

BONSAI

Bonsai, the art of creating "miniature trees," is an ancient art form which has been practiced for centuries in both Eastern and Western cultures. In some traditions, bonsai has religious and spiritual meaning. For most, bonsai is primarily a practice in aesthetics and an outlet for creativity and artistic expression. In the art of bonsai, there are numerous well-defined styles, each intended to reflect tree forms and situations found in nature. Of the many possibilities in bonsai, five basic styles are prevalent. These basic styles or bonsai classifications are based mainly on trunk angle, but include styling guidelines for every part of the tree from the roots to the branches.



FORMAL UPRIGHT

As the name implies, bonsai in the formal upright style follow strict stylistic guidelines – guidelines which, in many ways, form the basis for all other bonsai styles. In the formal upright style, there is never any lean or curve to the tree's trunk – it stands perfectly vertical and tapers evenly from top to bottom. The tree's roots extend out in an all-round spoke pattern with none projecting directly toward the front of the bonsai. Branches are arranged in groups of three – one branch to each side and one to the back in an order which is repeated to the top of the tree. No branches extend toward the front of the tree. Lower branches are the longest and strongest on the bonsai, and back branches are always shorter than side branches. Each branch, in each group of three, becomes shorter as the branches move up the trunk line, and no branch should be directly over another. Bonsai in the formal upright style symbolize strength, balance, composure, and dignity. SPECIES RECOMMENDATIONS: COAST REDWOOD, DAWN REDWOOD, GIANT SEQUOIA, ORIENTAL SPRUCE, PORT ORFORD CEDAR, ATLAS CEDAR



style, branches should become progressively smaller as they reach the tree's apex, creating an asymmetrical triangular shape. A "free form" variation of the informal upright style allows for even greater flexibility in the arrangement of branches and overall shaping of the bonsai. A free form bonsai is an excellent choice for many deciduous trees, and can result in a "broom style" feeling and character. Informal upright is a great style for beginning bonsai artists. SPECIES RECOMMENDATIONS: COAST REDWOOD, CHINESE FIR, DAWN REDWOOD, GIANT SEQUOIA, MOUNTAIN HEMLOCK, BREWER SPRUCE, ORIENTAL SPRUCE, PORT ORFORD CEDAR, ATLAS CEDAR, RED MAPLE & OTHER DECIDUOUS TREES (BROOM STYLE)

SLANTING

Slanting style represents a transition between the informal upright and semi-cascade styles. The slanting style is designed to reveal definite environmental impacts on the tree – a windswept quality – not only age and character. The basic trunk angle should be between 11 and 45 degrees. The trunk shape may vary greatly, from straight to curved. Surface roots should counterbalance the angle of the tree, appearing directly under as well as opposite the tree's lean. The "group of three" rule applies to branch arrangement in the slanting style, but much improvisation is allowed for. In most cases, the first heavy branch should be on the opposite side of the tree's slant. Branches opposite the slant should project almost straight out, while branches on the side of the trunk's lean may be shaped downward first and then out, reflecting typical natural patterns. In general, the slanting form has a definite asymmetrical quality, and it is up to the artist to bring a sense of balance and stability to the bonsai within fairly flexible shaping guidelines. SPECIES RECOMMENDATIONS: MOUNTAIN HEMLOCK, BRISTLECONE PINE, BREWER SPRUCE, ATLAS CEDAR



SEMI-CASCADE



Semi-Cascade is basically a horizontal bonsai design. This style requires a sturdy, heavily buttressed

trunk and strong surface roots to anchor the tree and give it a feeling of stability despite its strong horizontal form. Roots should be arranged much the same as for a slanting bonsai, beneath and opposite the tree's lean. The trunk may feature sharp angles or mild curves. Branch arrangement adheres to the "rule of three," with larger branches extending outward in both directions, lesser branches reaching skyward, and no branches extending directly downward. The apex of the semi-cascade style bonsai may appear in one of three positions: 1) two-thirds along the tree's horizontal length, 2) one-third along the tree's horizontal length, or 3) as part of a "counterbalancing head" along the vertical trunk line. Semi-cascade bonsai gracefully defy gravity and accentuate the supernal forces of nature which savage and shape trees in the wild. SPECIES RECOMMENDATIONS: MOUNTAIN HEMLOCK, BRISTLECONE PINE, BREWER SPRUCE, ATLAS CEDAR

CASCADE



The full cascade bonsai style depicts the dramatic, stoic beauty of trees born among sheer ravines and lowering cliff-faces where they have been sculpted by decades of icy winds and extreme weather. Imagine the full cascade style as an upside down informal upright. The tree's trunk should rise from the pot a short distance and then angle sharply downward. The trunk should be bent and weathered with many curves and angles. Branches, again in threes, are situated along the bends in the trunk. Minor branches extend forward, no branches extend backward, and there is no foliage on the underside of the branches. As in slanting and semi-cascade styles, surface roots of cascade bonsai should act to visually balance and stabilize the tree. SPECIES RECOMMENDATIONS: MOUNTAIN HEMLOCK, BRISTLECONE PINE, BREWER SPRUCE, ATLAS CEDAR

INFORMAL UPRIGHT

The informal upright style allows for a greater amount of flexibility than the formal upright style. Traditional informal upright bonsai feature a vertical or almost vertical trunk with a fairly even taper. Within the basically upright direction of the trunk, however, there may be curves or angles – exaggerated or slight. Roots should be fanned out in much the same way as in the formal upright style. Likewise, branch arrangement, again in groups of three, follows much the same guidelines as formal upright, but the order in which the side and rear branches are staggered may vary depending on the wishes of the bonsai artist. As in the formal upright

