

Bunjin and Literati mean the same thing. Bunjin is the Japanese word, Literati is the Chinese word. It is derived from Chinese scholars called "Wen-Jen", who were educated men of calligraphy, poetry, and art. They would go up into the mountains and see trees that were twisted, with little foliage, and made drawings of them. These drawings elevated the appreciation of the *minimal* qualities of these trees, and gardeners began to mimic them in their landscapes. When the art moved to Japan, Bunjin was their name for men of knowledge.

There was an early book where these trees were depicted, called Kaishi-en-Gaden, 1679 -1701, printed in Japan in 1748. An approximate English translation might have been "The Mustard Seed Garden". It describes how to paint landscapes and basically was the inspiration for Literati and Bunjin Bonsai. It states that you don't want just complexity or simplicity alone, nor method or non-method.

Although commonly referred to as a 'style', this is not a style itself, and can employ elements of all the other styles, from informal upright to slant and cascade.

They are a rarity in nature, but natural, not unnatural. They could be formed in deep gorges with minimal sunlight, water and nutrients. Debris from higher cliffs could fall on them causing rugged shapes, winds can cause breakage, animals can eat on them, or they can live in extreme temperatures.

Bunjin gives the artist a chance to tell a story. It is a free and light style. Don't force your feelings on the tree or it will die. You must understand the limitations of your tree and yourself as you create it. Try to dispense with some of the techniques you have learned and try the opposite. This style is very hard to grow in Phoenix because the exposed trunk and small amount of foliage make it difficult for it to withstand the heat and wind.

### Philosophy:

The Chinese Philosophy says the universe consists of two poles of cosmic energy, the Ying and the Yang. They are opposite yet interdependent. The key to ultimate wisdom is held by those who know how to keep both principles in their proper balance. Examples are heaven and earth, masculine and feminine, light and dark, firm and yielding, etc. Try to incorporate elements of both energies in your trees.

Japanese has a Zen philosophy with the words Wabi or Sabi. Wabi is a concept hard to define, it is of feelings created over many generations and unknown to westerners until recently. Unaffected by pleasure or pain, it is a disciplined feeling of quiet and serenity. Among religious people and people who create Bonsai it is a feeling of love. Love for trees and people. Sabi is a state of mind, a place, an environment; a Simplicity, quiet and dignified. Like a tea ceremony or a Haiku.

### Four things that characterize Bunjin are:

- It doesn't fit any one standard style.

- The trunk may change direction or movement.

- Foliage may be limited to a few leaves or a small 'cloud'.

- Branches are few, may be broken or died back

### Four things to attain or strive for in Bunjin:

- Balance

- Motion

- Understatement

- Shibui

Shibui is hard to explain. It is a quiet elegance, has grace, is uncommon, and is where the trunk changes directions or the branches turn.

They say you can break all the rules when creating a Bunjin, branches can cross the trunk, etc. Look at what's not there, it should be viewed with the intellect as well as the eye. When creating your tree, leave something for the viewer to see and tell their own story. The viewer will see the tree differently than the creator.

### Trunk:

Emphasis is on the trunk and not the foliage mass. The foliage groups should complement the trunk, not overpower it. The trunk line should have movement, balance is achieved when positioning the first branch. The trunk could be symmetrical, like going in a single direction, or asymmetrical, a compound direction.

### Branches:

They could express movement, conceal a naked trunk, or break up repetitious spaces. The angle of the branch can indicate age and adverse circumstances like wind, snow, etc.

Branches are usually on the top 1/3 of the tree. It is possible for the tree to be top heavy and could blow over in a strong wind so you might want to tie it down to the bench. Never throw out a tree with only one branch. A tree that keeps losing branches can be styled into a Bunjin. You can leave a small accent branch on the bottom 1/3 of the trunk. If you leave the bare minimum amount of branches on the trunk, you will still be able to express what you want to in the tree.

### Types of Branches:

Flat Branch - Shows age

Dragon Fly - Flying and diving, don't repeat too often.

Lightning - Sharp bends

Drooping - Foliage breaks up trunk line.

Hem Line - Foliage down around bottom of base, can be brought down from top or can sprout from bottom of trunk.

Scooping - Brought around from back of trunk to fill in space on either side.

Piercing -

### Foliage:

You can balance the foliage by not designing it too lean (that would have no dignity) or too heavy (that would be too soft).

### Apex:

The apex is the strongest part of the tree and will need to be thinned out the most.

### Types of apexes are:

Umbrella (the most popular), Flat, Weeping, Jin, and Anchor.

#### Pots:

The pot must support the mood of the tree, like an ancient tree in an old, worn pot shows the struggle for survival. Avoid pots that are heavily glazed or ornate. Moon, Drum, Round, Cascade, or Rectangular-with-soft-corners are the shapes most often used. You might want to use an old or antique pot.

#### Stands:

Keep it simple. A Moon pot can go on a thin slab. Thin Bunjin are good on an old wine barrel bottom. A thin trunked Bunjin in a stone-like pot can be shown in a shallow suiban with sand placed on a larger wooden slab. Another type stand is an abstract board.

The last thing about Bunjin is that it is exciting. You should have non-fixed ideas and have a detachment. The two most important things to keep in mind and strive for are Balance and Movement.