



the **TREE LINE**

the official monthly
publication of the

BONSAI SOCIETY of PORTLAND

Upcoming Events

October
2021

Monthly Meeting:

October 26, Milwaukie Senior Center (Proof of vaccination and mask required)
Meeting starts at 6pm, program at 7pm. An hour for socializing and shopping

President's Report

I hope you've been enjoying the cooler weather and the fall colors that have been gracing the deciduous trees of Portland. As a deciduous artist, this is my favorite time of year as the outstanding autumnal color performs its show and leaves the stage, and the branching structure that we work so hard to create on deciduous bonsai is revealed. I'm looking forward to sharing fall deciduous work with everyone this month on October 26th at 7pm, either on Zoom or at the Milwaukie Center for vaccinated members.

I'm incredibly thankful to our BSOP Executive Board, as well as our key volunteers and healthcare professionals, who have helped us navigate running such a large organization during this global pandemic. I'm also thankful to you, the membership, for being patient with us as we're trying to keep sharing our love of bonsai and meeting together while doing so in a safe and cautious way. Last month I really enjoyed our outdoor meeting with Lee Cheatle and hope everyone learned a lot about junipers!

I hope you are enjoying autumn, and look forward to seeing you either on Zoom or at the Milwaukie center for our next program.

Cheers, *Andrew Robson* BSOP President



Zelkova serrata (Thunb)
Japanese zelkova
Country of origin: Japan. A present from the Nobel prize Gabriel García Márquez to the ex-prime minister Felipe Gonzalez in 1990. It belong to Luis Vallejo Bonsai collection since 1996.

From bonsaiempire.com

Mentorship Program Update

As the current status of the coronavirus pandemic remains unstable, we have put great effort in to determining the most prudent option regarding the resumption of our Mentorship programs. The programs are highly valued by BSOP membership and greatly admired by bonsai clubs around the country. We would very much like to safely bring them back. However, at this time, we feel it is not sufficiently safe to do so.

Mentorship 101 is structured in such a fashion that each session builds upon skills and concepts learned in the prior session, and these in turn are tailored to take advantage of the specific tasks appropriate to the provided trees in that month of the year. Thus, the program is dependent on a January start. In theory, we might resume sessions in January of 2022 or 2023. If we delayed until 2023, some folks might need to turn for a year to other existing online, published or in person learning options, some of which are part of BSOP. If we chose to start again in January 2022, although unlikely, some folks might become seriously ill. The sessions require close physical interaction among mentors and mentees. This risk/benefit relationship strongly leads us to recommend a delay in resumption of M101 until January 2023.

Unlike M101, M102 is not dependent on a January start time and could be resumed at any time considered acceptably safe from virus transmission. This evaluation will be made continuously and hopefully these M102 sessions can be resumed at an earlier time.

We will, of course, keep everyone updated. In the meantime, take advantage of the other BSOP learning opportunities at the monthly meetings, and online learning via websites and blogs. Always feel free to reach out to more experienced members for bonsai advice.

Best, Howard Greisler, Mentorship Committee / BSOP hgreisler@icloud.com



Acer Buergerianum (Miq) Trident maple

Country of origin: Japan. It was the tree exhibit in the tokonoma in 1991 when the ex-prime minister Felipe Gonzalez visit Mansei-en. It belong to Luis Vallejo Bonsai Collection since 1993.

From bonsaiempire.com

Judging Bonsai

The Criteria

By Kath and Malcolm Hughes, UK Photos by Malcolm Hughes

Part Three.

Our challenge now is to try and produce guidelines that will be accepted and used by most (I would not dare to suggest all). If we can provide a universal set of criteria/guidelines and the means of using them at ground level i.e. at Clubs and local Shows, and if it is seen to work and be treated with respect, then hopefully we can move on to getting the method accepted at National or International level.

These images show trees exhibited at European exhibitions; some attained awards, some did not. The comments accompanying each tree reflect strengths and weaknesses of each indicating how the decision-making process came about.



Larix decidua: Height (max) - 61 cms.

This larch group has potential long term. However, there is no primary tree and no obvious apex—there is too great a uniformity in terms of height. Also no dominant tree; a small sapling has been planted at the front of the group rather than the back giving no clear impression of depth. The surface dressing was poor, with a covering of fine dead foliage together with patchy clumps of moss. Pot is OK, Health good, no sign of disease, has potential, needs time and refinement.

When we are judging bonsai, we first must scrutinize all the trees; we then can make a choice as to which ones will receive an award. It can seemingly be so easy to shortlist a number that stand out above the remainder. We can disregard some as not being up to the standard required for awards. If you cannot select to this point, then you should not have been asked to judge at a show. If however you envisage this as a training exercise then what do you look for?

Weeds, dirty pots, unsuitable pots, shaggy and overgrown foliage, dead and damaged leaves, discolored and dead needles, *jin* and *shari* that have gone green, pests or pest damage, bad and crossing wiring, poor shape, lack of *nebari*, general ill health and bad color, inverted taper, poor branch positioning (including T branches), heavy branches at the top, lack of apex or too many apexes; there are so many factors by which you can reject trees and this is what you must do before stating to select the good or even excellent.

Having rejected all trees totally unsuitable for showing, and let's hope that are not too many in this category, move on to the positive judging for the best. In some instances, the decision can be a relatively straightforward exercise, however, a decision must be reached, a decision where certain trees attain the status of being among the most impressive of all those on display. Their owners can be justifiably proud; conversely, those whose trees did not qualify for judgement beyond initial rejection may be left asking the question, what's wrong with my tree?

This can be difficult to accept, these owners have put so much effort into getting their trees to what they considered a high standard, worthy of their bonsai being exhibited. Perhaps a little basic training by the club is required for members before they even consider exhibiting, even at beginner level. Have you ever questioned why many beginners consider entering starter trees or novice trees without performing basic cleaning and tidying tasks? Would you go to a party in your gardening clothes?

Now this brings us to trees we are truly judging to win Awards or to be best in their Class. The main question is, on what basis do judges of bonsai justify their decisions as to what constitutes certain trees being viewed as *the best* out of all those displayed on any particular occasion?

Bonsai judges must be able to justify their decision, and not just for bonsai, but in any competitive scenario. An exhibitor is fully justified in asking the judge why their tree failed to get an award. Hence, the need to explain the basis and criteria by which decisions are made.

When viewing bonsai, the aim in judging is to narrow down the criteria on which a judgement is formulated. Essentially we are taking into consideration the following features:

Suitability of species for bonsai.

People make some very strange choices—large palmate, e.g. horse chestnut, and large pinnate, e.g. mountain ash—are all equally unsuitable for their refusal to reduce in leaf size.

General health, wellbeing of the tree.

Trunk; was the front of the tree chosen showing the trunk to its best?

Bark; does it show maturity and platting? Is it clean and free from algae?

faults and lacks refinement. The apex requires considerable thought as unnaturally shaped branches mar its basic structure. It needs more growth and development. The left branches lack form and are too heavy in terms of balance. In contrast, the pot and surface dressing is very good. It is clearly a well cared for tree but the owner must recognize its inherent faults.



An impressive tree which highlights good autumn color. Not really obvious from the photo, but branch development and positioning is good as well as the form of the trunk. The faults were two branches, both forward growing and consequently prevented a clear view of the trunk line. The pot was suitable if slightly small in relation to the tree. Also the stand was too dominant in terms of height and length. The surface had a good natural moss covering. A good tree but with fundamental branch structure faults, it will never be a winner.



Juniperus chinensis: Height - 44 cms.

Still in the early stages of development. This tree needs much more work to have it ready for exhibiting. The basic style is there but it has clear

Branch positioning, including ramification.

- Are the primary and largest branch and the counterbalance branch well defined?
- Are the main branches correctly placed without interfering or covering each other? Was it correctly pruned leaving no stumps? Are pruning cuts well finished?
- Is there enough negative space between the branches?
- Does the form of the branches logically coincide with the style and the trunk movement?
- Is the apex well defined?

Surface roots or Nebari; (if appropriate to the species) one of the most important factors to observe for styling a good tree, and also the one that is difficult to correct. It plays a crucial role in defining the front of the tree.

Foliage; leaf color and size; there should be no obvious blemishes or evidence of wind burn.

Deadwood effects, if any, should be well defined (*jin*, *shari* and *uro*), without excessive carving marks or evidence of revolving tools. Should show natural aspect of the work.

Wiring; correct wiring, not excessive but strong enough to hold branches in place without damaging the bark of the tree. Where possible, wiring should be discrete.

Surface dressing; use of moss and appropriateness of surface material, lack of weeds.

Absence of pests or diseases.

Pot; to include the appropriateness of the pot (shape, color, texture) and the position of the tree in the pot.

Stand where used; appropriateness of size, color and design.



Pinus sylvestris: Height - 31 cms.

As a basic concept, this Scots pine, could in time become an exceptional bonsai, but at present it needs to develop greater foliage in relation to trunk and branch structure. The pot, stand and trunk blend together in a dramatic fashion. It is let down by the lack of foliage. The foliage part of the tree could afford to be lifted to reveal the branch formation, there is a need for more needle development. Once that is ultimately achieved, we will have a dramatic tree but perhaps not a truly great tree.



An award-winning tree which beautifully reflects the semi- cascade style. Effective use of deadwood; branch positioning and refinement excellent.

Good balance of tree, pot and stand. The effect is accentuated by the use of a sickle pot as well as the use of a mix of ground cover.

Foliage mass is neat and well styled. Already an award winning tree, that will develop into a memorable tree with just a little more foliage.

Juniperus sabina: Height - 90 cms.

Aesthetics, general impression;

Is it presented at the correct angle thus showing that the balance of the tree is correct?

Are the respective volumes of foliage and branches, compared to each other, in harmony and are these volumes in proportion to the tree?

Is the tree styled in such a way that it gives a strong impression of depth? Styling a tree can create an artificial appearance.

Is the work on the tree done in such a way that it still gives the impression that the artist merely interfered in the natural appearance of the tree?

Often, on being invited to judge bonsai at a society show or exhibition, you are presented with the society's own set of judging criteria, including a points system for scoring each set of criteria. These can prove highly detailed and comprehensive, to the extent that an enormous amount of time can be spent 'ticking all the boxes'. While the purpose behind such judging may be well intentioned, it can prove a very time consuming exercise if faced with judging a large number of trees.

On occasion I have been confronted with the task of judging over 150 bonsai at National and International level. Time is a luxury one does not have on these occasions. Lists like the one on the facing page are perhaps put to better use as teaching aids for those hoping to become bonsai judges. Then they are able to look at *all* possible variables necessary in assessing a *good* bonsai from one which stands out as being *exceptional*.

In reality, developing an eye for evaluating a bonsai stems largely from experience. This is based upon a clear awareness of which features of each individual tree stand out and make the greatest impression.

I have created a list of the most significant criteria a judge should consider when examining a bonsai exhibition. The list encompasses a range of features, not all of which would apply to every tree. This list was designed initially as a score sheet, marks having been allocated for each of the points listed. For the purposes of this article, the idea is to draw upon this list as a learning tool rather than as a score sheet. Hence, the marks allocated for each feature within each section have been removed.

This list, which includes items not originally listed such as *jin* and *shari*, and also includes the stand on which it is exhibited, covers features on which judges must reflect in making their decision.

Judging, be it a floral display, paintings, dog or cats, or in this case bonsai, is not just a matter of arriving at a numeric score; it is rather a case of distinguishing between a number of bonsai that are all good and arriving at a conclusion based on which is First, Second and Third, and maybe, which ones we consider to be of such a standard that would warrant an Award of Merit.

TRUNK

Shape: Shape according to style

Bark: Well developed or not

Marks: Wire and other marks / unsightly cuts

Tapering: Lack of inverted taper as well as correct tapering

Shari: Appearance appropriate to the tree

BRANCHES

Distribution: Groupings

Development: Positioning of branches

Bark: Condition of main branches

Ramification: Extent of fine branch development

Marks: Avoidance of wire marks

Jins: As appropriate to the tree, give aged appearance

FOLIAGE

Leaves: Horticultural perfection

Blemishes: Evidence of disease, windburn etc.

Size: In proportion to the tree

Distribution: Not hanging below branch unless weeping variety

SOIL / SURFACE DRESSING

Well finished: Clear of weeds:

Surface: Appropriate surface cover e.g. moss

Visibility: Well or badly distributed as surface roots (nebari)

Buttressed: Shape of buttress at soil level

Other cover: As appropriate to the tree(s)

Rock planting: Roots give natural impression of having grown naturally (clasped) to the rock.

Shape & Style: Appropriate to the nature of the tree (species and style)

Placement: Tree correctly positioned within pot

Appearance: Cleanliness

Size: Good proportion to the tree(s), not over- or under-potted

Color Appropriate to species

STANDS

Shape & Style: Appropriateness to tree/pot combination.

AESTHETIC QUALITY

Could be a subjective judgement but reflecting overall impression of the tree(s) within the pot or displayed on a tray. Overall sense of balance and harmony.



Juniperus chinensis 'Itoigawa': Height - 44cms.

Here, the question is whether the tree is back-to-front. Sadly, a superb trunk with good movement and beautifully created *shari* is masked by the lowest branch. The remaining branches are not clearly defined due to the lack of refinement of the foliage pads. Very dense foliage on upper part of the tree including apical region. Once these factors are remedied, we will have a prize-winning tree. Overall balance between tree and pot is very good, with tidy surface dressing.



Pinus sylvestris: Height - 78 cms.

Not quite there yet, but another tree with potential. The basic design concept is good with the position of the tree in its pot well placed to counter the outward movement of the trunk beyond the periphery of the pot. Work needs to be done in wiring and refining the branch structure. With further back-budding, there could be an excellent foliage mass in due course. The primitive-style pot reflects the ruggedness of trunk, bark and *shari*.

Recognizing the elements that make a bonsai—from the tree (species and style) to the pot and the manner it is displayed—all contribute to our judging processes. Through experience of having worked in creating bonsai, we learn by trial and error what ultimately constitutes a tree that reflects a *good* bonsai, a tree of which you feel justifiably comfortable in displaying. could have impact on your decision making. You look at one particular tree that immediately evokes the thought “I really like that, it’s superb, it has got to be the best!” But then you have to ask *why*? What has given us the impression that one bonsai (or even a handful of bonsai) stand out above all the others?

In the end there is very little likelihood that when the judging decisions have been made and awards have been presented, that there will be a 100% consensus that the decisions were the right ones. Everyone has their own perception of what is good or not so good. But as long as our judgements are based on a comprehensive knowledge and appreciation of the factors that constitute the criteria of assessing bonsai, you can justify your decision and allow for people’s differences of opinion.

bonsai, you can justify your decision and allow for people's differences of opinion.

Unfortunately, or maybe fortunately, our hobby is an art form and not an exact science; hence opinion will always be an important part of decision making and judgement. Would we truly want it any other way? Can you imagine a world where every bonsai was an exact replica of another and there was no scope for artistry and personal flair? Preferably not!



We have here 3 trees, a *Crataegus*, an *Ulmus parvifolia* and a *Juniperus chinensis* that I dismissed on my first stage of selection. Apart a lack of a complete lack of styling to the branches, the Crataegus was dismissed immediately on the condition of presentation; algae on both trunk and pot, heavy overgrowth of moss, possibly trying to mask the extraordinary overhanging root. Take it home, do a lot of work and you could have a nice tree. The Ulmus is far too immature for showing. The branch structure has yet to develop, the branches all starting from the same point are all of equal thickness and choices need to be made on how many you require. A nice pot, a healthy tree but it needs time and development. Oh dear, what happened to the apex on the Chinese juniper? You refined all the lower branches quite successfully but did you get tired before you reached the top? Take it home and thin out and shape the apex and then we will look again.



The adjacent images are of the same *Juniperus chinensis*. *Left*; Initially, the tree was rejected for award winning at exhibition as the foliage mass needed to be opened more and refined.

Right; A few years later, the whole image was clearer, the foliage pads were better defined and tidier resulting in an award for its quality.



Pinus pentaphylla: Height - 58 cms. *Left*; A superb example of a semi-cascade style with a well developed trunk, neatly positioned branches and well developed foliage pads. Good healthy color of the needles. The whole image is of a tree, groomed and superbly styled, complimented by a rugged pot which reflects the contours of the tree. Needless to say, this specimen was one of the top award winning trees in a recent British bonsai exhibition.

BSOP MEMBER BENEFITS

From the BSOP Policy and Guidelines; Personal one-time ads for such things as home sales may be presented to the Membership Chair for distribution via email on a space/time available basis. Please allow a minimum of 14 days notice.

Contact Patrice Morrow/ Membership Chair, at morrowpatrice3@gmail.com with your message that is prepared and ready to be sent, along with your desired date of distribution. This will be sent to all members of BSOP, except for those that have opted out of club emails.

Realistically, I often can process these in a more timely manner than the 2 weeks mentioned above, but please plan ahead as much as feasible. Approval of content and timing are at the discretion of the Membership Chair. This service is intended for bonsai related messaging.

Advertising in the monthly newsletter can be arranged for members. Please contact me for details.



Trees For Sale

Evergreens include native, Shimpaku and Itoigawa junipers, black and lodgepole pines, mtn hemlock and spruces, moderately priced. Sizes vary from shohin to all one person wants to carry. Also varieties of maples, varieties of elms and accent plants. Plums, maples and elms are showing fall color. Call 503 704 3891

Editor



October Haiku

Rustling through dry leaves
 Sounds of Autumn everywhere
 Listen for the breeze.

Ron Yasenchak

Elvin forest of Coastal Live Oaks in Los Osos, CA. Nature makes beautiful bends, without our time constraints. That's why we wire.

PRE-BONSAI PLANTS · BONSAI TOOLS

High-fired Pots • Mica & Plastic Training Pots

Wire • Organic Fertilizers

Mazama Pumice (1/16-3/8")

Diatomite Rock from Nevada, USA

Superior Black Compost • Red Cinder Rock (1/4-5/16")

Est. 1978



25321 NE 72nd Avenue
 Battle Ground, WA 98604

Phone (360) 687-5641

D Burnett

Need supplies?

Call ahead for delivery
 at BSOP meetings.



Me? Obsessed with trees?
Yes. Yes, I am.

Vaughn Chandler champions the trees, landscapes and property investments of the customers in his care. And he's one of the many reasons we've become the premier scientific tree and shrub care company in the world.

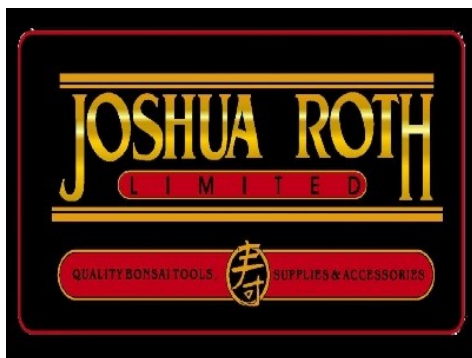
Contact us today at 503-722-7267 | bartlett.com



**BARTLETT
TREE EXPERTS**

EVERY TREE NEEDS A CHAMPION.

Portland Bonsai Supply is now an authorized dealer for Joshua Roth & Ryuga Bonsai Tools



**Check out all the new items at
portlandbonsaisupply.com
Bonsai for Everyone at Every Level**



6707 SW Pine Street, Portland, OR 97223

The Bonsai Society of Portland meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month.

The Milwaukie Center

5440 SE Kellogg Creek Drive, Milwaukie OR 97222

Enter parking lot from Rusk Road

Visitors are always welcome!

Board of Directors

President: Andrew Robson

2nd VP-Membership: Patrice Morrow

Secretary: Brandon Myren

1st VP-Programs: Reid Parham

Treasurer: Brandon McMullin

Past President: Joe Johanesen

Committee Chairs

Ambassadors:

Auctions: Dane Burrell

Audio/Visual: Reid Parham

Facilities Coordinator: Reid Parham

Fall Show:

Formal Display: Scott Elser

Heritage: Steve Leaming, Brandon Myren

Hospitality: Brandon McMullin

Library: Barbara Devitt

Mentorship: Howard Greisler

Newsletter: Peter Pelofske

Portland Nursery Show Reid Parham

Photographer: Jim Baggett

Raffle:

Social Media: Scott Tice

Spring Show:

Summer Picnic: Joe Johanesen

Vendor Coordinator: Reid Parham

Volunteer Coordinator:

Webmaster: Karl Holmes

Contact information is on the BSOP website www.portlandbonsai.org under Services/Members Only/Membership Directory