

Once again the Bonsai group met in the spacious facilities of Venn Valley Vineyard (between Landkey and Swimbridge) EX32 0NN. Through commercial need Ali and Tony (the owners) have found it necessary to offer just drinks and their superb cakes for sale, although we did come across a rumour that ice cream may also be found!

Our monthly meeting was once again enthusiastic with a dozen members present and several new members were welcomed.

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

The most interesting part is members bringing their own material so that all may discuss, and more importantly we all learn to anticipate what the tree may well look like in 5 or 10 years' time.

The first was a beautiful soft feathery-leaved tree that was thought to be a Weeping Quince. On research and talking to other bonsai folk, it seems that it is a Golden larch bonsai - *Pseudolarix amabilis*. This is a coniferous tree belonging to the Pinaceae or pine group. It comes from China's southern and eastern regions. For centuries the stem bark around the tree's base has been used as a traditional Chinese medicinal cure to repel insects and reduce itching.



The thoughtful owner of an Elm placed it away from all the other trees in the room. There was no evidence any of the dreaded diseases that are currently abundant in the UK – thankfully. Alas, we don't have any photos of the tree but several styling options were discussed with the promise of a rather nice tree in a year or two.

A very young Oak was next presented in a beautiful terracotta pot. It was only perhaps one year from being an acorn! Having said that, if replanted in a semi-shaded position in the garden, ideally in leaf-mould but importantly, with a small slate or saucer beneath it. This is to encourage the roots to traverse sideways when they come across the hard surface; this will aid the digging up process in 2 or 3 years time and the roots will be horizontal, therefore ideal for re-potting in a bonsai pot.

As this was the July meeting we tackled the summer growth that becomes rampant at this time of the year. Any styling of a tree can be swiftly lost, taking several seasons to reclaim the tree back to being a worthy specimen.



This is an example of a Trident maple (*Acer buergerianum*) that has been allowed to be 'let go'.

Virtually all other maples in the world have five 'fingers' on each leaf in some form or another. The Trident maple has only three 'fingers' – hence its name.

The start of the restorative process was to cut back, fairly harshly, to the second pair of leaves on each branch, all over the tree. This will encourage new growth at the point where each leaf joins the stem. This process almost doubles the amount of leaves that newly grow, but only smaller than their previous cousins! This process is called gaining '[ramification](#)'.

The tree will then look 'fuller', with a thicker trunk and a more convincing '[nebari](#)' – which refers to the lower part of the trunk

where it widens out to join the surface roots. Surface roots help us to see age in a tree. Young trees don't usually have roots visible.



This hazel was dug up from a spare part of the garden and looked rather promising as a potential bonsai - if totally overgrown.

A really severe pruning was done with the suggestions and help from the participants of the group, amid much whooping and in taking of breath as branches descended to the table.

Much still needs to be done with several branches still in the wrong place but consideration must be taken to the welfare of the tree in what can be done in one sitting. The tree will be left to recover through good feeding and watering, left in the semi-shade.



I do need to apologise to the Bonsai group that no photos were taken during our last meeting, hence some folk brought material to discuss and I cannot remember their trees and what we thought would be a way forward. Sorry to those folk.

Nevertheless, please still bring you material in and we all can take photos as we as a group can create some lovely bonsai.



I am in the process of writing an index to the website mentioned below so specific information can be sought easily. This is with the full permission of the authors, although it seems to be a bigger job than I imagined so may take a little while.

bonsaiforeveryone.com

Incidentally, the tree on the website front page was in the Rosemoor show.

At our next meeting, **2 August**, please bring along any tree that we could discuss.

Any queries or help needed please email or phone me:

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