

# Check List for Preparing for a Bonsai Show

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Preparing a bonsai for a show or display is primarily a task of attending to detail work.. Here are a few tips which might help in preparing a bonsai for the show.

## TREE

- Trim/groom your trees at least two weeks prior to the show.
- The foliage should be groomed for display by removing any damaged or discolored leaves or needles. Wash off any dust on the foliage.
- Shoots and/or branches that extend outside of the designed silhouette should be pinched or trimmed off.
- Excess leaves and large leaves should be eliminated. and make sure the maples have not developed very long internodes in the new growth.
- On pines the needles that are pointing straight down from the branches should also be removed.
- Scrub the trunk and primary branches of the tree to remove the accumulation of moss and mineral deposits.
- Areas of dead wood (jin and shari) – treat those areas with lime sulphur to whiten them up. Do this a week or so before the show as the odor of lime sulphur in an exhibit hall will not be a problem.
- Check for wiring on the trees - remove, replace or re-wire. Wiring should be neat and as unobtrusive as possible.
- Make certain that the trees you want to show do not have any bugs, insects or disease that could infect other trees on show. Spray your trees for protection.

## Soil Surface

- The soil surface should be neat and free of weeds and debris, foreign grasses, dead leaves, pieces of compost, fertilizer cakes, etc.
- Remove dead or rotting moss and replace with fresh material. Trim ground cover if used.
- Contour or build up the soil level in the pot if required.
- Replace existing surface gravel or sand with clean material.
- Close open root gaps with soil or fine gravel or sand.
- It may be desirable to place moss on the soil for esthetic reasons. Moss placement should be done far enough in advance of the show that the moss will have a chance to become established prior to display.
- Fill in soil areas around the moss with fine gravel or sand.

## Pot

- Clean the sides and bottom of the bonsai container removing all dirt, stains, or mineral deposits left by watering. Adding a little vinegar will be helpful to soften the mineral deposits
- If chemical substance used protect your soil so that none of the chemical is leached into it.
- Use a fine piece of steel wool, a Sandflex block or by carefully scraping with an X-Acto blade.
- Give the exterior surface a coating of oil. Johnson's baby oil works fine, as does any other non toxic, oil.
- Use a lint free cloth and remove as much of the oil as possible immediately after oiling.
- The objective is to give the pot a pleasant patina, not to make it look greasy. Applying the oil two to three days before the show reduces the avoids the possibility of the slick appearance.

## Stand

- Bonsai are customarily displayed on some sort of a stand to set the bonsai off from the surface of the display table.
- A stand can be a small wooden table, a slab of wood, or a simple mat of bamboo or some other material. The stand or mat should be larger than the bonsai pot.
- A general rule is that the stand should be about a third larger than the pot in length and depth. Along with the table dimensions, style and degree of decoration should be considered when selecting the stand that is appropriate for the tree.
- Stands should be cleaned and polished. Apply a scratch remover where needed.

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### ACCENT PLANTS

- It is customary to include one or two other elements in addition to the bonsai in a display. A small accent plant, or a suiseki displayed on the table next to the bonsai can be used to enhance the display.
- Make sure accent material, its movement and the stand is complimentary to main tree.
- Accents with fresh new foliage, emerging buds and new growth are most desirable.
- Apply appropriately sized top dressing to the exposed soil.
- Accent plants should look compact and not dominate.
- Containers should be relatively shallow. Round or oval containers are preferred.
- If a Bonsai is displayed in an unglazed container, the accent plant should have a glazed container.
- If a Bonsai is displayed in a light colored, glazed container the accent plant should be planted in a dark colored container, a natural stone or piece of driftwood.
- A large bonsai can be complemented by large accent plant.
- Similarly a small bonsai can be complemented by a small accent plant.
- Accent plants are displayed on flat asymmetric stands: pieces of wood, bamboo slats and the like.
- Suiseki are normally placed on rectangular stands (wood boards, tables, shelves)
- Accent plants should not be higher than the table used for the bonsai or suiseki.
- An exception to this rule is a single flower. If there are several flowers, the accent plant be lower than the table or all flowers must be cut except one.