

Few Useful Hints for Bonsai Exhibitors

When we display our Bonsai creations in an Exhibition, we should be mindful about few matters, concerning the quality of the product we are going to display. As it is a special occasion, we should take extra care to enhance its beauty and the artistic quality. If the exhibition is held in the form of a competition, Judges will consider these aspects in selecting the winners, among the exhibits.

Following factors will determine the beauty and the quality of the Bonsai Exhibits.

1. The Exhibit should be in accordance with the standard features of the particular style of the tree.
2. Suitability of the pot, where the tree is planted.
3. Overall Health of the plant, and a well spread Branches and Leaves.
4. Cleanliness of the pot, Tidiness, Ground Cover free of weeds

We'll discuss these points in detail.

1.

As we all know, there are certain rules we have to follow, in creating a Bonsai of a particular standard style. These rules have been established in order to present the beauty of the particular style, to the viewer.

- Basically, there should be a good visible taper in the main trunk from the base to the top of the tree.
- Lower branches of the tree, should be thicker than the upper branches.
- Few roots should be seen on the surface, preferably, well spread to two sides of the tree. They should not cross each other, and the spread should be neat and tidy.
- The lower 2/3rd of the main trunk should be visible to the eye in the front view.
- Where ever possible, the branches should have spaces in between.
- Two branches should not cross each other.
- No two branches should start from the same point in the main trunk.
- Branches should not cross the main trunk in the front view.
- Branches should have a 3-Dimensional distribution. If the branches are spread along two sides, the tree will not have the required depth in the design.
- The tree should have a triangular shape.

Few months before the Exhibition, the exhibitors should have a second look at their plants, to check whether the above conditions have been fulfilled. It will be easier if the plants are kept against a wall or a white screen, during this inspection, where any fault could be easily detected, and corrections could be made.

2.

In the overall design of a Bonsai tree, the pot is considered as an important component, where the tree and the pot should produce a composite specimen. The tree and the pot cannot be taken separately, but they should complement each other. View of a very well designed tree could be completely destroyed by using the wrong pot. The pot should be compatible with the style of the tree.

Extreme care should be taken in selecting a pot, where the features of the pot should not be highlighted, putting the tree in to the shadow. Pots painted with bright colours, or with decorative features will not be suitable. Light colours, of Grey and Earth shades would enhance the natural beauty of the trees. When cement pots are used, do not paint them with glossy enamel paint, but with water based emulsion paint.

The size of the pot is also an important factor, and it should be determined based on the size of the tree. Here too, a pot of incorrect size could completely destroy the view of a well designed tree.

3.

All plants brought for the exhibition should be free of deceases. We all agree that the trees infected with insects or fungus will not be pleasing to the eye of the viewers. Importantly, such plants could infect the healthy plants exhibitors by the others, and it is the responsibility of every one to make sure that only the plants free of deceases are brought to the exhibition.

A good foliage system will improve the beauty of your plant. A set of leaves with a lush green colour could be obtained by regular systematic fertilizing. It is desirable to prune the plant about 3 months prior to the exhibition. If re-potting is necessary, this too could be done at this stage.

Some times, removing all the leaves could give you a new set of fresh leaves. But, this should be done with a good understanding of the particular species of the tree, time required to get a fresh set of leaves etc.

Common mistake of most exhibitors is extra fertilizing ahead of the Exhibitions. This is done after neglecting the plant for some time and as an effort to improve the plant in a hurry. Such action will be result excessive growth of the plant, larger leaves etc. Therefore, what should be done is to continue regular fertilizing, months ahead, and maintaining the shape and growth of the plant, with regular pruning.

4.

Wiring should be removed before plants are brought for the exhibition.

If cement pots are used, it is always better to have a fresh coat of paint on them. Clay pots with enamel external coating should be washed and cleaned to be free of dust, fungus, algae etc.

Base of the trunk and the surface roots too should be free of algae and dirt. They could be cleaned with an old tooth brush or a paint brush.

The pots should be free of weeds. Moss used as a ground cover tends to discolor and rot after some time. It is always better to remove such old moss and lay a fresh carpet of moss.

All dead branches, dried leaves should be removed from the tree. Leaves fallen on the soil surface too should be removed.

It is always nice to have leaves of same size, through out the tree. Removing large leaves found sparingly should be removed.

Leaves projecting downwards from the horizontally spread branches obstruct the flow pattern of such branches. Therefore, such leaves should be removed as much as possible.

If the potted plant can be placed on a suitable stand, it will enhance the beauty of the specimen. Here too, we have to be careful in selecting a stand, where it should not get unnecessary attention, but should complement the overall view of the plant.

M.A.PEMASIRI