

Styling an Informal Upright Juniper

I start with four views of the procumbens nana juniper used for this demonstration. It was a one gallon nursery stock with good growth in the pot. The views of the tree are the views looking inward from 6:00 (the red reference mark), 9:00, 12:00 and 3:00 o'clock. At the point that the pictures were taken, the pot had been trimmed back over an inch and about a half inch of soil had been removed to expose roots. It was clear that the plant had two major directions of growth at 4:30 and 10:30.

The next step was to get in under the plant and remove all of the “downers” and any small bits of growth that impeded the view of the trunk and root base. The next several pictures show only the view from the three o'clock position because it is close to the final front of the tree. The materials trimmed off to this point are to the left of the tree.



One can see far more of the structure of the tree. The trunk base was not at all round and this view gives a much larger view of the trunk.

It has become apparent that this tree can be styled as a very informal upright rather than the other usual option, cascade. Thus the long branches will not be required in the final design and they can all be reduced. The result is shown in the next photo as viewed from 3:00. The removed material is shown on either side of the pot and represents over half the initial foliage.



View from 6:00



9:00



12:00



3:00



The tree leans too far forward so it will later be positioned in a more upright manner. This new orientation needs to be kept in mind, so it is sometimes convenient to work on the tree propped up in a pot to get the correct position. This is shown in the next picture, but does not convey significant information because part of the pot is in the way.



It is a little early in the process, but I chose to make some *jin* at this point. To do so, the bark of a branch is crushed with pliers.



After being crushed, it is quite simple to peel the bark off the branch. As will be shown, even the very finest branches have wood up the center.

The tree is beginning to take shape and it is becoming clear which portions of the tree will be maintained and which portions will be eliminated. It is time for another major pruning because it is possible to see what will be used in the final structure and what will be removed. From this point on, the tree is viewed from about the 4:30 position which will be the final front. Keep in mind that the tree had about half of its foliage coming forward when viewed at 4:30. Several heavy wires have been applied to the major branches, moving them to the sides and opening up the view from the front. Some heavy and fine wiring as well as some bark removal to make *jin* are shown in the next close-up picture.



The heavy wire is on a major branch and even on some of the newly-created *jin*. The fine wire can be seen positioning both of the branches with greenery.

A small branch that started from the center of the tree and headed to the back was wired and then carefully moved from the back to the apex position.



The finer wiring was carried out to get the small branches into horizontal pads around the tree. The initial styling is getting close to completion. In the next picture, the tree has been removed from the pot and you can see the substantial root system. Very little soil dropped as the tree was removed from the pot.



The potting medium used by the commercial grower is a mixture of peat, sand and something like pine bark. Almost all of that material is carefully removed using a chop-stick. What remains is the entire root system of the tree. It can be seen that there were actually two root systems, one close to the top of the pot and a second connected to the tree via a single large root.



That second root mass can be cut off with little ill effect on the tree. Then some of the longer, thin roots from the upper mass were trimmed back. The final root system for the tree is shown.



Wire staples were prepared and then used to secure screens into the bottom of the pot.



Another wire was then treaded thru the two drainage holes in the pot and will be used to secure the tree into the pot.

After placing about a 1/4" layer of bonsai mix in the bottom of the pot the securing wires are threaded up thru the roots of the tree as the tree is lowered into the pot. The wire is then crossed over the tree and twisted to secure the tree. That steadying wire is visible on the front of the roots if you look closely.



The pot is filled with bonsai mix and then a chop-stick is used to carefully work the mix down into the roots. The mix will have to be replenished several times during that process.

The tree is then watered thoroughly until the water coming thru the bottom of the pot is clear.

The tree is off to a good start, but the foliage is too wide at this point. Because this styling was done in September, the tree will be protected and allowed to rest. There should be some root growth before winter, though no foliage growth is expected before winter.

The tree will be fertilized routinely starting in the spring. It is expected that there will be substantial foliage growth and that some of the small buds left on the trunk will sprout into branches. These will be maintained and

then the outer edges of the tree will slowly be worked back toward the trunk to give a more pleasing look. The apex of the tree is spindly and will probably be allowed to grow wild to get some strength. Then it will be trimmed back. The foliage pads will be trimmed to give better definition so that there is little visual conflict between layers.

This final picture is almost life size.

