

# BONSAI STAMPS: A Checklist, Part 1

by Roger Cichorz

This checklist was initially an oral presentation at the January 4, 2006 TOPIC meeting at Rocky Mountain Philatelic Library (RMPL). It was repeated at the February 4, 2017 TOPIC meeting.

“Bone-sigh” is the preferred pronunciation although “bon-sigh” alternate is acceptable. Literal translation: “to cultivate in a tray”. Do not confuse with banzai (“bahn-sigh”), Japanese war cry (during/after WWII had negative connotation)

**Bonsai origins:** China, exact date unknown but generally thought ~2000 years ago.

**Folklore:** Han Dynasty (~100BC-100AD) emperor created a miniature landscape in his palace courtyard with hills, valleys, rivers, lakes, and trees to represent the far-reaching extent of his empire.

Chinese termed them penjing/punsai (meaning “singles in pots”). Penjing/punsai introduced into Japan during the Heian Period (794-1191 AD) by Buddhist monks. Japanese turned it into an art form, trying to duplicate the stresses of nature/elements on trees (distressed, aged look via “training”); at first, generally the undertaking of the elite but gradually spread among the general populace. Japanese “compulsion” lead to formalization of rules/styles: upright, slanting, cascade (bent trunk), forest or group (prostrate where branches represent single trees), clump; on/in rocks, on/in driftwood; most of what passes for “bonsais” at commercial outlets are more correctly termed “pre-bonsais” and require training to evolve into a proper bonsai.



Japan Scott # Z542  
*Crataegus sp.*

Japanese style stresses native trees: pines, junipers, maples, and azaleas. The U.S. style is more varied: it is similar to Japanese style, but adds most evergreens, oaks, elms, fruit trees, exotics, non-natives. Bonsais can be cultivated from seeds, seedlings, or “collected” in the wild.



United States Scott #4621  
*Acer buergerianum*

Introduction of bonsai into the West was fairly modern: Japan & China



New Caledonia  
Scott #1184  
*Murraya paniculata*

brought bonsais to display at the Third Universal Exhibition (Paris, 1878), then 1889, 1900; first major bonsai exhibition in London was 1909. Westerners thought trees looked “tortured” and voiced their displeasure. At the end of WWII returning Occupation U.S. soldiers brought bonsais back from Japan as souvenirs, but they soon died because they were not cared for properly; interest continued though and turned to Japanese emigrants and Japanese-Americans for advice.

The Denver Bonsai Club hosts annual Bonsai Show at the Denver Botanic Gardens on Father’s Day weekend; has gorgeous (“museum-quality”) displays, “how-to” classes, lectures, experts available to answer general questions or specifics about exhibits, and commercial retail source.

Bonsai people have competitive shows and exhibits, just like stamp shows!

## American Topical Association Bonsai Checklist Shortcomings:

There are several catalogue number, date, and species identification errors. Also naming and identification inconsistencies (primarily uses Scott identification versus various country specialized catalogues).

It includes bonsais (actual and stylized in art, paintings and tapestries), but also includes stamps depicting “trees with bonsai appearance or effect”; this is my major objection because the list only includes a small percentage of the stamps showing these trees that could qualify. So, where does one draw the line in including these in such a listing? Include all or none! Also, trees in nature do not resemble bonsais; it is vice-versa where bonsais are “trained” to resemble the actual distressed trees found in nature.

My Bonsai Checklist uses the species names given on the stamps as I assume the designation is correct. From there, trivial (popular) or scientific names are researched from the given name and cross-referenced. I divide my Checklist into stamps depicting specific bonsais and into those with artwork showing stylized bonsais (and include non-Scott-listed items in a separate section). As a concession to ATA’s Checklist and for the sake of completeness, I also include as a subsection the items the ATA Checklist lists as “resembling bonsais” but have made no effort to expand it despite its shortcomings because (as I stated earlier) distressed-appearing trees in nature are not bonsais!



San Marino Scott #1601  
*Pinus thunbergii*

Part 2 will appear in a forthcoming issue of **Biophilately**.

Part 2b: Stamps Depicting Trees with Bonsai Appearance or Effect (ATA Bonsai List)

China (PRC) Scott 1901-1903 (top row), Scott 1903 shows shrub planted on rock

China (ROC) Scott 1835-1840 (other side)

Scott 1835e shows two potted bonsais, Scott 1835c&d shows Ladies Watering Peonies,

Scott 1838a shows potted bonsais, Scott 1836 shows part Ladies Watering Peonies

China (ROC) Scott 2030-2032 (second row), Chinese paintings of trees growing out of rocks

China (ROC) Scott 2175-2178 (third row), Chinese paintings of trees

China (ROC) Scott 2439-2441 and China (ROC) Scott 2495-2500 (fourth row), flora

Don't have: China (PRC) Scott 1904 S/S, China (ROC) 2441a

Japan Scott 1001-1003 (top row), Scott 1003 (50y) shows Cypresses

Japan Scott 1071 (top row), shows aged and gnarled pine tree

Japan Scott 1282-1283 (second row), Scott 1282 (50y) shows aged and gnarled pine and flowers

Japan Scott B34-B35 (second row), Scott B35 (50y + 10y) shows aged and gnarled cherry blossoms

Japan Scott 1012-1015 (third row), Scott 1013 shows potted bonsai (not on ATA List)

Korea (ROK/South) Scott 781a, 784a (top row), 786a (second row)

Scott 786a shows Man and Boy Under Pine Tree (aged and gnarled pine tree)

Korea (ROK/South) Scott 781-786, Scott 786 = Man and Boy Under Pine Tree (aged and gnarled pine tree)

Korea (ROK/South) Scott 1210-1211, Scott 1210 shows Pine Tree (aged and gnarled pine tree)

### **Mulawin aso**

Confusion on this species: I originally thought it was the molave tree (*Vitex parviflora*), but the “Bonsai in the Philippines” site ([www.wildbonsai.com/bonsai-in-the-philippines.htm](http://www.wildbonsai.com/bonsai-in-the-philippines.htm)) lists it as *Gmelina elliptica* and mulawin daga as *Vitex sp.*

The *Gmelina elliptica* is a thorny seaside shrub, so I question this site’s identification and am inclined to go with a *Vitex species*; however, Indonesia (Scott #1425) depicted *Gmelina elliptica* as a bonsai tree, so I will go with this site’s identification.

A book on Philippine forestry indicates mulawin aso is a generic name for softwood molave trees:

A number of woods in the Philippines pass under the name mulawin aso and female molave as opposed to the hard molave (mulawin-bato) or male molave. The names male and female, of course, are only names for designating hard from soft molave ... There are a number of distinct species in this family that do have the general name mulawin-aso. One of the most important of these is the kalipapa-aso or mulawin-aso (*Vitex pentaphylla*), which is a medium size tree usually found scattered in rich bottoms. Another is lingo-lingo or mulawin-aso (*Vitex turczaninowii*)... A third species is alagao or mulawin-aso (*Premna nauseosa*).



Viet Nam Scott #3226  
*Ficus pilosa*

A website which gives a primer on Phillipine plants lists mualuin-aso as *Premna integrifolia* Blanco.

**Table 1: Stamps with Designs Depicting Actual Bonsai Plants**

Country	Scott #	Date	Description
China (ROC/Taiwan)	2481-84	09/22/85	<b>First bonsai series</b>
	2481		\$2, cork oak ( <i>Quercus suber</i> )
	2482		\$5, five-needle pine ( <i>Pinus parviflora</i> )
	2483		\$8, lohan pine ( <i>Pinus lohan</i> )
	2484		\$18, banyan ( <i>Ficus benghalensis</i> )
China (ROC/Taiwan)	2588-91	06/19/87	<b>4 different floral arrangements by Huang Yung-ch'uan</b>
	2591		\$10, camellia bonsai ( <i>Camellia japonica</i> )
China (ROC/Taiwan)	2729-32	07/20/90	<b>Second bonsai series</b>
	2729		\$3, <i>Pinus thunbergii</i> (Japanese black pine) – windswept
	2730		\$6.50, <i>Ehretia buxifolia</i> (Fukien tea) – cascading
	2731		\$12, <i>Buxus harlandii</i> (Japanese boxwood) – upright
	2732		\$16, <i>Celtis sinensis</i> (Chinese hackberry) – forest
China (PRC)	1665-70		<b>Miniature landscapes, set of six</b>
	1665		4f, Chinese elm ( <i>Ulmus parvifolia</i> )
	1666		8f, Chinese juniper ( <i>Juniperus chinensis</i> v. <i>procumbens</i> )
	1667		8f, maidenhair tree ( <i>Ginkgo biloba</i> )
	1668		10f, Chinese juniper ( <i>Juniperus chinensis</i> v. <i>sargentii</i> /J. x <i>media</i> )
	1669		20f, kaki persimmon ( <i>Diospyros kaki</i> )
	1670		60f, Meyer juniper ( <i>Juniperus squamata</i> )
China (PRC)	2665-70	04/18/96	<b>Penjing (Chinese tray landscapes of plants attached to rocks) six stamps in three se-tenant pairs</b>
	2665-66a		20f x 2, "Green Scenery of Lijiang and Glistening Divine Peak"

**Table 1: Stamps with Designs Depicting Actual Bonsai Plants (Continued)**

Country	Scott #	Date	Description
China (PRC)	2667-68a	04/18/96	50f x 2, "Melting Snow Overflows River and Eagle Beak"-Shaped Peculiar Rock
	2669-70a		100f x 2, "The Most Uncommon Years and Months of One's Life and Peaks Rising in Rosy Clouds"
Ghana	1386	02/16/92	200ce, <i>Juniperus sp.</i> (juniper)
Hong Kong	1040	07/17/03	\$1.40, Fukien tea ( <i>Ehretia buxifolia</i> ) – semi-cascade
	1041		\$2.40, hedge sageretia/Chinese sweet plum ( <i>Sageretia thea/Sageretia theezans</i> ) – informal upright
	1042		\$3, firethorn ( <i>Pyracantha coccinea</i> ) – cascade
	1043		\$5, Chinese hackberry ( <i>Celtis sinensis</i> ) – root on rock
Indonesia	1424-26	03/01/90	<b>Flora '90 set of two + SS</b>
	1424		75r, <i>Mammillaria gracilis v. fragilis</i> (mammillaria/Arizona snowcap)
	1425		1000r, <i>Gmelina elliptica</i> (common bulang/bulangan)
	1426		1500r, SS, <i>Gmelina elliptica</i> (common bulang/bulangan)
Japan	1826	04/06/89	<b>1989 World Bonsai Convention, Omiya, Japan</b>
	1826		¥62, Shimpaku juniper ( <i>Juniperus chinensis sargentii</i> variant)
	1826var		¥62, with mihon overprint
Japan	Z542	04/26/02	¥80 <b>Saitama prefecture issue</b> , <i>Crataegus sp.</i> (hawthorn)
	Z542var		¥80, with mihon overprint
Maldives	1456-65	1990-91	<b>Expo '90, two sets of four + 2 SS</b>
	1456		20l, winged euonymus ( <i>Euonymus alatus</i> )
	1457		50r, Japanese black pine ( <i>Pinus thunbergiana</i> )
	1458		1r, Japanese five-needle pine ( <i>Pinus parviflora</i> )
	1459		3.50r, flowering quince ( <i>Chaenomeles lagenaria</i> )
	1460		5r, Chinese elm ( <i>Ulmus parvifolia</i> )
	1461		8r, Japanese persimmon ( <i>Diospyros kaki</i> )
	1462		10r, Japanese wisteria ( <i>Wisteria floribunda</i> )
	1463		12r, Satsuki azalea ( <i>Rhododendron indicum</i> )
	1464		20r, SS, Sargent juniper ( <i>Juniperus chinensis sargentii</i> )
	1465		20r, SS, trident maple ( <i>Acer buergerianum</i> )
Monaco	1942	04/03/95	<b>European Bonsai Congress</b> , 6fr <i>Acer palmatum</i> (Japanese maple)

**Table 1: Stamps with Designs Depicting Actual Bonsai Plants (Continued)**

Country	Scott #	Date	Description
New Caledonia	1184	09/17/14 10/06/14	150f, <i>Murraya paniculata</i> (orange jasmine) – moyogi (twisted trunk) “17.09.14” pane inscription, but Scott lists FDI as 10/6/14
Philippines	2915	07/27/04	<b>Sheet of 16 (eight different stamps, 4 x 4 format), Philippine bonsais</b>
	2915a		6p, bantigue ( <i>Pemphis acidula</i> ) – stamps 3 & 9
	2915b		6p, kamuning binangonan ( <i>Murraya exotica</i> ) – stamps 4 & 10
	2915c		6p, balete/fig tree ( <i>Ficus sp.</i> ) – stamps 1 & 11
	2915d		6p, mulawin aso ( <i>Gmelina elliptica</i> ) – stamps 2 & 12
	2915e		6p, kamuning binangonan ( <i>Murraya exotica</i> ) – stamps 7 & 13
	2915f		6p, logwood ( <i>Haematoxylon campechianum</i> ) – stamps 8 & 14
	2915g		6p, kamuning binangonan ( <i>Murraya exotica</i> ) – stamps 5 & 15
	2915h		6p, bantolinao ( <i>Maba buxifolia</i> ) – stamps 6 & 16
Philippines	2916	07/27/04	<b>Sheet of 16 (eight different stamps, 4 x 4 format), Philippine bonsais</b>
	2916a		6p, bantigue ( <i>Pemphis acidula</i> ) – stamps 3 & 9
	2916b		6p, Chinese elm ( <i>Ulmus parvifolia</i> ) – stamps 4 & 10
	2916c		6p, bantigue ( <i>Pemphis acidula</i> ) – stamps 1 & 11
	2916d		6p, bantigue ( <i>Pemphis acidula</i> ) – stamps 2 & 12
	2916e		6p, balete/fig tree ( <i>Ficus sp.</i> ) – stamps 7 & 13
	2916f		6p, balete/fig tree ( <i>Ficus sp.</i> ) – stamps 8 & 14
	2916g		6p, bantigue ( <i>Pemphis acidula</i> ) – stamps 5 & 15
	2916h		6p, manzanita/bearberry ( <i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i> ) – stamps 6 & 16
Philippines	2917	07/27/04	<b>Sheetlet of four (four different stamps), Philippine bonsais</b>
	2917a		6p, lemonsito/limeberry ( <i>Triphasia trifolia</i> )
	2917b		6p, bougainvillea ( <i>Bougainvillea sp.</i> )
	2917c		6p, bougainvillea ( <i>Bougainvillea sp.</i> )
	2917d		6p, kalyos/sleekrodea/toothbrush tree ( <i>Streblus asper</i> )

**Table 1: Stamps with Designs Depicting Actual Bonsai Plants (Continued)**

Country	Scott #	Date	Description
Philippines	2918	08/28/04	<b>World Stamp Championship 2004, sheetlet of four, Philippines bonsais (stamps as Scott 2917 but background differs)</b>
	2918a		6p, lemonsito/limeberry ( <i>Triphasia trifolia</i> )
	2918b		6p, bougainvillea ( <i>Bougainvillea sp.</i> )
	2918c		6p, bougainvillea ( <i>Bougainvillea sp.</i> )
	2918d		3p, kalyos/sleekrodea/toothbrush tree ( <i>Streblus asper</i> )
Philippines	3174	10/17/08	<b>Sheet of 16 (eight different stamps, 4 x 4 in horizontal format, depicting Philippine bonsais), commemorating the 35th Anniversary (1973-2008) of the Philippine Bonsai Society, Inc.</b>
	3174a		7p, bantigue ( <i>Pemphis acidula</i> ) – stamps 1 & 9
	3174b		7p, balete/laurel fig/Chinese banyan ( <i>Ficus microcarpa</i> ) – stamps 2 & 10
	3174c		7p, serissa/snow rose/tree of a thousand stars ( <i>Serissa foetida</i> ) – stamps 3 & 11
	3174d		7p, bantigue ( <i>Pemphis acidula</i> ) – stamps 7 & 15
	3174e		7p, bantigue ( <i>Pemphis acidula</i> ) – stamps 5 & 13
	3174f		7p, lemonsito/limeberry ( <i>Triphasia trifolia</i> ) – stamps 6 & 14
	3174g		7p, bantigue ( <i>Pemphis acidula</i> ) – stamps 5 & 13
	3174h		7p, bogambilya/ bougainvillea ( <i>Bougainvillea sp.</i> ) – stamps 8 & 16
Philippines	3175	10/17/08	<b>Sheet of 16 (eight different stamps, 4 x 4 in vertical format, depicting Philippine bonsais), commemorating the 35th Anniversary (1973-2008) of the Philippine Bonsai Society, Inc.</b>
	3175a		7p, kamuning bilog ( <i>Murraya sp.</i> ) – stamps 1 & 9
	3175b		7p, bantigue ( <i>Pemphis acidula</i> ) – stamps 2 & 10
	3175c		7p, bantigue ( <i>Pemphis acidula</i> ) – stamps 3 & 11
	3175d		7p, bantigue ( <i>Pemphis acidula</i> ) – stamps 4 & 12
	3175e		7p, bantigue ( <i>Pemphis acidula</i> ) – stamps 5 & 13
	3175f		7p, bignay/Chinese laurel ( <i>Antidesma bunius</i> ) – stamps 6 & 14
	3175g		7p, bantulinaw/bantolinao ( <i>Maba buxifolia</i> ) – stamps 7 & 15
	3175h		7p, red balete ( <i>Ficus concinna</i> ) – stamps 8 & 16

**Table 1: Stamps with Designs Depicting Actual Bonsai Plants (Continued)**

Country	Scott #	Date	Description
Philippines	3176	10/17/08	Sheetlet of four (four different stamps, 2 x 2 in horizontal format, depicting Philippine bonsais), commemorating the 35th Anniversary (1973-2008) of the Philippine Bonsai Society, Inc.
	3176a		7p, melindres ( <i>Lagerstroemia indica</i> )
	3176b		7p, bantigue ( <i>Pemphis acidula</i> )
	3176c		7p, mulawin daga/molave tree ( <i>Vitex sp.</i> )
	3176d		7p, santan/Chinese ixora ( <i>Ixora chinensis</i> )
San Marino	1438-41	03/27/99	<b>Bonsai '99, San Marino Bonsai Exhibition</b>
	1438		50l, <i>Pinus mugo</i> (mugo pine/mountain pine)
	1439		300l, <i>Olea europaea</i> (European olive)
	1440		350l, <i>Pinus sylvestris</i> (Scotch pine)
	1441		500l, <i>Quercus robur</i> (English oak/pedunculate oak)
San Marino	1801-02	04/16/04	<b>Bonsai 2004, European Bonsai Congress, set of two</b>
	1801		45l, <i>Pinus thunbergii</i> (Japanese black pine)
	1802		60l, <i>Pinus mugo</i> (mugo pine/mountain pine)
Thailand	971-74	10/04/81	<b>International Letter Writing Week, dwarfed trees</b>
	971		75s, mai hok-hian (dwarfed tree with its branches curved down and turned up vertically or revolved around the trunk)
	972		2b, mai kam-ma-lo (dwarfed tree with its branches curved down except turned upwards at the top)
	973		2.75b, mai khen/merawen bunga ( <i>Hopea pubescens</i> ) (dwarfed tree with its branches spread out in three different directions)
	974		5b, mai khabuan (dwarfed tree with its branches curved up in a zig-zag manner)
Thailand	1829	09/15/98	2b, bonsai at left of statue, perf. 14 x 14½
	1830		2b, bonsai at left of statue, perf. 14 x 14½
	1831		10b, bonsai at right of statue, perf. 14 x 14½
	1832		10b, bonsais at both sides of statue, perf. 14 x 14½
	1832a		Souvenir sheet of four (#1829-32, perf. 13¼)
United States	4618-22	01/23/12	<b>Bonsai Trees</b>
	4618		Forever (45¢), Sierra juniper ( <i>Juniperus occidentalis</i> ) – semi-cascade
	4619		Forever (45¢), black pine ( <i>Pinus jeffreyi</i> ) – formal upright

**Table 1: Stamps with Designs Depicting Actual Bonsai Plants (Continued)**

Country	Scott #	Date	Description
United States	4620	01/26/12	Forever (45¢), banyan ( <i>Ficus benghalensis</i> ) - cascade
	4621		Forever (45¢), trident maple ( <i>Acer buergerianum</i> ) – informal upright
	4622		Forever (45¢), azalea ( <i>Rhododendron arborescens</i> ) – multiple trunk
	4622b		Booklet pane of 20, five each #4618-4622
Viet Nam	1633-40	06/16/86	<b>First bonsai series, set of seven + SS</b>
	1633		1d, <i>Ficus glomerata</i> (cluster fig)
	1634		1d, <i>Ficus benjamina</i> (Benjamin tree/Java tree)
	1635		2d, <i>Ulmus tonkinensis</i> ( <i>Ulmus lanceifolia</i> type elm with exfoliating bark indigenous to North Vietnam and Western China)
	1636		3d, <i>Prunus persica/Persica vulgaris</i> (peach tree)
	1637		3d, <i>Streblus asper</i> (sleekrodea/kalyos/toothbrush tree)
	1638		5d, <i>Pinus khasya/Pinus kesiya</i> (banguet pine/Khasya pine)
	1639		5d, <i>Podocarpus macrophyllus</i> (Chinese podocarpus/shrubby yew/plum pine)
	1640		10d, SS, <i>Serissa foetida</i> (evergreen, tree of a thousand stars)
	1633-40var		Set of seven + SS, with “Specimen” overprint
	1633-40imp		Set of seven + SS, imperforate
Viet Nam	2812-18	03/02/98	<b>Second bonsai series, set of six + SS</b>
	2812		400d, <i>Limonia acidissima</i> (Indian wood apple)
	2813		400d, <i>Deeringia polysperma</i>
	2814		400d, <i>Pinus merkusii</i> (Sumatran pine)
	2815		4000d, <i>Barringtonia acutangula</i> (wild almond/kandu almond)
	2816		6000d, <i>Ficus elastica</i> (Indian rubber plant)
	2817		10,000d, <i>Wrightia religiosa</i> (wild water plum/water jasmine)
	2818		14,000d, SS, <i>Adenium obesum</i> (desert rose/pink sabi star/mock azalea)
	2812-18var		Set of six + SS, with “Specimen” overprint



**Table 1: Stamps with Designs Depicting Actual Bonsai Plants (Continued)**

Country	Scott #	Date	Description
Viet Nam	2812-18imp	03/02/98	Set of six + SS, imperforate
Viet Nam	3224-27	07/01/04	<b>Third bonsai series, set of four</b>
	3224		800d, <i>Ficus microcarpa</i> (laurel fig/Chinese banyan)
	3225		2000d, <i>Premna serratifolia</i> (headache tree)
	3226		3000d, <i>Ficus pilosa/Ficus drupacea</i> (brown-wooly fig)
	3227		8000d, <i>Ficus religiosa</i> (bodhi tree/bo-tree/peepul tree)
	3224-27var		Set of four, with "Specimen" overprint
	3224-27imp		Set of four, imperforate

*The author is a member of ATA and its Topic (ATA #76) Chapter, and besides bonsais, his topical interests are puffins and Abbott Pentothal "Dear Doctor" postcards. Roger is a life member of APS/APRL and MEPSI, and longtime member of the Scandinavian Collectors Club, Channel Islands Specialists Society, Lundy Collectors Club UK Chapter, Cinderella Stamp Club (London), Philatelic Writers Unit, AAPE, Rocky Mountain Philatelic Library, and Collectors Club (Denver). His collecting passions include the postal history of Åland, Faroes, Lundy, and Herm Island. Roger presently is serving as acting librarian of the SCC Library in Denver, Topic President, and a regular columnist and article contributor for SCC's quarterly, **The Posthorn**.*

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