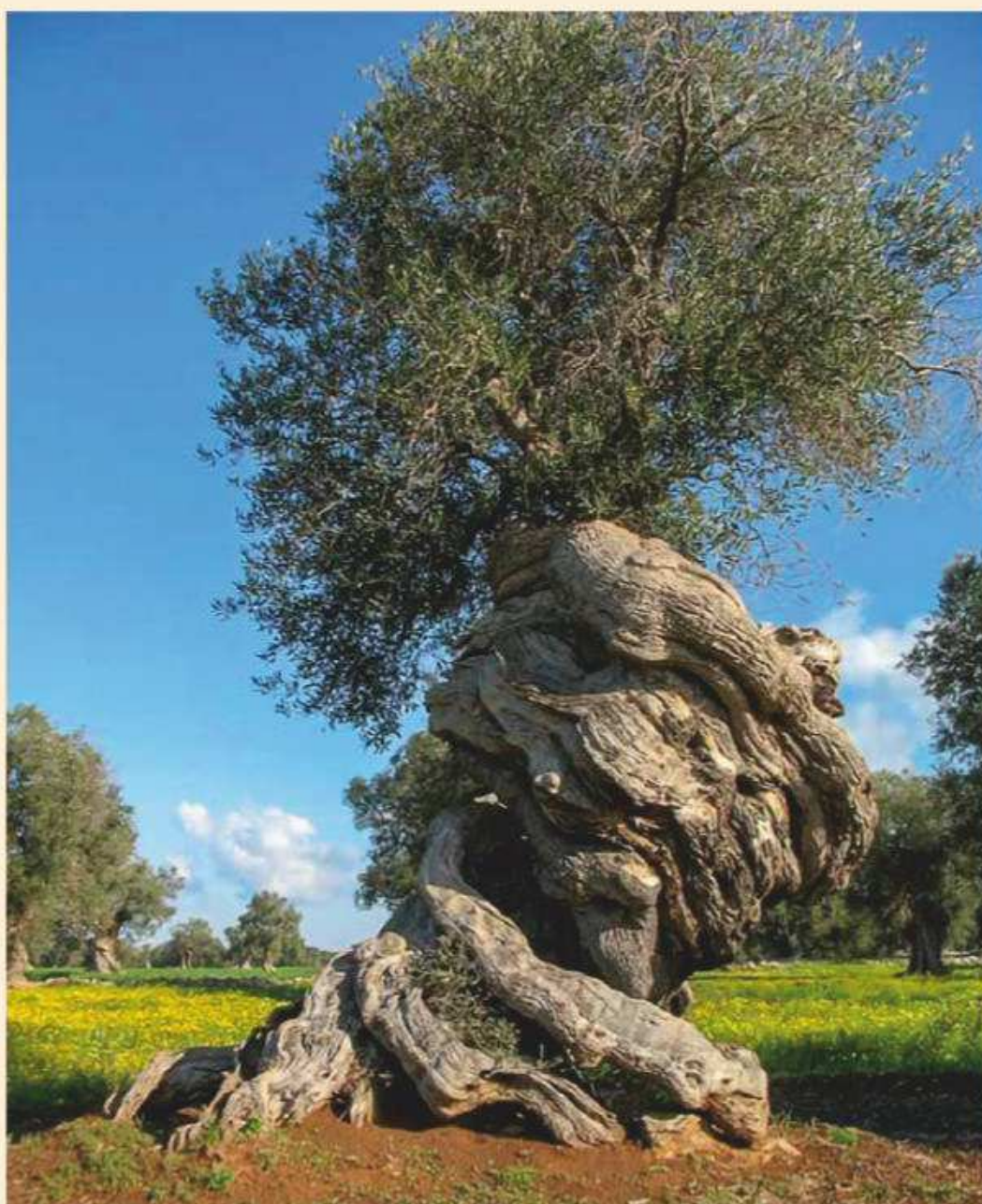
Feeding: organic fertiliser in spring and in autumn.



The work of nature – a superb olive with a hollow trunk (*sabamiki*).



The olive evokes a rural world in which machines are not required for its cultivation.



An ancient olive with an imposing and fascinating trunk.

What about cultivars?

The word “cultivar” is not appropriate for olive growing as there are cultivars made up of individuals with similar phenotypes (a set of observable characteristics) and genotypes (inherent genetic identity). However, we shall use the word “cultivar” for uniform reading, even if the term should really be “clone population”.

In nature

In its natural state the olive is a large shrub with a tangle of numerous trunks that are covered with small branches and twigs. It can grow to a height of between 5 and 20 metres (16 to 65 feet). Its trunk is often twisted and, on very old subjects, hollow with visible living veins.

It has evergreen foliage. The leaves remain on the tree for one to three years and renew every two years. They are coriaceous, lanceolate in shape, grey-green ►►►



The beauty of dead wood of the olive in nature.



In nature, olive trees have impressive bases with powerful surface roots that hold the soil together.



The underside of the olive leaf is silver-green and grey-green on the upper side.

▶▶▶ on the upper side and silver-green on the underside.

Equipped with a strongly developed root system, even on the surface, the olive adapts well to a dry, arid soil. It has a particular characteristic of being able to root itself from a piece of trunk buried in the ground and to throw out many shoots.

This hardy tree does not tolerate temperatures below -5° or -6°C.

It flowers from April almost to the end of May on one-year-old branches. Many cultivars are male, sterile plants, and many olive varieties are self-pollinating, with the wind carrying the pollen. The olive grows very fast, to begin with, and then growth slows and the core hardens. The fruit then start to gain strength until they ripen in November or December depending on the region. At this point, the fruit does not increase in size and the water it contains diminishes as the oil increases. Depending on

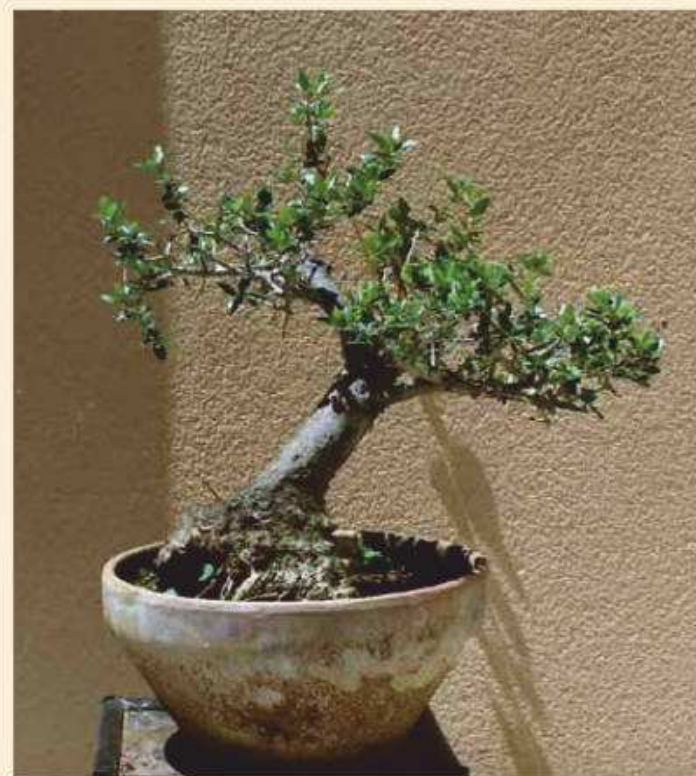
the variety, the oil ratio varies, but is generally between 18 to 26%. Olive production is haphazard particularly on poorly maintained trees.

Yamadori above all

The olive made its appearance in the bonsai world in the 1970s, so it is a relatively young species in this art. Most bonsai olive trees have been collected from nature (*yamadori*). The best time to collect is at the end of winter.

From an aesthetic point of view, I have seen some olives styled like pines, or at least in shapes which do not correspond to those of the tree in its natural state. Bonsaists should forget "human influence" and move confidently towards spontaneously natural shapes. They should avoid codifying the tree according to Japanese styles, which are not appropriate to it.

It is important to see the olive in its natural habitat before starting



One can start constructing bonsai on a young plant: it will be a long adventure as the olive is slow growing.

a bonsai project. The dispute persists between styling it "in pads" or as a natural tree. It is essential at the start of the project to analyse precisely the trunk's shape in order to reproduce it later on the branches and ramification.



Trees collected from nature are the material of choice for a bonsai. This wild olive has just undergone its first pruning after being collected. Pruning can be severe because of the apical tendency of the species.

Water abundantly

This Mediterranean bonsai likes the heat, but can survive temperatures of -2° to -3°C , over a short period. In cold regions, where temperatures drop below 0°C and for long periods, the tree must be placed in a warm greenhouse with good light.

One can repot the olive every two or three years from February to April (before and just after the start of the growing season) and a third of its roots can be pruned. It can tolerate a more drastic root pruning, but one must make sure to also prune the existing foliage.

The substrate mix depends on the climatic conditions of the region where the tree is being cultivated. The ideal substrate is made up of 50% pumice stone, 40% loam and 10% river sand. One can increase the amount of pumice against loam, if one lives in a cool area and vice-versa for hot regions.

Keep in mind that there is no rule for watering a bonsai. The olive grows in dry climates, but likes to be watered plentifully. It is advisable to let it dry out well before watering again.

Use an organic fertiliser such as Hanagakoro or Biogold from the restart of the growing period (March) through to May, and then, in autumn. One can complement the fertiliser input by applying liquid fertiliser two or three times a month during the growing period until summer, and then stopping during the heat of summer.

The olive tolerates drastic wiring, but it should be done during the dormant vegetation period, so as not to damage the bark which is extremely tender during the growing season. ►►►



Watering must be plentiful and the temperature must not drop below 0°C without putting the plant into a warm greenhouse. Collection: G. Chiapperini, Pollice Verde.



A tree collected while being worked on. One should not construct an olive following Japanese rules, which are not suitable for this Mediterranean species. Collection: G. Chiapperini, Pollice Verde.

Two kinds of pruning

Understanding how the olive grows helps one to prune more effectively. Because of its apical dominance, the species tends to distribute most of its strength in its upper zones and external parts. Thus, internal and lower branches will die, whereas those at the top of the tree will grow immoderately. This function shows not only the importance of pruning, but that the apical parts and external parts of the tree must be more drastically pruned. Two types of pruning – maintenance and structural – are noted below.

• Structural pruning

Structural pruning entails drastic pruning to give the tree its future shape and style. To shape the base, prune large branches and choose which branches to cut and which to keep. This operation, which is not easy to carry out, because it is irreversible, will decide the bonsai's future shape.

A good time for drastic pruning is winter, when the tree is dormant. One prunes with oblique cutting pliers and then wound paste is applied on the large cuts. With the approach of June, one can thin out the foliage to let light into the interior of the tree. This will allow new shoots to develop, which will enable a good ramification of the existing pads. Suckers and shoots that throw out from the trunk, very often at its base, are no use to the shape of the future bonsai and should be removed as quickly as possible.

• Maintenance pruning

This is done to maintain and improve the existing shape. It is enough to prune branches and shoots that protrude from the desired shape. It is important to prune regularly, particularly the external and upper parts, so that the tree is obliged to distribute growth in a more uniform manner and to thicken the foliage. ●



Why not construct an olive grove! Collection: Pollice Verde.



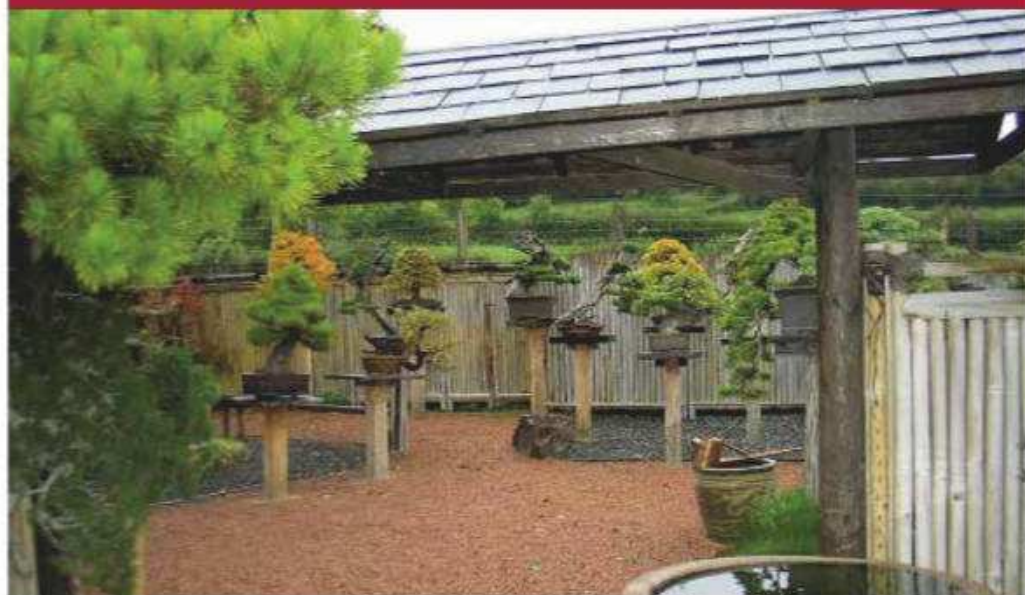
This splendid collected tree, boasts a majestic weather-beaten trunk.



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In the Northern Alps, a mountain elm spared from Dutch elm disease dominates a chalet, its companion of 258 years.

A mountain elm - a survivor

The elm has disappeared from our landscapes having succumbed to Dutch elm disease in the last century. In the Northern Alps, there is one that has escaped the disease, which from the lofty height of its 258 years gazes down on the walker.



Author: Louis-Victor Bourdeau

In a hamlet in the Haute-Savoie at an altitude of 1300 metres (4265 ft), at the very end of a road, one cannot miss a tree that dominates an old, uninhabited house – a mountain elm – survivor of Dutch elm disease that destroyed its species. One day, during a walk, we happened on this tree whose shape and situation caught our attention. And it was even less than a chance that we managed to discover the history of house and elm.

Opposite Mont-Blanc, in the upper reaches of the Montjoie Valley, in the Haute-Savoie, there are many hamlets that have been inhabited for centuries and are still somewhat safeguarded from the ravages of the property development frenzy in the Northern Alps. Most of the houses are hundreds of years old and, as in other eras, are still surrounded by trees, mostly fruit trees of course, but also large deciduous trees native to the region such as maple, sycamore, ash, and linden.

This elm that we came across while out walking, surprises by its unusual size for a mountain tree. It is nearly 35 metres (114 ft) tall with a trunk of almost 2 metres (6 ft) in diameter. And these measurements are not its only remarkable feature, because it is also a mountain elm (*Ulmus glabra*), a species that has become extremely rare since the Dutch elm disease epidemic – a fungus that decimated the elm population the world over. There are no elms growing today in our landscapes.

Welded to the wall

I was lucky enough to meet the owner of the tree during one of my walks, and was able to get valuable information about it. The elm is exactly the same age as the house next door. It was planted by an ancestor of the present owner at the same time as the house was built in 1760. They are now two intricately linked elements, as the tree's trunk



Every spring, for over two-and-a-half centuries, the tree has reawakened, however hard the winter.

has literally assimilated the retaining wall of the land on which the house is built, as if they are welded together for eternity.

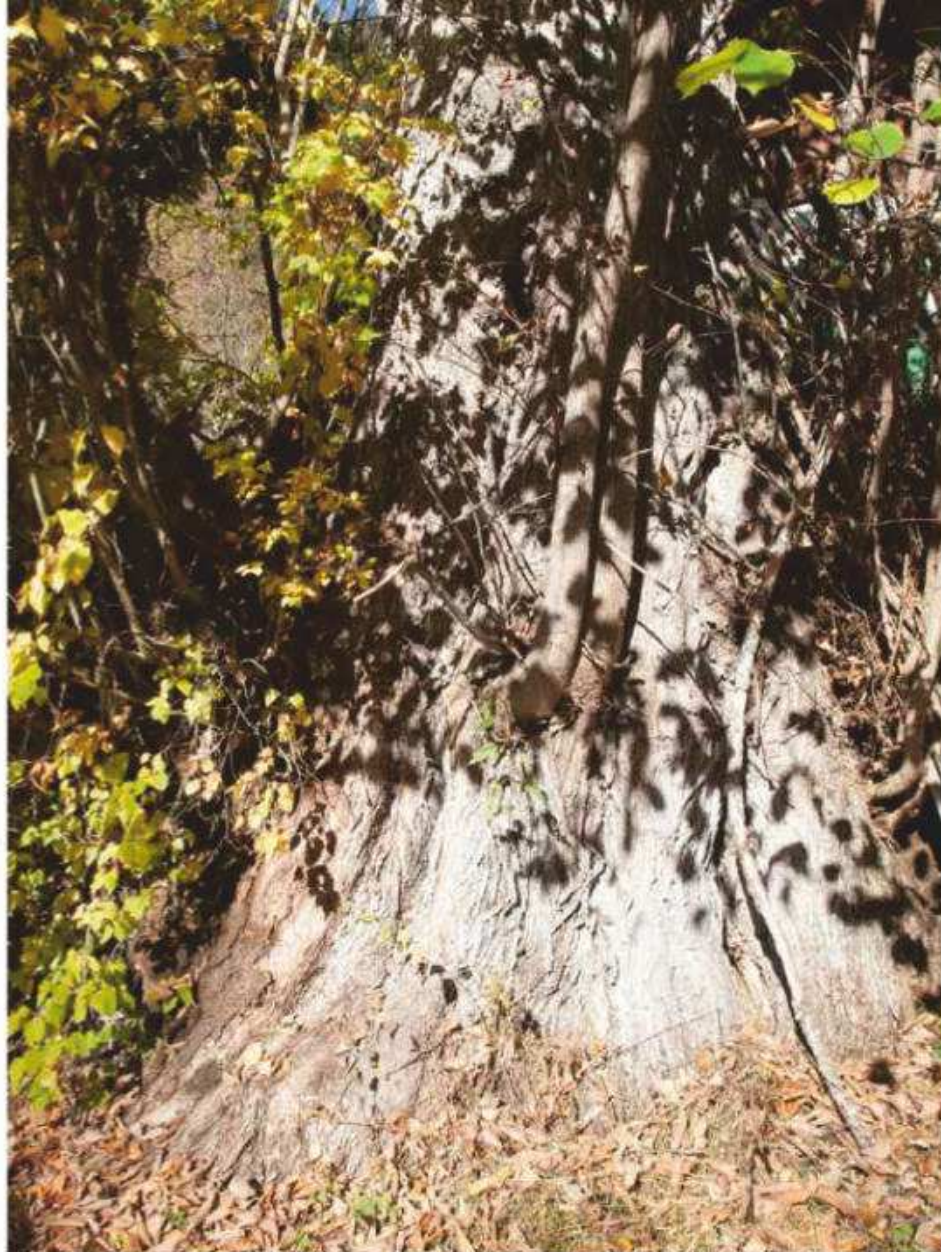
One might ask oneself why a peasant in the middle of the 18th century planted an elm next to his house. Was it to use the branches as firewood for heating in winter? These mountainsides had few forests in olden times; at such high altitudes, each pasture was crucial to survival. Firewood would have been rare and difficult to obtain. Or was it to provide welcome shade in the summer months? Perhaps for that reason too.

However, I am convinced that this tree was not planted there only for utilitarian reasons, but for aesthetic, ornamental reasons. Its free carriage without a trace of severe past or recent pruning is an indication of this.

Witness to the past

It is quite dizzy-making to evoke all the historic events that have taken place during the elm's life-time, the French Revolution, the Napoleonic era, the height of the industrial movement, and the two world wars: so many insignificant events for this tree, as opposed to drought, storms and late frosts. It has resisted everything including the terrible Dutch elm disease, from which it was spared probably because of its isolation, which has made it a true survivor.

The mountain dwellers of 1760 worked for the future, because 258 years later, the house and the tree still stand as wonderful witnesses to a distant past in terms of human history, but close on the scale of trees and mountains. They allow us to preserve a link with the men and women who, over 250 years ago, occupied these regions that are at once grandiose and hostile. ●



Reiterations, already dozens of years old, can be seen on the trunk that is nearly 2 metres (6 ft) in diameter.



Autumn marks the end of yet another vegetation cycle in the long life of this elm.



Elm and Dutch elm disease

The elm is part of the Ulmaceae group, a large family of deciduous trees present throughout the northern and some parts of the southern hemispheres. Their ease of propagation, and the good quality of their hard wood caused them to be grown in huge quantities in Western Europe. Sadly, in the 20th century, all the European species were decimated by Dutch elm disease due to a fungus introduced into Europe via Holland and which probably originated from Asia. It

first appeared in 1910, and spread widely during the 1920s to the point that by 1970, nearly all the old elms in Western Europe had died. The fungus is transmitted by elm bark beetles (*S. scolytus*) – a small, scarabaeid-type beetle – and from one root system to another between sick trees. The disease also caused human distress, as it radically changed landscapes in which the elm was a major feature: an additional and already old warning in the face of diseases caused by the globalisation of trade.



This juniper, *Juniperus chinensis* "Itoigawa", was prepared two months ago for planting on a rock. It hasn't changed much since then. A couple of Seiryu stones are examined for suitability along with suitable accent plants.

Rock-planting a juniper

Part 2

Installing a juniper on a rock requires preparation. It's all about getting the tree to grow in very little soil and making sure it doesn't fall off. Here, the previously prepared *Juniperus chinensis* "Itoigawa" is ready to be set in place.

Author: John Armitage

Before installing a tree on a rock, it needs to be prepared and styled – as shown with this juniper, *Juniperus chinensis* "Itoigawa", in Part 1 of this article, published in *Esprit Bonsai International* 96. After the preparatory work, the juniper has been allowed to rest for two months. It is now time for it to be placed on the rock. As before, it forms part of a demonstration given to the Yorkshire Bonsai Association. Because it is a tree that has been cultivated for bonsai and in a pot for many years, I had

no concerns that the roots would be plentiful. However, as the tree has not been repotted for some time, the soil, which appears to be 100% akadama, has broken down to what can only be described as mud. So, a repot is overdue. Whenever a tree is planted on a rock, the growth will be substantially reduced. The limited soils and the exposed nature of the root ball will be increasingly affected by the weather when compared to the same tree growing in a traditional pot. Therefore, the tree should not have a substantial amount of growth still required.



This Seiryu stone is chosen because there is a natural planting position on the rock. The deep fissures and quartz veins are attractive features.

A stone for aquatic landscapes

I looked for an alternative to Ibigawa rock, which is rather expensive.

The finished planting needs to be permanent, so a hard rock is required, and preferably one with a dark colour.

An internet search found a number of suitable rock types, but one called “Seiryu” stone appealed to me. It is used for aquatic landscapes and so a few random pieces were ordered. The rock is extremely dense and heavy with interesting fissures and quartzite veins. I found it to be far more available and affordable when compared to Ibigawa stone. One of the considerations I had to make is in respect to size. I had always intended to keep the tree as shohin size, so the rock needed to be quite small. A large rock would make the tree look smaller – the opposite of what I intended.

A lot of anchor points

The key is really in the preparation. Taking time at this point to get anchor points right will save a lot of time and stress on the tree later.

The stone is incredibly hard to drill to create anchor points, so we will have to be a bit creative in creating and planting position. I want to keep as many roots as possible, for the health of the tree. To do this I must create a substantial planting area.

The first step is to study the rock and mark out the planting position. The rock has a lot of interesting features that we do not want to cover up with soil or the tree.

Regular store-bought rapid-setting epoxy glue is used to fix copper wire loops in as many places as I can within the planting area. It's better to have too many than too few. It's important to leave the loops totally immobile whilst the glue sets. Any movement will break the glue's bonds and it ►►►

A Seiryu stone

Traditionally the rock used is Ibigawa. Ibigawa rock is a volcanic mixture of different rock types welded together by the heat of a volcano. For bonsai purposes it is shaped and acid etched. However, it can be a rare find and an expensive one.

So John Armitage looked for an alternative and found another interesting Japanese rock: a Seiryu stone, typically used in aquascaping, which is a discipline associated with fishkeeping that involves creating aquatic landscapes.



1 I rough out the area that I intend to cover with soil and moss, looking for suitable anchor points for the wires.



2 Plenty of copper fixing wires are crafted. Make more than you think you will need. Once the rapid-setting epoxy begins to set, you won't have time to make any more.



3 The rock must be clean and dry for the glue to set. As the rock is too hard for me to drill, I use the natural hollows that appear on it.



4 The “hairpin” of copper wire must be held absolutely still while the glue is setting. One wire is attached at a time. This process cannot be rushed.



5 The rock is methodically rotated so each crevasse can be filled like a pool with epoxy without it flowing out.

Taking time at this point to get anchor points right will save a lot of time and stress on the tree later.

▶▶▶ will not hold. Test the wire is holding securely before attaching the tree. If the wires come loose at the planting stage then the whole process will need to be started again.

A mesh pocket

In order to create a larger planting pocket, I created a “curtain” out of regular drainage mesh which is cut slightly on the large size. It will be trimmed later and will become invisible once the keto and moss are added. A hot glue gun makes the job of forming the mesh far quicker than using other glues, creating pleats so that it follows the contours of the rock. Obviously, the mesh must be a finer grade than the soil used. Just like when repotting into a regular pot, the tree must be held totally immobile for new roots to grow and establish successfully. The “problem” root that we identified in the first styling step (see *Esprit Bonsai International* 96) will be used as its main anchor point. The obtrusive wire that I am having to use won’t be there forever, but for now it is necessary for the establishment of the tree. All the fine roots are placed in the mesh pocket with the regular soil filled in around them. They can grow here as they would in a pot.

3

At the moment the screen is oversized. It can be cut later, once the soil and moss have been added.



1 A piece of bamboo skewer is used to hold the bottom of the mesh curtain in place. There are no suitable fastening areas at the bottom of the rock to do it any other way.



2 A hot glue gun helps make pleats and allows me to shape the mesh so it is more contoured with the rock.

Two types of soil

The planting medium consists of two parts. The first is the regular bonsai mix I use of half akadama and half pumice. Then, the soil that will hold the root ball intact and provide a growing surface for the moss is a mixture of sticky keto with long-fibre sphagnum moss. The addition of

the moss will help to hold the keto together should it dry and crack. Water is added to achieve the right consistency which for this is like a wet, sticky dough. For more porous rock, the mixture can be made looser to soak into the planting area.



4 The intention is to allow the roots to run down the back side of the rock, to allow them to grow to the maximum without becoming obtrusive and to maintain a balance between tree and rock.



A Soil preparation. Along with regular soil, a mix of keto and sphagnum moss is prepared to a malleable consistency capable of sticking to a vertical surface without falling away.



B The first layer of this mix is applied where the juniper will be seated upon the rock.



C Repotting time. The roots are untangled and the intention is to prune as little as possible, except for the roots directly below the trunk, to enable it to be seated close to the rock.



D Once seated and secured, the roots are manipulated into the mesh pocket, after which the regular soil mix is added and teased in among the roots.



E A dwarf rose is added at the rear as the accent plant. As well as helping to stabilise the soil mass with its roots, it will also serve as a seasonal feature with flowers and fruit.

A layer of moss

Again, preparation is the key for the moss. For a number of weeks, I had scoured the local area for moss but the unusually hot summer had meant that finding it was difficult, so most came from the soil of my established bonsai. This is better than that which can be found growing on walls, as it is suited to growing in a similar situation to where it will be planted and will therefore thrive in its new environment. Each year I propagate many ornamental plants such as cotoneaster and pyracantha for use either in rock plantings or as mame-size bonsai. In this instance, however, I opted to use a dwarf Japanese rose. I look forward to seeing it flower in the summer. ▶▶▶



After a layer of the keto soil is added, the moss covering is applied. Using different varieties of moss and keeping the edge clean adds a nice "finish" to the planting.



The large anchoring wire. This is the main attaching point for the tree. A large-gauge aluminium wire was used. Its thickness will mean it is less likely to bite in as the tree grows.



Careful watering

Because of the exposed nature of the planting, watering must be done carefully so as not to wash soil away, but at the same time water must be able to penetrate the soil mass. If you struggle with the moss falling off or being taken by birds then a piece of greenhouse shading mesh can be wrapped around until the roots become more

established. Ultimately, I might choose to plant the whole composition in a regular pot if the tree weakens and allow roots to extend from the mesh section into soil. But that's a while off yet. The coming year will see the foliage increase, and before long it will be quite presentable, but not all the moss will survive. For display it will be necessary to patch it up with some new moss. ●

The finished planting displayed in a nice Walsall Studio Ceramics suiban. I am quite pleased with it!



Constructing a group depends on the ability of certain species to sprout from a stump. This group of common beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) collected a few years ago by A. Quairel, has been trained and shaped into a clump of wind-bent trees. Regrowth in the space left by the main trunks gives depth and momentum to the whole.

Tree clumps: for group construction

Author: Gilbert Labrid

Many deciduous species sprout at the base; a characteristic that makes it quite simple to construct tree groups. Approach grafting and trunk fusion will do the rest.

To construct a clump, a group of more than three trunks, one can take advantage of certain species that are able to sprout from a stump.

Although most bonsai are constructed in single trunk styles, a great many bonsai are styled with double, triple and multiple trunks. This considerable diversity is based on the observation of natural elements and corresponds to the characteristics of each species in a specific environment. Not all trees are alike and the way they develop is not identical, and there are marked differences between conifers and deciduous trees. ►►►

No conifer clumps

A conifer's bearing is organised around a principal axis, which for the most part is single. Indeed the trunk does not divide into large extending branches, and maintains its singleness to the top of the tree.

The many aggressions suffered by conifers growing in mountainous regions make no difference to their growth. Lateral branches will replace the crown when that disappears, but if branches die, no bud will appear anywhere on the trunk, and when the trunk dies, there is no regrowth from the stump. Multiple trunks are often the result of seedlings grouped together in the same place, and which over time, end up by fusing together. Double and triple trunks can result from seedlings, but also from very low branches that become separate or, depending on the circumstances, become inclined trunks that distribute their development over several branches.

Clumped deciduous trees

Another aspect of deciduous trees is that they only show their true nature in winter when, bare of leaves, one can see their structure. Different species have different silhouettes and in nature it is easy to tell beech from willow, or birch from hawthorn. For these too, geographic location determines the general appearance of isolated subjects whose shapes vary from the plains to the mountains. Nevertheless deciduous trees react against these natural constraints and the number of shoots they put out increase at the base of the tree, or from the stump or even from the roots, not to mention the numerous buds that emerge from the old wood of the trunk. Thus, one can easily find deciduous trees in the wild grouped to form an imposing beech and oak grove, or thickets of small trees such as hawthorn, elder and almond, or in shrubberies of myrtle, blackthorn and box etc.



On the perimeter of a chestnut stump, long since dead, many suckers have formed trunks while younger ones are searching for the sun.



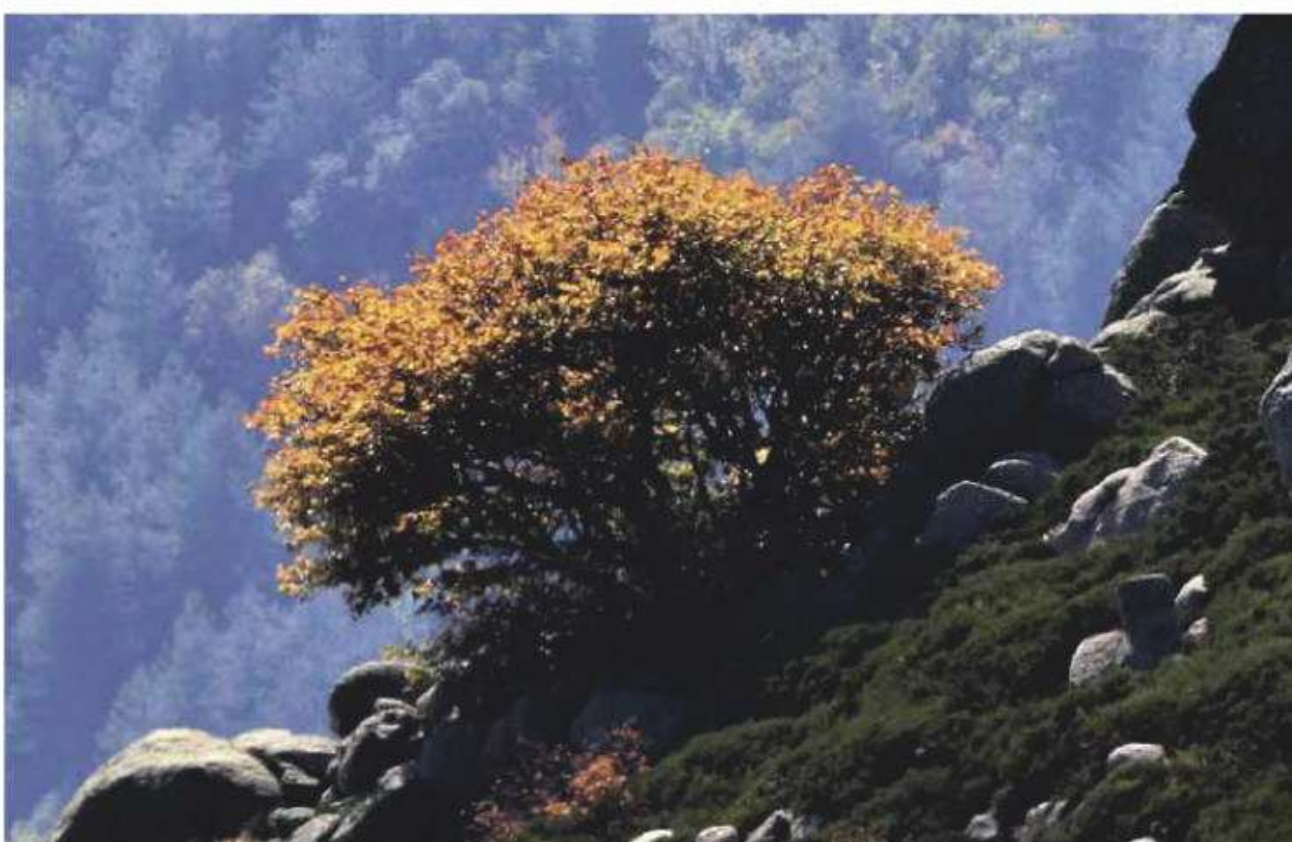
Pine does not sprout from a stump. Examples of groups from a single point are the result of packet seeding, ground layering or grafting. Low branches at the base of the trunk are sometimes kept. This Japanese tsuga, *Tsuga sieboldii*, has fused trunks, which is also possible with juniper, larch and spruce etc.



Like many trees subject to the harsh conditions of the Mediterranean climate, wild almond are often made up of several ramified trunks. The wind, late frosts and long periods of drought result in tortured shapes and lack of height, which are offset by multiple shoots being put out at the base.



The fig is fiercely determined to survive and to grow at all costs. Multiple trunks will sprout from the same base along the edge of a wall and nothing will stop the process.



Trees in mountainous areas become shrubby and bushy when growing at higher altitudes, such as the pussy willow (*Salix caprea*) wedged between granite boulders.



1 An Amur maple (*Acer tartaricum* subsp. *ginnala*) is made up of five trunks, created from a young plant. This variety is shrubby in the wild, which favours a strong disposition to produce suckers at the base.



2 Numerous and vigorous suckers sprout from spring to the middle of summer and must be carefully monitored.

Tree clumps: a minimum of three trunks

When constructing a group one has various options: a forest of individual trees, or a group of trees connected by one root, from a trunk lying on its side, or multiple trunks growing from the same base.

A clump is a group of trees that are connected from the base. This is a different category from the "Raft style" or *netsuranari*, a group formed from a fallen trunk.

To construct a group one can start with a single tree that throws out suckers from its base, or one can regroup plants of different heights and fuse them by approach grafting. One can also combine these techniques to reduce the training time.

Double and triple trunks are often constructed to be used for forests (*Yose-ue*), particularly when they are young, which can give the impression of depth by densifying the space between the trunks and bringing them closer together. A group made up of more than three trunks is called a "clump". ▶▶▶



A A young group of amelanchier. *Amelanchier ovalis* is widespread in the south of France, as it is impervious to drought (dry air). This species is difficult to ramify.



B It is fairly simple to create an amelanchier group. From spring onwards, one can select suckers that grow profusely. Pruning branches or live trunks encourage growth from the base.



Crepe myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*), is shrub species that habitually forms groups. With well-controlled pruning, it can be trained into a single tree.



This forest of *Acer buergerianum*, in Japan, has been constructed by framing the central base in the form of a clump with many maple trunks of various heights. The tight, dense aspect of the right side is due to the central clump made up of a cluster of trees growing from the base of the main tree. The very tight implantation of the supplementary trees emphasises the impression of depth.



This *Acer buergerianum* group, in Japan, shows the style of an isolated clump in a mountain meadow. The enlarged base, the balanced trunks both in height and thickness, and the spread of the crown that occupies space without being too stiff and regular, make it a very interesting piece.

A question of nature

When constructing a clump one must rely on those species that typically throw out more suckers from their base than others.

- Note that bushy varieties react quickly when the upper part of the plant is cut. As soon as they are pruned, regrowth is activated at the base. Suckers will sprout from the roots underground and enlarge the group. This applies to plants such as witch hazel (*Corylopsis*), amelanchier, rose, and flowering quince (*Chaenomeles*) etc. Just select according to the plan for the group's construction and let it grow.

The problem arises when growth has to be checked by pruning. Ramification does not occur unless there is regrowth and there is even the possibility of the pruned part drying out. On the other hand there is immediate regrowth at the base of the plant. To create a shape with this type of tree, one has to count on a great many trunks to densify the space.

- Apart from a few species (such as ginkgo, apple and crepe myrtle) that put out from the base whatever their age, for most adult deciduous trees, one must consider grafting to increase the number of trunks growing from the base.

- Lower branches are kept in place, with the aim initially of improving the trunk's taper or extending the rooting, but they could also be useful for creating supplementary trunks.



Ginkgo biloba comprised of three fused principal trunks. This tree originally from China was equipped with a single cylindrical trunk, but a badly protected cut resulted in the trunk rotting. Many shoots at the base were preserved which enabled the tree's resurrection in multi-trunk form.



Preserving suckers can contribute to widening the base and improving the shape, but bear in mind that good ramification in ginkgo is a tricky, long-winded and extremely haphazard affair.



This group has been very fortunate in being able to evolve again. New shoots appear endlessly at the base and can be kept or removed as one wishes.



From Japan: certain old rose buses have trunks with lovely features. These vigorous bushes put out from the base as soon as they are pruned with a welcome selection for a group.



Multi-trunks on a wide base can be obtained by grafting young plants to the trunk's base, or by assembling several plants together until they completely fuse.

Nebari and sacrifice

Plants fused by approach grafting can improve the nebari, as well as the lower sacrificial branches. As with these branches, fused plants can be kept to form a secondary group of trunks around the central trunk. This is why it is essential that the bark is identical to that of the main tree.

The majority of shrubs produce multiple shoots at their base, so it is a natural step towards creating multiple trunks. This is why one sees many species such as *Chaenomeles*, *Corylopsis*, or *Ilex* constructed in this style. Those that are constructed with a single trunk are very much admired, because it is more difficult to produce a quality tree.

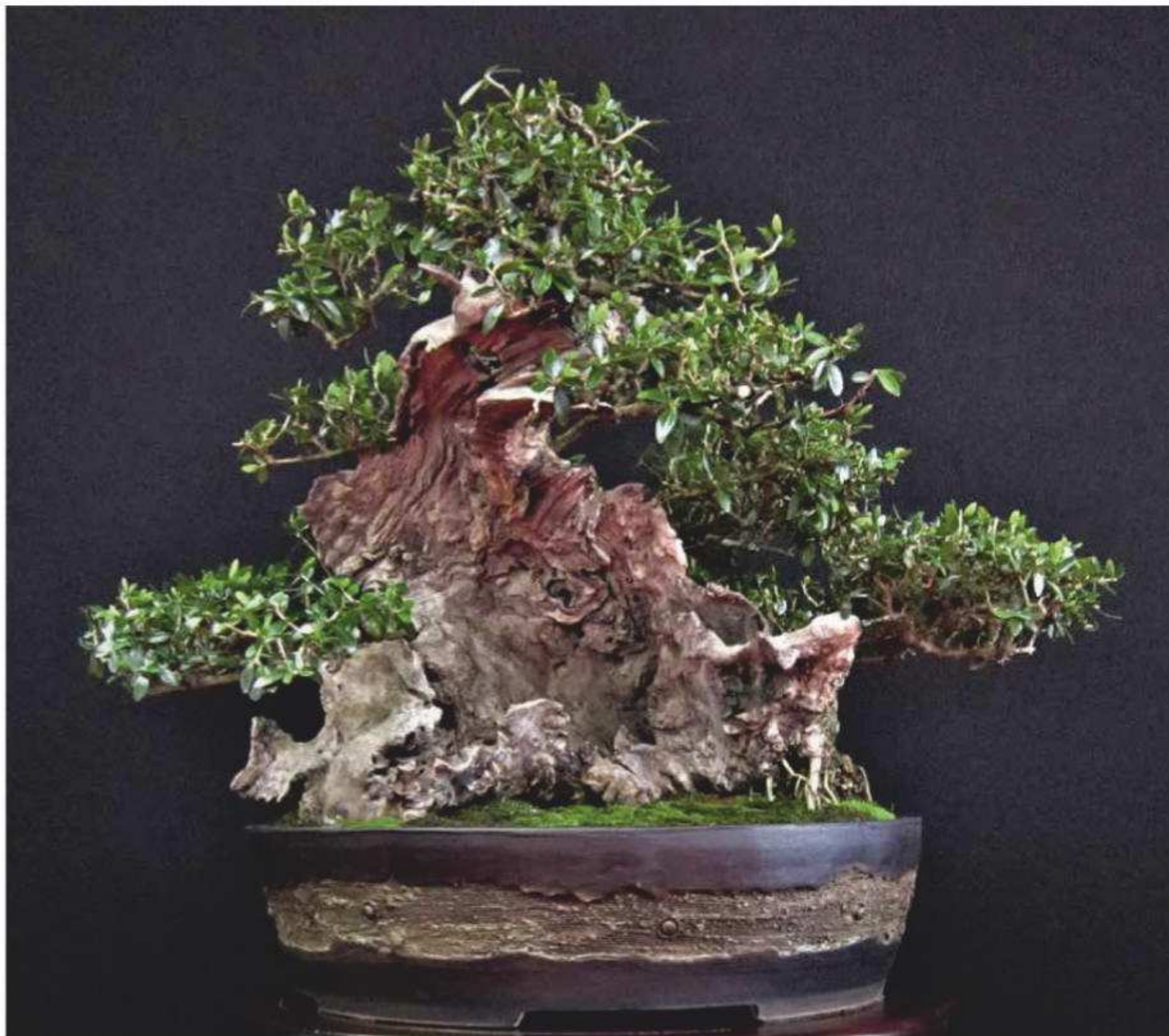
When arranging secondary trunks it is helpful to quickly wire the young shoots while they are still flexible. If one makes a mistake, one can always alter the movement and replace one sucker with another. ●



Scarring from sacrificial branches at the base of a maple trunk. Rather than removing them, one could keep one or several branches and construct them into a double-or triple-trunk style or clump.

Be careful of maple seedlings

One must be careful with maple seedlings, which often do not have the exact characteristics as the required variety. A maple clump with different foliage does not produce the best effect.



This olive, *Olea europaea*, by Christian Vos and exhibited at the 2018 European Bonsai-San Show, has a massive, tortured trunk, typical of old olive trees in the wild. It is prominently displayed here in a way that could seem excessive, unless one were to regard it as representing a rocky outcrop. In which case, the numerous shoots can be seen as small trees, which characterise *ishizuki*.



How water's pH affects plants

We humans can tell the difference between different types of water, and the same goes for our plants. Water quality depends on its pH value and mineral content – as Peter Warren explains.

Text: Peter Warren

Photos: Peter Warren, unless stated otherwise

The quality of the water used for watering affects bonsai health. It is important to take the water's pH and mineral content into account.

In addition to the techniques and concepts behind how to water a bonsai, one of the most fundamental ideas in bonsai cultivation, the water itself is important and can have an impact on the health and vigour of trees.

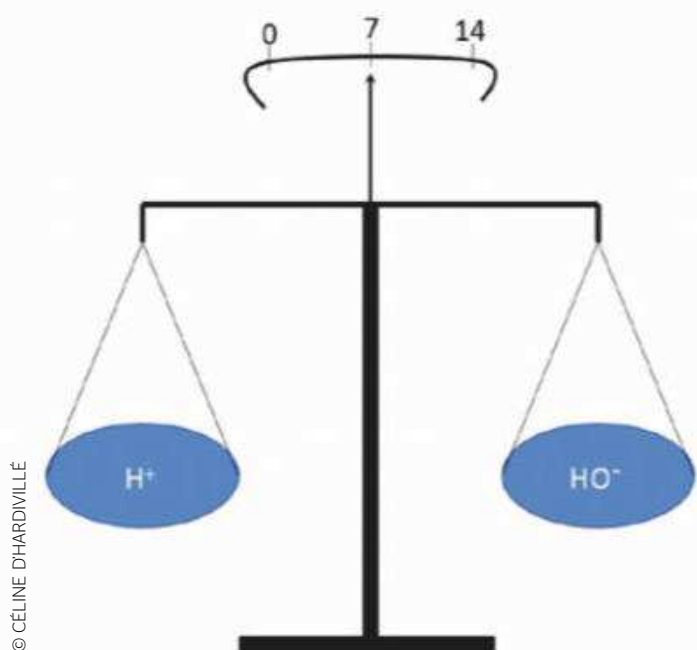
When we think of bottled mineral water, we immediately think of Evian or Volvic, both of which come from mountainous areas where the water has been filtered through many layers of rock before emerging from springs, only to be bottled and sent around the world. How is that water different from the water that emerges from the taps in New York or in Paris?

Mineral content and pH are the two major differences between tap water and bottled mineral water, affecting their taste and health benefits. Water is very rarely just pure H_2O , it is a complex chemical mixture that has an effect on plants and our taste buds. Within the soil there are chemical reactions and processes occurring between the compounds found within the water, fertiliser, soil components, soil biome and roots. *What* water we apply is just as important as how much is applied.

Acidic or alkaline water

We will look at the effects of pH and mineral content of water on bonsai using my garden setup as an example. Living in the South East of the UK, my tap water is particularly poor tasting and hard, meaning it has a high mineral content. It is not ideal for bonsai cultivation and so I collect rainwater into various tanks and have a total of 8,000 litres (2,100 gallons) of storage space. This is used to water my trees using an electric pump and hose. When it runs out in the height of summer, I must fill the tank with tap water, which inevitably causes a drop in the health and vigour of my trees.

Looking first at the pH of water, we must remember back to our school days and chemistry lessons. The pH of a substance is defined as the concentration of hydrogen ions in a solution and determines how acidic or alkaline it is. The more acidic, the more hydrogen ions there are; and the more alkaline, the more hydroxide ions. Pure water, just H_2O , has a pH of 7 and is completely neutral. Evian has a pH of 7.2 making it slightly alkaline, whereas Perrier has a pH of 5.5 making it quite



The pH measures the quantities of free hydroxyde (HO^-) and hydrogen (H^+) ions in the water.

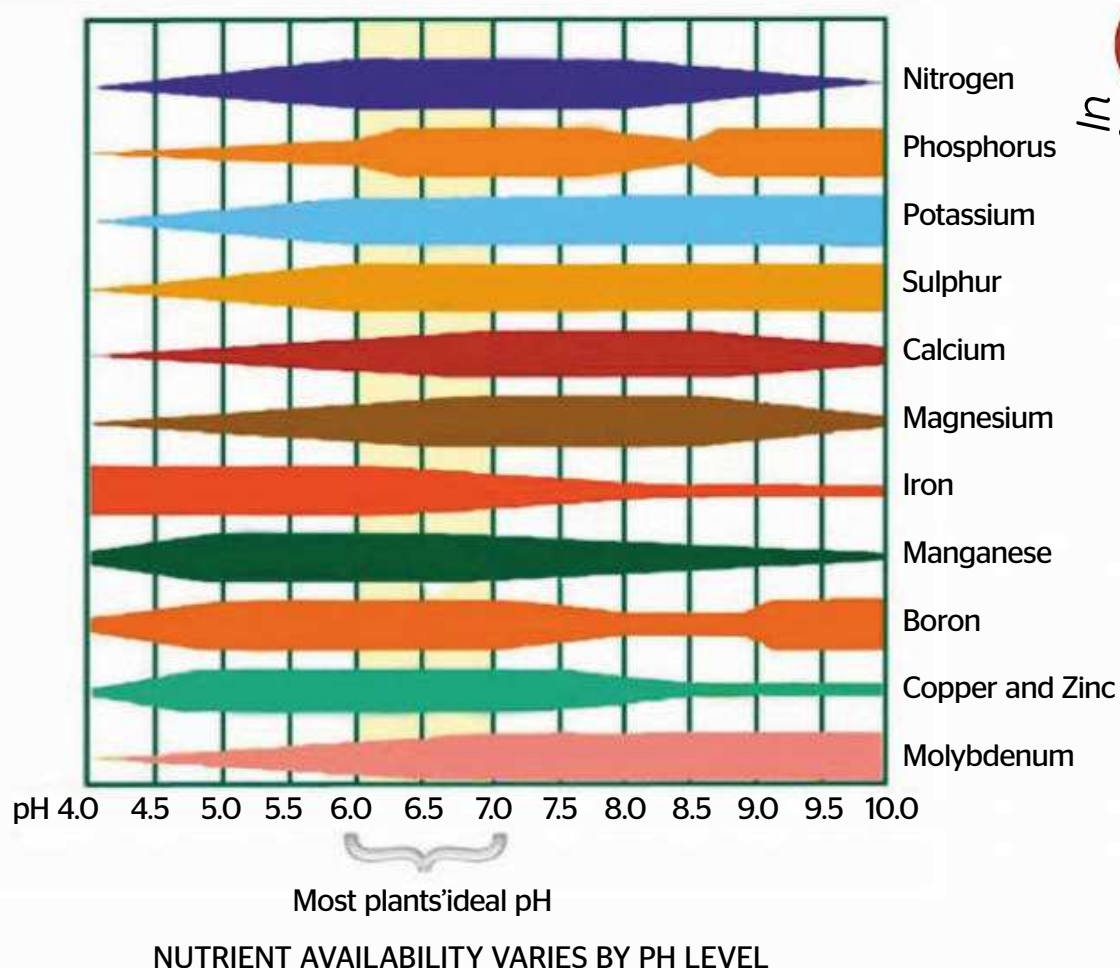
acidic. The reason for being concerned with the pH level is that hydrogen ions take part in most of the important aforementioned chemical reactions. The concentration of hydrogen ions influences the solubility of fertilisers, the ionic forms of salts, the availability of nutrients to plants, and the stability of chelates.

Simply put, a pH which is too high means that fertiliser efficiency is poor, uptake of nutrients is poor and residual salt build-up can occur – none of which is ideal for optimal bonsai cultivation.

Less availability of nutrients

Certain species are acid loving, such as satsuki azaleas, and others are alkaline tolerant, but for the most part, all trees that we use for bonsai should ideally be growing in a medium and supplied with water that is between pH of 6 and 7. Most of the growing mediums used in bonsai such as akadama, pumice and lava are fairly neutral pH, and kanuma is only slightly more acid at around 5.5. If the pH of the water being applied is too alkaline, then over time the pH of the soil will change, affecting the uptake of nutrients.

The availability of nutrients essential to plant growth changes with pH (see diagram). If we look at iron – an element which is easy to notice when a deficiency is present – the absorption availability drops off after a pH of 7.5. Chlorosis is often seen in plants due to a lack of iron within the plant itself. In these cases, it may be that there is sufficient iron in the soil, but the pH is too high for it to be absorbed easily, and therefore adding more iron to the soil will not cure the problem. Instead, lowering the pH and increasing the acidity of the soil is required for optimum uptake of the available iron. ►►►



Chlorosis on a *Physocarpus*, due to a lack of iron. If the water's pH is too high, it can inhibit absorption of iron by the plant even if there is iron available in the soil.

▶▶▶ It is very rare for a situation to arise where water is too acidic and the pH so low that issues will occur, but if the pH drops to around 5 and below, the uptake of excessive iron and manganese will lead to toxic levels and necrosis of the roots.

pH and carbonates

What causes a high water pH? A pH over 7 usually indicates that your water has high levels of carbonates, such as calcium carbonate (CaCO_3) or magnesium carbonate (MgCO_3). The concentration of carbonates determines the hardness or softness of water, with high levels of calcium and magnesium carbonate being referred to as hard water and meaning that the water has a high alkalinity, or buffering capacity.

The ideal pH of the water for watering bonsai is around 6 to 6.5. The tap water in my area has a pH of around 7.5 and is fairly hard, meaning it has a high alkalinity level. High alkalinity does not automatically mean a high pH value; the higher the alkalinity, the more acid must be added before the pH changes. This is because the bicarbonates and carbonates react with the hydrogen ions present in the acid, preventing them from dropping the pH. Once all the alkalinity components in the water are neutralised by the acid, the concentration of the free hydrogen ions in the water increases and there is a dramatic drop in the water's pH.

Since tap water is too alkaline, phosphoric acid is used here to reduce the pH to 6.



Calibrating the pH meter with a buffering solution.



Measuring the pH of rainwater: it is acidic.



Measuring the pH of tap water: it is too alkaline.



Adding phosphoric acid: the pH drops.

Measuring pH

Testing the pH of water can be done using either an electronic pH meter or pH test strips. An electronic meter will give you the best results if it is properly calibrated beforehand. Strips need no calibration but give less accurate results. I use an electronic pH meter to test my water, but the meter must always be calibrated before use in two solutions that are known to be at pH of 4 and 7. Once you have those two reference points fixed in the meter, then an accurate reading can be obtained.



Adding phosphoric acid: the pH drops.

To reduce the pH

When I have to resort to using tap water, I will always try to use an acid to drop the water's pH down to that ideal level of 6. However, this is both dangerous and difficult and should be done with great caution. The results are always worth the effort as there is a noticeable increase in general plant health and foliage colour.

There are various different acids that can be used and are relatively easy to purchase. The amount of acid needed to drop the pH is dependent on the type and concentration of acid used. There are commercially available injectors that are capable of handling acid and inject it straight into the hosepipe, but they are expensive, can be difficult to calibrate and often need a diluted acid. For most enthusiasts, the easiest way of reducing the pH of tap water is to use a tank with a capacity of 200 litres (50 gallons) or more, and to do it manually, testing the pH before then using the water. When mixing acid and water, always add small amounts of acid to the water, and they must be mixed very thoroughly as acid is heavier than water, and will effectively sink within a tank. Either stir vigorously or use a pump to circulate the water before then using it to water your plants.

The available acids

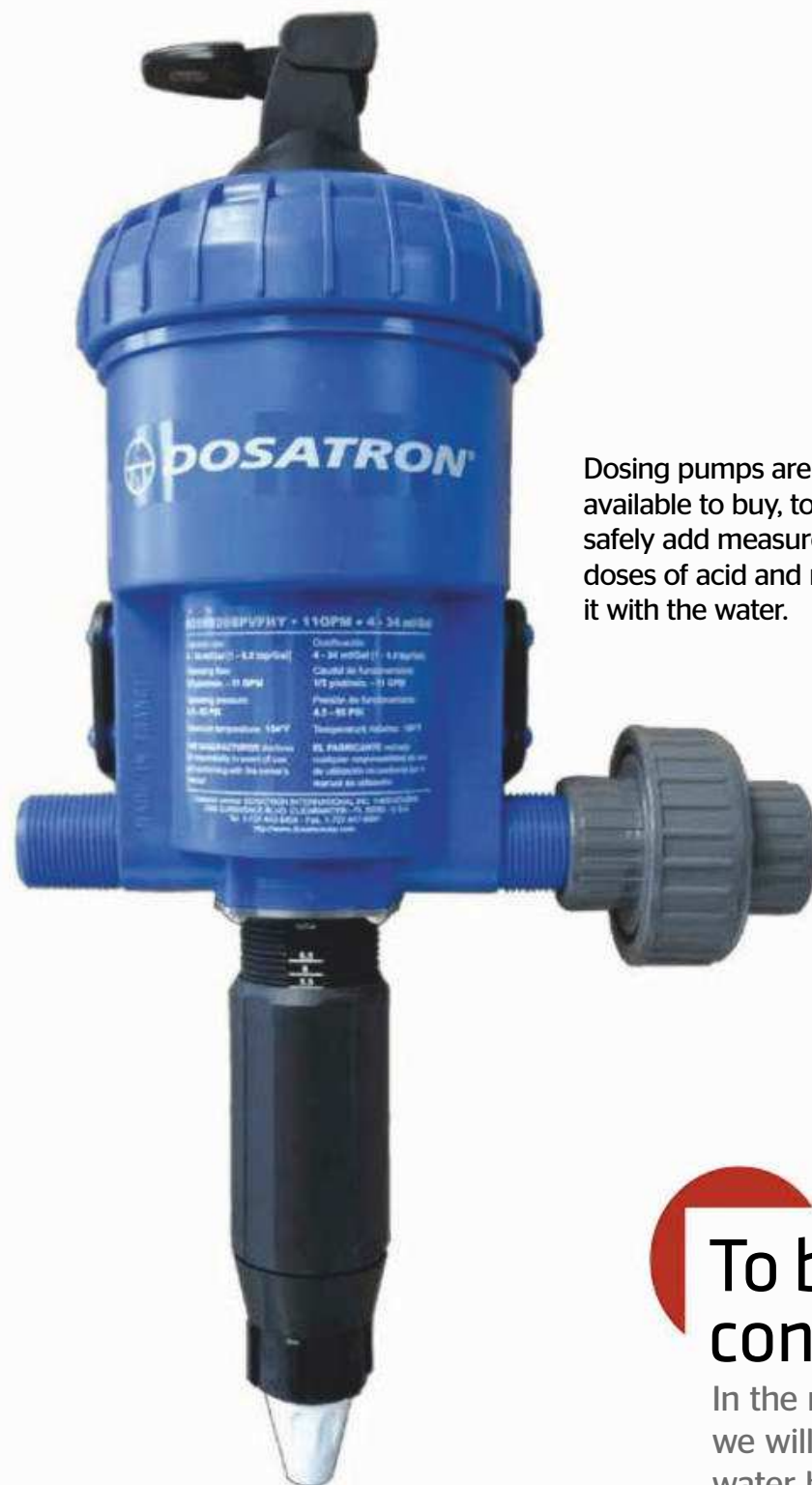
Phosphoric acid is often used as it is medium risk and is suitable for water that has relatively low alkalinity. It will provide phosphate which acts as a fertiliser – the P in NPK – and so it has some benefits in producing strong growth. However, excessive phosphate levels in the soil can result in poor uptake of other nutrients such as iron and manganese as well as damaging mycorrhizas in the soil; so phosphoric acid is only suitable for reducing pH levels by 1 to 1.5.

Nitric acid is ideal for a situation where you are looking to push new growth as the acid will produce nitrates – the N part of NPK. Excessive use of nitric acid will result in high nitrate levels, which are equally as damaging as excessive phosphates. Nitric acid is more difficult to handle as it produces fumes and is highly oxidising. It has also become very difficult to obtain in high concentrations as it can be used to manufacture bombs.

Sulphuric acid is also available and most commonly used commercially as it is very effective, but it is usually highly concentrated and the most hazardous acid to handle. It has no effect on

Beware – acids are dangerous!

However, any acid is a very dangerous chemical and should be used with great care. Protective equipment including chemical-resistant rubber gloves, safety spectacles or faceguard and a respirator should be worn at all times. Before attempting, please seek professional advice.



Dosing pumps are available to buy, to safely add measured doses of acid and mix it with the water.

To be continued ...

In the next issue, we will look at water hardness, how excessive carbonates affect growth, and how they can be removed safely.

NPK levels, producing only sulphate, which is not commonly found in fertilisers. The utmost care must be taken with this highly dangerous acid.

Hydrochloric acid, often sold as muriatic acid, should be avoided as it is very caustic and produces chlorine ions, an excess of which can result in burning of foliage. ●



Advanced course online

This branch assessment and ramification article is one of 26 lectures featured in Bonsai Empire's "Advanced bonsai course", in which Bjorn Bjorholm explains a wide range of advanced bonsai techniques. Two lectures can be previewed for free at www.bonsaiempire.com/courses/advanced-course. The full course is priced at \$69.99 for lifetime access.

This trident maple, *Acer buergerianum*, needs some work on its branches to continue to fine-tune them, and likewise for the apex which is a bit untidy.

Refining a mature trident maple

The delicate foliage structure of a trident maple, *Acer buergerianum*, is achieved using crucial but simple techniques that must be repeated throughout the bonsai's life.

When you are wanting to carry out restructuring work to fine-tune a maple, it is crucial that you know techniques including branch assessment and ramification. The tree we discuss here is a chuhin, or medium-sized, trident maple in the root-over-rock style – "ishizuki" in Japanese. The stone that it has been planted on is what's called an Ibigawa stone, from the Ibi river in Japan. The tree is approximately 40 years old and it was originally imported from Japan about five years ago.

When this tree began its life as a bonsai, it was selected artificially for its small leaf size. It isn't necessarily a dwarf cultivar of trident maple, it's simply that whoever started this tree in Japan

Authors: Bjorn Bjorholm
and Bonsai Empire



The stone that this maple is clasped onto is an Ibigawa, from the Ibi river in Japan.

selected this particular one from a group of trident maples because of its naturally occurring smaller leaf size.

Some techniques are useful for developing this type of ramification, including partial outer canopy defoliation in the summer. This tree has received that treatment for decade after decade, which is why you see such beautiful ramification on it. That being said, there are some major flaws in the ramification, which brings us to the subject of this case study.

Leaf size

Leaf size is something to consider when choosing deciduous material to use as bonsai. It's one of the most important elements. If you choose something with a naturally large leaf size, it doesn't matter how much defoliation and how much work you do to that tree over the decades, you will never get this type of ramification on a tree like that. Therefore it's necessary to choose something with a naturally small leaf size from the start.

Branch assessment

Branch ramification with both conifers and deciduous trees is a goal in bonsai culture. Obviously, there are different techniques for producing ramification depending on the species. As explained above, this tree has reached this level of ramification by having a technique called partial outer canopy defoliation performed on it on a yearly basis. While branch ramification is one of the goals in creating a bonsai, there does come a time in the development of a tree as a bonsai where we get too much ramification, and it needs to be cut back. That's what has happened at this stage with this particular tree.

In addition, the apex is now elongated to a degree where it looks like it has a stretched neck. The phrase used in Japanese is "kubi ga nagai" which directly translates as "the neck is long". This gives the tree a young or weak appearance, which is something that needs to be addressed. It is a common problem with all species that are apically dominant, which includes the majority of the species that we work with in bonsai culture, so making sure that we force that apex down little by little over time and keep it maintained at a lower profile is really important in developing a bonsai.

Branch removal

Let's dive into the details and mechanics of removing those unnecessary branches. Because Trident Maples are apically dominant, most of the auxin – the hormone that tells a branch or the apex to grow up towards the light – is contained at the tip of the branch, or in the upper branches, meaning branches that are protruding upright vertically out of the lateral branches. Because of this, these vertical branches will thicken faster than the lateral branches. If we don't cut these heavy upward-oriented branches back on a consistent basis, it's highly likely that they will get thicker and thicker over time and the lateral branches will weaken and die. In order to offset this we need to periodically remove the vertical branches. ▶▶▶



This branch is nice and soft, very elegant. However, there is a bit of a heavy area here out towards the tip. If we allow this to continue to grow, this area will become thicker and thicker, heavier and heavier, and it's going to look even more out of proportion with the soft, delicate branch ramification on other portions of the same branch. Therefore we need to cut that back.



The same situation has occurred on the opposite side of the tree, here to the left. This branch is incredibly heavy in comparison to the branch ramification at this point, so that needs to be addressed as well.



The apex is stretched to a degree where it looks like the neck of the plant has grown too tall.



Because of the trident maple's apical dominance, the branches that grow vertically will thicken up more quickly than the lateral ones.



They need to be cut off, to avoid weakening the lateral branches.



When removing upper branches on a trident maple like this, we don't necessarily want to strip all of the vertical branches off the tree. We want to look for branches that have grown too thick at this particular stage and remove only those.

For a three-dimensional look

If we were to go through and completely remove all of the upward-oriented branches at once, including the very small, fine branching, we would end up with flat, ugly-looking branches. What we want is a three-dimensional look to the branches when we see the tree without foliage on it. The only way we will get that effect is if we allow some of the vertical branches to remain while they're still thin and pliable. As they thicken over time, though, we want to make sure that we're cutting them back. This is why it's so important to perform partial outer canopy defoliation during the summer, so that the inner branches receive light and we can eventually cut back to them once the upward-oriented branches become too thick.



We keep a few slender, flexible upward-oriented branches to obtain a three-dimensional look.

Cutting flush

The tissue on a trident maple is relatively thick, so as it callouses over, if we don't make that wound completely flat or just slightly concave, it'll be bulbous when it heals, and we don't want that.



When we're cutting back the heavy upward-oriented branches, we want to make sure that we're cutting either completely flush, or just beyond flush - in other words, slightly concave into the main branch.



If a branch is getting thick, it needs to be cut off.



At the stage where the branch gets too thick, it is then cut back in favour of softer growth.



It's a continual process over the lifetime of a bonsai.



Remove thick clusters

In addition to removing heavy vertical branches, we also want to remove any thick clusters at the branch tips.

When we do the partial outer canopy defoliation in the summer, we will get a second burst of growth that has smaller leaves and twice as much branching. Quite often, though, this will cause chunky tips to appear, and these need to be removed. ▶▶▶



1 Thick tufts at the ends of branches are trimmed.



2 The end of this branch has a tuft that needs to be cut off.



3 We leave two small lateral branches.



4 We want to remove the thick clusters, in favour of softer growth.



5 This tuft should be cut off.



6 We cut flush with the branch.



7 After trimming.



8 Look for a bifurcating structure, or bifurcating buds, and cut back to those.



Lowering the apex

In choosing a point which we want to cut back to, we have to identify a new line for the apex. If we simply cut back whatever is heavy in the apex, we may end up with a very uninteresting and chunky line to the top of the tree.

Healing wounds

Any wounds that are about the size of the nail on your little finger or larger will need to be covered with cut paste. It's not necessary to cake on the cut paste, we simply want to cover the entire wound with a very thin layer of it so that that tissue stays moist beneath and doesn't dry out, and it will continue to heal in the subsequent growing season.



The wounds are covered in cut paste.



The moisture retained under the cut paste will allow the wound to heal well.



D A final trim.



A We have a perfect line near the top that we can cut back to. This is going to continue the flow of the apex to the right.



B The cutting back begins.



C The outline of the apex starts to appear.



E The apex is tidier and more defined.



The trident maple before work.

A task that needs repeating

After branch removal and silhouette refinement, the tree appears to have quite a bit less ramification but it also has a softer appearance to it because we've removed most of those heavy upward-oriented branches and those fat chunky branch tips.

Again, this type of work on a trident maple needs to be done every few years.

This could be every five, eight or 10 years. It depends on the tree. That being said, every single year in the winter you should take the time to look at the branch ramification and remove bit by bit any pieces or any branches that have grown too thick in the previous growing season. This will allow you to maintain the tree over a longer period of time and delay a massive cut-back like this even further.

This coming growing season, the tree will once again be partially defoliated so that we can continue the process of developing fine branch ramification. ●

The key points

Finally, let's take a minute to review some of the key points from this case study:

- Refine trident maple silhouettes in winter.
- Cut heavy, vertical branches each year.
- Cut branch tips back to simple bifurcations.
- Put cut paste on wounds larger than the nail on your little finger.
- Check for, and cut, heavy branches each year.

The ramification is delicate and easy to read.



The trident maple, *Acer buergerianum*, after work.



A heavy cut-back like this is necessary every few years.



The apex doesn't look like an overstretched neck any more.



The Aleppo pine: from tree to bonsai

The Aleppo pine is a marginal figure in the bonsai world. Jean-François Busquet, a passionate lover of pines wanted to understand this species that surrounds him and has succeeded after many attempts, to turn it into bonsai.

Author: Jean-François Busquet



The Aleppo pine is rarely seen in bonsai collections. One needs to experiment to test the species' vigour and capacity for back budding. The Aleppo pine's dimensions increase considerably with age, demonstrating the power of its structure. Nicolas, the author's colleague, shows the scale of the tree.

The Aleppo pine is rarely seen in exhibitions. There were a few from Italy some ten years ago, but hardly at all since then. So what were the reasons behind this renouncement? Is it really so unworkable? As a professional collector living in the southernmost part of France, and pine having always been my favourite bonsai species, it was difficult for me not to be interested in the Aleppo pine. This pine, *Pinus halepensis*, is endemic to my region, and they are in

my view every time I open my shutters in the morning. It is the principal representative of its family and it is found as far as Syria. Its two congeners, the maritime pine and stone pine are limited to very small areas. The Aleppo pine is home to cicadas, whose bark-coloured exoskeleton camouflages them when they are singing in the tree. It would be easy to transform the old specimens that I see in the wild into bonsai. The shapes are perfect; only the scale needs to be changed.

Upright in the face of the wind

Since the aesthetic aspect of the Aleppo pine does not seem to be the reason for its rarity as a bonsai, I collected several subjects to study and to experiment with. The speed with which they recovered in a pot, proved that it is a very vigorous species making projects easier. On the other hand, it is not easy to find these pines with twisted trunks. Even on windward slopes, they grow upright, or almost. Hopeless...

The anatomy

As a bonsai is a composition made up of successive details, we should look at them more carefully in this Aleppo pine. The bark is thick and grey that darkens with age. Its scales are flaky with deep, dark crackling. On ancient trees, the blackened superficial layers disappear, and the bark then becomes brick coloured, smoothly faceted and pointed in grey. The effect is superb! Solitary old trees have massive trunks, often covered with shari, that is caused by scaffold branches breaking away in violent gusts of wind. The trunk's architecture is powerful and made up of thick, generally long branches with fairly good movement. The, massed foliage is lightish in colour and densely distributed on the periphery of the tree framing a

trunk that is always bare – a feature that is related to climatic conditions. The needles are soft to the touch and are finer than those of other pine varieties used in bonsai. As they are a bit longer, although not excessively so, they should be reduced with the usual maintenance techniques.



The bark on mature trees.



The Bark of the branches: if you look closely you will see a cicada.



The red-orange faceted bark of an old tree. The author's shadow gives an idea of the size of the trunk.

In fact, their distribution range is swept by the southern winds. The lack of foliage in the centre of the tree and a certain lightness of bearing enable the wind to blow through it rather than against it: it is a strategy. By searching in rougher terrains constantly battered by winds, I finally found trees with twisted trunks. After cultivating them for two or three years in full sun, the trees were growing well, impervious to the sometimes fierce pruning to which they were subjected. The foliage, without my trying to regulate it, multiplied, and grew further away from the trunk with every new shoot as the branches progressively lengthened, which can be considerable when conditions are good. With no obstacles in the way for the moment, the time for styling had arrived. The Aleppo pine mentioned here was growing on a clayey ledge in a concatenation of small canyons. This type of relief traps and compresses the wind creating a vortex that, from our perspective, satisfactorily modifies the vegetation that is subjected to it. These extreme constraints are needed to bow trunks that are used to resisting strong winds. After I had collected this pine in autumn, 2002, I chose to plant it vertically to help it recover and to minimise volume, ►►►

Cultivating the Aleppo pine

Family: *Pinaceae*

Latin name: *Pinus halepensis*

Substrate: must have particularly good drainage in order to contain its vigour and to facilitate the miniaturisation of the needles.

Exposition: sunny.

Watering: moderate to avoid

overlong long needles.

Pruning: drastic, after being richly fertilised, to encourage back budding.

In bonsai, the cultivation of the Aleppo pine is similar to other pines and without real difficulty when the climatic conditions are favourable.



The tree is planted vertically, without taking the aesthetics into account. Its branching will be simplified in order to efface the unattractive cross made with the trunk.



In 2006, the first styling – simple and conventional.



2008: the tree is freed from its wiring. The foliage has already started to distance itself from the trunk.

▶▶▶ to the detriment of its shape. So the trunk ended up on three branches growing more or less from the same point and forming an unattractive cross. The following winter, I removed two of the smallest branches and kept just the largest branch, the only one with marked movement, which freed its fluid line and attractive taper.

No back buds

In the summer of 2006, the tree was repotted in a smaller container and at a more aesthetic angle. At the beginning of 2008, I cut back the branches severely and gave the tree its first styling, sticking to the trunk's new dynamism created by the change in its planting axis. I found that it has a very flexible wood that offered a wide range of possibilities for its modification. When making strong bends one must pay careful attention to the different preparations (raffia, wiring etc.) when applied to branch divisions, which are fragile and split easily. Towards the end of summer, when I removed the wire, the branches returned almost to where they were before – the corollary to their flexibility. It was going to take a long time to give it permanent shape. In addition, I noticed that there had been no back budding. In 2010, during its next, more meticulous repotting, I discovered a complicated root system which, from the way I had planted the tree, would need a much taller pot to contain it. So I put it in a



Installed in a shell by John Pitt, the tree seems to have evolved well, and thanks to the twisting branches, the foliage has been kept compact.

superb shell by John Pitt, a little too big for the tree, but I still thought it would be a good match. By returning to a planting axis that was closer to that of the tree in the wild, the root ball's height was considerably reduced, allowing for a more achievable project. The simple structure of the preceding styling was kept. It just needed to be adjusted by moving the construction axis.

A vigorous species

Every year I pinched out the needles more and more fiercely, in the hope of stopping the foliage from lengthening. Although these interventions were not enough to interrupt this inexorable and programmed course, they nevertheless did slow it down by generating an increasing number of buds that gave density to the foliage, but alas – only at

the tips. Removing needles, a process that works well with other pines, wasn't the solution here, even when going to extremes: budding was weak and still random. However, if the results of these different operations were somewhat disappointing, they still confirmed the vigorousness of this variety and showed its capacity to easily replace or multiply its buds. In the following years, the tree, unwired, was cultivated, but left a bit to its own devices. Its so-called "spaghetti" construction that was used to constrict the volumes had no future. If initially, it enabled the creation of a coherent silhouette, it was not destined to last, much less to increase. This method, in other varieties, allows light to reach bare branches and promotes back budding – a device that is later phased out. So what to do?

Drastic pruning

In 2013, while at a show, I found a pretty shell on the Klika pottery stand, with a shape better suited to this pine. This purchase rekindled my interest in the project and I decided on a specific programme to make the most of the information collected. The following year, after changing the pot, I implemented an extremely rich cultivation programme for a year and a half (see inset) without any other intervention. This way the tree's sugar reserves would be sufficient to react positively to the drastic pruning I was to carry out. In June 2016, after the candles had developed and another dose of fertiliser administered, I removed the extremities from the entire ramification and, thereby, most of the foliage. Getting as close as possible to the interior, on every branch I pruned down to the last sets of needles closest to the trunk, preserving a minimum of activity for each one. I sometimes cut down to the last pair of old needles still present at nascent branches, leaving the tree partially denuded and without buds. Just a few scattered but well-placed young shoots remained. A month after this pruning, which almost certainly would have killed most other pines, the first buds appeared. ►►►



The tree's regrowth close to the trunk, after drastic pruning.



Substantial budding after pruning. One can see the discrepancy in growth between the shoots.



Contrary to the usual methods used on pine, one can see where this lignified branch has been pruned at its centre, and then the budding that resulted from it. The remaining part, without buds, will be removed.



This branch is already too long. Buds will appear at its base after it has been pruned.



The needle length of the new generations has become more relevant to the bonsai.

Fertilisation

The usual organic fertilisers with moderate nitrogen levels are still the best ones to use here. For pine, the main dosage is generally given in autumn with lighter input for the rest of the year. During the cultivation stage, in preparation for pruning, a generous dose of fertiliser is given every second month between March and November. And then, during the construction stage, an important dosage in spring as well as the one in autumn will increase the growth of second-generation buds. Following these stages, one resumes the usual dosages, which moderate the tree's growth.

Spotlight on Conifers



Autumn 2018: the pine in its Klika shell. The needles, still long in certain places, inhibit an interpretation of the volumes.



On the most severely pruned branches, the length of the needles has been greatly reduced in comparison to a tree in the wild.



The back of the tree.



The left side.



The right side. One can still see a few s-shaped branches, which must be removed.

Watering

These pines in their desert-like habitat are naturally extremely resistant to drought, an asset they retain when in a pot, which facilitates their cultivation. As moderate watering is better during the growing season to prevent the leaves from growing too long, the tree, will not suffer, as a result, from water stress.

▶▶▶ They showed first where the cuts had been made, but over many weeks, as the process continued, a few buds started to show well at the back. The structure gradually bore leaves again, but this time the foliage was close to the trunk. This staggered reaction resulted in a growth discrepancy and new, very green branches grew alongside barely nascent needles. By the end of summer this discrepancy had almost disappeared. The main benefit of this new experiment was the activation of back budding. Small, tender tufts of green were scattered over enough branches to continue to push back the foliage departure points as close to the trunk as possible, which would then reconstruct the branching by drawing on the particular vigour of the species. Knowing

that after the first growth, one can prune back to the desired place to trigger off a second growth, reconstruction would be rapid and controlled. All that needed doing was to place the tree in a sunny position and to maintain a regular input of organic fertiliser to obtain this result – easy, in fact.

Controlling energy

Conventional styling is the same from the outset. I only have to tidy the whole to retrieve its shape. Initially, it is kept compact by the twisting ramification, after which it will evolve more naturally as this is gradually removed. In this spirit, I have also removed the first branch in front; its sinuous movements had become too implausible to face the viewer, and this extends the reading of the trunk.



The new budding, significant at the extremities that have been shortened, now allows me to better distribute the volumes that form the developing silhouette. The trial and error period now over, it seems that the best way to deal with this species is to start with drastic

pruning after the recovery period, which is needed for photosynthesis if the tree has been collected. After this, the clip and grow method should be used for the construction, and for maintenance one should be much more severe. This is the only way to control the energy of these trees. ●

After many attempts, we can conclude that the Aleppo pine is a desirable species for bonsai. But its vigour has to be tamed.

An olive tree as if cultivated in Japan



At the 2018 BCI international convention, this olive tree by Juan Antonio Pérez won the City of Mulhouse grand prize awarded by Mitsuo Matsuda.

Re-imagining a tree

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

This Majorcan olive tree belonging to Juan Antonio Pérez, and constructed either intuitively or strictly respecting Japanese rules, has the appearance of a Japanese bonsai.

Author: François Jeker

This olive tree by Spanish Juan Antonio Pérez was collected on Majorca Island. With its tiny leaves and extraordinary natural deadwood, it has all the characteristics typical of the olive found on the island. However, at first sight, one would think it was a Japanese bonsai – who said that “bonsai is a universal art”?

Rules or intuition?

The tree respects many Japanese rules: the first branch on the left to increase movement at the base of the trunk; the height of the gap between the first branch and the balancing branch on the right to free the empty space in the “hollow” of the trunk; the large, clearly visible living vein at the left of the trunk; the regular tapering, the dense ramification, the asymmetrical silhouette, and finally, the staggered, rhythmic foliage – large branches at the base with the foliage pads becoming progressively smaller to meld into a well-rounded crown. Did Juan Antonio follow the rules or was it simply intuition?

Option 1: with the first branch on the right

The slight movement at the base of the trunk is now hidden; the attractive empty space is obstructed and the dynamic created by the gap between the first branch and the balancing branch is obliterated. And finally the lovely cascading jin disappears completely.

This option clearly demonstrates the importance of empty spaces even, or perhaps above all, on mature trees. As the Japanese say, “beauty lies where there is empty space”.

Option 2: Longer foliage on the right

If we lengthen the branches on the right, the upper part of the tree becomes symmetrical. It is a small detail, but it partly suppresses the movement of the trunk and the foliage.

Option 3: A large crown

On the first tree, small branches are emphasised by differently sized spaces which give the tree rhythm. Without these empty spaces, the rhythm disappears and the crown becomes top heavy. ●



1 By adding a first branch to the right, the dynamic disappears.



2 Too stable with longer foliage on the right?



3 Without the small empty spaces beneath it, the crown looks like a weighty helmet.

Marjan specialises in the manufacture of large pots, in a relatively classic style. His workshop is located in the family house near Novo Mesto, Slovenia.

Marjan Mirt

“The tree is the most important thing”

Interviewed by Anne Royer
Photos: Robert Kokol

Marjan Mirt, a 58-year-old retiree, makes bonsai pots with delicate colours from his studio near Novo Mesto in south-eastern Slovenia.



Marjan has chosen the turtle symbol to sign his pieces.

Esprit Bonsai International: How did you become a bonsai ceramicist?

Marjan Mirt: In the 90s, I participated in a fair in Milan, Italy, for business. At the time, I made belts and other leather goods. I saw wonderful bonsai on display and I fell in love with this art. Today, I have more than forty trees. I've always been interested in making bonsai pots, and when I retired six years ago, I started to investigate it

seriously. I realised that all the experience and skills gained from working during many years with leather, which is also a natural material, like clay, helped me a lot in my practice.

There is a long tradition of classic pottery in Slovenia: many master ceramicists make jugs, bowls or other dinnerware. But nobody produces bonsai pots. Some of these old masters taught



The Slovenian ceramicist mainly uses the hand-building slab technique, which allows him to create large pieces.



This deep red is one of the signature colours of Marjan Mirt. Dimensions: 23 × 21 × 7 cm (9 × 8¼ × 2¾ in.).



Sobriety and classicism characterise Marjan Mirt's work. Dimensions: 26 × 26 × 6 cm (10¼ × 10¼ × 2⅜ in.).



This delicate grey-green shade is another of the ceramicist's favourite colours. Dimensions: 32 × 28 × 7 cm (12⅝ × 11 × 2¾ in.).

me the basic skills of working clay and making high-quality ceramics.

And afterwards, I learned a lot from experience, on my own. When you start, you have to practise, practise and practise again. We learn from our mistakes. If I had to give advice to beginners, it would be to arm yourself with patience and be ready to fail.

E.B.I.: How do you like to work on a piece?

M.M.: I take a lot of time to work on design: in general, I draw the shape and size of the pot on paper, which I can then transpose on cardboard. Then I use this model to cut out all the pieces I need to make a pot. I use several techniques, depending on the shape and size of each piece. Most often, I choose the slab technique, which allows me to make large pots. Other times, I just begin working the clay and it guides me and inspires me to design the shape of the pot. I can apply the glazes, which come from different manufacturers, by brush, spray or dipping the pot directly. I also leave many pots unglazed, especially for pines or junipers. Finally, I use a gas kiln for firing my pots, at high temperature so they will be resistant to frost.

E.B.I.: Where do you find inspiration?

M.M.: I'm mostly inspired by bonsai trees, mine or others: when I see a tree, I always wonder what pot could suit him. I also look at what my potter friends do, while keeping my own style, which I believe is rather classic. I don't like it if the pot is more beautiful or interesting than the tree. The tree is the most important thing. The pot must be discreet. At least, that's how I see my pottery. ▶▶▶



Oval pot with studded decoration. Dimensions: 43 × 32 × 7 cm (16⅞ × 12⅝ × 2¾ in.).



The feet of this pot were sculpted by hand. Dimensions: 32 × 24 × 7 cm (12⅝ × 9½ × 2¾ in.).



Marjan Mirt was a leather goods maker in another life. He also has been passionate about bonsai for almost thirty years and has devoted himself entirely to bonsai ceramics since his retirement.

E.B.I.: How do you manage to be creative while maintaining this classic style, in keeping with tradition?

M.M.: Making bonsai pots is really a very old tradition. I learn a lot from the old masters from around the world, they have forged this long history and I have a lot of respect for their work. That said, the styles, the colours, the shapes of the pots also change and develop over time. Today, we can offer more sophisticated containers; we can play more with enamels and pot shapes. Each potter has his or her own style, favourite techniques, methods of design. And since buyers all have very different tastes, there is room for everybody ...

E.B.I.: How is the practice of bonsai evolving in Slovenia?

M.M.: In Slovenia, we have a national bonsai club and very good bonsai enthusiasts, for whom I also make pots. However, I sell most of my pots in Europe and I also send many to the United States, they like my



Lemon-yellow glaze for this hexagonal pot. Dimensions: 27 × 27 × 6 cm (10⁵/₈ × 10⁵/₈ × 2³/₈ in.).

style. Most people don't know much about bonsai ... it's the same here, even though we try to show them what a wonderful hobby it is. And today, more and more young people are joining us!

E.B.I.: As a ceramicist, what are your plans for the future?

M.M.: Of course, I want to keep getting better at what I do. I learn more every

day and the quality of my pots improves. I'm also very honoured to be a member of the European Bonsai Potter Collective (EBPC). I will present my pots during the big exhibition of the 'Best of' 20 Years Trophy, which will take place from 8 to 10 February 2019, in Genk, Belgium. ●



Red and black textured pot.



Grey-green tones and discreet patterns. Dimensions: 41 × 29 × 8 cm (16 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 11 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 3 $\frac{1}{8}$ in.).



Matt or glossy, Marjan offers pots with different textures and colours.

To contact him

Marjan Mirt

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Facebook: www.facebook.com/mirt.marjan



Green and beige glaze. Dimensions: 31 × 28 × 8 cm (12 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 11 × 3 $\frac{1}{8}$ in.).



This pot has an unusual shape, a beautiful deep-blue colour and a delicate texture. Dimensions: 26 × 17 × 6 cm (10 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 2 $\frac{3}{8}$ in.).

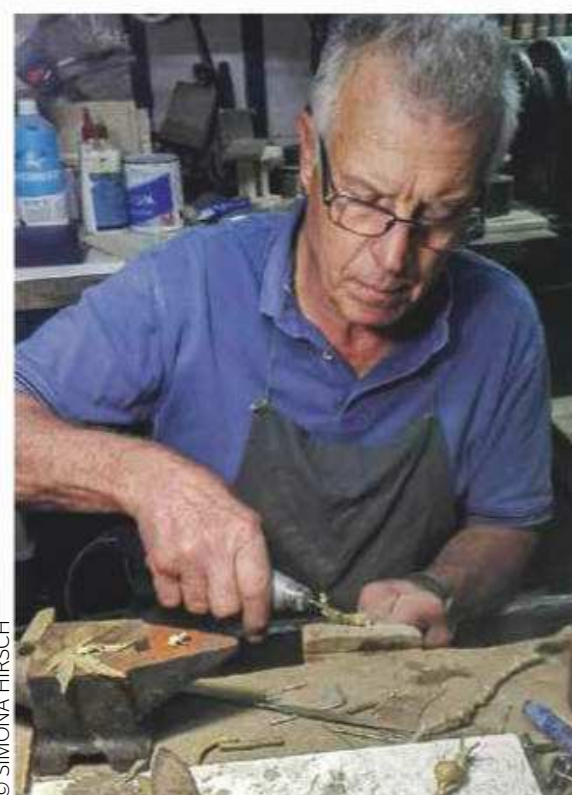


Former silversmith, Andrea Terinazzi creates figurines, landscapes and other objects in bronze, known as *tempai*, to accompany bonsai such as this pilgrim and ...

... his donkey.

He sculpts figurines and landscapes

Now retired, Florentine Andrea Terinazzi uses his expertise as a silversmith to create small bronze objects to accompany bonsai.



© SIMONA HIRSCH

Andrea Terinazzi is seen here in his atelier in Florence working on a branch on which he will place a snail.

Text: Isabel Ribeiro
Photos: Isabel Ribeiro
unless otherwise stated

A bronze figurine or *tempai* can accompany a bonsai display and replace the traditional accent plant. Andrea Terinazzi, a retired Italian silversmith, specialises in this art form.

Andrea has been practising the art of bonsai in Florence since 1982 and trained with the great Japanese masters such as Hideo Suzuki, Kunio Kobayashi, or Masahiko Kimura during their visits to Italy. Unable to find suitable shitakusa, trays, or *tempai* commercially, he started to make them himself and thus the silversmith became a creator of bronze figurines.

A former silversmith

Creating *tempai* requires sculpting and soldering skills. Andrea Terinazzi has a perfect knowledge of metal working, as well as long experience in modelling. Throughout his career as a silversmith, he has designed many ornamental and utilitarian items that were then modelled and manufactured by his company.

And from designing objects in precious metals, he went over to designing animals, traditional Japanese houses, or decorative elements found in Japanese gardens. He draws inspiration from specialist bonsai magazines such as the Japanese *Kinbon*, or by studying *Kakejiku*, the traditional Japanese scrolls that can be seen in tokonoma where a bonsai, a kusamono, a sculpture or an ikebana may also be displayed. *Kakejiku* can represent people, animals, or landscapes.



A *kakejiku* (scroll) depicting typical Japanese huts is a source of inspiration ...



... for the creation of a shack on stilts, for example.

A bestiary and landscapes

Andrea Terinazzi is particularly sensitive to the concept of space which he finds in Japanese aesthetics and spirituality, and conveys this through the *kazari*, the art of sublimating emotion unleashed by a bonsai. When creating *tempai*, a *kazari* component, Andrea takes traditional Japanese elements such as thatched houses, bridges, lanterns, *tori* (Japanese entrance gates), or various kinds of animals. His two herons, one leaning down towards the earth, and the other stretching



These herons seem to be drinking, but their positioning forms a link between heaven and earth.

A *tempai* from A to Z

Andrea uses the “lost wax” technique to cast his bronze *tempai*. When he has designed the model and made the prototype in plaster, he uses different sized wax sheets to construct the object, which he sculpts and refines. “All the same, nobody has ever called me a sculptor,” he says jokingly.

After being cast in a foundry, the *tempai* has to be refined using bronze chiselling techniques. This is followed by cleaning and soldering if necessary. For this Andrea works with great care using small drill bits and metal cutters corresponding in size to the smallness of the piece.

The carving is also carried out with various types of gouges and scalpels for small objects and other tools usually used for woodworking. Conversely, Andrea sometimes uses tools for metalworking to make wooden stands.



© ANDREA TERINAZZI

In the workshop ... sculpting with a chisel.



This oak branch- a gift created for the Japanese master Kunio Kobayashi - evokes autumn.

up to the sky, form a link between the two worlds. The donkey accompanies the pilgrim, who sometimes puts his stick down and removes his hat. One could imagine that the artist is creating a sort of bridge between the West and Japan.

As with an accent plant, *tempai* suggests the seasonality of the display it accompanies. Andrea presented the Japanese master, Kunio Kobayashi, with a large *tempai* which he designed, and then made to represent autumn: an oak branch bearing acorns, one of which has fallen off.

Tempai can also evoke landscapes: marshy with a frog, mountainous with a wild goat, or perhaps a plain from which a deer emerges.

The correct position

Very careful observation is needed for a *tempai* to succeed. A belling deer would be the result of watching many documentaries about the animal to find exactly the right pose. The same goes for a kingfisher on a branch on the lookout for a fish: the

bird expresses the same patience as an angler in a boat. Boats too have woodworm suggesting how time can change the work of humans. And sometimes a cormorant, the angler's friend, will come to perch there.

On occasion, when a Japanese buyer purchases one of his *tempai* that will be taken back to Japan, Andrea realises that he is on the right path. Despite his success and his numerous creations, this multi-talented artist still sees himself as an apprentice.

When he lays out the elements of the *kazari*, and the *tempai* he has created rests on a *jita* (a fine wooden slat) of his making and accompanies a bonsai that he has cultivated over a long time, which is placed on a stand that is yet another of Andrea's creations ... a mere trifle! ●

Contact
www.facebook.com/andrea.terinazzi.5



Chikurin-ji

In praise of moss

The garden of the Chikurin-ji temple, in Kōchi Prefecture, is admirable for its beauty and simplicity. Mosses and ferns lend the place an air of serenity and mysticism.



Mosses and ferns cover the rocks.

The island of Shikoku is home to 88 temples that form a pilgrimage trail. The Chikurin-ji temple, near Kōchi, is the 31st. Its gardens, composed of shady wooded areas, are conducive to moss growth.

Author: Michèle Corbihan

The Chikurin-ji

temple is home to shady, mossy gardens that are imbued with a great poetry and tranquillity which pilgrims and visitors love to savour. Situated near the city of Kōchi, in the south of Shikoku island, and on Mount Godaisan, this wonderful temple is the 31st stop on the island's 88-temple pilgrimage trail.

In the garden's woody undergrowth, mosses and ferns are free to spread and take over the rocks and tree trunks as they



Monks, pilgrims and tourists encounter each other on the garden's pathways.

A Buddhist temple

Founded in the early 8th century, seemingly by Gyoki (668-749), an important Japanese Buddhist monk of the Nara period (710-794), the Chikurin-ji temple belongs to the Shingon school of Buddhism. Some of its sculptures, architectural elements and gardens from the late Edo period are classified as Important Cultural Property.



Mossy stairs invite you to walk on, without entirely revealing the way.



The moss forms a carpet that soothes the eye, but on which you dare not tread.

please. In early September this year, there was every shade of green, from the lightest to the darkest, with no disruption from any other plant colours except the white-grey of lichen. There are no lawns here, but instead a soft carpet of a huge variety of bryophytes, echoed by wild grasses and ferns clinging to the walls and trees. The rocks have disappeared under the moss, as have the old dead trunks; all that remain are their rounded silhouettes. There are several parts to the temple's gardens, and the shady areas have enormous evocative power: they are a hymn of praise to moss and to the patina of passing time. It is a place of extreme simplicity and yet that displays great refinement and elegance.

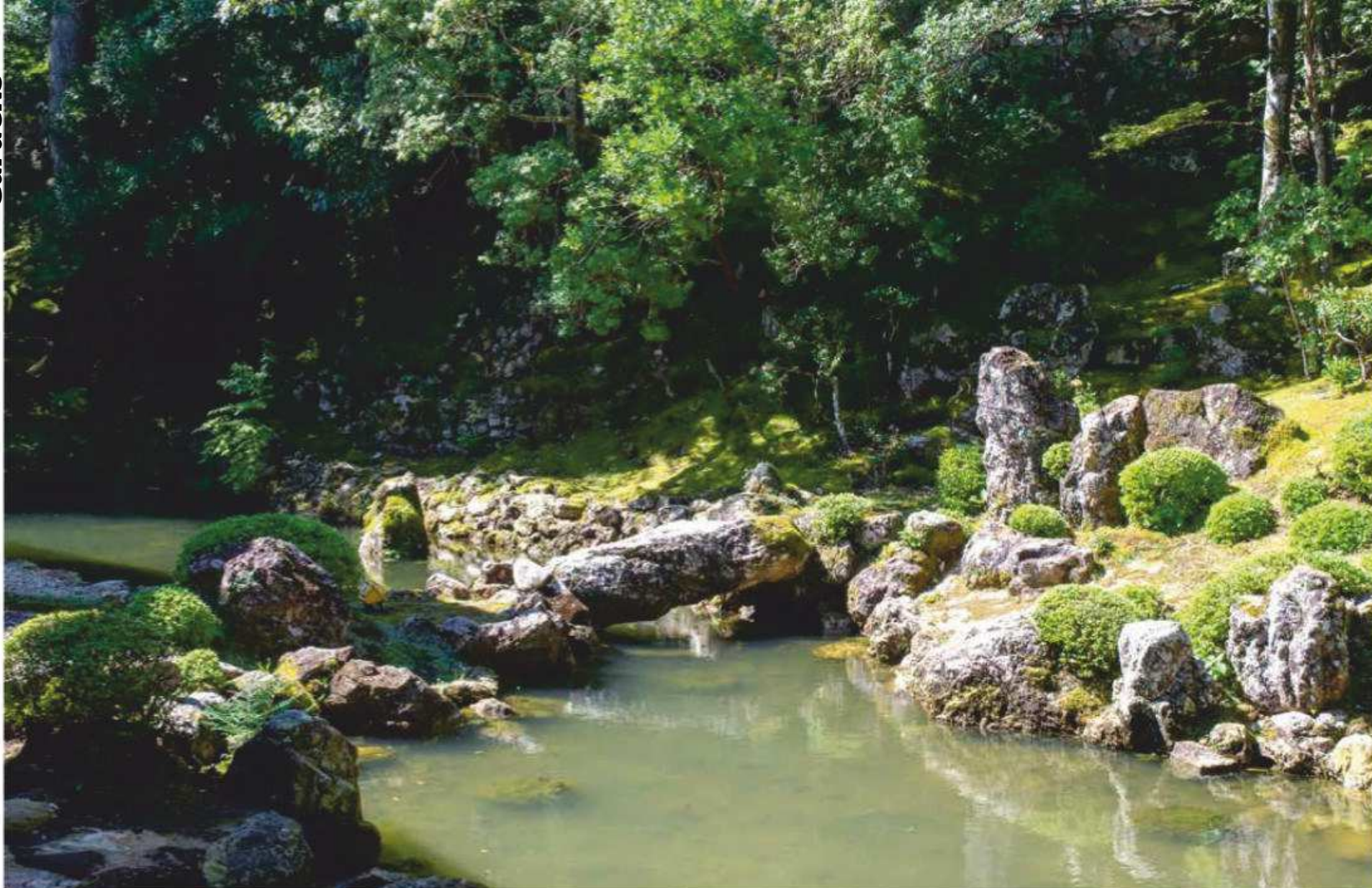
Overgrown tombs

Having entered the temple enclosure by its west entrance, I found myself walking past a set of tombs of former monks, half hidden in the vegetation.

After following a pathway, I arrived in an area of the garden that has been restored and which hosts outdoor yoga classes. This leads to a very modern funeral parlour. On the left, a garden is lit by LEDs concealed in stones during Otsukimi, the Full-Moon festival that takes place between mid-September and mid-October of the solar calendar, as well as during momijigari, the period of contemplation of maple colours, which is generally in the second half of November. ►►►



Near the western entrance, old monks' tombs disappear beneath the vegetation.



The garden is divided into two parts and includes a pond. Every element is symbolic and placed with precision.

A large pagoda

As I continued my walk through the dappled shade, I reached a large stone stairway, at the top of which are the temple's main buildings, including a beautiful pagoda that is about 30 metres (100 feet) tall and was restored in 1980.

Further on, the little pavilion of the Yamauchi lords, who governed the region, is enclosed behind a wall to protect the garden, dating from the Edo period.

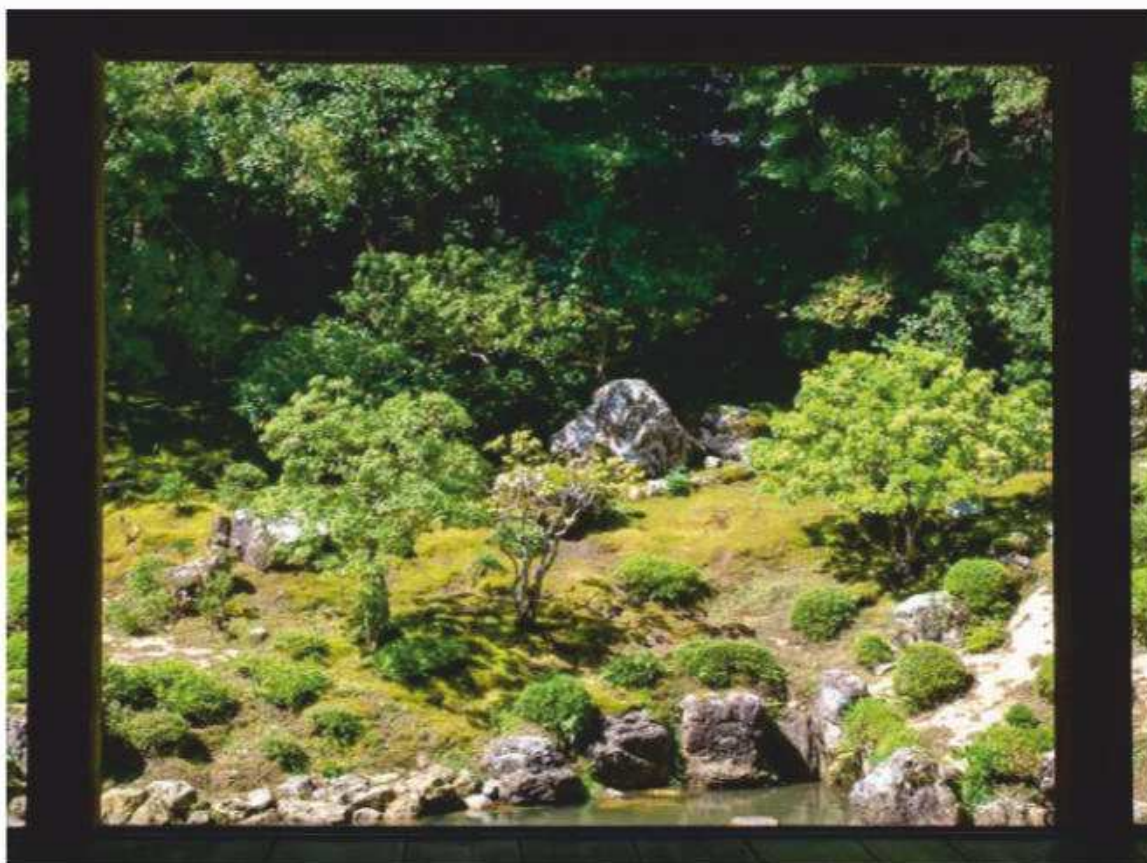
In this garden, which is designed in two parts, you can see a tortoise standing up to walk. The right-hand side of the garden was intended to symbolise a sacred mountain from Chinese Buddhism. The design of the garden and pond is such that, once you are sitting in the main room of the pavilion, you can only see the far end of the little pond, so that it feels as if the pond is coming into the room.



The garden is home to a beautiful five-storey pavilion.



A pathway to the ruling lords' pavilion.



When sitting in the pavilion, it feels as though the pond is coming into the building.

Wedding photos

Between the First and Second World Wars, at the start of the Shōwa period (1926–1989), part of the garden was completely covered to make it into a vegetable garden, because of the need to find solutions to feed the region's population. Once the war was over, the garden was dug up and returned to its original structure.

Pilgrims and tourists visit the Chikurin-ji temple, and monks live in it. All these different people thus encounter each other while walking the quiet pathways. At the foot of a broad stairway, as I was heading for the exit, a young newlywed couple were posing for posterity in traditional costume, in front of a photographer, in this idyllically romantic green oasis.

Between mosses and ferns, temples and the ruling lords' pavilion, nature reigns supreme here and, with gentle guidance from human hands, expresses all the mystery of life. ●



The Chikurin-ji garden is a romantic setting for photos of newlyweds in traditional costume.



Many pilgrims stop off in this temple.

Tourist attractions

Traditionally, temples are not places for tourism. However, with the development of the pilgrimage trail, Kōchi's governing authorities have shown a political will for the temples to be visited more and more. When, in the late 1950s, there was a project to establish a botanical garden in honour of the famous botanist Dr Makino, who was born at Sakawa in Kōchi Prefecture, the decision was made to site it on the slopes of an existing mountain, Godaisan, rather than in Makino's native city. The creation of roads and infrastructure to reach the neighbouring botanical garden benefited Chikurin-ji, opening it up to visitors.

To visit

Chikurin-ji
Godaisan, 3577
781-8125 Kōchi Prefecture, Kōchi, Japan
<http://www.chikurinji.com>
<http://visitkochijapan.com>

■ ■ ■ In 2018, the Folie'flore flower show in Mulhouse is celebrating Japan. Soazic Le Franc was invited as a special guest, to introduce visitors to the art of Japanese flower arranging.

Ikebana at Folie'flore

Text: Soazic Le Franc
Photos: Do Quyen Phan

The story of the Sogetsu ikebana exhibition at Folie'flore 2018, in Mulhouse, began in December 2015 when François Jeker invited me to take part in a talk and demonstration for the Bonsai Clubs International convention that was being planned for the "Journées d'Octobre 2018" ("October Days 2018") festival at the city's exhibition centre. I was delighted to take up his request, both for the opportunity to display my art and to return to Alsace, where I had only been once before – in 1984!

As the months went by, the invitation for the weekend turned into a two-week stay in the lovely city of Mulhouse, for an exhibition during Folie'flore, a flower show that takes place as part of the "Journées d'Octobre".

Emotion in people's eyes

In 2017, I decided to form a little team to help me with this undertaking so far away from western France where I am based. Do Quyen Phan would come from the Paris region for a "holiday", and likewise Claude and Michèle Robert, who live in Lorient (southern Brittany), and who would combine the pleasure of a get-together with part of their family in eastern France with transporting the materials and structures that were needed for the exhibition.

All four of us thus worked away to set up about twenty ikebana arrangements that were displayed in a well-lit, whitewashed gallery space which showcased them perfectly. A lot of visitors were surprised, and got their first look at this Japanese art that had come from Brittany: we are proud to have spread awareness of it.

Over the last 18 years, the Folie'flore show has been a feature of the "Journées d'Octobre" [a public festival presenting new work by the region's craftspeople and producers – Ed] and achieved great renown in eastern France. It is also Mulhouse's biggest event.



■ **Space Plant**
A modern composition with metal.
Arrangement by Michèle Robert, Asphodelinh studio.

Despite our tiredness, all four of us have fond memories of the welcome that we were given by the organisers at the exhibition centre and the demonstrator's spot that François Jeker gave me. In my long career in flowers, Mulhouse remains set apart, because I found respect and good humour in our team, and amazement and even emotion in the visitors' eyes: not only was the weather warm, but people's hearts were, too. Mission accomplished. ●



■ **Elegance**
Palm husks showcased.
Arrangement by Do Quyen Phan.



■ **Giddiness**
A large bamboo sculpture.
Arrangement by Soazic
Le Franc, Asphodelinh studio.



■ **Eika**
A neo-rustic composition. Arrangement by Michèle Robert, Asphodelinh studio.



■ **Kannazuki (October)**
A dance of leaves.
Arrangement by Soazic Le
Franc, Asphodelinh studio.



■ **Whirlwind**
A modern
woven
composition.
Arrangement
by Do Quyen
Phan.

■ ■ ■ Last September, ikebana arrangements by the Senshin-Ikenobo School were shown alongside the collections of the Georges Labit Museum of Asian and Ancient Egyptian art, in Toulouse.

Ikebana at the museum



■ The Senshin-Ikenobo School put on a display at the Georges Labit Museum of Asian and Ancient Egyptian art, in Toulouse, to mark France's annual Heritage Days.
A large moribana in the museum's entrance hall. Kiwi stems, winged spindle (*Euonymus japonicus*), orange lily.

Text: Murette Renaudin

Photos: Bénédicte De Saint-Martin

Arrangements: Murette Renaudin and her former students

Over the last few years, on France's annual Heritage Days (Journées du Patrimoine), a distinguished venue has been made available to us: the Georges Labit Museum of Asian and Ancient Egyptian art, in Toulouse. We are given the chance to create complementary pieces to accompany such priceless works as the Buddhas in the Japan room and the wall sculptures from Thai temples. All these treasures seem to be invigorated by ikebana designed specially for them.

Practising ikebana means finding yourself with the most typical plants of the season week in, week out. It is also an encounter with nature at a given time. You get to know the shrub branches and flowers of the moment, and you celebrate them by creating an arrangement in the style that shows them off at their



■ A rikka to each side of the Buddha.
Right: *Mahonia japonica* branch, leaves of asplenium, aspidistra and hydrangea, privet stems, azaleas and celosia.
Left: *Mahonia x media* "Charity" branch, aspidistra leaves, variegated spindle, lysianthus, celosia and azaleas.

best. After some correction from a teacher, it is nice to take the plant elements home to remake the arrangement in an area of your personal environment that you have chosen specially for the occasion.

Other than your own home, sometimes particular places such as a gallery can present themselves for the display of a variety of arrangements that are all in harmony with each other, like a symphony. ●



■ Large nageire.
Serviceberry branches, celosia and veronica.



■ Two freestyle arrangements.
Left: lily, sunflower and heather.
Right: asplenium, sunflower and hydrangea leaf.



■ Natural and seika styles beside the Buddha.
Left: nageire with dogwood and chrysanthemum branches.
Right: seika of alstroemeria.



■ Three shinkatai to complement the wall sculptures.
Left: iris leaves, nerine and choisia leaves.
Middle: sandersonia and begonia leaves.
Right: Squash leaf, leucadendron and dill.



■ Two natural styles.
Left: variegated pyracantha leaves, chrysanthemums and hosta leaves.
Right: winged spindle branches, celosia and variegated hosta leaves.

The Bonsai Time School brings students together from beyond Italian borders and operates in France, Monaco and Spain where it is multiplying the exchanges between its pupils.

Text: Isabel Ribeiro
Photos: Isabel Ribeiro,
unless otherwise stated

Bonsai Time, the Italian school of bonsai, now operates well beyond its country's borders from France to Spain. Its headquarters was established in 2006, in Nole, near Turin, by Giorgio Castagneri. In 2005, this bonsai enthusiast achieved the status of IBS instructor from the college of Italian bonsai and suiseki instructors. His very first pupil, Carmelo Bonanno, trained for four years at the school, followed by two years of specialisation, and became an IBS instructor in 2015. In 2016, he opened a Bonsai Time School at the Noaro nursery in Camporosso near the French-Italian border on the Côte d'Azur.



▼ Giorgio Castagneri (in the background) representing the Turin school, and Carmelo Bonanno (in the middle) that of Camporosso, demonstrate on a tree together during the En Yu Ten exhibition, organised by the Passion Bonsai Club de Valbonne, in the Alpes-Maritimes.



▲ The Bonsai Time School created in Turin, operates in Italy as well as in France, Monaco and Spain. During the Japan Tour organised by the school in 2017, pupils of four nationalities were able to visit the Sakufu ten in December.

BONSAI TIME

“We are multiplying exchanges”

Giorgio Castagneri, for his part, opened three branches in the Turin region, and one in Spain at Almuñécar in the Grenada province and then in Seville.

Carmelo Bonanno then crossed the border to become an instructor with the Team Monaco Bonsai, and extended his teaching to Marseille. And now, following the same impetus, French enthusiasts take the opposite route to reach Camporosso.

A four-year course

Bonsai Time offers many types of training. Beginners can follow a “corso base”, a basic course covering an introduction to the theory and practice of bonsai, which allows them to gauge their interest in the discipline, and then those who are certain can sign up for a four-

year course during which they will receive full instruction related to bonsai. They can put their learning into practice by working on their own trees, as well as those of their instructors! Other pupils may prefer individual tuition. Both instructors are committed to sharing their passion inspired by the art of Japanese bonsai, but also to practising it correctly. The two Italians are bonsai professionals: therefore their mission is to support their members – which today, number about sixty – seriously and calmly towards the expected result. And indeed, since the school was created by Giorgio Castagneri, six people have obtained the title of instructor from the school after completing the entire course.

The various branches of the Bonsai Time School are made up of pupils



▲ Carmelo Bonanno (left) opened his school at the Noaro nursery in Camporosso. Apart from the Italian pupils, the proximity of the French border enables him to accept French students too.



▲ A forest by Andrea Cosmano, awarded a prize at the Arcobonsai exhibition in Arco di Trento, Italy.



© JACKIE AIMARD

▲ A Scots pine by Giorgio Castagneri exhibited at the May 2018 national IBS convention in Camporosso.

of all ages. The youngest member at Camporosso is nine years old and is particularly interested in kusamono.

Despite a strong female membership, representing 30% of the students, few trees are exhibited by women. According to Carmelo Bonanno, it is the weight of history that explains their scarce presence at the important exhibitions. "In the history of western art, women play a role of little importance. Although this has changed with time, in the bonsai world, a sort of exclusion still persists, perhaps because women

themselves unconsciously take a back seat. And yet, they have trees with great potential, which they enthusiastically work on!"

Club competitions

In order to spread the art of bonsai, students from the various branches of Bonsai Time take part in regional events.

And to increase the exchanges between members of the schools, Giorgio Castagneri and Carmelo Bonanno organise meetings, which might be, for example, between the branches in northern Italy and those on the borders, including French clubs in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (PACA) regions, and vice versa. This is to promote synergy between enthusiasts who do not necessarily work on the same species, or to address particular skills.

Exhibitions are ideal places to meet other enthusiasts. Bonsai Time is a school accredited by the IBS and as such is committed to setting up exhibitions in Italy, where demonstrations make clubs compete against each other. This is a frequent occurrence in Italy. During the 2018 national IBS convention, organised by Carmelo Bonanno at Camporosso, because of its proximity to France, a French club and a Monegasque club, with which Bonsai Time is involved, were able to participate in the competitions.

This opening out onto the international scene characterises the spirit of exchange in the Bonsai Time School so well, that the two instructors, as if to take up a challenge issued by their members, decided to organise a Japan Tour for 2017, so that their students could learn about the land of bonsai, where they have often been themselves. ●



© CARMELO BONANNO

▲ A juniper by Carmelo Bonanno.



▲ During the 2017 Japan Tour: Takeo Kawabe carrying out a graft on a *Juniperus* in his workshop.

Useful information

Facebook : BonsaiTime



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