

Bonsai, the art of creating and maintaining miniature trees in pots has an aura of mystery surrounding it. We are fascinated by the concept of tiny trees that look like their full-sized cousins and we marvel at their beauty. We are naturally drawn to them and we wonder, are they real? Where do they come from? How are they created and by who? Where can I see one and learn more about them?

Bonsai offer endless opportunities to learn many lessons. One is that bonsai are not just beautiful art but important cultural and historical artifacts. Each bonsai has a history and its own story to tell. In this series of short videos, we will explore the stories of four bonsai.

In our first story we will visit a place where the stories of many bonsai are told, a bonsai museum.

A **museum** is an institution that cares for and exhibits artifacts and other objects of artistic, cultural, historical or scientific importance. The Clark Bonsai Collection is a museum for bonsai and it is out of doors.

As bonsai are living entities, plants, they require sunlight, water, fresh air and the changing of seasons to keep them healthy. Things that would not be available to them indoors. Bonsai also require much more maintenance than do other types of museum artifacts.

Part of the museum's mission is to protect, preserve and present the cultural and historical significance of original bonsai created by Japanese American artists. The work to maintain the health and artistic value of bonsai is never ending and can only be performed by individuals with special training and understanding of the art of bonsai. Before this bonsai goes on display some maintenance must be done so it will look its best.

The Japanese Maple bonsai and is often selected to demonstrate Fall spectacle of color change. It was originally created by bonsai artist Wayne Takiasu. The Japanese Maples bonsai has been resting in its assigned location on a storage bench, gathering strength for the coming winter. It will be moved to a work area for inspection to insure it is healthy and all is well. Small branches and leaves that may have withered during the summer will be removed and the bark will be gently cleaned using a toothbrush and water. The soil surface will be inspected and all detritus, unused fertilizer or small weeds that have grown will be removed and the first few centimeters of topsoil removed. New soil and a layer of replacement moss will be added. The pot will be cleaned and oiled. Ready now to great visitors, it will take its place among the other bonsai and to tell its story. There are many bonsai waiting to tell their silent stories, sing their wordless songs and voice their visual poetry.



[Link to video](#)

## LEADING QUESTIONS

Grades 3rd -5th

### KEY IDEAS & DETAILS

In your own words, explain what is a museum and what kinds of things can you see there?

### CRAFT & STRUCTURE

What is a curator and how is a curator like a storyteller?

### TEXT TYPES & PURPOSES

How is the bonsai exhibit more like a museum or more like a garden, explain?

Grades 6th - 8th

### KEY IDEAS & DETAILS

What do you believe is the author's purpose of writing this piece?

### CRAFT & STRUCTURE

Take each word below and make a new sentence to show your understanding of each word. Each word is used in the text above, try to use context to infer its meaning if needed.

aura  
artifacts  
entities  
detritus

### RESEARCH TO BUILD & WRITING PRESENT

Explain which are claims supported by evidence and the claims that are not supported by evidence.

Grades 9th – 12th

### KEY IDEAS & DETAILS

Explain what is inferred about the peace tree and what is explicitly stated in the text.

### CRAFT & STRUCTURE

Explain how the introduction differs from the body of the text, why did the author do this? What are the questions in the introduction lead the reader to do?

### PRESENTATION & KNOWLEDGE OF IDEAS

Explain your new understanding of how bonsai are intertwined with history, use the text.





### ADDITIONAL LESSON PLANS from GSBF-Clark Bonsai Collection

*From the Welcome to the Clark Bonsai Collection Series*

1. The Peace Tree Bonsai (link to video)
  - The Peace Tree Bonsai (link to document)
2. Yamadori and the Contribution of Japanese Americans to the Art of Bonsai (link to video)
  - Yamadori and the Contribution of Japanese Americans to the Art of Bonsai (link to document)
3. How Old Is It? Age in Bonsai (link to video)
  - How Old Is It? Age in Bonsai (link to document)

### ADDITIONAL LESSON PLANS from Shinzen Friendship Garden

*From the Welcome to the Shinzen Garden Series*

1. Design Concepts (link to video)
  - Design Concepts (link to document)
2. The 1939 Lantern (link to video)
  - The 1939 Lantern (link to document)
3. The Koi Pond (link to video)
  - The Koi Pond (link to document)
4. The Toro Nagashi Ceremony (link to video)
  - The Toro Nagashi Ceremony (link to document)

### ADDITIONAL LINKS TO JAPANESE CULTURE & GARDENS

Visit us at: <http://shinzenjapanesegarden.org>

1. Traditional Japanese Tea Ceremony (link to video)
2. Japanese Chado Matcha Green Tea Ceremony (link to video)
3. 45 Japanese Garden Design Ideas (link to video)
4. Portland Japanese Garden (link to website)
5. Oregon Koto-Kai Performances (link to website)
6. Green Legacy Hiroshima (link to website)
7. Hiroshima Peace Tree Planted in Clovis (link to website)

### ADDITIONAL LINKS TO GSBF BONSAI COLLECTIONS & BONSAI

Visit us at: <https://gsbfclarkbonsaicollection.org>

1. CBC\_Behind the Scene with Bob Hilvers, "John Naka – California Juniper" (link to video)
2. CBC\_Behind the Scene with Bob Hilvers, "The Dwarf Oak" (link to video)
3. CBC\_Behind the Scene with Bob Hilvers, "Basic Bonsai 01" (link to video)
4. CBC\_Behind the Scene with Bob Hilvers, "Basic Bonsai 02" (link to video)
5. CBC\_Behind the Scene with Bob Hilvers, "Basic Bonsai 03" (link to video)

