

SOMERSET BONSAI SOCIETY

Bonsai Pot Choice

It's exciting to get a new tree into a bonsai pot for the first time but before you rush ahead always consider whether it is ready for a proper pot! If a tree is still in development the confines of a bonsai pot will slow that process down. So, first point is to have a little patience. Plastic bonsai pots are a good halfway house in that they are generally deeper and do at least look better than a flower pot, washing up bowl etc!



A bonsai pot is like a frame for a picture. It should enhance a tree and show to its best but not distract or become the main focus. For any given tree there may be several pot types and colour that might suit – there is no single solution. Pot choice is can completely change the feel or mood that a tree imparts. Choice is personal but with time/experience you should get a feel for what looks right....and wrong!

To help you along there are:

Guidelines

- Pot should be 2/3 height or width of tree, whichever is greatest
- Pot depth should approx. equal width of trunk just above nebari
- Unglazed "earth" colours for evergreens
- Subtle glazes for deciduous
- Bright colours for flowering or bright foliage
- The pot must be large enough for the tree to thrive

These guidelines will serve you well, but there are exceptions and you should not follow slavishly!

- Some trees need deeper pots e.g. azaleas, crabs and many other flowering trees. They may struggle in shallow (=trunk) pots
- Cascades will need tall, deep pots – you can't match trunk thickness
- Crescent pots are good for semi-cascades
- Groups/clump style generally look best in relatively shallow pots
- A shallower pot tends to give a "landscape" impression

Colour

Think about when your tree looks best – or when you want to display it. You might want to match spring or autumn colour for e.g. Try to make a subtle match to leaf colour, bark etc.

For flowering trees a bright contrasting colour may look good and will show off the flowers or fruit

Style

Powerful masculine trees look best in chunky angular pots. Ovals and rounded edges suit elegant feminine trees best. Take care with round pots. Best used for (a) trees where the apex lies at/beyond the pot edge - this will appear to anchor the tree, (b) elegant/tall/literati. Abstract pots suit dramatic trees

Many trees are neither powerful nor elegant – fall in between.

- Raised feet make more elegant
- Curves soften a pot
- A line or part glaze will make a pot appear shallower than it is
- A lip or rim also softens/lightens

Use these tricks to achieve the look that you want.