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## SOMERSET BONSAI SOCIETY

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Bonsai Newsletter July 2024



My heart sank when I realised that England would be playing against the Netherlands in the semi-finals of the UEFA cup on the same evening that Simon Temblett was due to give a



presentation. But I should not have worried as we had a good attendance; the opportunity to listen to Simon was obviously far more important than footy for our band of bonsai enthusiasts! He is well known for his quirky trees – hence his presentation on “Innovative Bonsai”.

Simon started off with a privet in which he had embedded several shiny stones into holes cut into the trunk. Over the years the bark had grown around the little gems keeping them firmly in place adorning the trunk. Very unusual and certainly not something I’ve seen before!



His second tree was also a privet. Inspired by trees he had seen in Australia with blackened trunks due to bush fires, Simon had created a bonsai version using a blow torch. Deadwood on privet tends to rot very quickly but burning with a blow torch drives out moisture and helps to preserve the wood. A little soot or black paint can be used to enhance the appearance.



Next Simon talked about his bizarre "Root over Pot" Acer. Many years ago he had grown the Acer in a drain pipe to get long roots and then placed the tree on the pot working the roots in and out of the holes in the pot. Over time the roots have filled the holes and the tree now looks as though it is gripping the pot tightly.



Unsurprisingly, watering is a challenge and the only form of repotting involves removing soil and roots through the bottom of the pot! A most unusual but very attractive tree/pot combination. To add to his achievement, Simon made the pot himself, along with some of the others on display.

Next, another privet but this time Simon had cut out pieces of bark from the trunk and hollowed it out, leaving a lattice of interwoven live veins making up a very interesting trunk. Although the tree is currently in a slanting style Simon plans to reposition as an upright broom style to show off the trunk to best effect.





Beech trees usually have a smooth grey bark. However, if the bark is damaged it grows back looking much more crusty. Many years ago Simon carved shapes into the trunk of this beech tree and years later the bark is now much more textured, though the shapes are still visible and it looks like the trunk has been tattooed! Simon was unhappy with the thick branches, so he has recently cut all branches off, leaving just the trunk. He plans to regrow a whole new branch structure. I look forward to seeing the final result.

Simon's final tree was a lesson in how to create a twisted trunk without twisting it! Over many years he had cut away slices of bark at angles around the trunk, forcing new growth of bark to follow the sinuous lines of the cuts. This seems to contradict the accepted view that any bark removal to create sharis on juniper should always follow the line of the live trunk veins. Perhaps it's because Simon did this little by little over several years but he has clearly shown that you can cut across the "flow" of the trunk and in doing so he has created a very beautiful and quite convincing, twisted trunk.



After a quick break we reconvened and the second part of the evening took a different, though equally interesting path. Simon often uses thread grafts and approach grafts in creating his trees, so with whiteboard and pen he illustrated very clearly how these can be done. He also showed us how, on his twisted juniper, he had moved a single branch down the trunk to a more suitable position. This he did by repeatedly paring away bark on the top of the branch where it joins the trunk; each time forcing bark to grow on the underside. A very slow process but given Simon's patient approach it works.



Tree of the Month

The winner for July was Michael C by a fair margin with his lovely little Cotoneaster.

