

Enjoy the Journey

As I've been enjoying the Winter Olympics this past week, I've been reminded of the process involved in getting to Sochi and competing against the best in the world. These athletes train for at least four years developing their skills and techniques. They compete in many other professional competitions and gain status and rank in their event. The highest ranked come into the Olympics with great expectations and high hopes. However, the Olympic outcome is not always what is anticipated. Several top ranked athletes have not even made the podium. Was their Olympic experience a waste? Of course not. They may express disappointment in their performance at that specific moment but are always full of optimism for the future and grateful for past experiences that got them to that point.



So it is with life. We need to make plans and set goals and then work diligently to meet them. Life is full of ups and downs... so are roller coasters... and I love roller coasters. As you work towards your goals, dreams and aspirations take time to, as they say, "stop and smell the roses". The journey is always longer than the final destination and will always be full of more experiences and memorable moments.

A tree is planted to enjoy for many years, not to be left unnoticed until the last year of its life. Blossoms appear, new leaves form in the spring and then turn color and drop in the fall, birds sing from the branches, a rope swing puts smiles on little faces, the tree house strengthens friendships, the air seems to smell a bit fresher, and life is just better for many years in the shade of a tree. Enjoy life's journey.

"Success is not a place at which one arrives but rather the spirit with which one undertakes and continues the journey."
— Alex Noble

FAVORITE FLORA:

PINUS THUNBERGII - JAPANESE BLACK PINE



This month's favorite flora is an excellent specimen native to the coastal areas of Japan and South Korea. The Japanese Black Pine (*Pinus thunbergii*) is an evergreen conifer that can reach heights of over 100 feet in its native range but a height of only 20 to 30 feet is more common in the Las Vegas valley. This size makes it ideal for smaller spaces where large conifers such as the Aleppo Pine (*Pinus halepensis*) or Mondel Pine (*Pinus eldarica*) may not fit. The Japanese Black Pine can be grown in full sun and is very resistant to tough conditions such as drought, poor soils, and high winds. This pine commonly takes on an irregular shape and can easily resemble a large bonsai tree with little to no pruning. The needles of this tree are dark green and contrast well against its dark grey, rough bark.

highly sculptured tree. It differs from 'Bonsai' or 'potted tree' in that Niwaki utilizes larger sized plants that are grown in the ground. Niwaki trees are highly stylized and pruned to resemble mature trees found in natural settings. A tree may be shaped to resemble a windswept or even a lightning struck tree. Also keep in mind that while Western gardeners may like to experiment with a wide variety of plants within a landscape, Japanese gardeners focus on training and shaping a limited number of plants to create a certain atmosphere or ambience. A Japanese Black Pine, a few well placed shrubs and groundcovers in combination with a boulder or two can create a stunning, uncluttered landscape with a lot of character and interest.

The Japanese Black Pine can be used in a variety of landscape scenarios and planting combinations but this tree can be a great addition to a traditional Japanese style garden pruned in a 'Niwaki' style. Niwaki is translated literally to 'garden tree' and is used to describe a

Summer is Coming
Lake Mead, NV
Stan Southwick

Photo of the Month

