

February 2010

栽景

SAIKEI - LIVING LANDSCAPES

Landscape Views

The e-magazine of the International Saikei Association



Welcome

David Penny

Welcome to this newsletter this month we have a largely historical feel with articles about the history of Saikei and a short tribute to Toshio Kawamoto who rediscovered, refined and developed the art of Saikei to the beautiful form we know today.

Our new feature 'Hot off the press' will bring you the latest news items from around the world.

Hot Off the Press

Editor

President to visit Croatia in September 2010

- We are delighted to announce that in September our president and regular contributor David Penny will be visiting Croatia as a guest of **Hrvatski Bonsai Club** www.crobonsai.com whilst visiting we will be demonstrating and teaching the art of Saikei. So if any Croatian members are interested they should make contact with the club via their website.

History of Saikei

Saikei has been practiced in Japan as a Chinese style landscape since the 11th century. It lost popularity in the 14th century in favour of the classical Bonsai forms, and was rediscovered and refined just after the second world war under the patronage of Toshio Kawamoto.

After WWII, bonsai had still been a creative pastime of only a small number of wealthy enthusiasts and the sons of bonsai specialists. Toshio felt that this could become a popular hobby that anyone could enjoy, regardless of social or economic class. He combined the best of group plantings and rock-grown bonsai, which were increasing in popularity at the time. Due to shortages of suitable mature material for bonsai, young specimens would be utilized by Kawamoto sensei to successfully depict sections of natural scenery. These containerized living landscapes of trees, rocks and mosses would be known with the name of Saikei.

Toshio Kawamoto developed Saikei into the styles and form that we know it today in 1967 he published the main work of Saikei literature entitled 'Saikei Living Landscapes'. The book is now out of print but can still be found in second hand book stores and online auction sites. The book remains the foundation of modern Saikei and Toshio Kawamoto its founder and master.

Toshio Kawamoto

David Penny

Toshio Kawamoto was born in the Kanto (Tokyo) area of Japan in 1917, the first of seven children to bonsai master Tokichi Kawamoto.

Rediscovering, refining and developing the art of creating living landscapes in pots/trays Toshio Kawamoto can only be described as the Grand Master of Saikei, a name which he himself invented to describe the art of creating these 'miniature landscapes'.

At his father's death in 1960, Toshio took over the family's nursery Meiju-En, establish the Nippon Bonsai-Saikei Institute, and formed the Nippon Saikei Association. His first English language book would be *Bonsai-Saikei* (1963), followed by *Saikei: Living Landscapes in Miniature* four years later.

He wrote and illustrated articles on Saikei each month in a series published in *Bonsai World* magazine.

He has influenced most of the modern day Saikei Artists and I owe a deep debt of gratitude to this man for creating an art form which has become such a passion to me.





Seijaku

David Penny

Calmness

Well you may be glad to know that this is the last in this series of articles exploring the Zen aesthetics principles used in Saikei; I can hear the sigh of relief from here.

It is obviously important to understand some of the basic aspects of the original artistic principles that Toshio Kawamoto used when he created the art of Saikei, but you will find that you don't have to try too hard to achieve these as the formation of a Saikei naturally creates a major proportion of these principles without trying.

So onto the last of the principles Seijaku roughly translated means calmness, many of you will probably say 'I could do with some of that'. I once heard a master talk about Seijaku as an absence of disturbance and noise from your mind, body and surroundings and I believe that I once felt this intensely on a mountain in Scotland when I seemed to connect with the landscape and nature and I became part of it, I felt calm and at peace with the whole world.



Sprawling Tokyo hardly a source of calm

In Saikei when someone views our composition they should be able to feel at once calmed and relaxed, the Saikei should have a lack of 'noise'. This is where we see the other principles all working together for example it should be simple, natural and free from ridged style so as not to 'tighten' the viewers emotions. When we have too many ornaments on a Saikei it

(Continued on page 5)



Seijaku Cont...

David Penny

becomes cluttered and therefore clutters up the emotions and reduces the chance of achieving Seijaku this is why I try to avoid the use of ornaments in Saikei preferring to 'keep it natural'. In essence the Saikei that I produce are as though the viewer is the first person to ever seen the landscape I avoid any sign of mans influence such as paths and figures, I try to capture that emotions of the early pioneers that discovered a valley, or mountain never before seen by man. This does not mean that you have to follow this path it just gives you a feel for my aims and emotions when I design a Saikei.



Ryoan-ji a garden designed to bring a calm state of mind

So how do I know when my Saikei has Seijaku:

- Once you have made the composition place the Saikei against a plain background and walk away then return later and those first emotions will help you to decide do you feel up tight or calm when looking at the Saikei. This is the method that I use.

If you feel calm then you have achieved Seijaku.

Some things to avoid:

- Avoid creating features that will detract the eye from the overall composition.
- Avoid thinking too much allow your emotions to guide you in your creating process.

Choosing trees for Saikei

When choosing trees for Saikei there are essentially 5 elements, these are:

- Resembles a full sized tree.
- Small and tight growing foliage.
- Tight rooting.
- Able to grow in a pot.
- Able to withstand temperature increases and decreases.



Cryptomeria japonica 'yokohama'

The tree above has been chosen because it has an upright form with a single strong trunk to reflect the shape of a fully mature tree, it has very small and compact foliage which means that the scale will be good when planted. We also know from using other *Cryptomeria* that it will form a good root structure and is tolerant of sudden changes in heat and conditions. This is also a small growing variety which means the planting changes little and is long lived but obviously during the initial development period it will take longer to reach a good tree form, say 3-5 years.

Species for Saikei

There are a number of species that meet the above criteria but I have listed those species suitable for the beginner to intermediate Saikei enthusiast.



The individual opinions expressed in this issue are not necessarily those of the International Saikei Association.

| Conifer | Broadleaf |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Junipers-Juniperus (most species and varieties) | Box-Buxus |
| Japanese Cedar-Cryptomeria (all the small leaf forms) | Cotoneaster |
| Spruce-Picea (all small Leaf forms) the roots will need to receive copious water. | Dwarf Honeysuckle-Lonicira |
| Hemlock-Tsuga as Picea | Elms-Ulmus (all small leaf forms) |
| Larch-Larix | |
| | |

All these above varieties are suitable for those at the start of their Saikei learning.

Next month we will look at picking up nursery stock for Saikei and what trees should be selected.





Suppliers

Green Lawns Bonsai, Hadleigh Road, Boxford, Nr Sudbury, CO10 5JH

Phone: 08700347765

Email: enquiries@greenlawnsbonsai.co.uk

Website: www.greenlawnsbonsai.co.uk

Downsview Bonsai, 126 Wannock Lane, Lower Willingdon, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN20 9SJ

Phone: 01323 485666

Email: info@downsviewbonsai.co.uk

Website: www.downsviewbonsaitreenursery.co.uk

Southampton Bonsai Trees 6, Farmery Close, Swaythling, Southampton, SO18 2JX

Phone: 023 8049 5729

Email: info@bonsai-trees.com

Website: www.bonsaitreesouthampton.co.uk

Bushukan Bonsai Ricbra, Lower Road, Hockley, Essex SS5 5NL

Phone: 01702 201029

Email: bushukan-bonsai@ic24.net

Website: www.bushukan-bonsai.com

Affiliated Bonsai Groups

Dai Ichi Bonsai Group (Essex)

Eastbourne and Wealden Bonsai Club (Sussex)

Meets Hellingly Village Hall, 2nd Monday of the Month, call 01323 731 369

International Association of Saikei Administration:

70 Forest Rise, Crowborough, East Sussex, TN6 2ES.

david.penny@saikei.co.uk

01892 665704

International Association of Saikei Membership:

Brian Dale

brian@bonsai-club.co.uk

01323 731 369