

A fun and pleasurable session was held this month, with 11 attendees, many of whom thoroughly enjoyed owner Ali's amazing cakes at our venue, the [Venn Valley Vineyard](#) !

IMPORTANT BIT

Tony and Ali who own the vineyard are changing their business model in the near future. Much of the main hall where the 'café' area is will be converted into small business units aimed at the Craft market. Once that phase is complete, similar units will be constructed in the room that we use for bonsai. Our next meeting will be on **Wednesday, 3 April** at the vineyard, at 2:00 pm, whereupon I will be in a better position to give you further information.

As for our May meeting several factors come into play.

- As the first Wednesday of May falls on the first, we will need a different date. This is due technical reasons of me not being in the country!
- We may need a different venue if Ali and Tony's site development goes ahead at pace. This may mean a different day anyway – all depending where we can get a venue.
- Since the beginning of the Bonsai u3a Group we have not been charged for the room. This was based on us buying a drink and possibly having a piece of Ali's delectable cake – which let's face it, was not a hard choice!
- I have made enquiries about venue hire, and it seems other u3a groups charge about £3.00 per person. Would that be acceptable to you?

I'm sorry this is all rather 'in the air' and hope to tell you more on 3 April when we next meet.



Sue brought in four delightful acer seedlings, all rather young, but nevertheless very healthy. They just need to be kept moist and fed really well so they can put on as much growth as possible this year.

Next year would be the time to start thinking about the initial styling, especially if Shohin, or indeed Mame sizes were preferred.



Maggie had this shrub in her garden for a long time that unfortunately nobody knew what it is. Maggie has cleaned the dead leaves and branches away making a rather splendid specimen that has a strong rootball – within the confines of an old colander!



This rather dainty Acer is a year older than the other Acers and the initial bend was put into the trunk.

It must be remembered that Acers fatten up very quickly making bark damage happen far faster than is often anticipated. As soon as damage is spotted the wire should be removed. It should then be replaced but in a different binding to avoid further damage.

Secondly, a rather pronounced bend has been applied to this trunk. This is to compensate against the trunk straightening the bend out as it grows over time.



The next section of the afternoon was devoted to Christmas trees – Norwegian spruce.

This species can be tricky to make into a really convincing bonsai, but the experience of working with a fairly mature tree, which invariably arrives free around January, cannot be underestimated.



The first Christmas tree example is an image of a still from a YouTube video where this tree had been thrown out after Christmas and the top had been burnt in a fire!

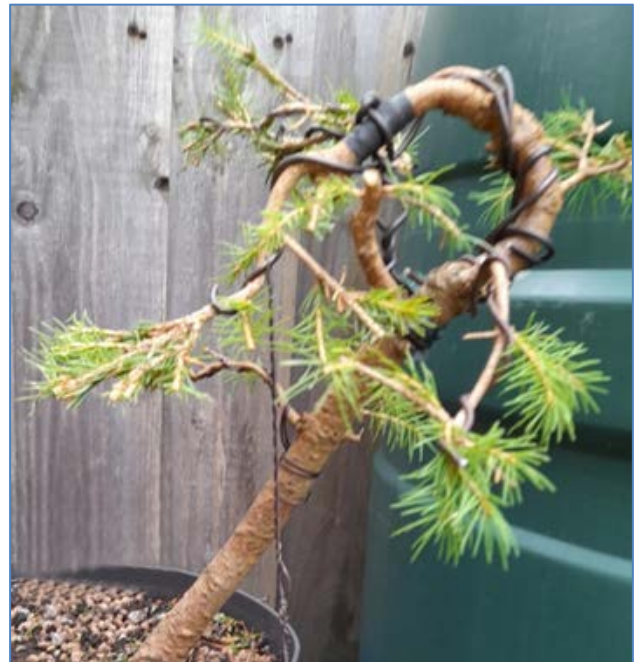
The burnt bit is the jin at the top of the straight trunk. This has been cleaned up and whitened using lime sulphur.

It was then wrangled into a rather presentable bonsai that will look really good in a few years time.



A nine year old Christmas tree that had developed a bit of a lean is the next example.

I wanted to break away from the usual triangular style of this species of tree so after two hours work at a Somerset Bonsai Society workshop it ended up looking this.





The tree is now repotted and starting to take an interesting shape. The top is now defined and needs to grow, whilst the pad on the far left needs to be brought down a little. This would be achieved by pulling the entire branch down

The third and final example Christmas tree bonsai is this rather cute 6 inch (15 cm) high tree that originally came from Scotland.

It shows all the facets of the species yet undeniably it is a rather splendid bonsai





And finally, the last in the Christmas tree narrative. A good friend gave me one of Sainsbury's finest in January. This is clearly a healthy tree, with an elongated top and a sturdy, very straight trunk. The tree was brought into the January meeting and the strange top was removed, as can be seen below.

After careful inspection nobody could detect an obvious front on account of the huge amount of very healthy foliage.

Rather than folk becoming bored as the tree was to be systematically pruned I brought it home to have a considerable ponder



Many of the superfluous branches were removed during the meeting with a front emerging and material left to form a new top.



On the way

The first styling. The tree will be left now for 6 months or so being fed well and kept out of direct sunlight and wind



Our next meeting will be on **Wednesday, 3 April** at the vineyard, at 2:00 pm.

It is planned to discuss some of the different styles of trees both in nature and as replicated in bonsai. Various trees will be brought along to emphasise some of the styles.

Further details of bonsai help can be found at www.bonsaiforeveryone.com

Any queries or help needed please email or phone me:

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