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POTOMAC BONSAI ASSOCIATION  
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# PBA NEWSLETTER

Vol. 10 No. 10 Oct. 1980

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## TREE OF THE MONTH

# THE TRAINING OF JAPANESE BLACK PINE PART II

Adapted by  
Dave DeGroot

From September through October of the second year, when the trees are 16 to 17 months old, they should have their needles thinned. It is usually easier to pluck the needles with your fingers, but it may be necessary to use pincers on miniature or Yatsubusa pines with very small needles. Grasp the trunk firmly when plucking needles so that the roots will not be disturbed. For the initial thinning, pluck the needles so that those which remain are arranged on the trunk in rows like feathers on an arrow. (Fig. 1) Each row will be only one pair of needles wide, but the needles are not arranged directly above and below each other, so rows of needles remaining will appear as in the close-up view in Fig. 2. Notice in Fig. 3 that the needles are plucked out so that only the sheath at the base of each pair is left. (Fig. 3A, B)

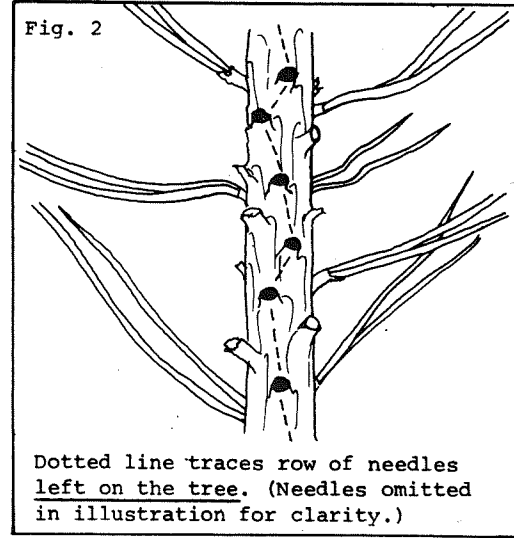
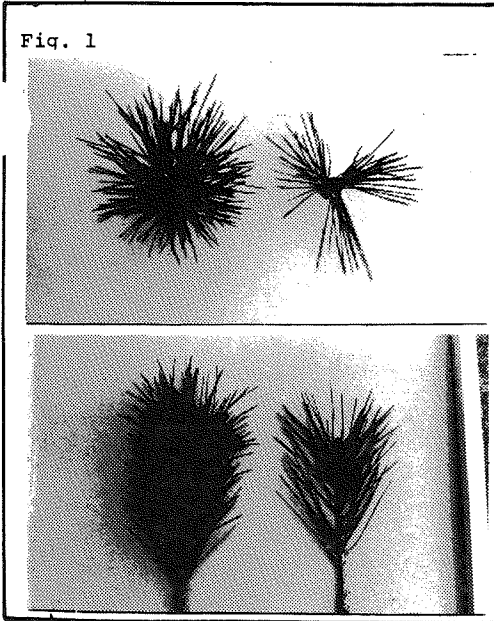


Fig. 3

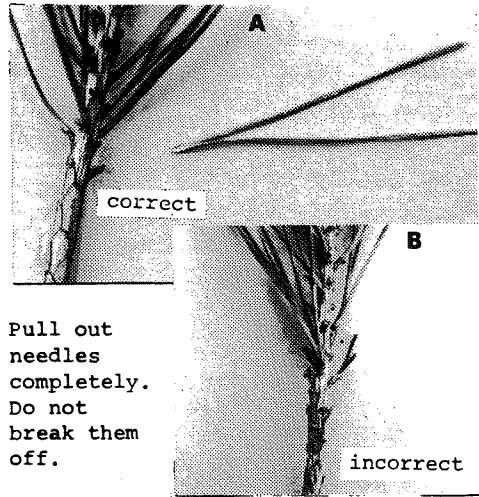


Fig. 4B

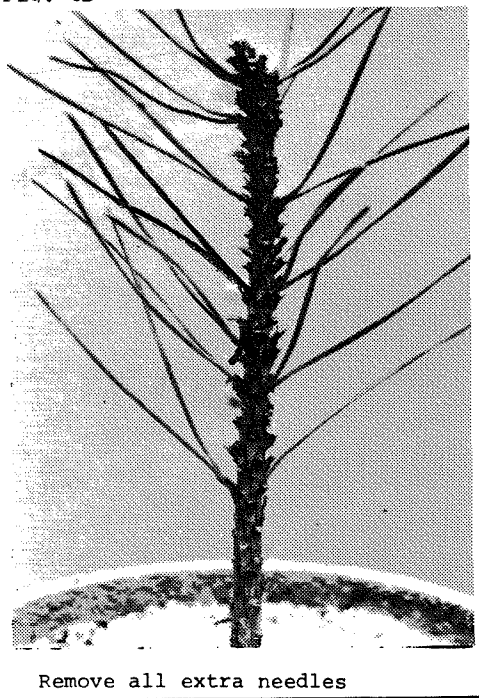


Fig. 4A

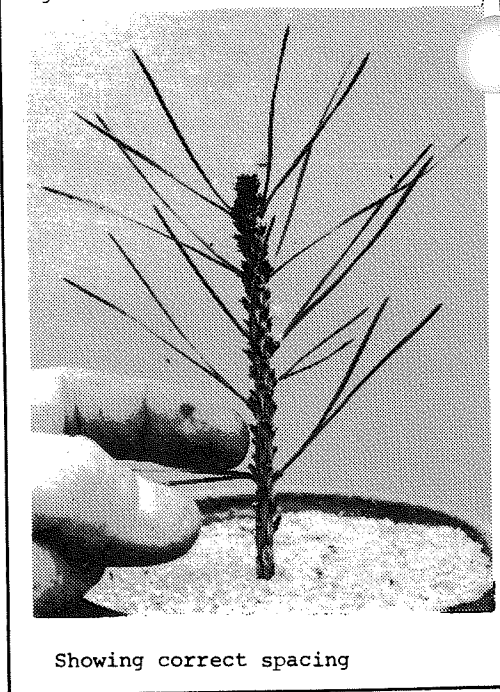
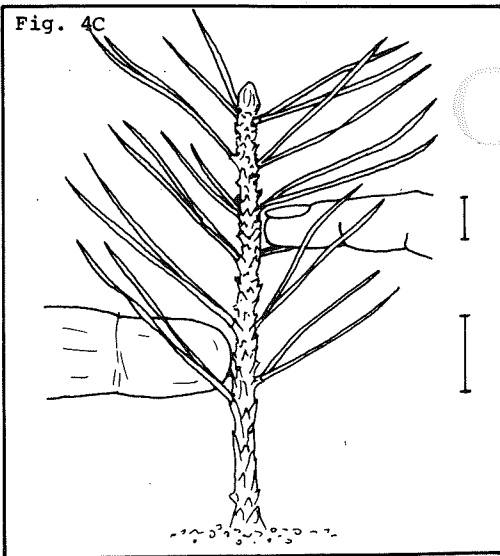


Fig. 4C



The following February, when the trees are about 22 months old, most of the remaining needles are removed. Pluck the needles from the trunk so that those which are left occur at intervals of one finger-width, as in Fig. 4A. Be sure to clear out all needles occurring in between. The upper half of small size and all shohin should use the narrow part of the finger for measurement, in order to make the branch arrangement better, as in Fig. 4C. Leave two pairs of needles which extend like wheel spokes, at the same height on the trunk. The usual practice is to leave one pair of needles extending to the side, and the second pair extending to the rear. (Fig. 5A) The sequence shown (alternate sides) can not usually be repeated indefinitely because of branch placement requirements. (Fig. 5B) Plan tree height and branch placement before plucking needles. For tall trees, needle arrangement here is not important, as low branches will eventually be removed.

Fig. 5A

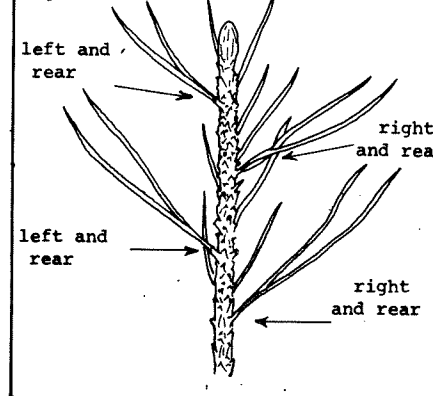
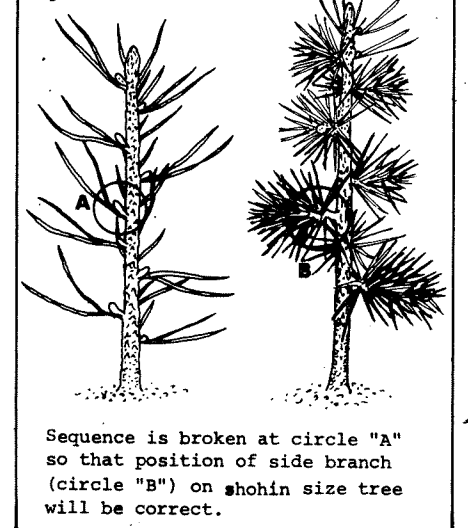


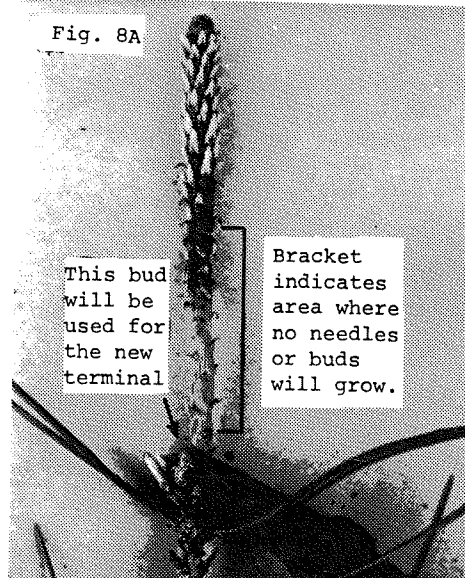
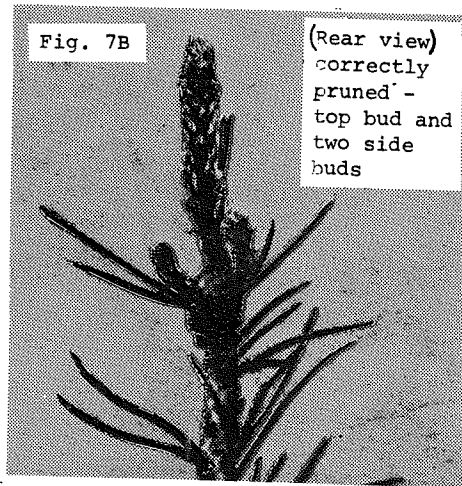
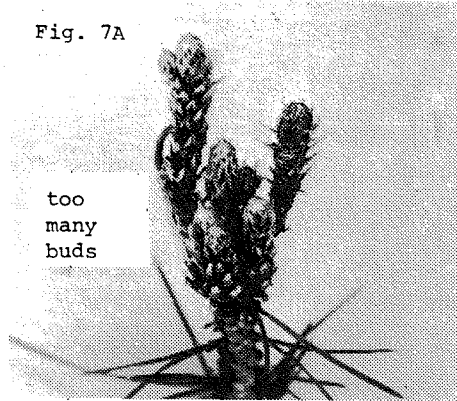
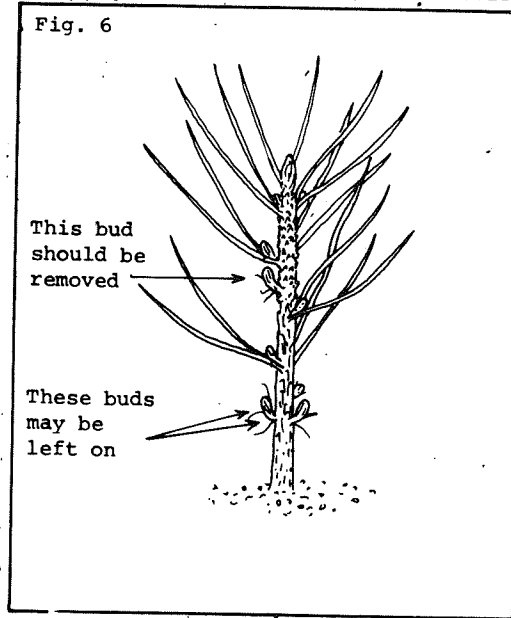
Fig. 5B



The reason for stripping the needles on Yatsubusa is to reduce the excessive number of buds appearing on the trunk. On regular black pine, stripping needles will cause new buds to be formed. The tree will try to replace lost foliage by forming buds wherever needles are left on the tree. This will happen about 6 to 8 weeks after the needles have been plucked. It sometimes happens that buds develop from empty sheaths. If they appear low on the trunk and do not interfere with planned buds, leave them on. They may be useful as branches on shohin (mame) bonsai, or can be let grow to help thicken the trunk on larger trees. (Fig. 6)

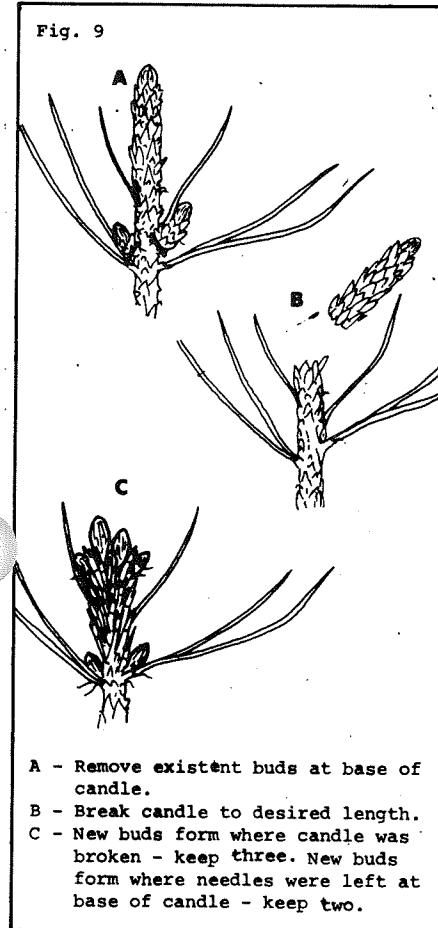
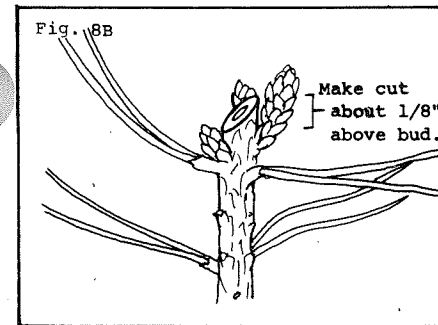
In the middle of April, when the trees are almost 2 years old, examine the swelling buds or "candles" on the trees. As long as the main, or largest candle at the trunk's terminal does not grow excessively, it should be left without cutting until the tree reaches its ultimate height. Don't worry about

Trimming the top to encourage the branches at this time. Branches can be developed later. Do leave two side buds in addition to the main bud at the terminal, as one of these will be selected to be a branch later. (Fig. 7A, B)



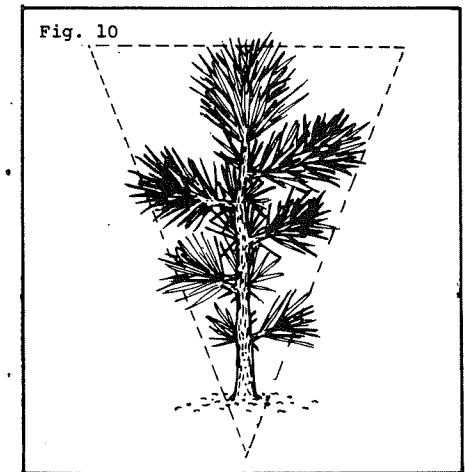
If the candle grows too much, there will be a section near its base where no needles or buds will develop. Such a long interval may prevent you from having branches where you need them. Therefore, overgrown candles must be removed. Select a new bud from near the overgrown candles' base to be the new terminal bud, and keep two others for side branches. (Fig. 8A) When cutting

back to the buds, leave 2 to 3mm of trunk above buds so as not to endanger them. (Fig. 8B)



Bud training to develop shohin or very small size bonsai is slightly different for the tree's height must be limited much sooner. Working in late April, remove already-formed side buds at the base of main terminal bud. (Fig. 9A) If the main terminal bud is too long (its length should not be greater than the planned distance between branches) it should be snapped in half (Fig. 9B). Within about 3 weeks several new buds will form where the main candle had been snapped (9C). Three buds should be kept--one for the terminal and two for side branches.

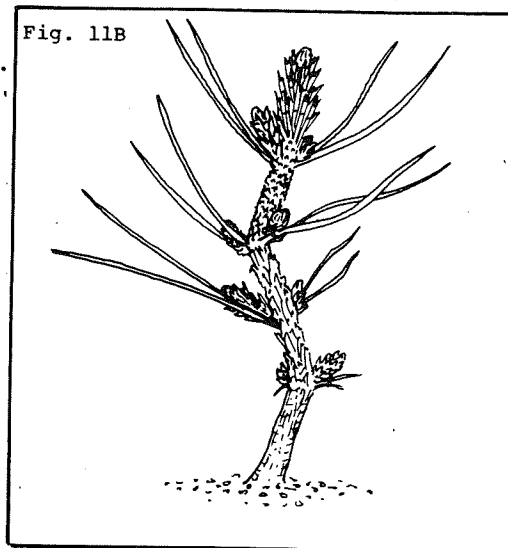
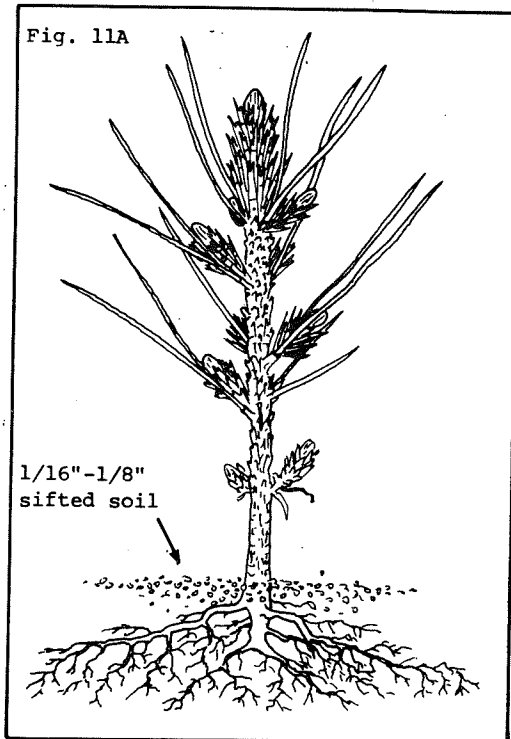
Young black pines in particular are very top-dominant. If you don't prune the top buds for very small-size bonsai, the lower buds will become very weak, and the tree will have an inverted triangle shape, which is not good. (Fig. 10) Also, even if you prune terminal buds on the trunk, do not prune branch buds as well, or they will not develop. Leave branch buds untrimmed for strong growth. If you do cut them, the tree's shape will again be that of an inverted triangle.



Beginning of May, trees are full 2 years old and should be transplanted. Trim out all downward growing, crossing, and

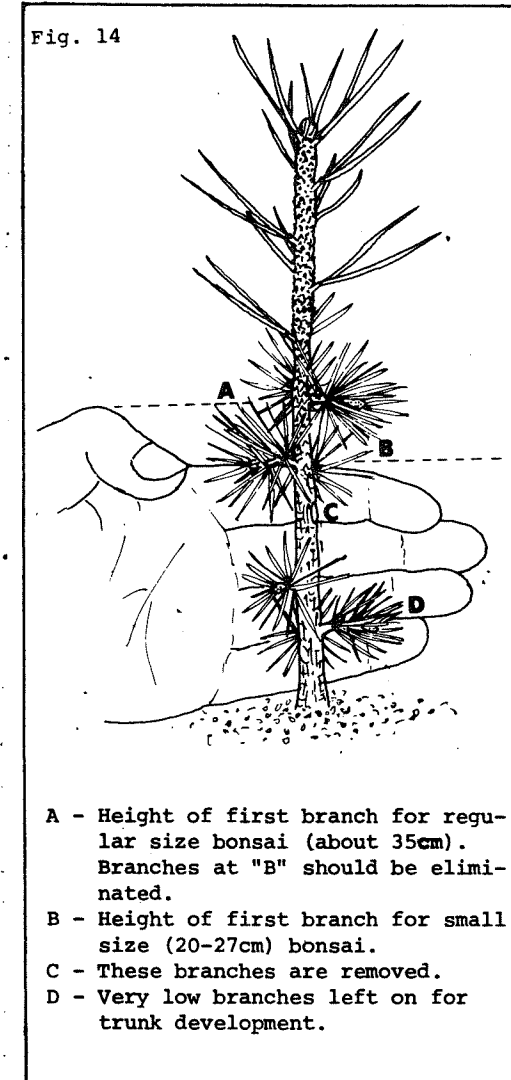
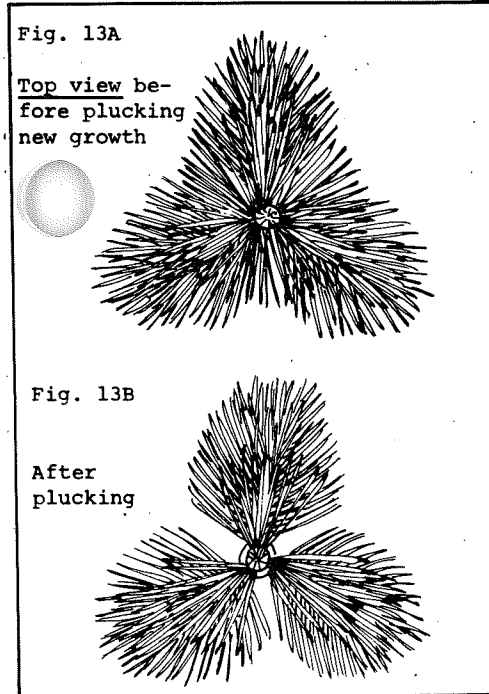
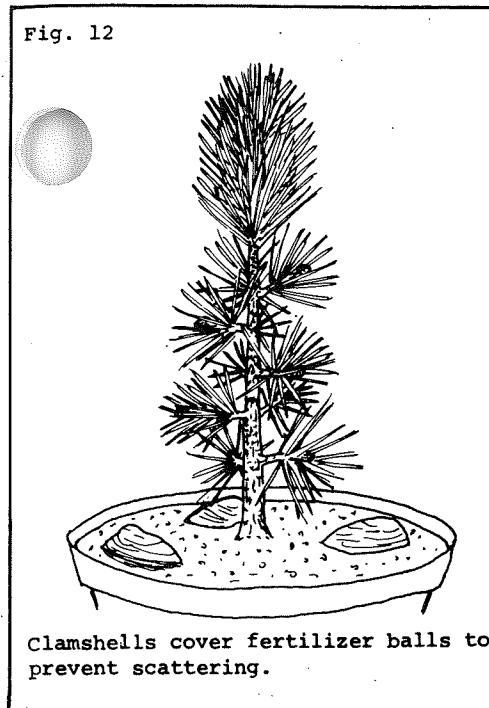
too-thick roots, and trim back overlong roots as at the first repotting. Before potting, examine the rootage and decide upon a front for the tree. THIS IS IMPORTANT, AS FROM NOW ON, ALL TRAINING WILL BE DONE WITH REGARD TO THE FRONT OF THE TREE, AS WELL AS ITS ULTIMATE HEIGHT AND BRANCH ARRANGEMENT. The front can be marked by making a dot on the rim of the container with paint or permanent marker. The container for the second transplanting should be a 5" shallow clay pot. The soil used should be a mixture of ½ coarse sand and ½ hard clay, such as Terragreen. Do not try to expose rootage at the base of the trunk yet. Keep the roots covered with soil for better development. Fertilization should be resumed in about 40 days. Transplanted seedlings should be given plenty of sun.

A well-trained 2-year old seedling should appear as in Fig. 11A. If a seedling has a bend in the trunk, (Fig. 11B) it may be good for mame moyogi. However, the curve is too low to use for larger size bonsai. Informal uprights can be made with wire later.



growth must be thinned as previously (Fig. 13A), Fig. 13B.

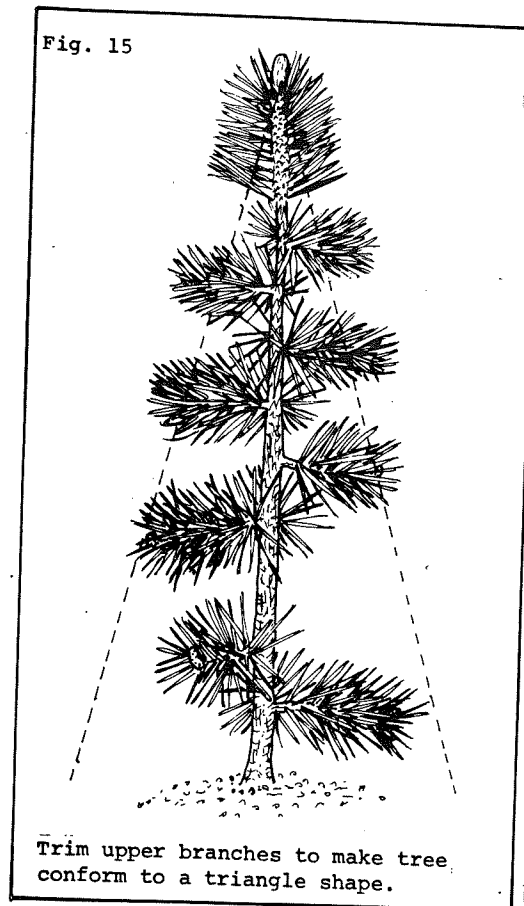
The following February, strip needles to 2 pair every finger width. Remember to have the front of the tree in mind. Determine the height and branch placement on finished tree, and leave needles where branches will be needed. (Fig. 14) Note: Do not leave more than 2 branches on trunk at any one place or swellings will develop.



During September or October of year 4, when trees are about 3½ years old, cut autumn buds in order to hasten lower branch development. Shape tree to a tall, narrow triangle shape. Upper buds, which are most vigorous, should have one-half or more of the candles removed, but leave at least 3-5 pairs of needle. Lower branches should be left untrimmed, as in Fig. 15. After shaping, pluck needles from current year's growth as in Fig. 13, and proceed to train the branches.

Editor's Note: Once again the PBA staff expresses their sincere gratitude to New Orleans Bonsai, their editor Dave DeGroot for the article and permission to use it and to Jimmy Littleton for providing the excellent illustrations.

It should be mentioned that Dave's article, along with the two previously appearing in the PBA Newsletter represent the latest techniques and ideas from Japan. It is in this vein that the readers should compare the articles, and try.



**THERE'S ROOM HERE  
FOR YOUR ARTICLE**

# DAY IN ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND; NIGHT IN KYOTO, JAPAN

Part III  
by Juli Haga

## MIZUKAKE SANNEN



## or WATERING BONSAI for THREE YEARS

The other day I was reading a Japanese landscaping book on water gardens. One page was dedicated to the Japanese colloquialisms concerning water. A colloquialism caught my eyes: "Mizukake Sannen," Mizu (water), Kake (to spray or sprinkle). and Sannen (3 years). Therefore, it can be translated as "spraying water for three years."

I heard this expression many years ago at the tender age of low teens at a farm in California near the Mexican border. Since any resemblance between the characters in this writing and real persons, living or dead, is a resemblance between the characters in this writing and real persons, living or dead..... and I still have to maintain a peace with some characters that appear in this story, I will just create characters Mr. and Mrs. D and Mr. and Mrs. T.

When I was growing up, many Japanese families were reestablishing their lives and businesses in California after returning from the relocation camps. Both man and wife worked hard and sent their children to colleges. Then, the children were married and had established themselves. Those old folks were now entering the stage that they could spend modest but comfortable lives in their golden ages. Then, in many cases, wives died suddenly and widowers went back to Japan and brought back young wives who were young enough to be their children's age. Then, troubles in family started.

Mr. T was one of them. They said that first wife had worked herself to death. The second Mrs. T was somewhere in the thirties, slender and good looking in her own way. Mrs. T came to see her Japanese neighbor, Mrs. D frequently and complained about Mr. T's children by the first marriage. Even Mr. D, who usually did not say much, commented about Mrs. T at the dinner table. Mr. D said that Mrs. T wore nice dresses all the time but it somehow did not fit on her at all. However, she could look very good in kimono. Certainly, a woman who had been in Mizu Shobai (water business) should know how to dress in kimono and would appear sexy. The term, Mizu Shobai comes from the nature of water which never stays in one place but flows from one place to another. It is considered that Mizu Shobai is a very unstable and unpredictable business and anyone who values dependability and stability in one's life and society would not venture into such a business. Mizu Shobai includes restaurants, hotels, bars, geishas, cocktail or sake waitress entertaining fields, etc. Mr. D heard that Mrs. T used to work in a Ippai Nomiya (a cheap, small sake bar) before marrying Mr. T. Mr. D commented that Mrs. T was more of an Omekae (mistress) type than a wife type. It was natural, he said, that

if Mr. T brought back a woman like that from Japan, he was asking for a trouble from the family. Furthermore, Mr. T's daughters were all head-strong girls. Mrs. D reminded Mr. D that there were young teen agers at the dinner table and he had better be careful of what he said. Of course, I was listening to every word.

Mrs. T's face was skin and bones and she appeared to me a nervous type. There were veins on the both sides of her forehead and she complained of headaches all the time. She massaged her forehead with her boney, well manicured, cigarette-holding hands. She wore large diamond and pearl rings on her fingers. These rings were nice and expensive. Everyone noticed them right away. She always talked with her hands. If her hands were not used for massaging her forehead or puffing a cigarette, they went back and forth, and right and left in front of her face. They moved as fast as her lips. Her main complaint was her relationship with her step-daughters. Mrs. T made a circle with her left thumb and index finger and let the remaining 3 fingers stand up high - like those fingers of Buddha's. Then, she shook her hand by saying that she had endured all the family pressure for 3 years but nothing had been improved. She used the words, "Mizukake Sannen," frequently.

Once I asked Mrs. D what that exactly meant. Mrs. D said Kakeru (verb) meant to sprinkle but it could also mean a passing or a taking of time. Since Mizu (water) flew like the passing of time it might be a poetic local colloquialism where Mrs. T came from and it meant "the passing of 3 years time." Mr. D commented that the passing of time was expressed as "Ashikake Sannen" but not "Mizukake Shannen." It might be that because Mrs. T had been in Mizu Shobai, she used Mizu instead of Ashi. A nasty, nasty comment! Mrs. T reprimanded her husband. By that time, she lost all the patience to answer my question, "Ashi means legs, what has leg got to do with the passing of time?" Mrs. D did not want to talk about Mrs. T. Period! As leaving the table, Mr. D said, "Dokono umano honeka wakaranai" or, "We don't know where that horse bone came from." It was true the Mr. D was a little annoyed of Mrs. T's frequent visits and complaints ----or---- was he a little jealous of Mr. T???

Few years later, I came to Los Angeles. I remembered Mrs. T's skinny fingers, those rings, and "Mizukake Shannen." When I started working for a bonsai man as a water girl, he told me that there was an old bonsai saying "Mizukake Shannen," - which meant that it took 3 years to know just right way to water bonsai. Therefore one must not think lightly of a watering bonsai duty. He further stated that some might say hichinen (7 years) instead of sannen (3 years). Since we have different weather every year (short summer, cold winter, etc.) it might take 7 years to know the average climate in a particular area. I told him that I preferred shannen, not because I was a fast learner but shannen will stick in my mind much better with a certain association. You can appreciate my surprise. I never knew that was a bonsai colloquialism. I wondered if Mrs. T had ever had an affair with a bonsai man in Japan ???... She never appeared to make bonsai herself (If it is so, it must have been her slip of tongue) or if the bonsai business is also one of Mizu Shobai?????

I did not tell my boss of that sexy Mrs. T. My boss was thinking about taking a trip to Japan. He was also a widower.

(To Be Continued)

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## ABS SYMPOSIUM at MICHIGAN STATE

The ABS Symposia are structured pretty much as our own PBA Symposia. ABS programs are larger, featuring one full day of workshops, and two and one-half days of lectures and demonstrations. ABS has been meeting at universities which have prominent horticultural faculties, and research and demonstration facilities. The 1980 Symposium was held August 27-31 at the Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan. We roomed and dined in the Kellogg Adult Center manned by hotel management students. Kellogg Center also has classrooms and a theater.

Two tours and four workshop choices were arranged for the first day. Following the Welcome Dinner, "Clancy" Lewis, Professor Emeritus, treated us with slides of trees. His back-lighted trees, leaves, and flower photos were fantastic.

The lectures on "Hunger Signs and How to React", "What is Bugging Your Bonsai" and "Producing Trees Faster" by MSU faculty were excellent, and hopefully will appear in future issues of BONSAI JOURNAL. The accelerated growth of seedling trees under continuous greenhouse light is amazing. The environment must be hygienic. Temperatures are lowered after the first year. Both root and tree systems are larger by factors of six or more. The application to bonsai is uncertain.

In the session of "If I Were Starting Over", the experts agreed on how to take better care of their trees, but disagreed on soil, best time to water, and what types of trees to acquire. It seemed that the choice of soil and watering were individually developed. I am interested in the high temperature fired clay aggregate used by Brussel Martin of Memphis.

The Bonsai artist was Tosh Saburomaru, assisted by Keith Scott--the sorcerer and his apprentice! They were entertaining as well as informative. Tosh converted a 17-year old mongrel juniper into a dai-shakan slant style which could be taken for one of those aged, jinned California junipers. This was followed by a group planting of Japanese hornbeam. The following day they planted Ezo spruce and satsuki azaleas on an upright gorgeous piece of porous igneous rock. The rock was broken in two in transit from L.A. and repaired with plumber's "Fast Plug", a quick-setting cement. As an encore he planted a forest of Ezo spruce on another triangular volcanic rock slab with a mountain shape on one corner.

For me the highlight was a lecture by Dr. Art Spomer entitled "Understanding Container Growing Mixes". His lecture was well organized and presented. The factors which control soil drainage were clearly identified. He had plots on soil moisture at various depths of a container, always saturated at the bottom. He said that moisture absorbed within the media was not available to the roots. We had discussions on perching. Besides his fundamental research, he has been designing golf greens for USGA. Dr. Spomer, leaving the Univ. of Illinois for the Univ. of Arizona, now has a keen desire to develop an understanding of the hydroponics of bonsai soils. Many bonsai soil problems were clarified for me through this lecture and the discussion which followed.

POTPOURI--We were shown slides of Japan and a presentation on Japanese gardens. I think our own Juli Haza does a much better job on Japanese gardens. There were too many trees in the host association's display. Our hosts were friendly and gracious. I hope that PBA can do a bang-up job for an ABS Symposium which may be scheduled for 1982. ABS will be in Boulder, Colorado in June 1981.



# Shoen Bonsai & JAPANESE GARDEN



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Other times available by  
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## NOTICE !!!

Oct. 10,11,12 Black Pine Sale  
(wine and cheese will be served)  
Japanese black pines are to be  
supplied by Mr. S. Sasaki, from the  
Japanese Embassy. They will have  
thick trunks and they are not yet  
trained for bonsai. Price can be  
negotiated.

We have a limited number of  
Satsuki, Zelkova, and Trident Maple  
(good for rock attaching) starters  
for sale.

We welcome bonsai beginners.  
J. Haga will be at the shop for  
free consultation.

- \* BONSAI TOOLS (10% discount for PBA Members)
- \* BONSAI POTS, SOILS, GRANITE CHIPS, RAFFIA,  
AND TERRA GREEN
- \* BONSAI TREES AND STARTER TREES
- \* TREES, WATER BASINS, TOROS, & OTHER ITEMS  
FOR JAPANESE GARDENS
- \* SMALL JAPANESE GARDENS INSTALLED  
(MARYLAND ONLY DUE TO INSURANCE)

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE TO SHOW OR NOT TO SHOW

One of the aims of local, regional or national Bonsai clubs and associations is to educate not only its members, but the public as well. One way to accomplish this is to take any opportunity to show and demonstrate the art. Places to show are easy to find but you must go after them. Try your local Department of Recreation and Parks events, shopping centers, libraries, museums, schools, garden centers, your own club (every club should have an annual show open to the public). My home club, the Baltimore Bonsai Club, has had three shows so far this year and two more are in the works. Two were in concert with the Department of Recreation and Parks events and one by request of the Cylburn Wild Flower Preserve and Garden Center (our home base). The two DR&P events were not too well attended but netted good results. At one event we recruited two new members, cash in hand, who had not know that the BBC was in existence. At the other event a reporter from a local newspaper did an interview and promised an article later in the fall around the time of our annual show. So you see these things do pay off. At the Cylburn event, an annual, we tried selling for the first time and everyone made money: Cylburn, the BBC, and those individuals who we sold for on consignment.

As for demonstrations, they need not be full fledged stand up demos where you start from scratch and do a tree from raw material. We have found that these shows are a good place to do that refining that you never seem to have time to do. People are always fascinated by seeing others work and will ask questions by the bushel. Try it, you'll see I'm right.

The complaint I hear most often is that once the arrangements have been made they get no cooperation from other members. If at all possible don't worry about it. If you can do it by yourself. One table with trees and another to refine your trees and lay out your tools and books, etc.

To show or not to show, I say show and go back to your club and say Boy, was that fun and we recruited a new member and are invited to show at another event. You'll get all the help you need next time. Go forth and spread the word. Show Show Show Show.....

## BEGINNERS BONSAI COURSES

PBA/BROOKSIDE: PBA members can sign up for a beginners course with Cliff Pottberg scheduled to begin on Saturday October 18, 1980. There will be a total of five 3-hour sessions with four commencing on consecutive Saturdays at 9:30 a.m. (The time and place of the fifth session is to be determined at a later date.) Classes will be given at the Gatehouse, National Audubon Society Headquarters, 8940 Jones Mill Rd., Chevy Chase, Maryland. The location is that of the meeting site of the Brookside Gardens Bonsai Club and is just a short distance from the Connecticut Ave. exit off the I495 Beltway.

All members of PBA are welcome and encouraged to register. The class is limited to 15 students, so please register as soon as possible. The cost will not exceed \$40.00 per person plus \$20.00 per student for supplies which the students retain. Contact Fred Mies (301)299-6194 evenings and weekends for information and registration.

NATIONAL ARBORETUM/JIM NEWTON: Bonsai course E-Horticulture 120 "Introduction to Bonsai;" will be conducted by Jim Newton at the National Arboretum on Saturday September 27, October 4, 11, 18 and 25. Times are 10 am to 12:30 pm. Contact (202)472-9279 weekdays for information/registration.

## Club Calendar

October 11  
Saturday

Pre-winter care. 10 am Gulf Branch Nature Center. Pre-winter care, including wiring and shaping by other techniques. There will be a preliminary demonstration of wiring. Bring trees to wire. Wire will be available for purchase. Bring trees for show-and-tell or critique/problem solving. NORTHERN VIRGINIA BONSAI SOCIETY


October 21  
Tuesday

Three Ring Circus. 7:30 pm St. Margaret's Church. Arschell Morell has kindly offered to join two of our experienced club members in the simultaneous styling of three trees. This type of program is a fascinating learning experience. Please Note: night change. ANNAPOLIS

October 26  
Sunday

All-member Bonsai Show. Noon-5:00 pm Audubon Naturalist Society 8145 Jones Mill Rd., Chevy Chase, Md. Brookside All-member Bonsai Show. Open to public. Special invitation extended to all PBA members - all positive criticism of trees will be gratefully accepted. Brookside participants should deliver trees 8:30-10:30 am, pickup is at 5:00 pm. Trees will be individually photographed by Howard Clark. We would like 100% participation of club members. Contact Janet Lanman (365-7621) if you have any questions. BROOKSIDE GARDENS BONSAI CLUB

TO BE ANNOUNCED: Kizomizu  
Washington Bonsai Club  
Baltimore Bonsai Club



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### JIU-SAN BONSAI

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# SNIPS and SLIPS

ALL BALLED UP

The pasteballs of cottonseed, blood-and bone-meal combinations are an excellent method of fertilizing bonsai. There is one major problem to this method, however: the mess. After water is added to the dry mix in a bucket we have always formed the paste balls by hand or spoons (& hand) and had a smelly messy job of cleaning up after. But filling up the cups in a plastic egg carton is an easy solution. Just spoon in the mix until the cup is full and then let dry. No drilling of drainage holes necessary. Later, tapping the carton provides you with 12 flat-bottomed paste balls, without mess, for your bonsai.

--- Felix Ready

BONING UP

Now is the time of year that we need to give our bonsai an extra "boost" to carry them safely into the winter months and dormancy. Trees do need some fertilizer this time of year - what they do not need is fertilizer in the form of nitrogen. Put away your blood meal until next spring. That is the stuff which encourages the growth of foliage and that is exactly what should not be encouraged now. New growth is likely not to harden-off by the first frost and be literally "nipped-in-the-bud." The tree needs to store energy, not put it out in the form of new leaves. Food in the form of potash and phosphates is the fall diet for healthy trees. Bone meal is a good source (if you can keep your pets away from it). Those cleaning out the fireplace from last year in preparation for this year have another good source for bonsai nutrients. I fall into both the above two categories and, being basically lazy, I mix the bone meal with the fireplace ash, sprinkle it on top of the soil, and take a chop-stick and "scruffle" it in. (Scruffle, in this instance, means working the mixture into the top layer of soil so the mixture doesn't make an impermeable barrier to water.) It's easy and it works.

THE PROMISE

It seemed so very friendly  
To see it blooming in the fall.  
The time was mid-September  
When it shouldn't bloom at all.

It was only just collected  
About a month before.  
I hope it was a promise  
Of what will be in store.

A lovely little crabapple  
So carefully selected.  
I'll take good care when snow flies  
To see you're well protected.

You still have got some bloom buds  
And with the warm spring rain  
I hope you'll take the notion  
To do it all again.

--- Mary Holmes

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