

SLANTING STYLE BONSAI

Chapter 5

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 *slanting* style bonsai which distinguish it from other bonsai styles.
2. Using an appropriate stock plant, create a *slanting* style bonsai in training.

II. GENERAL

- A. The *slanting* style bonsai is one of several styles of bonsai which have relatively upright trunks.
- B. The *slanting* style bonsai depicts a tree in nature which
 1. May have been pushed over at an angle by a fallen tree, by a snow or rock slide, or by other environmental factors.
 2. May have grown in a harsh environment of wind-torn shorelines or rugged mountains where the winds generally come from a single direction. This *windswept* style tree may be the result of the wind alone or salt spray and/or sand combined with the wind.
 3. May have grown away from shade and toward the light.

Slanting Style Bonsai, Continued

NOTES

- C. Slanting objects are inherently off balance. The *slanting* style bonsai achieves asymmetrical balance through branch placement.

III. SLANTING STYLE BONSAI DEFINED

- A. The *slanting* style bonsai is one having either a straight or curved trunk with the apex above and to the left or to the right of the base of the trunk.

B. Trunk

1. Is a slanted version of either a formal or informal upright trunk. It should either be straight or with well balanced curves.
2. Emerges from the soil at an **angle** and which leans between 10 and 45 degrees from the vertical to either the left or right. The degree of lean is arbitrary and is determined by your ability to maintain visual balance.
3. Is **tapered** from a wide base to a narrow apex.
4. The apex leans slightly toward the front.



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C. Branches

1. May be horizontal or angled downward.
2. Are straight or curved to complement the style of the trunk.
3. Located on both sides and on the rear. Side branches should generally be located on the outside of the trunk's curves and be placed to counteract the lean.

D. Roots

Wire and position the roots so that the longer roots are on the side away from the lean.

Slanting Style Bonsai, Continued

NOTES

E. The container

1. May be rectangular or oval.
2. The tree is placed in the container so that it is offset toward the side away from the direction of the slant.



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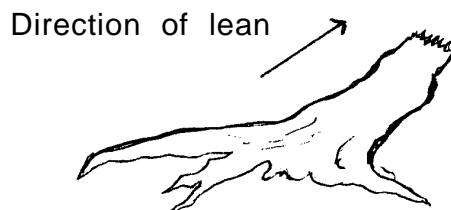
IV. STYLING THE TREE

A. Roots

1. Remove **surface soil** down to relatively thick radiating roots.
2. There should be strong and mature **surface roots** to give a feeling of strength, stability and endurance.
3. Strong roots should be apparent on the opposite side of the slant of the trunk to physically and aesthetically counter balance the lean of the tree. Wire and place 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 the **attitude** (the angle at which the trunk emerges from the soil) so that it emerges at about a 25 to 45 degree angle. The angle should be less if the trunk is straight rather than curved.

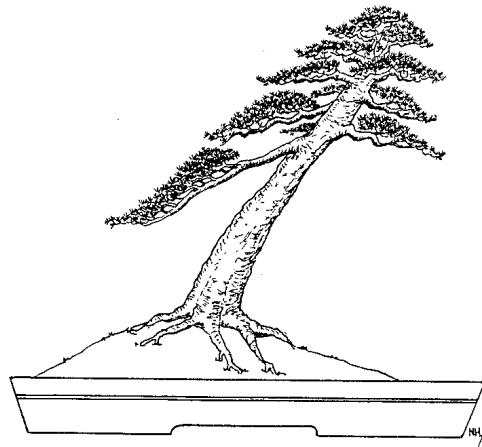


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3. If the trunk is curved, the **first curve** should bend in the direction opposite from which the trunk leans. If at ground level the trunk leans toward the right, the first curve should bend back toward the left to reestablish the tree's balance.
4. The trunk may continue at a slant to the apex or it may turn upward.

C. Branches

1. The **lowest branch** is the heaviest branch and should be on the opposite side of the slant of the trunk. This is necessary to counter balance the lean of the trunk. The tree should not appear to be about to topple over.
2. The **second branch** is the next heaviest branch and should usually project toward the rear to provide an immediate sense of depth.
3. The **third branch** is the third heaviest branch and extends in the direction of the lean.
4. Branches extending away from the direction of the lean are usually longer than comparable ones on other style bonsai.
5. Create the new apex either from an existing apex or by removing the old apex and wiring a front branch upright.
6. Identify and style the remaining branches between the lower three and the apex.



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Slanting Style Bonsai, Continued

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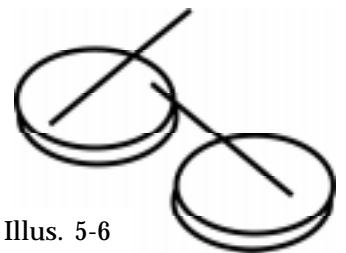
7. In a *windswept* bonsai
 - a. The **angle of the trunk** and lines of the branches should be arranged to create a sense of direction, movement, rhythm and tension.
 - b. The use of conifers is usually best.
 - c. The **foliage mass** should be relatively sparse to assist in defining the branch structure. It should be kept trimmed and not allowed to become bushy and should be kept away from the trunk line.
 - d. Branches may cross the trunk.
 - e. *Jin* (dead apex) and *shari* (dead branch) are highly desirable.
 - f. Planting in crescent shaped or shallow pots, on slabs or on rocks are usually best. These forms suggest an irregular coast line where prevailing winds have molded the tree.



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V. POTTING THE TREE

- A. Prepare the correct size and style container and assemble the appropriate soil mix.
- 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 slant of the trunk. Position the tree so that the slanting side of the tree, the side in the direction of the slant, is above the largest soil area. If the tree slants to the right, plant it toward the left in the pot.



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- 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 *slanting* style bonsai is one in which the trunk emerges from the soil at an angle, leans to one side or the other, and has the apex above and to the left or right of the base of the tree.
- B. It has either a curved or a straight trunk which is tapered from base to apex.
- C. Its branches are horizontal or are angled downward. They are shaped to complement the style of the trunk, and when the trunk is curved, are usually on the outside of those curves.
- D. The container is usually rectangular or oval and may be glazed or unglazed depending on species or style of tree. *Windswept* styles may have unique containers.
- E. 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 direction in which the trunk leans.