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Bonsai – The Journey East To West

By Steve Castle

Since its beginnings in China, during the Han Dynasty over two thousand years ago, the art of growing miniature trees in containers, bonsai, has had an interesting history. Initially, penjing - as it is called in China, was considered too spiritual for the common folk and only nobles were permitted to own one. During the 14th century, the Chinese invaded Japan and brought with them many aspects of Chinese culture, including religion, calligraphy and penjing. Even today, the Japanese characters for bonsai remain the same in Chinese.

The Japanese developed and refined this art form, still remaining the privilege of the nobles. When they began to lose interest, the art form almost died out completely and was only practiced by a few people. Bonsai rose in popularity, but with the leaning towards coloured flowers and variegated leaves. The development of bonsai as we know it really began during the last century.

Although Westerners had encountered bonsai on their travels in the Far East, and a few had even written articles about them, it wasn't until the end of WW2 that the hobby really began to catch on in the United States. GI's returning from Japan brought with them small samples of these fascinating trees.

Many of them only survived for a short time, but there were enough people curious about bonsai to try to find out how to care for them correctly. The large Japanese-American population in the United States was the major source of information and encouragement, and for many years their knowledge and skills were in demand.

Today bonsai has become a household word. Small cuttings planted in shallow pots are sold as bonsai in department stores, garden nurseries, open air markets and even at gas stations. These are not true bonsai such as produced by artists in Western countries as well as Japan, but they are a start. They at least introduce newcomers to the idea of growing a miniaturized tree in a pot. It is then up to the individual to read books, join clubs and meet other bonsai enthusiasts in order to learn and improve their skills.

As your knowledge and enthusiasm grows, you will surely become more ambitious and begin to create your own bonsai from native plants. You will find the art of bonsai a hugely absorbing and satisfying pastime that will give years of pleasure.

Bonsai nut of note. new blog at :

<http://www.bonsai-dojo.blogspot.com>

and my information site at

<http://www.info-aces.com/bonsai/index1.html>

What Is An Outdoor Bonsai?

By Andrew Green

Bonsai trees and plants are basically trees and plants that are pruned and trimmed to keep their size minimal. The trees and plants relish the practise because they get a lot of care and attention and have a lifespan similar, even greater in some cases, than their wild counterparts. Indoor Bonsai can be bought from virtually anywhere in the world and the increase in popularity has seen a large increase in the number of specialist shops dedicated to the growing and caring of Bonsai.

Outdoor Bonsai can be grown in a small area of your garden, and some of the most healthy Bonsai in the world are outdoor Bonsai. However, it is important that you should try to buy outdoor Bonsai from a shop close to home, thus ensuring that your specimen can cope with the conditions you are going to force it to endure. If you live in a baking hot state in America and are considering buying over the Internet, you shouldn't be buying a Bonsai from a cold climatic country, as there is a good chance it will not thrive in your area.

Do outdoor Bonsai need less care than indoor Bonsai?

Just because you are growing your Bonsai in a small area of your garden doesn't mean you should or indeed can forget about them and just expect them to maintain their miniature height or grow at all. A Bonsai that isn't trimmed and cut will cease to be a Bonsai and will simply become a tree, presuming there is room for the roots to grow; it's amazing exactly where your roots will dig to, they will often find a way through or around concrete, rocks and even other plants and trees so be very careful where you situate it.

If you are growing your outdoor Bonsai in a pot, which is the most common and sensible way to do it, then you should never bring it indoors. No matter how ill it looks it will undoubtedly not enjoy the sudden change in conditions and even the most healthy and hardy of Bonsai can only withstand a day, possibly two at the very most, indoors as a centre piece. It is very important to remember this, do not bring an outdoor Bonsai indoors for longer than one day every season. Bringing your Bonsai in during the winter and putting it next to the blazing hot heater is undoubtedly going to scorch the leaves and the roots, and your plant will probably die from dehydration. The reverse is also true, bringing a Bonsai

in from the heat and leaving it next to the Air Conditioning unit is the equivalent of a shock frost in summer and will also kill your Bonsai.

Bonsai HQ,

<http://bonsaihq.com/>

for lots of information about looking after your bonsai.



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