



## midway bonsai society

### POT SELECTION.

Selecting an appropriate container for a bonsai involves the same decision making process as the selection of a frame for a painting. In either case, the decisions made can enhance or detract from the final impact; the work will have on those who view it. Don't make the mistake of thinking the tree is the only thing a viewer will see when they look at your creation. Your bonsai is not just the tree, but a whole presentation including not only the plant material, but other elements as well.

What distinguishes a flower pot from a bonsai pots, is that a bonsai pot has feet.

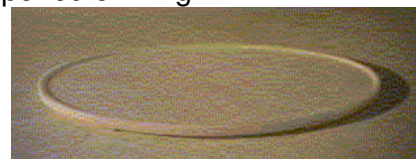
In choosing a suitable pot for your tree, you should have to consider...

1. **The material the pot is made from.**
2. **The shape of the pot.**
3. **The style of the pot.**
4. **The size of the pot.**
5. **The colour of the pot.**
6. **Maintenance issues.**

#### 1. POT MATERIALS

Bonsai pots are made from various materials, but generally what are commonly available would be plastic, fibreglass, cement, mica and ceramic.

- **Plastic** pots are cheap and functional. They are light weight and come in a variety of colours and shapes. They serve a better function as growing and training pots being cost effective but the UV rays usually end up breaking the plastic of the container after 2-3 years.
- **Fibreglass** is a good alternative. Fibreglass is strong, light and comes in many colours. They tend to scratch easily, but are easily mended. They tend to be on the expensive side, and are very good alternatives to ceramic flat forest planters.
- **Cement.** Stay away, purely because of the lime leaching into your soil. Trees liking lime soil, such as Olives may do well, but acid loving trees like azaleas may survive, but will invariably die...
- **Mica** pots are made of 80% mica, 15% polyethylene and 5% graphite. Mica has a natural ability to stabilize the temperature of the soil in the pots. This promotes healthy root activity during the growing season and protects during the cold periods. These pots are extremely durable and will withstand the elements for years.
- **CC.** To have a clear definition, first, various kind of ceramic should be classified, by considering its construction and make. As a rough guide, earthenware is normally fired at temperatures in the range of about 1000 to 1200 degrees Celsius. This is the most common form of bonsai pot. Stoneware is fired at between about 1100 to 1300 degrees Celsius; and porcelains at between about 1200 to 1400 degrees Celsius. However, the way that ceramics mature in the kiln is influenced not only by the peak temperature achieved, but also by the duration of the period of firing...
- **Marble** although very porous allows for the creation of miniature landscapes.



Author:



## midway bonsai society

### 2. POT SHAPE

The basic pot shapes are square, round, rectangular and oval. Coupled with this the pot may be flat – for suban, shallow for forest planters to tall for cascades. Consequently, the following pots will suit the style. Generally informal and formal styles fit into square, round, rectangular and oval pots, while cascade and semi-cascade have tall walled pots. Literati have a round pot without a lip.

### 3. POT STYLE



PB-006

Feminine characteristics in a tree would be bonsai with flowers, berries, colourful or petite leaf, smooth bark texture, no visible root, oval crowns. Feminine characteristic of pots would be smooth rounded corners, ornate inscriptions, fluted sides, dainty feet and glazing.

Masculine characteristics would be trees with thorns, gins and sharis, little or no flowers and berries, serrated leaves, rough bark and a prominent nabari. Masculine pots would include sharp corners, large lip, and simple feet and unglazed. However, such assessment is fairly subjective.



PA-007

### 4. POT SIZE

Haven't we all been amazed at healthy trees in pots that are tiny? The tree is the focal point and trees that are too small in a pot will detract from the pot. Mathematically, where the tree is wider than it is tall, the container width should be equal to less than  $\frac{2}{3}$  the spread of the left and right branches. For trees that are tall the width of the pot should be a little more than  $\frac{2}{3}$  the total height of the tree.

### 5. POT COLOUR

Ceramic pots are glazed, unglazed or painted. Unglazed pots come in the clays natural colour and are usually brown, but can vary to black, yellow, red and white. Glaze is a glassy coating applied to pottery, the primary purposes of which include decoration and protection. Glazes are highly variable in composition but usually comprise a mixture of ingredients that generally, but not always, mature at kiln temperatures lower than that of the pottery that it coats. One important use of glaze is in rendering pottery vessels impermeable to water and other liquids. The colours and patterns involved are infinite, but there are a few pointers. All colours are made by mixing together varying proportions of 3 primary colours - red, yellow and blue.



them in pairs creates three new secondary colours orange, green and violet, and further mixing creates tertiary colours. Then there are varying shades of these colours. The reds are the warm colours while the blues are the cold colours. When looking for a glazed pot and unsure of what colour to use, you should stick to the earthy colours of green, brown and red.



## midway bonsai society

Should you have a unique colour characteristic on your tree, such as red fruit, then you can either compliment the colour with a warm coloured pot of red or brown or you can contrast the colours with a blue pot. Your choice may be preference, but should you choose to contrast, the colour trait of the tree must be significantly greater so that the pot does not detract away from the tree. Trees with these traits typically carry berries, flowers and colourful leaves. Very often it is simpler to stick to an unglazed natural colour. A tree in an unglazed container is always correct.

### **6. MAINTENANCE**

Trees in bigger pots grow better than trees in smaller pots. The prime importance of bonsai is to sustain the life and health of the tree.

Trees in deeper pots dry out exponentially slower than trees in shallow pots.

Lighter pots are cooler than dark pots. This can be a good or bad facture depending on the ambient temperature.

### **CONCLUSION**

Sometimes bonsai artists are so focused on the placement of each branch and leaf that they forget see their creations apart from any containers they might be potted in. A tree in the correct pot can have such a dramatic effect on the bonsai as a whole, changing it into something of great beauty. What you must do is remember the prime directive... **THE TREE IS THE POINT**. By keeping things in focus, and taking a step back from our creations, we can insure that the selection of containers and accent items all make a positive contribution to our bonsai creation. It almost goes without saying that trees with massive trunks will look better in heavy containers. Likewise, trees with lighter elements belong in lighter and more delicate pots. A cascade style bonsai belongs in cascade style pot and not in a shallow tray. Forest plantings tend to look better and give a better feeling of depth if they are planted into low wide trays. A capable bonsai artist with a clear understanding of harmony, balance and negative space will probably arrive at these conclusions by himself.

Finally, it is well to remember that the selection of a pot for your tree does not need to be an absolute one. Periodically changing the container your tree is potted in can give the planting an entirely new look and is completely at harmony with the way our trees themselves change throughout the seasons and years.