

Developing Tamarisk Bonsai in the Weeping Style with Deadwood

(notes by Tom Gatz from a workshop given by Bob Pressler at the California Bonsai Society April 2012 Convention)

-Be aware that this species/style is high maintenance.

-Once you pot it, be sure to **re-pot and remove one third of the roots every year or two** (more often in Az?) or they will quickly fill your pot and your tree will languish and die after a few years due to lack of adequate water absorption (perhaps this accounts for reports of tamarisk doing well here for the first few years, then going downhill?)

-Start with a good-sized plant (5-gallon).

California tamarisk species has bright pink flowers; not as bright in Arizona species.

-When growing potential material get rid of suckers near the base early or they will sap growth from the selected trunk.

-If the trunk has reverse taper near the base, remove the bark from the constricted portion, bury it and, once new roots develop in this area, you can remove the original, lower root ball.

-When removing bark to create a shari or jin, tearing results in a more realistic scar than carving.

-Create a shari where you have a stub by sawing/cutting part way into the branch stub crouch from the top and then peeling the stub and bark down with a pliers.

-To extend the life of your Dremel bristles, put two drops of Super Glue on the bristles and let it dry before using (as with any wood working, don't inhale the dust and use eye protection- Bob had a bit fly off and almost hit someone). He likes to us a 'Ninja' bit for carving.

-First draw the outline of your shari on the bark with a red wax pencil; then remove the bark within this outline.

-If you have a straight-branched jin, carve indentations along alternating sides of the branch to give it some 'movement' and character.

-Don't wire green branches; wait for them to begin to turn tan.

-Be sure to put a fairly drastic downward bend in the initial and subsequent styling of the branches.

-Wire carefully; branches break easily. Wire branches downward by first securing wire to trunk ABOVE the branch to get a better anchor.

-You only need to wire the first third of the branch downward, since you will be removing much of the original branch once a secondary branch emerges from it, to create a cascading 'waterfall effect'.

-Remove wire (and rewire) every 3-5 months (more often in Az?)

-For smaller specimens, a mesh basket or open mesh fruit sack pushed down over the young branches to force their growth downward is another quick way to start the weeping style.

-Remove all growth off of the bottom side of the branch and some off of the sides. Select top growth to continue weeping form.

-A round, 8-inch wide pot about 1.5-2 inches deep is a good size.

-If you plan to use a taller bonsai pot, you can extend some weeping branches down past the pot rim.

-Keep main branches and foliage to a minimum (3-5 main branches at most even on a fair-sized tree).

-Bob says a low nitrogen fertilizer is best (3-4-5 ratio).*

- Note from Tom – many folks in the succulent growing hobby are moving to a 10-16-38 formula to develop good structure without lots of leggy growth. Available from Crop Protection Services in Tucson.



