



REDDITCH BONSAI

Edition of November 2023.

EDITOR'S REMARKS.

It's that time of the year when everyone's thoughts should be turning to considering whether they can possibly offer more support to the society by becoming a committee member, or at least putting their name forward for election. A committee of any sort must surely deliver a better outcome if there is a reasonable turn over of committed members, so this is why we always ask you all to consider your position at this time of the year. Membership of the committee is not, for the most part, an onerous or particularly time consuming exercise and is certainly worthwhile. So, why not do something different and offer your services? We should be delighted to hear from you. Get the nomination form which we sent to you with the AGM paperwork and return it to us here or at the November meeting.

COMING UP AT THE MBS.

In November we welcome IAN HOMER from WALSALL BONSAI SCHOOL AND NURSERY. He will be talking to us about pots in general, including the suitability of a pot for a particular tree and matters of that nature. We are therefore asking you to bring along your favourite pot/pots, whether there are trees in them at the moment or not. This will be Ian's first visit to the MBS.

COMING UP AT REDDITCH BONSAI.

This month (November) we are holding a WORKSHOP and BRING & BUY/AUCTION so you should be looking out all those unwanted items and getting them ready for sale! Judith's talk about the HISTORY OF BONSAI will take place in the new year.

HANBURY HALL.

Anne Walton, (Redditch Bonsai), reports that upon a recent visit to the above she found the new cafeteria open for business and that there were small trees and apples for sale.

(As a matter of interest a member of the Worcester Austin 10 Club had a big part to play in forming the supporting timbers for the new building.)

GARDENING TIP OF THE MONTH.

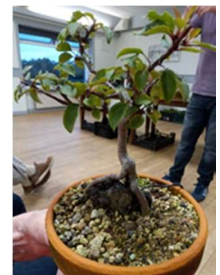
It's time to spread the leaf mould that you got underway this time last year. For next year you should either gather your leaves into a frame constructed for the purpose, or, use black bags. I use the latter and there are 2 simple rules:-

1. Leaves must be thoroughly wet going into the bag, and,
2. Once filled and tied at the top the bag should be pierced with a fork at the bottom before storing.

BONSAI TIP OF THE MONTH.

You just about have time to protect against leather jackets and vine weevil before the temperature drops too much, which would mean that Nematodes won't really operate efficiently.

TEANAH'S NOTES ON DAVID CHESHIRE'S TALK ABOUT ROOT OVER ROCK.



The basic idea for 'root over rock' is that the tree itself has grown over the rock and is ready to grow beyond the rock. Some trees that are being grown as 'root over rock' have gone too far and no longer work, meaning the biggest problem is that you have been putting a tree over rock trying to get some roots to grow. The tree will want to grow away from the rock, it won't want to grow into the rock. If you put the tree on the rock itself, you want the root system clinging to the rock itself. The roots tight with tree, growing into the rock and the rock becoming part of it.



Choosing a Rock

The thing is really about finding a piece of rock that is of interest to grow around. If you get the bits of rock that have cracks & crevices, where you can get the roots to go into those, it always works better. You've got to find a piece of rock that's got crevices and bits where you can actually run the root through and down them, so it really grips; it grows into that piece of rock. If you use a piece of rock that is quite soft/ full of holes, roots can grow too big, and they could literally break the rock in half.



You can see the rock is going to be holding the root. It is a kind of grip so when this tree was made up with concrete, the rock was buried initially now the tree is growing over it.

You could use slag from foundries - garden walls were made with this...

Concrete - Dig a hole in the ground, pour concrete out into the hole - it makes interesting shapes, and you get the natural texture of soil as well. It actually looks quite natural. You can just line the hole with concrete so it's not solid (hollow in the middle) to make it a bit lighter.



Japanese grown tree that's probably about 40-45 years old and grown in exactly the same way. It's a volcanic rock so it's a very hard rock. It won't break down but it's quite full of air holes.



Binding the Roots to the Rock

Raffia

Raffia is actually better to use wet so put it in a bucket of water, wet it and then it's much easier to get it really tight and wrap it around the root system. It can be quite awkward because it's in long strands and you want several strands together. Then you need to start wrapping it around and getting as tight as you possibly can to the root system against the rock.



Raffia rots away and the roots can push themselves away from the rock and it's very difficult to get them to cling to the rock again; so you need to get it right the first time!

Trees that do this may then be better off grown just as trees with exposed root.

Keep rewrapping it in order to bind to the rock!

Now the problem with raffia is that it decomposes and breaks down so, although you get it really tight to the rock for a start, over time it becomes loose and the roots pull away from it. If you use polythene strips, the polythene doesn't break down. However, the problem with that is that, as it grows, you've got remove the plastic because the plastic is going to stay there forever. Also, the roots start to swell/ grow, and it can cut

through the roots. We want to restrict the root so it doesn't grow away from the rock itself and is held tight to the rock.

Polythene

With plastic - use polythene bags (a fairly thick polythene) and then cut it into strips. Strips about 1-2cm in width. Wrap around the root system instead of the raffia to pull it really tight and because it's stretching, it gives you strength to actually holds the roots to the rock itself. Don't use biodegradable – it's not going to last five minutes! Proper polythene is not great for the environment but it's the only way.



Just go slowly. Keep wrapping the roots with polythene, bringing them in. Make sure that the position is right. Run each strip around and then run the next piece over the previous one. That helps to hold it in position. You don't have to tie it off at every point.



You're just trying to cover every part of the root system apart from the roots at the base, so you've got the fibrous roots sticking out of the bottom. To cover the whole root system, you need quite few layers.

One problem you can get is that the roots themselves can swell up after the tape is put on and it can split.

I would say you could probably use something more like pallet wrap, like cling film but thicker.

Really give it time so once the roots have grown over the rock, you don't necessarily expose the root straight away. You actually bury them in the soil. The stone is buried. Over time, as the roots grow, start to expose them. (Label these clearly so you know which trees have stones underneath!)

Things to be aware of:

- ▽ You need to think about the future and how thick you want the trunk to get.
- ▽ Also think, as the roots swell, they can lift the rock up and the rock can end up stuck in between the trunk and the roots.
- ▽ Don't over grow the tree – it will 'swallow' the rock and in the future, you would never know it was even grown over a rock.
- ▽ You could bind trees together in a sort of platform.
- ▽ I'd suggest you don't use seedling Trident maples, use cuttings from one individual parent so that the leaves are identical otherwise your seedlings can vary in leaf size. They will vary when the leaves change colour in the autumn.
- ▽ You could have a limit as to how long the tree is going to really survive growing on that piece of rock. It may end up becoming a tree that is actually an exposed root as opposed to root over rock, but it will be a nice tree. Until it gets to that point, it's just finding the positioning of your tree, spreading your roots out and then getting the roots to go where you actually want them.
- ▽ Sometimes you might find the odd root on the rock that actually dies so we want to keep as many of roots as we possibly can when we start.



- ▽ Hot weather is not ideal. It's not a good time to be doing too much to roots. It's better if it's a bit cooler.
- ▽ You might do quite a lot of these but only get a few that actually make really nice trees . You never know how they're going to grow, or which roots are going to die; which roots are going to grow so you could experiment with it.

At this time of year trees are pushing out masses of new white roots. When plants are growing in the spring, they put all their energy into producing leaves so they can photosynthesise and produce food from the sun. When you get to mid-season, somehow, they stop growing and start putting the energy that they're making from photosynthesis to produce a root so actually this time of year (early autumn) that trees produce masses of root.

A lot of nurseries in Holland and Belgium that field grow trees, and stock deciduous and conifers, will actually lift their trees at this time of the year and repot them. The problem is, you've got to repot them very quick because if it's a sunny day they're going to dry out extremely quickly. They do this now because the trees produce a really good root system before the winter.

Cut the roots in about February time so the trees produce masses of fibrous roots earlier on in the year. This means that the root system itself is not putting out masses of root at this time of year. When you trim the roots, you're not cutting through thick roots, just cutting through some of the fibrous root that formed over the year. The trees can be lifted quite easily after this trimming.



Here's a recent picture of the ACER PALMATUM in our back garden in all its autumn colour. It will only take one sharp frost for all the leaves to drop!

In the absence of any further contributions that's all folks. Richard and Angela 28th October 2023.

