



The Midway News

3. June's meeting – Choosing the right pot for you Bonsai

~ by Heinrich

~"A tree is a tree, a pot is only a pot. It does not become a Bonsai until these two are combined and form a harmony together.

A large part of the art of Bonsai is the experience of a tree that has become detached from its ground bondage and now lives a life in a pot." ~ Thor Holvila

Bonsai is not only about the tree, but also about the pots as well. The tree and the pot must complement each other. This is what makes Bonsai, a tree in a pot. Having a tree in a flowerpot does not make it a bonsai, only when the tree is put into a bonsai pot will it become a proper bonsai.



Above: Different pots and trees on display



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When choosing a pot for your bonsai, there are 4 key criteria that must be considered:

- Size
- Shape
- Style
- Colour

Size:

- If you are using a rectangular pot, the longest dimension, usually the length of the pot, is between 1/2 and 2/3 of the height of the bonsai.
- If you are using a circular pot, then 1/3 of the height of the bonsai is used to determine the diameter of the pot.
- With literati style bonsais, the pot is usually 1/10th of the height of the tree.

As a general rule, the deeper the pot, the more freely the roots will grow and the stronger the tree will become. If the pot is too shallow, it can cause problems as drainage is a problem and there is less soil for the roots. Thus, to ensure the pot is deep enough, the pot must be at a minimum as deep as the thickness of the trunk.

Shape:

- For powerful looking trees, ruddy and chunky rectangular pots are used.
- For delicate and soft trees, oval or circular pots are used.
- For landscape, oval or rectangular pots are used. If you think of a painting, you do not want to overpower the picture with the frame. The same applies to a landscape, a shallow pot is used.
- For cascade trees, deeper pots are used to anchor the pot.
- Pots with sharp corners and upper rims are used for powerful looking trees.
- Pots with rounded corners and straight rims are used for delicate and soft trees.

Style:

- For powerful looking trees use more ruddy and chunky pots.
- Delicate trees use more smooth finished pots.
- The glazed pots are usually used for deciduous trees.
- Texture can also help to emphasize the picture you are trying to portray. Smooth finishes can usually be used for delicate trees and more rugged looking pots are used for powerful looking trees.
- You can also have a pot where the top portion is smooth and the bottom part having more texture. This will help emphasize the foliage with the smooth finish and then the part with more texture will help emphasize the trunk.

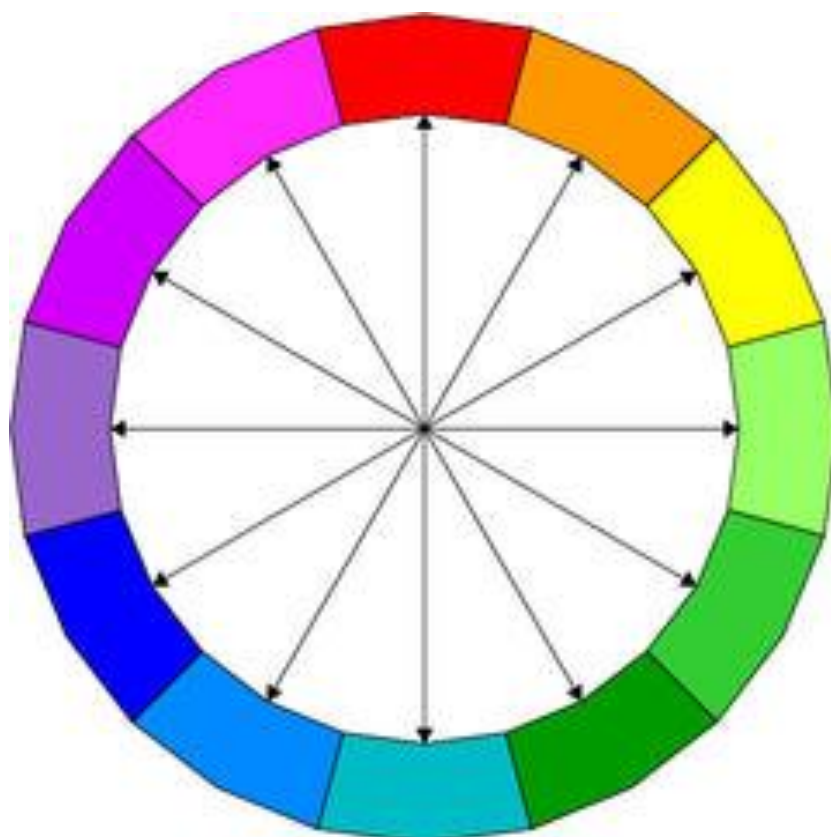


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It Colour:

- Green is the most used colour in all bonsai. The colour harmonizes perfectly with the earth tones. Dark green pots complement variegated trees well.
- Darker pots are best to emphasize flowers as the flowers are usually white. With flowers of a colour other than white, use a colour pot which complements the colour of the flower. They are also always used when you wish to display a tree without leaves but with fruit.
- Powder blue will best complement red berries, the fiery red of Japanese maple leaves in spring or the winter branching of a trident maple. A medium intensity blue will work best for any tree with an orange berry such as a Firethorn. Dark blue is best for yellow berries and flowers.
- Greyish bark like that found on maples and stinkwood harmonize well with very light-coloured pots, such as the creams. Light coloured pots are also traditionally used when you wish to display fruiting trees with fruit and leaves. These light-coloured pots are not distracting and therefore are focus the viewers' attention more on the tree and less on the pot.
- The following colours combination can be used:

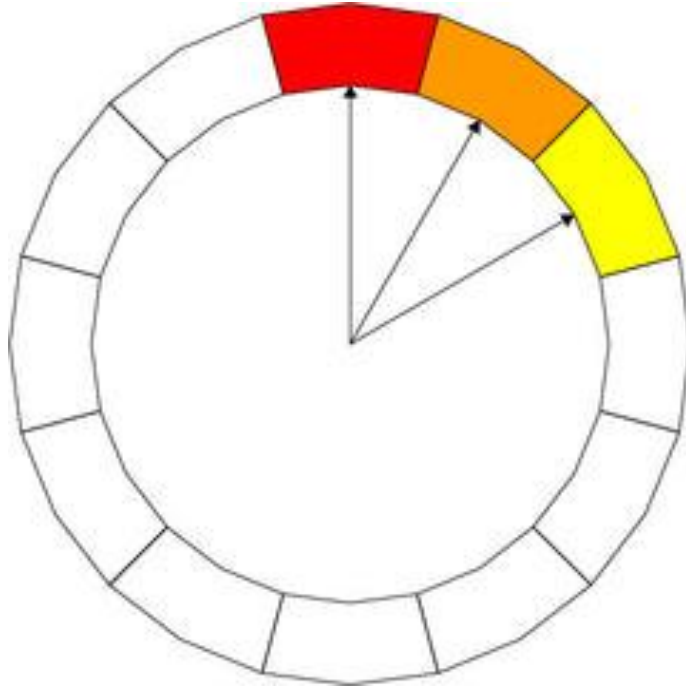
The colour wheel:



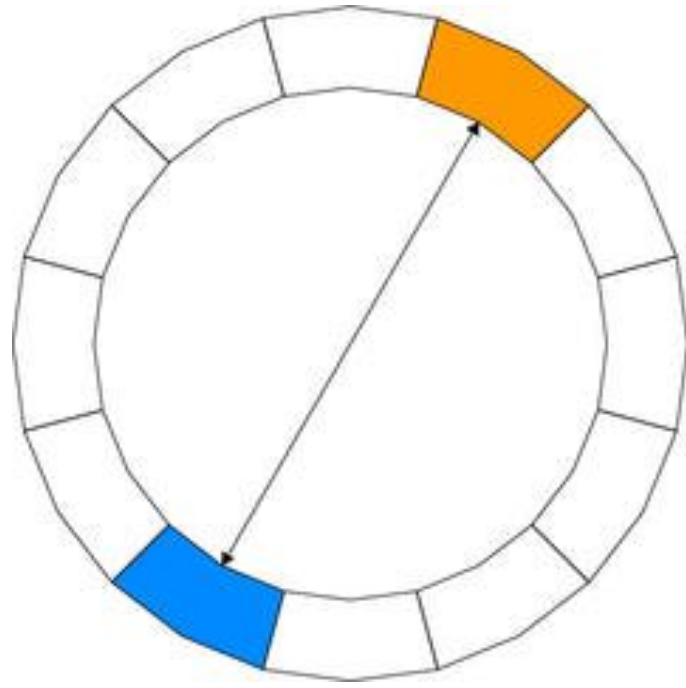


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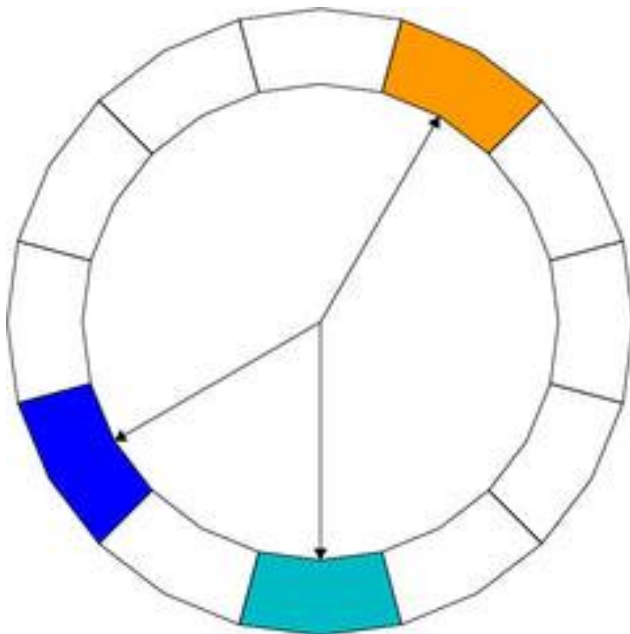
Analogous colours:



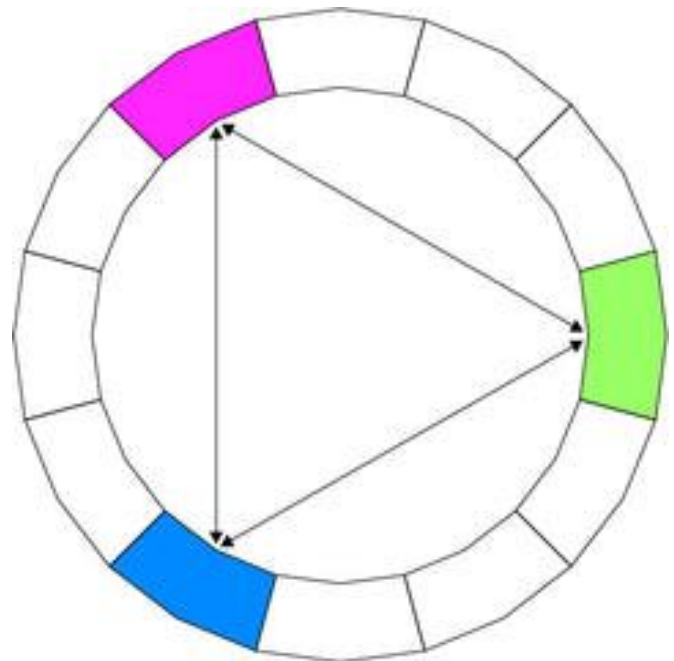
Complimentary colours:



Analogous complimentary colours:



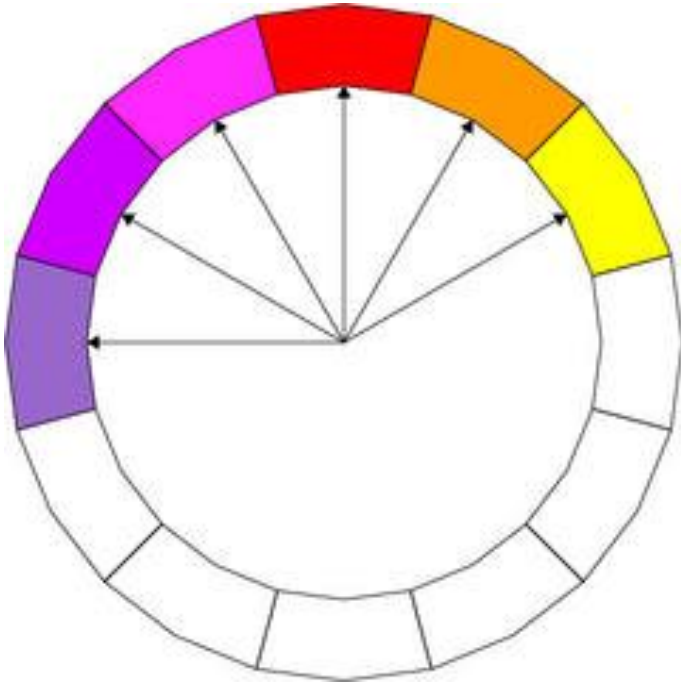
Colour Triad:



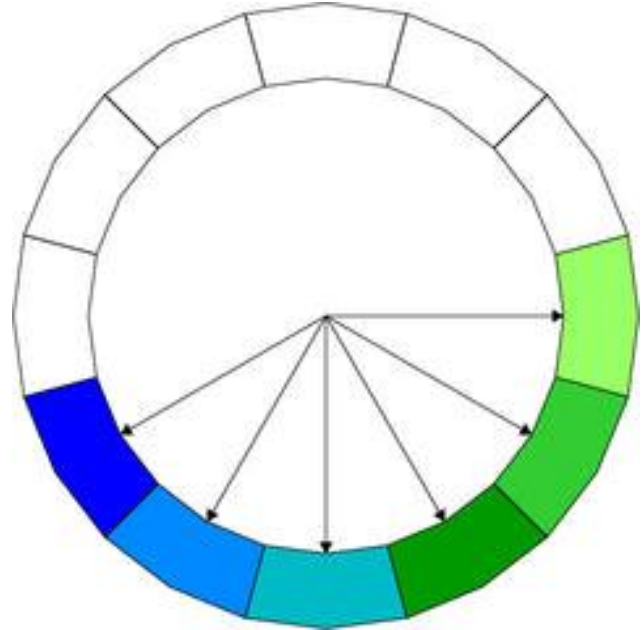


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Warm colours:



Cold colours:



Conclusion

These are only guidelines, but you can use any pot that you feel emphasizes the overall picture that you are trying to create.



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Examples:



This is a Juniper still in training. Thus a plastic training pot is used. Once the tree is ready to be repotted, a smoothed green or blue glazed pot can be used.



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This is a Wild Olive that is a more powerful looking tree. Thus a unglazed brown pot is used.



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This is a Chinese Maple. The pot used contains scenery pictures to showcase where this tree is from.



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This is a Firethorn that carries orange berries. The white pot helps to display the berries. A medium intensity blue pot could also have been used to portray the orange berries.



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This is a Lavender tree with leaves that have turned red for the autumn/winter. A red pot is used to emphasize the red colour in the overall picture.



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This is a Juniper. A contrasting colour to the foliage was used for the pot so that the attention is drawn to the green foliage and its shape.