

## Garden Group Visit To Barry Lemon's Bonsai Garden

Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2009



Thirteen members took the opportunity to learn something about Bonsai growing by visiting Barry Lemon's garden at his home in Denia.

Barry is a gold medal winner at the Chelsea Flower Show for his Bonsai exhibits. Indeed he has won just about everything there is to win for bonsai growing. His garden is an array of dozens of Bonsai plants ageing from a few weeks to well over 100 years!



The weather was gloriously sunny but with a rather cold north wind! However, Barry held our interest by introducing us to his many bonsai trees with information on how to grow and look after them.



Interestingly a bonsai can be made to develop from virtually any tree. All that is required is patience and a long life! Many of Barry's trees are, in fact, over one hundred years old. Obviously Barry did not start these off! They were purchased – costing, in some cases, thousands of pounds.

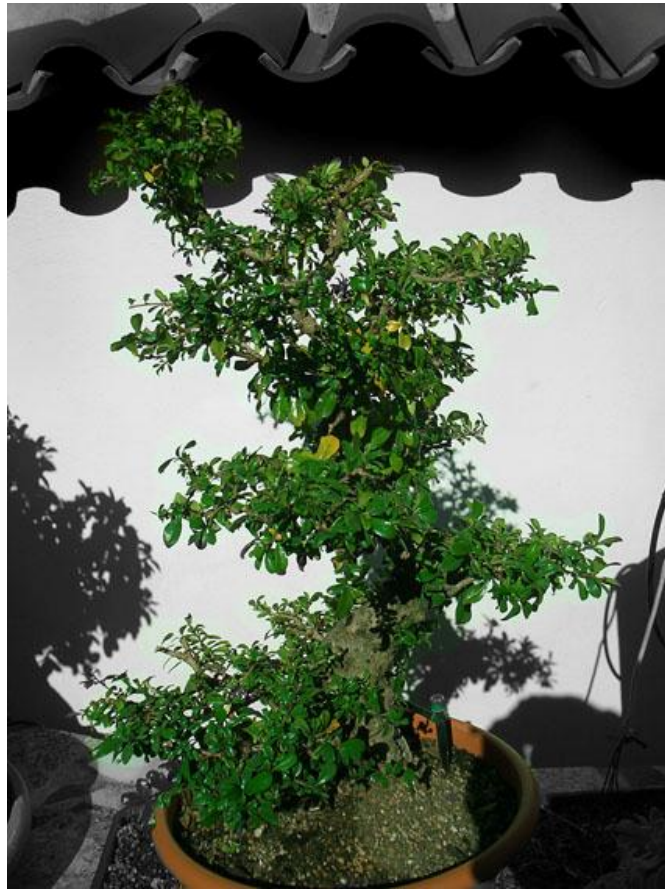
Depending on the type and shape of bonsai tree one is aiming for there are a number of ways of starting them off, including over a rock or decorative stone, or by cutting the roots every 18 months to two years.

As long as some of the tap root is retained, they do not appear to be too difficult to develop. The important thing is that they receive enough water (usually twice a day) and nourishment, since they have, by virtue of how they're grown, a relatively small root system.

If one is to grow over a rock or stone, for example, they would need to be grown initially in a long tube (eg rain water pipe) to develop long roots. Otherwise, simply planting them into small pots with good soil is all that is required. The roots need to be trimmed to fit but provided the tap root is essentially retained then there appears to be no reason why they should not survive.

Because of the small volume of roots and soil, watering and feeding must be performed twice daily. Most of Barry's Bonsais are situated outside. In the summer, therefore, the area they are in is covered with sail sheeting to give them some shade. But still they require regular watering.

Here are some examples of Barry's excellent collection:



Included are some creations surrounded by more conventional plants/flowers!



The shape that one gets with Bonsai trees is simply developed through careful pruning and shaping with aluminium wire. Keeping the plant small will generally promote smaller leaf development so that the plant will retain an element of proportion and so take on the appearance of a true miniature. However, any flowering or fruiting bonsais will have normal sized flowers and fruit.



We were all kept thoroughly interested -



and continued into Barry's garage for a demo of how to start off growing Bonsais. This was accompanied with mulled wine and a piece or two of stollen!

Barry's first demo was with a fig, which he started of by pruning away unwanted stems. Then the plant was removed from its pot and the root ball untangled and trimmed down in size to fit into the shallow pot that would become its 'home'.





The plant was then simply potted with a mixture of ordinary soil, good quality compost and grit to provide for drainage. The soil should last for a few years before needing change.





To demonstrate how, even a large palm can be managed as a bonsai, Barry re-potted this -



Having spent a very interesting morning seeing something of Bonsais we travelled a short distance to Denia's La Marina for a meal at Latitude.



This was thoroughly enjoyable. We look forward to meeting up again in the New Year for a trip to Elche with its numerous palm and botanical gardens.

Chris & John Parsons  
December 2009