



eZine

Special points of interest:

- Briefly highlight your point of interest here.

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My side of the story...Caroll



You never know how much you have. And that goes for everything in life. Last weekend, I got a bee in my bonnet and decided to rearrange 'the furniture' in my bonsai-en. My family had to move the Shed, move the bricks, build a new wall, no-I-don't-like-it-there, let's start over and eventually, the 'aahhh' moment. THEN, I started doing an inventory of my trees. My goodness, I have a lot... of.....nothing. I closed my eyes and put some stock to the side that I would get rid of.... Only to eventually put it back. I give up. My

name is Carol and I am addicted!

Van al die bonsai mense is ek seker die liefste vir Tannie Dot. [Hier is nog n paar fotos van haar bonsai.](#) Sy vertel my dat by die te huis waar sy bly, die verpleeg personeel die ou tannies wat nie meer kan loop deur haar bonsai-en stoot in hulle rolstoel. Ek kan my nie n meer volmaakte prentjie in sien as dit nie. Tannie Dot, baie dankie vir jou bydrae. En ek is ook nou baie gelukkig om n hele paar Dot Henegan bome to besit.

There is a very technical article on soil in this issue. I found it very

interesting and hope you will forgive me my indulgence if it is not your sort of thing, but I do know that there are lots of people who enjoy in-depth articles.

Ek word ook dikwels gevra wanneer en hoe doen ek die nuusbrieff. (en hier moet die media mense hulle ore toe druk) Ek werk aan twee of drie uitgawes gelyktydig. Sodra ek n bydrae kry, plaas ek dit, sodat dit nie verlore raak êrens op my rekenaar nie. Partykeer kry ek meer as een bydrae van een persoon, dan plaas ek dit in die volgende nuusbrieff. Ek gee GLAD nie om as mense my op foute uit wys nie—veral nie op die web blad nie. Laat my asb onmiddelik weet. Ek probeer dan die opvolgende naweek dit reg stel. Ek hoop julle sal ver-

staan dat ek n 'regte' werk het en ook partykeer foute maak. Hou asseblief aan om artikels en kommentaar te stuur.

I would also like to thank Alison Mortimer who keeps me motivated and inspired. Allison, I hope you are much better now and I look forward to loads more from you.

The fact that I am only thanking ladies have nothing to do with the fact that I also receive contributions from men.... But after all, it was Women's Month in August. Hope you all managed to celebrate with your loved ones.

Well Spring is here and I, for one, have waited long enough. Time to get started.

Caroll

Visit to BrazilLouis

On the first morning I woke up to the shrill sound of parakeets and other strange bird calls confusing my jetlagged brain. Oh yes, now I remembered, I was in Brazil about 350 kilometers from Sao Paulo in the city Ribeirau Pietro. Mario Leal had invited me to do a bonsai demonstration at his annual convention.

After a breakfast of exotic fruits and small cups of very strong coffee, Suthin Sukosolvisit and I ventured outside to inspect the bonsai material that was on sale. Suthin is an American bonsai master originally from Thailand who would also be doing demonstrations at the convention.

Different sizes of healthy Shimpaku junipers, Japanese black pine, Trident maples and some foreign plants drew our attention. The Brazilian rain trees impressed me the most with their flaking bark imitating the leopard trees that we know in RSA. The live growth veins are reminiscent of rippling muscles like my favorite Buddleja saligna trees. The leaves of these trees look exactly like our indigenous black monkey thorns but without the thorns that grab more than your attention.

Suthin and I both styled trees which would be sold on an auction later. He worked on a Shimpaku juniper and I tried to create an African style. After lunch Vladimer Ondejcik from Slovakia who was the third international demonstrator arrived. Bonsai enthusiasts from all parts of Brazil also started arriving. Everyone who entered through the front gate did so with great enthusiasm for bon-

sai. I have seldom experienced such enthusiasm and which was contagious.

Brazil is a big country, most bonsai for the exhibition and their owners traveled further than 1000 kilometers to be a part of this convention. One enthusiast spent 23 hours travelling by bus while another used three flights and a bus. Mario's brother acts as a chauffeur to fetch people from the airport



and bus station. The language barrier is overcome by the mutual love of bonsai. Most of the people attending the convention stay 500 meters from the venue at a type of guesthouse. At about 7 pm the three Shimpaku junipers which were to be used as demonstration material arrived.

Louis Nel visit ...continued

Mario smokes a lot less cigarettes per hour during the demonstrations due to his interest in what was happening around him. Demonstrations got underway with two local lads working on two junipers. A new talent competition started with great enthusiasm and provincial support. During the afternoon Vladimir styled one of the Junipers, leaving a big branch on the tree to be removed after one growing season. The reason for this is that at least 30% of the foliage should remain for the tree to recover easily. Marcello Martins fondly known by the bonsai community as Yamadori Marcello works on a beautiful old Brazilian rain tree.



After supper we were entertained by Mario and his band with Brazilian music and other of the bonsaists display their talents by joining the band with a musical instrument or two. A short distance away in dim light an impromptu styling of two trees was taking place to the sound of the music being played. With the first early morning screech of parakeets Suthin and I inspected the trees we would be

using for our demonstrations. Suthin knew exactly what he wanted to do and made a sketch of what the tree would look like in the future.

I decided to make a semi cascade that reminded me of the way some trees grew on the steep slopes of the Andes Mountains. The Argentinean Sergio Luciani was asked to assist me with the wiring and Renato Bocabello of Brazil to do the translations when necessary. The end result of Suthin's tree is testament to the fact that he has worked on plenty of junipers in the past. My team was most satisfied with the end result of our tree. Both trees were later sold for an undisclosed sum of money.

After lunch Shugo Isami demonstrated the art of making clay pots on a wheel and then a free for all styling session followed. Everybody assisted one another. We worked with a lot of enthusiasm on one tree after the other. I was privileged to work on an old Brazilian rain tree belonging to Ricardo Loriggio. This was a wonderful experience and added to my knowledge of Bonsai.

Friendship through Bonsai was a reality as we worked and helped each other until well after dark. Fun was held by all.

What a pity that this convention had to come to an end. In closing I would like to say a special thank you to Mario Leal and all the enthusiastic Brazilians for a wonderful Bonsai experience.



Kei Appel



Jurgen Nuss from Pietermaritzburg Bonsai Society submitted this picture of a Kei Apple with a massive crop of 32 'apples'.

C Dippenaar van die Kaap het die volgende fotos ingesuur.

Cape Cherry Trees



Cape Bonsai Kai... Tony Bent

History tells us that bonsai were first displayed in South Africa at the British Empire Exhibition held in Johannesburg in 1933, where Asian exhibitors displayed their trees. Thereafter, mention is made of soldiers, returning home from the east after the Second World War, expressing interest in the beautiful trees they had seen in Japan.

However, the person who was responsible for the initial start of the art of bonsai in the Cape was Becky Lucas who, loving what she saw and wishing to find out more and improve, went to Japan in the 1960s. There she attended a bonsai course under the guidance of a bonsai master. On her return she founded the Bonsai Society of South Africa – the first society in the Cape, and set about travelling the country promoting the club and the love of Bonsai. Through her many different offshoots of the Society were formed.

In 1970 – forty years ago this year – four members broke away from the Bonsai Society of South Africa, to form the CAPE BONSAI KAI.

Needless to say, our Kai was an immediate success owing to the foresight of our founders who arranged a public show to promote the art of Bonsai. Through this initial show, and the ones following every year since then, we have recruited many new members – besides encouraging an interest in bonsai in members of the public.

Well, since then our kai has not looked back and is today renowned as a forerunner for its high classical standards and disciplines.

The kai has been fortunate in having senior members who have completed courses held by Japanese bonsai masters, either in Japan or USA. Over the years, this nucleus of advanced artists and growers has shared their knowledge with all members to ensure and guarantee the high standards of the kai. The pattern has continued over the years with members travelling to international conventions and imparting their knowledge on their return.

We have also hosted many bonsai teachers such as John Naka, Ben Oki, Melba Tucker, Dorothy and Debra Koreshoff, Shigeo Kato, Vaughn Banting, Harry Tomlinson, Peter Chan, Mr I C Sui, Cheng Kung-Cheng and Marco Invernezzi. At our 40th celebrations in September 2010, we will be hosting Budi Sulistyono.

Our enthusiastic members meet frequently and the kai prides itself on providing members with a high standard of expectation through its well-structured organisation. The kai has always enjoyed a sound financial footing thanks to the support of its members and the executive committee ensures that it, and various sub-committees, is effective and well run. The technical programme is particularly well managed to ensure that the progress and knowledge of its members is continually being advanced.

For the last forty years this continuous handing down of knowledge, coupled

with the technical and artistic skills taught to members by advanced growers, ensures that the standards of our kai and the magnificent trees belonging to its members, are highly respected throughout South Africa.

Your **committee** is:

President	Yvonne Romyn
Secretary/PR	Tony Bent
Treasurer	Trevor Venables
SABA Rep	Dorothy Franz
Library	Alastair Welsh
	Peter Bruyns
	Cindy Rodkin

Mentorship

The following experienced growers are willing to assist members by mutual arrangement:

Fish Hoek :	
Neville Coxon Tel:	021 782 1786
Tony Bent	021 785 1402
Kirstenhof:	
Yvonne Romyn	021 701 2749
Southern Suburbs:	
Dorothy Franz	021 797 8972
Hout Bay:	
Lionel & Gail Theron	021 790 3478
Pinelands:	
Trevor Venables	021 531 4622
Northern Suburbs:	
Isabel Hofmeyr	021 939 5924
Rudi Adam	021 987 4040

Monthly Meetings

Meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month, from 7.30pm for 8pm. The programme for the year is worked out well in advance to enable members to prepare for the relevant subjects and topics for a particular evening.

Cape Bonsai Kai...continued

This year a typical meeting comprises a display of trees, From Bush to Bonsai – where a member designs a bonsai from stock, a ten minute subject such as How to prune, Choose good material, etc, the judge's choice of the displayed trees, then the main talk/dem/lecture of the evening.

Refer to your copy of the Programme for the Year for further details.

Workshops

Generally, we try to hold workshops every month. They are on the last Saturday of the month and are held at advanced growers' houses from 1.30pm onwards. Gail and Lionel Theron of Bishopsford also usually run workshops several times a year – as does Rudi Adam of Olive Grove.

Refer to your copy of the Programme for the Year for further details.

Library

We have a large library with a varied collection of books and many magazines. The library opens at 7.30pm on club meeting evenings, when Gail Theron will be on hand to help you.

Members may borrow up to 2 books and 2 magazines at any one time but are asked to diligently return them the next month to ensure that others have an equal opportunity to enjoy them.

Guidance with your trees

Should you have a troublesome tree or two, Gail Theron is at each meeting from 7.30pm to help, en-

courage and guide you.

Displaying trees at monthly meetings

At monthly meetings there are separate tables for novice, intermediate and advanced growers to display their trees. Each month we have A Tree of the Month – look at your annual programme to see the next tree of the month. There is a judge for the evening awarding points (out of 10) – if you show the tree of the month you receive an extra two points. No tree can be shown more than twice in a year. Up to two trees get marked per meeting – if you bring more than two trees select the two that have received the highest marks.

The secretary collates and keeps a record of all marks. If you win any award at our annual show you receive ten points

Categories of membership

Novice

Novice growers are encouraged to take part in a beginner's course offered from time to time. Novices can and should participate in club activities by bringing one or two of their trees to the show tables at club meetings. Grading points are awarded to all trees for the purpose of helping individuals to improve their trees. No tree may be brought more than twice per year. On accumulation of 200 points over a minimum of two years, a member will advance to intermediate level.

Intermediate

To progress from the Intermediate to Advanced categories, you have to have

accumulated 200 points and to have been an Intermediate for at least three years after which you may request to be assessed to advance. Members may be advanced by due consideration of the majority of Advanced growers.

Advanced

Advanced growers are experienced growers who have advanced through the ranks.

Transfer of members

In certain circumstances a member may be advanced by due consideration of the majority of advanced members



Invites you to its 40th Anniversary Celebration

Schoenstatt Retreat House & Training Centre, Constantia.
18/19 September 2010

We are proud to present

Bonsai Master **Budi Sulisty,**
Jakarta, Indonesia,
and having him share his knowledge with us

Award winning Budi Sulisty is a pioneer of bonsai in his country and a valued BCI board member - see latest BCI magazine Apr/June 2010.

Budi began bonsai in 1976 & started teaching in 1984. He gives seminars & teaches throughout his country & and on national television

40th Anniversary Celebration Programme

SATURDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2010

09.30 - 10.00	Registration
10.00 - 10.10	Welcome
10.10 - 10.30	Peter Hattingh, founder member
10.30 - 11.00	Rudi Adam
11.00 - 11.30	Tea
11.30 - 13.00	Budi Sulisty demonstration
13.00 - 14.00	Lunch
14.00 - 15.00	Demonstration continued
15.00 - 15.30	Tea
15.30 - 17.00	Budi Sulisty workshop

SUNDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2010

09.30 - 10.00	Carl Morrow demonstration
10.00 - 10.30	Budi Sulisty critique
10.30 - 11.00	Tea
11.00 - 13.00	Budi Sulisty demonstration
13.00 - 14.00	Lunch
14.00 - 16.00	Budi Sulisty workshop
16.00	Thanks and farewell

The Artist's Perspective... Russel Hawyes



I'm relatively new to bonsai, a few years of experience; but a veteran, at 27, to the fine art of landscape painting. What attracted me to growing miniature trees was a feeling comparable to the quest of playing God and manipulating nature, restraining and holding captive, in an abnormally shallow pot, a great illusion of something larger. There's always been a mystery surrounding bonsai. But that was then and this is now. My pursuit to be king of the Land of Lilliput ended when, after several attempts to keep various Junipers indoors, overwatering baobabs and fertilizing in hot afternoon sun, I realised I don't necessarily own the little trees and I have a lot more to learn and I will never stop learning about this ancient art.

From an artist's standpoint, the switch from two-dimensional landscape painting to three-dimensional sculpture could be considered a natural evolution. And what started as a hobby reserved

for Sunday afternoon outings to garden nurseries has morphed into an almost daily trip to garden centres and constant attention and surveillance over my bonsai collection. Often I find myself *not* sitting in front of an easel, paint brush in hand (this is my bread and butter); but, instead, scrutinising my latest purchase and planning its retirement as a bonsai tree and waiting impatiently for the first signs of spring. My wife often complains, jokingly, that I give my trees more attention than our kids. Which I do. Honestly speaking, trees don't back-chat nor leave nasty post-processed banana and custard flavoured Purity in their Huggies at ungodly hours of the morning. I have involved the two girls, though. Each has their own designated bonsai and the eldest (4) has expressed an excited interest in painting. But to return to the subject of the all-consuming bonsai, which has impaired my life on almost every level, but at the same time served as a healthy and clean escape, the relationship

between art and bonsai are inseparable – exercising creativity, playing God, forging a sense of meaning and purpose, creating an illusion of great depth, perspective and age, and of course exhibiting your great finished masterpiece. There is just one difference between the two... When a painting is signed, framed and hanging in a gallery it is unarguably complete, never to be touched again. Bonsai, on the other hand, is temporarily and debatably complete by design and always requiring attention. Branches die off, leaves wither, roots become pot bound and the list goes on. From one bonsai artist to the next generation of artists the tree is an endless task of artistic maintenance. Therein lays the undeniable magnetism and the ongoing challenge that the art presents from beginner to pro. The painter leaves a 'full stop', the bonsai artist leaves a legacy.

To conclude, I am grateful for one factor in the yearly cycle of

Russel is a fulltime landscape artist and lives in Gauteng wit his wife and two young daughters.



bonsai: Over the winter dormancy I can actually get a few paintings done without looking over my shoulder to see if my Chinese Elms have gathered too much apical growth, or the baobabs are in a too humid environment leaving their soil too moist, or fulfilling the daily watering requirements for well over an insane amount of trees. I thank nature herself for Balance or I'd be gathering the Autumn Maple leaves to employ as Wet Wipes...

proof of global warming



To all the people who are still sceptical, I have been sent proof of Global Warming!

Dot Henegan Trees..... . . .



Trade Corner

Dot Henegan is selling off her larger trees. She lives in Harrismith and has amazing trees for sale. Please contact her should you be interested.

082 883 3321

Eddie & Christa Rabie are moving and wish to sell their collection. They currently live in Empangeni, KZN. Please contact them on:

H: 035 7721786

Eddie sel: 0835406470

Christa sel: 0724242292

Dawie van Heerden verkoop bome namens iemand. Kontak hom by: 082 881 7946

Ed Brits from Bonzai Boyz in Pinetown has a weekly auction of a tree on his Facebook page. He is donating a percentage to the ABC3 fund. Please support him. Apart from it being loads of fun, it helps generate funds for a good cause.

Bonsai Growing Mix..... Ian Pringle

Technical Article

This article is not for the faint-hearted. YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED. (and it has been shortened. For the full copy, please contact Ian)

Ian Pringle is a member of Waterberg Bonsaiklub.

The term growing medium is used instead of soil to emphasize that a good *bonsai growing medium does not resemble soil*. However, a little *soil* in the growing mix is not out of place, particularly if it contains the fungus mycorrhizae. It all depends on what is required of the growing medium but normally one would wish to restrict the amount of fine particles because they tend to compact and leave little pore space for roots to develop.

The very basic needs that all bonsai root systems require from a growing medium are good support and a supply of water, air and nutrients. Without these your bonsai will not survive. A good growing medium is a medium that not only provides for all of these needs but also does so in a manner and in the proportions suited to the bonsai in question. A large bonsai will require more root support than a mame. A water cypress will require a growing medium with high water retention and a baobab a medium with excellent drainage.

Principal Components

The fundamental elements of a growing medium are solid particles, water and air. The solid particles – inorganic and organic - should have certain physical properties and characteristics, be of uniform size and not fit too tightly together. This allows for spaces in-between that can be occupied by either water or air. It is possible to entirely saturate the growing medium with water by filling all the spaces with water. But if this situation is maintained for any extended period - weeks is too long for most species - the bonsai roots will suffocate and deteriorate.

The liquid part of the ideal growing medium consists of many chemical compounds dissolved in the water producing ions, which are more readily absorbed by the roots. Included are dissolved gases of the atmosphere, dissolved salts formed by rock weathering, and acids produced by bacterial action during the decay of organic materials.

The air in a growing medium is basically the same as the free atmosphere but in less than ideal situations there are larger proportions of carbon dioxide liberated by the chemical processes of decaying compost.

The bonsai enthusiast can adjust the properties and

characteristics of a growing medium by changing the solid particle ingredient mix - typically a unique blend of inorganic and organic substances. Inorganic particles are composed of inert rock chips and sand-like grains of rock forming minerals like quartz and feldspar. These mineral particles give the growing mix most of its mass and volume. Other rock forming minerals like olivine and pyroxene are somewhat less inert and will break-down under normal weathering conditions to form clay minerals. The process takes time but it does release essential trace element ions required to keep plants healthy.

Organic particles are related to, or are derived from living organisms and are best when partially decomposed such as found in loam, peat, leaf mould, manure, bone-meal, compost and humus. Immature or partially decomposed compost does not release the required levels of nitrogen and carbon dioxide.

Finding the correct blend, size and texture of the organic and inorganic ingredients so as to approximate the perfect natural habitat of the bonsai is only one reason our hobby is so unique and interesting. The debate as to whether one should add certain 'additives' like super phosphate, agricultural lime or bonemeal is one that will continue for some time. Small amounts making up less than a few per cent of the total mix is not going to do any harm.

Particle Characteristics

Many of the properties of the bonsai mix depend on the physical characteristics of the individual particles that make up the mix. By changing the particle size, shape or texture within the mix one can change the characteristics of the mix as a whole.

Particle Size

Particle size in a bonsai soil mix is an important physical characteristic if not the most important characteristic of a growing mix because it affects the free draining open structure and water retention properties of the growing medium.

Consider the volume and surface area of two spherical objects, one approximately the size of a billiard ball and the other the size of a marble, say 5 cm and 1 cm in diameter respectively (Table1).

Table 1.

#	A	B	Remarks
Size (diameter)	5cm	1cm	5x smaller
Volume-cc	65.45	0.52	125x less
Surface Area-cm ²	78.54	3.14	25x less

By decreasing the size 5 times one decreases the volume 125

times and the surface area only 25 times. A good trade-off if one wants to improve the total surface area of all the particles within a container of a given volume. Roots grow on the surface area of soil particles. Therefore given the limited volume of a bonsai pot, the smaller the particle size of the material used to fill the pot, the greater the total particle surface area in the mix on which the roots may grow.

So what is the best particle size for a good bonsai-growing medium? Changing billiard balls to marbles would have some small improvement in the water retention, but if you kept reducing the size of the particles you would eventually reach a stage where the water would not flow through as easily and the growing medium would stay "wet" for a longer time. *At some point before this you would have a particle size where the water would be retained for a few hours and then the growing medium would dry out through the action of drainage and evaporation.*

Particle Shape

Particle shape is the spatial or geometric form of a particle and is a fundamental property that determines the relationship between its mass or volume and surface area. Shape affects the way particles tend to pack and therefore the amount of pore space for effective drainage. Round spherical particles have a smaller area to volume ratio – less surface area beneficial for root growth. They also tend to pack more efficiently reducing the pore spaces required for good drainage. On the other hand flat plate-like particles have a very high area to volume ratio but they tend to pack rather well leaving very little pore space for water circulation. The best particle shapes are those that do not pack well but still have good area to volume ratios.

A shape like that of a pear with a few bites taken out of it – irregular pear shape – is probably the ideal particle shape, even better if it has a rough surface texture to promote residual moisture. Residual moisture on and adhering to irregular particles becomes important in maintaining a modest temperature in the bonsai pot. Roots tend to become dormant at temperature in excess of 32°C and any further increase will cause root damage and put your tree at risk - twig dieback and curly brown leaf may follow.

Particle Surface Texture

The surface texture of a particle is another important characteristic that is frequently overlooked. A smooth particle, such as found in a well-washed river gravel, has less surface area than a rough particle, such as found in crusher sand. Many bonsai enthusiasts believe that the roots of a bonsai tend to slide around the smooth surface of a distal river gravel particle, while the rough textured pumice particle or rough sand particle will aggravate the roots, causing them to divide and subdivide into larger masses of the tiny root hairs. This, they believe, results in branches that are more twiggy, detailed, twisted, and with greater ramification. If you have a choice, always favour materials of a rough texture in your mix. A rough texture is more likely to trap and retain both water and air together making it the ideal spot for root growth.

Growing Medium Mixture

Almost all indigenous species will be satisfied with a 50:50 mixture of organic and inorganic substances but for a bonsai to flourish it needs a few judicious adjustments as well as a few selected nutrients added to the mix. A fertile growing medium contains well-matured compost and is full of micro-organisms and bacteria, which contribute to the breakdown of the compost particles. An example of an important micro-organism in a bonsai-growing medium is the fungus mycorrhizae. It attaches itself to the roots and forms visible nodules. The relationship to the plant is symbiotic. The fungus processes atmospheric nitrogen into a usable plant nutrient while the plant supplies the fungus with its required nutrients, eliminating the need for leaves. When transplanting a bonsai always retain a bit of old growing medium and transfer it along with the tree.

Functions of a Growing Medium

From a bonsai enthusiast's point of view a growing medium has three functions:

- to act as medium through which water, air and dissolved nutrients are carried
- to be heavy enough to weigh down the bonsai and keep it from moving or falling over. Good root support is essential to stabilise and anchor the tree. A case in point is the use of vermiculite that, although it drains well and is able to absorb water, is too light in weight to support the tree.
- to round off the planting and convey the impression that the tiny tree is growing in nature.

Properties of a Growing Medium

The ideal properties a growing medium should include at least the following:

- it must retain water long enough for the roots to absorb it together with any dissolved nutrients the water may contain. This means that if the nutrients are not applied in the dissolved state, the water may need to stay in the growing medium long enough for the nutrients in the growing medium to be dissolved in the water before they can be absorbed.
- it must not retain water for so long that the medium becomes soggy, preventing contact with oxygen and suffocating the roots.
- it must therefore allow an interchange, or swapping, of air and water.

Drainage

Good drainage is a very important feature of a bonsai-growing medium and is a feature of the interconnection of the interstitial pore spaces. Water that enters the growing medium should drain along these interstitial pore channels through the growing medium and eventually through the drainage holes – one does not want the roots to be immersed in water for too long. Being surrounded by water will mean that normal transfer of gasses at root level cannot take place and the roots will deteriorate. Good drainage is also required to ensure that there is no build up of fertilizer residues and salts in the pot.

Some degree of water retention is necessary otherwise the water flows through the growing medium in too short a time and the roots dry out. This is, however, where the problem lies, in that a balance has to be achieved between drainage and water retention.

Bonsai Growing Mix.....continued

Water Retention

The growing medium should also retain water, at least for a short period of time. Consider the situation where a number of particles in a medium that drains well also have the ability to absorb water and once saturated allow the excess water to continue draining through the container. Calcined clay particles retain a certain amount of water; so do pumice, charcoal and coarse compost particles. They are said to be porous, having numerous interstitial spaces to collect and retain water. However organic particles will eventually break down into smaller particles and in so doing change the texture of your growing medium. In a natural soil there are four zones of moisture.

- The lower most zone, the ground water zone occurs below the ground water table. Here all the voids are filled with water that moves under gravity.
- The next zone of moisture, just above the ground water table, is the capillary moisture zone. Here, capillary water fills all the voids except for a few trapped air bubbles.
- The most important zone of soil moisture for the bonsai enthusiast is the continuous film zone where capillary films of water are continuous and connected.

Air voids are also all interconnected. This is the zone one must try and duplicate in the bonsai pot.

Above the continuous film zone and above the capillary fringe one finds the discrete film zone where water occurs only as discrete films and where air filled voids are continuous. The little moisture in this zone is not freely available for the roots because of the strong adhesive forces between the soil particles and water molecules. This moisture can often only be driven off by intense heat.

The bonsai grower who only takes care of the drainage properties could have a growing medium that does not hold water at all, one that may dry out in a matter of a few hours - not what you would want at all. This means that if one starts with a pure sand mix, some material that will retain water needs to be added. This could be in the form of crushed clinker, peat moss or compost. Each one of these has some merits as well as demerits. For instance, the clinker may have good water retention – because of its porosity - but has little nutrient value and is difficult to remove from the roots during repotting. Compost has good water retention as well as nutrient value. In addition, compost aerates the soil, and, as it is utilised, it allows spaces to form into which roots can develop. This effect is temporary and as the compost is consumed it needs to be replenished every two to three years. Peat contributes very little towards the nutrient value, but being slightly acidic it is suited to certain *acid loving* plants like azaleas. All natural waters are slightly dissociated into H^+ and (OH^-) ions. The acidity of the growing medium (pH) refers to the concentration of H^+ ions present. A pH of 1 is

highly acidic – plenty of H^+ ions, 7 is neutral and a pH of 14 is highly alkaline. The pH of rain water ranges from 4 to 7, a range suited to most plants. The acidity comes from dissolved CO_2 and lightning discharges producing nitric acid. If necessary the acidity can easily be counteracted by adding lime to the growing medium. Unless a lot of peat is used, it will not have a practical effect on an ordinarily basic (alkaline) growing medium. Most plants grow well in a pH range and not a specific acidity or alkalinity, but a pH of somewhere between 6,5 and 7,5 is preferred by most bonsai growers.

Colour and Appearance

Colour and the appearance of the growing medium must be taken into account for display purposes or to round off the planting to give the impression that the tree is growing in nature. This usually only matters for the surface and not for the mix as a unit. One may consider keeping a number of containers filled with screened sand and gravel in different grade sizes and natural colours for this purpose. But remember, dark colours tend to absorb heat and will warm up a pot placed in the sun. Dark colours also radiate heat more readily causing greater temperature fluctuations in the pot. Light colours tend to reflect the sun's rays and maintain a more constant pot temperature.

One must not use an inappropriate growing medium colour that will spoil the effect of a well-chosen pot for your tree. Rainbow coloured chips belong in the hen-house.

References

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What is a man?

What Is a Man?

A real man is a woman's best friend.

He will never stand her up and never let her down.

He will reassure her when she feels insecure and comfort her after a bad day.

He will inspire her to do things she never thought she could do; to live without fear and forget regret.

He will enable her to express her deepest emotions and give in to her most intimate desires.

He will make sure she always feels as though she's the most beautiful woman in the room and will enable her to be the most confident, sexy, seductive, invincible

No wait... ..

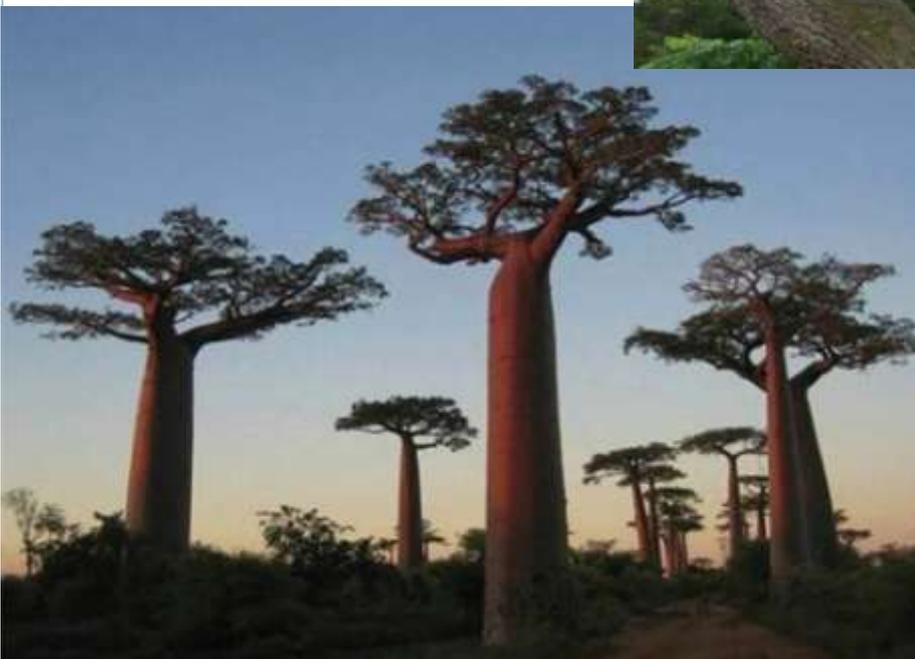
.....I'm thinking of a bottle of wine.

Maybe it's true
that life begins
at fifty .. But
everything else
starts to wear
out, fall out,
or spread out.
- *Phyllis Diller*

Sent in by Chris Joyce

TREES

**I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.
A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth's sweet flowing
breast;
A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;
A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;
Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.
Poems are made by people like me,
But only God can make a tree.**



Club News



Following the severe winter we have had this year our repotting schedule is going to be later than usual. The trees and shrubs in the garden tell us Spring is on the way, but we are still having frost and very cold nights, so don't be in a hurry to get started too soon
[Read more](#)



Bloemfontein Bonsai Kai

Is situated in the Free State and has a meeting every 2nd Saturday of the month. This year they will also host the SABA Mini C.

Friday 12th 18:00 SABA AGM
 Saturday 13th Full day convention with many demo's ,
 New Talent Competition and informal dinner
 Sunday 14th Dig

For more information, please contact Vian Herbst



PRETORIA BONSAI KAI

Die skou vind die 9-10de Oktober by Safari Kwekery plaas. Ons het 'n groot area gekry en gaan baie bome nodig hê. Begin solank julle bome voorberei sodat hulle reg is vir uitstalling.
[Lees meer.....](#)



CAPE BONSAI KAI

The new potting season has started. The buds will start to swell on

Swamp Cypress, Celtis and Elms and the Maples will start to move

shortly after. Watch the buds!! The swelling of buds will indicate the correct potting time for each individual tree. Make sure you have a variety of pots on hand so as to be able to choose which best suit those trees that you are going to pot/repot.

[Read more.....](#)



Spring started for me midway through July with new leaves on my Elms. The flush of new

leaves and the swelling of buds led me to pot the two Suberosa that I have. It was good to get my hands into the pots again. Celtis which used to be the first to show growth is slow again this year. My large Celtis is showing signs of growth but my smaller trees are still sleeping. We are prone to gales at this time of year and it is advisable to secure Bonsai that could be blown of stands.

[Read more.....](#)



Last month I told you about the new format for meetings. Well, at the last meeting, attendees divided up into three groups – Beginners, Intermediate and Seniors. Each of these groups was again divided into three groups – group 1, group 2 and group three, to make control easier.

[Read more.....](#)



PIETERMARITZBURG
 BONSAI
 SOCIETY

After tea we worked on trees, I took my bougainvillea which was in full flower. Wade brought some large comiphora trees for the raffle, and Joy's Vietnamese Fig were snapped up pretty smartly! Jürgen helped members with the trimming and potting of the comiphora's. Joy worked on her lovely Olive tree.



Dave got our July meeting going with a slide presentation on his trip to Puerto Rico WBBF Convention in 2009,

whilst Errol repotted the club maple. Included in Dave's slides were pictures of his visit to Pedro Morales' garden with beautiful tropical bonsai on display. Buttonwood (conscarpus esectus) seems to be a favourite in Puerto Rico. It is widely distributed in tropical America, Carribean Islands and West Africa. It is primarily a coastal tree growing adjacent to mangroves. It was pointed out that the trees on display had much more foliage than we have on our bonsai.

[Read more.....](#)



Potting mixtures were discussed and a useful mix is 2/3 washed or sieved Umgeni sand; 1/6 chicken or kraal compost; 1/6 mushroom compost; plus a bit of bone meal. Shaun also uses a bit of "Bounce-back". Ideally the mix should be dry so that it can settle in between the roots and fill all the air-pockets.

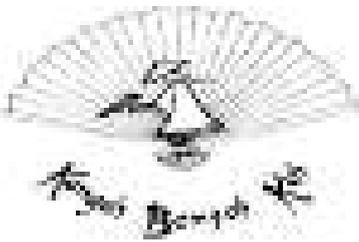
[Read more.....](#)





Tony en Alison Mortimer van die East Rand Bonsai Kai was ons gaste op 15 Mei en Tony het eers 'n klompie fotos gewys van potte en rotse wat hy alreeds gemaak het en wat hy nou al .n hele paar jaar gebruik. Van sy bome in die bakke was ook al op van die plaaslike uitstallings en ek is seker baie mense het nie eers besef dat dit nie regte rotse is nie.

[Lees meer.....](#)



After Farouk's address the beginner's corner got under way with many moans and groans about not wanting to be involved. Beginner's corner consisted of assessing the plants on the crit, table, in this case specimens of informal upright. Human nature never ceases to amaze as those who moaned most and did not participate had most to say about how to judge the trees! Anyway, that said, the assessing went off very well, in fact too well. Those who agreed to assess became very involved and silence reigned (except for those mentioned above) as the judges seriously seriously to work. It was meant to be a fun learning exercise but it turned

out to be a most serious business indeed.

[Read more.....](#)



Saagsels en hout skerwe het gespat! Mack, Tricia en Ria het die groot gereedskap uitgehaal en kerfwerk gedoen. John het ook gehelp. Mack het 'n boom se dooie hout verfyn.

[Lees meer.....](#)



A wonderful outing was held at Kwambo Indigenous Plant Nursery where lots of infor-

mation was shared and loads of pre-bonsai available.

[Read more.....](#)



EAST RAND BONSAI KAI



Style of the year - Bushveld.

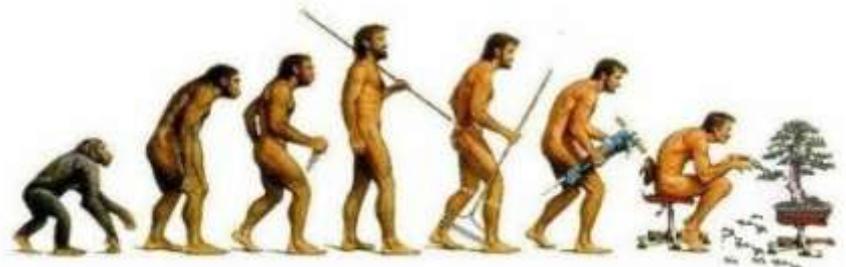
There is still lots of time to enter unworked trees & Yamadori for the Style of the Year that is running till the AGM in May 2011.

[Lees meer.....](#)

Please send all contributions in .pdf format or MS Word. Pictures are to be sent in .jpeg format and between 200kb and 500 kb.

Any other format makes it very time consuming and difficult to work with.

Once contributions have been received it will be presumed that consent has been given for publication.



I received the above sketch in my mailbox and promptly saved the picture. I have since lost the original email and cannot give credit to the original owner.