

Yamadori is a Japanese term that is literally translated as mountain dug bonsai. As it is applied to the art of bonsai it means native plants that have been collected from the wild and used to create a bonsai.

Yamadori is the origin of bonsai, its very essence. Stunted wild trees, battered by the elements, starved of nutrients then collected from the mountains of Japan and China were the first bonsai. First and second-generation Japanese Americans transferred this tradition to the Americas.

The Yamadori California Juniper. All are the result of the influence of Japanese Americans on the art of bonsai. Collected wild trees are the most valued for use as bonsai because nature has already imprinted them with the mark of age and the visual language that defines their life's struggles. Trunks are twisted and bent. Old scars, dead stubs of broken branches attest to struggles in dynamic environments. The dead wood is bleached by harsh sun and scoured by blowing sand and ice crystals.

In the Early 1950's when bonsai enjoyed a rapid expansion of interest in the US, Japanese Americans pioneered the practice of collecting wild Junipers from the high deserts in California to be used in the creation of bonsai. The practice of using Yamadori plant material for bonsai continues to this day and the most esteemed bonsai are those created from yamadori.

The California Juniper, by Sherwin Amimoto, has been allowed to grow and add new foliage to maintain its health and vigor. However, it has now outgrown the original artist's design and has been selected for restoration. Images of the original artist's concept are studied to ensure the results of the restoration will be as close to the original artist's vision as possible.

As plants, bonsai grow and change with time. Part of the mission of a bonsai museum is to protect and preserve as much of the original artists concept as possible. Not all agree with this and many professional bonsai practitioners feel that the best use of all bonsai material is to re-style them periodically to the highest possible aesthetic value.

Not all work can be done at once if the health of the tree is to be preserved some foliage is retained and removed at a later time. The foliage will be arranged. the branches that have grown too long and heavy and will be removed. The jins and sharis will be cleaned and treated with lime-sulfur. The bark of the living vein will be brushed. Final replacement of the surface soil and moss and cleaning of the pot and the job is done.



[Link to video](#)

LEADING QUESTION:

Grades 3rd -5th

KEY IDEAS & DETAILS

In your own words, explain what a Yamadori is.

PRESENTATION OF KNOWLEDGE & IDEAS

Can you explain why a yamadori would be more successful than a non-yamadori? Use supporting details from text to explain your reasoning.

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.

- Yamadori
- stunted
- dynamic
- vigor
- preserved

Grades 6th - 8th

CRAFT & STRUCTURE

Summarize what a yamadori is and how you can obtain one.

RESEARCH TO BUILD & PRESENT KNOWLEDGE

Can you explain why a yamadori from Japan would not survive quite as well as a California yamadori if it were to live in Fresno, California? Explain using text and additional material.

KEY IDEAS & DETAILS

Describe the various methods used to preserve the health of a bosai tree.

Grades 9th – 12th

TEXT TYPES & PURPOSE

Explain how a yamadori from California would survive in Japan, what are the location differences that would pose a challenge?

PRESENTATION OF KNOWLEDGE & IDEAS

How did Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans contribute to the art of bonsai in America?

INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE & IDEAS

Why are yamadori especially valued by bonsai artists?

ADDITIONAL LESSON PLANS from GSBF-Clark Bonsai Collection

From the Welcome to the Clark Bonsai Collection Series

1. An Outdoor Museum (link to video)
 - An Outdoor Museum (link to document)
2. The Peace Tree Bonsai (link to video)
 - The Peace Tree 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)

