

Bonsai Show Display

Why do we show our trees? Everyone may have different reasons, some to consider are...

- To share our passion for the art of bonsai
- To participate/support our bonsai community and to create awareness and curiosity within our larger community
- As a motivating factor to push ourselves in a pursuit of bonsai growth
- For shared camaraderie and fun

Fundamentals of Bonsai Show Display

At its core, Show Display is just another design challenge of how we want to present our tree. This should ensure that every aspect of our display is *intentional* which will help guide every decision regarding our display.

While there are many approaches when creating an intentional show display, we will focus on three main categories to help build guidelines in this process.

These are:

Traditional Display

- Demonstrated most universally in the Japanese Kokufu Show model consisting of tree, pot, stand, accent and accent platform.
- Tree is always the main focus.
- Traditional Display has been the predominant model for a majority of Bonsai shows.

Creative Display

- While the elements of the display may be similar to the traditional model, how they are presented, composed and relate to each other may vary.
- May convey seasonality and/or context
- May tell a story
- Found or repurposed objects often are elements in the display

Avant-Garde Display

- Sky is the limit here, but usually deviates from the traditional model
- May show context/seasonality
- Often tells a story
- Can be provocative
- Can challenge mindsets
- Can be to create abstract visual art
- Tree may not be the main focus but just a part of the overall story

Considerations or “Rules of Thumb” for Display, Particularly Traditional Display

-Size/Height of the tree important. Optimal viewing of the tree is about 2/3 the way up the trunk. So size determines stand height and preferred table height. This also trickles down to accent height and size.

-Visual mass of the tree. This also informs the stand. For a big powerful tree you want a stand that looks and feels that it can comfortably support the tree.

How to get visual mass in the stand:

- Leg thickness
- Top thickness and/or added detail
- Darker color feels sturdier

-Orientation of Elements. Tree and accent should be oriented towards each other with their primary gestural movement. The defining branch should reach toward the accent with the accent and its jita orienting back towards the tree. All this helps your eye flow through the design and remain in the composition.

-Variation of material, color and shape of display elements. All of the elements in the display composition should have variety from each other. This helps create interest and flow in the display.

Pot

- Traditionally conifers in unglazed pots and deciduous in glazed containers.
- Shape and size appropriate to the tree. Is the tree masculine or feminine, heavy and solid or light and airy.

Stand

- Generally darker color demonstrates solidity, mass and age and doesn't compete with the tree.
- Lighter wood can demonstrate seasonality, usually spring, and newness, freshness and delicacy. Often more appropriate with deciduous trees.
- Variety of shapes. Rectangle the most universally useable as it pairs with a lot of different tree/pot combinations.

Accent Plant or Object

- Can insinuate season, environment or context that relates to the tree. In traditional Japanese display this is secondary to proper size and orientation.
- Accent should generally not be higher or not much higher than the stand.
- Accent should not be aligned with the stand, place it either slightly forward or slightly back from the stand.

Accent Stand or Jita

- Should be of different material, color and shape from the tree stand and other elements in the display.