

Somerset Bonsai Society  
at the  
Blackmore Vale Bonsai Show 2024



Our display, ready for the judge's critique!

Once again, we were invited to attend this excellent show by our friends at the Blackmore Vale Bonsai Club. Held in the Remembrance Hall at Charlton, this show usually attracts a large number of visitors as well as a host of high-class entries from the surrounding clubs. This year, there were displays by Blackmore Vale, Somerset, Warminster and Staverton and lots of goodies on sale from a number of traders.



Our display almost ready, just making the final choice on tables and wooden slabs

Outside the main hall, Tony Oswin and Trevor Banbury spent the day toiling away in the hot sun, wiring, carving and styling a number of interesting trees including a few for various lucky club members. They were joined by Tony's son, Nathan, who recently won the "New Talent Competition" at the "Bonsai by the Sea" show in Exmouth.



Tony and Nathen Oswin working on a large collected Scots pine.



Ade makes a few adjustments to his Penjing landscape, in the individual tree category



The Warminster Club's display

The doors opened at 10.00 am, and a steady flow of visitors arrived to view the trees, chat with the exhibitors and purchase a few pots and trees. For some reason, visitor numbers were down on last year and the tailed off in the afternoon. Thankfully, the host club had laid on refreshments for all including snacks and cold drinks, which was very welcome, and the fish and chip van arrived at lunch time, providing a very welcome distraction.



Blackmore Vale's club display.

As the afternoon wore on, the judges set about judging the club displays. Last year we were all told that our displays should be symmetrical and care should be taken to match the height and size of trees. Having taken this on board we made sure that our display was as symmetrical and balanced as possible, fingers crossed!



Trees in the "individual" category

Best in show was judged by a public vote and this year Robin Hereward-Isaac won with an interesting group planting of Larch on a ceramic "rocky outcrop".



Best in show

Our very own Ade won the best tree by a Blackmore Vale member, for his awesome Katsura, see below. Michael Bryant won the Blackmore Vale member Novice award. The "best Club Display" was close fought and according to the judge's comments hinged on the finest of details. Who won you ask? Somerset Bonsai Society with their symmetrical display and attention to detail, who says OCD, is a bad thing!



And the winner of the Best Club Display is – Somerset Bonsai Society.  
It pays to listen to the judges' comments!

The show closed its doors at 3.00pm, and with everyone lending a hand, the hall was soon cleared and exhibitors were off on their way home. As I navigated the summer traffic on the busy A30, I reflected on some of the days points. What had I learned from this experience? Firstly, you don't need to go to big shows to see high quality trees, so please support your local shows. When the judge tells you what they are looking for in a winning display, try and give them it. Look at the finer points of your display; does it look the best that it can be? And finally, have faith in the quality of your own trees and don't be afraid of putting them into shows.

So, roll on next June, when hopefully we will be invited back and we can defend our title once again.

Alistair