

A Guide to Workshop "dos and don'ts"

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Bonsai Workshop Instructors are not doing this to get rich quick! They have a wealth of knowledge to impart to you about the Bonsai art that they love. Many will not only give you styling tips, but will also have great information on watering, feeding, soil mix, etc. about your particular type of tree AND for our hot inland valley. You can do some simple things that will not only show your respect for the workshop Instructor, but will allow you to get the most out of the session.

At home, a week before the workshop:

Do prepare your tree - you should not spend workshop (or bonsai class) time doing these things - it is a waste of the Instructor's time and your workshop time:

- Remove all weeds and any moss that is climbing the trunk
- Clip away all dead foliage, but leave any dead branches for the time being, in case they will become "jin" (a dead branch) that will enhance the finished tree
- Remove all growth in the crotch between branches, and downward and upward growing foliage, especially on junipers. You may be surprised how much this simple step opens up the foliage and allows you (and the Instructor!) to see the branch structure and plan the future development of the tree

Don't wait until the last minute and just grab any old tree - raw material is fine with a little preparation noted above

Do sit down with your cleaned up tree - take some time to look at it and think about it. You don't need to do any more cutting or pruning at this time - wait for the workshop or class, but ask yourself these questions:

- What style does the tree lend itself to? Chokkan, Moyogi, Kengai, etc?
- Where do you think the best front of the tree is?
- What overall height will it be?
- What branches might be removed to improve the tree?

As a beginner, you may not have confidence in the answers to these questions, but you should go through the exercise to improve your learning curve. **Don't** just plop down some raw material and expect the Instructor to do everything for you.

Do organize your tools and wire - make sure you have everything you need and be sure to clean and sharpen your tools. Bring a turntable, all the sizes of wire you will need, raffia, etc. **Don't** keep the Instructor waiting while you borrow the needed tools or wire from others in the workshop. (Our Club Members are generous in lending tools

to our newest members - just "buddy up" before the workshop so you don't lose time when you are with the Instructor. At a Convention workshop, however, you might not know anyone in the workshop, and not everyone is willing to lend tools).

If you can, **Do** bring a table covering and dustpan and brush to clean up your own spot - don't assume that "someone else" will sweep up after you. If you don't bring your own clean up tools, there is usually a broom, dust pan and trash container on site that you can take turns with others to clean up your spot.

Don't take the same tree to different Instructors. Each Instructor may see the future of your tree differently - the branch that the second Instructor wants you to take off might have been important to the first Instructor's design for your tree. **Do** take workshops/classes from different Instructors - you will learn something from all of them. Just don't take the same tree to the different Instructors.

During the workshop

Do what the Instructor asks you to do - work steadily on your tree when the Instructor is working with others so you are ready for the next review and advice

If you are done with what the Instructor asked you to do with your tree on this round, **Do** go observe his/her work with other students, but **Don't** ask questions - be a "silent observer"

Do carry a notebook and make notes about general advice from the Instructor and the specific input on this particular tree

Don't interrupt the Instructor about your tree when he/she is with other students

Don't bother the other students while they are working - you might be done with your tasks, but they might need to keep concentrating and working on their tasks

One final note to beginners:

Do take advantage of the opportunity for workshops offered by the clubs you belong to. Don't be shy - just tell the instructor that you are a beginner - they will understand. You are not the first beginner they have encountered, and they know you are here because you have fallen in love with the beautiful art of Bonsai like the rest of us!

If our Club Members (especially those who are Instructors) have any additional comments or corrections to this "Beginner's Guide" please let me know - it should be a "work in progress" to be as helpful as possible to our newest budding Bonsai artists.