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## TAUNTON & SOMERSET BONSAI CLUB

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Bonsai Newsletter August 2022

Rather like last month I set off for the August meeting with some trepidation. Our secretary and excellent report writer was away and Michael, who usually takes the photos, had fallen and hurt his foot, so couldn't attend either. On top of that I'd heard that our usual large meeting hall was not available, meaning that we were squeezed into a smaller room on a very warm evening! I was due to do a critique of members trees and do the Tree of the Month, so I could see a very busy evening ahead.

We have done many "Critique" evenings before and generally the format has involved two experienced members giving advice on each tree. So on arrival I was rather pleased to see John Trott already there and he soon offered to help - as I had hoped he would, which made the whole evening much easier. Not only easier but a lot more informative and fun! Having two doing critique not only provides twice as much advice - though sometimes that can be conflicting, but it seems to also get more audience participation. Thoughts and ideas bounce around much more freely. It's a format that works well.

With 22 members present and at least as many trees, it was certainly a busy evening! But with Nigel taking notes and new member Paul taking photos, we got through quite a few trees, though I doubt we covered them all. Hopefully, every member got a chance to have their tree/trees given the treatment, but if we missed anyone, then apologies. Critique is just that, and involves pointing out both the good and bad points of a tree; I hope we presented a good balance without offending anyone! It was good to see our new members put trees forward and take an active part in the meeting. I have had three members independently tell me how much they enjoyed the evening.



Juniper horizontalis – Tanuki Style - Nigel

An early stage of styling with the trunk needing to be thickened to fill the groove of the donor wood by encouraging maximum growth.

Stainless steel screws need to hold tree into the gap to prevent it growing outwards.



Scots Pine – Richard

Lovely trunk was overpowered by huge wide flat branches. This photo was taken **after** the removal of two large branches.

We should have taken a “before” photo! Much work still remains to thin out the top and style to make a rather nice bonsai. August is a good time to work on this species.



Tony's massive Acer

This is currently a huge tree! The branches need to be taken back hard to produce further ramification but only in spring time whilst the sap is rising.

Underpotted – just for once we have a tree in a pot that is too small and sadly Michael missed the moment! A deeper pot by another inch would enhance the overall impression. Possibly a glazed grey pot would further enhance this tree.



Howard's Hawthorn

A very nice tree in what David Joyce called the 'Moorland Style' rather than a 'Windswept' as the branches and trunk go in different directions.

Further debate over the front of the tree as a scar on the trunk might impinge on the best side.

A different pot was strongly recommended, perhaps a thinner and shallower crescent shaped pot was suggested; or even a slate slab.



Howard's Box

Lovely trunk; the top needs a great deal of thinning to force the branches to grow at least six inches in all directions.

Being a Box it is best to be kept in the shade and fed chicken 6X.

Perhaps a different pot of a yellowy or beige colour to show greater contrast to the foliage.



Richard M's Field Maple

Overpotted! Contorted and exposed roots are at odds with the straight, juvenile trunk. The 'bar' branches will need some attention.

Field Maples are very thirsty trees so best to leave them in a tray for watering.

Needs more top growth, watering will help here.



## Richard M's Chamaecyparis Group

A species that always grows upwards with its signature multiple trunks.

Pinching out may help to bulk out the branches a little and bending them down, although the temptation for this species to return back to its traditional upward facing format.

Given that we were doing a critique evening, I thought it would be a good idea to make a change from our usual approach to Tree of the Month so that we could include the entries in the critique. All present were asked to view the entries during the break and then we simply voted by a show of hands. The result was a draw with 6 votes each for Richard P's Ash group and Tony W's Maple. Instead of huddling away in a corner to do the judging, I then did a "live" version with Nigel kindly taking notes and scores. With the theme being "My Favourite tree" each member gave a little story about their tree. The usual critique sheet can be found [here](#). Interestingly, on the score sheet, overall winner was Richard M with his little oak!



Critiques – Part Two - Ade and John



This little hornbeam needs some thick branches taken out of the top for better balance.



Hemlock, I think? Thick bar branches need removing and branches perhaps wired to sweep downwards.



Perhaps a touch overpotted! This is a lovely cork bark Chinese elm that belongs to Bob. All it needs is a suitable shallower pot and it will look stunning.



Er, I really don't remember doing critique on this one! It looks like a nice little trident!



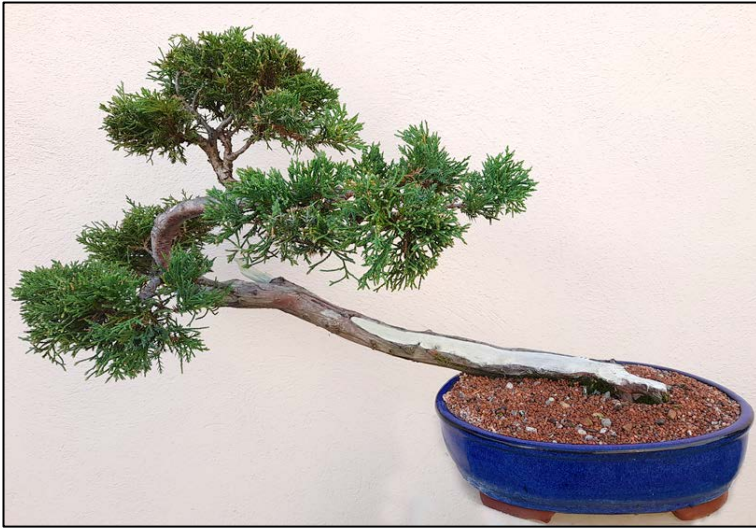
This is a privet I have in development from an old hedgerow stump. I brought it along to show Simon, having persuaded him to buy a privet stump at the Staverton boot sale for a bargain £25! He says he is now inspired, and I look forward to seeing how he develops his privet.



Richard P's ToTm entry – Ash Group. A very nice little group with small leaves; ash is not the easiest subject for bonsai due to its vigour.

It's a little flat on the top so a little more variation in tree height would improve the image.





Nigel's ToTm entry. Juniper. The shari areas could be improved by extending a little by ripping the bark so that the taper/ending looks more natural. The apex could also be brought forward more.

I've only covered the trees here for which we have photos; apologies if we missed yours! Thanks to Richard P for rearranging our meeting room and ensuring tea/coffee etc. Thanks also to Nigel and Paul for notes and photos.

As mentioned, we are now in a position to hold one-day workshops at Tony W's in Street and we hope to start in September. Information about this will be circulated separately. In the meantime, keep cool and keep doing bonsai. I hope to see you all in September.

Ade & Nigel