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Creating a new Apex

The principle aim in creating bonsai is to produce a tree that looks old, weathered and filled with character. Old trees generally have thick trunks with stocky side branches that fairly quickly divide up into smaller branches, and at the ends of these the leaf pads. There are always exceptions but these are the basic characteristics of most old trees.

The technique we use to develop this in our bonsai is the most basic of all bonsai techniques and the easiest. This is done simply by removing the top or apex of the trunk, and bending a smaller side branch into position to take its place using wire.

What in fact actually happens is that you reduce the height of the tree, and consequently the trunk appears thicker, and the tree older. At this point some of the smaller branches of the new apex can also be removed to further shape the crown.



It is quite important to leave an active bud at the very tip of the new apex. This will grow with vigor fueled by all the nutrients that were being supplied to the older, larger apex. The side branches should also be treated in this way. It may be necessary to repeat this process a couple of times a growing season, and actually you will be doing this on all of your trees for as long as they are in your care. This is THE secret bonsai technique. Now you are also a bonsai master!

When I prune branches I generally do not cut too close to the node of the branch. I try to leave a small stump that should dry out naturally and fall off leaving a smaller scar. The stumps of large cuts should be sealed with special tree sealant to prevent dehydration. I use wood glue, the white cold glue, as it is cheap, and it dries clear.

Tip: If the branch you have cut off has a nice shape to it then remove most of the leaves, dip the cut end into rooting hormone and plant it into river sand. You will soon have another lovely tree in your collection. Tax free!