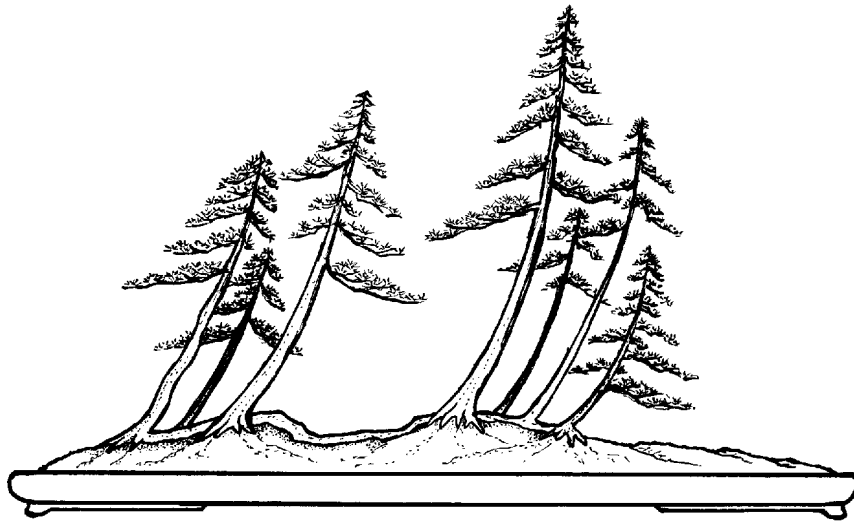


INTERMEDIATE BONSAI

A COURSE SYLLABUS



NH

By Thomas L. Zane
Backyard Bonsai, Daytona Beach, Florida



N.H.

Intermediate Bonsai - A Course Syllabus

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By Definition

By Definition

Bonsai is the art of creating a miniature replica of a mature tree or group of trees which could be found in nature. The bonsai artist attempts to create that replica by changing normal plant material into a miniature tree which exhibits the illusion of maturity.

In Review...

In order to accomplish this, the artist must understand that both horticultural principles and artistic principles must be followed.

Introduction to Bonsai - A Course Syllabus discussed the horticultural aspects of bonsai as well as basic techniques, rules and principles used in creating a bonsai. When doing more advanced bonsai work, keep these rules in the back of the mind, but do NOT be a slave to them. Approach each new piece of material with an open mind. Do not force the tree into a style, rather give it style. Use the basic rules as needed. Let the material tell you how it may best be treated.

This Intermediate Syllabus takes the student more into the artistic realm of bonsai, discussing the creation of styles other than the basic informal upright bonsai.

Imagination...

Imagination, we all have it, to some degree or other. But in styling a bonsai we all too often don't call on our imagination and attempt to recreate a bonsai in the image of some basic bonsai icon, stoically following styling traditions which came from Japan some 50 years ago. These basic "rules", or principles, ARE important and ARE essential in getting one started on the road to creating good bonsai; but they are only the beginning of the journey, they are not the end all to bonsai design. The Japanese do not continue to copy the Chinese; they took what China had to offer and, using their imagination and skills, created their own bonsai based on what they see growing in their own land. If we are to progress in our chosen art, we too must evolve, develop, digress, deviate, exercise free thinking and adapt the best history has to offer and use examples in our own landscape on which to build.

ART and AESTHETICS OF BONSAI

Chapter 1

NOTES

I. OBJECTIVES

As a result of studying this section of the *Intermediate Bonsai Syllabus*, viewing audio visual presentations, or participating in other activities provided by an instructor, you will be able to:

1. Define the meaning of the terms *art* and *aesthetics*, and relate them to the styling of bonsai.
2. Explain why bonsai is a horticultural art form.
3. Describe factors which enhance the appearance of ageing in a bonsai.
4. Explain how rhythm enhances the artistic and aesthetic appearance of a bonsai.
5. Define *visual speed* and explain how texture on a bonsai affects visual speed.
6. Explain how good proportions and balance enhance the appearance of a bonsai.
7. Explain how the display of a bonsai affects its aesthetic value.

II. GENERAL

A. An understanding of **artistic composition** is essential in creating an aesthetically appealing bonsai.

1. The bonsai **artist's responsibility** is not only to create and maintain healthy miniaturized trees, but also to present an aesthetically appealing, that is, beautiful tree.

HARMONY in BONSAI

Chapter 2

NOTES

I. OBJECTIVES

As a result of studying this section of the *Intermediate Bonsai Syllabus*, studying APPENDIX C - Harmony, viewing audio visual presentations, or participating in other activities provided by an instructor, you will be able to:

1. Define harmony.
2. Discuss the concept of *harmony* as it applies to bonsai, to include:
 - a. Understatement
 - b. Perspective
 - c. Line
 - d. Balance
 - e. Soul and spirit
 - e. Nature and natural appearance
 - f. Display of bonsai

II. GENERAL

A. An expanded discussion of Harmony is included in APPENDIX C to this Syllabus.

B. Definitions

1. **Harmony.** Harmony means fitting together, agreement, a combination of parts into an orderly or proportionate whole, congruity, agreement or proportionate arrangement of color, size, shape, etc., that is pleasing to the eye. It is an affirmative emotional response for which bonsai artists strive.

INFORMAL UPRIGHT STYLE BONSAI

Chapter 4

NOTES

I. OBJECTIVES

As a result of studying this section of the *Intermediate Bonsai Syllabus*, viewing audio visual presentations, or participating in other activities provided by an instructor, you will be able to:

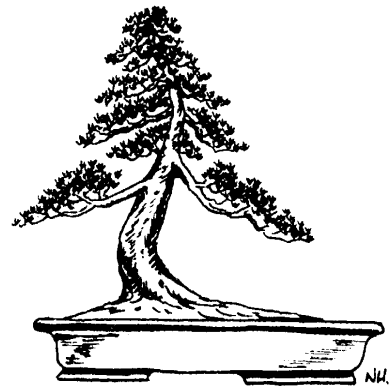
1. Describe the principal identifying features of *informal upright* style bonsai which distinguish it from other bonsai styles.
2. Using an appropriate stock plant, create an *informal upright* style bonsai in training.

II. GENERAL

- A. The *informal upright* style bonsai is one of several styles having relatively upright trunks. It is also the style tree taught in Introduction to Bonsai - A Course Syllabus.
- B. The *informal upright* style bonsai is the most common style in which trees are designed. It imparts gentle rhythmic movement, balance and grace.

III. INFORMAL UPRIGHT STYLE BONSAI DEFINED

- A. An *informal upright* style bonsai is:
 1. One in which the trunk emerges from the soil at an angle, curves one or more times between the base and the apex, and has an apex which is above its base when viewed from the front.
 2. The most popular shape of bonsai, especially for pine, juniper, oak and other conifers. It is also a good style for pomegranate, maple, plum and apple.



Illus. 4-1

FOREST STYLE BONSAI

Chapter 10

NOTES

I. OBJECTIVES

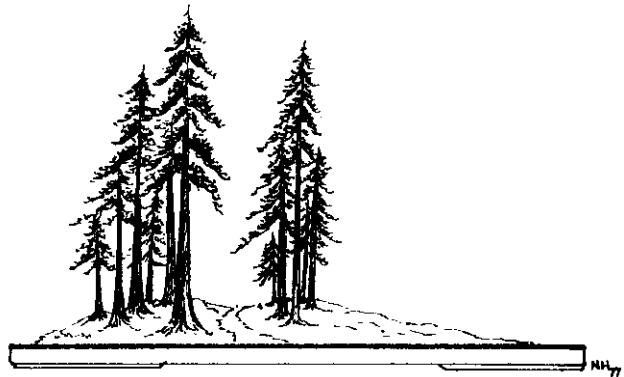
As a result of studying this section of the *Intermediate Bonsai Syllabus* and viewing audio visual presentations, or participating in other activities provided by an instructor, you will be able to:

1. Describe the significant features of the *forest* style bonsai, to include:
 - a. The significance of the *height/girth ratio*.
 - b. The type of container which is most appropriate.
 - c. The importance of soil elevation.
2. Using appropriate stock plants, create a *forest* style bonsai in training.

II. GENERAL

A. A *forest* or *group* style bonsai is one in which **three or more trees** are planted in a single container.

1. The forest planting may have any number of trees, however, the **number 4** should be avoided. In the Japanese culture the characters for the number 4 are the same as those for death. From a practical point of view, four trees present a symmetrical composition, and symmetry is to be avoided.

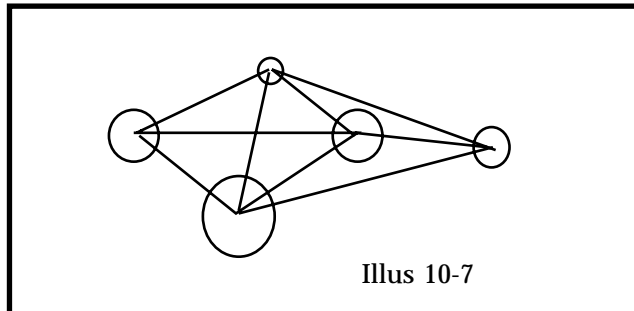


Illus 10-1

G. Scalene Triangle

1. Trunk Placement

Arrange the trunks of the trees to form a series of scalene triangles.



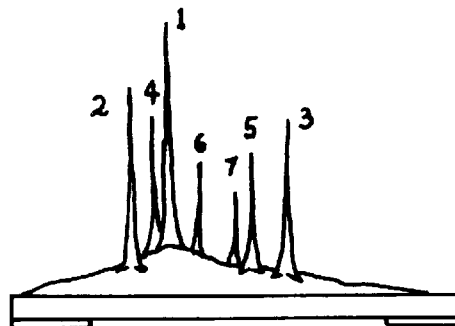
2. Branches

The **lowest branch** should normally be on the shortest tree with the smallest trunk. This will often form the long side of the scalene triangle which defines the overall shape of the planting.

H. Soil

1. Contour

The soil should be contoured so that the largest tree is planted highest.

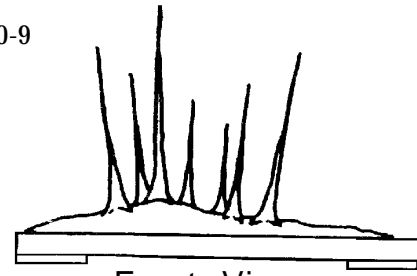


Illus 10-8

I. Attitude

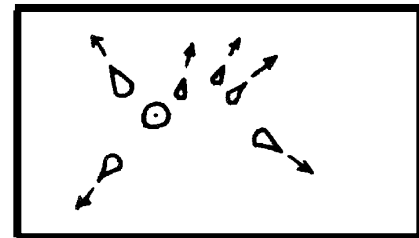
1. The **attitude** of a tree refers to its degree of verticality; upright, slanting, cascading, etc.
2. In a group planting, the largest and tallest tree usually is **vertical** while the others lean away from it.

Illus 10-9



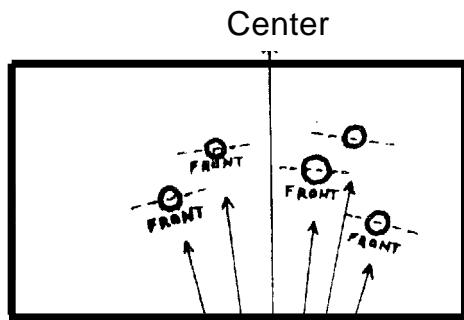
Front View

Top View



Trunks lean in the direction of the arrows

J. Front of each tree



Trees face the viewer

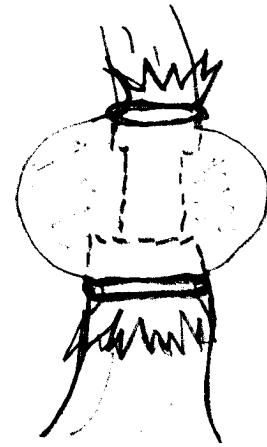
Illus 10-10

Viewer

1. The **front** of each tree is based on the trunk line and on the placement of the branches.
2. The **front faces** the viewer which is not necessarily the front of the container.
3. The line of the front trees should form a shallow **concave arc** which visually invites the viewer into the scene.

NOTES

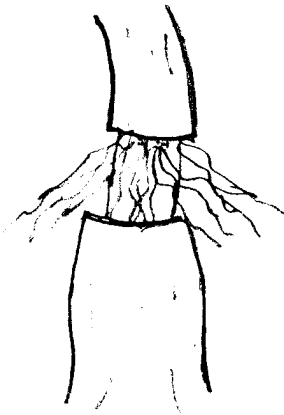
- d. Dust the cambium of the upper ring cut with a rooting hormone. Take some of the Superthrive[®] soaked sphagnum moss, squeeze out the excess liquid and put the moss onto the air layer, covering the entire air layer area. Tie the moss on with twine by criss-crossing the moss covered area. Next cover the entire air layer area with a layer of Saran Wrap[®] and then a layer of aluminum foil, tying it at the bottom and loosely at the top. Flare the foil at the top to act as a water cup. Check that water will flow through the layered area.



Rooting medium secured around cut

Illus 17-6

- e. Water the air layer just as if it were a potted bonsai. The sphagnum moss should not dry out.
- f. Periodically check for roots by removing the aluminum foil. Remember to replace the aluminum foil as roots need darkness. When a goodly number of roots can be seen through the clear wrapping, cut the layer off the plant stock.



Roots developed

Illus 17-7

- g. When the plant is separated from the stock plant, spread the roots evenly around the trunk and adjust the angle at which it leaves the ground. Plant it in a potting soil in a nursery container. Secure the plant within the container to prevent it moving about and breaking newly forming roots.

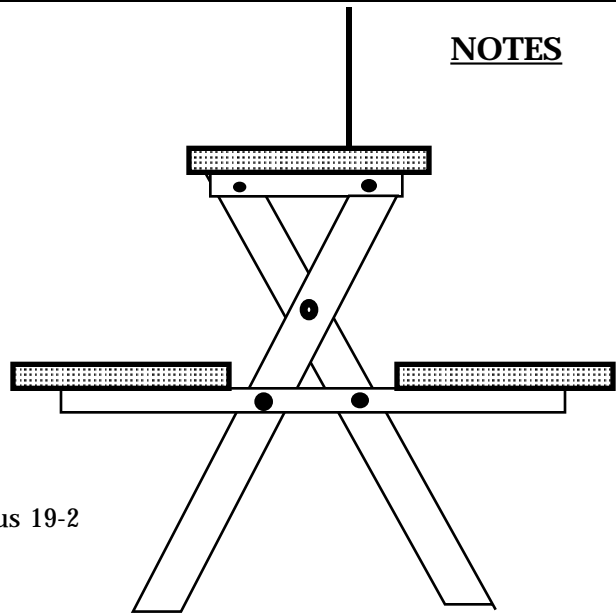
2. Tourniquet layering.

- a. A tourniquet of copper wire is put around the trunk or branch about an inch below the place where the new roots are desired. This will keep the sap above the tourniquet.

Displaying Bonsai, Continued

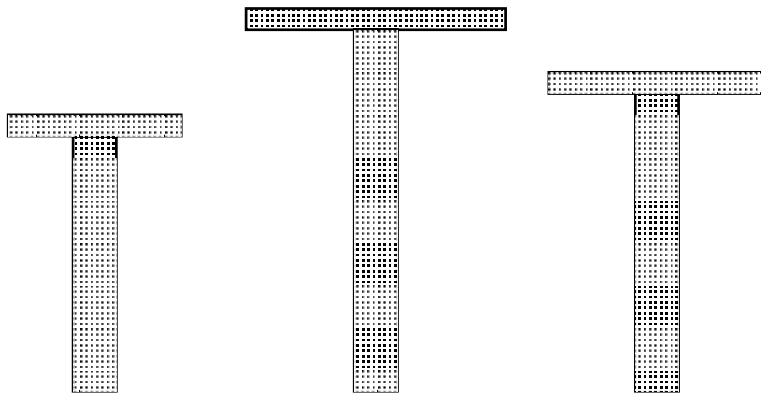
- Another type of support is a pair of wooden "A Frame" supports with three shelves. The two "A Frames" are attached together with a pair of 1" x 4" horizontal boards to prevent side sway.

Illus 19-2



Side View Wooden Shelf Support

- Individual stands may be appropriate. The upright should be 4" x 4" pressure treated material securely set into the ground with a flat shelf firmly attached to the top.



A Grouping of Individual Stands

Illus 19-3

Designing a Bonsai

A 1 hour program filmed in a television studio by the author. It provides a brief history of bonsai and a discussion of bonsai rules. The bulk of the program is a lecture and demonstration of the principles of designing bonsai. It concludes with the selection of an appropriate container and potting of the demonstration tree. 60 minutes

The program is available on a rental basis from the AV Program of BCI.

Grow Successful Bonsai: A Step by Step Guide, Vol 1

Peter Adams of England discusses the bonsai image and what to look for, starting off in bonsai, tools and how to use them, wiring, pots, potting and bonsai soil, cuttings and fertilizers, watering, and developing shape by refining and pruning the structure. He concludes with specific information on formal upright, informal upright and broom style bonsai. 60 minutes.

Grow Successful Bonsai: A Step by Step Guide, Vol 2

Peter Adams of England discusses the art of bonsai, the collection and maintenance of wild bonsai material, styles of bonsai and how to achieve them, developing the image and hard and soft pruning of deciduous and evergreen species. He concludes with a detailed coverage of the group style. 60 minutes.

Both Volume 1 and 2 are available on a rental basis from the AV Program of BCI. They are available for purchase from: Mrs. Sheila Adams, Cherry Trees, 22 Burnt Hill Rd., Wrecclesham, Farnham, Surrey, GU10 4RX, UK.

Growing Art of Bonsai, The

Canadian bonsai artist Arthur Skolnik leads the viewer to a wide variety of locations, talks to professional bonsai growers and hobbyists, and gives practical demonstrations in many techniques needed to successfully grow a bonsai. 58 minutes.

The program is available on a rental basis from the AV Program of BCI.

Introduction to Bonsai, Vol 1

Mary Corrington, a bonsai teacher from Oregon, presents an answer to the question, "What is Bonsai". She does this by explaining the concept of bonsai and does not try to demonstrate the process by which a bonsai is created. 30 minutes.

The program is available on a rental basis from the AV Program of BCI.

Kei Do: The Way of Display and Appreciation, Vol 1

Harmony in Bonsai

I. INTRODUCTION

This **APPENDIX** in addition to containing all of the material in Chapter 2, has expanded coverage of the subject which it was felt more appropriate to present in an **APPENDIX** than in the text of the Syllabus.

II. GENERAL

A. Definitions

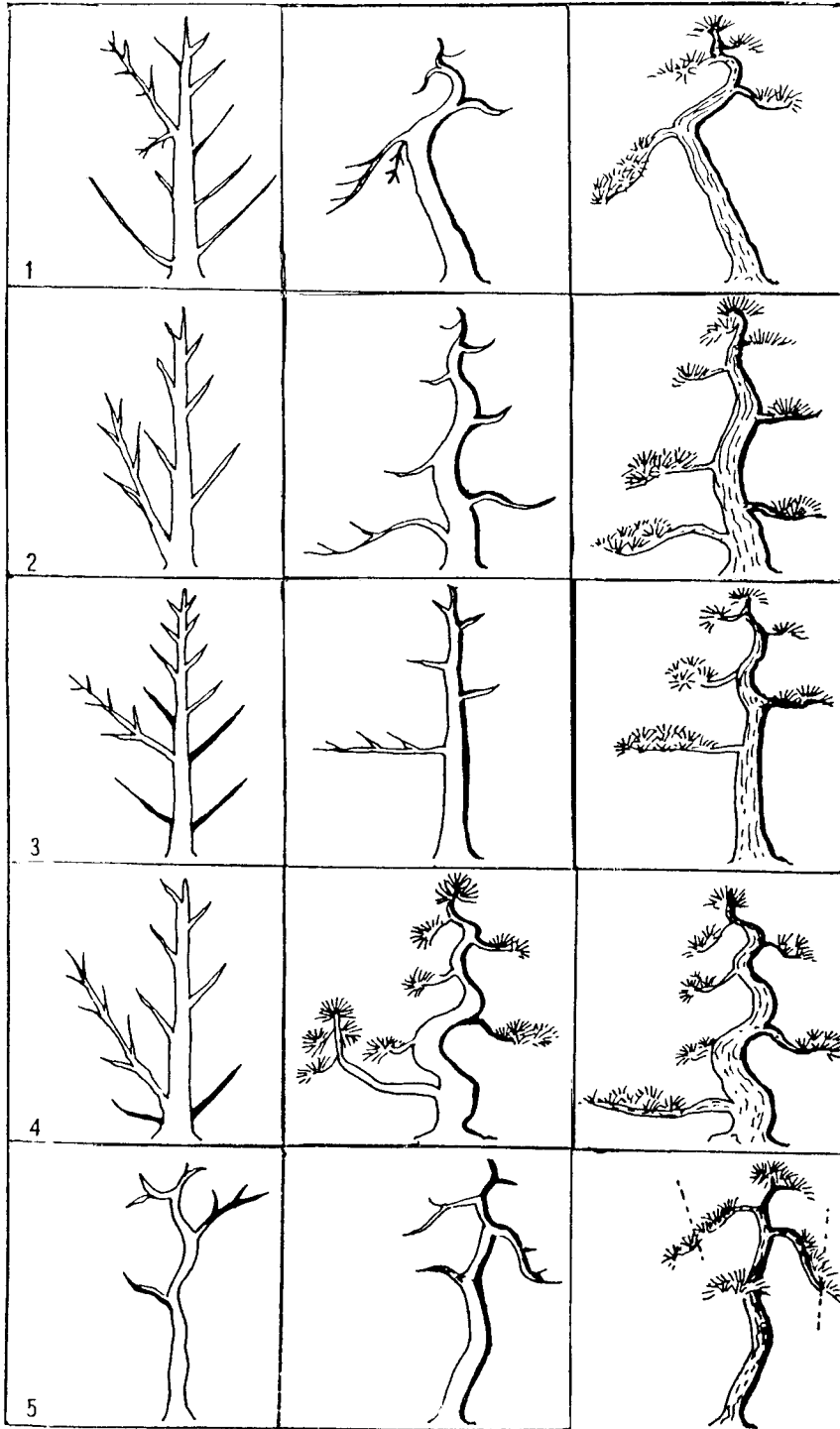
1. **Harmony.** Harmony means fitting together, agreement, a combination of parts into an orderly or proportionate whole, congruity, agreement or proportionate arrangement of color, size, shape, etc., that is pleasing to the eye.
2. **Bonsai.** Bonsai is the art of creating a miniature replica of a mature tree or group of trees which could be found in nature. The bonsai artist attempts to create an **illusion** by changing normal plant material into a mature tree.

III. ELEMENTS OF HARMONY

- A. Various elements, concepts and conditions contribute to the existence of harmony in a given composition. They include: understatement, perspective, line and its continuity and rhythm, balance and the soul and the spirit of the creation.
- B. **Understatement.** When a bonsai exhibits harmony, it is because of the presence of a variety of factors which, when acting in a concerted fashion, provide a unified structure, a work of horticultural art which is pleasing to the eye. One of these factors which contributes to harmony is **understatement**. There is a basic aesthetic premise in the orient which states that the **less** powerful a thing may be, the **more** effective it can be.
 1. The power of quietness and understatement is the core of much of Oriental art's approach to beauty be it architecture, interior design, flower arranging, bonsai or nature itself.

Appendix E

Examples of Styling Miniature Bonsai



These sketches are examples of styling miniature bonsai by pruning and wiring. They are from the Fall 1982 issue of Florida Bonsai, magazine which published these four panels of sketches as part of a short article by Charles Lloyd titled: "Ideas for Mame Bonsai". Those sketches, appear on pages 14-17.

Illus E-1