



Niwaki: Pruning, Training and Shaping Trees the Japanese Way

By Jake Hobson

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Over the years, Japanese gardeners have fine-tuned a distinctive set of pruning techniques that coax out the essential characters of their garden trees, or niwaki. In this highly practical book, Western gardeners are encouraged to draw upon the techniques and sculpt their own garden trees to unique effect. After discussing the principles that underpin the techniques, the author offers in-depth guidelines for shaping pines, azaleas, conifers, broadleaved evergreens, bamboos, and deciduous trees. Complete with abundant photographs, personal anecdotes and a wealth of advice, this unprecedented resource will inspire gardeners everywhere to transform their own trees into niwaki.

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Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

Hobson illuminates the practice known as *niwaki* in a fascinating, long overdue guide to shaping trees in ways that reflect the aesthetics of Japanese gardens. Hobson's regard for elements of garden design inspired by nature, and at times, derived literally from iconic features in Japan, shapes his writing. Possessing a sculptor's eye, Hobson ably opens the eyes of readers to the nuanced tree and shrub forms achieved by clipping or heavy pruning. Offering sound advice--do not imitate, but rather incorporate, a Japanese approach--Hobson elucidates principles and techniques with step-by-step line drawings accompanied by clearly defined descriptions of naturalistic and formal shapes. Instructions cover approaches to dealing with side branching, how to alter the line of the trunk, and how to sculpt pine trees, azaleas, conifers, broad-leaved evergreens, and deciduous trees. More than a pruning manual, Hobson's guide encompasses the cultural implications of *niwaki*, an artistic custom integral to the gardening legacy of Japan. *Alice Joyce*
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Review

"More than a pruning manual, Hobson's guide encompasses the cultural implications of *niwaki*, an artistic custom integral to the gardening legacy of Japan." —*Booklist*

"Any gardener would be fascinated, not only by the pruning and training techniques, but the background information about Japanese culture which the author weaves throughout the book." —*Washington Gardener*

"Of as much interest as the practical cutting points are the bits of history and lore woven into the chapters that stress the spiritual underpinnings of this ancient art." —*Seattle Post-Intelligence*

"Definitely has what it takes to impress serious garden nerds, [but] there's also plenty here for the rest of us. . . . *Niwaki* is [Hobson's] first book; let's hope it's not his last." —*Asian Reporter*

"Detailed drawings of the pruning methods, as well as numerous photos of Japanese examples, make this an eminently practical guide." —*SciTech Book News*

"Easily the best book in English on this pristine type of pruning. . . . Anyone who appreciates plants and Japanese culture will find more than they could have imagined in this unique book." —*West Hawaii Today*

"Has wonderful illustrations and very specific directions that should prove useful to anyone who has garden subjects that need pruning." —*Capital Times*

"More marriages have gotten in trouble over the 'correct' way to prune shrubs than probably any other gardening task. We can't save your relationship, but we [can] suggest *Niwaki: Pruning, Training, and Shaping Trees in the Japanese Way*." —*Cleveland Plain Dealer*

From the Inside Flap

Trees pervade Japan's physical landscape and are vital to the country's history and culture. Over thousands of years, the sculpting of Japanese garden trees, or *niwaki*, has become a finely honed art with a distinctive set

of pruning techniques meant to coax out the trees' essential characteristics. The methods yield dramatic and beguiling effects; mounds of pruned shrubs resemble interlocking hills, flowering apricot trees are trained out over archways, and elongated branches of *Pinus parviflora* cast otherworldly silhouettes.

Jake Hobson, who learned the techniques in an Osaka nursery, encourages Western gardeners to apply the Japanese methods to their own trees. Impressive results are achieved when gardeners accentuate the natural spread of branches, transform overgrown shrubs into bold, architectural outlines, make their trees look mature, craggy, windblown or even lightning-struck, and much more. Uniquely beautiful and highly versatile, niwaki excel as additions to borders, doorway sentinels, and stand-alone focal points. The techniques are surprisingly easy to learn, and gardeners at all levels are urged to experiment.

With illustrated step-by-step instructions, this book is a comprehensive guide to sculpting pines, azaleas, conifers, broadleaved evergreens, bamboos and deciduous trees the Japanese way. Moreover, because Japan's garden trees are deeply rooted in the country's cultural landscape, the author supplements the practical tips with insight into niwaki's historical and spiritual underpinnings, and offers a behind-the-scenes look at Japan's nurseries. Complete with abundant photographs, personal anecdotes and a wealth of advice, this unprecedented resource will inspire gardeners everywhere to transform their own trees into niwaki.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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