



Best of British Bonsai



2011 Spring Bonsai Exhibition and Convention in Birmingham

by Kath and Malcolm Hughes



Over the weekend of the 9th and 10th April, the Birmingham Botanical Gardens was host to the second *Best of British Bonsai* event, staged once again by Kath and Malcolm Hughes. The event comprised an exhibition, demonstrations and a trade fair. Having the Gardens as the venue, as was the case when the event was first held in 2009, proved again to be an excellent choice. The Birmingham Botanical Gardens, designed by landscape garden designer J.C. Loudon, opened to the public in 1832. It is a 15-acre oasis of delight, located in Edgbaston near Birmingham City centre. The Victorian-style buildings in which the exhibition and trade fair were held, together with the open terrace for the demonstrations, provided the bonsai



facing page; Birmingham Botanical Gardens the terrace and orangery.

top inset; Birmingham Botanical Gardens- the Japanese Garden leading to the National Bonsai Collection

bottom left; Birmingham Botanical Gardens- the tropical house.

bottom right; Birmingham Botanical Gardens- the aviary.

this page; Views of the exhibition halls.



top left; Salvatore Liporace with Scots pine demonstration tree.

middle left; Savatore's assistants.

bottom left; Enrico Savini (right) assisted by Tony Tickle.

bottom right; Rammon Hamers from the Netherlands at work on his tree.

facing page, top; *Carpinus turczaninowii*, 64 cm. - Ian Stewardson: Best Large Tree and Overall Winner of Best of British Bonsai, 2011.

facing page, bottom; *Taxus baccata* – 47 cm. - John Pitt: Best Chuhin.



fraternity and general public an ideal opportunity to enjoy British bonsai at its best.

An additional bonus was the weather – warm sunshine throughout with uncharacteristically high temperatures of 24 degrees C (75 F) – bearing in mind we are talking of Britain in April! With the weather reflecting conditions more closely related to summer, the demonstrations took place in open-sided marquees set up on the terrace overlooking a broad expanse of the Gardens. The demonstrators over the two days were led by Salvatore Liporace and Enrico Savini from Italy, together with further talks and demonstrations by Rammon Hamers (the Netherlands) and a British contingent comprising Alex Evelyn, Simon Temblett and Charlotte Walby.

The trade fair was made up of traders offering a diverse range of items for sale; these included both trained bonsai as well as a wonderful selection of *yamadori*, a number of bonsai potters, bonsai tools and accessories together with antique Japanese scrolls, *netsuke* and other items related to the hobby.

The exhibition was set up by Steve Tolley who also selected the trees and sponsored the Awards. This was to prove a difficult task, considering the number of bonsai and shohin compositions submitted for selection during the previous nine months. The result was a superb display of trees that was greatly admired by all. The high standard was testament to the progress in the level and quality of British bonsai over the years and was to prove a challenge to Salvatore Liporace and Enrico Savini in judging those trees that would receive the *Best of British Bonsai* awards.

Of all the trees and shohin compositions exhibited, twenty received *Awards of Merit*. Of those, three were to receive the top *Best of British Bonsai 2011* awards.





These were:

Best large bonsai and Best Tree in Show (above)

Korean hornbeam, *Carpinus turczaninowii*

Ian Stewardson

Best chuhin (right)

Yew, *Taxus baccata*

John Pitt

Best shohin (overleaf)

Yellow-star jasmine, *Trachelospermum asiaticum*

Mark and Ritta Cooper

In addition, the European Bonsai Association presented its own *Award of Merit* for the *Best Shohin Composition* to Duncan Hield.

As organisers, my husband Malcolm and I felt that this was a job well done. We went away from it very tired, looking forward to a rest but content in the feeling that we had started something that now had a momentum of its own and must go on to greater heights. 🌲

Best of British Bonsai continues overleaf.







facing page, top left and right; Trachelospermum asiaticum – 13 cm. - Mark & Ritta Cooper: Best Shohin individual tree.

Shohin composition showing award winning tree – Mark & Ritta Cooper.

facing page, bottom; Shohin Composition - Duncan Hield: EBA Award of Merit for Best Shohin Composition.

top left; Juniper sargentii – 78 cm. - Martin Shepherd.

top right; Juniper Itoigawa – 74 cm - Graham Potter.

middle left; Acer spicatum – 95 cm. - Chrissie Leigh Walker.

bottom right; Taxus baccata – 76 cm. - Dan Barton.





facing page, top left; Ligustrun ovalifolium – 71 cm. – Russ Farley.

facing page, top right; Prunus spinosa – 100.cm -John Pitt.

facing page, bottom; Pinus mugo – 60 cm - David Hannah.

top left; J. chinensis ' Kishu' – 70 cm – Kevin Homer.

top right; Larix decidua – 60 cm – Alisdair Howat.

bottom; Pinus paviflora – 42 cm. – George Bradley.





top; *Juniper chinensis* – 31 cm – Andrew Pearson.
bottom left; *Juniperus rigida* – 75 cm – Geoff Pearmine.
bottom right; *Pinus parviflora* – 81 cm. – Ian Stewardson.



top left; *Pinus sylvestris* – 100 cm. – Chris Thomas.

top right; *J. chinensis Itoigawa* – 70 cm – Dave Hannah.

bottom; *Chamaecyparis obtusa* – 30 cm – Bill Gordon.





top left; Pinus parviflora –
81 cm – Dougie Smith.
top right; Picea jezoensis –
102 cm. – Ian Cuppleditch.
bottom; Shohin composition –
Tracy Morton.





top; *J. chinensis* 'Itoigawa' –
61 cm. – Dougie Smith.
bottom; *Pinus parviflora* –
55 cm – Mark & Ritta Cooper.

