

SHIBUI BONSAI KAI

NEWSLETTER

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Dear Bonsai Friends

Hi Derry,

As promised, a contribution to the next newsletter. Hope to have more in the next day or so.



Nandina Domestica – Sacred or Heavenly Bamboo.

Despite its common name, it is not a bamboo but an erect evergreen (my bonsai do shed their leaves in winter, but not the garden plants) shrub which spreads via underground runners and can be difficult to remove. It is considered an invasive species in some areas, particularly in the United States. It is not listed as such in South Africa.

It is native to Eastern Asia from the Himalayas to Japan and has been grown in Chinese and Japanese gardens for centuries.

It is a slow to moderate grower which will tolerate full sun to full shade, will tolerate heat and cold, a wide range of soil types which are kept moist and well-drained, and is drought resistant once established.

The leaves and the berries are toxic to livestock, other domestic animals and wildlife, although this doesn't appear to apply to the birds which feast on the berries here.

It is low maintenance and generally pest and disease free, although I find that garden plants do get infested with mielie bug at times.

Photo (left) is of my collection of Nandina, while photo (right) is a close-up of the trunk of the large specimen. This was growing in a pot for many years and when I took it out found the now exposed roots below the original soil level. It was then cut back hard as can be seen in this photo.

Sid Pavey.

I don't know if anyone is familiar with this bonsai enthusiast who lives in Somerset in the UK. He is a prolific YouTuber, generally posting 3 videos a week about his trees. He has some interesting ideas and concepts and is well worth a visit. His videos are generally only about 15 to 20 minutes. Google him and have a look.

Thank you, Mike for this



This is the Nandina in the collection at Brenthurst. The leaves do not turn the spectacular colours of the normal one does with red berries. These berries are cream/yellowish. The above photo is of the base which is very interesting. Don't look at the weeds, these have always been a problem with the lack of manpower to do the necessary.

In the photo's below, just to show you a comparison of the different colour of the berries. The red ones on the right are from the plant in my garden. Once they ripen, the birds do the rest.



Azalea Kurume 'Christmas Cheer' by Craig May

The hunt for that unique tree is part of the hobby I probably enjoy the most. One of the sources of older material are demolition properties, if you're lucky enough to find one before the bulldozers move in. Thought I would share a short update of the transition of this ugly duckling into a swan, in a very short 3.5 years since collection.

October 2016—the original tree on the right is as collected, the current view is the back of what is today the front of the tree. The tree attracted me at the time as it had a fairly thick base, although with the volume of suckers cannot really see any direction.



Upon arriving home, decided to reduce the number of straight suckers to some sort of primary structure, retaining the thicker more interesting trunks, as well as shorter / thinner for variation. Once potted up, gave the tree a short soak in Seasol. The picture on the right below is the tree **11 months after collection**, can see how vigorously the tree responded. At the time I removed majority of the flower buds to divert all energy to foliar growth allowing the tree to establish.



September 2018 (left below) the tree continued to grow without any visible setbacks. As part of the pruning, selectively removed internal shoots, following the clip and grow method. Middle picture September 2019, the tree is in full bloom, the colour and coverage is stunning. Tree 2.5 years from collection was moved to its new home, love the blue colour against the flowers. If you take a closer look at the base, you can see how the trunks have thickened. May 2020 the tree with autumn colours, truly a multi-coloured beauty across the



I thought you may be interested in seeing a couple of the Heritage trees at Brenthurst as well as knowing some of the known history of each. Each Bonsai is catalogued and given a number.



Heritage Collection, Bonsai Number: 45 Malus halliana, Common Name: Halls crabapple planted in a rectangular, unglazed, blackish/grey, 1st Grade, Tokoname container from the Derry Ralph collection. This container was the first imported into South Africa by Derry and Chris Simpson, in the late 1970's. Sold for R50 each with a profit of R10 on each sale, and we were criticised for importing this huge size as it would never be used for Bonsai in this country. Bring back the good old days, please!! Known History of Bonsai: Created and styled from nursery stock in 2012 by Roy Nagatoshi at a BRAT demonstration. Original height about 2 meters. Bonsai was rewired and styled in 2019 and hopefully will be repotted in Spring.



Left: Bonsai # 8 Acer buergerianum, Common Name Acer trifidum or Chinese maple, Group planting or Forest, Originally Sourced, Garden stock from seed – Derry Ralph. Container: Grade: Polished, Tokoname, 1st from the Derry Ralph collection. Known History of Bonsai: Created by Derry Ralph from garden material, early 1970's.

Right: see below



Bonsai Number: 11 *Acer beurgeranium*, Common Name *Acer trifidum* or Chinese maple, Style- Root over Rock – (Pelindaba rock). Container: Cream, Glazed, Oval, Shigaraki, Tokoname, Signed and hand made from Derry Ralph collection. Known History: Garden stock from seed, created in 1985 by Derry Ralph in Melba Tucker workshop. Photographed showing both sides recently in unpruned condition. Will be rewired and repotted in spring. One root originally threaded through a hole in the rock has now split the Pelindaba rock into two pieces. The rock maintains original shape due to being kept together by the heavy root structure on both sides.



General view on a cold and frosty morning.



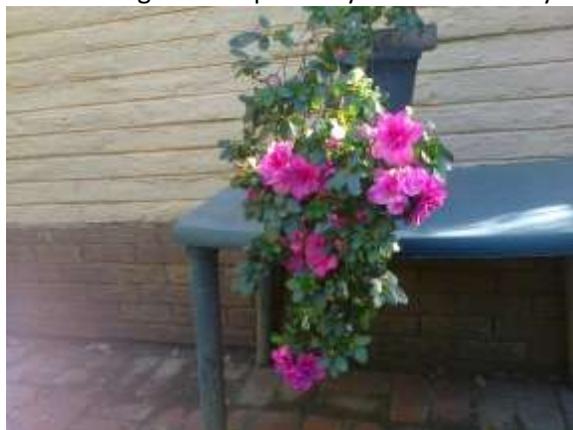
The big daddy of them all, Bonsai # 3 *Olea europaea – Africana*, Common Name, Wild olive in a Semi cascade style. Originally Sourced: Collected from nature. Container Grade: 1st. Tokoname, un polished, grey, - Shibui Heritage collection. Known History of Bonsai: Collected by Werner Bubb, mid 1980's. Purchased from estate by Shibui Bonsai Kai in 1990's and kept as Heritage Bonsai. Photographed recently after severe frost, with frosty yellowish leaves.

Some more for the newsletter as promised.

Azalea.

I know that you have seen this cascade before, together with my intentions for the past 2 or 3 years to repot. Well now it has reached the stage where it will have to be done soon as it now reaches down 600mm from the top of the pot and requires a brick on the back of the pot to stop it toppling over! Please can somebody give me advice on the best time to repot and prune Azaleas. In the meantime it continues to produce flowers for lengthy periods, so is obviously happy.

Another thing which puzzles me about this particular Azalea is the fact that it has grown itself naturally as a cascade and has never been trained or wired to do so. In my experience Azaleas tend to have an upright growth pattern. It was originally a garden centre plant and has been growing on a shelf on a south facing wall for probably at least 8 to10 years.



Cape Honeysuckle (Tecoma Capensis).

Another of my bonsai oddities. This was a very old specimen garden yamadori rescued as a stump with no branches and with very few roots about 12 years ago. Being the eternal optimist, I put it in a pot and it duly survived. All the trunks/branches have grown since then. It does get orange flowers occasionally but only on the ends of any very long shots which I have allowed to grow. For me the interest is more in the rugged stump and twisted trunks than the flowers.



I hope that you find the above interesting enough to include in the next newsletter.

In conclusion I must say how much I miss the monthly club meetings and the interaction and advice I receive there. Kind regards, Mike B.

Well, here we are on day 100 of lockdown with no end in sight and with nothing but doom and gloom on every newscast and predictions today that the pandemic will only peak in September. Perhaps we should congratulate ourselves on reaching this milestone and now finding ourselves living in one of the 'hot spots'. Hopefully, it will peak sooner and things will get back to what we used to call normal again. We all need to stay positive and safe with most of us being of the age that it is in our best interests to do so. At this stage we do not know when we will be able to get together for a meeting and have our AGM which should have happened on the 18th. What do we do now? The only thing is to carry on regardless and manage things as best as we can. However, it does give you all time to think how and what you can do in the future for the benefit of Shibui. Decisions will have to be made and we need to consider and discuss the way forward with the Heritage collection at Brenthurst as well as another important matter which needs to be discussed among members only. As far as subs for the new year are concerned, we need to make a decision on the amount to be paid, but in the meantime, may I suggest we leave them the same as last year and if this changes, we can adjust at a later stage. Times are hard for us all and those who are still lucky enough to have employment are working with reduced take home pay.

The subs are Single membership R200 and Family membership R250. The banking details are as below and it would be easiest to do an EFT please.

As far as The Floreum renovation is concerned, there is no news. The Zoo and Botanic Garden are still closed and I have been unable to get any response from the staff, if they are working. So, once we are given the go ahead to have a meeting again, we will arrange a venue and let you know. Otherwise what's up? How are you all coping? Are you still working on your Bonsai and do you have everything ready for the repotting season? With the very severe weather and heavy frost, including black frost, we have had recently, everything looks very sad, but at least we are on the right side of the calendar now and summer is now on the way. Hopefully, spring will arrive early this year and bring with it better weather and a rapid decline in the dreaded virus. A big thank you to Craig in Australia as well as Mike B for their contributions above, these are very much appreciated. The cupboard is now bare and I have nothing for next month so how about something from each and every one of you?

Birthdays in July : Four this month, Trevor on the 1st, Archie on the 5th, Rashid on the 6th, and Erich on the 15th. Many happy returns to you all and we wish you many more happy and healthy years.

Sincerely and please stay safe

Derry

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