



SOMERSET BONSAI SOCIETY

Bonsai Newsletter January 2024

The evening began with Ade formally presenting the engraved cup to Richard for gaining the most points throughout the year in the 'Tree of the Month' competition. Congratulations Richard – richly deserved.

The novice level of the 'Tree of the Month' was awarded to Nigel who has now been graduated to be with the 'big boys' in the Advanced section!



The evening was then totally devoted to John Trott who was the speaker for the meeting this month under the heading of 'Training nursery stock into potential bonsai'.

He started off with the use of Rosemary as a subject for bonsai. Lovely flowering subject that also provides cuttings for when roasting the lamb or other vegetarian dishes. The large Rosemary bonsai brought along is approx. 35-40 years old and was gifted to John from Jekka McVicker of Jekka's Herb Nursery in Gloucestershire. It was one of her original plants when she started.

The best soil mix is an ericaceous mix with some loam and fine grit. A smaller example was brought along to show how to develop a literati style bonsai.



Nandina domestica or sacred bamboo as it commonly called was next up.

Two examples, one was still in the nursery pot and the second was in a clay training pot. You can see the reduction in leaf size and the smaller leaved one is kept in the polytunnel over winter hence the beautiful colours. Usually styled as multi-trunked groups.

Keep plucking the old dead leaf stems will create nice trunks.

A lovely Japanese quince was next to being talked about.

Readily available in garden centres.

Put in the ground and wait for the development.

This specimen was approx. 50 years after spending many years fattening the trunk up.

Prune the long new growth back in November to encourage the flower buds to appear on the old wood.

Very high potash fertiliser helps flowering.



Japanese maples are readily available at garden centres, they make fabulous bonsai. There are so many cultivars these days to choose from. Look for small leaved varieties especially for Shohin styling.

This tree brought along was a variety called Kashima.

It is approx. 12 years old being styled as a windswept/semi cascade, the intention is to put over a rock this year.

This was an example of a garden centre *Camelia* grown from approx. 2008.

A word of warning! *Camelia*'s and magnolias are best when grown as bonsai to be given winter protection. They hate hard cold winters.

Some species of *camellia* have very small flowers and flower when very little else does



This is a dwarf cypress called Stoneham.

It is a grafted plant which can be found in some good nurseries.

Very similar to the Hinoki Cypress which has courser foliage.

Aged approx. 10 years.

It has been styled and shaped by fine wire and finger pinching.



Another oddity brought along was a Ceanothus gloriosus.

Whereas Ceanothus can be a difficult species when cut back hard on full grown garden trees this miniature variety has dark almost black bark, tiny blue flowers and small holly like leaves. Ideal for shohin sized bonsai.



Another unusual species here tonight is a St John's wort. A shrubby tree with yellow flowers which quickly forms a thick trunk to work with.

The tree was quickly cut back hard to the required trunk line and sealer applied.



Another good evergreen species for working with for especially cascade styles is Juniperus procumbens.

You can get very nice thick trunks forming.



Stage 2 of styling a Blue Cedar

This tree was a 2 metre specimen from a garden centre.

It was cut back by near half in order to style into a reverse literati style. It was first started late October 2022 and had 6 and 5 mm wire applied to the main trunk.

This was removed prior to this meeting other than some 6mm on the lower trunk.

When the tree is repotted the angle of the trunk will be tipped by approximately 15 degrees.



With the aid of some heavy duty Ryuga branch benders bending the already wired trunk is made easier.



Just a little bit more.....



Now attaching some tourniquet style guy wires to aid the bending today.



You can see the wire which has been attached to top section down to near trunk base to pull it down.



See the extra guy wire to pull the leader into a tighter curve.



Notice the section of wire with the ends turned back in centre; this stops it dropping out as you wind the wires to tension the pull.



Some finer wiring will be undertaken in the next few days.

At the end of March/early-April the tree will be potted into a pot half the depth and bigger diameter.



Tree of the Month



Peter – Hillier Elm



Bob – Chinese Elm



Richard P – Ash group



Michael - Hawthorn

Apologies to Richard M (larch) and
John C (Scots pine) –
the photos seem to have vanished!



Dave - Cotoneaster

It must be said what a superb 'masterclass' of bonsai knowledge and wiring skills were demonstrated this evening by our President, John Trott. Very many thanks to him.

This report was compiled as a joint effort between Ade, John T and Nigel.

Please come back Alistair – all is forgiven!