

Basic Tools

Die grinder 150watt small, 750/1000Watt large with multiple speed. You will not need one that exceeds 30'000rpm. The large one will make work faster while the small die grinder refines the work. Both are required for a proper job.

Saw if branches need to be cut or a knob cutter. If you are going to remove a large section, do it in stages as you may cut too short.

Bits made of carbon steel.

Goggles.

Sealants.

Wire to move branches out the way.

Chalk.



Tree selection

The nature of the wood will limit the scope. The direction of the wood is called the grain. The more refined section of your design should be along the grain instead of against it. One should never carve against the grain. Across and against the grain will result in chips and broken lines which may interrupt the harmony of the grain. Hardwoods are the best to carve as they have a greater longevity, finer grain, and greater lustre, and many types of furniture will tell you whether the wood is suitable. Suitable trees are, oak, olive, buddleja, stinkwood, juniper, elm. Unsuitable woods would be softwoods such as baobab, figs. Although soft woods may be easier to carve the results may not last long and be prone to rot.

Buddleja is very good for carving as the tree grows on veins. The tree is often found in the wild where termites have already started the work for you. Carving a vein in a buddleja will result in dead branches while in most other species it is not a problem. Some woods are suitable for carving but jins and sharis do not lend themselves to the tree, such as acacia.



Process

Initially map out the piece of wood to carve with a piece of chalk. Start with the end in mind.

Select a bit that takes out large pieces of wood smoothly. Start at the bottom of the jin or shari and work up to the top of the tree working with the grain.



Once the basic work is done, you may find rot, holes, worms that may change your whole plan. You will have to remove the rot, worms. Your holes and sharis may become large. You will need to be aware of reverse taper, especially if you are working near the base of your tree. Once you have the basic structure you will need

to move to a finer bit and a slower machine. This is where a small machine comes in handy as it allows one to manoeuvre deep into the grain. This is the most delicate part of the process and also the most time consuming. After this you will need a very fine bit with a sand paper finish. All loose pieces must be removed. The sandpaper will also soften the grooves, sharis and gins so that they look more weathered.

Sealing will be the last process. We like to use water based wood glue. It gives a gloss shine, is transparent and shows off the grain. It also protects the wood from the elements and pests. The shine also allows the observer to read the grain. Your first application should be a well watered down glue. This will allow deeper penetration and a longer period before you need to recoat the

wood. Apply a second and third application. Some wood glue give off a white sheen when they get wet or cold after the drying period. This type of glue is unsuitable.

Oiling wood is unsuitable as the colour of wood goes very dark and as bonsai is outside also collects dirt.

Lime sulphur is also a popular choice. White dye or paint is added to create a stark contrast of white to the brown bark. Our view is that lime sulphur only looks good on junipers and conifers. On other trees it looks very unnatural.