

2. STYLES.

A. The five basic styles, variations, choosing an appropriate style. It is easier when you talk on any subject to have some clear parameters to work in. With bonsai, the parameters that are used is the five basic styles. These will give the grower some defined structure to work in. They are like a model to work from (not a copy)

The 5 basic styles are; (There are other styles that fit within the 5 basic styles also)

1. Formal upright (chokkan)
2. Informal upright (moyogi)
3. Slanting (shakan)
4. Semicascade (han-kengai)
5. Cascade (kengai)

1. Formal upright.

Whilst it is difficult to find a tree with a perfectly straight (and corresponding taper) it is probably the easiest style for the beginner to work with. The formal upright is a tree that characterises strength. It grows erect because it has no competition from other trees. It does not have the effect of strong prevailing winds, and has ample food and water, thus enabling it to grow straight up. The apex will always be directly over the base. The branches will have a symmetry about them, giving the whole tree a triangular shape. (This triangle does not have to be asymmetrical).

2. Informal upright.

This would be the most common of styles. It is probably the style most easy to find amongst nursery stock. This style allows for less formality in the placement of the branches. The informal upright has "movement" to it whilst the formal upright is rigid. The informal, whilst it is upright in nature, it has the scope of twisting and bending, yet retaining a constant taper. There are some bends to avoid and these are bends that protrude toward the front toward the viewer, and also to a lesser extent, those that protrude backwards. It is possible to take a variety of tree that is prostrate in its normal growing form, and to train it in an informal upright style and vice versa.

3. Slanting style.

The most significant aspect of the slanting style is the fact that the apex is never over the base. This style depicts a tree that has been growing in nature that has had to contend with either other trees, or prevailing winds. Surface roots on this style are always on the opposite side to the lean, giving it the appearance of strength and support, whilst on the formal and informal they are more uniform in their distribution.

The slant does not necessarily need to start at the bottom of the tree, it may start growing in one direction and then curve in the opposite direction any number of times before it reaches the apex. Yet it will always portray stability. Sometimes by just tilting a tree on an angle you may discover that a slanting style would far more suit that particular tree. Just because a tree is growing a certain way in the nursery, doesn't mean that is the way it must be. Take some time, explore some possibilities. This is where the artistry begins, in your hands and in your eyes.

4. Semicascade.

Any tree that has as its first and major branch running out at an angle less than that of horizontal could be considered to be a semi cascade. Usually the tail falls somewhere between the rim of the pot and the bottom of the pot. This style evokes the image of a tree growing on the side of a cliff, or on a rugged precipice on a coastline. They appear to have grown under great hardship, and seem to hug the cliff for protection. The semi cascade is nearly the informal upright with an elongated lower branch. If you were to remove the tail you would have a perfectly styled informal upright. The branches when styled and trimmed correctly will give the appearance that they are floating.

5. Full cascade.

The full cascade represents the tree that is growing on the side of a cliff, and being unable to grow in an upright position, begins to grow outwards and then eventually downwards. As the tree grows its own weight then

contributes to its downward growth. The trunk line will fall below the horizontal. The tail of the cascade (and also the semi cascade) must pass over the front part of the pot, but not directly toward the viewer.

B. Various other styles.

1. Root over rock.

Root over rock as the name suggests, is a tree that has for one reason or another, grown on or over a rock or group of rocks. This often happens in nature when a seed is deposited on a rock that has some sort of hollow with rotted plant matter that has gathered over the years. This then produces the right environment for the seed to germinate. Usually in this situation the growth of the tree is very slow, owing to the fact that it usually has only limited water, and nutrients. Thus the appearance is that of an old gnarled tree that has struggled to grow, it may have old dead branches and often pronounced roots. These trees are fairly easy to grow, especially using such specimens as figs or elms, both of which have a vigorous root system. The method used is by barerooting a tree and strategically placing the roots over a selected rock. The rock and roots are then firmly wrapped in glad wrap and placed back into a pot with the roots covered by soil. After one to two years, the tree is taken out of its pot, and unwrapping the plastic. As long as the roots have developed sufficiently, you are now able to repot the tree but this time only covering the very ends of the roots.

2. Windswept.

A windswept style will reproduce a tree that has grown with a constant prevailing wind. If you are to walk around any cliffs near the sea, you will notice that the trees always grow away from the ocean, that is the branches, yet the trunk may actually lean into the wind. This happens from the constant drying out of the cells on the windward side, while on the protected side the cells are able to grow at the normal rate. This is because the constant force of the wind does not allow the branches to grow, thus the branches that are windward are either stunted or non-existent.

3. Broom.

The broom style is as its suggests shaped like the end of a broom, or fan. This is done by using a tree that is a formal upright in style, and then by constantly cutting each branch back to produce forking. When these two branches have grown say two internodes, they too are cut producing another two and so on. This is one of the exceptions in styles that does not follow the triangular approach. To gain a good looking broom style, it is important that the branch ramification is uniform, with no hollows. The ideal trees for this style are the likes of elms, maples, and any trees with fine twiggy branches. Deciduous trees have the advantage of showing spectacular ramification in winter. This would be one of the more difficult styles to create.

4. Multitrunk.

Probably the most trees we see in nature are often twin or multitrunk. More often than not one of the trunks will dominate. This feature is often called "mother and daughter", or "father and son". The trunks may be divided at soil level or higher. The effect of the larger trunk will always be noticeable on the smaller. This is apparent by the lack of growth on the smaller trunk where it is shadowed by the larger. Sometimes a tree that has good potential, yet lacks one or more side branches, can be adapted by using the second smaller trunk to emulate the lower branches that would otherwise be missing.

4. Groupstyle.

The groupstyle setting is done by using a set of trees of the same type. (different types of trees can be used but is only successful in the hands of an expert). The trees are always used in odd numbers 3,5,7,9 etc. Once you get above nine it is not as important. By using odd numbers of trees you will create a greater random, or natural effect. If you use even numbers of trees it tends to look less natural and more contrived. The placement of each tree is vital. You want to give an impression of a forest or a grove that you feel you could walk amongst or through. This is done by careful placement of each individual tree. The removal of branches and foliage that is close to or touching another tree is also vital to gain the right effect. It is best to use trees that all vary in size

