



Background:

I have been going to Chino in Negano Prefecture for the past three years to meet up with my friend Kotaro Koike who runs a tree surgery business.

Sketch map of Japan and location of Chino in relation to Tokyo and Kyoto.

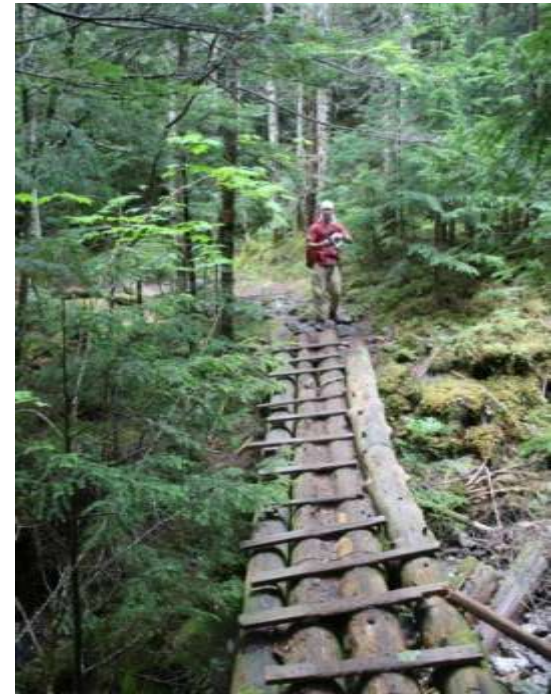


Region:

Chino is situated in the Japanese Alps of central Japan at height of 800m. The Yatsugatake mountain range is at around 2,500m or more. The area has fertile soils where rice, soya, buckwheat, fruit and salad crops are grown.



- Mountain walk



80% of Japan is mountainous. The hill sides are covered with species such as Japanese cedar, magnolia, maple, red pine and oak.



The Japanese people have a strong connection to the land and natural world through one of their religions – Shintoism - a belief that mountains rivers, rocks and trees have spirits called Kami and they can be either benevolent or destructive. Paying homage to them is a good idea if you don't want trouble.



Shinto:

The Shinto shrines are noticeably surrounded by tall trees such as *Zelkova chinensis*, which represents longevity and *Cryptomeria japonica* which represents strength.



Zelkova chinensis





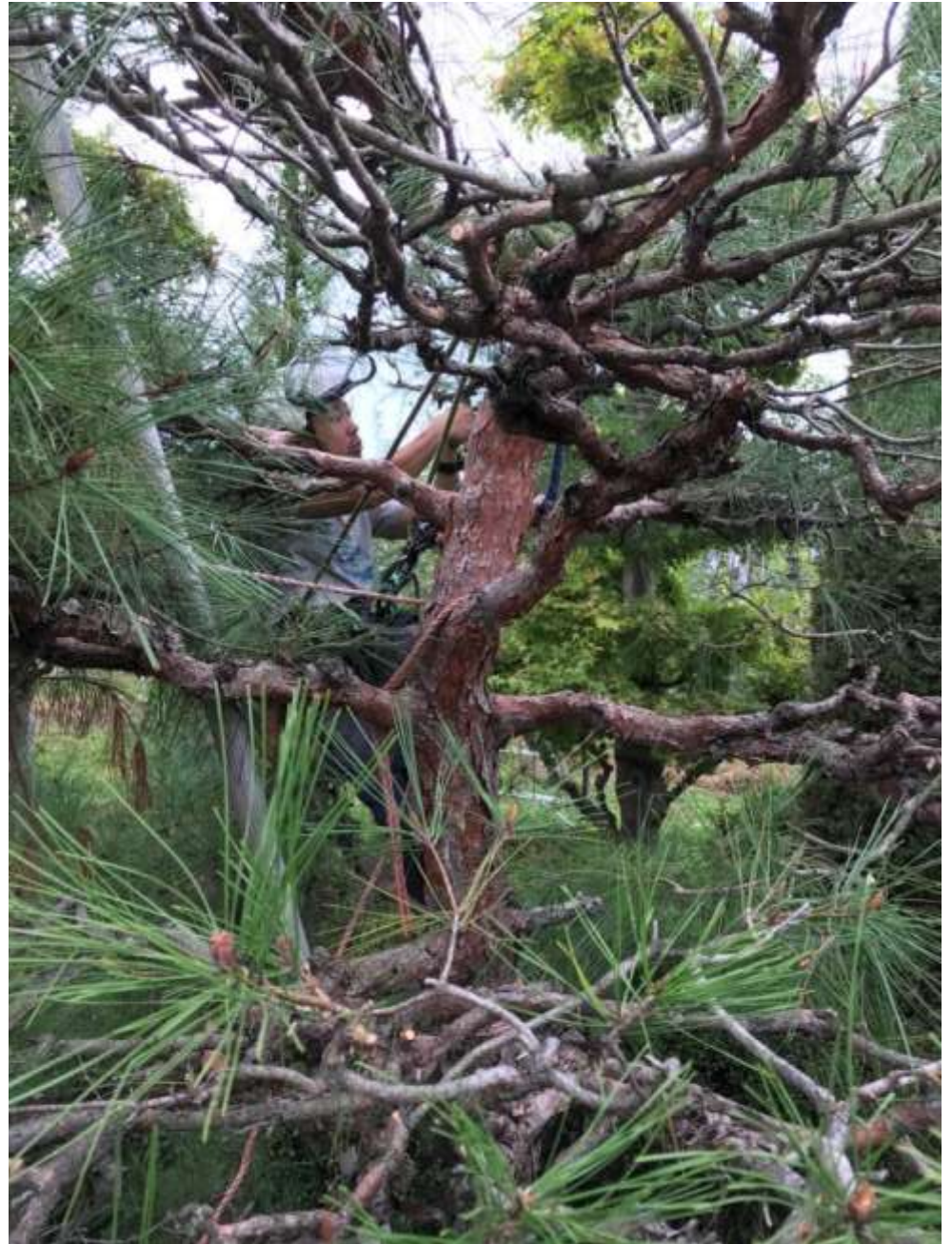
Niwaki:

Niwaki – garden trees. Chinese garden design inspired Japanese gardeners to send workers to the mountains to find suitable trees to dig up and use in their landscape designs. They sought out trees with gnarled stems, widespread branches and asymmetric forms from cliff tops and mountains. The gardens were microcosms of wild landscapes. New pruning techniques were developed to manage the trees and eventually nurseries began to produce them.



Pruning techniques

There are two main pruning techniques for managing niwaki pines. Midorisumi –in spring where the new growth, candles, are pinched back/out to force a new flush of stunted growth giving a dense form. Momiage – in autumn where old needles are pulled off and the new shoots are thinned to 2 outward facing opposite buds.



Before



After



Other species and pruning management:

Species such as yew, mock privet, holly and bay are all managed by training and pruning to get the desired shape and once established by clipping with garden shears.



- Gardens in Japan:







And some I am growing:

Including: *Luma apiculata*, *Phyllirea latifolia*, *Pieris japonica* 'Forest Flame', *Osmanthus delavayii*, *Laurus nobilis*, *Griselinea littoralis*, *Pinus thurnbergii*, *Pinus sylvestris*, *Fagus sylvatica*, *Carpinus betulus*.

