

SHIBUI BONSAI KAI

NEWSLETTER

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MONTH: DECEMBER/JANUARY 2024
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Dear Bonsai Friends

Unfortunately, bad news to start the New Year for us with the very sad news that our good friend Adrian Steed has passed away. He attended a couple of meetings last year looking very frail having survived Covid and was his normal, very cheery self and taking photographs. We extend our deepest sympathy to his wife and family and wish them to know our thoughts are with them at this sad time. He will be sorely missed.

On a happier note, on behalf of the committee, we wish you all a very happy, healthy and prosperous 2024. We hope the New Year (the Year of the Dragon- in the Oriental zodiac) will be one of growth and maturity for both ourselves and our Bonsai. To repeat the story from last year, there is still no news of when we will be able to use The Floreum for our meetings and Johan has already forwarded the calendar for this year's meetings to the members:

Our first meeting will take place on Saturday, **20 January 2024 at 14:00, in 'The Division', Roosevelt Park Recreation Centre, Cnr Anton Von Wouw and Preller Drive, Roosevelt Park.**

The theme of the meeting is - BRING ALONG YOUR SEPTEMBER SHOW TREE FOR DISCUSSION. We have scheduled our annual show for September this year, venue and arrangements will be confirmed closer to the date.

It is important to start with early preparation and selection to ensure quality of show material. We therefore request that all members bring a tree or trees that they would like to show in September's exhibition for a critique by senior members, and advice on preparation, branch removal or placement, wiring, pot selection, etc.

We request all senior members and the committee to bring along at least one tree.

New or less experienced members should not be afraid whether their tree is not going to be suitable for exhibition. The intention is to provide the necessary guidance and input to maybe have a section and/or incentive for "Trees in training/ pre-bonsai/ trees in development".

It is important to practice display over and above wiring, repotting, and pruning, to provide the necessary experience for a future vision of your tree that will be worthy of exhibitions. It is also a way of just enjoying your tree by placing it in a setting where you can sit back and view the tree without thinking about development, etc., but it can also be a way of tracking the development of your tree and celebrate where it started or came from and your vision of where the tree might be developing to. A display setting also removes the tree from your own garden surroundings, changing the way how you look at the tree and this sometimes will highlight elements of flow, shape, placement, trunk size, which in turn will influence the story you want to tell.

The club is fortunate enough to have a couple of members with trees of very high national standard, and it is important to share this with the newer members and other bonsai enthusiasts.
(Thanks for this Johan, much appreciated)

If you would like any tools etc, please let me know. The cake duty roster for the New Year will be available for completion as well as the watering duty roster for February for the Heritage collection. The raffle will operate as usual.

All the Heritage Bonsai collection are looking great after the good rains we have been having lately, some pruning has been done as well as some more repotting. How is this for dedication:



Left: J-P and his dad Paul, on Christmas morning at 10:30 in the pouring rain at Brenthurst, watering the Bonsai under cover of the pavilion roof.

Right: As quite a few of the waterers will testify, the wasps are back nesting in the ceiling. Take care when watering and use perfume and smelly deodorant sparingly as this seems to attract the BEASTS. If stung, use appropriate medication.

The large cascade Cedrus deodar which we repotted in November into the large plastic basin is growing well in the work area at the back and we have been able to reposition the cascade portion with some heavy wiring and a great deal of muscle power. It will soon be ready for more detailed wiring and quite heavy pruning. We decided we will only repot into a suitable container next season. This is how it looks now:



Following the severe hailstorm we had at the end of the year, the Bonsai have been trimmed back and the trees are now starting to grow back again. The large Ginkgo group, having larger leaves, was severely hit back but it is now shooting back all over the place so hopefully we won't have another such storm. There have been a few comments about the suitability of using the Ginkgo for Bonsai but I thought you might be impressed by these two pictures I took on my last visit to Japan 10 years ago. The tree is growing in the grounds of the Kumamoto Castle in the southern Island of Japan. My lucky day as I was with Roy Nagatoshi's group and the tree was in its full autumn glory. Yes, seeing the castle was great, climbing heaven knows how many steps to the top, not that great, but seeing the Ginkgo was the cherry on the top. The colour of the leaves was incredible.



So, hopefully with a bit of luck and suitable weather we may be fortunate enough to have a glorious coloured Ginkgo group come Autumn.

Our friend Roy Nagatoshi asked me to pass on his best wishes for the New Year to all his South African friends. He and his family are well and he took another group over to Japan in November and visited the Taikan Ten exhibition in Kyoto as well as some of the other very interesting and beautiful things to see.

As we have done over the years, you may be interested to hear that in the Oriental Zodiac, this is the 5th Year - The Year of the Dragon or in Japanese, *Tatsu*..

The 5th Year – the Year of the Dragon ‘Tatsu’

Of all the mythical beasts the most important, by far, is the dragon. These fabulous creatures reached Japan through China and is supposed to have had its origin in the Indian serpent, or some prehistoric monster. It is not always possible to establish a clear demarcation between the dragon and the serpent.

One description characterises it as a ‘composite monster with scowling head, long straight horns, a scaly serpentine body, a bristling row of dorsal spines, four limbs armed with claws, and curious flame-like appendages on its shoulders and hips. The claws are usually three on each foot, but are sometimes four and even five’. Another description calls it essentially a serpent, ‘with the horns of a deer, the head of a horse, eyes like a devil, neck like a snake, belly like that of a red worm, scales like those of a carp, ears like a cow, paws like a tiger, and claws like an eagle’. Furthermore, it is said to be ‘all powerful, for it is possessed of the strongest characteristics of each of the creatures from which it is formed’.

Dragons are represented as of various colours: black, green, red, white, or yellow. ‘When the white dragon breathes, its breath turns to gold; the spittle of the violet dragon turns to crystal balls’ – and in Japanese art the dragon is generally accompanied ‘by a ball of varied form, but usually spherical which is the gem of omnipotence’. It is stated that the Japanese artist uses the dragon in every possible way for the purposes of adornment.

The dragon also features in figures of speech such as: the Emperor’s garments are spoken of as ‘dragon robes’, and his seat is known as the ‘dragon throne’.

The dragon appears early in Japanese mythology, and figures in many of the so-called Japanese fairy tales. Moreover, the dragon is not confined to the orient. The European dragon of the middle ages, a winged serpent with a crocodile’s tail, was the symbol of sin in general and of paganism in particular. Its name, in English, is Greek, and is derived from a verb meaning to see or look at, or, more remotely, to flash.

If you were born in 1940, 1952, 1964, 1976, 1988 or 2000, you can consider yourself, a good looking and nice dragon, and hopefully, with none of the characteristics or features mentioned above.

Birthdays in January: Dottie Nagatoshi (Roy’s wife) on the 1st, Johan on the 4th, Anthoney on the 13th and Pat on the 31st. Many happy returns to you all and we wish you many more happy and healthy years.

Hoping to see you all on the 20th and please stay safe.

Sincerely
Derry

CAKE DUTY ROSTER:

January: Johan Nel

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

COMMITTEE:

President:	JOHAN NEL	(082) 575 6951	RUZA WHITAKER	(082) 873 7955
Treasurer:	DERRY RALPH	(082) 435 7126	GODFREY JONES	(082) 958 0771
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Banking Details: Nedbank – Rosebank Gardens Branch – 195 805:

Shibui Bonsai Kai: A/C # 1958 289 906

Don't try to do an EFT as the account is 'locked'

**PS: All committee members, we will be having a committee meeting
at 13:00 sharp on the 20th.**