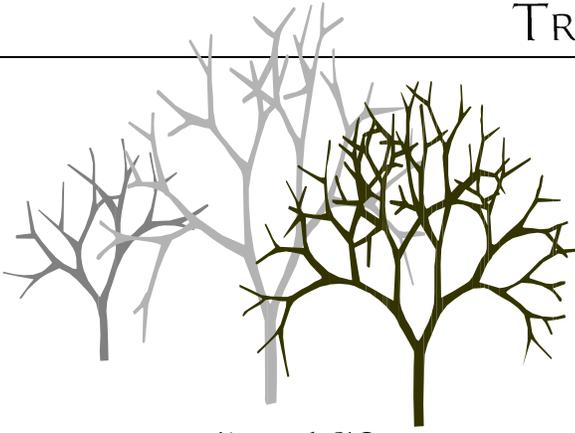


TREE QI GONG



Yes, trees do Qi Gong.

Let's start from the basics: everything is energy, everything is energy at various levels of vibration; matter to light, body-thoughts-spirit. One way to think about energy is as if it's water in its many forms: an ice cube, water, steam, or humidity.

Though what I'll be talking about here is primarily from the Lung Men Daoist Qi Gong (a parent of Bagua Zhang) just about every branch of Qi Gong has a version of tree Qi Gong. Pa Kua has tree qi king in the basic level of 'Bird Enters Forest'.

The basic principle of tree Qi Gong is that trees are the guardians of the earth. They take what are toxins from other life forms and feed on it, transforming it into useful products for the planet; they are the filters of the planet.

Every form of life, or matter (energy) also has a type of energy field around it to some extent. Just as a sound doesn't really go to a certain distance and stop, energy and fields of energy are much the same way. Energy radiates out in all directions from each being, just getting fainter as it gets further away from its central source. This means that beyond our perception these energy fields interact and blend to a certain extent influencing each other. As we practice the zhan zhuang and certain Qi Gong over a period of time we can begin to feel this field energy emanating from us. This feeling of qi is first between our hands, as we begin to develop our Qi Gong and increase our own qi and awareness of it, our vitality increases and our qi shines brighter - stronger. The way to develop this is practicing the zhan zhuang daily. This is a very slow and individual process, training with a Qi Gong master can accelerate this process.

If we have an internal weakness or sickness, instead of building up a reservoir of qi as we practice the qi is directed to heal the illness or weakness. If our minds are busy and can't calm down, much of the qi is used up by the thoughts and nervous energy expenditure (Stress depletes much qi). Practicing too much fa-jin movements also depletes our qi reservoir. The mind uses up much energy in its functioning which is why basic meditation and learning to calm and focus the mind is very important. As our health improves and

our mind learns to center we begin to build up our qi reservoir.

Once our qi begins to build, along with our awareness, we not only become aware of our own qi but also that around us. A good example of this is being in a room when a depressed or angry person enters; the vibes change. Keep in mind all energy isn't all the same so some types of energy may: flow, mix, merge, change, irritate or bump into each other. We're talking about a limitless levels of vibrations.

The basic assumption of tree Qi Gong is that trees also feed on and filter pure energy - all vibrations. Through our practice we can open up and permit a greater exchange of qi with plants for healing, insight or knowledge. Even without specific tree Qi Gong or being aware of it, anytime we're around a forest, or wooded area we are benefiting from a boost of our own energy by being so close and exposed to the trees. Try doing taiji or basic meditation in an old growth forest, the energy is so thick you can almost see it (some people can see it). As with all Qi Gong, tension - muscular or mental inhibit the flow or exchange of qi. If we walk relaxed through a wooded area we are basically doing a minor type of tree Qi Gong. Anytime we practice around a tree or healthy plants we have an exchange of qi with the surroundings and we benefit on very subtle levels.

The most basic tree Qi Gong is practicing our zhan zhuang with a tree. Begin zhan zhuang until you can feel the qi flow between your palms, then use your palms and try to feel the qi flow, aura, of the tree. When you feel the current of the tree, this is the place to stop and use 'listening' energy. *This is your practice.* When you can feel the tree's qi flow, this creates a strong circuit, your energy gets hooked into the flow of the tree's qi stream. If you can't feel the energy between your palms just practice your zhan zhuang keeping your palms about 6" away from the tree. Another method is sitting in a meditation posture slightly away from the trunk, focus on the color of the bark as a column of qi, then see your qi the same color and merging with the tree. Open up all cells and pores, blending with the tree's qi.

Though there are specific visualizations and certain exercises to do with some styles, this basic method of focusing on feeling the energy connection I believe is the best. We permit the energy to flow as it should, and the changes and cleansing happens naturally, without forcing or interfering in any way. Just open up to what you feel or completely empty your mind.

Though in some styles of tree Qi Gong there are specific instructions of what to do with each tree and what each tree is good for, personally I don't think things can be classified so specifically considering we're

TREE QI GONG

all different and complex. What one person needs, or enjoys is completely wrong for another. As you practice and increase your awareness; what you'll find is that each tree, not merely species, has it's own personality. The range spans all feelings: happy, sad, healing, angry, neutral, energetic, calming, aggressive, strong, soft . . . Also the time of year changes the feeling of the tree's energy current. Don't stand by a tree you feel a negative response from. This energy-link is a healing-link, a purification of our system. The calmer and emptier our minds are the greater the exchange, there is less resistance to the exchange of qi flow.

Try this 'listening-energy' with all types of plants, house plants as well. Spider plants, sanseverias, and African violets are considered good energy plants but see what you feel. If you're ill you may not want to over burden a small-newly planted tree or non-vigorous house plant.

Is there a certain spot in a park where you like to sit, read a book or just rest? In your yard? Check out the plants around you.

One theory of tree Qi Gong is that there is a subtle exchange, cellular, of information whenever the energy-link is great. So. . . on some level we are learning or absorbing information when we practice.

The size of the tree makes a difference, the location of the tree will make a difference. If you don't feel comfortable practicing your tree Qi Gong in public you may just sit by a tree with a book, pretend to be reading the book, hands in zhan zhuang position on your lap. In some clubs and arts you hear specific instructions to stand with your back to the north or south, only stand by such and such a tree as you practice to absorb the proper energy of the area.. Master Tchoung would say walk around, feel the area - you'll find the right spot and right direction. If it feels right then the energy currents must be in harmony.

The following is a list of some trees that certain Qi Gong masters agree have these characteristics. Don't take them as law however, everyone is different. But, if you can't feel the energy of trees yet, these are a good place to start with. The colors are from the Five Element theory of Qinese medicine. The color being that of the bark. Which of the five element colors does it come closest to? It's thought that each tree/color benefits the organ associated with it. You visualize the tress's qi and your qi the same color and merging. Sometimes the colors are merely used in healing meditations for specific organs. As you practice and your awareness increases, trust your feelings and disregard the lists.

Some tree Qi Gong methods visualize drawing the earth or tree's qi in through the feet, filling the body,

merging with the tree and extending up to the crown of the tree. Another method, usually by a weeping tree, drawing the tree's qi in through the crown of the head, filling the body, then sinking the qi into the ground.

Tree	Color	Organ	Element
Apple	Red	Heart/sm int.	Fire
Poplar	White	Lungs/lg int.	Metal
Cypress	black	kidney/bladder	Water
Pine	green	liver/gll bl	wood
Willow	Yellow	spleen/stomac h	earth

According to information from a workshop with Zhang Jie here are some characteristics: cypress and cedars are thought to nourish yin qi and reduce heat. willows draw dampness out, elms calm the mind and strengthens the stomach, maples reduce pain, locusts clear internal heat and balances the heart, firs clear bruises and reduce swellings, hawthorns aid digestion and lower blood pressure, birches detoxify and clear dampness, plums nourish the spleen and stomach.

One method I find working through my own tree Qi Gong practice is drawing in the tree's qi with each inhalation. Though most tree Qi Gong work in the 'aura' of the tree; I've found that touching the trunk and visualizing inhaling the qi through the lao kung point, then either sinking it to the tantien or grounding it is very powerful.

