

Saikei

International

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IN THIS ISSUE

- Gallery
- Shows
- Demonstrators List
- Saikei Weekend
- Penjing
- Accent Plants

CONTENTS

General News	3
Demonstrators List	3
Saikei Weekend	3
Shows.....	4
Back to Basics	5
About Chinese Penjing.....	5
In the Workshop	6
Accent Plants	6
Competition	8
Saikei and Bonsai Word Search	8
Suppliers	9
Clubs	10
Contacts	11

GENERAL NEWS

The website is progressing nicely with a similar layout to the previous website but with many added extras. We are hoping to have the website available for next month's issue so watch this space.

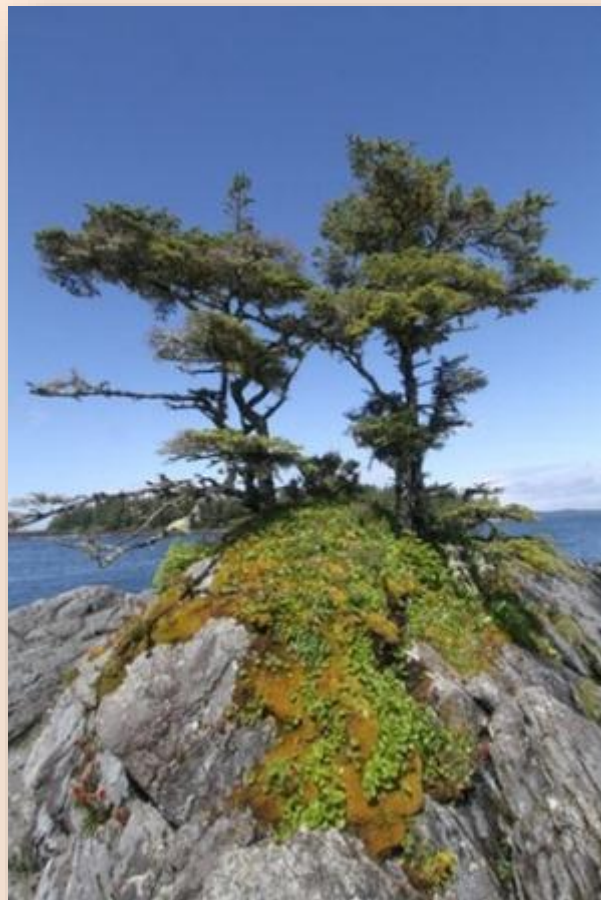
In other news we have had some new members join us and they are very welcome.

DEMONSTRATORS LIST

To renew our request of last month as part of our website development we are seeking to create a page to provide information on demonstrators of Saikei. We would be delighted to hear from anyone who has or intends to demonstrate Saikei. Please contact myself or David Penny to be added to this list.

SAIKEI WEEKEND

We have decided to aim for a Saikei learning event in 2013, if you are interested please email events@saikei.co.uk



SHOWS

We were invited to display at two shows this year and we have had great success. If you are aware of any shows concerning Bonsai and Saikei we will be delighted to hear about these and we will of course put them in the magazine so that all members are aware. In order to enter an event we only need to know the name of the event, where it will take place, dates and times and contact for further information.

Your Event Name Here

Where

When

Description

Your Event Name Here

Where

When

Description

BACK TO BASICS

ABOUT CHINESE PENJING

Penjing is nominally split into three types 'Tree Penjing', 'Landscape Penjing' and 'Water and Land Penjing'. All these categories overlap in practice.

Chinese Penjing does not have clearly defined styles (Formal Upright, Informal Upright, Slanting, etc.) like Japanese Bonsai, although they do use these categories as points of reference.

Historically, style in Penjing was more to do with regional style, with different areas of China specialising in certain species of tree, certain techniques (clip and grow, bending with rope, bending with wire, etc.) or certain visual ideas (such as trees shaped to represent or suggest dragons).

There are other differences too. In Japanese Bonsai, crossed or tangled roots are usually seen as a real faux pas, whereas in Penjing heavily knotted roots are something which suggests character and age in a tree. Also, in Penjing there is less emphasis on technical perfection (often pruning scars are not hidden). In Penjing, little pagodas and men with fishing rods adorning the scene are seen as a good thing (adding to the beauty), whereas in Bonsai they are just thought of as tacky (distracting you from the tree). The same could be said about pot decoration.

Perhaps the biggest difference is the intention of what is being created. In Bonsai, often an image of a tree in nature in the Platonic sense (or an image of an idealised tree) is being created, whereas in Penjing, a realistic representation of a tree (in the Platonic sense) is not always the aim, although it may be the aim to create a realistic representation on an individual tree, real or imagined. Also, the intended scope of Bonsai and Penjing differ. Bonsai compositions consist of a single tree or a group of trees, whereas Penjing often incorporate other aspects (such as rocks and water) to create a miniature landscape, sometimes these landscapes do not even contain a tree.

Traditionally, Penjing, landscape painting and poetry are and were intimately linked. The Chinese intelligentsia believed that by understanding and experiencing nature, they would advance their spiritual development, and bringing nature closer to home in the form of paintings, poetry and Penjing would also aid this development.

Like Japanese haiku poetry, Chinese poetry relied on a very limited amount of content to portray a vast scene in the mind of the listener. Likewise, Chinese landscape painting used a minimal amount of actual brush strokes to portray an impression of a scene. As well as mimicking the visual style of Chinese landscape painting, Penjing also uses a similar method to portray the whole of a scene or idea using a limited number of elements. This is most striking in the 'literati' style, which later found its way to Japan. Significantly, it is common for Penjing compositions to be given titles, and in China, they are often regarded as a form of three dimensional landscape painting.

To me, the purpose of Penjing seems more concerned with creating a subtle and metaphorical tale, using trees and other landscape elements as its medium. So the tree or trees become a means to that end, rather than an end in themselves as is more the case with Japanese bonsai.

Some Penjing masters refuse to use wire to shape trees, preferring clip and grow techniques because they think it requires more skill and patience. They see shaping with wire as too easy. Historically, copper wire was very scarce and expensive in China and alternatives were used, such as bending with iron wire or string. But also, 'clip and grow' techniques were relied upon for basic shaping and development far more in China than in Japan.

IN THE WORKSHOP

ACCENT PLANTS

BY DAVID JOHNSTON

When getting a Saikei into show form the exhibitor must consider that the composition also needs an entire ensemble, as if it were going to the prom. Once the composition is ready, it needs the dreaded "appropriate" accessories - a stand, and the corsage - an accent plant. We should not take accent or companion plants for granted just because they seem of lesser consequence. Companion plants have their own beauty and can attract a lot of attention from viewers. They add to the impact of the Saikei when displayed properly.

It should be noted that Suiseki, figurines or other objects of art can be used to accompany the Saikei but accent plants are the most common option.

Accent or companion plants help reinforce the feeling or mood of a Saikei when on display. Accent plants "accentuate the character of the compositions they accompany with respect to the following characteristics: motion, depth, silhouette and seasonality."

MOTION

Saikei have some movement or direction even if it is a vertical formal arrangement. Likewise, accent plants should have a sense of direction that compliments the composition. In John Naka's *Bonsai Techniques II*, he suggests that the movement of the bonsai and the companion plant should be toward each other. This tends to strengthen the unity of the setting or scene that both plants create.

DEPTH

Perspective or depth can be created in the same way that back branches overcome the flat two dimensionality of width and height. The accent plant can be placed on either side of the composition depending upon movement, in front of or behind the overhead centre line of the Saikei container.

SILHOUETTE

Refers to the shape of the composition and accent plant. Repeating the silhouette of the Saikei should be avoided in the accent plant. A tall accent plant would probably not work with a tall literati composition. A contrast of shapes, heights, flowering and non-flowering Saikei and accent plants create a better scene.

SEASONALITY

Means to take note of the time of the year. The flowers of an accent plant indicate the season. The same would be true of the formation of fruit and turning of leaf colour in the fall. Flower colour also contributes to the overall display by adding an element that might otherwise not be present. Given the Toronto Saikei Society's traditional June and October shows, accent plants that flower, fruit or have leaves that turn colour during these time periods should be sought after.

Accent plants can serve to suggest the location where the Saikei would naturally be found in the wild. Accent plant expert Willi Benz wrote in *Bonsai Today* that a companion must...

Symbolically represent the main object's place of origin, whether it is a bonsai or a Suiseki. Harmonize with the colour of the main object. Harmonize with the central object in both shape and size. Add a seasonal reference to the presentation's theme. Reinforce the presentation's overall theme. Serve as a connection between the other pieces of the presentation."

A good mixture for accent plants is a 50/50 ratio of screened sand to top soil that allows for good drainage and water retention, a requirement for small containers. However the grower will have to recognize that some plants need more water, or more shade and try to imitate a plant's natural growing conditions. The pots for accent plants tend to be coloured or natural, round and shallow although other shapes could work. Some articles in Saikei literature recommend using shells, stones and driftwood.

Flowering plants, mosses and grasses are often used as accents. I have even seen a single dandelion used...just don't let it go to seed. The soil should be covered with the plants or in combination with moss. Sometimes arrangements made with different species combine varying heights, colours and shapes. Limiting the number of different species to three keeps the arrangement from getting too busy. The plants in a single arrangement should be from similar eco-conditions. That is, a cactus and a bog plant with different watering needs could not survive in the same container.

In the same way that Saikei are readied for a show, the accent plant should have the dead leaves removed, the pot and plant cleaned and the soil covered with moss and/or low growing plants.

To make life just a little more complicated, the accent plant also needs its own stand. Since the accent plant is smaller than the composition, its stand should be thin because it should not challenge the focus on the Saikei. A thin woven mat, piece of wood or flat ceramic can also be used.

The main objective should be to have fun while you improve the display of your Saikei and create another attractive planting. These accent plantings can also be brought inside for short periods of time to add a bit of colour and nature to your home.

While some accent plantings can be put together relatively quickly, ideally the arrangement should grow for some time in the container to get established and look more natural. Well cared for accent plants improve with age

So give your accent plantings their due consideration because according to Willi Benz, "a bonsai (Saikei) or Suiseki without an accent plant is like a face without a smile."



COMPETITION

SAIKEI AND BONSAI WORD SEARCH

W L I X F O Y I F A Q U V U W P L P E L K S U V R E L I T A
 R S C Q T A F P W Q J W I H V M U N P C Q V S B A L W O I E
 C I R Y J D H T R F G X H J N I Y D D C E Q T X M T P S A C
 E A M U Q I Z A K Z B I G X E R R F J P D N D P Y L Y S D A
 J B M E K N L R Z G K L Q C Z O P F I S W Q G E E D A G Y C
 F O B B J E F B N C R Q H B M H C J O G G Z Z G N I R X L V
 L X G M G F C L J V N S V T Z H I S T Y K S R A K P X N Q A
 E Z O M M M O H D H W J C K M N J W K Z R A O E P K U P K R
 X O O H B O Z G N D M F H U O N K T S D V O I I A D B H J Q
 B B G L I X F O Y I F A Q U V U W P L E P E L K L S U V R E
 L I A R S C Q T A F P W Q J W I H V L M U N P C Q V S B A L
 W I E C I R Y J D H T R F G X H J N I Y D D C E Q T X M T S
 A C E A M U Q I Z A K Z B I G X E R P E N J I N G R F J P D
 N D P Y L Y D A J B M E K N L R Z G K L Q C Z O P F I S W Q
 G E E D G Y C F O B B J E F B N C R Q H B A L P I N E M H C
 J O L G G Z Z N R X L V L X G M G F C L J V N S V T Z H I S
 T Y K A A P X N Q A E Z O M M M O H D H W J C K M N J W K Z
 R P K U T P K R X O O H B O Z G N D M F H K U O N K T S D O
 A D B H J S Q B B G L I X F O Y I F A Q U C V U W P L P E L
 K S U V R E A L I A R S C Q T A F P W Q J O W I H V M U N P
 C Q V S B A L O W I E C I R Y J D H T R F R G X H J N I Y D
 D C E Q T X M T C S A C E A M U Q I Z A K Z B I G X E R R F
 J P D L O W L A N D N D P Y L Y D A J B M E K N L R Z G K L
 Q C Z O P F I S W Q G E E D G Y C F O B B J E F B N C R Q H
 B M H C J O G G Z Z N R X L V L X G M G F C L J V N S V T Z
 H I S T Y K A P X N Q A E Z I A S N O B O M M M O H M D H W
 J C K M N J W K Z R P K U P K R X O O H B O Z G T O N D M F
 H U O N K T S D O A D B H J Q B B G L I X F O Y S R I F A Q
 U V U W P L P E L K S U V R E L I A R S C Q T S A F E P W Q
 J W I H V M U N P C Q V S B A L W I E C I R Y J D H T E R F

Saikei and Bonsai - 12 Words to find

SAIKEI	PENJING
BONSAI	ALPINE
COASTAL	LOWLAND
TREE	MOSS
ROCK	SOIL
POT	GRAVEL

SUPPLIERS

Name	Telephone	Address	Email	Website
Bushukan Bonsai	01702 201029	Ricbra, Lower Road, Hockley, Essex SS5 5NL	bushukan-bonsai@ic24.net	www.bushukan-bonsai.com
Southampton Bonsai Trees	02380 495729	6, Farmery Close, Swaythling, Southampton, SO18 2JX	info@bonsai-trees.com	www.bonsaitreessouthampton.co.uk
Downsview Bonsai	01323 485656	126 Wannock Lane, Lower Willingdon, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN20 9SJ	info@downsviewbonsai.co.uk	www.downsviewbonsaitreenursery.co.uk
Green Lawns Bonsai,	08700 347765	Hadleigh Road, Boxford, Nr Sudbury, CO10 5JH	enquiries@greenlawnsbonsai.co.uk	www.greenlawnsbonsai.co.uk

CLUBS

Name	Telephone	Address	Day of Meeting	Website
Dai Ichi Bonsai Group (Essex)	01277 625 298	Shenfield Village Hall	1st Monday of each month call	
Eastbourne and Wealden Bonsai Club (Sussex)	01323 731 369	Hellingly Village Hall	2nd Monday of the Month	www.bonsai-club.co.uk
Eastleigh Bonsai Club (Hampshire)	01489 789 962 or 07795 187 632		2nd Monday of the Month	

If you would like to have your local club details added to this list please contact the newsletter team by e-mail newsletter@Saikei.co.uk

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