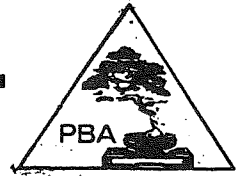


Newsletter

ISSN 0160-9521



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

This Newsletter will be put in the bulk mailing section at Merrifield Post Office, Northern Virginia, on or about 30 August.

THINGS to CONSIDER DOING IN SEPTEMBER

- * COME TO THE PBA SYMPOSIUM - 28 and 29 September
- * GO TO THE BROOKSIDE CHAPTER'S BENEFIT BONSAI AUCTION 7:30 p.m. on 19 September.
See pages 6 and 7 for more information.
- * PBA MEMBER CLUBS: Provide club/society schedules as far into the future as possible for publication in the PBA Newsletter.

For information on member club's/societies' activities not appearing below please contact them:

Baltimore - (301) 823-0863
 Chesapeake - Steve Choi at (301) 266-7366
 or (202) 261-8131
 Mei-Hwa Penjing - (301) 390-6687
 Washington - (202) 583-2676

PBA NEWSLETTER Published by the Potomac Bonsai Association, Inc. (PBA), a non-profit organization, in the interests of its affiliate member clubs and societies.

SUBSCRIPTIONS PBA Member Clubs/Societies: Annual subscription is included in the membership dues paid to the PBA Club or Society of your choice. Telephone numbers of points of contact for information about any member club or society and its annual dues, are listed under the "Calendar of Events" section of this Newsletter.

Subscribers: Annual subscription for 12 issues of the PBA Newsletter is \$15.00 which should be made payable to the "Potomac Bonsai Association" and sent to Cy Mill, 10300 Bushman Drive, #111, Oakton, VA 22124 1031.

ADVERTISING RATES Monthly rates: 1/4 page - \$6.00; 1/2 page - \$12.00; full-page - \$19.00
20% rate reduction for advertisements that run 3 or more months.

ADVERTISEMENTS and/or ARTICLES Please send to the editor.

EDITOR J. F. Koetsch, 6709 Caneel Cr., Springfield, VA 22152; Tel.: (703) 569-9378.

PRESIDENT: Russ Kinerson; FIRST VICE PRESIDENT: Chris Yeapanis; EDUCATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT: Steve Choi; SECRETARY: Julie Walker; TREASURER: Jerry Antel, Jr.; PUBLIC RELATIONS: Tony Meyer (301) 654-1854; MEMBERSHIP: Cy Mill.

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**TIME
CRITICAL
INFO**

8 September Sunday

U.S. NATIONAL ARBORETUM (202) 475-4815. PUBLIC BONSAI DEMONSTRATION in the Yuji Yoshimura Bonsai Center at 1:30 p.m. FREE! Each attendee gets one free ticket for the raffle of the demonstration tree.

11 September Wednesday

U.S. NATIONAL ARBORETUM (202) 475-4815. 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. BONSAI REFINEMENT WORKSHOP. Bring your own bonsai, tools, and equipment. Attendees must have taken beginners' classes or worked with bonsai for two years. Limited to ten persons. Charge: \$10.00 for FONA members, \$12.00 for others. Make checks payable to Friends of the National Arboretum and send to the Education Department, U.S. National Arboretum, 3501 New York Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20002. The workshop is held under the auspices of FONA and the National Arboretum. Instructors: Dan Chiplis and Bob Drechsler.

14 September Saturday

NORTHERN VIRGINIA (703) 765-7223. Green Spring Horticulture Center at 10:00 a.m. SUCCESSES and FAILURES - what did and didn't work with trees from previous Northern Virginia and PBA workshops.

19 September Thursday
 BROOKSIDE (301) 365-7621
BENEFIT BONSAI AUCTION

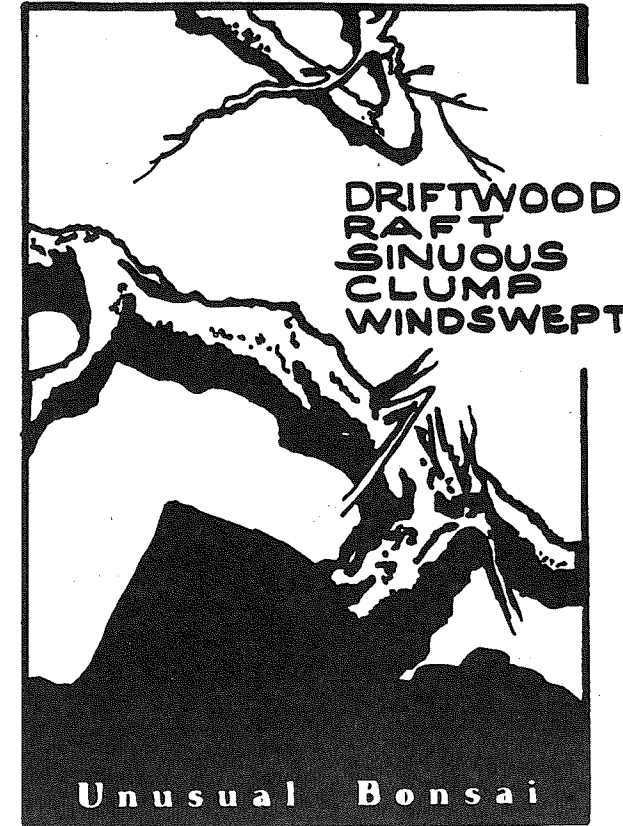
This auction is to benefit the National Bonsai Foundation to help support the construction of the greenhouse complex for the storage of semi-tropical and tropical bosnai.

See pages 6 and 7 for details.

28 September Saturday

WOLF TRAP NURSERY (703) 759-4244. 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. 9439 Leesburg Pike (Rt. 7) 3 1/2 miles west of Tysons Corner. Free class limited to 25 persons, - telephone for reservations. Attendees are welcome to bring in bonsai and

Potomac Bonsai Association



Fall Symposium '91
US National Arboretum
Sept. 28-29

Marion Gyllenswan ● Larry Jackel ● Roy Nagatoshi ● Steve Pilacik

Registration Info: PBA Symposium
T Holden/4337 Stream Bed Way/Alexandria VA 22306

discuss any questions or problems concerning their bonsai. However, if the instructor prunes or wires a bonsai, there will be a \$5.00 charge to defray costs. Topics to be covered: HOW TO OVER WINTER OUTDOOR BONSAI and ADAPTING NATIVE PLANTS and NURSERY STOCK to BONSAI CULTURE.

*
* 28 and 29 September *
*

PBA FALL SYMPOSIUM

U.S. NATIONAL ARBORETUM

For more information contact your club/society officers or:

Trisha Holden
4337 Stream Bed Way
Alexandria, VA 22306 Tel: (703) 660-9318

5 through 13 October

U.S. NATIONAL ARBORETUM (202) 475-4815. VISITING EXHIBIT by the Delaware Valley Bonsai Study Group, Delaware, Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

*
* 8 October Tuesday *
*

U.S. NATIONAL ARBORETUM : TROPICAL BONSAI PLACED IN WINTER STORAGE.

Above date can be used as a guide for readers to consider placing tropical and sub-tropical bonsai under cover so that the cold nights and impending winter temperatures will not kill the bonsai.

9 October Wednesday

U.S. NATIONAL ARBORETUM (202) 475-4815. 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. in Yuji Yoshimura Center. REFINEMENT WORKSHOP: instructor - Dan Chiplis. Bring your own bopsai, tools and equipment. Attendees must have taken beginners classes or worked with bonsai for two years. Limited to ten persons. Charge: \$10.00 for FONA members, and \$12.00 for others. Make your check payable to Friends of the National Arboretum and send it to the Education Department at the National Arboretum. The workshop is held under the auspices of FONA and the National Arboretum.

12 October Saturday

NORTHERN VIRGINIA (703) 765-7223. VISITS TO VIEW MEMBERS' COLLECTIONS.

13 October Sunday

U.S. NATIONAL ARBORETUM (202) 475-4815. 1:30 p.m. in the Yuji Yoshimura Bonsai Center. FREE! Each attendee gets one free ticket for the raffle of the demonstration tree. PUBLIC BONSAI DEMONSTRATION by a member of the Delaware Valley Bonsai Study Group.

27 October Sunday

U.S. NATIONAL ARBORETUM (202) 475-4815. 1:30 p.m. in the Yuji Yoshimura Bonsai Center. FREE! PUBLIC BONSAI DEMONSTRATION. Each attendee gets one free ticket.

Bonsai Class

26 October Saturday

WOLF TRAP NURSERY (703) 759-4244. 9:00 to 10:30 a.m. OUTDOOR BONSAI WORKSHOP - CREATE YOUR OWN BONSAI. Call for more information.

BROOKSIDE CHAPTER PBA

BENEFIT

BONSAI

AUCTION

FOR

NATIONAL BONSAI FOUNDATION

NORTH CHEVY CHASE RECREATION CENTER

7:30 P.M. THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 19TH

12 OUTSTANDING BONSAI

by

JONAS KOLKER

DONATED BY HIS WIFE

(Please see next page)

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DIRECTIONS: "Chevy Chase Recreation Center" is off of Jones Bridge Road between Wisconsin and Connecticut Avenues. Enter at the brown wooden sign.

From the Beltway: Exit at the Connecticut Ave.-Chevy Chase-Kensington Exit heading to Chevy Chase and the District. At the first traffic light, Jones Bridge Road, turn right. In less than a 1/4-mile enter at the brown wooden sign "Chevy Chase Recreation Center."

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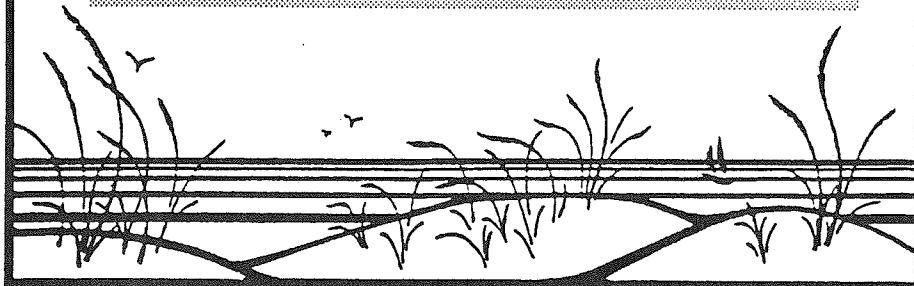
☆ Joe Harris III

The Naples Beach Hotel and Golf Club

Registration: Frank Dieffenwierth, 4535 3rd Ave. NW, Naples, Florida 33999

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- | | |
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| ☆ Bonsai From Landscape Plant Growers | ☆ Bonsai & Things Shibui |
| ☆ Bonsai Too | ☆ Bonsai Northwest |
| ☆ Brussel's Bonsai Nursery, Inc. | ☆ C. Matt Sadowski Bonsai |
| ☆ Don's Bonsai Nursery | ☆ Fugetsu-En Bonsai Nursery |
| ☆ Lotus International | ☆ Midwest Bonsai Pottery |
| ☆ Murasaki, Inc. | ☆ Riverside Bonsai |
| ☆ The Potted Forest | ☆ Ginger Tree Bonsai |
| ☆ Yamayo | ☆ The Blade-Smith |



Foreword: The editor of this newsletter was given permission by Dan Robinson to print the following dissertation which Dan provided as handouts at the International Bonsai Convention 1991 in Birmingham, England. Dan was also one of the guest artists at the convention and his lecture/demonstration will be described in a subsequent Newsletter.

+--+--+--+

Bonsai Redefined: The Robinson Addendum Copyright

My life, it seems, has been a constant immersion in the beauty and wonder of trees. Even as a child I loved, collected, and hugged them. Growing up in many places-- New York as a child, Los Angeles, Seattle, Madison, Chicago, I learned about and saw many different kinds and shapes. My mind saw, captured and tucked away those early images in a special, easily accessible place. In some place, at some time I saw my first Bonsai tree, and later in my life I remembered that tree and at the same time, because I always loved trees, I understood and knew things about it. For nearly 35 years I have been understanding and learning new things about trees and bonsai.

Later some interesting perceptions have emerged and hardened into powerful forces which guide my creative thoughts about tree design and construction. This new philosophy I call Focal Point Bonsai Design. Quite simply, Focal Point Bonsai means shaping the foliage and branches to surround and frame the area of greatest visual value. This area of greatest value (Focal Point) has to be the trunk or trunk root area, for rarely can the crown of a tree command enough respect to outweigh the trunk.

Within this brief philosophy lies a myriad of details which require enumeration and explanation. But perhaps a comparison with the traditional Western approach to bonsai design would be helpful.

The Western approach (one, two, three, triangle) is really very successful at reducing a very complex art form to an

(Continued on page 14)

**POST OFFICE AUTHORIZES
SPECIAL CANCELLATION
FOR PBA SYMPOSIUM**

Not only if your're a bonsai nut but also a stamp collecting enthusiast. (philatelist) the good news is that arrangements have been made for a pictorial cancellation having a bonsai motif, with the U.S. Postal Service. There will be a U.S. Post Office van on site at the PBA Symposium on 28 September. The postal clerk in the van will cancel stamped envelopes which will be given, one each to the symposium attendees, free of charge. Anyone wishing to obtain more cancelled envelopes need only purchase the additional postage stamps. Likewise those wishing to mail any envelopes with the cancellations need give the postal clerk envelopes that have been addressed.

Jerry Antel, Jr.



**17th Annual
Symposium**

**POTOMAC BONSAI
ASSOCIATION STATION**

**September 28, 1991
Washington, D.C. 20066**

**UNUSUAL TEACHERS
FOR UNUSUAL BONSAI**

**Marion Gyllenswan Larry Jackel
Roy Nagatoshi Steve Pilacik**

The PBA Fall Symposium on Unusual Bonsai features these four great bonsai artists and teachers. Here's a little more about them.

Marion Gyllenswan will be styling quince in the clump style during the symposium. Marion is Chair of the National Bonsai Foundation, Founding Director of ABS and past President of the Bonsai Society of Greater New York. Most importantly, Marion belongs to that wonderful circle of Yuji Yoshimura students who for some reason know how to create magnificent bonsai.

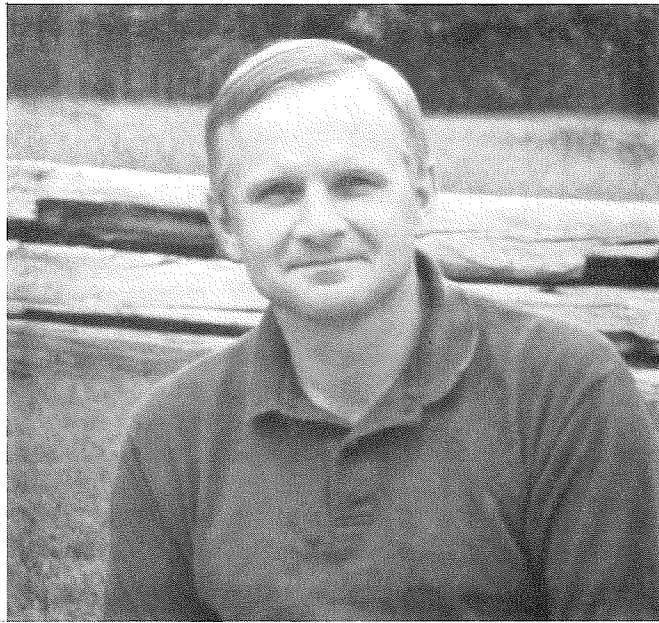
Larry Jackel is from Aurora Colorado and is proprietor of Mountain Trees, specializing in collected native material of the Rockies. Larry will demonstrate the sinuous style on a collected tree from the Rockies during the Symposium. He has always managed to capture the best of Rocky Mountain highs in his art.

Roy Nagatoshi will be styling a California Juniper in the driftwood style during the Symposium. Roy and his father operate the Fuji Bonsai Nursery in California, and Roy has also been teaching bonsai at the Community College in Santa Barbara. Most importantly, Roy belongs to that wonderful circle of John Naka students who for some reason know how to create magnificent bonsai.

Steve Pilacik will demonstrate the windswept style of bonsai with San Jose Juniper during the Symposium. Steve is proprietor of the Matsu-Momiji Nursery in Philadelphia and is author of Japanese Black Pine. He is best known for his work on Maples and Pines and has expanded his interest to include Juniper and Camellias. Underlying his art are many influences, particularly those from his travels to Japan.



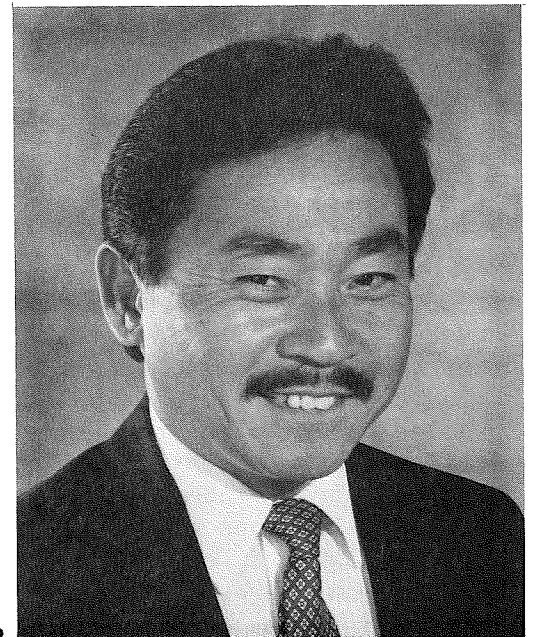
Marion Gyllenswan



Larry Jackel



Steve Pilacik



Roy Nagatoshi

(Continued from page 9)

efficient painting-by-the-numbers system. The "how to book" compulsion and good old American can-do marketing have sold the world. The wide disparity between how American trees look and how Japanese trees look doesn't seem to compute. The one, two, three, triangle philosophy really cuts the art of bonsai as well as the whole world of natural trees short, for only young trees in nature are triangular, that's really a result of their vibrant apical energy. No trees in nature grow with one, two, three branching. To pick out these premises to build trees around is truly limiting from a design standpoint. That every author has reiterated it as the way to go is baffling. Something is confused here!

Look at natural, old or ancient trees (excellent patterns for bonsai), or peruse the myriad books of beautiful trees from Japan and note the dearth of triangle one, two, three trees.. Something was obviously lost in the translation. To be sure one, two, three triangle does turn out a tree that we recognize as bonsai. With the help of the Karate Kid movie, everyone knows what a bonsai should look like. What happened to all those other beautiful shapes and forms?

It is with this triangle in mind that I venture forth to present a humble suggestion about another approach to bonsai creation. As I alluded to earlier, I will enumerate in detail the facets of my approach. Any apparent digressions are really attempts to illustrate clearly so that little confusion will remain as to what I mean.

Selecting the focal point isn't as difficult as it may seem. On many trees certain features are exciting and instantly attract the eye. Look for certain contortions of the primary trunk line, a hollow area full of mystery, a deadwood feature that emanates age and struggle, beautiful bleached wood (mindful of the eternal inclemency of an Alpine site) or great gnarled roots which draw the eyes like a magnet. These attributes are worthy of building a tree around. On the other hand many trees lack a great feature that is worthy of focusing on. Here lies one of the great challenges of Sculptural Bonsai Art. Imposing a focal point on a tree which lacks one will require sculpture. Carving is the only way. Many lower trunk

areas are weak and spindly, or at least lacking in pizzazz. Heretofore little could be done to help these areas develop. The eternal hope that a few years in the ground to develop is protracted. Now help has arrived. Carving and sculpting can inject energy and pizzazz where none existed before. The deliberate creation of deadwood and hollowed trunks is best achieved through the use of power tools. I feel that rotary (going round and round) tools are the best-- and the faster the revolutions per minute (R.P.M's) the cleaner and smoother the carving. I use three different tools to create Sculptural Focal Points: the small electric chain saw (major wood excavating), the die grinder with a carbide, round-nosed router bit, and the Dremel for delicate finish work. Each of these tools compliments the others. The truth is that practise makes perfect and experience is king.

The most vexing problem for any sculptor is what to create now that the tool is in hand. This involves creation (something new). It is very difficult to reduce the experience to carving-by-the-numbers. Several elements are needed to assist you in the process. If you looked and studied natural deadwood, several things stand out. First, most of it is uncomfortable to the touch. This means that sanding or filing may produce an unnatural finish. Second, the grain of the wood is usually raised and grooves result. Third, surface undulations are not choppy or chunky but are rather swirly and flow from point to point. Fourth, the more skeleton like it becomes, the more aged it appears. Age and character are what great trees are about. Fifth, deadwood should be bleached to accentuate its contrast with the living areas. I recently collected a many-hundreds-years old Rocky Mountain juniper from an area in Montana. It grew in a north-facing cleft in a rock cliff which received little sun, and the deadwood was the color of plaster. It was as if it had been lime-sulfured for years. The whiteness contrasting with the thin, reddish life line makes it easy to find the Focal Point.

Sculpting the wood is made much easier with the use of power tools. What once appeared hopeless, or at least a life-long task to me, with chisels and gouges, now is measured in hours. Endless refining can be done, and the more attention that is

paid to detail, the better and more rewarding the end product. For years deadwood was considered inappropriate on many types of trees. The philosophical stand in the face of great junipers, pines and buttonwood always seemed nuts to me. If it looked so great on those trees, why would it be deemed inappropriate on others? Well, the concept is changing, thank goodness, for in the real world of trees the relentless ravages of nature and natural aging have left every tree with visible deadwood. In many instances this deadwood has created a masterpiece of a tree that otherwise might have appeared usual and plain. In most American bonsai trees, deadwood elements are the result of shortening or removing branches and shortening trunks. The emphasis has been to hide these scars by hoping for heal-over, hiding with other branches, or the worst, to my thinking, "hiding in the back." The hiding of deadwood is like ignoring Mother Nature and art simultaneously. All these man-made scars can be worked and expanded to yield a major contribution to the energy and variability of your bonsai. The sculpting, shaping, and refining of these areas is critical. Man-made scars--I call them the dreaded bull's-eyes--are very ugly, much like seeing a tire dumped in mountain stream. It will be there forever, just like those pruning scars. It's wiser and certainly more artistic to hollow out and carve these areas into value-added attributes, rather than treating them as something to hide. The least appropriate area for sculptural refinement is the apex or top of a reduced tree. Most of the tops have been treated by peeling the wood down with pliers or jinning tools. This makes the top look like it was stuck in a pencil sharpener. The top of a tree receives as much attention as its base, and it deserves careful sculptural refinement. There is no room for a quickie "that's good enough" or "we'll hide it with a new, live apex" approaches.

The heavy emphasis on the sculptural aspects of Focal Point Bonsai design is because of the profound impact on the human eye. No element of a tree has more visual pull than does well carved, bleached deadwood. You may or may not like it,

but the eye goes there and works on it; it does produce focal point! To compliment, support and frame this focal point is the final element in the creation. Branch placement and shape are the key.

Here I must develop and articulate the four principles of Bonsai design and creation which permeate my productions. I call them principles rather than rules just as I prefer the term teacher to master; there is something sinister about "Rules and Masters." My principles of Bonsai are as follows:

1. All trees deserve to have deadwood, and it's best when sculpted and refined to be a value-added element to the tree.
2. All man-made pruning scars are inappropriate and ugly; no dreaded bull's-eyes, please.
3. All trees deserve crooked, gnarly, undulating branches.
4. Wire training is essential to bonsai control and design. Try not to encumber a tree with needless wire, use guys and pulls when possible in lieu of heavy wire.

I have followed these principles for many years. As guidelines for bonsai creation I find them useful and stimulating. By employing these guides, my creations have natural, almost an unman-made quality. To emulate nature and succeed is a thrill. To have trees that have been endlessly altered and sculpted and look so natural is a profound reward.

The principle that all trees deserve crooked, gnarly, undulating branches is the frame on the painting! All old or ancient trees have crooked branches. The ravages of time have made them so. The rhythm and lyric of the dancing branches has enticed poets, authors, and movie makers forever, it seems. The deliberate imposition of this crooked branch conformation on your bonsai creation is instant and startling. No feature other than beautiful deadwood is as powerful and seductive. All trees, even formal upright styles, look graceful and dramatic under the aegis of undulating branches. Even one, two, three triangle trees appear better. I must say to the other side that straight branches appear incongruous,

especially on trees with crooked branches. Whatever made the trunk crooked must certainly have exerted influence on the branches. Harmony must pervade the creation. Struggle is endemic in the real world; let your branches creak and groan, swirl and dance, and harmony will raise its battered crown.

How the undulating branch is used to frame the focal point involves several considerations. First, the physical limitations of bending branches must be addressed. Large branches can be altered, but small branches are easier. Small branches tend to enhance and exaggerate the trunk's size and this is valuable. Remember, we have carved and rendered the trunk to create a focal point. Branches must not weaken or subtract power from the trunk.

Most American bonsai seem to be out of proportion--too much crown for the trunk size. Someday the trunk will catch up. It may take 50 or 100 years or more. Crowns receive all the attention. Pinch, pinch, pinch--that's the rule, and it works. Unfortunately it works to the disadvantage of trunk size increase. So many trees have been groomed so assiduously that only a multiplicity of buds and shoots has occurred. Once that tree came out of the ground or training pot and went into a bonsai pot and "Show Training" began, trunk expansion slowed down. Too much or too thick a crown overpowers the trunk in many instances. The huge cloud of vibrant green foliage which sits atop many great California junipers with their great swirling deadwood trunks seems so out of tune with reality. Whatever forces created those gnarled bases suddenly stopped and life became much better and gentler. To re-establish the dynamic forces that accentuate and highlight great trees, greater attention to branch design is in order. Each branch can be treated as if it is a small tree on its own. It can have foliar planes. By reducing each branch from a large, flat foliar horizontal plane to many individual planes at slightly different levels, the foliage mass is visually reduced. The intricacy of such a branch is complicated as opposed to the flat, full, single

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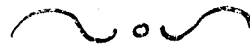
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plane. When elegance replaces that full, simple, single plane, proper crown and trunk proportions are restored. Perhaps the best way to describe a well-trained, detailed branch is that if severed, it would make a dandy small tree, whether cascade or informal upright.

Diminishing the amount of foliage on a tree always exaggerates what is left. The trunk and branch lines become obvious and accentuated. Much like a great oak or maple in winter, this foliar reduction is revealing of the tree's foundation. In Focal Point Bonsai Design the high emphasis is on this exposure. As the sculpted trunk's value has appreciated, the gnarled branches' embracing the tree lend vitality and life in a somewhat understated manner.

Focal Point Bonsai Design is fun and free,- as an artful creation should be. Let your creative impulses flow as you study your trees using this new aspect.

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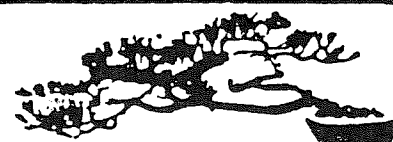
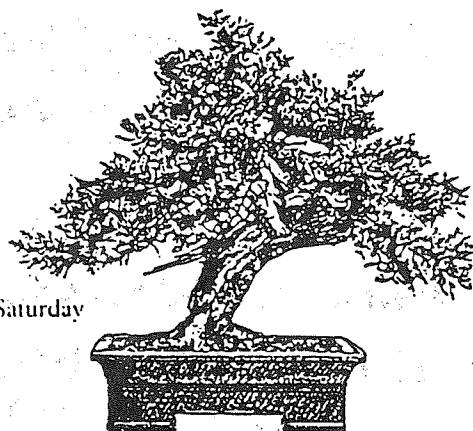
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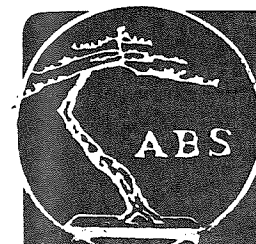
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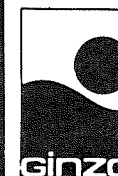
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