

INFORMAL UPRIGHT STYLE BONSAI

Chapter 4

NOTES

I. OBJECTIVES

As a result of studying this section of the *Intermediate Bonsai Syllabus*, viewing audio visual presentations, or participating in other activities provided by an instructor, you will be able to:

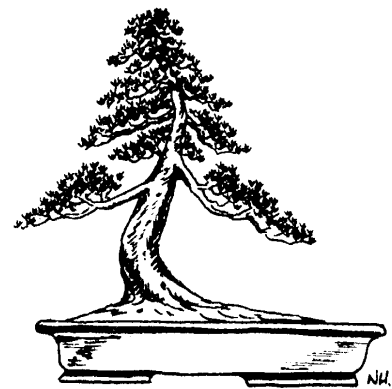
1. Describe the principal identifying features of *informal upright* style bonsai which distinguish it from other bonsai styles.
2. Using an appropriate stock plant, create an *informal upright* style bonsai in training.

II. GENERAL

- A. The *informal upright* style bonsai is one of several styles having relatively upright trunks. It is also the style tree taught in Introduction to Bonsai - A Course Syllabus.
- B. The *informal upright* style bonsai is the most common style in which trees are designed. It imparts gentle rhythmic movement, balance and grace.

III. INFORMAL UPRIGHT STYLE BONSAI DEFINED

- A. An *informal upright* style bonsai is:
 1. One in which the trunk emerges from the soil at an angle, curves one or more times between the base and the apex, and has an apex which is above its base when viewed from the front.
 2. The most popular shape of bonsai, especially for pine, juniper, oak and other conifers. It is also a good style for pomegranate, maple, plum and apple.



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B. Trunk

1. As seen from the front, has a **curved trunk** which is curved enough to be interesting, but not exaggerated.
2. **Tapered** from a wide base to a narrow apex.

C. Branches

1. **Angle downward** at varying degrees below the horizontal to give the appearance of age.
2. Are **curved** (serpentine) to complement the style of the trunk.
3. **Side branches** are usually on the outside of a curve of the trunk.
4. **Apex** is above the base of the trunk.

D. Container

1. Rectangular or oval.
2. Glazed or unglazed depending on species of tree.

IV. STYLING THE TREE

A. Roots

1. Remove **surface soil** down to the relatively thick radiating roots.
2. **Surface roots** should radiate in several directions but be strongest on the side away from the direction in which the lower trunk leans. Wire and reposition roots as necessary.

B. Trunk

1. Study the shape, curvature, defects, branch location and visual movement of the trunk and decide upon the front to be used in styling the tree.
2. Adjust **angle** at which the trunk emerges from the soil so that it rises at about a 25 to 35 degree angle from the soil to the first branch.
3. The **first curve** should bend in the direction opposite from which the lower trunk leans. If at ground level the trunk leans toward the left, the first curve should bend back toward the right to reestablish the tree's balance.
4. The **radius** of the curves should become less higher up on the trunk. Movement should be graceful and not monotonous.

C. Branches

1. The **lowest branch** is the heaviest branch, projects either to the left or to the right when viewing the tree from the front, never goes towards the rear or front and is about one third the way up the tree.
2. The **second lowest** branch is the second heaviest branch, extends either to the side opposite the lowest branch, or to the rear of the tree, and is not a bar branch.
3. The **third lowest** branch is the third heaviest branch, extends to the rear or to the opposite side from that of the lowest branch, depending on placement of the second branch, and again avoids being a bar branch.
4. Create an apex either from an existing apex or by removing the old apex and by wiring a front branch upright.

5. Identify and style the remaining branches between the lower three and the apex.

V. POTTING THE TREE

- A. Prepare the correct size and style container and assemble the appropriate soil mix. Generally an oval or rectangular container is best. (See Chapter 7, "Selecting a Container" in Introduction to Bonsai - A Course Syllabus for a discussion on container selection.)
- B. Decide on the tree's location in the pot.
 1. Position it in the container to the rear of the center line and either left or right of the center.
 2. In deciding whether to place it to the left or to the right consider the location of the lowest branch which is usually the longest branch. An alternate consideration may be the selecting the most massive side of the tree rather than the lowest branch.
 3. If the longest branch or most massive side is on the right, position the tree to the left of center. Vice versa if the longest branch or most massive side is on the left.
- C. Remove soil and roots from the rear and from the left or right side depending on placement.

Note: Details on potting are discussed in the chapter on formal upright style bonsai and will not be repeated here.

VI. SUMMARY

- A. The *informal upright* style bonsai is one in which the trunk emerges from the soil at an angle, curves one or more times between the base and the apex, and has the apex above the base of the tree.

Informal Upright Style Bonsai, Continued

NOTES

- B. Its branches angle downward, are curved to complement the style of the trunk and are usually on the outside of a curve of the trunk.
- C. The container is usually rectangular or oval in shape and may be glazed or unglazed depending on species of tree
- D. The tree is positioned in its container to the rear of the center line and either left or right of the center depending upon the location of the lowest branch or other characteristics which provide weight and mass.