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## SOMERSET BONSAI SOCIETY

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Bonsai Newsletter March 2024



Ade's Kiyohime Japanese Maple

Welcome to our March meeting report. It being "Spring", please tell the weather, it was time for a workshop evening. Giving members a chance to work on their trees; re-potting, a bit of post winter restyling or just a general tidy up, in the warm and dry.



Our eager attendees, hard at work

As usual, we had a good turnout and a wide variety of trees; Pines, Junipers, a few Larches and numerous other Deciduous trees such as Maples and Hornbeam.



New member Stephanie with her latest

So, going around the tables, we start with Stephanie and her Mum, Maurine. Stephanie had brought along a Hornbeam that she had purchased back last autumn. The tree came from the collection of an old friend of our President, who had sadly passed away and whose widow was no longer able to care for the trees. Although the tree was healthy it had suffered some wire damage on the apex and needed to be repotted into a freer draining potting mix. After various suggestions from; Nigel, Richard, John and I, it was agreed that the apex needed to be removed as the damage was too deep to heal. Luckily there was a suitable lower branch that could be trained into a new apex.



Cathy and Paul seek guidance from Chairman Ade

Next up was Cathy and Paul who were busy working on their raffle prize. Paul was removing all the large leaves from the tree as well as any out of place branches. Pyracantha respond really well to spring defoliation/partial defoliation and this tree had already started to produce lots of new growth and back budding. Cathy also



mentioned that they had purchased a nice new pot for it and would be repotting it at our next Weekend workshop.



Brian busy repotting

Moving along we come to Brian and Richard who had both brought a number of trees to work on. Brian was busy repotting a nice little Birch whilst Richard was wondering what to do with his Hazel! Apparently, this Hazel tree had started from a Hazel nut that had been buried by a squirrel and then promptly forgotten about. The nut germinated and grew into a sapling, then disaster struck and it was partially uprooted. It then continued to grow until Richard noticed it and decided to dig it up and put it in a bonsai pot. Why you may ask? Well, the partial uprooting had resulted in the tree developing strong roots and forming a sort of Raft Style trunk which gave the impression that the tree was pulling itself out of the ground. Not your usual Hazel tree and a lesson to us all to trust in Nature to make the best bonsai!



Hilly hiding behind a Hinoki Cypress

Next to Richard was Nigel and Hilly. Whilst Nigel was busy helping Stephanie with her Hornbeam, Hilly was working away on a nice Chuhin size Hinoki Cypress. You don't seem to see many of these grown as bonsai anymore, so it was nice to see this example. Once that apex is wired this will be a lovely tree ripe for a subtle glazed shallow oval pot.



John and Ian pondering on which branch to remove!

John had also brought along a couple of trees to work on. The most interesting one was a little Chinese Elm that had been trunk chopped at some stage and then had its apex developed from a side branch.

John explained that this tree had come from another old collection where it had been left to do its own thing. So, what to do? Suggestions so far had been; to tilt the tree to the left so that the apex became more vertical, remove most of the branches on the right side and grow on the remaining ones to form a new apex and turn the tree to find various new fronts! Unfortunately, there were a couple of large roots growing out above the rest, so I suggested that John explores the subsurface roots to see if there were any that could replace the ariel ones.

As luck would have it there was a nice thick root roughly level with the rest of the nebari that could be used to replace the unwanted ones. This also gave John a rough front which then indicated which branches he could remove and which he could use to build a better apex.



John, Del and a large Needle Juniper

It was good to see our President John getting some time to actually work on one of his own trees. The tree was an old Needle Juniper which required some work on defining the foliage pads. Needle Junipers always look fantastic with their dead wood, rugged bark and compact foliage, unfortunately they give new meaning to the phrase "Blood, sweat and tears" as they are vicious to work on, leaving your hands in tatters. Wearing gloves can help, although it is hard to work on them whilst wearing motorcycle gauntlets! Respect to you John.



Pam working on her reincarnated Olive

Next to John, were Pam and I. Whilst I was busy taking photos, Pam got down to the fun task of removing dead wood and pruning the live wood, on the way back from being a dead Olive.



You will have seen this tree at various times over the last five years. Originally purchased from a Bonsai nursery as raw material, fresh from a Spanish Olive grove no doubt, and given to Pam as a Christmas present.

It grew well and quickly turned into a show ready tree. Then last June it decided to drop all its leaves and go into hibernation, not the sort of thing you want an evergreen tree to do! Pam was devastated and I was perplexed. What had we done wrong? Well, rather than bin it, I decided to leave it for a while and every couple of weeks I tested the branches to see if they were still flexible or had they died. Well, some were and others were not so we decided to just leave it alone and keep it where it was and keep the soil damp.

Then in September it started to put out shoots. Some shoots came from the tips of flexible branches and others from the base of dead ones. This continued throughout the winter and now the tree is ready for some restyling. It has lost around a third of its branches but there are still enough to reform foliage pads and make a reasonable tree.



My heritage Larch and Tony with his trees

Although I don't usually get much time to work on my own trees at meetings, I did bring along an old Larch to work on. This tree came from the same collection as Stephanie's and had been left to grow up and out. Originally a collected tree that had been shown at several National shows, for the last fifteen years it had been placed in a large mica pot and left alone. The branches had lost their shape and there was a lot of Lichen and moss on them. Whilst moss and Lichen look nice and add to the ancient look of a tree, the downside is that they retain damp and eventually cause the wood to rot and die.

So, first task – remove the moss and Lichen with a soft wire brush. Then remove all the dead wood that is not suitable for turning into Jins. Next, wire all the branches and reposition them. Well, I got to do step one and a bit of step two. The rest I had to do the next day – see photo at the end of report.

Tony, on the other hand got all his work done. He was busy repotting various trees, including a lovely little Maple that belonged to a friend of his – you can just see the top of it poking above his tray. I must take more pictures!



Simon helping Bob with his Juniper

Next to me, Bob was working on an interesting Juniper that he had collected from his own garden. If I remember rightly, it was a *Juniperus x pfitzeriana* Golden Joy and had some very nice deadwood on the front of the trunk. Everything was in place it just needed wiring to form the foliage pads, bend most of the branches downwards and form an apex. Simple.



### Tree of the Month competition 2024 – Spring Tree

During tea break, we had our TotM judging. Ade commented that it was good to see some members utilising stands and accents in their displays.



Brians Kojo-No-Mai Cherry



Bobs Kiyohime Japanese Maple





Richards Larch.



Richard P's Kojo-No-Mai Cherry.



John's Japanese Quince.

And the winner of the people's vote is: Richard P's Cherry. Well done Richard. If you would like to read the judges' comments on all the entries then click [here](#).



So this is my Larch (below) after a few more hours of wiring and slip potted into a slightly smaller pot with better draining soil.

The first branch needs to be brought in closer to the trunk but that will be done gradually over the next few months. Who knows, maybe it will appear at a National show once more!





Well, that's all for now. Next meeting is on the 10th April and will be a talk by Amelia Williams on Roots and repotting.

The tree of the month will be back, with "Evergreens" as the topic.

Till the next time, stay safe and "keep doing bonsai".

Alistair

P.S. We will be restarting our weekend workshops in April at the Monkton Elm Garden Centre – see website for more details. - [somersebonsai.uk](http://somersebonsai.uk)