



SOMERSET BONSAI SOCIETY

Bonsai Newsletter September 2023



Ade's Cotoneaster

Welcome to the September meeting report.

This month we had our annual Autumn workshop, so it was time to put all those tips and techniques from the August meeting into practice. If you didn't bring along a Pine or Juniper then it was time to deal with all that summer growth and tidy up your deciduous trees before winter comes.

"It doesn't seem that long ago that I was writing about our repotting workshop and everyone was looking forward to the onset of spring and all that brings to the bonsai world. Well spring came, trees burst into life and we all got busy with the tools. Then came summer and what a summer, it was scorching heat and all the problems that brings to looking after trees in pots. Now it's almost Autumn. Well, some trees have already decided that it is time to close down and there are many reports of "False Autumn" occurring around the country. Whilst I haven't had any trees do this, I have spoken to several people who have had trees, mostly Beech and Hornbeam, drop their leaves and go into early dormancy. Fingers crossed that next spring will see them back fit and healthy."

Eagle eyed readers will recognise the above paragraph, from last year's Autumn workshop report. I can now report that I have had several deciduous trees go into "False Autumn" back in early Summer and that they are now having an "Early Spring" – producing new buds and pushing out long shoots. Sadly, some of those Beech and Hornbeams that dropped their leaves early did not recover this Spring and as we have all heard there were a lot of reports of people losing trees this year. It also looks like we will be facing a long, wet winter, once again so please make sure that you keep an eye on your trees and don't let them get waterlogged – did somebody say "Bonsai umbrellas"?



Unusually for me, I didn't manage to talk to everyone at the workshop so I won't be able to tell you about all the transformations that occurred. However, I do know that in this corner of the room: Richard thinned out the shoots on his Saikai "Tray landscape" Cypruses and is still unsure what to do with the Pine, but it will involve a lot of wiring! Out of sight, Dave G was working on a lovely little Cotoneaster and a Spruce. Brian was working on a Chinese Elm and Graham had brought along a medium size Spruce – more wiring!

Brian hard at work, whilst Richard M contemplates what to do with such a straight Pine.

Tony contemplates his Scots Pine whilst Cathy and Paul work on their latest purchases. Moving clockwise, Cathy and Paul were busy pruning a couple of their latest acquisitions and later you will see the results of their work. I know that many people now prefer to avoid joining clubs, preferring to work at home on their trees but there is something enjoyable about being able to ask for advice and also receive feedback face to face.



Next to Cathy and Paul, it was good to see Tony W back after a bit of time off. Tony brought along another of his "big" small trees. This time a very interesting Scots Pine that was in need of the annual needle pluck and resetting of the foliage pads. I do like Pines but the tedium of removing the dead needles can sap the will of the strongest person. Luckily Tony had help on hand.



Next to Tony, Hilly and Nigel were working on a young Larch and an old Juniper. The Larch required a bit of branch selection and wiring whilst the Juniper needed the Caz Scott treatment – clean bottoms and tidy crotches. If that doesn't make sense then go and read the August meeting report. If it does, then you will know how much work Nigel had to do.

Hilly deep in conversation, bonsai related of course!

Next to Nigel's Juniper, in the picture, you can see a before image of Paul's Spruce. Before John Trott worked his magic on it, that is!



Michael points out the finer details of Ade's styling.

If you have read the August meeting report, and if not why not, you might remember Michael's Juniper that had suffered a drastic amount of die back over this Spring and Summer. Caz's advice was to jin the dead branches and then compact the remaining live branches to form a smaller tree. Well Michael explained to me that Ade had spent the day with him, doing just that to the tree and here are the results. Give it a year to recover then repot it into a more suitable pot and there you have it – a show worthy bonsai born out of catastrophe!



Tony M had brought along a few trees including a lovely shohin size Whisteria. I look forward to seeing this once it starts flowering.

Tony's lovely shohin Whisteria.

Tree of the Month

The theme was – “Shohin or smaller” and prompted a range of entries. You can see them below and if you would like to read the judge’s comments then click [here](#).



Michael's Blue Cedar



Bob's Chinese Elm.



Richard M's Oak.



Brian's Hornbeam.



Nigel's Cotoneaster



Richard P's Cotoneaster

The winner of the people's vote was a tie between Bob's Chinese Elm and Brian's Hornbeam and the judge's choice, was Bob's Chinese Elm. Well done to both.



Next to Tony, Ade was working on a lovely, compact Scots Pine. As you would expect from Ade, all that this tree required was a bit of needle plucking. I always think that the secret to a good bonsai is that it looks bigger than it really is. The tree exists in its own space unaware of how big or small it is, until you place something next to it that does have a defined size. Then you become aware of its size – “is it small or just far away”?

For your information the Pine is less than 2 feet high, around 20 inches.

Ade's Scots Pine.

Paul and his tree, post "John Trott" treatment. Jin the old main trunk and then wire the remaining branches down into a literati style, maybe even add a shari to the trunk!



What of the "bonsai apprentice?" I hear you cry.

Well Pam was busy working on one of my Scots Pines. Needle plucking and weeding before moving on to her own Olive tree, which has now emerged from its early dormancy and produced a huge amount of new growth in amongst the dead branches. Hopefully it will continue to go from strength to strength.



Simon helps out Tony, with some autumn needle plucking.





Nigel is very happy with his Juniper. Notice the bottoms and crotches and the huge pile of dead leaves and redundant shoots. Just needs the second branch on the left to be wired upwards, slightly and "Bob's your uncle" as they say.



The end result of Cathy and Paul's hard work

Next meeting is on the **11th October** and will be a Critique of member's trees.

Tree of the Month will be "Autumn colour".

Until then take care and keep doing bonsai!

Alistair