

SHIBUI BONSAI KAI

NEWSLETTER

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Dear Bonsai Friends

By the time you receive this letter, theoretically we should be into Spring. The blossoms this year have been spectacular both on our Bonsai as well as the trees and shrubs in the garden so maybe the very cold winter we have been having had something to do with it. Hopefully, the miserably icy cold Spring Day we had last week will be the last for this season. Thankfully, we did not have any frost so all the Bonsai are still bursting out with their new foliage and looking good. Now is the time to do daily nipping out of the new growth on the Maples especially in order to create good ramification. The Japanese maples are more advanced than the Chinese this year for some reason. I went past The Floreum the other day to check on progress and they are now almost finished with the new tiled roof. There are still no window or door frames and it looks like there is still a great deal of work to do so I doubt we will be able to have a meeting there this year. I have been unable to get any info from the office about a possible completion date.

So, I have asked Strilli and she has given us permission to have a meeting on Saturday 19 September at 14:00 at Brenthurst. We will need to abide by all the Covid regulations, wear masks, keep social distancing etc. and have temperatures taken and hands sanitized by security on entering the property. If you will be attending, please let me know by the 16th at the latest as I need to give all the info to security. If you are not a regular waterer, I need your I/D number, car registration and cell number as well. There is a great deal of weeding to do and with time permitting maybe we can do some repotting. All the Bonsai need to be rotated, and some moved in and out of direct sunlight as well, as I am no longer able to do this. Please bring something such as a tweezer or something else to remove the weeds properly. Removing the growing top portion of the weeds only causes great problems so PLEASE dig out the root as well!!! The garden will be open to tours again from the 15th, so we need to get all the Bonsai into tip top condition again.

There does not seem to be much happening on the Bonsai scene for some time and we have not received any newsletters from other clubs for months. Hopefully, they will all come out of hibernation soon.

Now, some valuable and interesting info from our fellow members, starting with an article from Pieter:



Experimenting



This Celtis you may remember from previous photographs in the newsletter, shown below. They show two different front views with one trimmed and the other not, waiting for budding. The angle is slightly changed and though not really visible I did a lot of work on the scarring so as to have it appear natural. If I wait much longer, I will have difficulty getting into the inner parts with chisels and Dremel.



At this point I'd like to beg you enthusiasts! Experiment! Try the techniques shown in books and magazines. Sometime the results are magnificent. I promise you. I think that this Celtis, above and below, is going to be something very special. It being a large-leaved deciduous tree this takes many

years. But living with such a child is nothing different than seeing your own offspring developing. A wondrous journey.

The following tree shows some of my first attempts. I had not done something like this before. I had read an article on thickening trunks of Swamp cypress trees which argued that by creating vertical strips of damage in the trunk, the repair process would thicken the trunk in that particular area. A very nice idea and it would give the trunk so-called character. I had to guess as to the width of the vertical incision and bark removal on a Celtis. I was too enthusiastic and years of injury to the growing cambium sides hasn't yet closed the wound on the right. Maybe some other decade? But it is thickening up! See the over-potting, but it should perhaps even be in a larger container.



The next Celtis (they seem to have taken charge of my collection) is about scarring again, but in a different context. I wanted a Celtis that divided right at the bottom on the base. I ring barked it and this was the result. Two trees that I could play with! Remember that bonsai should always be fun! I wanted to give some character to the trunk on the right because I couldn't bend it anymore. I injured it to scar it. It is slowly closing and in a year or three from now it will add to the appearance. Some minor scars on the left trunk are doing well, also. This is a slightly unusual tree, but I love it. No major overpowering trunk. Just a youth reaching out to the adult world.



The one below is something very similar. Three trunks from one base. All adding to one silhouette. They belong. They are family. Dad and mom and child? Also, a ring barking exercise. Maybe you can call me The “ring barker”, I won’t mind.



And then things don’t keep on going to plan and you need to stand back and think. In the case of the next tree I wanted to see how clip-and-grow would work on a Celtis. Another experiment in my growing patch, years ago. Over the past while I noticed that the tree was losing it’s ramification. The second

branch on the left was designed to fill a gap at different levels and is a thought experiment on it's own. The tree below has an interesting trunk and the spread of the main branches is acceptable, but the ramification is not good at all. The photograph is an injustice to the tree as is the case with the other trees I show in this article. My art as photographer is dismal.



What I want to show you is a comparison between this tree and the next.



The lower photograph shows a tree that was losing its finer branching in the lower section and I decided to over-pot it and allow "wild" growth. I did that for two years. It responded nicely and the difference in its ramification and the one above is obvious. I think that it can be moved to a somewhat smaller pot to enhance the interesting trunk.

Surely there must be more members that have results of experiments to show. Please let us see the results. Covid19 has shocked US. But we can communicate and share via the newsletter. Please help Derry.

Kind regards to all you people. I miss the meetings, but we will get there again.

Pieter Loubser, Klerksdorp

Thank you, Pieter, I wish all members were as dedicated as you.

Hi Derry,

Here is my contribution, as promised.

This is my large Trident Maple, approximately 900 mm tall and a trunk base diameter of about 120 mm. This tree was dug out of the garden about 12 years ago having been first chopped off where the trunk now divides into two. It is another of my clip and grow trees, having never been wired. As I can no longer move it or repot it is just one of the trees which I would like to pass on to other younger members of the club.

I also have the following large trees looking for a good home.

- Two Acacia Karroo – Sweet thorn.
- A large upright Celtis.
- A very large semi-cascade juniper – I don't know what type.
- An Australian Silky Oak – Grevillea Robusta.
- A small leaf Privet – the one which was featured in a previous newsletter.

All I am asking is for someone to supply the muscle and suitable transport to take them away. If you are interested please contact me on 071 821 0272 or at bullivant@mweb.co.za and I will send you photo/s and further details.



My collection of Mulberry trees. The larger tree and the one on the right are the so called White Mulberry which has oak leaf shaped leaves. The other tree is the so called Black Mulberry with oval shaped leaves.



This is of the trunk of the larger tree, about 75 mm across.
The Mulberries are by far the earliest to start shooting, well before it is officially spring. All of the trees are now covered with tiny emerging fruit which do ripen if the birds don't get them first. They remain quite small though, only about 10 to 15mm long.



Kind regards,
Mike.

Thank you, Mike. Always appreciate your contributions.



Heritage collection number 46, *Ficus natalensis*, just out of winter hibernation and back home at Brenthurst. Front and back view, you can decide which you prefer. Tree originally grown from a cutting and planted on Pelindaba rock in early 1980's by Katinka Meiring at one of Shibui's annual style symposiums. Bonsai was much taller but top burnt off years ago by black frost. Planted in a Chinese unglazed, round, drum styled container from Derry Ralph collection. Donated by Katinka for the collection.



A general view of the collection just after watering last week. Garden getting back into shape and Bonsai area spick and span once again. Bonsai looking good but need weeding badly.

Hi bonsai friends.
Here is a photo of my Dobeya in full flower.



Many thanks Eddie Jenner, our friend down in Nelspruit.

Just a reminder to all, Subscriptions for the new year are now due!! Single membership R200, Family membership R250, and Junior R30 per annum. If you pay by EFT, please let me know. Banking details below:

Birthdays in September: Only two this month, yours truly on the 19th and Pieter Loubser on the 23rd. Many happy returns to you Pieter and may you enjoy many more.

Hoping to see you all on the 19th at Brenthurst. **Please don't forget to let me know you will be attending before the 16th!!**

Sincerely

Derry

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