

Shapes of Bonsai

A number of tree shapes have been formalized as the art of bonsai developed over the centuries. These generally follow patterns observed in nature and, rather than being strictly defined, allow for freedom of the artisan's creative interpretation. It is not absolutely necessary to conform to any established style.

Chokkan and Moyo-gi

These two upright styles are archetypal bonsai shapes, often seen in bonsai created with trees from the pine family. *Chokkan* ("formal upright") features a single straight, upright trunk, while *moyo-gi* ("informal upright") is distinguished by a roughly S-shaped upright trunk that tapers as it grows upwards.

Fukinagashi and Kengai

These two forms convey the notion of a tree persevering against nature's harsher side. The angled trunk of the *fukinagashi* ("windswept") style conjures up a tree battling a strong wind. Similarly, *kengai* ("cascade") resembles a tree hanging dramatically down from a sheer cliff. The *goyomatsu* (Japanese white pine) is among the trees used for these two styles.

Ne-tsuranari and Yoseue

Ne-tsuranari are bonsai with multiple ground-hugging trunks, often huddled together, that stem from a single root. *Tosho* (needle juniper) is among the few species that grows into *ne-tsuranari*. *Yoseue* refers to trees planted in a tight group to evoke a forest scene.