

INITIAL STYLING OF LARGE OLIVE BONSAI

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INTRODUCTION

There are no hard and fast rules in the treatment and styling of large bonsai. Often it is related to the time and space available, inspiration, inner beliefs and judgement of the condition of the tree as well as the time of the year. Personal priorities will vary from artist to artist and this will lead to a decision that he/she is comfortable with. What to attend to first? To my view the health of the tree is my first priority, and then the roots, the trunk and lastly the branches.

PRIORITIES

Personally I still believe that trees should be collected at least twelve to twenty four months prior to attempting to do major work on it. However, preliminary or rough styling may be carried out straight after collection.

Treatment for survival and continued health of the tree that you are working with, is to me of major importance. I see no sense in putting a lot of time and effort into something that will not be cared for properly or where one is in doubt that it can withstand the rigour or training.

Examine your tree impartially, weighing the good points or features as well as the bad points or faults. For people new in the game, it may be advisable to write these points in opposing columns. It should be obvious that faults need to be corrected or eliminated first, but keep in mind that sometimes the removal of a fault may lead to a bigger problem.

HOLISM

Think holistic. That is taking all the possibilities, all the action, as well

as the reaction into account and then work unerringly towards a desired goal. Make a plan, or several if need be, in your head or on paper, whatever is easier for you. This will help to visualize the probable outcome of your work. Treat your plan as a rough guide and not as a must to achieve.

CREATIVITY

Be creative. Creativity means to generate ideas, originality, zoom into essence, elaborate and be open to more ideas.

RESPECT

Respect your material. Grant the tree its own character, refrain from "forcing" your ideas onto older trees especially. It may help you to try and visualise it in human or animal form, static or in motion. A well structured tree will be read like a book: Having a beginning (getting your attention), an easy to follow or intricate story-line (never confusing), with excitement, tension, surprises as well as quiet reflecting moments (holding the viewer's interest), coming finally to a conclusion (apex or crown). Avoid multiple apexes. They are conceived as inconclusive and leave the viewer confused and thereby spoiling the story.

DESIGN PRIORITIES

Base and roots – the beginning of the story

Apex or crown – the aim, the limit and conclusion

Trunk – the central core of the story, the feature and essence

Branches – the elaboration and mood

Outline – the ramifications and dimensions

What holds it all together?

It is held together by line, space, perspective and balance.