



TAUNTON & SOMERSET BONSAI CLUB

Bonsai Newsletter September 2021 - Meeting Report

The last time that members of the Somerset Bonsai club met face to face was 11 March 2020, or should I say, tree to tree. That's 18 months in old money and what a time it's been!

But all things come to pass and Wednesday, 9 September saw the club hold a proper, everyone present, in person, meeting and not a laptop in sight.



Seventeen members and friends attended, including our President, and resident bonsai professional, John Trott along with our former chairman and life member, Howard. Everyone brought at least one tree to show, to work on or to ask advice about, but more of that later.

Our current chairman Roger opened the meeting and thanked everyone for their continued support, both on Zoom and now in person. He

also thanked Howard for his generous donation to the club of £100, from the sale of some of his trees. Roger explained that the committee had decided to leave the programme open for the rest of the year and that we would set out the new programme for 2022 at our AGM in December. So, if you are coming to our October or November meeting, which of course you are, just bring along a tree or two for help, advice or just to show them off. After all, it is all about the trees!

Roger then introduced Howard who wanted to say a few words. Howard thanked the members for their continued support of the club and stressed the need for the club to regain its "pre-Covid" vitality; something that we can all work towards. He then asked members to support club auctions by either putting up trees and accessories for sale or spending money at the auctions which benefit both the club and its members.

John Trott mentioned that club auctions are now becoming more important, as a source of bonsai material, due to the drop in the importation of trees from abroad, particularly Japan and China, as well as from Europe. This means that if you want trees to work on then you will have to support both your own club auction, as well as others. Interestingly, Black Moor Vale Bonsai Club will be holding their day long auction on the 17 October 2021 - see the website for more details. We will be having our annual auction in March 2022 instead of its usual November date, details to follow.

It was then time to get on with the main purpose of the evening; working them trees!

Michael's White pine

At our last Zoom meeting Michael asked what he could do to improve the balance of this white pine which has been in his collection since 1985. John explained that rather than cutting off too many branches the tree could be improved simply by repositioning it and doing some strategic wiring, both of which he offered to do at the next meeting. Michael jumped at the chance.



Michaels Japanese White pine before work commenced

Howard and Michael watch whilst John works his magic.





In true reportage style we will go over to the trees owner for his description of what happened:

"I sat next to JT all evening as he worked on my tree, trying hard to look pleased and grateful whilst he chopped bits off my precious Pine that I had owned since 1985. I can't really say that I had lovingly nurtured it for as many years as I had a business to run and a young family so it did not get the care and attention it deserved until I joined the Club, but it was still a

pretty traumatic experience and all I could do was grit my teeth and let him continue.

I explained that I was well aware that its main fault was the way it leant away from the viewer, as Ade has so often reminded me. JT Hummed and hawed a few minutes then tilted the whole tree forward and changed it completely in a moment.

He then reduced the foliage on the dominant lowest branch by about 30 percent leaving a 2 or 3 inch jinn for me to deal with.

Next as it had been recently rewired he was able to reposition a number of the middle height branches and pads and to a degree moving some to the back which had been very empty.

Going up the trunk further using very heavy wire 5 or 6mm he managed to lessen the pronounced kink on that unsightly elbow like bend near the top.

At the very top I had been encouraging a nice gently domed crown that I was rather pleased with which John then reduced and separated into two areas to develop themselves later.

Johns said that the tree must be kept at the new tilted angle until spring repotting in order that the foliage pads get used to the new levels the tilt had created.

John's final instruction was that when repotting to use a larger pot, about two or three inches longer and position the tree to the right hand end which would then help the balance of the tree, with what is still a more dominant lower left branch. This would make it appear different with more of that branch then being over the pot and not leading way out to the left so much.

I think that is about it, all I have to do is the jinn, repot it, and then wait and hope that it soon benefits from all his work and advice. At least I can now claim it has been restyled by John Trott which should look good on its CV.

Seriously looking at it again in the cold light of day I can see what he has in mind for it and God willing with a bit on my help we should get there one day."

Michael

Dave's Beech



As mentioned at the start, some members brought along trees that they needed help with. Before we start lopping off branches it's always useful to get a second opinion and Roger was on hand to help Dave with the future design of this tree. The main problem with this tree was that it was two trees! How so you say. Well, the trunk has some nice movement and branches until you get to the top 3rd where it becomes a second tree with a dead straight trunk. Not good. Options: air layer the top or bend the straight trunk.

After much deliberation and some input from my good self, it was decided that we would split the straight part of the trunk and bend it, giving the tree a more aged appearance and incorporating dead wood that can be carried on to other parts of the tree. Work to be carried out at our next meeting and pictures to follow.

Whilst Roger was busy with Dave's tree, Sara and Brian got on with general maintenance work on a few of their trees and Geoff helped out Graham with advice on developing Maples. Graham had already used a variety of techniques to improve these trees including root layering and in arch grafting but was unsure what to tackle next.



Some members already knew what they needed to do to take their trees to the next level. Pam had a plan for her Olive (*Olea europaea sylvestris*) and was sticking to it. Remove the old leaves, trim back new shoots to two or four leaves, remove any downward facing shoots and reposition a few of the guide wires. Job done.



Member's trees

Whilst there is no tree of the month competition at the moment it is always good to see trees being displayed in all their glory and a few members had brought along trees just for that purpose.



Geoff's Field Maple Group.

Simple yet elegant in its composition.

Tony's Crab Apple.

A perfect combination of tree and pot with the added bonus of fruit. Lots of fruit.





Brian's Japanese Katsura tree.

The vibrant colours of this tree need to be seen in person.

Alistair's composition of a Root over Rock Trident Maple and a collected Larch with a Suiseki (distant mountain viewing stone).



Another one of Brian's trees. A Chinese Elm, won at a previous club raffle and redesigned over the subsequent years.



Talking of raffle trees. Roger has been diligently looking after our 2020 raffle prize, a sturdy Pyracantha.

Well it should have been our 2020 raffle prize but due to "you know what" it will now be our 2021/22 raffle prize. So there is still time to buy a ticket.

John's Pine

Having finished restyling Michael's tree. John started work on one of his own. This is a Japanese White pine (Pinus parviflora 'Kokonoe') nicknamed "The Sumo" for obvious reasons.

Now at home in it's new designer pot, made by Swedish potter Thor Holvila, to a design called "the four kings". The tree was in need of the usual autumn work of removing the two year old needles. Top Pine tip: yellow needles - good, brown needles - bad (get your tree looked at). So go and look at your pines but not just yet.



As well as his lovely Crab apple, Tony brought along a couple of trees to work on including a sturdy Yew in need of wiring.

Meanwhile over in the opposite corner, Richard was quietly working away on a lovely little Bonsai landscape, Saikei in Japan, Shanshui Penjing in China.



Geoff H was giving his Pine a wiring makeover.

And so, as it always does, time ran out and the meeting was over but no sad faces, only cheerful "goodbyes" and "see you in October" as people loaded their cars with their spruced up trees. Bonsai is back.

A.H Sept 2021