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international friendship  
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# bc*i*

# Bonsai & Stone Appreciation

2014  
Q3

**Ryan Neil; Contemporary Bonsai Artist**

**Stones From the Great Lakes;  
A Primeval Aesthetic**

**Why judge bonsai? Part Two**

**Know Your Tree Series;  
*Ficus Benjamin* 'Little Lucy'**

**An Exuberance of Satsuki**

**Juicy Bonsai; Knowing  
Your Succulents**



Colorado Spruce  
(*Picea pungens*) by Ryan Neil,  
Bonsai Mirai. Height 29," Width  
34," Chinese container.

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photo courtesy  
William Valavanis

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## President's Message

I participated in four bonsai events in three countries in the last two months. Some of these were major events like the 41st National Bonsai Exhibition & Competition in Manila, Philippines and a major exhibit of 150 large Lingnan style penjing in Beihai Park in Beijing, China. Others activities were more local or regional such as a bonsai exhibition at Descanso Gardens and a program on styling olive bonsai at the Southern Breeze Tree and Stone Society, both in southern California. Although widely dispersed, these events had two items in common. Bonsai activities are attracting a more diverse audience of hobbyists than two or three decades ago and more young and middle-aged people are becoming involved. Many of our best and most innovative teachers are relatively young. Bonsai is not just a hobby for older, retired, and financially secure people. These trends are all positive, indicating a steadily growing interest in bonsai and bonsai-related arts world-wide.

More abundant information and the growing numbers of quality instructors, meetings and conventions are major factors in this diversification of bonsai hobbyists. There was an air of excitement and enthusiasm among the people attending the convention demonstrations, lectures and workshops in Manila, Philippines to watch and learn from expert bonsai stylists from other countries. Budi Sulisty, a BCI board member, from Indonesia was a featured demonstrator as was Mr. Yen Tzy-ching and Mr. Tang Chin-Feng from Taiwan. I gave a lecture on Chinese and Japanese stone appreciation to an eager group of young stone collectors and had a great interaction with them during the critique of the approximate 50 stones on display. The art of bonsai is thriving in southeastern Asia because of the friendly cooperation between bonsai instructors and enthusiasts in different countries. However, it is not limited to Southeast Asia. I see this in other regions of the world as one reaches out to another and we all help each other learn and grow in our knowledge of tree and stone appreciation.

It is also encouraging to see the growing use of native or local trees and shrubs in making bonsai. These are best adapted to the environmental and climatic conditions and eliminate the unintentional introduction of a new disease or insect pests. Bonsai growers and stylists in the Philippines strongly favor the large coastal shrub or small tree, *Pemphis acidula*, or Bantigue as it is locally known. They also favor a woody leguminous shrub in the genus *Desmodium*. Its common local name is Blue Bells because of the numerous small, bluish colored flowers. This shows a growing level of sophistication among the bonsai community in the Philippines. As our newest BCI club member, the Philippines Bonsai Society is leading the efforts to bring quality bonsai to all reaches of this island nation.



The Internet is changing the way we learn about bonsai and stone appreciation. We at BCI are adapting to these changing trends and working to greatly improve our web site and the type and amount of information that we have for our members.

Another indisputable trend is the greater role of the Internet in providing information to people everywhere. There are few places left in the world without some form of internet connection. The amount and quality of material available to people on the Internet is growing rapidly. Thirty years ago, people were still relying mainly on books, magazines, local club meetings, and occasional conventions as their source of information. Now, the use of website, Facebook and other social networking sites allows information to be posted and viewed immediately throughout the world. Within minutes of an event or activity, photographs documenting those events are posted on the Internet. Each day, I receive photographs of people who have just dug a tree from the mountains, or showing a newly restyled tree, or cutting a ribbon at an opening ceremony, or displaying an outstanding newly found stone. The Internet is changing the way we learn about bonsai and stone appreciation. We at BCI are adapting to these changing trends and working to greatly improve our web site and the type and amount of information that we have for our members. Watch [www.bonsai-bci.com](http://www.bonsai-bci.com), we are launching a new website in the coming months.

Finally, there is still time to register and attend our August convention, Sunrise on Australian Bonsai, in the Gold Coast of Australia. It will be held August 21–24th. Plan an Australian vacation and attend our convention. If you like to plan ahead, save the September 18–21st, 2015 dates and plan to attend our grand convention in Guangzhou, China. And, if you are truly an advanced planner, the 2016 convention will be held in Lithuania in September. It too is shaping up to be a great experience. 🌳

Tom Elias, President  
Bonsai Clubs International

*You are invited to be a part of the BCI Vision.*

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## FROM THE EDITOR

It's been a busy spring for everyone at BCI and we are working on many fronts to make bonsai and stone appreciation a pleasurable pass time for our members around the world. Work on an improved website, especially the log in and account management section, has begun in earnest and soon we'll launch a website that has more content and will be easier to use. Promise.

The season's highlight for me was a visit by Dan Robinson, from Elandan Gardens in Seattle, to our local bonsai club's workshop in June. Dan is an American bonsai pioneer and a unique artist whose main concern when creating a bonsai composition, is the trunk. To this end, he has mastered many techniques to make the trunk a major focal point with a story to tell. Not only did he demonstrate on a club tree and collaborate with all workshop participants on their individual trees, he also took interest in our unique geography by asking to be taken tree collecting on the Canadian Shield. After a short 90-minute drive and an easy climb to granite outcrops no more than 30 feet high, we were in Jack pine land where stunted trees grow on the glacier-scoured rock face. Dan was in his element, commenting on everything he was experiencing and sharing his considerable experience on how to "bring them back alive." Most important was his advice on "root enhancing" wild trees with good bonsai potential but with small root pads or no root pads at all. Six hours later, we had five trees in tow and a new outlook on our beloved rocks. Sometimes it takes a visitor to help you see what you have. While it is essential to study bonsai and to apply what is learned, there is no substitute for a lifetime of experience like Dan's. Our club is now joining in Dan's gnarly tree aesthetic and the future looks promising for creating bonsai from our local Jack pines.

This issue is full of articles from very experienced and knowledgeable contributors from which we can learn. Lew Buller, Nikunj and Jyoti Parekh and Sujata Bhat provide valuable information and insights into two species suitable for bonsai; Kath Hughes is on a mission to help us understand the complexities of judging bonsai with a challenge to comment on the trees she presents; Kath also profiles her colleagues Mark and Ritta Cooper, whose love of Japan and all things Japanese has enriched their life; and Tony Ankowicz contributes an important chapter in American stone appreciation, presenting stones from The Great Lakes. Everybody loves a bonsai tree in bloom but the Satsuki Festivals in Japan are in a class of their own. Mike McIntyre takes us there to explain the fascination with the tree of "the fifth month."

Our feature article, by Massimo Bandera is on Ryan Neil, part of a new generation of bonsai artists who have studied in Japan and are energizing bonsai activities all over the US and beyond. We are also pleased to show you the great bonsai Ryan has created.

As always, I invite your comments. 🌳

—Joe Grande, Canada ([bcieditor@grandesign.net](mailto:bcieditor@grandesign.net))

## MISSION STATEMENT

BONSAI CLUBS INTERNATIONAL

Bonsai Clubs International, a not-for-profit educational organization, advances the ancient and living art of bonsai and related arts through the global sharing of knowledge. We educate while promoting international friendship and solidify world relationships through cooperation with individuals and organizations whose purpose is consistent with ours.

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**ON OUR COVER:** Ryan Neil, Bonsai Mirai, Colorado Spruce (*Picea pungens*) Height 29" Width 34". Chinese container. Collected by Jerry Morris in Colorado, this spruce is one of a handful of truly ancient specimens Jerry collected. Now in its third year of development it's beginning to show a refined wildness characterized by the combination of craft and yamadori.



# STONES FROM THE GREAT LAKES A Primeval Aesthetic

By Tony Ankowicz, USA

Photographs by Richard Trummer and William Lemke

*Top; Example of wind swept trees throughout the area.*

**W**ith utmost respect for the spirit of this art form, I would like to offer another variation to our North American Viewing Stones. My intent here is to describe the unique qualities of these stones from the Great Lakes, specifically Lake Huron, and how they have changed and filled my life.

More than four billion years ago, the Laurentian or Canadian Shield was formed and subsequently shaped by active volcanoes which eventually became large mountains. The Shield itself is predominately composed of Pre-Cambrian igneous and metamorphic rock consisting of granite, quartzite, gneiss and migmatite which eventually folded and cooled into stunning veins and the structures that we see today. Over millions of years this plate eroded to an almost flat topography, providing the source for many of these stones.

The Great Lakes were formed next to this structure approximately 7,000–10,000 years ago following the recession of the last glaciation. This massive sheet of ice gouged, carved and further flattened the Shield into its present form. In the process of this retreat, rocks of various sizes were “dropped” along the way, and some of



those that were protected underwater slowly dissolved into these unusual shapes.

This area has also profoundly influenced Canadian culture. The mining and lumber industries have flourished on the abundant natural resources. Lake Huron, the second largest lake, is a “holiday” retreat for countless Canadians who spend time on and around this area for the elemental beauty of water, wind, and scenery. This same landscape has also been the inspiration for several early 20th century artists, famously called the “Group of Seven,” who distinctively captured this primeval aesthetic on canvas.

However, there is a harsher side to this environment. The vast wilderness had historically been a challenge for the early settlers, being described by one 17th century Jesuit priest as a green desert. Not only is the vegetation a thin green veneer over this ancient bedrock, but the prevailing northwesterly winds, seasonally at their worst and predictively called, “Gales of November,” have historically taken their toll on ship and sailor alike. This constant wind blowing off the lakes also creates striking wind swept pines that cling stubbornly to rock crevices on the thousands of islands. It is a spectacular area but one that can be unforgiving and definitely requiring mindful respect. Even today, despite modern protective efforts and conveniences,



*Top*; 13 x 24 x 16 inches. Untitled, A highly finned stone cantilevered to highlight the horizontal turn at the tip of the bottom fin. Base; Cherry.

*Left*; A view of open water from a smooth flattened bedrock island.

the numerous types of biting flies remain an acquired tolerance.

From my earliest years, I vacationed with the family in this area and grew to appreciate the unique wonders of this environment. It became an integral part of my psyche. Even though I had been swimming, diving, and snorkeling in the waters of Lake Huron for years, it wasn't until mid-life that I discovered, quite by accident, a layered “reef” looking sculpted stone sitting on top of a smooth shoal approximately eight feet underwater. The unusual nature of this find, as compared to all the other found curiosities, initiated this adventure.



Top: One of the thousands of natural Penjing islands within the Lake Huron area.

I shifted my snorkeling agenda from admiring fish, lures, and interesting aquatic features to an intense search for green algae- and Zebra mussel-studded stones of unusual shape. At first the harvesting of these stones was a novelty but very quickly evolved into an obsession. As my vision became more refined (we tend to see what we're looking for,) the number and quality of candidate stones increased.

Owing to the popularity of this area as a vacation destination, the number of cottages has increased as well as localized pollution. This has forced us further from shore into open water in search of clarity just to see the bottom. Our rudimentary equipment, which includes a fourteen-foot aluminum boat meant for sheltered waters, is being deployed miles into open water in search of boulder fields around shoals and islands. Actually, this is part of the adventure, albeit a dangerous one.

I referred to these stones as being “dropped” by the receding glacier only because they always seem to be located on top of or leaning against other rounded and worn glacial rocks and boulders, and could not have otherwise survived the crushing effects of the ice.

As yet I have not determined with any predictive certainty were best to look for these stones; deceptively, what's above the surface does not necessarily indicate what's below.

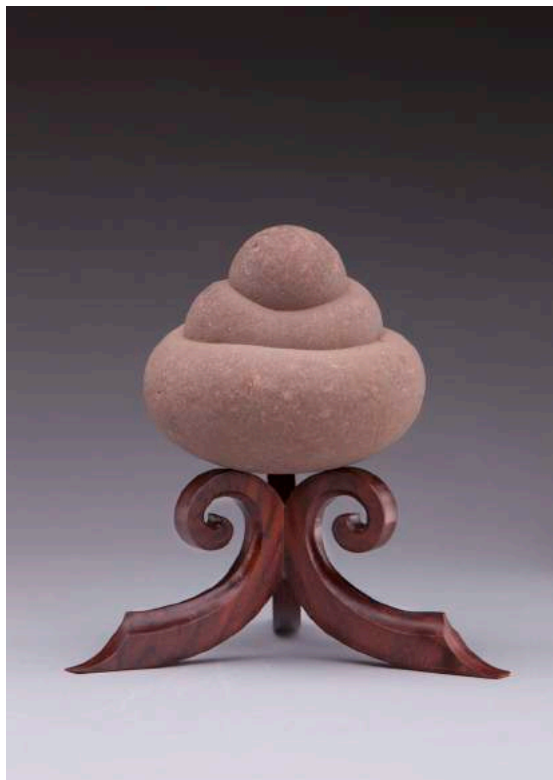
When an area is deemed to have potential, which is often based solely on intuition, then a well-organized surface plan is implemented with all conscripted family divers, the lead being my son David, being assigned to their respective underwater responsibilities. Once in the water, however, our best intentions and strategy vanish as we scatter, like freed minnows, independently scanning and following the contours of the bottom in search of stones. On occasion, we will become disoriented by the monochromatic bottom and circle back into a previously viewed area, as evidenced by the tell tale signs of examined rocks.

When an interesting shape is spotted, it is studied for complexity, size and feasibility to move. We've admired many large sculpted boulders that were far beyond our capability to transport, leaving us to merely swim around these sentinels in awe. If the rock is considered manageable, it will then be manually lifted and cradled by hand while holding one's breath and





*Top right; 5 x 9 x 9 inches.*  
The "Illusion" is an early piece primarily undertaken as an exercise in making something out of nothing. The stone itself has a severe cleft along the bottom but the top veining was intriguing. The suggestion of the stone being enveloped or extending into the wood was the challenge. This was also the first time I attempted such a robust base but did so after seeing Sean Smith's diaza for Jim Hayes beautiful stone, "Song of the Starlight Heaven." Base; Walnut.



*Middle; 5 x 4 x 4 inches.*  
Untitled. Lake Superior concretion. This stone is dedicated to a fellow spellbound stone hunter, Byron Buckeridge. Base; three-piece Coco Bolo.



*Bottom left; 8 x 5 x 4 inches.*  
Untitled. An early example of a simple platform meant to balance the stones' prominence. Base; Padouk.

walking along the bottom toward the shore for further examination. For larger stones, nylon straps are employed with the accompanying challenges of aligning the boat over the stone. This is usually done when we have finished diving in the afternoon but typically by that time the waves also begin to pick up. If after basic cleaning and critiquing, the rock is determined to be worth the effort, it is then loaded into our little boat, along with all the other rocks, diving gear and paraphernalia and transported back to the cottage. At this point, with a better vantage and equipment, far more serious cleaning, sorting, and positioning



is undertaken and ultimately decisions are made as to which stones should continue onward. Even upon their arrival at home they are triaged to either the garden, the garage, or the studio. Unfortunately, all this movement sometimes can traumatize the more fragile pieces with unsightly breaks, something I regret. Over time our dock, landing, yard, and garage began to fill with “visiting” stones. At this point it was still a collection without purpose, other than the thrill of searching for something so interesting.

The curiosity and fascination to seek out these stones was also motivated by the visual juxtaposition

between the harsh environment, which was evident all around the surface, and the delicate configurations of these stones found below. For me, they came to exemplify the elemental aesthetics that I so admire in this area.

*Top left;* 11 x 15 x 11 inches. A very animated piece which, if forced to ascribe a “looks like” title, is called “Wyvern” Base: Coco Bolo.

*Top right;* 24 x 15 x 11 inches. Untitled. An example of a heavily dissolved gneiss (grey section) and a much denser veined Quartzite (white). This formation/style appears frequently. Base: Coco Bolo.

*Bottom;* 12 x 15 x 13 inches. An early work affectionately titled “Bonsai.” The first piece that I experimented with sculpting. Base; Cherry.



While discussing the natural Penjing features of the local islands and this passion for stones that had captivated me, a local Bonsai club member referred me to Covello and Yoshimura's book, *The Japanese Art of Stone Appreciation*. This seemingly esoteric book was revelatory in broadening my artistic sensibilities. It made so much sense to elevate these rocks into presentations; their dynamic forms were already doing so in my mind's eye. I had never seriously worked in wood before this but felt driven to reproduce as best I could the bases pictured in this book. By reviewing as many other publications on the subject as possible, using a magnifying glass to analyze every pictured stone's base, I reinvented methods for myself to mount these stones. That was only because the afore mentioned seating techniques were not clear on how to deal with some of the larger balanced pieces that were being harvested. Also, the predominant literature on the Japanese style of diazas didn't feel appropriate for the types of stones that I was finding. The qualities of color, patina, hardness, size, shape and suggestion were simply not there. With publications about Chinese Gongshi, particularly Kemin Hu's work, I realized that I could take more liberty in presenting these stones. Though I had neither the aspiration nor skill in carving organic Chinese motif bases, I was never the less inspired upon seeing vertical, balanced, multi-colored and most of all abstract stones of all sizes displayed as art. But at the core, studying the cultural traditions of both Japanese and Chinese stone presentation was instrumental in developing my understanding of the



*Top*; 25 x 5 x 4 inches. This presenting side always felt "stern" to me and led to the name "Grand Duchess." The other side however, to continue the metaphor, actually has a smile. Base; two-piece Walnut.



*Bottom*; 10 x 11 x 5 inches. Untitled. This limestone piece has interesting geologic roots. The material was created approximately 440 – 420 million years ago, during the Silurian age, from biologically generated Calcium Carbonate at the bottom of an ancient ocean. This structure, now an escarpment, extends from western New York state, through Niagara Falls, Lake Huron, along Michigan's Upper Peninsula, and down into Wisconsin's Door Peninsula. These stones are randomly scattered about the region and are quite rare in this form. They are however easily identified underwater due to their light color despite being covered in algae. They also often contain fossils. Base; Cherry.



power of Viewing Stones, and the guidelines within these traditions proved to be invaluable when considering how to creatively display them.

I make every effort to keep the stone's natural sculpted form, removing only the algae and Zebra mussels with a power washer and numerous fine brushes. The process of cleaning, turning, flipping, and angling these stones tends to draw me further into their unique structure and subtle detail, which further amplifies their story and our relationship. Through this direct contact and numerous "conversations" with the stones, their true character is slowly revealed; on occasion this process can take years. Presentation or display is intended to elevate the stone, to transform it from rock to art, and to highlight its "best face." The base, essentially, may be considered as merely a functional embellished accommodation.

My basic craft of mounting each stone continued to develop but I found myself drifting toward a more contemporary interpretation of stone display. By this time I had been exposed to a variety of styles and, as such, better able to offer unique alternative approaches for each stone. However, this creative liberty presented its own challenges. Often times the drive for an artistic and expressive design would run rampant in my studio and need to be reined in to restore primary focus on the stone. This process, sometimes by trial and error, could extend completion time immensely.

I am fascinated by and attracted to the abstract nature and emotive power of Viewing Stones, regardless of their origin. Being sensitive to the local geology seems to enhance the story and appreciation for these particular stones. From the dynamic forces which originally created them through their elemental changes over time, our experience with them in comparison is brief. As are *Torii* gates to Shinto temples, so too are Viewing Stones metaphoric portals by which we can transcend our human condition. This art form helps me pause and be reminded of a much-loved Canadian wilderness aesthetic. I fully anticipate pursuing these stones, and many of their relatives, wherever they may take me. The Viewing Stones of Lake Huron have thus become my *Torii*. 🌲



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Tony Ankowicz grew up in Toronto, Canada and spent almost every summer vacationing with family in the Georgian Bay area of Lake Huron. His stone collecting started in the early nineties and took a giant leap when he was introduced to Suseki a few years later. He has shown pieces at the Ojibway Art Show, Lands End, "Richard C. Anderson Gallery," and at the Stone Appreciation Symposium. Several of his stones have been published in *BCI Bonsai & Stone Appreciation* magazine. Tony's first article about Georgian Bay stones appeared in *Waiting to be Discovered* magazine in 1999. He currently lives and works in Madison, Wisconsin with his wife. They have five children and two grandchildren who also enjoy annual vacations at the family cottage on Georgian Bay. More on [www.viewingstonedesign.com](http://www.viewingstonedesign.com).

*Facing Page;*

*Top;* 5 x 5 x 4 inches. The veining movement within the stone was carried into the Honduran Rosewood base and simply titled "Wave."

*Bottom;* 26 x 28 x 17 inches. Untitled. When first spotted underwater, this rare 200 plus pound granite stone was on its back, hole facing up, and looked like an old piece of timber construct. It has since taken on a much more forceful and severe feel. I hesitate to name it for fear of insulting the stone. Base; five-piece Walnut.

*This Page;*

8 x 3 x 3 inches. Untitled. A delicate piece with a graceful flow. Peter Warren collection. Base; Coco Bolo.



# Why judge bonsai? All in the Eye of the Beholder

By Kath Hughes, UK

Photos courtesy Malcolm Hughes

**Part Two.** Part Three coming soon. Part One was published in Q2, 2014;



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**T**he reasons why we exhibit our trees are as various as are the types of trees we own. Some of us are club members and the pinnacle of our ambition is to see our club exhibit prove itself against other club exhibits. Many of us are individualists looking to own the very best tree; maybe we spent vast sums to import it from Japan, or perhaps we nurtured it for many, many years from a seedling or a cutting, or like most of us, purchased first or second rate potential material, and hopefully proved ourselves by producing a masterpiece. Whatever your method, our aims are very similar—an Award of Merit, a First in its Class, or maybe even Best in Show.

It takes a long, long time to get there even if we spent lots on money. Do we know how to exhibit that tree to full advantage? Is it properly prepared for showing? Is it in the correct pot? Or even is the pot clean and weed free? What about a stand to display it on—is it the right size and color? Do we need a scroll and an accent plant to display with it—if so what is the right kind? Oh, so many things to think about before we are ready to display.

This is just for individual trees standing alone on a bench or in a Tokonoma. What if is to be part of much larger display for your club or even part of a National exhibit? This adds further dimensions—what about the relation to all the other trees exhibited, size, color, direction of movement, proximity to each other—all these are more things to puzzle over. It seems endless and overwhelming when you think about it for the first time.

Making rules for doing all these things can be incredibly restrictive. Rules are not flexible by their very nature and if you are too rigid, creativity cannot flourish. However judging without some form of rules is chaos. Balancing rules against innovation is a pervasive problem in all of life. As ageism is pervasive and entrenched in our society, so elitism is pervasive in



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bonsai 'culture'. Bonsai should teach us balance, and as experience grows the many exceptions and variations gradually invalidate the rules and, by the same experience the rules become less needed. The same thing applies to judging; rules are inflexible, so maybe what we require are guidelines that we can learn from until we reach that pinnacle of experience where recognizing good from bad becomes as much a learned reflex as driving your car—you do not have to think what gear is appropriate or when to apply the brakes—it has become automatic. So does judging bonsai—you just need those guidelines and lots and lots of practice.

In the near future we are going to give you those guidelines and plenty of time to practice. For now just test yourself. How much do you know already? How good is your 'Bonsai Eye'?

Bonsai exhibitions range from international events to local society shows. They range from purely local club shows, where the trees are judged against each other but at a fairly basic level, to reward members for improving standards and to try to raise the level of the club exhibit to a higher quality. The actual standard of display and presentation can often leave considerable scope for improvement.



10

Look at the images on these pages and be the judge. They are actual club exhibits at local shows, the standard varies enormously. Be critical and decide which trees should not have been displayed and why? Which displays lacked form and presentation and why, what's wrong? They are all in some way inappropriate.

What has ruined the chances of the trees in photos 1 to 3? A tree that should not be there? A very misguided positioning of



11



12



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something? Or even an extraordinary choice of color. It's the trees you are meant to look at.

In photos 4 and 5 could we squeeze any more on and oh, those drapes? Quality of trees? What happened to the backdrop, didn't they buy enough?

That's somewhat better in photos 6 and 7 but the feature trees at each end are so untidy—get your scissors out. Some lessons in tree trimming are sorely needed.

Look at photo 8. Don't try and squeeze that extra one on, each tree deserves its own space. Same problem in photo 9, and how on earth did that larch get there?

Photo 10 looks like a beginners' stand. Why on earth did they enter?

Photos 11 and 12 are not exactly bonsai, but should you try and exhibit so much? The accent in photo 11





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was displayed with a beautiful juniper but isn't it a little bit 'twee', or even Beatrix Potter?

Now let us look at some displays, recognized as 'Good' or 'Excellent' at local or even national horticultural shows. This is where your trees are part of an exhibit that will be judged against a whole range of horticultural exhibits that can range from flowers, vegetables or even horticultural sculptures on a grand scale. Here, the judges have a great deal of experience of display techniques, but how much do they know about the art of bonsai?

The exhibits are judged by a panel of judges who each have an expertise in different categories of plants. This does not make them all experts in bonsai but they are all experts in displays and exhibitions. The judging panel will have a bonsai expert in the position of advisor to the rest of the panel. That panel is presented



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with all kinds of exhibits that seemingly have nothing in common aside from being a great eye catching spectacle for the general public to admire in their thousands.

Why do we compete in this strange competitive field? Well in the U.K. and many other countries, horticultural shows are a huge part of the Summer Season, visited and admired by millions. Bonsai in most countries lacks public exposure; in many instances it is ignored by the media, so how do we get public acclaim by exhibiting at these events where, if we reach the right standard, we can win Gold Awards, worth at least £500.00 each, monies not acquired easily elsewhere. It is well worthwhile learning the skills of not just displaying trees, but displaying them to their greatest advantage.

What a selection we have in photos 13 to 20—these are all from Royal Horticultural Society displays in the U.K. and both of the bonsai stands won a Gold Award.

What do you make of this Bonsai in a display garden? Photo 21. What do you judge, the bonsai or the oriental garden? They are not good bonsai, are they? You will surely be pleased to know they only got a bronze award.

Judging takes so many forms it would be useful to have basic ground rules, something to steer your judgements in the right direction. Long lists of checkpoints with marks out of 5, 10 or even 20, takes hour upon hour to complete; you could still be judging two days after the Show is over! We have to practise; expertise has to be learned and decisions made quickly, even when we have to judge each bonsai exhibit of single



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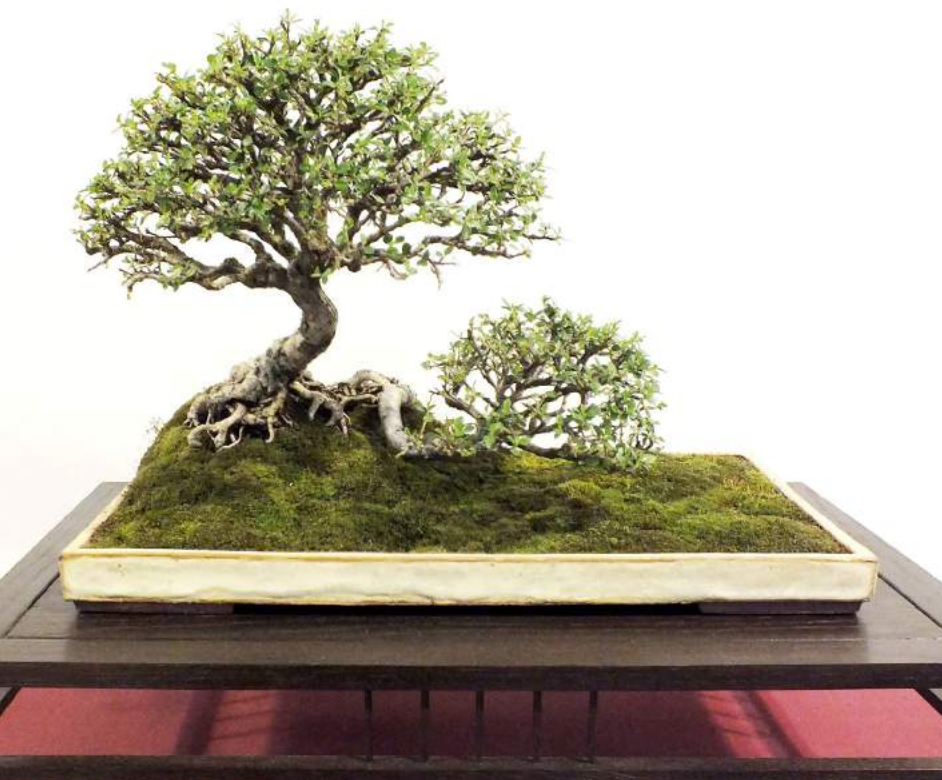
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33

trees with stand, accent plant, scroll or maybe even a shohin composition.

What are we looking for now in photos 22 to 24? Perfect trees of course, but what else? Is that the correct accent to go with that tree? Should a flowering lowland accent be displayed with a mountain tree? Is the stand the right size or color? Is that scroll even vaguely appropriate? So many questions, so many things that can mar perfection.

Lastly, back where we started with bonsai trees; no hidden extras to confuse the issue. Photos 25 to 33. Are they good enough for exhibition? If not, why not?

Next time we'll try and give you some answers and hope that this assists you in a better understanding of the judging process or even make you into proficient judges. 🌲

Ed. Note: The next installment in this series on judging bonsai will be a set of guidelines that clubs and individuals can download and use to evaluate and judge trees in local shows. The emphasis will be on criteria that will allow for efficient and impartial appraisal within a reasonable amount of time. Dr. Malcolm Hughes, the writer of this third article on Judging Bonsai, is a judge of long experience not only in the UK but internationally. In the UK, he is one of very few, fully accredited Royal Horticultural Society Judges of Bonsai.



creative capacity & bonsai spirit

# Ryan Neil

## Contemporary Bonsai Artist

By Massimo Bandera, Italy

Photos by Massimo Bandera and Pierluigi Gilardetti

Translation by Joe Grande, Canada

had the opportunity to meet Ryan Neil in depth when he came to my home to work on a centuries-old spruce, (*Picea excelsa*), a tree similar to one that Masahiko Kimura styled in 1992, and where I experienced firsthand Ryan's extraordinary talent.

Ryan and I both chose to study with Masahiko Kimura because we are fascinated by his great technique and his artistic vision, but in very different ways. My study has taken place through cultural exchanges, seminars, many visits to Japan, hosting him in Italy and many years of correspondence. I also administer an award that I established in his name; *Premio Kimura Masahiko per il Bonsai Contemporaneo*, (the Masahiko Kimura Award for Contemporary Bonsai).

I think Ryan embodies the dream of every western bonsaist, to experience bonsai in Japan while learning from one of the greatest artists of all time.



Ryan chose the path of a full-time apprenticeship and all the challenges that came with it. During six years of study with Kimura, Ryan was able to learn through a traditional Japanese apprenticeship with a focus on a “way of doing” based on repetition.

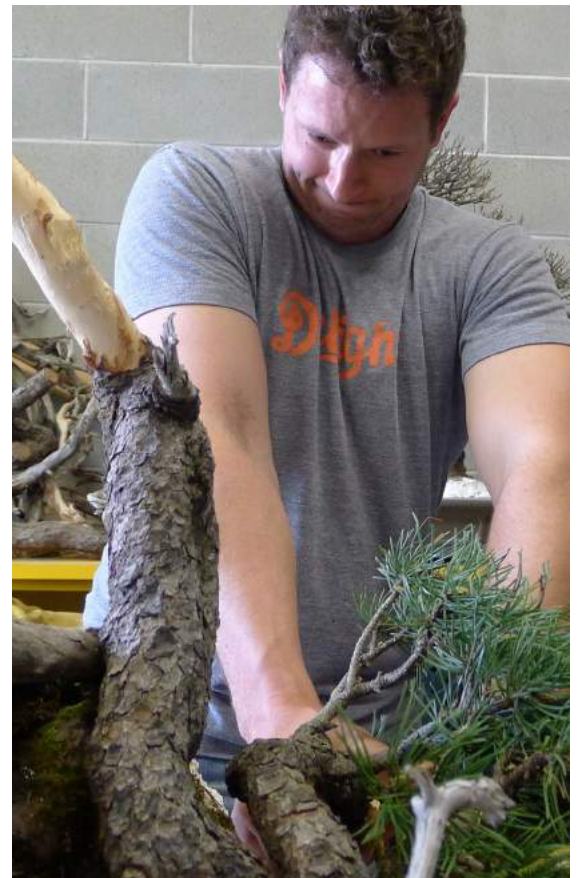
During this time, Kimura had indicated to me the creative capacity and the bonsai spirit of this young talent, whose career many were following.

I think Ryan embodies the dream of every western bonsaist; to experience bonsai in Japan while learning from one of the greatest artists of all time.

Browsing his site, [www.bonsaimirai.com](http://www.bonsaimirai.com), and reading his impassioned stories, we understand his grand passion for bonsai and his professional ambitions. The website also shows Ryan's dedication to teaching others the valuable lessons he knows so well.

If we were to refer to bonsai in an artistic way, we could say that it is a live, potted and miniaturized tree, and modelled according to the Zen aesthetic. But even if this definition is true to the historical record, in fact there are actually three historical models to appreciate bonsai: we have Chinese Penjing with an ancient history of eleven schools; classic Japanese bonsai that is not an art but a way based on ideal Japanese beauty; and contemporary bonsai in the twentieth century, which is a creative interpretation of the artist.

As an artist, Ryan brings to his work the experience of his great master, a very modern and natural line, with a naturalness that has always been also sought in American bonsai, where he wants to express his own identity but with comparable quality to European and



Photos on page 20 and top two on page 21 courtesy Fuji Sato Company where Ryan conducted a seminar on pines.





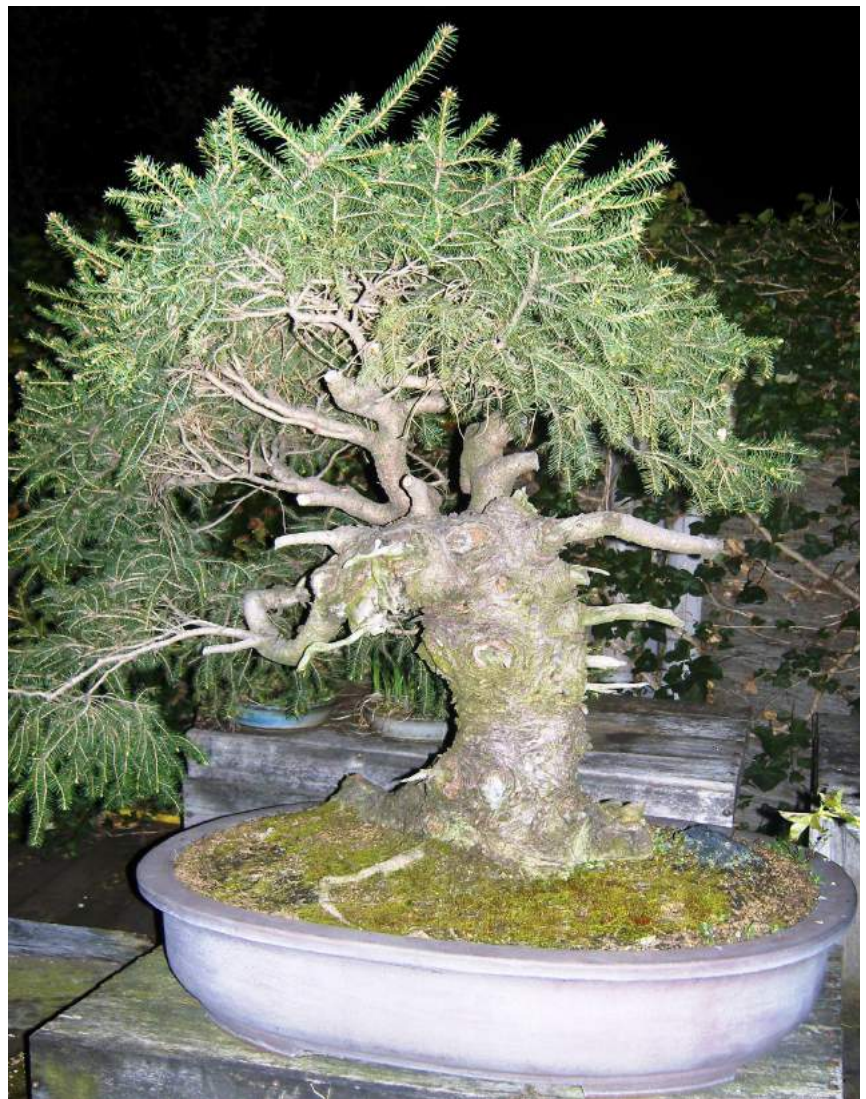
Bottom left; the *Picea excelsa* that Masahiko Kimura styled in 1992 has a striking resemblance to the tree, bottom right, that Ryan worked on in Massimo's garden. Magazine page from *Bonsai & News* number 14, 1992, article by K. Onishi, courtesy Crespi Bonsai, Italy.



Japanese bonsai. His talent and his tenacity, which are essential in bonsai, give him the tools to work with great confidence under high pressure, like Kimura has always taught.

According to Kimura, "To make bonsai, it is necessary to study and learn technique and theory, but first of all it is very important to understand the spiritual aspect of doing bonsai. Once this aspect is acquired, you can begin to learn the theory and technique. Spirituality is essential."

For the student is not easy to understand what Kimura means by "spiritual," but in repeating the work of the seasons in the garden, you realize how important this method of teaching it is. After much



According to Kimura, "To make bonsai, it is necessary to study and learn technique and theory, but first of all it is very important to understand the spiritual aspect of doing bonsai."

repetition, the work can be accomplished without thinking. The student becomes one with his medium, whether it is paint and brush, hammer and chisel, a musical instrument or a live tree.

Kimura also says, “The relationship between master and apprentice must be like it was in feudal Japan, so strict that the student must always accept the opinion of the master, even if the student sees a white thing, but his master says it is black, the student must accept it. Only in this way you can grow spiritually, by realistically facing the right spirit of doing bonsai.” This phrase, which I wanted as the preface to my book, clarifies the difference between the classic Japanese apprenticeship and modern educational models. It is an impossible dialogue between a feudal mentality and a modern democracy. Though the differences are great,

both methods are amazing and informative human experiences. Nevertheless, a traditional apprenticeship brings a typically Japanese pragmatism and the experience becomes moral-aesthetic.

The hierarchical system of student and master functions in a way incomprehensible to us in the West: the teacher disorients you, puts you to the test with deceit, punishes you, he makes you look bad, assigns impossible tasks, tells you things that are false, humiliates you. If we read medieval monastic rules, we will find a lot of similarity, the feudal methods are based on a deep psychological introspection and human spirituality. Certainly today it seems incredible that some teachers still use such methods, but this is the way Kimura, who lost his father in adolescence, was taught by his teacher Motosuke Hamano. He firmly believes in this method.

The relationship between master and apprentice must be like it was in feudal Japan, so strict that the student must always accept the opinion of the master, even if the student sees a white thing, but his master says it is black, the student must accept it.







It is in this environment that Ryan spent six years travelling the same path of many apprentices before him, experiencing failures amongst the many successes.

The major Japanese philosopher of the twentieth century, Kitaro Nishida (1870-1945) tells us that through active intuition, man forms and transforms the world, and in turn, is himself transformed. In such thinking lies in the strength of the Japanese mentality. In the absence of theoretical treatises in this tradition, apprenticeship is a process that happens naturally; seeing the works of the masters, learning from nature, serving the master, receiving oral information from the master when he thinks fit and, finally, the sacred texts, supremely practical and instructive.

Being a Westerner in a total sense, Ryan has a chance to really go into the magnificent beauty of contemporary bonsai, very dynamic, in which we see the power of the master, a creative capacity in harmony with the theory of art and the grandeur of nature, always however, respecting the trees being worked on. Living much longer than we, they deserve the respect of the wise who really know how to work on them without stressing them or making them die.

Ryan's work provokes pleasure that you understand with aesthetic contemplation without consideration of the source of that pleasure, without the distinction between major art, minor art or applied art as we

Ryan's bonsai trees have the awesome power of the masterpieces of Kimura, it is an emotional tension looking for a contemporary artistic expression through natural and perfect mastery of the technique.



know it in the West. Only after Japan's ports were open to the West, did the Japanese become aware of these distinctions. Before the Meiji period, it was neither known nor had the slightest importance. After contact with the West, Japanese terms were coined for fine arts and decorative arts. The words of Kimura: "I'm a bonsai craftsman," contains, along with his humility, the traditional idea of not to care in the least in classifying bonsai.

Looking closely at Ryan's work, I tried to understand how he makes a harmonious whole with the beauty of nature and the evocative power of the old trees, virile, survivors of countless battles. The modernity of his work is as though he has created a bridge connecting the classic Japanese masculine aesthetic of *masuraobi* (益荒男美), and his rugged, direct, highly emotional and sensual style, to the abstract avant-garde of the twentieth century—truly a global art!



I think it's an art in tension towards the spiritual, an inner necessity that always arrives in divergent interpretations such as Kandinsky, the influential Russian painter and art theorist, when he declared that, "Maximum realism is equal to maximum abstraction."

Ryan's bonsai trees have the awesome power of the masterpieces of Kimura, it is an emotional tension looking for a contemporary artistic expression through natural and perfect mastery of the technique. A poetic conception of the tree as a gigantic individuality that rises above all, with a trunk twisted and shaken by powerful forces, supreme in its height and large size. Like the trees painted by Cézanne, that rise from the ground in dramatic fashion; the inclined base leads to a very impressive aspect, the bare and



dry branches create a huge canopy that covers almost the entire sky—a tree with its forms in tension, in a response to the forces of nature. Something very difficult to accomplish but in this, Ryan achieves excellence.

With an apparent simplicity, Ryan's work results in a bonsai that is truly a giant in miniature.

I wish him an extraordinary career and to become what he deserves: one of the greatest masters of the art of bonsai in the West and a great creator of magnificent works of bonsai! 🌲

A photo gallery of trees by Ryan Neil follows. —Ed.



With an apparent simplicity, Ryan's work results in a bonsai that is truly a giant in miniature.



# B gallery

RYAN NEIL, BONSAI MIRAI

photos courtesy Bonsai Mirai



**California Juniper** (*Juniperus californica*). Height 42" Width 32". Container by Ron Lang of Lang Bonsai Containers ([www.langbonsai.com](http://www.langbonsai.com)). Originally styled by Marco Invernizzi several years ago, this California juniper has been at Mirai for 3 years and is showing a high level of refinement and health.



**Rocky Mountain Juniper** (*Juniperus scopularum*) Height 34" Width 24". Container by Ron Lang of Lang Bonsai Containers ([www.langbonsai.com](http://www.langbonsai.com)). Potentially one of the most dynamic displays of deadwood seen on a juniper, this Rocky Mountain juniper offers a freedom and creativity most bonsai artists rarely have the chance to utilize.



**Limber Pine** (*Pinus flexilis*) Height 26" Width 34". Antique Chinese nanban container. Collected by Andy Smith several years ago, this limber pine was one of the first trees at Mirai. Its hollow snaking trunk and beautiful foliage tell two tales of struggle and simple elegance—a nice juxtaposition of the delicacy and harshness of nature.



**Sierra Juniper** (*Juniperus occidentalis*) Height 37" Width 32". Chinese container. Collected by Bob Shimon, high in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California, the true character of this tree was not immediately visible when Ryan purchased it back in 2011. The unique hook of deadwood hanging over the edge of the container combined with the torn fin of wood running up the right side of the trunk express exceptional age and a wonderful story of survival.



**Mountain Hemlock** (*Tsuga mertensiana*) Height 27" Width 48". Chinese container. Collected by Randy Knight from a rotting stump back in the '90s, this hemlock shows great age and amazing bark. Its unique root system, combined with the intricate deadwood, contrasts with the fine feathery nature of the foliage to offer immense character and grace.







**Japanese Red Pine** (*Pinus densiflora*) Height 34" Width 46". Container by Ron Lang of Lang Bonsai Containers ([www.langbonsai.com](http://www.langbonsai.com)). The origins of this red pine are unknown but its potential is hard to miss. Exhibiting the characteristic finesse of the red pine, this specimen demanded a container as dynamic and elegant as its trunk and branching. Ryan and Ron collaborated to create a composition where the pot and tree work together to create something greater than the sum of the parts.



**Vine Maple** (*Acer circinatum*) Height 39" Width 34". Container by Sara Rayner. Collected in the Cascade Mountains of Oregon, this native maple usually grows as an understory tree to the dominant Douglas Firs of the area. However, this tree found life on one of the many lava flows stemming from the region's volcanos and clung to survival for well over 100 years to develop a trunk of this size. The contrast of mass and elegance makes this maple an interesting tree to view at Mirai.



**Sierra Juniper** (*Juniperus occidentalis*) Height 31" Width 32". Container by Ron Lang of Lang Bonsai Containers. ([www.langbonsai.com](http://www.langbonsai.com)). Originating from the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California, the characteristics of snow crush are apparent across every feature of this juniper. Its blue foliage contrasts beautifully with the whiteness of the bleached deadwood and the vibrant cinnamon color of its living vein.



**Rocky Mountain Juniper** (*Juniperus scopularum*) Height 36" Width 36" Modern Japanese container by Gyouzan.

The power of this Rocky Mountain juniper is something to behold. The mass of the trunk combined with its dynamic twists and deeply weathered deadwood create an amazing display of power and struggle. Few trees of this proportion are found in the mountains making this specimen a very special tree at Mirai.

KNOW YOUR TREE SERIES: *Ficus Benjamina* 'Little Lucy'

# Growing Little Lucy

Text and photos by Lew Buller, USA



*Nothing great is created suddenly, any more than a bunch of grapes or a fig. If you tell me that you desire a fig. I answer you that there must be time. Let it first blossom, then bear fruit, then ripen. —Epictetus*

**F***icus benjamina* comes from India and Malaysia and requires warm temperatures and regular water. It can be grown outside year round in areas that do not experience frost, grown indoors as a house plant, or a combination of the two—outside in summer, indoors when the temperature is cooler. A great deal of information is available on the Internet about the benjamina but very little on the dwarf cultivar “Little Lucy.” The material here is based solely on my experience with “Little Lucy” and will not repeat information on the Internet.

When Toshio Kawamoto wrote *Saikei: Living Landscapes*, he said that saikei could use immature trees and that they could be repotted separately after they developed. I decided to try a large saikei with “Little Lucy” and describe the process in my book *Saikei and Art*, (available from BCI as of this writing) Here’s what it looked like in 2005 (photo above); notice the gnarly and misshapen trees in the planting.

By 2010, the trees had grown taller; the top branches were shading the lower branches and killing them off, so I took it apart. The root mass was intermingled, but the roots could be cut with no serious side effects allowing me to plant each tree separately. The next year, I air-layered the tops—easy to do—also took





*Top left;* The roots after cutting are in the same relative position as in the photo of the back of the tree

cuttings and put them in a moist miniature green house, and now have 29 Little Lucys in my back yard. I knew that the full-size benjaminia required a large space for roots, but was unprepared for what happened to the Lucys. In the saikei pot, soil was no more than three inches deep; the trees were crowded and couldn't grow large roots. Giving them much more growing space was like undoing one's belt after a tremendous Thanksgiving dinner: things just burst loose.

Look carefully at the photo (previous page, bottom right) showing the back of the tree. At the base of the pot you will see a few small roots protruding—remember them. In addition to the obvious split in the one-gallon pot, the branch from the left hand tree crosses over in front of the right hand tree. (There is also a scar on the back of the left hand tree—see next page, top right.) The fact that the benjaminia is in the rubber tree family has a bearing on both. In general,

members of the rubber tree family exude latex when cut. When branches are cut, they exude latex quickly to seal the cut. Roots and leaves also do this.

In a healthy tree, latex moves so quickly that it makes side-grafting very difficult. The cut fills up, begins to seal the cut, and does this before the scion can be introduced. Approach grafting works, but it is very slow and leaves a large lump. That's why the approach graft shown here is on the back of the tree—so the lump won't be readily visible. I haven't tried thread-grafting yet, but will do so as I have plenty of trees to experiment with.

Did someone say "Cut roots?" The roots after cutting are in the same relative position as in the photo of the back of the tree, i. e., the crooked tree is on the left. The cut root second from left is about the same size in diameter as the trunk of the curved tree. The small yellow roots are a healthy color. Black roots would indicate root rot and thread-like white roots are weed roots.

What I want for this tree is a wide but shallow pot, with room for vertical as well as horizontal root growth. Two pots used together will make this possible.

I learned this trick from Mrs. Sarver, who ran an azalea nursery in San Diego. Azaleas are well known to require acidic soil, down to a pH of 4, available in straight peat moss. The soil in San Diego is highly alkaline. She sold her clients azaleas that had broad but not deep root bases with instructions to transplant every three years and replace the peat moss that kept the saline soil at bay.

The photo below combining the two pots gives a good idea how this will work. Soil is added to the top of the center pot and more around the edges. The root mass is placed on the center pot, adjusted to give more or less growing space on each side of the trunks, and then soil is worked in around the remaining roots. The finished product appears bottom right.

Now it's time to talk about scars and their healing. The scar to be healed is on the right hand tree, just



*Bottom;* I learned this trick from Mrs. Sarver, who ran an azalea nursery in San Diego.





below the branch that is being used for approach grafting. The latex dried and regularly I will use a knife or other sharp-edged tool to irritate the cambium. This stimulates the cambium to grow, to grow more than the amount removed by scraping the cambium.

Top left is a closeup of an old scar at the base of the right hand tree: The light gray color gives away the old scar; with a few more scrapings, it will be the same as the rest of the bark. Also, the old scar does not yet have the same horizontal markings as the tree above and below the scar. Don't

try that with your junipers; they have a very thin bark and do not callous over well. The ficus is the only tree I know that will respond this way.

The same root trimming is applied to my ficus retusa (*Ficus microcarpa*) shown below. It is not a miniature. The largest Lucy I have is two inches at the base of the tree, estimated at 25–30 years old. The retusa was imported from Taiwan, was 10–15 years old when I bought it about 15 years ago. The widest part of the trunk is six and one half inches across. It is 22 inches tall and 28 inches wide. This is a tree that could grow to be 30 feet tall in the ground.

Because the leaves are larger than those of the Lucy, I sometimes cut them to maintain an even silhouette. Latex seals them and they continue to function as leaves.

It is too heavy for me to lift. My apprentice, Eitan, helped me transplant it in April 2014. 🌳



Top left; The light gray color gives away the old scar; with a few more scrapings, it will be the same as the rest of the bark.

Top right; Planted in a larger pot, the roots and the approach graft will grow and develop faster.

Bottom; The same root trimming is applied to my ficus retusa (*Ficus microcarpa*)



# An Exuberance of Satsuki

By Michael Collins McIntyre, Canada

**T**here are many collective nouns for trees: “grove,” “forest,” “copse,” and “thicket” are common. A “stand” typically refers to trees of the same species while in an “orchard” trees bear fruit. Webster’s includes the lyrically evocative, “a stillness of trees.” The satsuki to be found at the Kanuma Satsuki Festival are myriad, but to refer to them as such may convey the sheer number of trees that can be found on display or for sale but does nothing to express the infectiousness and power of the thousands of satsuki assembled in full bloom. In thinking of how to refer to these magnificent trees collectively, the word “exuberance” came immediately to mind and resonated. “An exuberance of satsuki” just felt right.

It resonated with the spirit and inspiration for the amazing spectacle that occurs with each spring’s Kanuma Satsuki festival.

Kanuma is a city in Tochiga Prefecture, which is about an hour’s train ride north of Tokyo. Horticulture is important in Kanuma not only because soil and climate favor satsuki culture but also because there is a deep interest in the role of bonsai in Japanese culture. Bonsai artists the world over use Kanuma soil for trees that thrive in acidic soils. The Kanuma Satsuki Festival is held at the Kaboku (translated as “flowering tree”) Center. The Center contains facilities for the display, sale, and cultivation of satsuki azaleas. Bill Valavanis takes groups to Japan twice yearly and visited the Kanuma Festival





1a



1b



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with his most recent tour. He remarked in his blog (<http://valavanisbonsaiblog.com>) that: “This is a truly unique center for Satsuki azalea bonsai production, exhibitions, and sales. It’s the finest, largest and most complete garden center I’ve had the pleasure of visiting...” Indeed, a measure of the exuberant mood can be seen in the rapt attention to displayed masterpieces seen in Figure 1 a and b and in the acquisitive energy with which festival goers select their treasures displayed in Figure 2.

Satsuki is a Japanese term for “evergreen azalea.” Literally, it means ‘fifth month’ referring to the fifth month in the old Japanese lunar calendar during which it would bloom. Satsuki azaleas bloom from mid-May through July. Satsuki have been popular for

many centuries. They have long been selectively bred for two characteristics: growth patterns that make them an ideal species for bonsai and the beauty of their coloration. Since bonsai receive such meticulous care it has been possible for breeders to select for the aesthetic dimensions of form and color rather than, say, robustness. At Kanuma, the satsuki are displayed in two general forms. One is in the form of a traditional bonsai while the other is much less structured, more vertical, and is designed to accentuate floral coloration and patterning rather than tree structure. The bonsai displayed at Kanuma reflect both the genetic selection of potentially aesthetic characteristics and the artistry of the bonsai masters that bring these characteristics to fruition. These



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satsuki bonsai are both the highlight of the festival and its reason for existing.

The rapt attention being paid by festival goers in Figures 1a and b indicate just how important satsuki bonsai are in Japanese culture. These are the works of masters, of cultural icons. Masters such as Kunio Kobayashi, Takashi Iura, Isao Omachi, and Shinji Suzuki, to name but a few, have produced the prepossessing artistry on display. Figures 3 through 11 depict just a handful of the satsuki bonsai on display at the 2013 Festival. Figures 3, 4, and 5 are illustrative of the harmony between the strength of the trees' form and the beauty of the blooms. All three possess strong trunks and interesting nebari that convey great age and carry great beauty. Figure 6 depicts a tree just coming into bloom so that the classic structure and compact growth are readily apparent. Figure 7 illustrates the compact growth patterns of leaves and flowers characteristic of a mature, highly refined tree. In Figure 8, the wonderful nebari and trunk and the dense canopy convey strength while the floral display that is adumbrated promises transformation. It is captivating how the seasons are so altering for satsuki and how the changes to come lie dormant. As with all bonsai, full appreciation of a tree grows season-by-season, year-by-year. In Figure 9, there is a great complementarity between the delicacy of the structure and of the floral canopy. In the slanting style bonsai depicted in Figure 10, the movement conveyed by the branches beautifully complements the exquisite coloration. The tree depicted in Figure 11 is breathtaking. To the power of the trunk and nebari are added the ravages of age. The juxtaposition of live and dead wood, of space and lushness, of line and movement all crowned by the floral display together create a consummate harmony.

Satsuki may have bold or subtle coloration and may have unusual and striking flower patterns. This quality is called call 'sakiwake' by the Japanese. Many festival participants are keenly interested in finding cultivars that combine color and pattern in ways that they believe will be most expressive. There are over 1100 existing cultivars and the number is growing. The satsuki displayed in Figure 12 possesses flowers in several different shades of pink and white. The patterns are essentially unique. It would be very difficult to say that any two flowers on this tree were identical. This tree contrasts interestingly with the tree presented in Figure 13. The flowers here are a near-uniform red. The allele for red is dominant so it is more invariant. The genetics of the mosaics observed in satsuki are beginning to be understood; however, the basis of the diversity seen in Figure 12 and, perhaps, even more strikingly in Figure 14, is not known.

The experience of Kanuma Satsuki Festival is enriched by events that occur simultaneously. This year a bonsai exhibit of the work of Seiji Morimae's group was featured. Figure 15 displays a wonderful juniper that was part of this ancillary exhibit. Attendees receive a very rounded bonsai experience.



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Bill Valavanis reports that the fourteen bonsai enthusiasts that accompanied him absolutely loved the festival. One might say that their response was exuberant! 🌸

Dr. Michael Collins McIntyre is a Canadian professor, psychologist, and writer. He has a great love of bonsai and is a contributing editor of and contributor of articles to *BCI Bonsai & Stone Appreciation Magazine*.

Acknowledgements: Some information in this section provided by Kanuma Satsuki Festival. Photos of azaleas courtesy Kaboku Center, Kanuma.

Thanks to William Valavanis for permission to use his photographs (Figure 2 and Figure 15) and for the very informative background conversation.

This section profited from information presented in an extremely informative blog, *Azalea Splendor* at <http://azaleasplendor.no-ip.org/azalea/satsuki.php>

The work of Dr. N. Kobayashi is beginning to identify genetic profiles in families of azaleas and to study the genetic and epigenetic causes of individuation of flower structure and coloration.



*Insets: Top left; Kami-nari-mon (Thunder Gate) Senso-ji, Asakusa*

*Middle left; Maiko at a temple in Kyoto*

*Middle row, left to right; Toji Temple, Kyoto; Shishigashira maple at Kouka-en; Mark and Ritta in hotel gardens near Isawa-onsen; Suiseki (note the village on top)*

*Background; Torii Gate of Miyajima at night*

# Fulfilling a Dream

Mark and Ritta Cooper's adventures in Japan

By Kath Hughes, UK

Photos courtesy Mark and Ritta Cooper, UK

There are two sorts of people in life: the first are those who give up early when given the opportunity to do more for themselves, who don't take any chances, who always choose the "safe road" in life. The second, are those who want to live an extraordinary life, who aren't satisfied with what they're given, and who fight for their dreams. These are the ones who make the impossible possible

Mark and Ritta Cooper make extraordinary couple with an equally extraordinary passion—Japan and all things Japanese. Mark and Ritta, both scientists, met and married through working together and have become even closer through their love of Japan. Their interest in bonsai, like that of many other people, evolved from an interest in Japanese gardens and koi collecting. First visiting Japan in 1986, they were completely stunned by what they saw there and have been back at least once a year ever since. They have visited all the top Bonsai Shows in Japan many times, and bonsai nurseries have become familiar territory, in many cases, becoming firm friends with the nursery owners. It was inevitably going to lead them to bringing their small share of Japan back to the United Kingdom. Someone with this strong a passion will go to great lengths to ensure their bonsai collection includes trees selected and purchased in Japan, whatever the difficulties in bringing them back home.

Mark & Ritta, have been keen gardeners, since they had their first garden 37 years ago. Interest in gardens was nurtured from the start by both parents and grandparents alike. Mark was the proud owner of tropical fish in his childhood. It is hardly surprising then, that they developed their love of Nishikigoi (Koi Carp). Many koi-keepers have followed their early foray into keeping fish in a garden pond, to learning how to keep bigger and better Koi. From this simple start developed a deeper and lasting passion for Nishikigoi, Japanese Gardens and the whole Japanese culture, and would subsequently follow with a passion for Bonsai.

Their interest in bonsai began, as did most of us, from very humble beginnings. Their first thought, 'it would look good with the koi pond' goes back to the early 1980s and with true sentimental value, their first ventures into bonsai are still there today. The true catalyst for a serious passion goes back to their memorable first trip to Japan in 1986, a year to remember, when life changed forever. Going to Japan began with the intention just of selecting and buying Koi on a tour organized by a UK koi professional. Totally entranced, they toured many koi farms, this fast growing love fuelled by daily visits to temples and gardens. They developed an increasing passion for the beauty and simplicity of these Japanese gardens. They returned home inspired with an abundance of ideas to improve their prized garden and Koi pond, not to forget the new koi that, of course came home with them!

As is the norm in Japan, most koi-keepers and gardens they visited included bonsai. This to Mark and Ritta was new; it was the first time they had seen



Bottom; Mark and Ritta's entry at Noelanders Trophy XIV, awarded Best Shohin XIV. *Zelkova serrata* and *Pinus densiflora*.

Top and Middle right; The white pine, *Pinus parviflora*, and companion panting Mark and Ritta exhibited at Taikan-ten and the subject of a future article on importing trees from Japan to the UK.

Middle left; Chirimen Katsura awarded Best Shohin at Best of British Bonsai, 2011.



photo by Willy Evenepoel, Belgium, courtesy Bonsai Association Belgium.



Left column, top to bottom;  
Mark and a friend harvesting Koi at a mud pond in Mushigame, Niigata.  
Koju-en Shohin nursery, Kyoto  
Shuga-ten Shohin show sales area.  
Viewing day at a Shohin auction.



Right column, top to bottom;  
Green club sales area at Shuga-ten Shohin show.  
Mark admiring a Juniper at Sjojyu-en owned by Takashi Iura.



or even imagined bonsai of such beauty and quality. They were now motivated to learn more on how to get beauty of that quality. A real inspiration!

A few years passed before they visited Japan again, but their love for all things Japanese was quietly growing and they couldn't wait to return to Japan. They decided to take the plunge and travel independently this time, ensuring they could visit some top bonsai nurseries as well. All proved not quite as easy as they had thought. Fortunately, they were blessed with a good relationship with a UK bonsai professional that had spent time training in Japan. He was generous in offering advice and help. Soon they were deep into travel plans. Organizing this trip was quite an undertaking and took almost a year in the planning and now included a visit to Masahiko Kimura's garden. In Japan, you do not just turn up at someone's garden. It is considered polite to arrange such visits in advance. Also, it pays to have an introduction from yet another UK professional. Visiting Kimura-san's garden was a major highlight and memorable experience in what was to prove another life changing experience. This time they made their first visit to Omiya Bonsai Village, with its relaxed atmosphere and bonsai masters who are used to "bonsai tourists." Here they met Tomio Yamada, the owner of the famous Seiko-en, and his daughter Kaori, who had previously visited the UK and had the advantage of speaking good English. Her visit to the UK and to the home of Ruth Stafford-Jones, an early pioneer of Bonsai in the UK, made an excellent talking point, which then led to Yamada-san inviting them to see his collection in his private garden.

A further indelible impression was made on this pair becoming fast obsessed, and back home again, they were even more determined learn more and



improve their now growing bonsai collection. They resolved that if they could afford it, they would visit Japan at least once a year. Each year the planning becomes more and more involved, and now has to include Suiseki as well as Bonsai, Japanese Gardens and of course, Koi. Most well known nurseries have been visited, many times, old friendships renewed and new ones formed.

One important aspect of travelling independently is the freedom it gives you to research exactly where nurseries and exhibitions are located and ensure you know how to get there. Maps and details in both English and Japanese are essential as they have yet limited Japanese language skills available to them, but are still learning. Taking small gifts for the many friends that they have made, as beautifully presented as those given by the Japanese, is part of the culture and vital to the planning. Visiting shows, going to lectures and watching people working on bonsai is part of the learning process, usually with such friendly people as the bonsai professionals who are more than happy to share their knowledge with these eager Brits.

Soon visiting Japan was not enough; owning things created there was fast becoming part of the longing. Could they do it or was it too fraught with complications. Mark and Ritta discovered early on



*Left column, top to bottom;*  
Urushibata san at Taisho-en.  
Takashi Iura at his nursery  
Syojyu-en.



*Right column, top to bottom;*  
Bjorn Bjorholm working on a  
Japanese White Pine at Kouka-  
en in Osaka.  
Owen Reich at Kouka-en in  
Osaka.  
Mark and Ritta visiting  
Masahiko Kimura's garden.  
Masumi San at Koju-en.





Left column, top to bottom;  
Taiga Urushibata working  
on a Japanese White Pine at  
Taisho-en.

Tomohiro Masami at Koju-en.

Ritta with Kaori Yamada,  
Seiko-en.

Making of a Yamaaki pot,  
Tokoname.

Mansai-en in Omiya village.



Right column, top to bottom;  
Japanese garden at Isawa  
Onsen.

Water feature at Shinji-Suzuki's  
garden.



that importing koi from Japan is quite different from importing bonsai where the regulations and legal requirements are complicated. Buying koi directly from Japan is relatively common for hobbyists who travel with koi dealers from the UK. Importing bonsai however, is a costly and complex process, especially while ensuring plant health and phytosanitation requirements are adhered to, not to mention quarantine requirements both for the exporter and importer.

Bonsai enthusiasts visiting Japan rapidly discover that one of the most frustrating things is the inability to personally buy and take home a bonsai without the involvement of professionals and observing the correct processes, all of which are costly. Most of Mark and Ritta's trees have been purchased in the UK or Europe from bonsai dealers who import, and one or two of their trees have been personally selected by them in Japan and imported via UK dealers. Frequently hobbyists who visit Japan don't realize that most Japanese bonsai nurseries are not authorized to export bonsai.

On their 2012 trip, they visited Fujikawa-san's nursery Kouka-en near Osaka; they had admired his trees for sale and on exhibition for many years, and had spoken with his students studying with him, most particularly, Bjorn BJORHOLM. As they rarely visited Osaka they had not thought to visit before, but in 2011, Fujikawa-san invited them, and arrangements were made for the visit. They were hugely impressed with what they saw and by the welcome they received.

It was at a Taikan-ten exhibition some years earlier that they first met Mike and Amy Blanton from



Tennessee exhibiting there, unusual even today to find foreign exhibitors. Mike and Amy's exhibit was sourced from Kouka-en. Mark and Ritta were impressed and inspired by Mike and Amy's achievement. Mark kept in contact with them until Mike sadly died recently. The impression had been made—they wanted to exhibit in Japan. On their visit to Kouka-en, they discovered several large high quality goyomatsu (Japanese White Pine); unfortunately, they were not available for export. They hadn't completed their two years in quarantine on the nursery and anyway, amateurs did not import directly from Japan—or so they thought. But the idea had taken root. They spent a thoroughly enjoyable day on the nursery and daylight was fading. It was time to return to their hotel and dream. On the train back to their hotel in Kyoto, they started to plan. With images of the trees they had seen at Kouka-en still fresh in their minds, they began to think how they could, maybe, possibly, arrange to get a tree home from Kouka-en to the UK. If it was possible, it certainly wasn't going to be an easy ride, and thereby hangs another tale. 🌲

An article on how Mark and Ritta import a tree from Japan to the UK is under development and will be published in a future issue of *Bonsai & Stone Appreciation* magazine. —Ed.



*Left column, top to bottom;*  
Ezo matsu group planting.  
Deshojo maple at Bonsai Museum in Omiya.

*Right column, top to bottom;*  
Tokonoma display at the Bonsai Museum in Omiya.  
Kuchinashi (Gardenia) shohin bonsai and Shohin trident maple.  
Mark and Ritta at Ritsurin-Koen, Takamatsu.

# Juicy Bonsai

## Knowing Your Succulents

By Nikunj Parekh,  
Jyoti Parekh and Sujata Bhat, India

Photos by Mr. Niraj Chawla  
and Gemini Studio



**E**very place on earth has a unique atmosphere. All nature's elements—soil, air, water and sunlight—play specific roles in creating this environment in a particular region. Whenever there is balanced atmosphere for plants to grow, beautiful forests are created by nature. There are places on earth where the atmosphere is so harsh and unfriendly, the soil rocky and sandy that we cannot think of any plant life in that area. But like a great magician, God put life into unusual plants that can survive even on morning dewdrops. By the process of evolution, these plants have developed unique size, shape, color, form and texture to survive in such an

environment. Some of these species are now cultivated and made available in nurseries. Most important among these are ornamental **succulents and cacti**. Both these plants have special features. Many a times we are confused about the difference between a succulent and cacti. Some of the succulents are used very effectively for Bonsai.

All cacti are succulents but all succulents are not cacti. The most distinguishing characteristic, which separates cacti from other succulents, is that all the members of the cacti family produce 'areoles.' The areoles are round or oval structures composed of two perpendicular buds. From the upper bud, flowers,

fruits or new branches develop, while from the lower one, a spine arises. The spine is not connected with the tissues below and no harm occurs to the epidermal layer of tissues when the spine is pulled out. In contrast, if a spine is taken out of succulents the epidermal tissue beneath is damaged. Areoles are usually armed with spines as well as fine barbed hairs resembling a pincushion.

A large number of succulent plants originated in Africa, in areas where the vegetation faces acute shortage of moisture. The majority of vegetation there has shallow roots that absorb moisture from dew at night. Water is conserved in the fleshy leaves. Since transpiration usually takes place through leaves, the size and number of leaves in most succulents are fewer resulting in minimal loss of water through transpiration. Arrangement of leaves in the form of rosette is also effective in reducing transpiration. Some protective devices like waxy layer, white felt or woolly hairs on the surface of leaves and stem are also common in succulents. Many of the succulents are characterized by having fleshy stem base, cylindrical, oval or flat in structure.

Succulents will grow successfully only when suitable environment is provided. They require plenty of air and sunshine though some prefer semi-shade depending on the variety. They also need protection from heavy rain and storms. It is better to shelter all succulents in shade where they get plenty of air and bright light.

## The Succulent Family:

### Soil composition:

The succulents are group of plants varying widely in their characteristics and growth habits. Therefore, the preparation of potting mixture is very important for their proper growth. As a result, a number of soil ingredients are suggested that are suitable for this particular plant. The composition of soil in general should include locally available soil, organic manure, brick particles, sand, coco peat and leaf mold in appropriate proportions.

### Fertilizers:

All succulents require three major nutrients: nitrogen (N), phosphorous (P) and potassium (K) for normal growth. But quantitatively the requirements are much less than other plants, as they have fewer or no leaves. A good general-purpose formula is 1:2:2 NPK, meaning much lower proportion of nitrogen than the other two elements. However, slow release nutrient sources mainly of organic origin are better for these plants.

### Potting and repotting:

Potting and repotting are always very important for plants. Use relatively shallow pots for succulents. Cover the holes of the pot with plastic mesh. Fill a



*Facing page; Jade on rock in brown oval pot by Jyoti & Nikunj Parekh*

*This page, top; Multi trunk style Jade with golden green color on the new leaves in a boat shaped brown pot.*

*By Jyoti & Nikunj Parekh*

*Bottom; Cascade style Jade by Jyoti & Nikunj Parekh*



Above; Variegated Jade under training by Bhavana Shah

Below; Slanting style Jade in a cream pot by Jyoti & Nikunj Parekh



quarter of the pot with layers of big and small neutral river gravel to ensure proper drainage. Put the plant in proper position and fill the pot with the prepared soil mixture. Firmly press the soil around the plant. When watering for the first time, water profusely to ensure that the soil is completely wet without disturbing the soil layers. After potting, place the plant in a shady but airy place for a few days. The time of potting or repotting should be at the end of the resting period or early growing phase.

### Watering:

The most confusing aspect in growing succulents is the management of water. If proper drainage is provided, there is no worry about the quantity of water given, as the extra water will drain out. Water only when the soil is completely dry. Watering should be done in the morning before sunrise. If you prefer to water in the evening, check that the soil is not hot before watering. Never water plants in full sunshine, as there are chances of cell bursting which ends in ultimate scorching.

### Propagation:

Many of the succulents produce flowers and seeds. So, reproduction through seeds is a normal practice for succulents. Grow seeds mainly in sand, mixed with some leaf mold and garden loam. Little addition of fine pieces of charcoal and bone meal also helps.

Succulents are also grown with stem cuttings. Cut mature stems and allow the sap to dry at the cut end. Apply root hormone powder and grow cuttings in a suitable mixture. The suggested mixture for propagation by seeds is also good for growing cuttings. Generally, February and March are suitable months for raising cuttings. There are some succulents that develop from leaf cuttings.

Grafting is a popular method of propagation offering many advantages; one can get large size plant in a short time; getting special varieties of plants that do not thrive on their own root system; and one can easily produce large number of special variety plants through grafting method.

Bonsai growers in tropics enjoy growing *Adenium obesum* (Desert Rose) and its varieties, and *Portulacaria afra* (Jade), as wonderful plant material for bonsai. There is a variety known as *Portulacaria afra 'variegata'* that has pretty, small leaves of milky green color and creamy white margins. We also use mini Euphorbia, as a filler plant in Saikei as well as in complimentary plant compositions.

In the tropics, many bonsai growers like *Adenium* as bonsai, as it has obese trunk base and when trimmed and grown well, it will have plenty of branches to form umbrella style structure. From spring throughout summer, they grow plenty of flowers in shades of white, pink to deep red. Though *Adenium* do not take typical tree-like structure, people still prefer to keep them as bonsai in their collection.

This general information on succulents will help us to grow succulent bonsai more satisfactorily. But now let us deal with the most preferred succulent plant for bonsai, *Portulacaria afra*, commonly called Jade or Elephant Bush plant as it is grazed on by elephants in its native habitat, the arid sub-tropical areas of South Africa. Initially succulent plants were not considered good bonsai material as they have fleshy stem structure and leaves. But eventually bonsai masters like Jim Smith and John Naka of USA started looking at some of the succulents as good bonsai material.

## **Jade, *Portulacaria afra*:**

### **Structure:**

Jade plant does not have any particular method of growth. Its trunk and branches are tubular and straight. Occasionally a very gentle curve may be evident in the trunk due to the weight of drooping heavy branches and leaves. The bark or the skin is peppery brownish red in young growth, maturing to brown. Even light scratching shows a watery-green cambium layer underneath. Its pudgy leaves are about a third of an inch long, thick, smooth, oval and very juicy. They are flat on top and slightly curving below. Leaves occur in pairs, with a horizontal pair alternating with a vertical pair with short fleshy stalk separating the pairs of leaves. There is no real petiole.

In the tropical belt near seaside where temperature is hot and humid, with little extra care, Jade thrives well and its leaves get a shiny green color similar to a jade stone. In the interior lands, away from sea, where the weather is hot and dry with temperatures soaring to 45° C in summer, Jade does survive well but has ashy green colored leaves and dark brown bark.

### **Soil:**

As the plant stores water throughout its structure, it is essential to have a soil mixture that is extremely porous to facilitate proper drainage. At the same time it should be weighty enough to hold the heavy plant in its position in the container.

We have found that the normal bonsai soil mixture made up of garden soil, cow dung manure, neutral small river gravel, brick pieces and vermi-compost in proportions of 4: 4: 2: 2: 1 is suitable. In regions with heavy rain, addition of slightly bigger pieces of river gravel to the soil mixture helps to combat root rot.

### **Light:**

Give it all you have! Jade thrives on good sunlight resulting in compact growth with smaller leaves at shorter internodes. Jade survives hot summers, but does not do well if the temperature drops too low and there is frost. Freezing temperatures will shrivel the plant and it will die. Protection during cold winters will help it to survive. Jade does not do well in less sun either. It drops leaves and becomes weak in structure and dies eventually.



Above; Shohin bonsai in a boat shaped pot by Bhavana Shah

Below; Slanting style Jade with a lime stone by Chand Kejriwal



### Watering:

Horticulturally, Jade is probably one of the easiest tropical plant to work with and one of the hardest to kill. Because of its water storing capacity, it is virtually impossible to kill it by neglecting to water it.

When Jade it is over-watered and the soil retains water around the roots for a long time, the roots will rot easily, resulting in yellow leaves, leaf drop and puckered leaves. Moisture control is very important for jade plant. Water jade bonsai only when the soil dries.

### Feeding:

*Portulacaria afra* responds so well to good light, regular watering and good soil with proper drainage, and once the plant is established, feed with a nitrogenous fertilizer every 2 to 3 weeks to sustain its growth.

### Propagation:

Every part of the Jade plant is not only capable of producing roots, but does so readily and easily. Cuttings of larger and small branches and twigs could be taken for propagation. Allow the cut end to dry its sap for a day. Dip in root hormone and put in sandy soil. Keep the soil barely wet for the roots to strike easily and not rot with excess water. Keep cuttings in bright light and move gradually to a sunny location as it gets well rooted. Cuttings of already compacted growth can make beautiful mame bonsai in a short time.

### Potting:

Roots of Jade are fibrous and tend to break easily. Being a succulent, Jade is able to support itself with far fewer roots than many others. One half to two thirds of the roots may be removed while potting and repotting. Freshly pruned and repotted bonsai should have just damp soil for a few days and kept in semi-shade until it is established. Jade are heavy so they need deeper pots than normal to stabilize the plants. Regular pruning of top-heavy branches will help avoid imbalanced growth.

### Styling:

It is a pleasure to work with Jade plant as it adapts to most of the styles and sizes of bonsai. It also looks grand in a forest style of bonsai. To begin with, keep the soil on drier side before pruning to get the desired shape. It is better to cut a jade branch flush rather concave. Deep cuts will leave unwanted scars and may cause die back.

Pinching is the secret to refinement of Jade bonsai. Since Jade is fast growing, it must be pinched frequently during the growing season. Usually once a fortnight is sufficient. This will make the leaf mass dense and smaller in size, resulting in beautiful padding of foliage with a good silhouette. 🌿

Informal style Jade by Jyoti & Nikunj Parekh







## Bonsai in the Piazza

By Massimo Bandera, Italy

In April, the UBI (Unione Bonsaisti Italiani) annual national conference was held in Turin, Italy with the participation of many Italian instructors, and international guest instructors Ryan Neil, USA, and Kevin Willson, UK.

Massimo Bandera, BCI Director, gave BCI Awards of Excellence at this extraordinary event. The recipients were a *Pinus mugo* by Enzo Ferrari and a Suiseki by Umberto Zinini.

For the first time the conference was presented in a large Piazza, allowing tens of thousands of people to see the show and learn about bonsai. More at <http://torino2014.ubibonsai.it>. 🌲



## Major Changes at the Weyerhaeuser Pacific Rim Bonsai Collection

By David De Groot, USA

On January 1 of 2014, The Weyerhaeuser Pacific Rim Bonsai Collection became an independent, non-profit organization. Weyerhaeuser Company donated the collection of bonsai to the new organization, which will continue to operate in its home on the Weyerhaeuser Company campus in Federal Way, Washington.

The new organization, officially named the George Weyerhaeuser Pacific Rim Bonsai Collection, will be doing business as the Pacific Bonsai Museum, and will soon have a new logo.

Curator David De Groot said, "The new organization will require more staffing than when we operated as part of Weyerhaeuser Company. A board of Directors has been formed, and we will immediately start a search for an executive director. I will be retiring this summer, although I have not yet chosen a specific date, and the hunt for a new curator will be underway in the not too distant future.

We remain open to the public year-round, Tuesdays through Sundays (closed Mondays) 10 AM-4 PM. Admission will remain free, but of course donations are now welcome. We have a schedule of art and bonsai exhibits set for this year. We have a simple, temporary website at [www.pacificbonsaimuseum.org](http://www.pacificbonsaimuseum.org). We look forward to seeing many of our bonsai friends this year, particularly at our 25th anniversary celebration. A specific date has not yet been set, but



more news will be forthcoming. Thanks to everyone for your interest and support, and here's to our next 25 years and beyond!" 🌲



Top left; Budi Sulisty, his wife, Threes Sulisty and Vladimir Ondejcik cut the ribbons at the official ceremony opening the show.

## Bonsai and Suiseki in Slovakia

Text and Photos By Budi Sulisty, Indonesia.

Bonsai Slovakia celebrated The 17th International Bonsai, Suiseki and Tea Exhibition in the Agrokomplex in Nitra, Slovakia. Alenka and Vladimir Ondejcik were the persons in charge in organizing the big event that exhibited bonsai and suiseki on 24 to 27 April 2014. The bonsai and suiseki came from several countries in East Europe. The first day was China day, the second was Japan day, the third was Indonesia day and the fourth was Vietnam day. Many interesting cultural attractions were held in the morning while bonsai demonstrations were held in the afternoon. The Indonesian and Vietnam embassies opened counters in the vendor area, promoting Indonesian coffee and Vietnam tea and other national delicacies. The



*Juniperus chinensis*



*Juniperus chinensis*



*Pinus parviflora*



The god of longevity

exhibition was opened on the morning of October 24 and my wife and I together with Vladimir cut the ribbons as the official ceremony opening the show.

There were over 200 selected bonsai exhibited and almost 100 suiseki from east Europe exhibited on the nice long row of tables for bonsai and big suiseki and inside nice glass cabinets for smaller suiseki. Many of them were high quality bonsai and suiseki. Many types of species were exhibited like Juniper, pines, larch, carpinus, maple, olea, pseudocypripedium and taxus. Bonsai artists from Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Italy, Austria, Japan and Indonesia conducted demonstrations in the afternoon simultaneously from five tables with one speaker for all. Some assistants were helping the demonstrators. I had the opportunity to work on a *Juniperus chinensis* I got from Vladimir's garden as my demonstration tree. Some artists were even bringing materials from their own countries. It was fun to have the demonstrations together. Some children are also on the stage to give demonstration. It was really a good way to attract many youngsters to become bonsai lovers.

Besides bonsai and suiseki, many activities were held for the occasion. Various tea ceremonies from China, Taiwan and Japan were done in a very artistic



*Pinus mugo*



*Taxus cuspidata*



Stalactite Stalagmite



*Pinus parviflora*



*Chamaecyparis pisifera*

way. We were entertained by performances on the stages like Wushu Kungfu show, Feng Shui, Chinese paintings and martial art from China; a Japanese concert, Chado or Japanese tea ceremony, Samurai katana show and sushi show from Japan; Indonesian songs, traditional Indonesian dance, a music performance with traditional bamboo musical instrument called Angklung and dancing was performed by the Indonesians. As well, we were shown face and body paintings. The hall was always full of attendees who enjoyed the bonsai, suiseki, tea and other entertainments.

Some halls exhibited pets, agricultural accessories, building materials and the open space had many counters selling fruits, trees, foods and other things. The event attracted over 40,000 people. 🌳



*Pseudocydonia chinensis*



Madonna



Beautiful mountains



1

1. This beautiful "Chinzan" Azalea by Mel Goldstein received the BCI Award of Excellence.

## With Spring Comes a Harvest of Stones

Text and photos by Chiara Padrini, Italy

It was a very long and cold winter in Cleveland this year. They say one of the coldest in many years. While flowers were blooming in Paris, snowstorms blanketed this city making us think we were in a sequel to the film "Frozen." A few timid rays of sun awakened hopes, soon frustrated by cold winds and icy roads.

It was during of one of these stormy days I was to give another speech on stones to the Cleveland Bonsai Club. The car skidded and stopped in the middle of the road, but passers by helped us get going again. I thought surely with weather like this nobody will be there for my lesson. Not so! The room was full of people and it was very nice to meet many Club members again.

Four years ago, I gave the first talk on Suiseki and then other lessons and diaza workshops followed. In

2. This impressive Ying stone, 14 x 8 x 6.5 inches, from Mel Goldstein's collection received the BCI Award of Excellence. Although from China, it embodies the aesthetics of Korean stones. For Koreans the hollow spaces in the stones are very significant and are greatly prized. They indicate a path, overcoming the difficulties in life, the future and the unknown.

3. Frog on a lotus. River stone from China, 6 x 4 x 2.75 inches, Mel Goldstein Collection

4. Human shaped stone; 12 x 6 x 4 inches. Igneous from USA. The exact place of origin is unknown. Powerful and at the same time a dynamic stone. The rough material gives the feeling of aged person. The head turned looking at the past. Owned by Rob Giorgi and displayed in a traditional doban.

5. Detail; It brings to the mind a quality of Rodin sculptures.

6. Waterfall stone. 10.5 x 5 x 6.5 inches. Collected in California Earl River, Rob Giorgi collection.

7. Mountain Range. 13 x 8 x 2.5 inches from Liguria. Kathy Coffman collection, daiza by C. Padrini.

8. Flower stone from Carole Roske collection. 4.5 x 6.5 x 2 inches, Ohio River stone.

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9. Mountain with cave and tunnel. Ligurian Alps stone. 8 x 3.5 x 4 inches, Kathy Coffman collection. Daiza by C. Padrini.

10. Ligurian Alps stone. 6.75 x 4 x 6 inches, Carole Roske collection. Daiza C. Padrini

11. Ligurian Alps stone. 6 ¼ x 2 ½ ' x 2 ¼ ' – daiza carved in a workshop.



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Left to right; *Cryptomeria japonica* by Francesco Damini, recipient of the BCI Award of Excellence; opening ceremonies and a new generation of bonsai enthusiasts helps cut the ribbon.



## Arcobonsai 2014, Turin, Italy

By Massimo Bandera, Italy

From May 1 to 4, the Arcobonsai Conference and the accompanying Arco Fiori, organized by Club Arcobonsai Garda Trentino that has reached an enviable 29th year anniversary, took place in Arco in Trentino, Italy.

The conference was titled “Japan in Arco” and, in the magical setting of the Municipal Casino and



10

the beginning, few club members were interested in stones but it was an opportunity to plant some “seeds” for the love of stones in this fertile soil of Cleveland.

In June, as always, the Club show was held at the Rockefeller Greenhouse and for the first time a special room was dedicated only to the stones. I was asked to set up the display and I was very proud of that.

Metaphorically, it is early spring for our “seeds,” of course, but as demonstrated by the show, they will grow with a promise of a rich harvest in coming years.

Kathy Coffman and I presented the BCI Awards of Excellence for Bonsai and Suiseki. Forgive me if I report mostly on stones but a birth must be celebrated to the fullest! 🌳



surrounding gardens, guests, were attracted by interesting demonstrations and workshops on bonsai and many other Japanese cultural activities more or less related to the world of bonsai.



Thanks to Bonsai Creativo School of Sandro Segneri, demonstrations and workshops were held on kusamono with Igor Cute, Sumi-e with Sonia Stella, Shodo with Daniela Di Perna, Keido with Marco Tarozzo and Massimo Bandera. There were demonstrations and workshops on Ikebana with the Study Group of Ikebana Ohara from Venice and on Origami with the Centro Diffusione Origami. All this was accompanied by exhibitions of katana, Japanese dolls, as well as beautiful scrolls and Craig Coussins' antique pottery, closing with the kimono costumes, masterfully executed by Ms. Tomoko Hoasi.

The part strictly reserved for bonsai, enjoyed the presence of two Japanese Masters; Iura Takashi and Isao Omachi accompanied by an interpreter Master Shozo Tanaka. The first comes directly from a performance in New York and the second from the World Congress in China. In addition to styling a juniper tree and a fir tree of considerable size, the instructors and participating clubs attended the competition for the Arcobonsai Trophy and specific workshops.

Trees in the competition were put on display in the beautiful setting of the main hall of the Casino where Massimo Bandera also presented suiseki of considerable charm.

Trees of excellent quality resulted in the awarding of various prizes.

The BCI Award of Excellence was given to a *Cryptomeria japonica* by Francesco Damini, the Prize dell'UBI was won by the Club Drymenetum with a Scots pine, while Medi Bonsai received both the Award "Io difendo l'ulivo" and the IBS award with two different plants, an olive tree and a juniper.

Finally, the people's choice award, City of Arco Emilio Parolari Memorial Trophy, was awarded to a Yew by Giorgio Castagneri.

For thirteen years, the competition to style a tree for the Arcobonsai Trophy involved twenty-two National Bonsai Instructors, and in the opinion of the Japanese Masters, the victory went to Mario Pavone. In the same competition for bonsai clubs which was



Top left; formal entrance to the bonsai exhibit

Top right; Tokonoma display in the suiseki exhibit.

Middle; Japanese Masters; Iura Takashi and Isao Omachi were the featured instructors.

Bottom left; Francesco Damini, left, receiving the BCI Award of Excellence from Massimo Bandera for his *Cryptomeria japonica*.

Bottom right; Iura Takashi presents the Arcobonsai Trophy to Mario Pavone.



attended by twenty clubs, including five foreigners, the trophy was awarded to Napoli Bonsai Club for the second consecutive year.

For quality and quantity of the products offered and its 48 exhibitors, the vendor area has become the most important in Europe.

From a look at the numbers it can be seen that over 3,000 people have visited the exhibition, setting a record. Also notable were the 200 convention registrants who attended the Welcome Dinner in Palace Hotel Città di Arco and 400 participants had fun at the B&B&B Dinner held at Palatennis.

A year to remember for many aspects, certainly not least, the highest level of demonstrations in various categories. 🌲



*Top and right; What could be more fitting in Canada than a bonsai show in a hockey arena?*

*Left; Gay Liddell was given the BCI Award of Excellence by BCI Director Joan Greenway for her many contributions to the Matsuyama Bonsai Society.*

## Bonsai on the Blue Line

By Joan Greenway, Canada

Gay Liddell was awarded a BCI Award of Excellence at the Matsuyama Bonsai Club annual show for her many contributions to MBS and the art of bonsai. The award winning potter, and a 15-year member, past president and secretary of the Matsuyama Society summarized the joys and tribulations of putting on a Canadian bonsai show in a hockey arena this way.....

“On behalf of the show committee, I want to thank everyone for all of your hard work in creating, and presenting one of our best Annual Bonsai Shows to date. The huge number of spectators and the many genuinely interested folks were a testament to the welcome they received from the MBS members. This incredible show would not have been a success without everyone’s determined effort to set up the tables and carefully reconfigure the layout to accommodate the 6 foot tables we were given ( 8 foot tables were expected.) We ended up with a little tighter display area and not quite enough space between the trees, I’m sure the public didn’t notice. So to everyone who carefully and lovingly prepared their Bonsai trees, from the majestic specimens to the young bonsai in training; who provided and shared their stands and display items; who created and showed their companions and Suiseki; who laboured to create and construct, sew, dressed the display area on Friday; to the wonderful advocates of Bonsai and loving guardians of our trees; to the demonstrators, and all who stayed on Sunday night ( Fathers’ Day) to take down the show and carefully cart trees and heavy display features to the cars....I thank you. You are wonderful and our friendship is a testament to our shared joy in the art of Bonsai.

Finally, a thank you to Joan and BCI for the beautiful medallion award you gave me. It represents and reflects the wonderful fellowship within our family of bonsai, the members, past and present, of the Matsuyama Bonsai Society, mentors and friends all.” 🌳



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## We are seeking an Executive Director and a Bonsai Curator for the Pacific Bonsai Museum

The Pacific Bonsai Museum is located in Washington State, about 25 miles south of the city of Seattle. We are regarded as being in the top tier of bonsai collections in North America. At the end of 2013, the collection was gifted by the Weyerhaeuser Company to create the newly formed Pacific Bonsai Museum. We are hiring two leadership positions for the Museum.

We are seeking the Museum's inaugural **Executive Director**. Reporting to our Board of Directors, the Executive Director will have overall strategic, operational and fundraising responsibility for the museum's staff, programs, expansion, and execution of our mission. We have a goal of hiring in the Summer of 2014.

Our long-term Curator is also retiring and we are beginning the search for a **Bonsai Curator** targeted to be hired in Fall 2014. The Curator will lead a team of gardeners to maintain the health and artistic integrity of the collection providing all aspects of culture necessary for bonsai.

Detailed job descriptions and information can be found on our website:  
[www.pacificbonsaimuseum.org](http://www.pacificbonsaimuseum.org)

Interested candidates please forward a resume and cover letter outlining qualifications and interest in and/or connection to the Pacific Bonsai Museum to our consultant:  
Christine Martin, [BonsaiED@hrstrategiesintl.com](mailto:BonsaiED@hrstrategiesintl.com)

## Tree Power. A bonsai tree that charges your gadgets.

By Joe Grande, Canada



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Vivien Muller, a young french designer developed the Electree. He had the first idea about the Electree mini in 2007, shortly after his graduation in design. One year later, in order to find a job he decided to illustrate this concept and put it on the Internet. He did not expect such an enthusiasm for this product. Many journalist contacted him and demand was big.

After years of work, the Electree mini is available from <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/electree-mini>. 🌳



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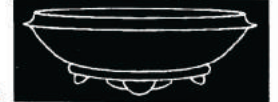
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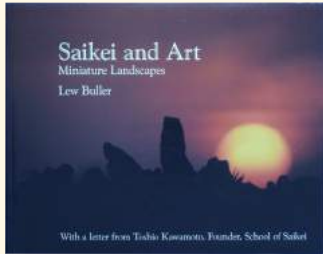
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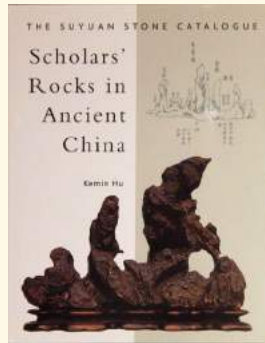
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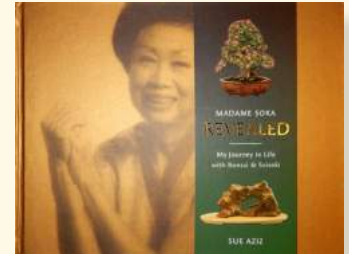
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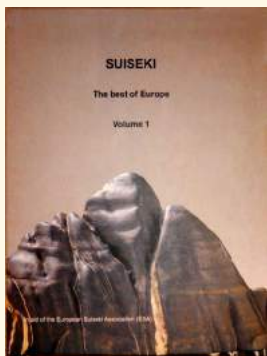
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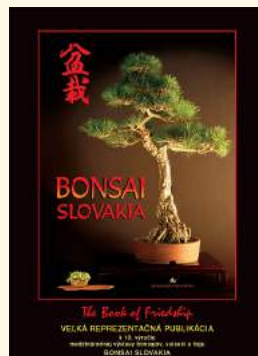
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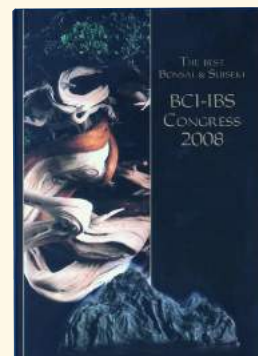
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