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SAIKEI International

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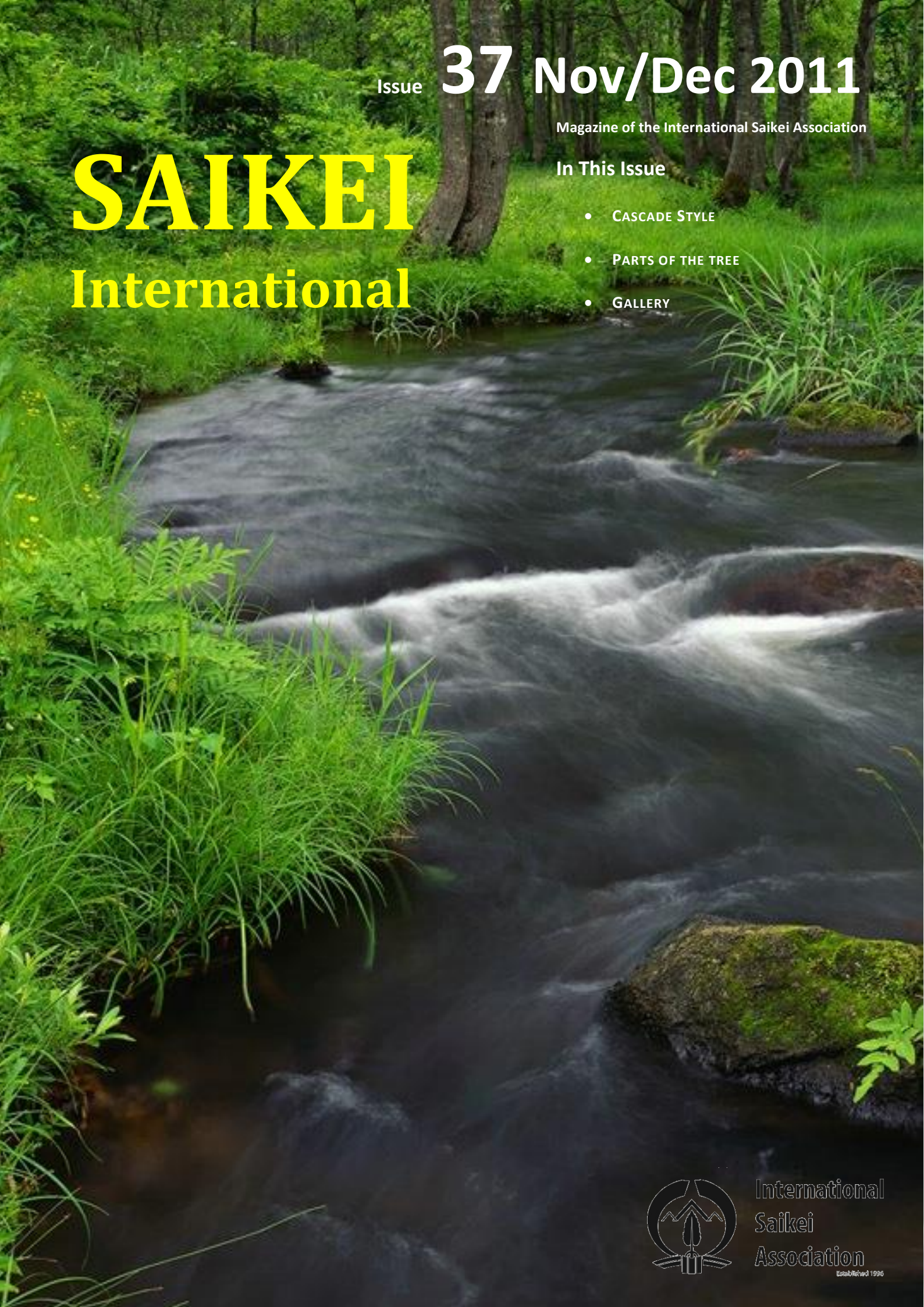

International Saikei Association

Established 1995

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General News

Seasonal Greetings

We would like to wish everyone seasonal greetings and a very happy new year.

Apologies

Unfortunately due to significant workloads our president had problems in getting his article to me this month and that is why this newsletter has had to be combined with December. He has asked me to apologise on his behalf.

Newsletter

We have not heard from members regarding our thoughts of expanding the article subject to include all forms of landscapes and Bonsai. Unless we hear from members to the contrary we will start to bring in a few articles that focus on other forms of landscapes in a pot and Bonsai.

Website

News Items

We are still seeking news items for the newsletter and website. So if you know of an event let us know and we will advertise it for you.

Articles

We are considering publishing articles on our website, if you have any article you would like to submit please send it to newsletter@saikei.co.uk

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CASCADE STYLE

Although cascade style is not as popular as it used to be it is fair to say that it still remains one of my favourite styles. Cascade trees are often formed where either through a lack of light or an exposed location has effectively pushed the tree over the side of a cliff or outcrop. These trees will often reflect the harsh nature of their environment in the trunk and branches of the tree.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A CASCADE STYLE

Using the standard formula the cascade style has:

- A trunk which extends in a downward movement.
- Branches that reflect the downward motion of the trunk and the hardships of the life it has led.
- Radial roots with stronger and thicker roots on the windward side.

The tree must always have a certain stability in order for it to maintain its naturalness.

CREATING A CASCADE STYLE FROM NURSERY STOCK

there are many species and varieties of tree available from garden centres that have a natural low growing pattern these can be used very effectively as Cascade trees, to force an upright tree into a Cascade is often ill-advised as these will never look completely natural except where there are sufficient bends in the lower trunk to allow the angle to be changed to drop the top of the tree right over.

I often prefer to use these low growing varieties in order to achieve a natural and gentle style of Cascade I will often create these trees from either cuttings or as nursery stock brought very early in its life.

If you wish to utilise nursery stock then select a tree with bends very low on the trunk or a tree with a very flexible and trainable lower trunk. One of the first procedures for creating a Cascade style tree is to repot to the desired angle so that the tree might get use to growing in a direction which will seem alien to it. The tree will always try to revert to upward growth if it is not naturally a horizontal grower this will have to be carefully controlled. Surface roots are important in this style in order to provide a visual anchor for the tree therefore the tree may need to be over potted in order to encourage strong root growth. The number and frequency of branches will depend dramatically on the location that you perceive the tree to be naturally growing in, branches will need to reflect the light and climatic conditions that the tree is exposed to.

CREATING A CASCADE STYLE FROM CUTTINGS OR SEED

Growing a Cascade from cuttings or seed is perhaps the best way to achieve this style it allows for the early development of bends in the lower portion of the trunk and thereafter. Because the tree is relatively young it will have less of an effect on the tree when it is placed in a downward direction. Branches should be allowed to grow unchecked for the first few years of the trees life in order to thicken and develop the trunk, when you have sufficient thickness in the trunk you may then select the branches that you wish to use in the design.

ROOTS

As in other styles roots provide an important visual anchor for the tree they also help to stabilise the design. As previously mentioned in order to achieve a strong visual anchor the trees roots must be allowed to grow freely this will mean over potting in the first few years of the trees existence you may wish to train the roots through selection to ensure a strong visual root base.

TRUNK

Unless you are very fortunate and have a tree with a good bend at the base of you will probably have to create these at an early age. Due to the fact that young trunks on trees tend to growing very rapidly it is important to

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remember that wire used in the training of the trunk will bite very rapidly, and therefore I recommend that every month you look at the wire on the trunk. As a Japanese bonsai master once pointed out to me it is important that the trunk should form in a series of steps this is because the tree would naturally try to grow upwards and the climatic conditions would then revert the tree to growing in a downward direction to avoid these forces. When creating the bends try to keep in mind that these must look natural as though created up by the condition that you visualise your tree living in, therefore if you believe that the tree is growing from the top of a cliff and has been forced to grow that way due to a lack of light and conditions from storms etc you should reflect this in the curves and shapes in the trunk of the tree.

Branches

The branches of a Cascade tree will generally be short due to climatic conditions, they will also grow into areas where the conditions are less harsh remembering that there must be sufficient light in order for the branch to survive.

Foliage

Foliage will need to reflect the climatic conditions that you visualise the tree is subjected to. The easiest way to achieve a tight foliage pad is by pinching new growth and by encouraging light and air to enter the foliage pad, therefore it is very important to ensure that the foliage pad is kept clear of dead leaves, insect webs and other debris in order to achieve a fine ramification and good healthy foliage.

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In the Workshop – From the Roots

By David Penny

Roots are fundamental to the health and well being of the tree. They provide the tree with water and food, have a healthy root system and you have a healthy tree, have a weak root system and you have an unhealthy or worse a dead tree. Sounds simple doesn't it! But how many times have we experienced poor root systems on trees at the club.

So what leads to a healthy root system? Key to any healthy root system is warmth, air and moisture which is dictated by a good soil. So for those of you who have not experienced my ranting over soils here is my brief guide:-

1. There is no such thing as a "general bonsai/Saikei soil". It really, really, really annoys me when I see general members of the public buying "Bonsai Soil" from garden centres, they are being conned in the worst possible way. You would not put a pine in the same soil as a maple due to the differing requirements of the tree.
2. Soil composition is one of the key elements to healthy bonsai and will vary based on the tree genus and species, yes that's right there is not a standard bonsai soil for all pines. The composition will also vary based on YOUR ability to provide care, water, food, etc… and even down to the type and size of pot, scary isn't it?

It is good to think of the roots like a road system. Now imagine that there is a factory producing bread and spring water, this factory is on a B road and it has to get this food and water to the distribution centre on the motorway. The truck leaves the factory and starts the journey on the B roads (fibrous roots) and then gets onto the A road (secondary roots) that leads to the motorway after travelling on the A road it turns onto the motorway (primary roots). After it has been on the motorway for a while it reaches the distribution centre (the trunk).

Bonsai root systems differ from normal trees in the fact that they need to have more fibrous root systems than normal trees due to the need to maximize water and nutritional intake. The way to redevelop fibrous root systems is by regular pruning cutting primary roots leads to secondary root development.

Most plant root systems grow in a symbiotic relationship with a fungus called Mycorrhizae this friendly fungus is invaluable to ensuring a healthy tree. There are now a number of products on the market that will "inoculate" the soil with this fungus this is especially important when root washing techniques are used.

Root Technique

Ok so far we have looked at the importance of roots to a tree and how different soils are needed for different genus and species. In order to grow successful bonsai you must encourage the tree to produce fine roots, without this the tree will not have the necessary strength to react to the training techniques used at the top of the tree.

The next question is "how do we encourage fine roots to develop":

1. In the beginning we must cut the primary roots to develop finer roots back towards the trunk. We must always leave some secondary root at the tip of the primary root to provide energy and draw sugars so that the tree can grow fine root.

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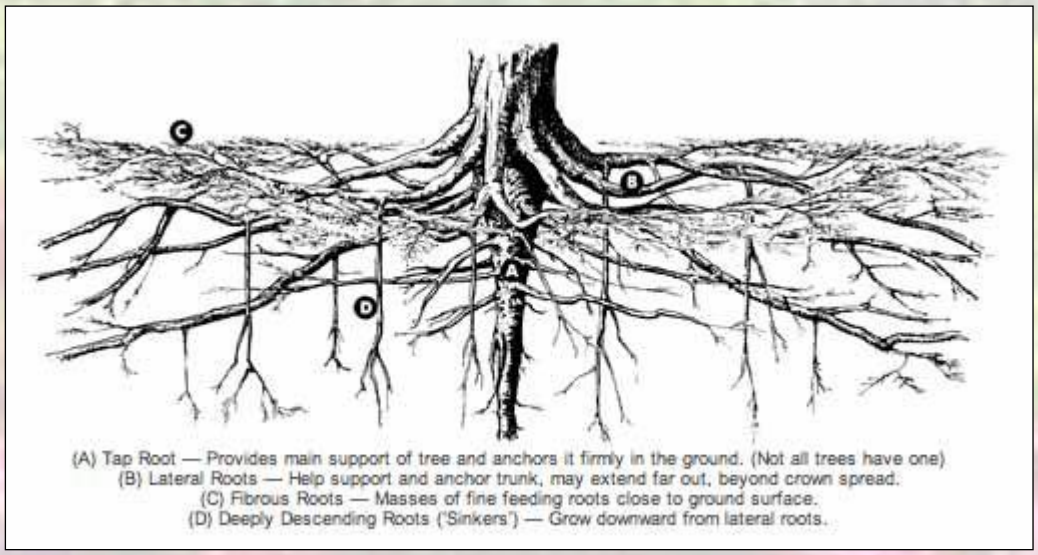
2. During the period of recovery no feeding should take place until fine root has developed this will normally be within 1-2 months then initially only at half strength for a month.
3. In the second repot the secondary roots should be cut to encourage fine roots.
4. In each repot thereafter a general pruning of the roots is needed. Remember to prune roots to balance strength in the tree.

A diagram showing the root structure on a full sized tree.



(A) Tap Root — Provides main support of tree and anchors it firmly in the ground. (Not all trees have one)
(B) Lateral Roots — Help support and anchor trunk, may extend far out, beyond crown spread.
(C) Fibrous Roots — Masses of fine feeding roots close to ground surface.
(D) Deeply Descending Roots ('Sinkers') — Grow downward from lateral roots.

The bonsai root system:

a. A tap root – is removed early in the trees life.
b. Lateral roots – are what we call primary roots.
c. Fibrous roots – secondary roots and fine roots.
d. Deeply Descending Roots (Sinkers) – are common in bonsai root systems.

TACHIAGARI AND NEBARI

As a child I can remember sitting under a tree on some gnarled old roots eating a picnic, I have to say that I could not tell you if that tree was an oak or beech but what I do remember is the roots. I believe that when we look at a full size tree we will initially take in its overall shape but as we approach we then will concentrate on the roots and lower trunk as these are within our sightline.

I think that when we look at a bonsai we do the same, which is why the surface roots (Nebari) and the lower trunk (Tachiagari) are so important.

NEBARI

As a general rule of thumb the nebari of a bonsai should be evenly spaced around the tree in a radial pattern. However I would like to explore 2 differing styles that use different root patterns to achieve "the look". Firstly lets take informal upright this design requires a good radial spread in which the roots disappear into the ground at about the same length all round. The second style is a slanting style tree, this requires a radial

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spread but the length of the visible roots differ with the longer roots on the windward side of the tree and the shorter on the sheltered side. Why the difference? It is simple the additional length on the windward side give the tree additional visual stability. So try to think about the visual affect that the nebari has on the tree.

Good or Bad Nebari you decide?

TACHIAGARI

The tachiagari of a bonsai further aids to stabilise the tree by the flare at the base. The tachiagari is measured from the first branch down to the beginning of the nebari, features in the tachiagari should help to enhance the look of the tree and help the viewer to understand the climate in which the tree is growing. The lower trunk should flare out to the roots, often this is missing on mass produced trees as the techniques for producing flared trunks are complicated and time consuming and are not helpful to profits. Providing the tree is not to old this defect can be put right. A don't with regard to tachiagari:

- Never hold a tree by its lower trunk if there is any chance that it will damage the bark, remember that the lower trunk does a lot of the definition work on the style.

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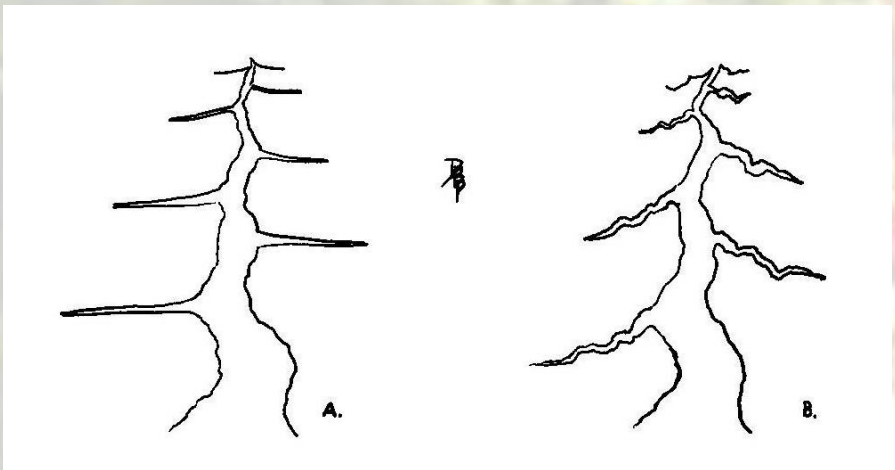
Good or Bad Tachiagari you decide?

BRANCHES

Branches are an important design feature and one that is key to portraying the age of the tree. How many times have you read that a bonsai must have sweeping branches to indicate the old age of a tree? The theory behind this is that branches on old trees sweep down, a reflection of the weight that a branch puts on as it grows; in reality the sweeping branches have more to do with the visual effect of the tree, the sweeping leading the eye in a downward direction which adds to the stability of the tree.

The first branch (ichi eda) should set up the branch pattern for the rest of the tree on informal trees the branches should have a lot of movement to reflect the trunk and on a formal tree the branches should reflect the formality of the trunk. I am sure you are starting to get the idea, to create harmony in the composition the branches must reflect the shape of the trunk diag 1.

You can see in this picture that tree b has a more harmonious shape



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With regards to the number of branches that a bonsai has it is important to “keep it simple” if you have too many branches on a tree it becomes clumsy and shrub like. Remember to train the branches at the earliest possible opportunity, (you may not get the opportunity later when the branch sets).

FOLIAGE

The foliage on trees is like the clothes on our bodies what we have to concentrate on is the way in which the tree is presented and the way in which it reflects the style you have chosen for the tree. The foliage changes with the genus, species and variety of the tree and consideration must be given for the shape and pattern.

Reducing the size of foliage

The reduction of foliage size hinges on the production of extra buds on the tree. This is done by various pruning techniques that vary from species to species; there are too many techniques to describe in this article. As a basic formula – more buds = increase in foliage area = smaller leaves, there is a balance between the roots and foliage and if you increase buds there is not a need to have as bigger leaves.

Using the foliage to tell the story

The foliage can tell the story and should do this in relationship with the roots, trunk and branches. As an example I can’t remember how many times I have seen a deadwood tree that has lush foliage pads more suited to an informal upright, by a reduction in the foliage quantity the balance of the tree style could be corrected and the image is refined, and the story becomes complete.

Foliage mistakes

The biggest mistake is to allow the tree to become so heavy that it ceases to look like a tree and becomes a shrub; a tree when you look at it always has light appearing through the crown. Our trees must reflect this and light should be always seen to avoid heaviness.

Thank you

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VIEWS FROM A LENS—GALLERY

Tochigi Japan for inspiration

Bonsai World 2011

Please let us have pictures and articles relevant to your country/area

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CLUBS

Name	Telephone	Address	Day of Meeting	Website
Dai Ichi Bonsai Group (Essex)	01277 625 298	Shenfield Village Hall	1st Monday of each month call	
Eastbourne and Wealden Bonsai Club (Sussex)	01323 731 369	Hellingly Village Hall	2nd Monday of the Month	www.bonsai-club.co.uk
Eastleigh Bonsai Club (Hampshire)	01489 789 962 or 07795 187 632		2nd Monday of the Month	

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