



TAUNTON & SOMERSET BONSAI CLUB

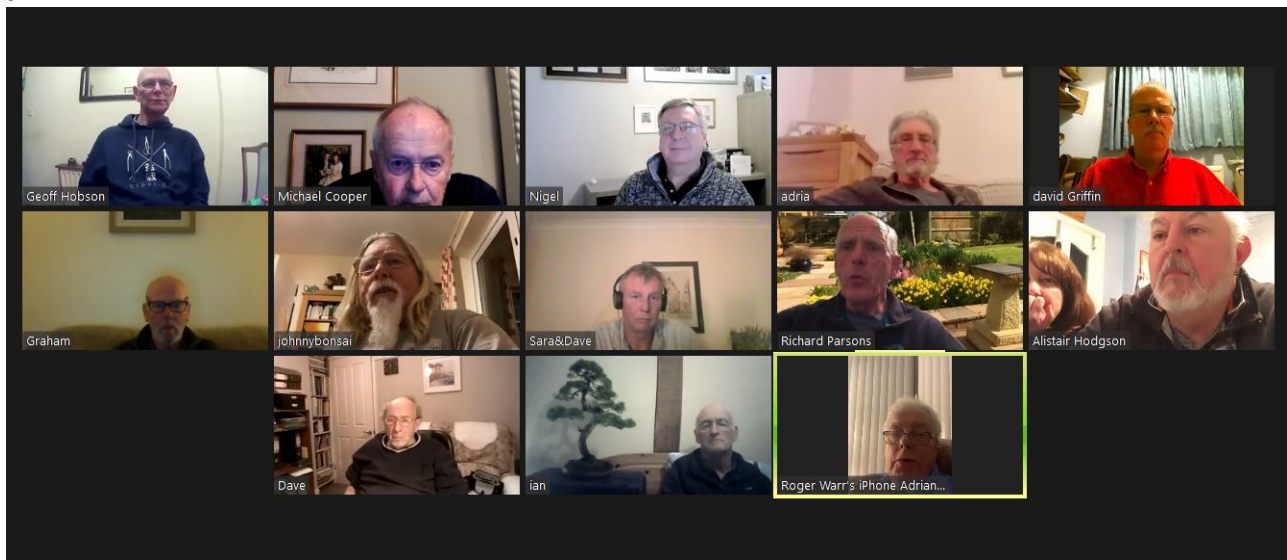
Covid-19 Bonsai Newsletter March 2021

A Coronavirus Year

It was in March last year 2020PC (Pre coronavirus) that we had our last face to face meeting, like the one below, at the Bishop Henderson Primary School in Taunton.



Little did we know then that for at least a year there would be no opportunity to meet together again and that these newsletters and more lately meetings by the magic of Zoom and the internet would be our only contact.



So welcome to all the bonsai stalwarts who have stuck by the Club and battled with their laptops and iPads to keep the Bonsai flag flying in Somerset.

Each month these enthusiasts and others have met to discuss their trees and their bonsai problems. Tree progress, mistakes and successes have been talked over, the old hands like John Trott and Ade have offered advice and friendly bonsai contact has been maintained in the Club.

MEMBER'S TREES

This month members brought to the Zoom meeting photos of the tree that was their present favourite or one that they had just been working on.

Please – See notes further on re Favourite Trees

Dave G

A regular to our Taunton meetings but making his first Zoom appearance was Dave G from the inhospitable climate zones of the Mendips and Shepton Mallet who brought along a handsome Maple, probably a Trident, for us to see.

When I say brought along, at a Zoom gathering it is easiest and a lot better to have a photo ready on your laptop to share amongst us rather than lugging an actual tree in at this time of year, lighting it and displaying it to advantage.

We spent some time studying various photos and with Club President John Trott on hand Dave had some good advice and suggestions as to dealing with the rather unsightly lumpishness



at the top of the trunk and where to encourage the fresh growth to go and where to possibly cut back. I think Dave was well pleased with his first Zoom meeting and possibly regretted not having joined us earlier. See you again next month Dave.

John Trott

John showed us a Red Pine but as you can see the advantage of having a photo ready on file to share would have helped.



Richard P

Richard though had his photo to hand of a Fuji Cherry Kojo-no-mai. Cherries are re potted after flowering but any cutting back should be left till later in the summer.

Richard's tree showed how well a blue pot can be used for a flowering variety



Alistair

Alistair obliged us with the tale of two Larches and kindly sent me his notes later on the progress of this one.



So here is a picture of the Larch in Feb 2019. I purchased it at the previous club auction and if my memory serves me right it cost between £15 and £20. It was collected from the wild a few years before and had not been worked on very much.



The next image is from March 2019 when I put some major bends in the two trunks and wired all the branches.



The third image is last Friday before I started working on it again. At some point in 2020, I had jinned one of the lower branches as it was clashing with the lowest branch and I also wanted to give the lower part of the tree a bit more character.

Thank you Alistair your notes saved me scrambling round to capture the images off the screen whilst paying attention to the narrative at the same time.

Alistair's second Larch also looked like quite a modest acquisition but after the work he has put in is now looking very promising indeed.

Taking this rather ordinary looking specimen which was too rigid to bend at first Alistair cut a channel up much of the trunk just deep and wide enough to insert a 4mm wire making it possible to then bend and give the tree some shape and character. I believe after bending it Alistair said the he taped or bound it to keep wire and trunk together and in place until settled.





Nigel

From the far West of our area Nigel showed us a Juniper that he is trying to identify and the general opinion was that it is a Squamata variety possibly Blue Star.



Ade

From the far East of our area Adrian showed us a Corylopsis, a Winter Hazel and relative of the Witch Hazel.

Ade also showed us a Hawthorn which seemed to have a life form of it's own as a reclining figure, by some modern sculptor, waking and struggling out of it's unusual and artistic pot.



A very different image from the colour and grace of Ade's Katsura in it's Gordon Duffett pot



M.C.

My own contribution was a little cherry of unknown variety that I have be nurturing for some while.

I found it in February 2016 hidden away at the back of a lot of trees and shrubs at Rocky Mountain Nursery near Wells where it was an etiolated specimen over three feet high.



It was then cut down and grown on in a largish plastic pot in March of that year.



It was next planted into this rather pretty little blue pot in 2017 and after flowering in March cut back again to put on further more condensed growth that summer.

Now I am bit more experienced I would probably left that March pruning till later as Cherries are prone to Silver leaf if cut back to early in the year, fortunately I was lucky and it went on to be the tree it now is.



Tony

A keen member of both our Club and the Blackmore Vale Group Tony showed us two photos of a large chunk of hawthorn that he is working on and asked for any suggestions. If I remember rightly the general opinion was to cut back the very straight branch leading from the trunk.

John Trott then said that rather than just sawing it off above the V it would be better to cut it back a little further up and then tear it down from there into the trunk making a much more natural feature.



Geoff

We share the Zoom meeting facilities with the Blackmore Vale Group and from there Geoff showed us a Box he is dealing with together with a very nice John Pitt pot he acquired for it.

Dave G. and John Trott then updated us a lot on the perils threatening Box trees at the moment and warned us to keep a look out for the evil little caterpillars that can wreak such havoc.



Ian.

Also from the Blackmore Vale Group. Ian showed us a number of trees including this Kashima Acer, quite a large specimen for a bonsai from a dwarf variety, a handsome tree. Kashimas put on an amazing selection of colours throughout the year, every season is a delight.



Your Favourite Tree

In the old pre Covid days at the Club meetings we often had a Favourite Tree evening when members would bring along and talk about their favourite tree. This did imply that the chosen tree was their all-time one and only favourite which is obviously absurd as we all know that your favourite may change from time to time. It could be a Cherry in the spring, an Acer in the autumn and evergreen at any time or just the tree that you have recently put hours of work into.

In order to inspire you then to take part in our Zoom Meetings each month every meeting will have a chosen Favourite Tree theme. Such as Your Favourite flowering tree, deciduous tree, evergreen, Cascade tree, etc.

So next month the theme is My Favourite Spring Time Tree. Please bear this in mind and think what you might bring along to our April Zoom meeting on 14th April at 7.30pm

You can of course hold your tree in front of your laptop/pad camera which seldom does the tree justice, it's far better if possible to have ready a photo of your favourite Spring Time specimen to hand and be ready to tell us about it or ask for any advice you need. Plenty of opportunity for spring foliage or blossom should make this an easy choice.

Photographs of your tree

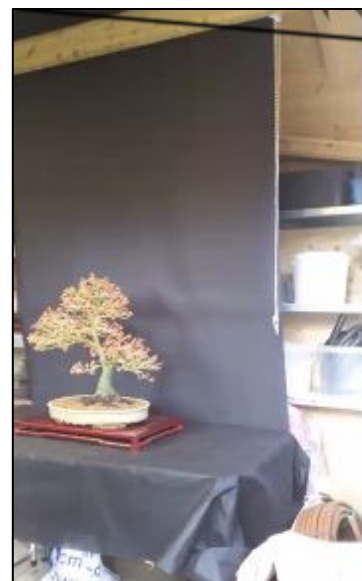
It really is easiest to have a photo or two ready on your laptop or iPad to share on Zoom and would be more interesting still if you have any progressive photos recording the trees progress.

Keeping a photographic record of your trees is not only an interesting part of our hobby but it is also very rewarding to look back on to check progress and see when and what work you have done on your Bonsai treasures and jolly useful if you are ever selling a tree.

Photo Backgrounds

I frequently spend quite a long time 'improving' photos of members' trees on the laptop to remove unsightly backgrounds or distracting items. Ian's Kashima for instance, I took the liberty of removing a heavy black tunnel support or something that went right through the tree and sky behind. These unwanted hazards can be eliminated and photos vastly improved by some sort of back-cloth like Ade has

fitted in his Bonsai Studio which is a black roller blind that can be pulled down when needed to take a good photograph.



Mendip Bonsai Studio

We are very lucky as a Club to have professional Bonsai grower John Trott as our President who is always there ready to give us advice and words of Bonsai wisdom from his many years of experience as one of the country's foremost authorities.



However this last year must have been a real trial for John, unable to run his master classes and exhibit at the famous RHS Shows where I believe he would have won his hundredth Gold Medal by now if it had not been for the curse of Covid.

After such disappointments, frustration and setbacks to his business it must be a great relief to John to be able to make the following announcement from Mendip Bonsai Studio.

I have rearranged diary of workshops. Please let me know if you wish to book a date or rearrange a previously cancelled workshop. It would be best to give me a call first if it is a stage 1 beginner's workshop you wish to attend as I have many people booking and rearranging. 01749 344274 or 07711205806. Hopefully, no more changes to restrictions. John's website with all the details is at Mendip Bonsai Studio

That's it for now folks, let's hope that the days of meeting together are getting nearer and that with the vaccinations and advances in Covid -19 treatment members and their families are feeling a lot safer.

Stay safe, keep well and look after your trees.

M.C. March 2021