

BONSAI BASICS

JULIA WOOD



BONSAI

- Literal translation: bon “tray” and sai “planting”
“planted in a container”
- Punzai, Penzai, Penjing: tree in a pot (Chinese)
- Chinese horticultural practice 2000 years old but redeveloped more stylized under influence of Zen Buddhism in Japan 700 years ago

- Artistic representation nature's force of trees or landscapes
- Attributes may be beauty, harmony, unity, balance, strength, and tenacity etc.
- Small scale in pots and tray is part of the composition
- Any woody tree, shrub, vine or plant
- Designed to appear as mature through various training techniques
- Allows designer to form an intimate bond with the tree
- Often seen as male or female
- Not perfect but a stylized suggestion or strong impression

VISUAL ELEMENTS:

- Line: expressed in the movement of the trunk and tells the story of how the tree grew
- Form: length, position, proportions, arrangement of branches, outline all tell the age, genus, condition
- Texture: bark, and foliage define grace or strength
- Color helps define character and general health

STYLES



Formal Upright
"Chokkan"



Informal Upright
"Moyogi"



Slanting
"Shakkan"



Twin Trunk
"Sokan"



Multiple Trunk
"Kabudachi"



Forest
"Yose-ue"



Raft
"Ikadabuki"



Broom
"Hokidachi"



Semi-Cascade
"Han-kengai"



Cascade
"Kengai"



Literati or Bunjin
"Bunjingi"



Windswept
"Fukinagashi"



Root-over-Rock
"Seki-joju"



Bonsai-in-Rock
"Ishisuki"



Shari
"Sharimiki"

TOOLS



MEDIA OR SOIL



Must be free draining with air spaces yet retain moisture:

- Sieve to less than 1/4 " and larger than house screen
- Examples: Lava, pumice, fired clay like akadama or turface, coarse granitic
- without additives, perlite, vermiculite, molar clay non-clumping cat litter
- No or low organic content (I use soil conditioner not peat)

TRAYS

- Compliment design – bark color, foliage or blossom color
- Sufficient depth for root mass, moisture needed for species and growth between repottings
- Shape
- Proportion to tree – Enhance age?
- Weather conditions – outdoor freezing? humidity tray underneath?

TRAYS

- Plastic Training Pots
- Ceramic
- Heavy plastic Korean trays
- Color, Size, Shape



TRAYS CAN BE SLABS, CREATED FROM ROCKS OR EVEN A ROOF TILE!



TRAY PREPARATION

- Select tray
- Clean tray
- Screen drain holes
- Bracing wires if needed for positioning



PLANTING YOUR BONSAI

- Remove all soil from root ball
- Simplify and reduce foliage
- Simplify and reduce roots
- Prepare suitable pot
- Position tree
- Work media into roots
- Water
- Protect and hope your tree survives!

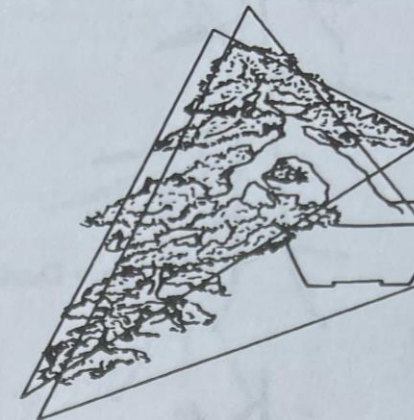






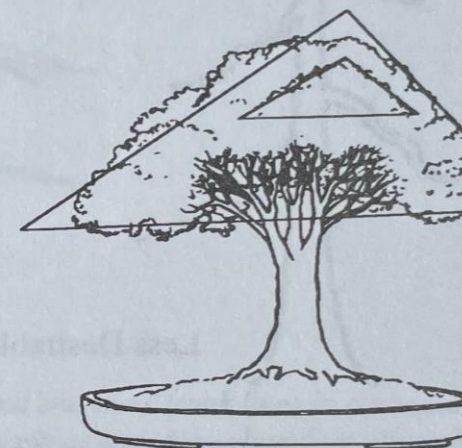
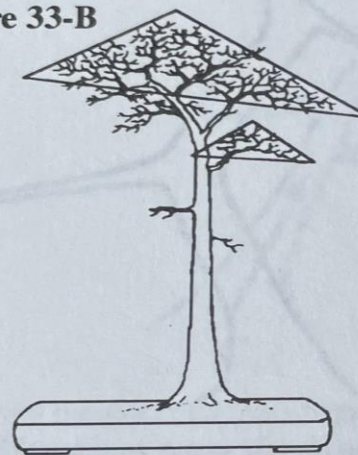
BASIC FOLIAGE SHAPE IS A TRIANGLE

Figure 33-A



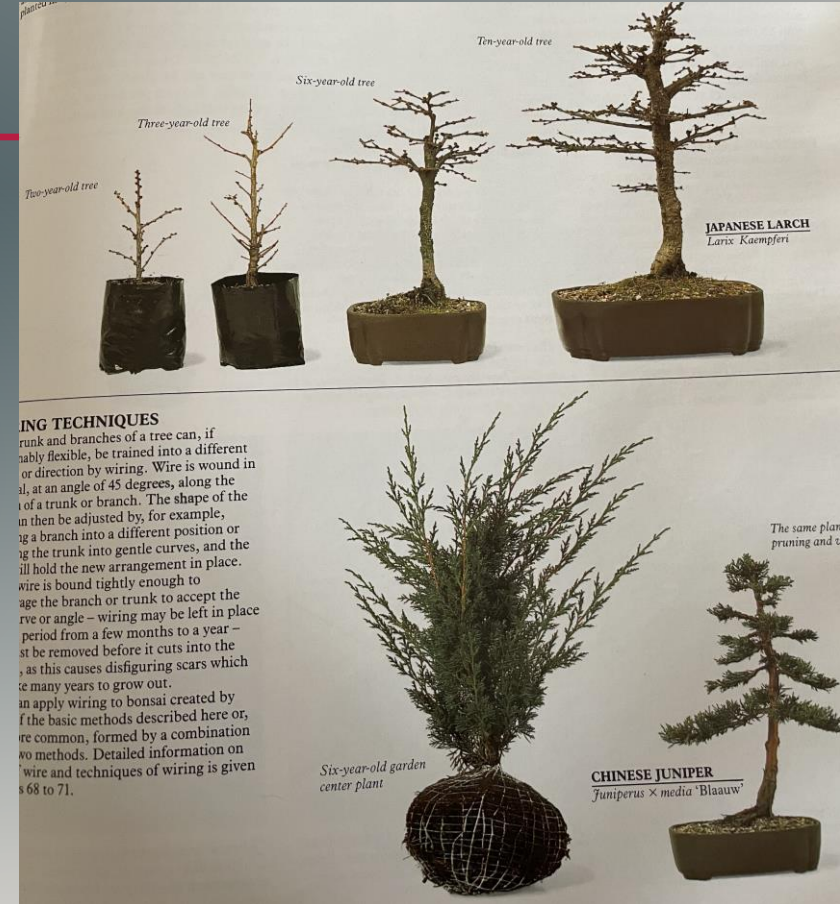
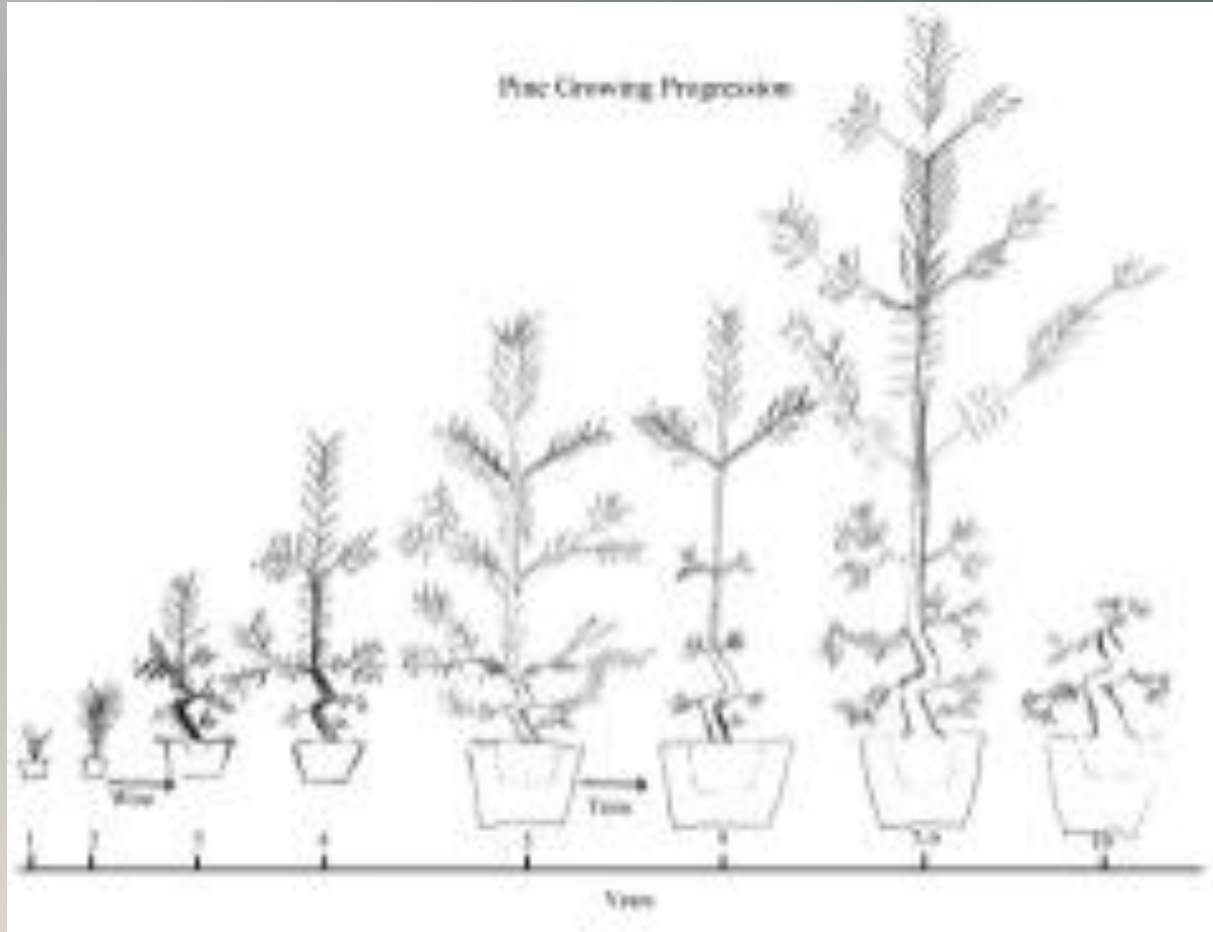
In these illustrations, we see that the triangle shape may be found in individual foliage masses, the entire tree, and the complete composition of tree and pot.

Figure 33-B



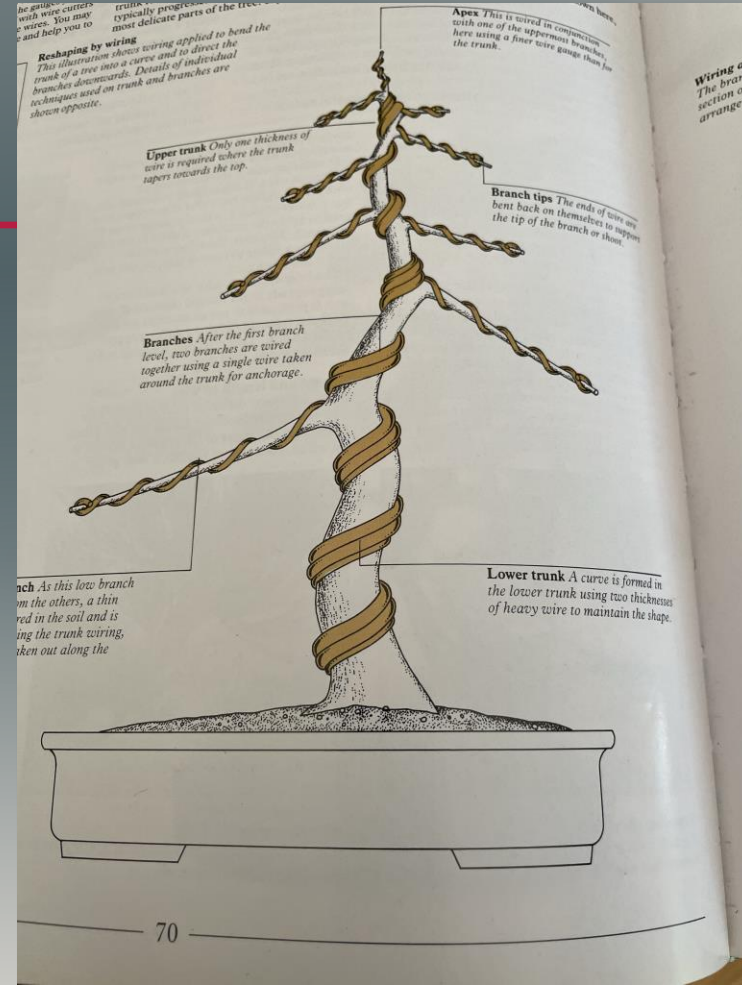
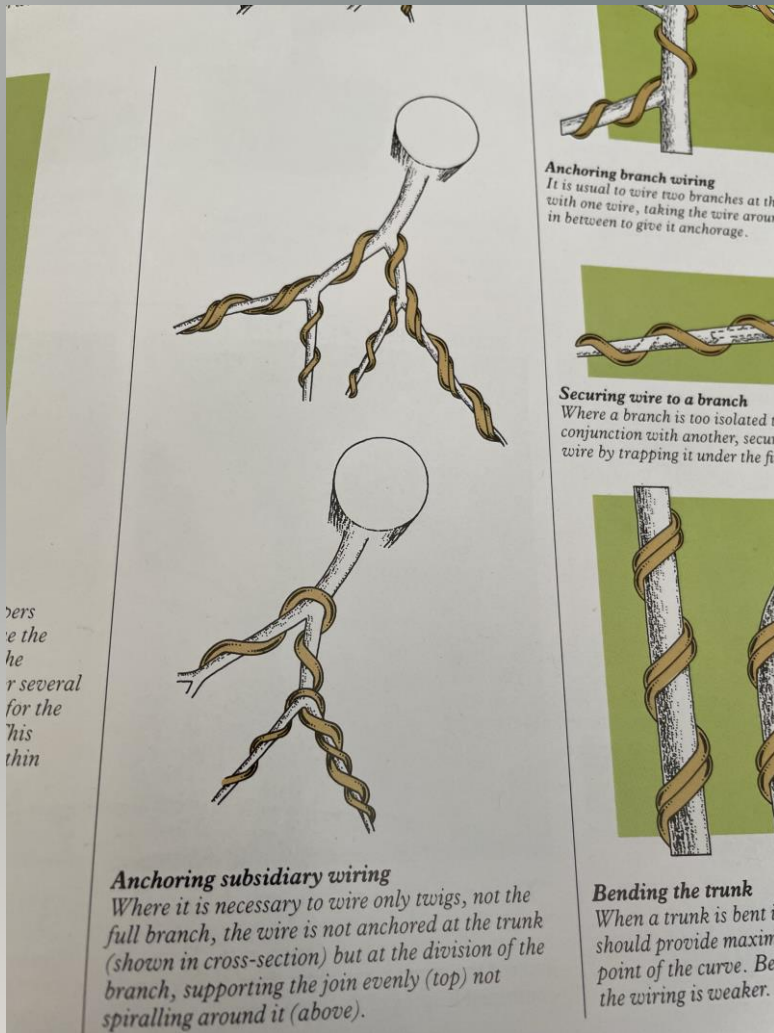
These trees show the triangle in a more subtle way, but triangles are present and are repeated throughout the compositions.

TIME IS A BIG FACTOR TO DEVELOP YOUR BONSAI



WIRING TECHNIQUES
Trunk and branches of a tree can, if suitably flexible, be trained into a different shape or direction by wiring. Wire is wound in a spiral, at an angle of 45 degrees, along the trunk or branch. The shape of the trunk or branch is then adjusted by, for example, bending a branch into a different position or angle, or curving the trunk into gentle curves, and the wire will hold the new arrangement in place. Wire is bound tightly enough to support the branch or trunk to accept the new curve or angle - wiring may be left in place for a period from a few months to a year - but must be removed before it cuts into the bark, as this causes disfiguring scars which take many years to grow out. The application of wiring to bonsai created by the basic methods described here or other methods, formed by a combination of the above methods. Detailed information on the use of wire and techniques of wiring is given on pages 68 to 71.

WIRING



RETYLING IS PART OF A GROWING TREE



top down
allow root system

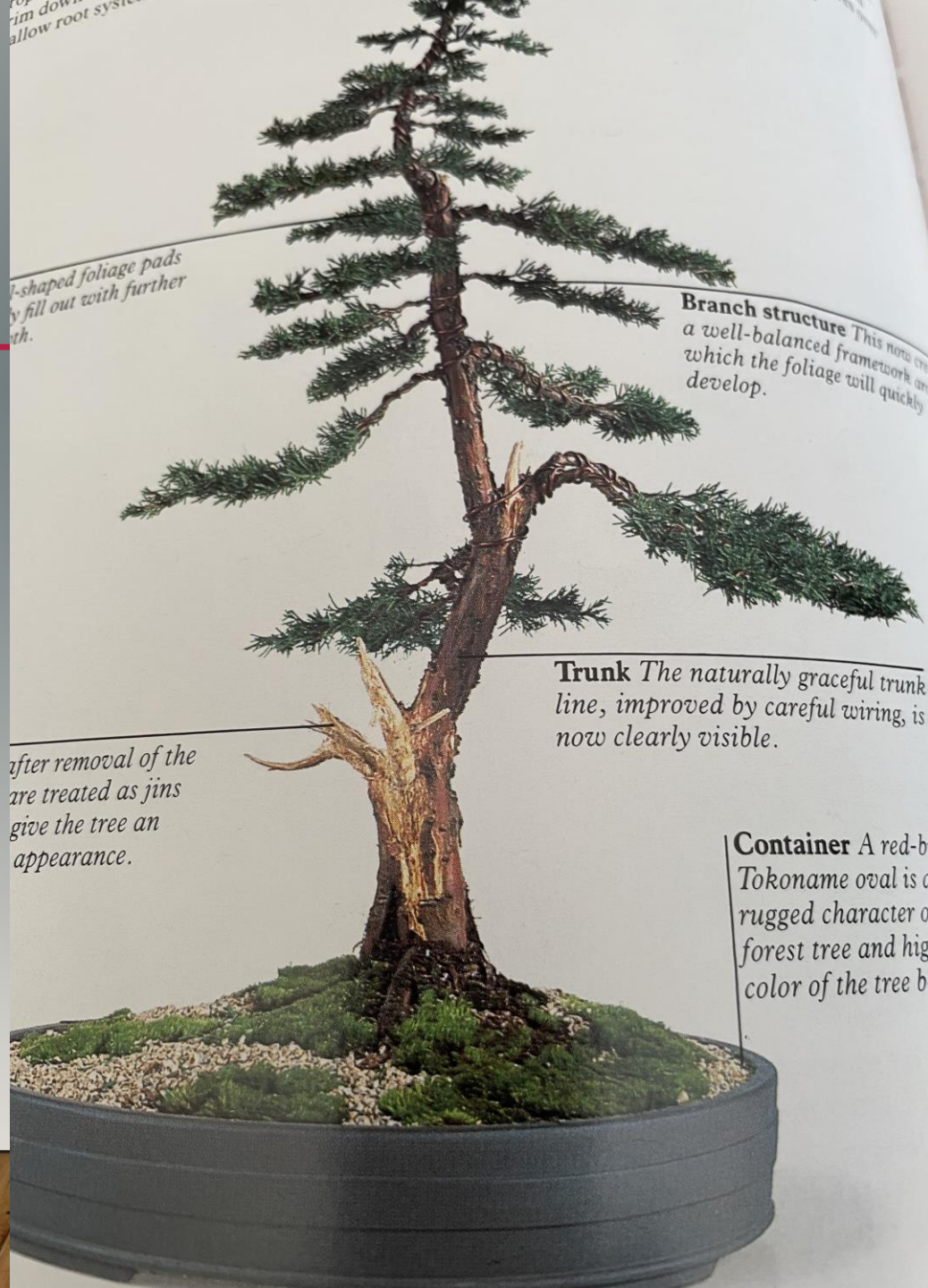
l-shaped foliage pads
fill out with further
th.

Branch structure This now creates
a well-balanced framework around
which the foliage will quickly
develop.

Trunk The naturally graceful trunk
line, improved by careful wiring, is
now clearly visible.

after removal of the
are treated as jins
give the tree an
appearance.

Container A red-brown
Tokoname oval is appropriate
rugged character of an
forest tree and highlights
color of the tree bark.

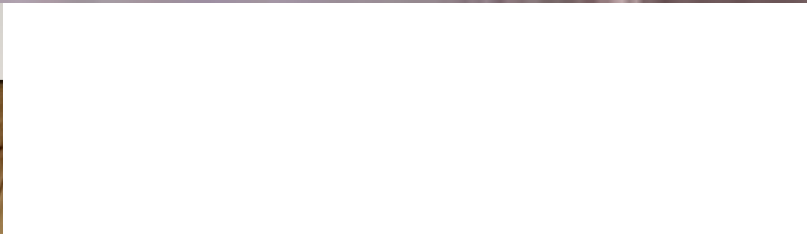


PROBLEMS IN ADDITION TO HORTICULTURAL ISSUES

- Pests deer, ants, chipmunks, squirrels
- Root rot (black roots)
- Excessive root or foliage pruning
- Excessive or Insufficient Water (including wind)
- Watering technique
- Cold weather
- Sun
- Under or over fertilizing

SELECTING PLANTS

- Low graft
- Leaf size
- Trunk flare
- Trunk movement
- Flexibility
- Branching and bud nodes
- Pot bound?
- Healthy - Circling roots, fungus, cankers?
- New growth
- Your ability to care for it



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