




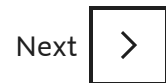
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Book review

Practical guide to bonsai styles of the world

Charles S. Ceronio; Third Edition, Briza Publications; Soft cover with 216 pages; Price: R325.00; ISBN: 978-1-920217-49-5; (Website: www.briza.co.za)

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The “Practical Guide to Bonsai Styles of the World” is divided into two parts: the first part dealing with The Art of Bonsai is only 15 pages long. The rest of the book deals with over 40 design styles including the author’s own African styles. The fore-edge of the book is clearly marked in sections of easy to choose colour coded Chapters. It is prefaced by Roy Nagatoshi, who is well known for his presentations on styling across North America and South Africa. The book has nearly 100 colour plates of some famous trees in the bonsai world, but Ceronio has also provided his own exquisite drawings, which generously illustrate all the possible styles. This is particularly helpfully to young stylists. Many books on bonsai tend to

concentrate on the practical aspects of making a bonsai, caring of tools and growing conditions. None of them focuses on style quite like this one.

Choosing a particular style for a bonsai is one of the most difficult decisions one has to make. Sometimes plants lend themselves to certain designs naturally but many may be wired to any number of styles. Once one has right the basics of a potentially good plant, fine-tuning the style becomes the next preoccupation. Then, many months of patient waiting provide a lot of time to lose or change focus.

Each Chapter in the book talks about a main style. Ceronio breaks down each style into every possible variation of that style, illustrating each with his beautiful clear drawings. He gives plenty of advice with guidelines on creating the style, which plants may be most appropriate, and then suggestions for suitable containers for that style. Travelling has helped him gain a good knowledge of famous artists and their trees and he uses their photographs throughout the book to illustrate his themes.

Charles Ceronio is a founding member of the Pretoria Bonsai Kai/Club. He has travelled to many bonsai exhibitions around the world. Ceronio is also famous for having established the annual Top 10 Bonsai Exhibition.

The first two editions of the book sold out quickly with a high international demand. Having a large international audience may have limited his contribution of South African tree species in the book.

South Africa has about 780 tree species, many of which bonsai members around the country are experimenting with, as most are relatively unknown in the bonsai world. Ceronio has added a whole Chapter on the six African styles that he invented. Although he has always advocated the use of indigenous trees for bonsai, in the bibliography Ceronio makes mention of only two books on South African trees, both published in the 1970s. It would have been useful to mention the new Pooley's Trees in which the author, Richard Boon, often suggests which species are suitable to bonsai.

What makes a book invaluable to an active club of bonsai growers and artists is the fact that you can use it in the workplace. This book is an A5 size with a stiffened plastic cover that is durable and cleanable. A book for practical use at club meetings is a wonderful tool for ideas while working on plants. Styling is a much-debated topic at club meetings and many of the more experienced club members are approached to advise on possible styles for a plant.

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