



# OYAMA BONSAI KAI

Club Newsletter - April 2011

## President's Report

The coming months are filled with excitement! Firstly there is the Easter show ( 22nd - 25th April), this is followed by the annual olive dig (21st April) and then shortly afterwards the Bonsai Bash (3rd & 4th June) as Oyama's 25th celebrations are known. Then a little later, in Durban, there is the 3rd African Bonsai Convention (22nd - 23rd Sept). And in between the latter two events you need to re-pot your trees!

The talk at this meeting was on leaning trunk style or slanting trunk style (Shakan). This is a style that shows the effect of nature on a tree; It describes the story of the tree's life in vivid and concise terms. The style is defined as the apex of the tree leaning between 11- 45 degrees from vertical. All trees strive towards balance so when a tree trunk leans, then on the opposite side the tree needs to develop strong anchoring roots and the roots on the leaning side become compressed.

Similarly when a major branch develops, the trunk tends to grow in the opposite direction to keep the tree in balance. These effects are easily seen in nature and it is interesting when you see a tree with a leaning trunk to check off these characteristics. Remember, "It is through styling that the illusion of age is created" Deborah Koreshoff.

Peter Bruyns, assisted by Cindy Rodkin, did a great job on the demonstration of a leaning trunk style and I cannot wait to see the tree maturing and taking shape.

The next meeting is on the 14th April. Please get there early (18:30) as we need to stick the date stickers on the posters. We also need to check off what needs to be done at the show. We will also be sending out a couple of email updates!  
Geoff



Leaning Trunk Olive by Carlos Brandão  
<http://dragaosai.blogspot.com>

## Len's What to do Monthly

After a brief lapse which I'm sure no one missed we are back and it's only fitting that I start with rain as this evening seems like the true beginning of winter with rain falling gently but drenching pots. Rain can not only be a blessing but it can be harmful to our trees if your mix is just not right. When it does start to rain it's important to put on your rain-suit and walk around your trees checking the growing medium for drainage, when you are watering your trees keep a careful watch on how the water drains out of the pot, if the soil is slightly waterlogged now think how it's going to be in a down pour. If the problem is serious you can take measures to prevent water standing in the pot, one solution is take the tree out of the pot and stand in the shade on your bench. The growing medium will not fall apart during the winter months and a slight crumbling will do no harm anyway. If the problem is not too serious a short term measure is to tilt the pot by placing a stone under one edge, the long term solution is to change the growing medium. Another reason for water logging is that the growing medium after a few years in a pot will start to break down and the once coarse mix now becomes finer and this in turn can cause the once porous growing medium to become denser so the conclusion is to keep up with your potting regime.

A well developed foliage pad can prevent rain from wetting the growing medium. After all that's what the foliage pad does in nature, it directs rain to the drip

area and in turn roots grow, searching for the moisture. In a pot it's different and the growing medium needs water so remember to check full foliated trees and make sure they are getting enough moisture, check your growing medium after a rainfall, it must not be waterlogged. In your pre-winter maintenance check your drainage holes which can become blocked, usually with slugs and snails that hide under your pot in the drainage holes, this causes water logging which in turn rots roots causing the demise of your tree, unless it's a Swamp Cypress or Alder.. Whilst walking around in the rain watch out for snails and slugs it's the best time to catch them. Also watch out for other nasties, such as scale (very prevalent on Figs) and the remains of mealy bug. Scale is quite hard to spot and needs more than a cursory glance. A detailed inspection shows little dark colored blisters, about 1.5 to 3mm in diameter attached to a trunk or branch. If you have an infestation you can use Oleum which will coat the scale suffocating it. If you only have one or two you can just scratch them off with a finger nail.

If you are really one of the die-hards who collect your growing medium take advantage of the few nice days left to collect, as it is going to get wet hopefully from now until spring. One thing I used to do is to drive down to Kenilworth racecourse where the council have collected all the fallen leaves from the Oak trees that litter the pavement, they even bag it for you if you go at the correct time. Keep the leaves in a bag around the side of your house and you have next year's leaf mould. I must admit that I have stopped collecting from natural sources preferring to buy my growing medium. It's an age thing! A senior moment as we say in Oyama. If you have Olives the one most important thing to do before the wet weather really starts is to drench the growing medium of your Olives with Alliette, as more and more Olives succumb to root rot it's your only protection. I actually did my trees the week before the show. You can buy Alliette from the club which you dilute with water. Now we have our own source of Alliette and it's quite cheap I would recommend doing all the trees with Alliette. For those of you not using Multicote it's time for a last feeding of Nitrosol or Seagrow on your Celtis and Elms, I have noticed they tend to die back in spring if you do not fertilize them. Other deciduous trees I do not fertilize but I do fertilize evergreens with a weak strength 2-3-4 fertilizer. I must admit to being impressed with Multicote and I have had good growth with less time and energy being used fertilizing.

Watch any wires that are still on trees as they really can bite at this time of year in fact you may be a little late if the wires are still on. No wiring of deciduous trees now but I do wire evergreens such as Pines and Juniper

I missed my annual Lime sulphur spray last year and consequently experienced some nasties this year I will not miss this year. Towards the end of May you can spray a weak solution of Lime Sulphur on your deciduous trees, wrap the pot in cling wrap when you do this as the Lime Sulphur stain is impossible to remove from the pot. The Lime Sulphur kills the majority of fungus and eggs of all bugs which may be getting ready to hatch, so get ready for this. Remember Lime Sulphur has a life span and the more it exposed to Oxygen the less viable it is. One of our members a Mr. Glass a chemist, once told us that if every time we drew Lime sulphur from the bottle we filled the remaining Lime Sulphur bottle with an inert substance such as sand so that no Oxygen was in the bottle the L/S would be okay, but I guess it's cheap enough to replace yearly?

Maintenance of your deadwood is important as you probably spent quite a time creating it so it should be looked after. The next hot day treat brush your deadwood with soft wire brush and then paint the dead areas with neat Lime Sulphur mixed with a few drops of Ink, the L/S is the preservative and the ink is for the erosion grey that is created.

When time permits another chore to do sometime through winter is to strip your benches of trees and then clear away all leaves and debris from the benches, and then disinfect your benches with Jeyes fluid. If you have wooden benches or stand of wood check for rotting as they do not last forever and I have heard of one grower who experienced bench collapse, losing some pots and setting back Bonsai with broken branches. Benches can be repaired and painted with creosote, keep your Bonsai well away from the strong smell creosote until the fumes have dissipated as some trees have an adverse reaction to the fumes. It may be time to change from wood stand to erecting concrete blocks which are more stable and longer lasting. At the moment we are in Show mode and hopefully everyone is getting their trees ready for our major attraction which is at the end of April. We have another fabulous centerpiece planned, something which we are famous for and I see people every year who come along just to see what we have concocted, some of these interested members of the public come from Johannesburg and come limping in after having run in the Two Oceans, they are always very complementary. You can always pop in on the Saturday afternoon and view some of the talented beginners who will be taking part in the Young designer competition, it's very interesting to see what these relative newcomers to Bonsai can do with nursery stock trees.

This is the best time to evaluate your trees and see if improvements can be made, when trees are bare of leaves is a prime time for this. It's also a good time to collect Indigenous trees. But that's another

story. In the cold wet winters nights that are ahead of us is a good time catch up with all the latest ideas and techniques which are published in the various publications the library holds. It's very relaxing to curl up by the fire or in bed with a glass of red wine and an interesting magazine. I hope you are not burning too many of the year's failures on that fire. It's also a super time for giving vent to things that you have experienced this year or would like to see happening in future so why not write an articles to the committee or for the web site, or send in a question which has been bothering you, why not give it a try.

Don't anyone tell me there is nothing to do in winter!!!

Yours in Bonsai, Len

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## Comms Corner

Crazy. That sums up my life at the moment!! I have just sold my house and bought a new one, so the move happens in three weeks time. I have been elected as the chairman of my daughter's school as well, and this needs to be registered with Madam de Lille, and so last month it was 6 meetings for the school!! As a result, I have had to relinquish my duties on the kai's EXCO as I just can't give it the time it needs anymore. Needless to say, you are all no doubt quite relieved!

Debbie has offered to take on the portfolio for now and I guess the next Comms Corner will be coming from her keyboard, not mine!

Regards,

Andrew

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## Bonsai Ramblings

Thanks to Cindy Rodkin!

It all started, fairly innocently I thought, with a picnic at Kirstenbosch Gardens on the Easter weekend. We were courting, and when Philip suggested a romantic picnic at Kirstenbosch on a lazy Sunday afternoon good red wine, fine cheeses, lashings of fresh French loaf it sounded great to me! We strolled in at the top entrance and our attention was caught by a large sign saying BONSAI EXHIBITION it sounded suitably entertaining so we agreed to take a quick stop there before heading out to find the perfect picnic spot.... And that was the last we even thought about our planned picnic ....

We were totally lost in a world of wonder the trees gripped our emotions and our imagination and we were hooked! We basically had no choice but to sign up for the Beginners Course and pursue this fascinating art as far and as fast as we could.

It didn't take long for Bonsai to take over our lives in a more or less permanent, and no-going-back kind of way. I vaguely remember someone warning me that Bonsai was addictive but this is ridiculous within 6 months we had somehow attained at least 200 trees! Well ok trees is a big word more like shrubs in buckets and they pretty much made themselves at home all over what used to be my garden!

Our garden has changed from what used to be a fairly pretty, but non functional area, to what is now a top, a middle, and a lower En all of them stuffed to capacity and satisfyingly green and growing. On top of that we seem to have developed an almost psychopathic hunger to acquire more and more trees and it has become so bad that we physically can't seem to drive past a nursery without stopping, racing each other to the entrance, and then digging around for hours in their off limit back areas where the stunted twisted forgotten treasures lie.

Bonsai has filled a hole in our lives we didn't know we had, and we are more than pleased to yield to our addiction ! Our back garden used to look like this:



And now it looks like this!



## Club Calendar

### 13<sup>th</sup> April

President's Report    Geoff  
Design Options        Viky

Main Theme

Fromal Upright  
Cindy and Len

Beginner's Corner

Cancelled this month as I will not be  
at the meeting.

### Easter Show

**Venue:** Kirstenbosch  
**Date:** 22 to 25 April

### Club Olive Dig

**Venue:** Klipheuwel  
**Date:** 21 April

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