

SHIBUI BONSAI KAI

NEWSLETTER

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MONTH: OCTOBER 2022

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Dear Bonsai Friends

At long last, over the past week we have had some very much needed rain to cool and clean the air and give our Bonsai a good and thorough soak. This has been very beneficial for sure, but with some of the downpours we have had, much goodness could have been leached out of the potting mix and it would be an idea to fertilise all your Bonsai again. The initial spurt of new seasonal growth is probably slowing down now so it is time to get your bonsai into shape and keep trimming and rewiring if necessary.

Rewiring, something many of our members seem to have forgotten all about. We were all taught about this when we first started out on our Bonsai journey and told in order to create good Bonsai, we must become proficient in the task and keep practicing. This was brought back to me last week when we held our first, for a couple of years, Bonsai for Beginners class. Our thanks to Trevor for doing all the teaching and demonstrating, and to Ruza for her help as well. Hopefully the bug has bit our participants and that they will enjoy their Bonsai for many years to come. Perhaps it is time we scheduled a hands-on workshop at one of our meetings, the subject being, back to basics 'Wiring Bonsai correctly' for all our members.

Our last meeting was quite well attended and Erich gave us a very interesting and informative demonstration on the root over rock style Bonsai. He discussed different types of materials most suitable for the style as well as different rocks. There was a general discussion of personal experiences and materials used and some good examples available for all to see. Many thanks Erich for your great effort as well as to all who brought their trees for us to admire. Thanks also to Ruza for the goodies for our tea break as well as the donors of the raffle prizes.

In our last newsletter I mentioned we had done the initial creation of the Ginkgo group at Brenthurst. Unbeknown to us, Johan was recording the proceedings on his phone and sent these to me later. The container is a large oval Chinese, purchased from Liebermann many years ago. The stock was all nursery material, the larger planted into a container by Roy Nagatoshi for development. A couple of the trees had sent up suckers from the base which have since developed into thin trunks and these were to be used as well. The original plan was to copy one of the Grand Master of Bonsai Forests, Saburo Kato's

creations, but the container was too small and we did not want to kill off the Ginkgo's by removing too much of the root base in order to get things right.



Left: The trees were graded for height and trunk diameter, the positioning of trees 1,2 and 3 being the most important.

Right: Positioning tree #3.



Left: Placing some of the smaller stock at the back of the group in order to create depth.

Right: View from the back.



The initial group after the potting mix added with rough pruning being done



Final result of mornings work. As can be seen, pruning still has to be done as we were unsure if there would be die back after large cuts were made. Wiring has to be done as well and looking at the photo's, the group is very unbalanced and we need at least one larger tree to be added on the right hand side and a few of the smaller trees on the left side repositioned. There has been no dieback on any of the trees and some have already started showing signs new growth, despite having been quite badly battered by a severe hail storm. In my opinion it is still planted too high out of the container but this can be rectified in a couple of years when it is repotted. Come autumn, we will be able to appreciate our new group in all its yellow autumn glory.

Thanks Johan for the photo's. No wonder my back hurts, seeing the way I was slouching

And now, an interesting article from our friend, Pieter Loubser:

Olive: Severe pruning

Olives are very interesting trees as bonsai. It is officially named *Olea africana* subspecies *europaea*. Just a few notes: They grow well and do so for most of the spring, summer and even into autumn. They do something distracting in spring by going into their own autumn. They start losing quite a lot of leaves. The leaves turn yellow and are shed and this does not look well. My experience is that it happens to more established trees. This has some benefit to bonsai growers because we can see better into the inside of the tree. The leaf-shedding happens at the same time that new growth is being seen. You will notice that olives tend to form (like Ficus) tufts of growth at the ends of slender branches. I removed leaves and some twigs from a section of this established olive and you can see exactly what I say. There is a multitude of twigs. I dare to say that it is because we are in too much of a hurry to get a general shape established. The branches do not convince regarding the seemed age of the tree.



See the kind of twiggy leaves on the tiny branches below.



You won't see twigs closer to the base of the branch.

Severe pruning back to closer to the trunk can give a better frame from which to work in the years to come. These trees will need similar treatment in years to come and the branches will start suiting the trunk. We dig these old trunks but paste young branches on them.



The Olive responds well to such dramatic loving care.

Pieter Loubser

Many thanks Pieter. I have also done this to this Olive which I bought at a deceased estate a few years ago, as well as an old Olive which was dug by one of the Cape Kai founders, Bernard Coetzee way back in the 1970's and it does work well.





This is another Olive of mine which had a very weird shape for an apex and has been living at Brenthurst for a couple of years. I took it home a couple of weeks ago and decided to decapitate it and give it the same treatment. Personally, I think it looks better, and in time with further development and care I may be able to call it a literati style – only time will tell.

Our next meeting is to be held on Saturday 19 November at 14:00 in The Floreum. Trevor will be wiring and styling a Yellowwood, indigenous, and one of the Podocarpus family. I think he said he would be using the small leaved variety, can't remember which one, but these do make very good Bonsai – the best I have ever seen was in Washington DC many years ago. This material is not found very often in the local nurseries so it should be an interesting afternoon. I don't remember seeing one in the club before, but if you have any in your collection, please bring it for us to see. The raffle will operate as usual and we will have the Brenthurst watering schedule for December available. With Christmas just around the corner, please remind family and friends that Bonsai tools make very good Bonsai presents and we do have supplies available – my cell number below for more details.

Birthdays in November: Only one this month, Kyle on the 21st. Congratulations, we all hope you will enjoy your special day and have many more.

Hoping to see you all on the 19th and please stay safe.

Sincerely
Derry

CAKE DUTY ROSTER:

November: Godfrey Jones

December: Year-end function

It would be appreciated if you would provide one plate of 'sweet' and one plate of 'savoury' please

REMINDER!! Please note, it is the duty of the member providing goodies for the tea break to set out the cups etc as well as to wash up afterwards and repack the kitchen cupboard. Many thanks.

COMMITTEE:

President:	RUZA WHITAKER	(082) 873 7955	TREVOR BOTHAM	(082) 784 7581
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Banking Details: Nedbank – Rosebank Gardens Branch – 195 805:

Shibui Bonsai Kai: A/C # 1958 289 906

PS: All committee members, we will be having a committee meeting at 12:30 sharp on the 19th.