

BROOM STYLE BONSAI

Chapter 6

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:

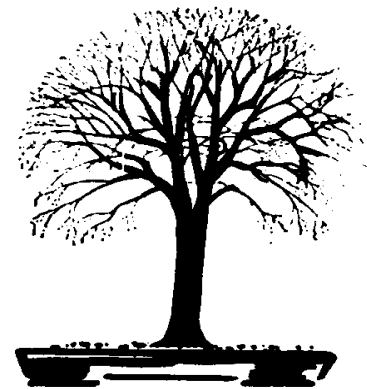
1. Describe the principal identifying features of the *broom* style bonsai which distinguish it from other bonsai styles.
2. Using appropriate plant material, create a *broom* style bonsai in training.

II. GENERAL

- A. The *broom* style bonsai appears as a juvenile deciduous tree in nature. They are usually found in locations protected from harsh environments.
- B. The *broom* style bonsai is one of several styles which have relatively upright trunks. It is a variation of the *formal upright* style bonsai.

III. BROOM STYLE BONSAI DEFINED

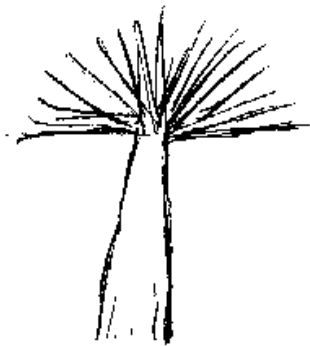
- A. A *broom* style bonsai:
 1. Has a straight, vertical trunk with a foliage mass like an upturned broom.
 2. In both bonsai and in nature, this style is usually created from deciduous trees. Zelkova and Chinese elm species make good *broom* style bonsai.



Illus 6-1

B. Trunk

1. Is absolutely straight when seen from the front and usually is vertical without any slanting or leaning.
2. It may have one of several configurations.



Single trunk



Split trunk



Multiple trunks

Illus 6-2

3. Surface roots radiate fairly evenly in several directions.

C. Branches

1. Subdivide into a fine tracery, reduce in diameter, and incline from the vertical as they approach the perimeter of the foliage mass.
2. Branch distribution is secondary to the overall effect.
3. Dead branches do exist on *broom* style trees in nature, but are not advisable on bonsai. This style is attempting to portray a smooth, rounded, soft profile; a dead branch would be counter to this.

D. The container is usually round or oval and shallow to emphasize the trunk.

IV. STYLING THE TREE

A. Roots

1. Several earth-clinging surface roots should be visible from the front. None should come directly toward the front of the tree. The location of roots may be adjusted by wiring and bending them as is done with branches.
2. Should be well established because of the size of the foliage mass in relation to the trunk diameter. A poor root formation would make the tree appear unstable.

B. Trunk

1. Select straight trunk plant material with thickness ranging from 1/2" for miniatures to 3" - 4" in diameter for larger bonsai.
2. With a healthy tree and in the early spring, decide on the final overall height which the bonsai will be allowed to attain. Then stump it (cut it off) to about a third of its proposed height. New branches will begin to grow from the stumped area.

C. Branches

1. Tightly wrap the upper portion of the trunk with raffia or monofilament binding material to prevent unsightly bulging as new branches develop. Remove the wrapping after 1 - 2 years.
2. As the new branches begin to develop, select 3 - 5 as the new leaders and remove the rest.
3. Wire or tie these new leaders so they are at a 30 - 45 degree angle from the vertical.
4. During the first year of training allow relatively free growth in order to develop girth on the new leaders.

5. The following spring and prior to the leaves emerging, prune to reduce the length of the new leaders to only 2 - 5 internodes, depending on the height of the tree and the length of the internodes. Another rule of thumb would be to cut the leaders back so they are the same length as the main trunk.
6. Remove buds facing a direction in which branches are not wanted, especially those growing in towards the center of the tree. Branches may come towards the viewer, but should not overly obscure the trunk line.
7. Periodically thin the foliage mass to allow light into the tree and to keep the branches healthy.
8. The process of leader and branch training takes several growing seasons before the tree appears to be an acceptable *broom* style bonsai.
9. An alternative method of developing branches is to begin with a seedling.
 - a. Tie the seedling to a straight stick to insure development of a straight trunk.
 - b. At the beginning of the second growing season, stump it at about a third of its intended ultimate height.
 - c. Allow the top three buds to develop, preferably at different levels and in different directions. These will be the leaders in the apex of the future bonsai.
 - d. Prune to stop vertical growth of the leaders when they are about the same length as the major trunk below.
 - e. Develop shape and ramification by pruning and wiring.

V. POTTING THE TREE

- A. Prepare the correct size and style container
 - 1. Generally a round or oval shallow container is best.
 - 2. Its depth should be between 1 and 2 times the diameter of the trunk at its base.
 - 3. Container may be a slab.
- B. Decide on the tree's location in the pot. The base of the trunk may be slightly off-center to the rear and to the left or right of center, or closer to the center depending on branch location and visual mass.
- C. Prepare appropriate soil mix.

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

VI. SUMMARY

- A. The *broom* style bonsai is defined as one having a straight vertical trunk with a foliage mass which looks like an upside down broom.
- B. Unlike many other style bonsai in which branching and the apex are designed by simply modifying existing material, branching and the apex on the *broom* style bonsai have to be developed in a totally different fashion. This takes time; there is no such thing as an "instant" *broom* style bonsai.