

Hunting is a term often used for game animals. In bonsai the term “hunting” is used to depict careful selection of a tree followed by the painstaking process of getting it out of the ground. Many articles have been made against bonsai hunting. It is said that bonsai hunting destroys nature and ecosystems which lead to floods and other calamities. Bonsai hunting is a lot different from logging where vast expanse of forest is cleared. Hunting for bonsai is very selective, very big trees can not be used for bonsai. Healthy upright trees are not preferred because they are not interesting. Bonsai hunters look for trees which are struggling to survive with contorted trunks which for bonsai have movement and are therefore interesting; trees which were dwarfed because of the marginal conditions of the soil that it has grown on; trees which live at the edge of a cliff or in cracks which developed contorted trunks with overgrown exposed roots; partly burned trees due to slash and burn agriculture; trees that fell down and grew sideways to survive; trees that remained small because of the continuous forage of animals; trees that were chopped down by loggers but then regrew as a clump; trees that were eroded from a bank and washed on to a shore with few roots clinging to the ground for life; trees removed from an area for road construction; trees that never grew because of being shaded by other healthy trees; the list is long but very selective. In the conditions that I have mentioned, it is more of saving the tree rather than hunting it. When a tree becomes a bonsai, it receives optimum condition for growth, health, and survival. In a pot it becomes immune to calamities, disease, and other problems that affect all trees in the wild. Tall healthy trees can not be used for bonsai because of their very huge trunks and no tapering characteristics. Majority of bonsai are not hunted but rather grown from seeds, cuttings or grafted from a branch of a large tree. Proponents of bonsai hunting even say that the best way to save endangered tree specie is by giving it to bonsai professional that can propagate and care for it successfully.

## **What to look for?**

### **Tapering trunk**

Tapering trunk is the most difficult to find. Natural taper can only be achieved through anomalous events. This happens when something very different happens to a tree during its growth. Most common is when a tree loses its apex in its early years of development. This can be caused either by being hit by something, burned, insect or fungal infestation, which results to cuts or damage in its trunk thereby losing its top growth. This creates a multiple trunk right on that point. Further damages of the tree’s top growth by wind, fire, or foraging animals, results to more branching at every cut. It is stunted but will have good taper to the eyes of the hunter. Look at the images below.

### **Trunks with movement**

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Movement is created by wind, water, erosion, shade, another tree or branch falling on the young tree, insect infestation and any other means that move the tree from its upright position. A tree could be hunted from a cliff or a sloping mountain side which makes the trunk grow at angle relative to its base.

### **Wide base**

Accidents happen when the tree gets damaged at its base several times. The base widens compared to the newly developed trunk. Often times, trees like this go back to life as a clump. To the experienced hunter this can be developed into almost any style of bonsai.

### **Good radiating nebari**

This is a common occurrence in nature. The nebari is often good if the tree is matured enough.

### **Special shari character**

This happens when animals strip the bark of a tree. But in the tropics this is produced usually by slash and burn agriculture.

### **Interesting Deadwood**

Much like a shari, when the burning or damage of the tree involves the whole tree. It is only on the eyes of the artist that a future of a damaged tree like this can be resurrected as a good sabamiki

### **Large first primary branch**

To save time on development, if there is branch low enough to be the first branch then it could be cut right at the point where you want it to grow secondary branches. This is a prize find for hunters.

More later . . .

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How to remove a tree from the ground.

The tools you need