



REDDITCH BONSAI

EDITION OF LATE OCTOBER 2020.

There are some fabulous autumn colours this year, all caused by a particular combination of weather from spring onwards, so do try and enjoy same when weather permits, both in the garden and further afield. It is also apparently thought likely that this year will be a “mast year” when trees produce an abundance of seeds and nuts. This is something which only occurs every 5 to 10 years and is believed to be an evolutionary survival strategy whereby the continued production of saplings is ensured. The theory is that in such a year there are so many nuts etc that the animals and birds that feed upon them cannot possibly eat the lot! I was surprised that when Monty mentioned this on Gardeners’ World last night he seemed to imply that oaks were the only candidates for a mast year, which is of course not the case. What’s not so far been explained however is why different species of trees all seem to do it at the same time – although I suppose they are all subject to the same weather (?)

Another interesting theory is that trees may be talking to each other via a network of fungi in and around their roots allowing species to share resources between one another. The question is whether these subterranean highways are developed enough to allow trees to “declare” a mast year. This is as yet unproven.

TEANAH’S NOTES OF MALCOLM’S PRESENTATION VIA ZOOM

JUDGING BONSAI by MALCOLM HUGHES.

Design – artistically beautiful. *Balance* – shape & position of roots, trunk, placement of branches & foliage, apex. *Movement* – direction of eye. *Emphasis* – focal point? *Simplicity* – get rid of non-essential features/ details. *Contrast* -variations for interest. Should enhance the beauty, e.g. colour *Proportion* – relation in size/ amount of tree parts. May also refer to additional feature (moss, rock, container, accessories). Take care with any fruit, they are not as controlled. *Space* – distance between branches & foliage pads. Negative (empty) space – part of the design. *Unity* Harmony – fitting together as a whole (balance, style, colour, space) to please the eye. Giving a positive emotional response.

Visual balance – illusion of balance across the tree as a complete composition.

Placement in the pot – what is the form & shape of the tree? Pot should complement the tree.

Health & vigour – no sign of disease or infestation. Branch development – correct placing, developed network of branches - ramification. Thick & tapered.

Quality of workmanship with wiring – correctly placed & not too obvious! Proper wire!

Carving – should show care & skill but used appropriately! Not to just show off the carving. Keep it natural – exposure to the elements! Not usually seen on deciduous.

Tapering – Should be thick to thin. Branches taper from trunk.

Nebari – Root spread of deciduous trees. Lowest part of the trunk & roots visible on surface.

Care & presentation – weed free, algae free, clean pot, no damaged leaves, no dead leaves or needles, no disease or infestation, trim long shoots back, no wire cutting in, clean soil (moss should be trimmed & one variety preferably not sphagnum), Stands should be ¼ - 1/3 size of pot. Accent plant or suiseki in proportion. Leave space between trees & stands. Not cluttered. Avoid creases in any display fabric.

Refer to summary of ‘Points to look out for’.

ZOOM AND ZOOM MEETINGS.

Please note the following alterations to the schedule of meetings published in the last Newsletter.

Malcolm Hughes will return on 2nd November to tell us all about “Winter Preparation”.

Judith’s talk about photographing your trees scheduled for the 2nd November has now been postponed until 14th December.

The committee of both societies has decided to invest in a subscription to Zoom at a discount price and the cost will be shared between both societies. It is hoped that this will improve the quality of Monday evenings, producing a seamless presentation for members which can be terminated at any time of OUR choice.

It will also enable the committees to meet virtually and will probably also allow members to communicate with each other at times of their choosing. I will ask Alex to prepare a summary of the options and how to access them once the subscription is confirmed. It may not be available for Malcolm’s talk on Monday however. We shall have to wait and see.

Summary of points to look out for when judging bonsai

BRANCHES	Distribution: Positioning of branches Ramification: Extent of fine branch development Bark: Quality of wiring (if present) and lack of wire marks Jins/ sharis: As appropriate to the tree – give aged appearance
FOLIAGE	Leaves: Horticultural perfection Blemishes: Evidence of disease, windburn etc. Size: In proportion to the tree
SOIL / SURFACE DRESSING	Well finished: Clear of weeds: Surface: Appropriate surface cover e.g. moss or fine akadama
TRUNK, ROOTS & NEBARI	Trunk: Appropriate taper Root base: Well or badly distributed as surface roots (nebari) If a Rock planting: Roots give natural impression of having grown naturally (clasped) to the rock.
POT	Shape & Style: Appropriate to the tree (species and style) Placement: Tree correctly positioned within pot Size: Proportional to the tree(s) , not over or under potted Colour Appropriate to species
AESTHETIC QUALITY – overall impression and quality of presentation, material, character and style.	Could be a subjective judgement but reflecting overall Impression of the tree within the pot or displayed on a tray. Overall sense of balance and harmony. Stands – marked on whether required or not at specific show. If present, appropriateness to tree.

GARDENING TIP OF THE MONTH.

This is more of an advertisement than anything else. Please remember that Russell Andrews has bonsai stands and clay pots for sale. I gave you his telephone number in the last edition but here it is again:- 07929061195. He would love to hear from you. My daughter was out at a garden centre this afternoon and has given me some Honey Lilies, *Nectaroscordum Siculum*, previously known as *Allium Siculum*. The bulbs certainly have the appearance and aroma of the allium family. According to the packet the bulbs will spread quite freely in future years. I haven't grown them before so I look forward to their appearance next year.

This arrival has reminded me that I need to get my other alliums into the ground in the next couple of weeks. For reasons that you may be aware of I had to leave my allotment daffodils in the ground for the summer. I shall be interested to see how they fare. They will get a dressing of general purpose fertiliser (see recipe below) and a covering of well rotted leaf mould. Fingers crossed. I have spare bulbs if anyone wants a few and I am going to try and raise *Allium "Christophii"* from seed.

My recipe for general purpose fertiliser is a mixture of the following:-

4lb sulphate of ammonia,

5lb superphosphate, and

2lb sulphate of potash.

These ingredients can be acquired individually at any good garden centre.

As you may know I grow Ecchiums, which are not winter hardy here and have to be protected. I had 3 very good plants growing in the garden at home and they have now been transferred into pots so that they can go into storage. On being dug up they have a nasty habit of flagging considerably and looking for all the world as if they are on their “last legs”. Patience is required. They eventually come back. I also have 2 types on the allotment which I have yet to deal with.

They are a great plant for attracting bees and other pollinators into the garden. I will try and put a photo or two of the ones grown to maturity at the house in Ireland in the next compendium. In Ireland the plants do survive outside as frosts are generally less severe and snow very rare – at least where we are!

If anyone wants seeds please let me know. They are easy to grow and require little maintenance.

BONSAI TIP OF THE MONTH.

Make sure when putting trees away for the winter that you remove all debris from soil surfaces so that “nasties” cannot hide under same.

Collect seeds from the wild if required – at our age growing from seed is not high on the agenda!

Remove dead pine needles – if nothing else they look unsightly.

I called George Bradley the other day. He is well and sends his best. He was in his greenhouse when I called. His advice for acers was as follows:- Now is a good time to correct the shape of the tree. Removing leaves and unwanted branches allows the tree to concentrate bud development where that is wanted.

Last weekend, with the help of my daughter and her partner, I put the Bonsais into their winter quarters. A little early perhaps but when the opportunities arise you have to make the most of them. Given the heavy rain this weekend, however, it was I think, not a moment too soon.

You have probably seen pictures of the arrangement in the past. This year it was necessary to replace the roof covering of the larger section but fortunately we had some heavy duty clear polythene which had earlier seen service as a mattress cover! What is important is to ensure that rain falling on the roof is siphoned off without falling on or into the trees with the help of the prevailing wind, i.e. getting blown in to the open front. I use an old piece of gutter.

Remember that deciduous varieties can be stored under benches in the shelter but evergreens really do need to be up on top and in the light.

Don't let your trees dry out at any time and don't be afraid to let the evergreens have a dose of SB Invigorator now and again because they are continuing to grow during the winter albeit at a much reduced rate.

I shall be interested to hear what Malcolm Hughes has to say about the use of tar oil wash on deciduous varieties.

The more tender trees may find their way into the greenhouse later in the winter depending on temperature. It always amazes me how Acer Kyohime manages to start leafing up in the depths of February/March. This summer a bird of some sort has obviously landed on top of that tree and damaged the crown. I am not sure how I am going to manage this - we shall have to see what the spring brings but I suspect that it may look a bit flat at the top for the time being!

My shelter also serves as an excellent environment for the protection of the pots of spring bulbs which I have now sorted out. Be sure to cover them with well weighted/secured chicken wire or similar to keep squirrels away. I put as many pots as I can in to those blue mushroom trays and I can then tie the chicken wire down over them with cable ties which will defeat any squirrel! Don't leave the pots out in the weather but make sure that they do not dry out, of course. Mine are just at the front edge of the shelter. Frost will not trouble them. We are looking forward to a colourful display in the Spring.

Richard Gilkes, Ed.,
31st October 2020.