



5. MAY MEETING - CREATING CLUMP STYLE BONSAI BY DORIAN FOURIE

IF DONE CORRECTLY, CLUMP STYLE BONSAI CAN BE REALLY MAGNIFICENT BONSAI TO HAVE IN YOUR COLLECTION.

TO CREATE CLUMP STYLE BONSAI, ONE NEEDS THE FOLLOWING EQUIPMENT AND ITEMS.

1. SEEDLINGS
 - 1.1. TRIDENT MAPLES, CELTIS AND SMALL LEAF FICUS ARE GOOD SPECIES TO WORK WITH
 - 1.2. ODD NUMBER OF SEEDLINGS 5 - 9 WORKS BEST
 - 1.3. PREFERABLY LESS THAN 1 CM THICKNESS ALTHOUGH YOU CAN DO LARGER
2. CERAMIC TILES
 - 2.1. ONE CAN USE A CD, WOODEN BOARD OR THICK PLASTIC TOO SHOULD YOU WANT
 - 2.2. GO TO YOUR LOCAL TILE SUPPLIER. THEY ARE SURE TO HAVE MANY TILE SAMPLES FOR YOU TO USE.
3. POWER DRILL WITH RELEVANT DRILL BIT
4. ANGLE GRINDER OR TILE CUTTER
5. POT
6. PLANTING MEDIUM
7. SAFETY GOGGLES FOR WORKING WITH POWER TOOLS



HOW TO PROCEED

CREATING A CLUMP STYLE TAKES A SMALL AMOUNT OF PLANNING AND A MEDIUM AMOUNT OF EXECUTION MAKING IT A FUN AND EASY PROJECT TO TAKE ON AND TRY OUT.

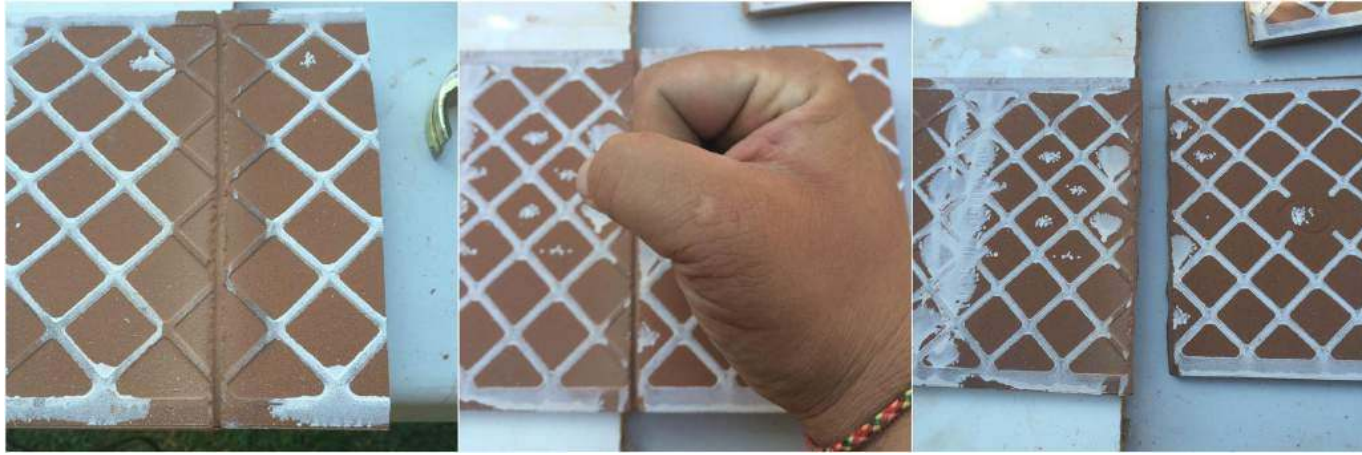


Trident Maple Clump Style - Peter Tea

1. DECIDE IF YOUR CLUMP STYLE WILL HAVE ALL THE SEEDLINGS EMANATING FROM A CENTRAL POINT (PETER TEA CLUMP TO THE LEFT) OR MORE SPREAD OUT. (WALTER PALL CLUMP TO THE LEFT) THE PROCESS IS EXACTLY THE SAME APART FROM ONE MINOR DIFFERENCE. THEN DECIDE HOW MANY SEEDLINGS YOU PLAN TO USE ON YOUR CLUMP. REMEMBER TO USE AN ODD NUMBER OF SEEDLINGS AS IT IS MORE APPEALING VISUALLY
2. PREP YOUR TILE. DECIDE THE SIZE THAT YOU WANT THE TILE AND CUT IT TO SIZE. THAT CAN EASILY BE DONE WITH THE TILE CUTTER OR THE ANGLE GRINDER. WHEN USING AN ANGLE GRINDER, CUT A GROOVE INTO THE TILE, PLACE THE TILE OVER THE EDGE OF A BOARD AND GIVE IT A SHARP BUMP WITH YOUR FIST. THAT WILL CAUSE THE TILE TO BREAK ALONG THE GROOVE. REMEMBER TO USE YOUR SAFETY GOGGLES WHEN WORKING WITH POWER TOOLS
3. NOW ONE NEEDS TO PLAN THE POSITIONING OF THE SEEDLINGS. IF YOU DECIDED TO HAVE YOUR SEEDLINGS EMANATING FROM ONE POINT, YOU WILL NEED TO DRILL ONE SINGLE HOLE IN THE CENTRE OF THE TILE THAT WILL ACCOMMODATE ALL THE SEEDLINGS NICE AND SNUG. SHOULD YOU WANT IT SPREAD OUT THEN YOU WILL HAVE TO DRILL A HOLE FOR EACH OF THE SEEDLINGS. YOU CAN PLAN THAT POSITIONING BY MAKING A MARK 4 ON THE TILE WHERE EACH MUST GO.



Japanese Maple Nr21 - Walter Pall



Step 2 - Prepping the tile

4. DRILLING THE HOLES. One needs to remember that the size of the hole has to be big enough to fit the seedling into without damaging the bark or any buds that may occur on the seedling. In saying that it must also not be too big so that the seedlings fall around. Should you damage the buds or the bark when feeding the seedling through the tile, one stands a good chance of killing the seedling dooming the project from the start.

I use a diamond tip tile bit as they come in different sizes and you can choose the size that will work best. Drill your holes into the tile making sure that the drill bit does not overheat. A good tip is to let the tile soak in water for a hour before using it. Always drill a few extra holes into the tile should any of the trees die or if you want to add some more seedlings in the future.



5. FEEDING THE SEEDLINGS THROUGH THE TILE: You need to take special care when doing this to ensure that the buds are not broken off when you push them through the holes. Whilst your holes need to not be too big, the same is that they cannot be too small to cause damage to the buds or trunk. A 2nd pair of hands to assist is always handy to ensure the tile is held secure. A good idea is to keep some water handy to leave your seedlings in so that the roots do not dry out during this process. You do not want the roots to dry out and ultimately kill your seedlings.

6. PLANTING: After all the seedlings have been threaded safely through the tile, one must have your planting medium and container ready. I use a mix of LECA and Perlite and planted it into a colander as I want rapid growth over the next few years. Take special care to ensure that the growing medium fills up the area below the tile and between the roots.

7. COVERING THE TILE: It is vitally important to ensure that the top of the tile is covered sufficiently with your growing medium so that all future root growth above the tile does not dry out and die. As the seedlings start to thicken and press against the tile, roots will form above the tile and grow. This will form your future nebari. If the medium above the tile is allowed to dry out, the roots will die causing your clump style to fail. After you have covered the tile, give the clump a good soaking to ensure that the water gets to all areas below the tile.



8. THE IDEA IS TO NOW LEAVE YOUR CLUMP STYLE TO GROW FREELY OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS. YOU WANT THE SEEDLINGS TO THICKEN UP CONSIDERABLY SO THAT THE TILE STARTS TO CUT INTO THE SEEDLINGS. ONCE THAT STARTS TO HAPPEN, IT WILL FORCE THE SEEDLINGS TO THROW ROOTS ABOVE THE TILE. DEPENDING ON YOUR GROWING CONDITIONS, AFTER ONE / TWO FULL SEASONS ONE CAN CAREFULLY CLEAR YOUR GROWING MEDIUM ABOVE THE TILE TO CHECK ON YOUR ROOT GROWTH MAKING SURE NOT TO DAMAGE ANY ROOTS THAT MAY HAVE FORMED. IF YOU HAVE A HEALTHY ROOT GROWTH, PROCEED TO THE NEXT STEP. IF NOT, COVER IT AGAIN AND LEAVE FOR ANOTHER SEASON



Step 8 - Checking the roots



Step 9 - Fanning out the roots

9. IF YOU ARE HAPPY WITH THE ROOT GROWTH HAPPENING ABOVE THE TILE, CLEAR AWAY THE REST OF THE MEDIUM SO THAT YOU CAN SEE ALL THE ROOTS. NOW IS THE TIME TO CUT AWAY ANY ROOTS THAT MAY HAVE FORMED HIGHER UP ON THE TRUNKS LEAVING ONLY THOSE GROWING RIGHT ON THE TILES. ONCE THOSE HAVE BEEN REMOVED, FAN OUT THE ROOTS NICELY OVER THE TILE. REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE BUSY CREATING YOUR FUTURE NEBARI SO SPEND A FEW EXTRA MINUTES MAKING SURE YOU ARE HAPPY WITH THIS. KEEP A SPRAY BOTTLE OF WATER HANDY TO KEEP THE ROOTS WET AS YOU DO NOT WANT THESE ROOTS TO DRY OUT AND DIE. ONCE YOU ARE HAPPY, COVER THE ROOTS WITH YOUR GROWING MEDIUM. AGAIN, MAKE SURE IT IS COVERED SUFFICIENTLY SO THAT THE ROOTS WILL NOT DIE. LEAVE THE CLUMP FOR ANOTHER GROWING SEASON

10. AFTER ANOTHER GROWING SEASON, ONE CAN REPEAT STEP 8 AND 9. NOW IS ALSO THE CORRECT TIME TO START CUTTING BACK ON THE SEEDLINGS SHOULD THAT BE PART OF YOUR DESIGN. I FIND THAT AFTER 2 / 3 GROWING SEASONS (DEPENDING ON YOUR GROWING CONDITIONS) THE TRUNKS HAVE FUSED TOGETHER AT THE BOTTOM AND YOUR NEBARI IS FORMING NICELY. BY CUTTING BACK YOUR TRIDENT MAPLE SEEDLINGS DOWN TO THE FIRST BUD, YOU START TO CREATE TAPER AND MOVEMENT ON THE FUTURE GROWTH. CUT BACK TO JUST ABOVE YOUR LOWEST HEALTHY BUD. COVER THE CUT WITH CUT PASTE AND ONCE AGAIN LET THE TREE GROW FREELY. AFTER A FEW SEASONS OF REPEATING STEPS 8 - 10, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO CUT OFF ALL THE ROOTS GROWING BELOW THE TILE AND THE TILE ITSELF AS YOU WILL HAVE A BEAUTIFUL NEBARI.





11. SOME VITAL POINTS TO REMEMBER AS YOU PROCEED. AFTER YOU HAVE DONE YOUR FIRST CUT BACK TO THE LOWEST BUD, ENSURE TO ALLOW ONLY ONE BUD TO GROW FROM ABOVE THE CUT AREA. IF MORE BUDS ARE ALLOWED TO GROW, IT SPLITS THE ENERGY NEEDED TO THICKEN UP THE LOWER TRUNK. IT COULD ALSO CREATE BULGES AT THE CUT AREA WHICH WILL BE UNSIGHTLY IN THE FUTURE.

BY LOOKING AT THE IMAGE ON THE LEFT BELOW CIRCLED IN RED, YOU CAN SEE HOW NICELY THE TRUNK HAS GROWN AFTER THE FIRST CUTTING. THE CUT IS HEALING OVER NICELY AND THERE ARE NO UNSIGHTLY BULGES. AT THE NEXT CUTTING, IT CAN BE CUT BACK TO THE LOWEST STRONG BUD AND BE LEFT TO GROW OUT ONCE AGAIN.



IF YOU LOOK AT THE IMAGE ABOVE ON THE RIGHT, YOU WILL SEE THAT THERE ARE 4 GROWTH AREAS COMING OFF ONE TRUNK. THAT HAS SPLIT ALL THE ENERGY INTO 4 AND THE TRUNK BELOW IS NOT THICKENING UP. ALSO IF YOU LOOK AT THE CIRCLED AREA IN YELLOW, YOU CAN SEE HOW THE AREA HAS STARTED TO SWELL. WHEN YOU CUT IT BACK YOU WILL HAVE TO DO A SEVERE CUT AND CLEAN UP THE BULGES FOR IT TO LOOK NATURAL IN THE LONG TERM.

IF YOU CONTINUE THIS PROCESS, AFTER A FEW YEARS YOU WILL BE HAPPY WITH THE TAPER AND THICKNESS THAT YOU HAVE CREATED ON THE TRUNKS, ONCE YOU HAVE ACHIEVED THAT, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO START WORKING ON YOUR BRANCH STRUCTURE AND RAMIFICATION.

GOOD LUCK.

Clump styles by Suthin Sukosolvisit

