

## Rose Bonsai

**Definition of Bonsai** – They are generally outdoor plants (a few species can survive indoors with special lighting and ventilation).

- Japanese, **bonsai** – To plant a tree in a tray - The only thing that is Japanese about the art is the name, it is worldwide.
- Chinese, **penjing** – tray scenery, Thanks to the Chinese and Japanese, the whole world is now enjoying the art.
- American – **miniature living art** - It is a four dimensional art – it has height, width, depth, and life. Life takes time and it is never finished. Once dead, it loses much of its appeal.

**Species of Plants Used for Bonsai.** Bonsai is an art using many types of plants, not a species of plants

Bonsai techniques have been developed to fit each species. Understanding the growth and dormant cycles and when to apply each procedure. Plants produce their own food and the food reserves is a function of their growing and dormant cycles. Evergreens produce year round and don't store much while deciduous must store food for new growth in spring. Plants have a hierarchy for food usage, first it will use it to produce flowers, next to produce fruit, then leaves, and last to grow new roots, and it is usually in sync with the seasons which determines the timing for re-potting, pruning roots and branches, trimming leaves and small branches, and fertilizing.

- **Evergreens** – evergreen deciduous (leaves live for one year) or evergreen where leaves live for more than one year. Can be difficult or tricky to reduce leaf size. Understanding hormone production and flow can help.
  - Juniper
  - Pines
  - Boxwoods
- **Deciduous** – usually top dominant so timing of trimming can be more important.
  - Elms
  - Maples
- **Flowering and Fruiting** – Flower and fruit size usually cannot be modified by bonsai technique. The size is determined by genes and nutrition.
  - Azaleas
  - Camellias
  - Peaches, apples, quinces, etc.

**How to Start a Bonsai** – It doesn't require patience, but perseverance, and it will teach patience.

- **Seeds and cuttings** – Usually takes a long time and only used with rare species or to develop a special root system.
- **Nursery stock** – Generally the quickest way to develop a good looking bonsai to enjoy while you work on developing old age characteristics.
- **Collected Material** – You start with a plant that has old age characteristics, but it takes time and skill to grow a good root system to support it and new branches to match the old trunk.

## **The Challenges of Using Roses for Bonsai** – Many traditional bonsai techniques don't work

- **Compound Leaves** – resist leave size reduction
- **Growth Habits**
  - Fast growing, short lived
  - Needs full sun, but cool roots
  - Long and slender branches with weak trunk, tends to clump
- **Vulnerable to Insects and Diseases**
- **Weak rooting**
  - Not drought tolerant
  - Not heat tolerant
- **Styling is difficult**- hard to make them look old, achieve the look of old age.

## **How to overcome challenges** – The challenges can make it more interesting and rewarding, fun

- Select the correct variety – small leaves and flowers.
- Select correct pot and use correct soil – deeper and well-draining soil with the correct fertilizer.
- We often see bonsai lecture/demos all done in an hour or two, and often the audience is not told they can do some of the steps over days or weeks. Often it is better for the health of bonsai to do one step then give it a little time to recover before doing the next step. Learning how to work on the bonsai in a continuous matter is an art of its own.
- Style bonsai to accent rose features –
  - Prune flower buds to reduce the number of flowers to fit branch size, the number of leaves, and pot size. Start by keeping the branch tips and flower buds trimmed until the trunk and main branches reach the desired size. When removing flowers or flower buds, cut branch back two or three leaves (buds) leaving a long stub so it will not dry out and damage or weaken the bud. Use "Titebond II" or some other brand of exterior wood glue to heal the cut. This should add two branches for the one you cut off which will increase the number of small branches and will increase the number of new flower buds.
  - Keep the sucker branches removed. Keep just enough flower buds so each flower can be seen without flowers overlapping or hiding each other.
  - Azalea bonsai flower buds are reduced according to size to regulate when the blooms open, generally to all open at the same time. Roses could be done in a similar matter, however, with roses you may want to extend the blooming cycle by leaving buds of each size.
  - Dead head flowers - As soon as flower starts to fade, prune by cutting branches to reduce food usage and stimulate back budding. It is desirable to encourage as many small branches as possible growing close to the trunk and lower on the tree. This can be done by cutting each branch back leaving two leaves with buds so there will be two branches sprout from the branch then you will have two branches where there was one.