

A Bonsai Close-Up on Blended Trees

from seedlings or cuttings to mature bonsai in a "wink of time"

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What is blended bonsai?

Bonsai that are created by binding five or more very young trees together to create one bonsai. This method can create a mame or shohin bonsai in a fraction of the time it usually takes. It is excellent also for root over rock styles.

What are the advantages?

- It creates a thick trunk quickly
- It allows for the exact placement of branches
- It uses inexpensive material....often material that you have grown from cuttings or seeds.
- It allows you to be more creative
- It allows for perfect nebari.

What are the traits of good material for blended trees?

- The seedlings or cuttings are long and very thin
- The species is fast growing
- The trunk is a single straight line
- If branching occurs near the projected apex you may wish to use it
- It is well rooted



Suggested species to use

- most maples especially trident and koto hime
- Chinese elms
- Mugho and black pines
- Azalea
- try other and experiment (remember the traits listed above)

When to work

- Try to work with stock just as it begins to grow
- If working with deciduous material in late spring, defoliate first
- Do not attempt in summer or fall
- This can be done in later winter in the greenhouse

Materials needed

- 5 or more young trees of the same species
- Green floral tape (can be purchased at most craft stores or from a florist
- Wire and tools
- Shohin bonsai growing medium
- A training pot prepared with wire
- A rock if you wish to do root over rock.

Procedure

1. Prepare your container with screening and wire and a layer of bonsai medium
2. Gently remove the soil from the roots of your trees
3. Gather the group into a bunch. If there is a tree with a slightly larger caliper, put it in the center of the group.



4. Wrap the bunch in florist tape as seen in the diagram. You <<<<must stretch the tape as you wrap it. (If you are doing a root or over rock design, you must work the rock in at this stage. Put the lower part of the trunks over the rock and secure with the thick, stretchable electric tape. Be sure all roots will be below the soil level. The remainder of the rock with taped on roots will be above soil level.

5. When you get to the place you wish branch number 1 to be, gently pull it to the side and continue wrapping upward leaving that tree out.

6. Do this one by one with each tree until your only have the apex left. As you can see each tree is becoming a future branch. >>>>>>>>

7. After completing taping, wire the tree as you usually would.

Begin at the bottom and wire the trunk line first, then beginning at the base again, wire the first branch. Continue wiring each branch in order from bottom to top starting at the base each time.



8. Once the wiring is complete, bend the trunk and then the branches to accomplish your design. Remember to give each branch motion. Take care to place each branch to give it its place in the sun.



9. Once the bonsai is shaped, put it in the prepared container. Wire it in and complete adding in the soil. Water well.
10. Now grow as usual. Be sure to fertilize properly. In most cases the wire will be on the trunk for the summer. You may need to remove and rewire the branches. If you allow some wire scarring on the trunk, the scars will add to the illusion of age over the years. The use of this part of the technique is optional and up to you.
11. As the tree grows work on the design and canopy as you would any bonsai.
12. Depending on the species used, the trunk will grow together over a period of time. If you need to rewire after checking on the trunk, remember to re-tape tightly and re wire in the same direction.



Questions? Comments?

Contact Pauline Muth at Pauline@pfmbonsai.com

Demonstrations and Workshops on this topic as well as others are available at her studio and may be scheduled at clubs.

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