



TAUNTON & SOMERSET BONSAI CLUB

Bonsai Newsletter November 2021



It was great to see our November meeting so well attended, following the dip in last month's numbers. Twenty members brought along a variety of trees to work on as well as eight entries for the "Tree of the Month" competition which isn't a competition but will be next year!

Due to technical issues I don't have the usual pictures of our members hard at work on their trees but I will try my best to describe some of the activities.

Tony's Acer Palmatum Deshojo, one of the entrants in the ToTM

First off, Richard M who brought along a Pine and a Euonymus to work on. The Euonymus required a bit of tidying up following all the summer growth and the pine needed some styling ideas. Who better to provide those ideas than our resident bonsai professional and Club President John Trott.

John assessed the tree and suggested that Richard remove the current apex and restyle it as a cascade. Richard agreed and then spent the remainder of the meeting cutting and wiring. We all look forward to seeing the result, in a few years.



Talking of John, he brought along a lovely Dwarf Japanese Cypress, Chaemsupris Pisifera Tsukumo to work on. Not as popular as pines and junipers in the bonsai world, Cypressess make lovely bonsai and are relatively easy to look after. So next time you are wandering around a garden centre pondering what to buy for your next project, try a Cypress.



Talking of projects, John had also brought along a root style bonsai stand that he has been hand carving from a section of trunk. Using his trusty Flex cut 'carvin' Jack, John has so far spent 26 hours turning solid wood into, well mostly holes! But as any artist worth their salt will tell you "It's the spaces that make the Art". Next steps are refining the carving and smoothing away the hand of man and possibly a bit of staining or varnishing. We wait expectantly.

Root style stands cost a lot of money in Japan and make a real statement with the right tree. So next time you find a bit of old tree root consider, making it into a stand.



Richard M's Oak and ToTM entry

Club stalwarts, Brian & Sara brought along a couple of trees each to tidy up and spent the whole of the meeting quietly doing so. I wish I had some pictures!



As well as bringing his Beech to work on Dave also entered this nice little Cotoneaster into the ToTM.

It was good to see Tony back with some of his trees. Although he keeps threatening to start growing shohin bonsai, Tony does love a big tree. And these were no exception.

Both trees were getting on for Dai size, over 1 meter. The Japanese mountain maple in formal upright style required a bit of wiring to bring down the branches and give it a bit of an older appearance. Tony had also created a new lower branch using the tread grafting technique and hopefully over the next few years that will ramify nicely. The other tree was a lovely craggy Scots pine with lots of foliage and potential dead wood crying out to be jinned. Chatting with Tony, we both agreed that the tree could quickly be transformed with a few hours of wiring and some judicious work on creating suitable deadwood to support its aged appearance. Well that's his weekend sorted out!



Nigel's Sycamore.

Another ToTM entry.

Pam, my better half and currently my bonsai apprentice was up to date with all the work on her own trees so I decided to let her undertake one of the most important aspects of bonsai work - weeding. The removal of all those nasty little weeds from the surface of a large bonsai pot is one of the most satisfying jobs, only surpassed by removing old needles from large pines. The tree I chose for this "lesson" was a Kifu size Mulberry that I have been growing in the "Fairy tale style" - lots of crazy branches, hollows and holes. I have to say that my apprentice did a wonderful job and here is a picture I took today.





Whilst Pam was weeding away I worked on tidying up a shohin size Kyohime Japanese Maple. I have had this tree for six years now and most of that time has been spent reducing the number of branches on the tree. Not your usual bonsai styling problem!

When I purchased the tree, fresh from Japan, it was a tightly packed broom style tree. Great for winter image but not so good for the other nine months. I always think that bonsai look better when you can see through some of the foliage so out came the cutters and off came the branches, then leave it to heal over before starting again.

February 2021 - half of the original branches removed and guy wires from 2020 season still in place.

I also brought a Pyracantha along to show in the ToTM, mainly because it had decided to flower four months earlier than usual.



If you read our September meeting report, you might remember that Graham brought in a collected Common Beech which had a bit of a problem. That is the top third of the trunk was dead straight whilst the lower portion wasn't. Following a discussion with Roger and me we decided to split the top section of trunk and introduce some dead wood features.

Roger & Graham discussing the tree in September.

Well two months later we got around to starting the work. Using a large pair of root cutters I split the trunk from a point adjacent to a side branch, all the way down the straight section. Prising the trunk apart, we used some 6mm wire as wedges to keep the split open whilst binding the side that was to be bent with self-amalgamating tape and suitably thick wire. Using a guy wire we starting bringing the section down however we then discovered that the lower part needed some of the inner wood removing. A job for power tools. We didn't have any power tools with us and even if we had, then we wouldn't have had the time to do this delicate work properly. So I brought the tree home and hopefully will get to work on it before the next meeting. If you are reading this Graham - "It's all good"!



Richard P's entry for the ToTM.
Japanese White pine.

In between judging the "Tree of The Month competition" which isn't a competition this year our resident judge Ade, worked on a Field maple with a massiv trunk and excellent ramification on its branches. I believe that the tree originally came from the growing beds of Glenbrook Bonsai, who remembers Glenbrook? Ade was drawn to it because of the movement in its trunk and having planted it in a suitable bonsai pot he then used a large stone to accentuate the trunk direction and set about building that branch ramification. A lesson to us all in how to create a deciduous bonsai.

Well that is all for this month. There were other members working on their trees and I do wish that I could feature your hard work but Well you know - no pictures!

However Ade did do some judging on the tree of the month, as well as taking excellent picture of each entrant, and you can find his Informative notes here.

Next meeting is December 8th, our Annual General Meeting. So members please come along and help decide how your club is going to be run for 2022.