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GREEN HOUSE The living art BONSAI - I Maj Gen C.S. Bewli



The pleasurable experience of bonsai gardening has gained popularity as an increasing number of people of all ages and cultures are experimenting and enjoying the art. The key to having the perfect bonsai is to bring nature in miniature.

Creating a bonsai, however, is not an overnight affair, it is a living art and it keeps on evolving and taking shape perpetually. Like a sculpture or a painting a bonsai is never finished as it keeps on challenging the artistic abilities always. A bonsai can live for more than 100 years if it is looked after well.

There is a common misconception that bonsai trees are a special type of trees that are miniature in nature. But it is not so. A bonsai tree is the same as any other tree, the only thing different is the way the in which it has been shaped and pruned to create the dwarf effect. It is not a dwarf species or a young sapling shaped as a tree. It is the result of painstaking efforts, a craft where love and hard work is put in for years to create a work of art to resemble a mature tree in nature.



Key elements

The art of making bonsai is a blend of creativity and horticultural techniques. The overall artistic effect is of great significance in crafting a bonsai.

Proportion is the key element. Each element of bonsai must be proportional: the size of the tree, the thickness of trunk, its leaves or needles, its flowers or fruits, and the container in which it grows. The containers, especially, must be chosen carefully to be in harmony with the size, shape and colour of the tree.

Bonsais are classified into four classes

- Mame are miniature bonsai which can be placed on the palm of the hand and are upto 15 cms in height,
- small sized bonsai are between 15 cms to 30 cms in height,
- medium sized bonsai are from 30 cms to 62 cms in height
- large sized bonsai are beyond 62 cms in height.

The difference between a bonsai and ordinary potted plants is that bonsai expresses the beauty of the entire tree and its harmony with the container; whereas the admiration points of potted plants are their flowers and leaves. Selection of a suitable container\pot for the bonsai involves the same concept as selection of a frame for a painting. The pot should complement the tree to enhance the beauty of the tree and not to dominate it.

There are two reasons for identifying a bonsai by a named style:

- Provides a graphic description of the tree and a short cut to understanding.
- Provides a direction of purpose when structuring a bonsai.

Journey down the ages

- Bonsai art originated from China in the 8th century and the art was spread to Japan by the Buddhist monks during 11th and 12th centuries. The Japanese refined and perfected this art during the 17th and 18th centuries and by the 20th century they codified the various styles of bonsai derived from different trunk-line forms as they exist in nature.
- It was introduced to the West in the 19th century. There was an exhibition in 1909 in London where bonsai was declared as a form of art.
- In India this art came in limelight about three decades back and since then bonsai societies in big and metropolitan cities have made this art very popular. Chandigarh is a beautiful city, where people are fond of greenery and love to have plants around. The culture of bonsai is catching up fast with the residents of the city where everyone would like to decorate their drawing room with a good specimen.

To be concluded

