



THE MIDWAY NEWS

8. WHO'S WHO

HOW DID YOU START DOING BONSAI

I was very lucky to see Bonsai in Cape Town and fell in love with the concept way back in 1980s, as we lived in Windhoek in the then SWA now Namibia, water is scarce it was something I was always interested in and gardening in general, my dad and I did quite well with the gardening and herbs, however in those days getting access to information on Bonsai was not like it is these days.

Then as a school prize I chose a book I still have with a flowering wisteria on it by Lezniewicz, (I collect and buy as many of the old books and booklets about SA Bonsai and such for my collection, almost as many as my trees).



John Hecht aka Mack

Over those years with the schooling, military service, and then hotel school where I trained as a manager, only to later become a financial administrator in a group, those old trees suffered terribly from neglect and most died, of those I had managed to save one till 2008 when a severe frost destroyed so many. My family tried to look after them but not as I should have.



Mack's Collection



THE MIDWAY NEWS

8. WHO'S WHO CONTINUED

How many trees do you have

AS TO HOW many trees I now have or SHOULD I say HAD, IT'S VERY HARD AS THINGS GO WRONG AND SO ON, BUT, AT THIS TIME I HAVE AROUND 200, FROM THE 5-7cm TO THE 1m SIZES, MAINLY BECAUSE OF TIME AND INSIGHT I HAVE REDUCED THESE FROM THE ORIGINAL OF 500, TOO MANY TREES DOESN'T LEAVE ONE WITH ENOUGH TIME TO FOCUS ON THEM ALL, ESPECIALLY WITH MY WORKING HOURS.

Favourite style in Bonsai

I am FOCUSING ON mame and SHITO, THE DETAIL IS EXTRAORDINARY, I LIKE THE BIGGER ONES AS WELL, WHERE YOU CAN REALLY MAKE SOMETHING FANTASTIC, SO ITS BIT OF MIX AND MATCH FOR ME FOR NOW.

AS REGARDS STYLES THAT I FAVOUR, ITS MOSTLY BROOM, FORMAL AND SEMI-FORMAL MOSTLY, AND NATURAL LOOKING, I TRY TO ALLOW THE TREE TO SHOW ME THE WAY, AND THE GENERAL HORTICULTURAL ASPECT OF THIS HOBBY, SOME OF MY TREES LIKE THE SILVER BIRCHES ARE AIR LAYERED, BY MY OWN HAND AS WELL AS THE FLOWERING PLUMS, I LOVE FLOWERS, BUT THESE ARE HARD TO ACHIEVE, UNLESS LOOKED AFTER CLOSELY.

Favourite species of tree

WHEN IT COMES TO SPECIES AND TYPES, I HAVE MANY, EVEN WITH AS SMALL COLLECTION NOW LIKE MINE, THE USUAL WISTERIA, ACACIAS (VACHELLIA AS WE ARE NOW SUPPOSED TO CALL OUR AFRICAN TREES), ELMS 2 TYPES, PRIVETS 3 TYPES, FIGS 7 TYPES MANY FROM CUTTINGS, MAPLES 3 VARIETIES, AND SERRISA OF WHICH I HAVE 3 TYPES, I AM NOW EXPERIMENTING WITH FLOWERING PLUMS FOR THE FLOWERS, AND POMEGRANATES, PECAN NUT, WALNUT (THESE GROW IN MY GARDEN FROM SEEDS NATURALLY, AND OF COURSE ONE OF MY FAVOURITES ARE SWAMP CYPRESSES, THOSE LINES ON A SWAMP CYPRESS JUST GET ME, AND FINALLY SOME JUNIPERS AND STINKWOODS.

I AM NOT FUSSY ABOUT WHAT I WANT OR LIKE, BUT IT'S NOW ABOUT FOCUS AND ATTENTION TO THE DETAILS FOR ME, THE CLUB HAS CHANGED MY TREES AND MY WAY OF THINKING AND UNDERSTANDING OF BONSAI SOO MUCH FROM THE WAY THEY WERE TO WHAT THEY WILL BECOME IN THE FUTURE, ALL MY FRIENDS AND FAMILY HAVE NOTICED THIS OVER TIME, WHICH IS A NICE COMMENT.



Mack's Swamp Cypress



THE MIDWAY NEWS

8. WHO'S WHO CONTINUED

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE ON BONSAI

WOW, WHEN IT COMES TO ADVICE, THAT'S A HARD ONE, MOSTLY FROM A PARTICULAR SOURCE ABOUT WATER AND WATER MANAGEMENT, AND MANAGING ELECTROLYTES IN THE SOILS (MOSTLY WHY TREES GROW OR DON'T), BECAUSE OF MY WORKING HOURS I USED TO USE DRIP TRAYS, NOW I DON'T (EXCEPT FOR THE SWAMP CYPRESSES), WHICH IS A BIG RISK AS DRYING OUT QUICKLY HERE ON THE HIGHVELD IS A SERIOUS CONCERN.

WHEN IT COMES TO SOILS, I USE A SAND AND GRAVEL LESS MIXTURE, MOSTLY COMPOST AND SOME ACID COMPOST WITH PERLITE AND VERMICULITE, SO MY POTS ARE THEN LIGHT WEIGHT WITH ENOUGH WATER RETAINING ABILITIES FOR ENSURING I DON'T HAVE TO WATER EVERY DAY, BUT AT LEAST EVERY BY SECOND TO THIRD, THE FOCUS IS ON WEIGHT AND (MACK BOSHOFF SHOWED ME A BETTER WAY, PERHAPS FOR SOME NOT THE BEST OR IDEAL, BUT IT WORKS FOR ME), GRAVEL IN THE RIGHT CONTEXT IS FINE, BUT WITH WEIGHT BEING AN ISSUE, I CHOSE LIGHTWEIGHT, ESPECIALLY IF ONE MUST MOVE AROUND AND CLEAN AROUND OVER 200 TREES ON YOUR OWN.

MY TREES ARE CURRENTLY IN A LIGHTLY SHADED AREA FOR NOW, PARTLY OPEN TO THE ELEMENTS BUT NO TOTALLY OPEN, AND SINCE I DON'T WATER SOO MUCH AS BEFORE THERE HAS BEEN A HUGE DIFFERENCE IN THE LAST TWO YEARS IN HOW THESE HAVE RESPONDED TO GROWTH.

SO AS REGARDS ADVICE, USE COMMON SENSE, NOT ALL OF IT IS WRONG AND CONTEXT HELPS, MOST ADVICE IS GIVEN WITH THE BEST INTENTIONS, AND HERE ON THE HIGHVELD/Vaal, OUR MICRO CLIMATES VARY HUGELY, SO WHAT "WORKS SOMEWHERE ELSE MIGHT NOT WORK FOR YOU, IN THIS DAY WITH WATER BECOMING AS BIG AN ISSUE AS NEVER BEFORE, WATER MANAGEMENT IS NOW MY FOCUS, IF SOMETHING EXPIRES BECAUSE OF INSUFFICIENT WATER, THEN TOO BAD..!

SO IN A SENSE I AM SUGGESTING THAT YOU LISTEN AND HEAR WHAT ALL THE PEOPLE HAVE TO SAY WHAT ABOUT WORKS FOR THEM, AND THEN FOLLOW YOUR OWN BALANCE OF THE NUGGETS OF BEST ADVICE AS TO WHAT MAKES SENSE FOR YOU, MAKE MISTAKES AS YOU MUST, BUT ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT THESE ARE YOUR TREES.

WHAT ARE YOUR OTHER INTERESTS OR HOBBIES

SOME OF MY OTHER GARDENING INTERESTS WHICH HELPS WITH BONSAI, AS THESE HAVE THE SAME NEEDS ARE ROSES, I HAVE ABOUT 150 OF WHICH 10 ARE NOT FROM CUTTINGS.

I AM OFTEN ASKED THE QUESTION WHY I DO AND LIKE BONSAI, FOR ME IT IS SIMPLE, I LIKE AND ENJOY THE DETAIL, THE OUTDOORS AND THE VARIETY OF IT, SAME WITH MY ROSES, LUCKILY THESE TWO DON'T CLASH IN MY LIFE, AND IT'S ENOUGH OF A HOBBY THAT KEEPS ONE BUSY EVERY DAY WITHOUT BEING A CHORE, AND LEARNING NEW THINGS AND IDEAS EVERY DAY.

OUR CLUB ALLOWS ALL VARIETIES PEOPLE WHO LIKE THIS HOBBY TO HAVE OPINIONS AND IDEAS, AND OPEN DEBATES, AND NOT SO RESTRICTIVE AS WITH PERHAPS OTHERS, WE ARE ALL DIFFERENT IN LIFE, BUT SHARE ONE HOBBY, AND THIS HOBBY IS COMPLICATED AND INTENSE ENOUGH WITHOUT ALL THE OTHER THINGS THAT GO ON.