

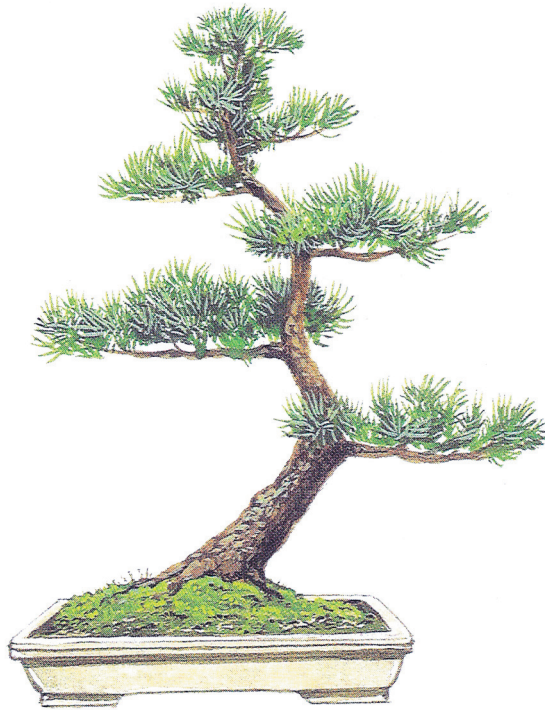
CLASSIC BONSAI STYLES

Retirado do livro "The Bonsai Handbook" de Colin Lewis
ISBN 1-903938-30-9

MOYOGI

Informal Upright

模様木



This is a variation on the formal upright style but is much easier to create.

The rules for the branch structure are the same but the trunk may have any number of curves, both from left to right and from front to back.

The branches should ideally grow from the outside of the curves and never on the inside as this creates a shock to the eye.

The apex should lean towards the front.

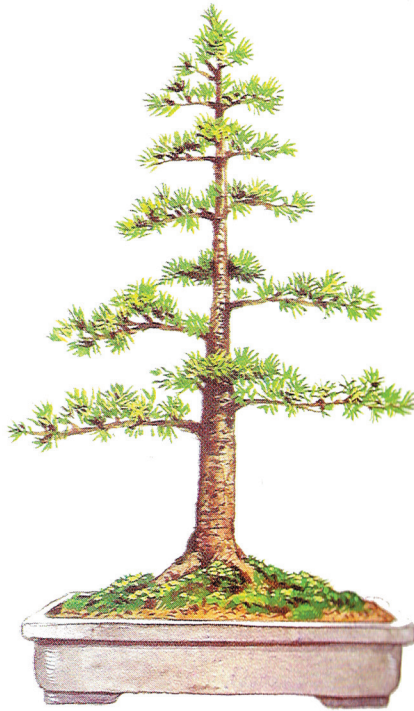
The tree illustrated is just one of the many variations on the informal upright style.

Unlike the Formal Upright, Moyogi works equally as well with deciduous and coniferous species.

CHOKKAN

Formal Upright

直幹



As the name implies, this is the most formalised of all styles. The trunk must be ramrod straight and bolt upright, tapering uniformly from base to tip.

The branches should be arranged alternately either side of the trunk with every third branch to the rear.

The branches should diminish in thickness and in length from the lowest one upwards, and should be either horizontal or sloping downwards.

Ideally, the spaces between the branches should also diminish toward the top of the tree, in proportion to their thickness and length.

SHAKAN

Slanting

斜幹



Another variation on the formal upright style, except that it is not upright.

The trunk is usually straight-ish, although it may have a gentle curve or two.

The placement of the branches needs to be carefully thought out in order to stabilise the design and to prevent the tree looking as if it is about to fall over.

Unlike the previous two styles, the number and placement of the branches is less crucial, providing the opportunity for creativity. For instance, using only the top branches and training them down steeply can result in a dramatic image.

FUKINAGASHI

Windswept

吹流



Although this is one of the more naturalistic styles, it is also one of the most dramatic.

The aim is to capture the dynamic shape and movement of a tree living high in the mountains or on a clifftop, where it is constantly exposed to high prevailing winds.

There are no rules governing the trunk shape or location of branches, but in spite of this freedom this is one of the most difficult styles to create successfully.

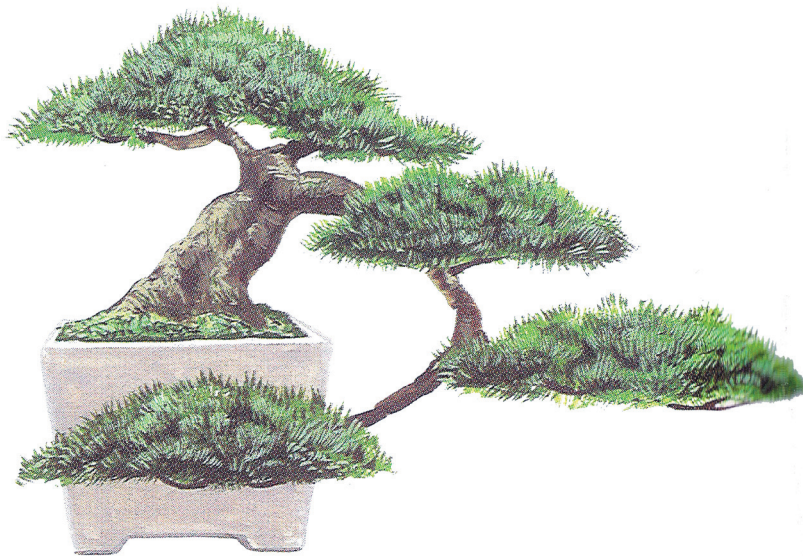
The difficulty lies in making the image appear authentic, rather than merely looking like a tree with branches on one side.

The trick is to ensure that the windswept effect begins at the base of the trunk and is reflected in every aspect of the tree.

HAN-KENGAI

Semi-Cascade

半懸崖



Both this style and the cascade style depict trees clinging to a cliff face, where they are beaten by snow, wind and rockfalls.

The trunk should have dramatic curves and taper, and the branches should ideally also cascade from the trunk.

Tradition states that the inverted 'apex' should be positioned directly below the base of the trunk when the tree is viewed from the 'front', but this can inhibit the design somewhat.

These days it's perfectly acceptable to allow the lowest point of the tree to be placed to one side of the pot, as if it was reaching out from a cliff face to find light.

The one unbreakable rule is that the lowest point must be below the rim of the pot, but not its base.

KENGAI

Cascade

娑婆幹



The difference between this style and the semi-cascade is that here the trunk must fall below the base of the pot.

All other criteria are the same.

Good cascades are rare because of the difficulty in maintaining vigour in the lower parts of the tree, opposing its natural urge to grow upwards.

This is probably the most difficult of all styles to design convincingly, partly because of the horticultural problem, but mainly because we have few natural examples to recall as inspiration.

It is important to include dramatic features and sharp angles to evoke the feeling of a tree clinging to life in the harsh mountain conditions.

SHARIMIKI

Driftwood

懸崖



Echoing the natural appearance of mountain junipers, which produce areas of bare, sun-bleached wood as they age, this style is seldom successfully created from other species.

The focal point is the beautiful and dramatic shapes of the grain in the exposed wood.

These shapes may be natural but are more often elaborately carved and then bleached and preserved with lime-sulphur.

The foliage masses, although acknowledging some of the rules of other styles, serve more as a foil or frame to the driftwood.

This style is suitable for conifers and rarely, if ever, applied to deciduous species of bonsai tree.

HOKIDACHI

Broom

娑婆幹



This style was modelled on the natural habit of the zelkova and is seldom successfully used for other than related species, since it works best with trees bearing alternate foliage.

All branches should emerge from the top of a straight trunk and fork at regularly diminishing intervals until a network of fine shoots at the tips forms an even-domed crown.

For broom styles to work well, they must be perfectly symmetrical and meticulously trained and pruned to ensure an even and gradual transition from trunk, through heavy branches, to the finest terminal shoots.

Trying to rush the development will always end in disappointment.

BUNJINGI

Literati

文人木



This style is reminiscent of ancient pines, which tend to shed their lower branches as they get old.

It gets its name from the calligraphic style of ancient Chinese artists.

The focal point of the design is the trunk, so it should be full of character.

The branches are limited to the uppermost part of the trunk and should bear just enough foliage to keep the tree healthy and vigorous.

The foliage should, however, be immaculately positioned.

The pots used for literati styles are generally round and comparatively small to balance the sparse foliage.

They are also frequently 'rustic' in appearance, to reflect the tree's rocky habitat.

SEKIJÔJU

Root-on-Rock

石付



In rocky terrain the scarce soil is constantly being eroded, exposing the rocks and the roots of the trees growing amongst them.

This style depicts such a tree whose roots, as they thicken, cling to any rocks beneath them.

The tree itself can be of any style, although broom and formal upright styles look out of place.

The most important factor is that the roots should cling tightly to the rock and should have a mature texture.

This can take many years to accomplish.

First, the root-covered rock must first be planted in the ground for several seasons to consolidate, and then exposed to the air and sun for the bark to develop mature characteristics.

ISHITSUKI

Root-on-Rock

石付



The tree itself may follow any style, the significance is that a rock is used instead of a pot, with the roots growing in a crevice or hollow.

The rock may stand in a shallow dish of soil or, better still, in a water tray Mixed plantings of pines with red maples or dwarf quince and azalea are particularly successful.

The essence of the root on rock style is the natural landscape that the composition evokes.

The choice of rocks, tree species and various accompanying plants must be carefully made, ensuring that they all harmonise visually and horticulturally, since repotting can be a difficult operation.

NETSUNANARI

Sinuious Raft

根連



As the name suggests, this is a raft planting where the original horizontal trunk has attractive snake-like curves and is exposed in such a way as to show this feature to its best advantage.

With a style like this it is even acceptable for the old trunk to be above the ground in places.

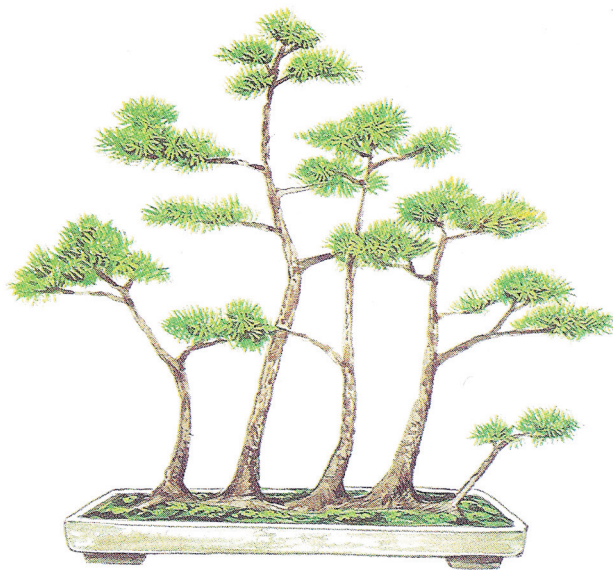
The natural inspiration for the sinuous raft style is a fallen tree that has sprouted vertical branches and then taken root in places where it has come into contact with the earth.

Although trees of this kind themselves may conform to any style, they should harmonise and all be similar in trunk movement.

IKADABUKI

Straight Raft

筏吹



Another obvious one: a raft planting where the original trunk lies in a straight line.

Most rafts created from nursery stock follow this style because of the difficulty of bending a fairly thick trunk into sinuous curves. In such cases the trunk is usually buried in the soil or covered with moss to disguise its unnatural appearance.

The main problem to solve when making a straight raft is how to avoid a straight row of trunks.

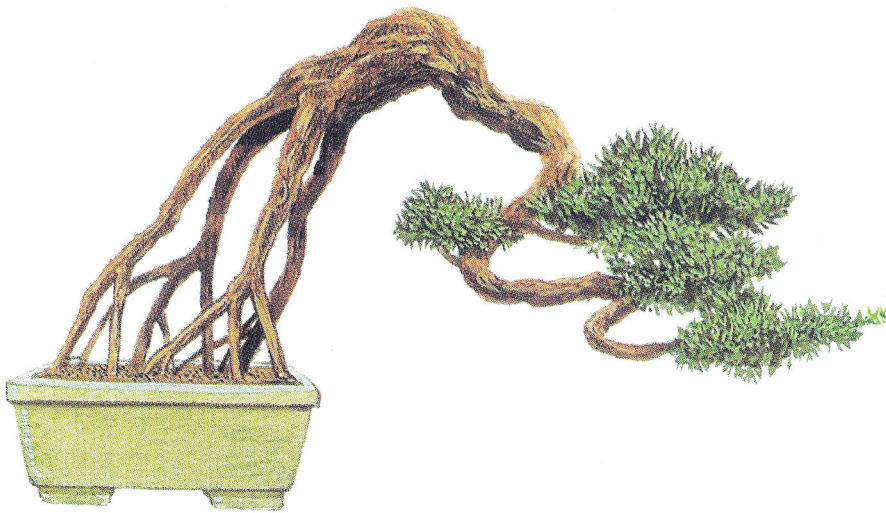
This can be achieved by training some branches horizontally forward or backward before bending them up to form trunks.

It is even possible to create a fairly dense forest in this way.

NEAGARI

Exposed Roots

根上



Most of us have driven down lanes where the steep banks have been washed away to expose the roots of an ancient beech or pine, and this style is based on such cases.

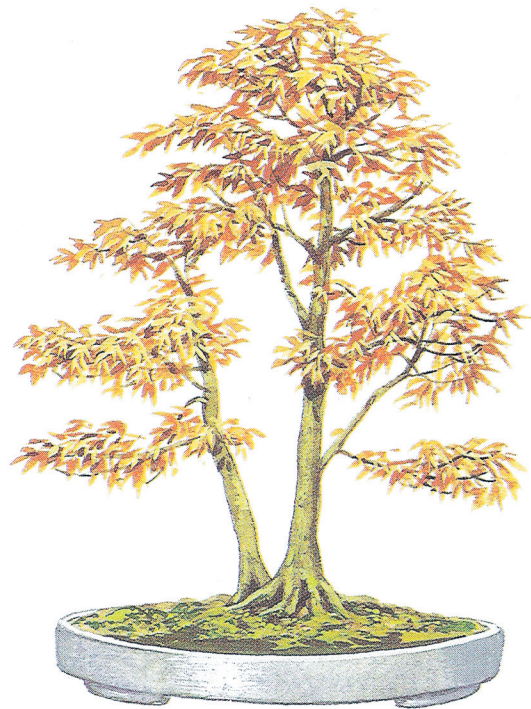
The roots, which must have mature bark and interesting shapes, add a dramatic, rugged appearance, so the design of the tree itself should echo this.

The foliage mass should be kept fairly small so that its weight or wind resistance doesn't cause the exposed roots to bend over. You might find wild specimens that lend themselves to training in this style, but more often than not, growing from scratch is the easiest method.

SÔJU

Twin Trunk

雙樹



Two trunks, one smaller than the other, joined together at the base.

Trunks which divide significantly above the base are unacceptable. The smaller or secondary trunk should be slightly to the rear of the dominant one to enhance the perspective.

The trees themselves may follow any appropriate style.

These bonsai can sometimes be difficult to maintain in the long term, because as the trunks thicken with age, the fork between them inevitably begins to fill.

This has the effect of raising the junction until eventually it is too high.

When starting a sôju, make the angle between the trunks as wide as possible.

BANKAN

Twisted Trunk

蟠幹



This most unnatural of all bonsai styles has heavy Chinese influence. It became popular for a time last century and was grown in large numbers.

Although still popular among some hobbyists, it is seldom accepted in classic circles.

The trunk spirals from base to apex while the branch structure follows that of the informal upright.

Unfortunately, the majority of commercial, mass-produced small bonsai – intended for the gift market - are bad examples of this style.

Far Eastern growers seem to think that this is what Westerners believe a tree looks like!

KABUDACHI

Clump

株立



Any (odd) number of trunks, which must be in a variety of sizes, all growing on the same roots.

This may either be created from suckers (shoots arising naturally from the roots) or by cutting off a thick trunk at the base and using the new shoots which spring up from the stump.

The trees can be any style.

The horticultural advantage of using a clump rather than separate plants is that the 'trees' do not compete for water and nutrients. As with the raft and group styles, the trunks should have similar movement and characteristics but must also vary in thickness.

YOSE-UE

Group
寄植



This style may incorporate any number of trunks from seven up to as many as you like.

The main interest is in the interplay between the trunks, which should be of different sizes and should be arranged to give the impression of depth and perspective. No three trunks should form a straight line and no trunk should be obscured by another when viewed from the front.

The trees in the centre of the group or forest should be the tallest, with the thickest trunks bearing the most foliage.

The trunks on the perimeter should lean outward, reaching for the light.