



SOMERSET BONSAI SOCIETY

Bonsai Newsletter July 2023



Ade's "Morrisons Maples" group, fresh from exhibiting at the Blackmore Vale Show

Welcome to the July meeting report. This month we have a meeting of two parts. Originally, we were due to have our usual Summer Styling workshop. However, we were recently contacted by the husband of a keen bonsai grower asking if we could help him find good homes for his wife's collection. Unfortunately, due to ill health, she could no longer look after her trees and after 45 years of cultivation he felt that they should go to people who would give them the care and attention that they deserved. We agreed to collect the trees, a big thank you to Paul and Cathy for doing that, and then auction them off with the money going to a suitable charity. Unfortunately, this is something that we "collectors" all have to face at some time or other. Unless we have a family member or friend who shares our particular obsession and is happy to take over from us then all our "preciouses" may end up being given away or even worse, sold for the amount that we said we bought them for! So, the moral of the story is; decide what you are going to do with them before it is too late.

So, the first part of our meeting was taken up with a "mini auction" made up of the 10 trees from her collection plus various pots and some extra trees from Ade's garden. After vigorous bidding all of the lots were sold and the new owners settled down to work on their new acquisitions. After a brief bidding war with Ade, I managed to secure an ancient looking Larch that had been in her collection for 45 years, this now means that my collection consists of 50% Larches and I will not be buying any more, unless I find a really good one, that is! Unfortunately, all of the trees will need some gentle rehabilitation. My Larch is very "leggy" and has lost a lot of branches but these will make great jins and eventually it will make a very nice "Heritage" bonsai. For now, it is having a rest after being "slip potted into a larger pot with freer draining growing medium, some light feed and daily misting to help it recover. Once it starts pushing out shoots, I will reduce the length of the branches and hopefully do some wiring in the winter.



Right, let's have a look at what everyone is doing. Pam "A.K.A my apprentice" had brought along a couple of trees to work on. Her Spindle tree, bought at our club auction back in Feb, which is happily throwing out shoots and was in need of a quick trim and a couple of collected Larches. Yes, I know more Larches but these will be styled as Literati, ready for the Chairman's challenge next year. I brought along my Tamarisk which has responded well to repotting and regular feeds by throwing out lots of new branches and they all need wiring down to maintain the weeping style.



Simon had brought long a large Boulevarde Cyprus which was in need of some help. These were very popular trees for bonsai, back in the day but they do suffer from die back and can end up with very long branches and lots of brown foliage. Much like Simon's tree. So what to do? Luckily Bob was on hand to advise and they were soon removing all the dead foliage and cutting back the tips of the branches.

Once the branches were cleaned up we could see some new buds on the trunk and at the branch junctions so hopefully Simon will be able to develop these into new foliage pads. For an example of what you can do with these trees Google "Boulevarde Cyprus bonsai" and you might be surprised!



Paul and Richard with a forest of Oaks.

On the next table, Paul and Richard were busy with a selection of Oaks and Spruces and Cathy and Paul quietly worked on some of their new acquisitions.



Zac busy with his recent auction purchases.

Zac had brought along a few trees to work on plus a couple of recent auction purchases so there was little time for chat. One tree that needed help was a small Hawthorn which John was more than happy to style. You can see the before and after images below:



Zac's Hawthorn, before John styled it.



Zac's Hawthorn after.



Brian contemplates wiring his Katsura

Next to Zac was Society stalwart Brian who had a couple of trees to work on including a lovely shohin size Katsura, which needed a bit of a tidy up and some wire. These trees make lovely bonsai and their autumn colour is spectacular.



Richard at work on a selection of trees.

As well as winning one of the auction trees, Richard had a few more shohin trees to work on. Nothing too radical, just pruning back the summer growth and selecting a few branches for removal of wiring. The bread and butter of bonsai!



Ade helps out Michael with his Katsura tree

Michael had also purchased a tree at the auction, one of Ade's Katsuras. So, it was only fitting that Ade should lend a helping hand with the initial styling of the tree. I look forward to seeing how all these trees look in the coming years.



Hopefully Nigel hasn't cut off the wrong bit!

Nigel and Hilly also had a variety of trees to work on, a couple of Spruce, some Maples but sadly, no Katsura!



John quietly working away, refining his recent purchases

Although John has only been doing bonsai for a few years he has managed to build up quite a collection and here you can see a few of his purchases from the South West Bonsai show, which we went to a few months ago. The Maple, in particular, is looking good and John is building his bonsai skills with each tree.



Dave ponders his next steps on this fine Cryptomeria

Dave is also keen to improve his skills and working on this Cryptomeria will certainly do that. Similar to Simon's Boulevard Cyprus, Japanese Cedar can suffer from die back of the interior foliage resulting in bare branches with pom poms on the end. So, lots of time spent pinching back the new growth and in a few years this will be a killer bonsai



John's lovely Korean Hornbeam

In between helping out everyone else, John T, had a couple of specimen trees to refine, including the lovely Hornbeam which you can see above. Sadly this wasn't in the auction and isn't likely to be, any time in the near future. For now all we can do is study the fine ramification, awesome nebari and the artful underplanting. Look and learn. The Tree of the Month theme was – "Summer growth" and this prompted a range of entries. You can see them below and if you would like to read the judge's comments then click [here](#).



Peter's Malay Apple



Richard P's Cherry



Michael's Orange Dream Maple group



Richard M's Birch



Bob's Kiyohime Maple

The winner of the peoples vote, also the judge's choice, was Michael's Orange Dream Japanese Maple group. A worthy winner and an excellent example of what can be done with simple material given time and a modicum of skill. Michael also made the pot and if you would like to know how then pop over to [Michael's Studio](#) for more info.

Well, that's it for another month. Next meeting is on the 9th August when guest speaker Caroline 'Caz' Scott will be giving us a demonstration on styling Pines and Junipers. Tree of the Month will be Pines and Junipers so expect lots of them.

Until then take care and keep doing bonsai!

Alistair