

Real Estate

GREEN HOUSE

The splendour of miniatures

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An artistic landscape can be created by using the living art-form of 'miniature' trees. Due to their prominence and grandeur, these trees assume a very significant role at the time of planning the landscape of any area, big or small. For the miniatures to exude beauty, it is better to establish them on a slope so that they receive good amount of sunlight. The whole look of a big garden gets enhanced when 5-7 such trees are planted in close proximity, making them the centre of attraction. However, in a small garden even one miniature tree grown in a corner can add punch to the whole setting.

A miniature tree is grown in ground instead of in a pot. For easy maintenance and beautification, it is normally allowed to grow up to 6-7 ft in height. With the aid of horticultural practices it is artistically trained, styled and fashioned in such a way so as to give it a "bonsai-like" character. However, technically one can't call these bonsais, as the word bonsai in Japanese language means 'a tree in a container'. But the techniques used in training, styling and fashioning these miniature trees are basically just the scaled up versions of bonsai culture. The concept of miniature trees is very new, but styling technique is as old as bonsai.



Attention grabbers: Miniature trees can be placed in a corner or in the centre in a cluster

Such trees can be suitably shaped in the form of informal upright style, slanting style or cascaded style of bonsai. It is not necessary to follow strictly the bonsai guidelines in creating a miniature. The artist should reflect his imagination and show his skill in altering the natural form of the plant in expressing and creating the overall design of the miniature which should look different. This can be achieved by training and suitably placing branches at different heights and in different directions. The technique of wiring the trunk and branches and clipping of branches and some foliage helps in giving the desired shape.

The miniature will take about 4-5 years to reach the desired height and shape, giving the artist a great satisfaction in its creation. Not only this, being a live creation, the overall design of the miniature improves with each passing year to keep the creator motivated.

Way to go

Select the desired plant and also the location in your garden where the miniature, when ready will exhibit its full grandeur. Rainy season has set in and it is the right period for such an activity. As the tree is grown in ground, its growth is stimulated, resulting in more pruning to maintain and keep it in shape.

Create your own miniature

Select a plant having a healthy trunk-line and remove all basal shoots as these deprive the plant of nutrients. It is transplanted in the ground using nutritious compost where enough sunlight is available for the plant to remain healthy.

Decide on the overall shape of the miniature which the plant would ultimately acquire.

Remove shoots growing at odd angles and other shoots which come in the way of the design.

Start styling the miniature when it gets about three ft high, the lowest branch should normally be placed at a height of about two feet from ground, keeping in mind the height of miniature to be created will be about 6-7 feet. All other branches below it should be removed.

Wire the trunk-line and branches, giving it the initial desired shape

As the plant grows in height, rest of the branches above the lowest branch should also be aesthetically placed and trained accordingly by means of wires.

When the plant reaches about 6-7 feet in height, it's time to give it a final shape using wires. Pinching and pruning of the branches should also be carried out to aid in the final shape. Pruning of fresh sprouts is usually done from spring to the end of rainy season. Pruning can be as much or as little as you like, to keep the tree upto the desired height.

Deciduous succulents such as *Sesamothamnus lugardi*, *Bursera fagaroides*, guggul species, *Adansonia grandidieri* (Baobab) and ever green trees such as *Ficus benjamina*, *Ficus nuda*, *Crassula ovata* and *Crassula arborescens* in the shape of miniature trees look stunning; however other species should also be tried.

Tending tips

- Grow the plants under good sunlight.
- Periodic pinching and pruning should be carried out during growing period to keep the miniature in shape.
- Dead and brown foliage should be removed periodically.
- Regular watering is required during initial stages, but when established, watering is considerably reduced.