

MBP Bonsai presents the art of bonsai, offers supplies and gifts

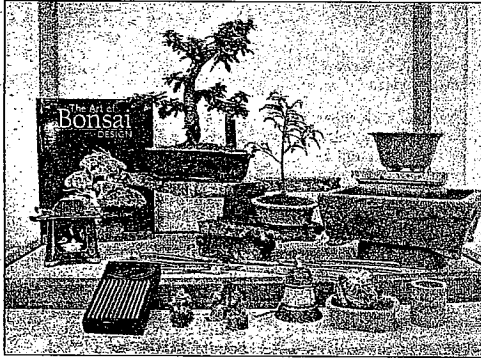
By Shanna Howard
Special Sections Writer

Bonsai blends artistic and horticultural abilities to create aesthetically pleasing miniature trees through pruning, shaping and special care. The Japanese have practiced bonsai (meaning "tree in a tray") for more than a thousand years. Mike and Candy Hansen bring the art home to the Austin area with their nationally known MBP Bonsai Studio.

Exploring the studio, greenhouse and garden at MBP Bonsai, visitors will find an array of bonsai, from tiny, delicate trees to more substantial ones like an amazing 100-year-old ficus. Both native and exotic plants can be found from local cedar and juniper to Japanese boxwoods and black pines.

"By shaping and pruning them, we give them style and definition," says Candy Hansen. "It's nature in miniature."

Candy Hansen has advice



Shanna Howard

MBP Bonsai features live bonsai, such as the Fukien Tea and ficus pictured, as well as classes, supplies, books and gifts like Asian incense, ornaments and figurines.

for beginners, noting that tropical bonsai will grow inside. Others, like European olive trees, pine, juniper and crepe myrtle, need to stay outdoors year round — a common mistake for those not well-versed in bonsai. She recom-

mends tropical Fukien Tea and Thousand Star Serissa, as well as hardy ficus trees, for beginners.

Those interested in learning more about the art of bonsai might be interested in bonsai classes — ranging from begin-

ner to skilled — that begin in January. A beginner's class works with outdoor plants. After the two-day sessions, students walk away with two new plants of their own. For gifting, a certificate for the classes comes with a book to wrap.

Candy's husband has been studying the art and science of bonsai for more than 30 years with a Japanese teacher, who comes to teach in Austin yearly. Mike Hansen is a licensed importer, and he goes to different parts of Asia to select the trees.

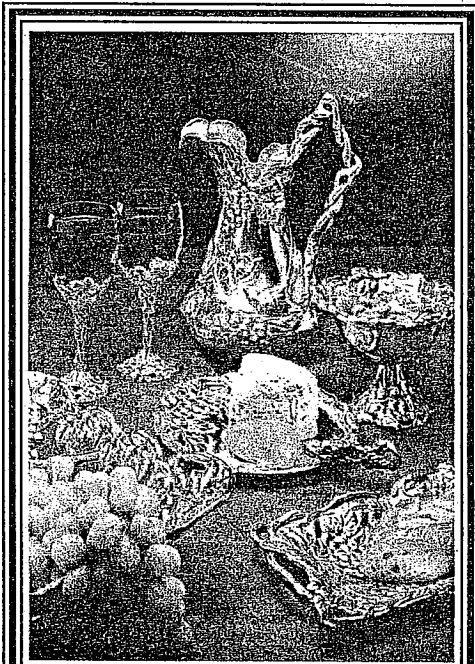
In addition to bonsai, MBP

Bonsai carries an extensive section of bonsai tools, accessories and books, and will ship supplies to bonsai enthusiasts outside the Austin area.

The store carries many imported gift items such as Japanese incense, Chinese cloisonne ornaments, carved stoneware, pots and lanterns, carved stone figurines and "mud figures."

"We're a one-stop shop for people looking for everything for bonsai," says Hansen.

MBP Bonsai is located at 601 Kay Ln. in Pflugerville. For information, call 244-3240 or toll-free at (888) 627-7883.



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