

Once again the new Bonsai group met in the excellent facilities of Venn Valley Vineyard (between Landkey and Swimbridge) EX32 0NN – it is well worth a visit for a coffee, or even lunch, or just a natter!

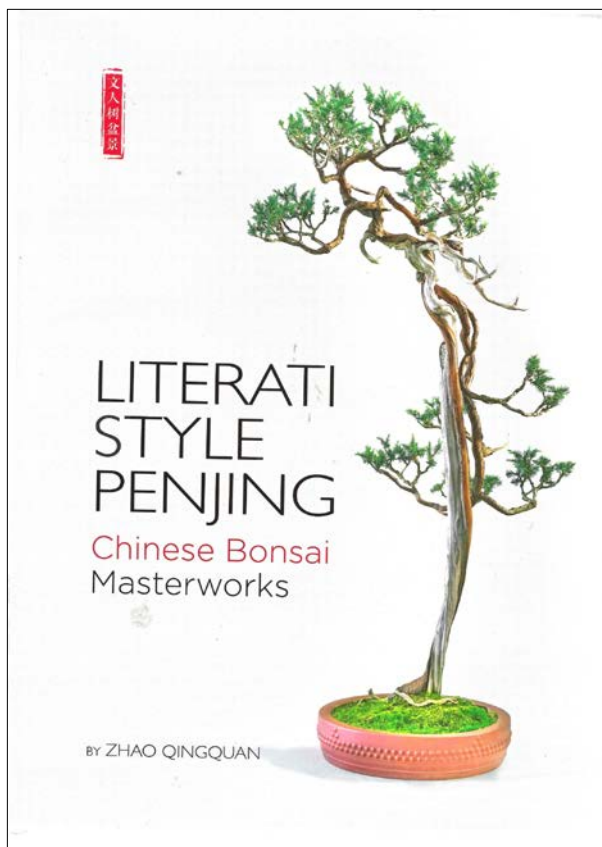
It was decided that we would meet once a month, on the first Wednesday at 2:00 pm. Due to several close events in June, the next meeting to be **Wednesday, 5 July** at the vineyard.

A very enthusiastic group came, along with several new members – welcome.

The most interesting thing was a table full of trees that had been brought in by group members. These ranged across many different species and state of tree wellness!

It is most gratifying that group members could start to see where and how the potential of each tree lay which gave rise to a huge amount of debate and hilarity. Nearly half of the session was taken up looking at the material brought in – brilliant, keep it coming.

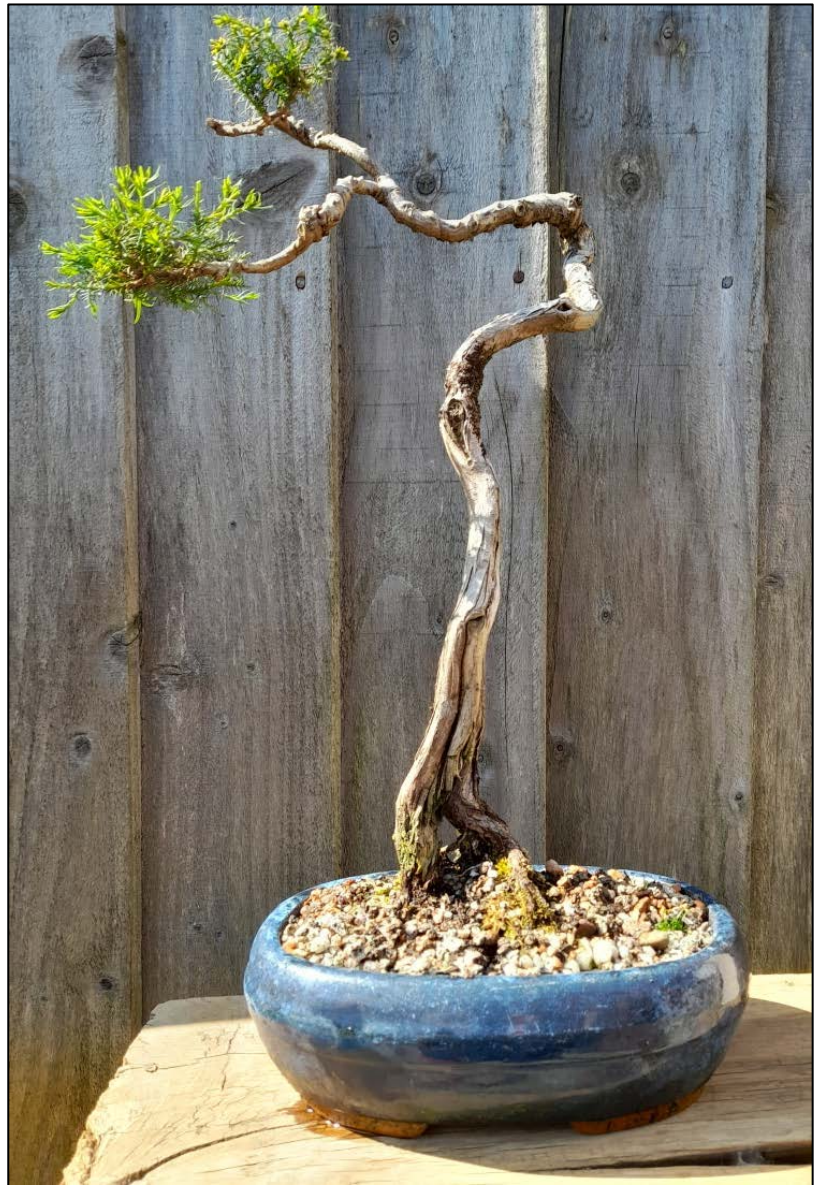
The second or 'theory part' of the afternoon looked at two of the roughly dozen different styles of bonsai; we tend to look at two during each session to give a little background theory to our proceedings.



The Literati or Penjing (Chinese version) does split folk. Bit of a 'Marmite' style; some love it, others feel it is a step too far. The image to the left is a book that is generally accepted to be the leading light for those interested Literati. ISBN 978-1-60220-018-0

Literati bonsai style mimics the shape of ancient Chinese scholars' paintings. These paintings often depicted as tall, slender trees with sparse foliage and twisted trunks. Literati bonsai aims to create a sense of elegance and simplicity, as well as a contrast between strength and fragility. The history of literati bonsai can be traced back to the Song dynasty (960-1279), when literati artists expressed their ideals and emotions through painting, poetry and gardening. Literati bonsai was influenced by Zen Buddhism and Taoism, which emphasized harmony with nature and detachment from worldly affairs.

This is a juniper of mine has been heavily influenced by the Literati book. The next task will be to gently move the two foliage pads down and round towards the trunk to gain greater elegance and harmony of the whole.



The acer to the left is a four year old seedling that was largely stripped of branches and leaves during the afternoon – much to the horror of the onlookers! This was to start the process of gaining that sense of elegance and simplicity but maintaining a contrast between strength and fragility. I did overlook how brittle acers can be and a tell-tale snap occurred about half way up the trunk. The keen observers will note the wire lashing the trunk to a steel bar inserted into the pot. Cut-paste was immediately applied to the break and all seems well as a new pair of leaves have appeared in the last two weeks. Whew!



The second bonsai style we discussed is the 'windswept'. There are some fabulous natural examples of this on the A39 just past the Hartland turning, here in North Devon.

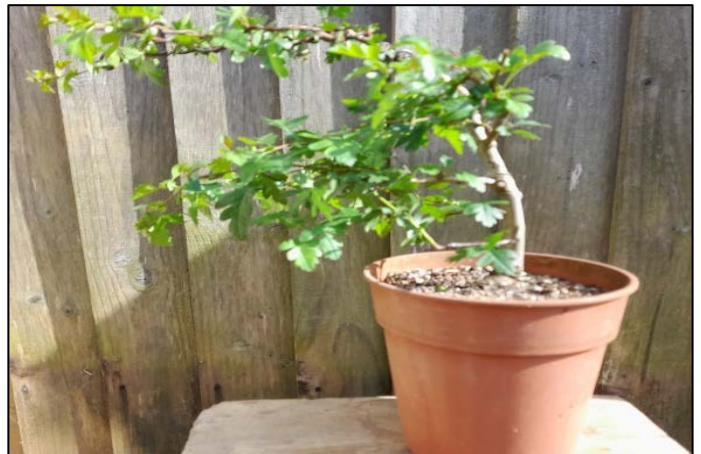


And on the B3232, just coming out of Alverdiscott on the right hand side, going towards Torrington.

Bonsai artists often turn to nature for inspiration and understanding. The constant wind from predominately one direction does not necessarily bend the branches completely (although this clearly helps a little), the wind burns the new buds and growth on the windward side thus allowing the protected buds underneath to flourish.

So much for the theory! This rather scruffy hawthorn was pointing in all directions but importantly the trunk had a delicious bend, reminiscent of a windswept style.

Much work is still required to make this tree look convincing, but some judicious wiring has helped it on its way!



The biggest bonsai show in the South West occurred over the Coronation weekend at RHS Rosemoor, with many group members going to have a look – along with the other 1,500 people over the two days. Some photos of the stunning exhibits can be found at bonsaisw.uk

A further excellent source of bonsai information for beginners and good gardeners that comes highly recommended is at bonsaiforeveryone.com. Incidentally, the tree on the website front page was in the Rosemoor show.

At our next meeting, **5 July**, please bring along any tree that we could discuss.

Any queries or help needed please email or phone me:

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