

# Tsuru 鶴 Soars

## Friends of the Gresham Japanese Garden Newsletter



### Celebrate O-Hanami with Us



#### PHOTOGRAPHER'S VIEW

.寝心に花を算へる雨夜哉  
*ne-gokoro ni hana wo kazoeru  
amayo kana*  
*my sleepy mind, counting cherry  
blossoms, a rainy night*



and eat together, and enjoy themselves underneath the beautiful flower blossoms.

To celebrate o-hanami this year, GJG has invited Oregon Koto-Kai to play Tuesday, April 5th,

O-hanami means “flower watching” in Japanese. The practice of o-hanami is many centuries old and a long-standing Japanese tradition of welcoming spring. People gather to drink

from 12-12:30pm in Ebetsu Plaza. Bring a lunch, sit underneath the blossoming boughs of the cherry trees, and relax to the sounds of Japanese harps.

*Tuesday, April 5th  
Oregon Koto-Kai  
12-12:30pm, Ebetsu Plaza  
south end of Main City Park*

# The Cherry Tree Myth

Source: *Sukiya Living Magazine*

The myth that cherry trees are common elements in Japanese gardens, is just that—a myth. The flowering cherry tree is an important image in Japanese culture, especially each spring when blossoms suddenly appear for a week and people celebrate O-Hanami. O-Hanami is a happy, party-like celebration that occurs underneath cherry blossom trees in wide-open public places, like Ebetsu Plaza where we have 12 Akebono cherry trees. In Tokyo, the most famous spot for viewing cherry blossoms is Ueno Park.

Unfortunately, many Westerners associate this cherry blossom tradition with Japanese gardens. Seeing how both encompass Japan and trees, it's an understandable mistake. But they are very different facets of Japanese culture.

One will not find cherry trees in a Japanese private garden. Japanese gardens honor a more subtle, year-round role in the lives of their owners. Plants are selected *and rejected* partly based on their attractive image throughout all four seasons. Some varieties of cherry trees can also get quite large, and Japanese gardeners tend to plant and prune tree

varieties less than 15' in height.

Cherry trees are absolutely stunning for a week or so, but for the rest of the year they have a woeful, unattractive appearance. They have other drawbacks as well. Cherry trees are plagued with disease, mold, and insects much of the year. They have an awkward growth habit with long, heavy branches, that respond poorly to pruning, because of their susceptibility to infection and rot. But, like most trees, they still need pruning allowing light channels to penetrate the tree, allowing a better fruit set and ease of harvest (if you have a variety that produces fruit.) Pruning enhances the ability to battle and thwart disease.

Early spring is the prime time for pruning young cherry trees, shaping and training the young tree before it blossoms. Pruning should begin as buds emerge, but wait until all chance of extreme cold temperatures have passed to avoid possible cold injury, as younger



trees are more susceptible to this. The Gresham Japanese Garden volunteers spent two days pruning the Akebono cherry trees in the middle of March. Some pruning should occur each year to combat unruly and crossing branches.

If you are looking to include a flowering tree to your garden, there are many varieties that offer attractive blossoms AND four-season beauty. These include flowering plum, dogwoods, magnolias, and crab apples.

Cherry trees are a lasting symbol of Japanese culture, but due to their significant shortcomings, are generally unwelcome in traditional Japanese gardens.



## GARDENER'S TIP

*April is great time to continue planting cool weather vegetables such as lettuce, leeks, etc.*

*Apply organic fertilizer to roses and other perennial flowers.*

*It's also a good time to reseed bare spots in the lawn. Cover the seed with a thin layer of sawdust to maintain moisture.*

*Start a compost pile or turn the material in the one you have.*

— Jim Buck, Garden Volunteer  
and Organic Gardener

## Ask Jim!



In this month's **Ask Jim!** plant care video, he discusses how and when to fertilize rhododendrons and azaleas.

Featured on our Facebook page,

[@greshamjapanesegarden](https://www.facebook.com/greshamjapanesegarden).

Submit your Ask Jim! question to <https://www.greshamjapanesegarden.org/ask-jim/>.

## Seeds for Planting



The greenhouse is getting greener by the day. Milkweed and zinnia seeds have been planted for the pollinator garden and as giveaways for the free pollinator class in May.

And our Exploratory program students have planted petunias and lupine seeds to fill the planter boxes in Ambleside Annex.

Spring is here!

# Designing and Pruning Tamamono and Endoh-kei

Source: *Sukiya Living Magazine*

Two shapes of shrubs particularly useful in Japanese gardens are the semi-spherical tamamono shape and the tall dome endoh-kei shape. Both are almost always ever-green. A few plants that work well for tamamono are azaleas, Japanese Holly (*Ilex crenata*), Japanese yew (*Taxus cuspidata*), and mugo pines (*Pinus mugo*). There are many broad leaf plants that are suitable for endoh-kei; osmanthus frangrans, and camellias, to name a few.

When measuring the tamamono shape, first measure its height. A tamamono should be twice as wide as its height. Normally, the largest tamamono are waist to chest high. If the shrub gets any wider or taller, it becomes too difficult to prune.

In contrast, the endoh-kei shape is essentially a cylinder with a semi-spherical dome on top. It can be any size, but usually taller than 6.5'. Endoh-kei can stand alone in a garden, but never in the foreground, because of its size and density.

Now let's talk pruning. At GJG, you will hear us discourage using shears, mainly because it's done for expediency, leaving heading cuts (see GJG December

2021 newsletter) and a disregard to the health of the plant, but to create tamamono and/or endoh-kei, shears are the appropriate tool to use.

Also, when two tamamono start to bang into each other, you can merge them together IF they are the same species.

See fig 1. If they are different species, they must remain separate and must be pruned smaller to fit the space.

Tamamono and endoh-kei are dense, and basically opaque. This opacity isn't as much a concern with tamamono because the shrub is low and rounded, and in most cases the sun travels overhead and hits almost the entire surface, which is healthy. See fig 2.

If no sunlight is hitting a branch, the shrub says, "I'm not getting any photosynthetic gains from that branch, so why should I keep maintaining it?"

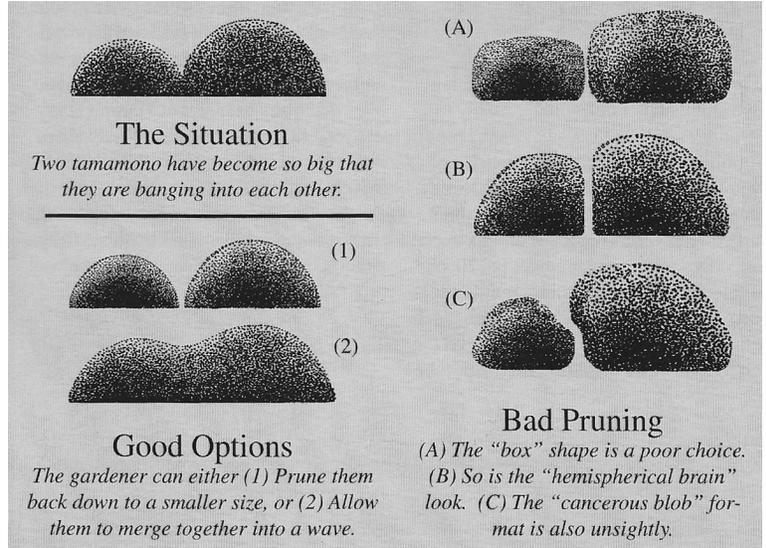


Fig 1 - Tamamono shapes

The solution is to employ the dimple technique and thin out the head, shoulders, and south side even more than usual. See fig 3.

Find a dense spot of foliage, grab it, and inspect. You'll often find a "fist", which is a thick branch ending in a tangle of smaller branches. Remove the fist, or if that's too drastic, remove most of the thicker branches in the dense tangle.

The final product should be a gradual transition from thin foliage on top to thicker foliage towards the bottom with dimples on the southern side allowing sunlight into the interior.

As a homeowner, having a landscape plan and a clear vision of how you want shrubs to perform in the future is a key aspect of proper spacing.

As to pruning ordinary landscapers who are hired to prune, often have no clue about tamamono and endoh-kei. It's often more effective to prune those shrubs yourself, rather than hiring an uninformed landscaper.

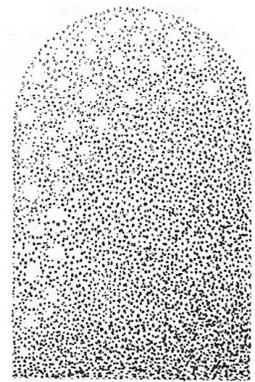
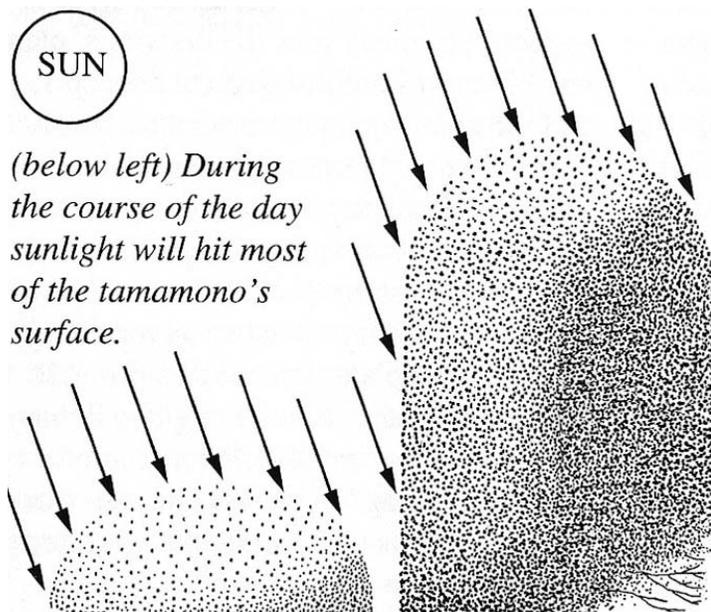


Fig 3 - Dimple technique



(below left) During the course of the day sunlight will hit most of the tamamono's surface.

*But entoh-kei shrubs are taller and have more foliage mass. The lower areas and north side are often in shade.*

*Branches down here can die.*

Fig 2 - Pruning for sunlight

# The Art of Bonsai

**S**imply put, bonsai are miniature potted plants which are carefully styled to achieve an aesthetic effect. Many concepts of bonsai were imported into Japan from China more than a thousand years ago. Since then, a distinctive style of this art form has been developed in Japan. In Japanese culture, a bonsai garden is a “style” of garden. A scenic vista, miniturized to represent worlds within worlds.

## **MOST COMMON STYLES OF BONSAI:**

**Formal and Informal Straight:** The trunk is straight, and the apex of the tree is in line with the body and the base. In an informal straight bonsai, the trunk slants slightly, but the top of the tree still ends up directly above the center of the base.

**Slant:** As the name suggests, the entire tree is slanted to one side.

**Cascade:** Rather than upright, the tree grows downwards to one side to a degree where

its apex ends up at the same height or lower than the pot, like a tree at the edge of a cliff.



**Forest and Multi-Trunk:** Multiple trees are grown in the same container, carefully fashioned to mimic a forest. A multi-trunk bonsai is similar to the forest style, except multiple trunks have a common root.

**Rock:** The tree grows on a rock with its roots anchored in the rock's cracks or in the soil below.

Typical trees used in bonsai include pines, broad leaf such as maple trees, flowering such as cherry trees, and fruits such as quince trees. Techniques such as the trimming of the roots and wiring are used to keep the trees small, and aes-

thetically pruned to how they look if grown in nature. This achieves the effect of condensing the appearance of a natural tree or forest within the container, hence creating a miniature vista.

Feng shui and bonsai are interconnected with ancient Asian lifestyles and beliefs. Both practices demonstrate how subtle the energy (chi) which rules us and how deep the roots of beauty and simplicity can reach a life in harmony. There are so many things one can learn and adapt by the right combination of the two disciplines.

GJG's bonsai instructor, Mark Vossbrink, talks about how a single bonsai can be a whole garden in itself. We can think about bonsai as a portable Tsuru Island that can be enjoyed for the tranquility anywhere we live and work.

Bonsai workshops at GJG take place every third Thursday and Saturday (Thursday's class just opened up) at the Resource Center. In each workshop/class students learn a new technique and are rewarded with a bonsai to take home.

Watch this **Ask Jim!** video of Mark



*A workshop project*

Vossbrink, GJG bonsai instructor transform a red pine, into bonsai.

<https://www.greshamjapanesegarden.org/red-pine-bonsai/>



## 2022 Spring Classes - Free

### **ORGANIC GARDENING FUNDAMENTALS**

**Mon, April 4 - 6:30-8pm IN PERSON**

**Wed, April 6 - 6:30-8pm ZOOM**

Jim Buck, an avid organic gardener since childhood, has a strong interest in native plants and their uses by indigenous tribes. In this class Jim will cover how to improve your garden's health and our environment by growing organically. The class will include soil preparation, planting succession tips, companion planting, avoiding diseases, different types of composting, and elements of permaculture.

<https://www.greshamjapanesegarden.org/class-registration/>

### **POLLINATORS FOR YOUR YARD**

**Saturday, May 21, 1-2:30pm IN PERSON**

Join Deb Peters in the Garden's greenhouse for a discussion on native host plants for butterflies and how to create a pollinator yard.

Learn where and how to plant milkweed and other pollinators to attract butterflies and other pollinators. Learn about keeping mason bees too.

<https://www.greshamjapanesegarden.org/class-registration/>