



Midway Bonsai Society
October 2025

THE MIDWAY NEWS



Midway Bonsai Society
October 2025
www.midwaybonsai.co.za

Inside this issue:

- Chairman's report.
- Club News.
- October's meeting: Root-over-Rock **Workshop**
- Editors Letter

In Memory of Gina Rothfels

On the **front page** this month, we pay tribute to Gina Rothfels, a valued and long-standing member of our bonsai club. Gina's dedication to the art of bonsai and her quiet presence enriched our community in many ways.

She was also a member of the Eastern Bonsai Society and was well known throughout the bonsai fraternity across South Africa. Her friendships extended far beyond our club, and she was respected and admired by many.

In addition to her bonsai work, Gina was a talented photographer. Her images often appeared in our newsletter, capturing the subtle beauty of bonsai with care and insight. Her contributions helped document and celebrate the work of our members and the spirit of our gatherings.

Gina's absence will be deeply felt. Her kindness, creativity, and commitment to the bonsai community leave a lasting legacy. We extend our sincere condolences to her family and friends.

She will be missed.

Chairmans Report



Hi all,

I hope this letter finds you all well.

Thanks to all who attended our meeting on the 18th October 2025 especially as it was cold and rainy, and the topic of the day was a demo talk of Root Over Rock, by Pieter Bosch, he had a detailed demo organized, and we also worked on Desiree's tree and mine. Arnold completely repotted a monster rock, interesting to see the development over the 3 years since the original plantings, considering the scope of available material, this type of bonsai style will develop your creative abilities, from small to large display.

It is with sadness that while putting this letter together for this month, that I regret to inform all that Gina Rothfels has passed away, and hopefully she now has peace. Gina was a member of both Midway and EBS and will be missed.

At this time of year, the weather continues to be uncertain, either hot, dry or blustery, with big splashes of rain, so keeping an eye on watering your trees is essential, fingers crossed it will rain more soon, and then it will be time to begin the fertilizing regime, if you haven't already been doing so.

For our 15th November meeting the topic will be, Air Layering, so please bring suitable trees that you want to air layer, sphagnum moss, rooting hormone, string, plastic bags or wrap, cable ties, elastic, tin foil, etc, to hold it, should be a great afternoon.

This is something that requires time to settle before winter next year, so if we start now, we will have plenty of time. Air Layering is a great way to collect good material from mature stock quicker than from seed.

Do not be afraid to bring any other projects that you are working on and require advice, so that the attendees can also learn what to do with their challenges. Usually this is good fun for all.

At the meeting a proposal has been put forward to change our club logo, have a look at the Whatsapp pics, and please, make your choice for either of the two (or any other proposals) or to keep the current one, we need to get this decided soonest as a club.

Thanks all and keep those scissors sharp 😊

Mack

(John Hecht)

Club news

You're Invited to our next meeting!

Join us on **15th of November** 2025, as we gather for a “Air Layers”.

Here's the agenda:

- 12:00-14:00: Work on your own trees
- 14:00: **Workshop** “Air Layers”

Please bring your favourite trees to display on the show table.

Everyone is welcome!

If you have a specific topic, you would like us to cover, please let me know and I'll pass it on.

Looking ahead to our upcoming **workshops**, please note that these are interactive, hands-on events that may require some preparation in advance.

We'll share more details through our Newsletter and WhatsApp group, so stay tuned!



Membership fees

R350.00 for Single

R510.00 for Family

You can pay into the Club
Account, state your name
as reference to:

FNB

Heinrich Crystal

Account No: 63021469689

Branch: 250063

Program for 2025

15 November 2025:

For our 15th November meeting, we're excited to host a hands-on workshop on Air Layers. This bonsai technique allows you to propagate new trees from existing ones.

What to Bring:

- Trees suitable for Air layering
- Sturdy plastic bag, gladwrap or plastic pot/bottle (going to need to cut it)
- Box cutter or sharp knife
- Cable ties or bonsai wire
- Pliers
- Sphagnum moss or peat (for wrapping the cut)
- Rooting hormone (optional)

Whether you're a beginner or experienced, this is a great opportunity to experiment, learn, and share ideas. Don't miss it.

October's meeting: Root-over-Rock Workshop

Understanding the Root-over-Rock Style

Root-over-rock is a dramatic bonsai style that mimics trees growing in harsh, rocky environments. The roots wrap around and cling to the rock, eventually anchoring into the soil below. This technique showcases both the resilience of the tree and the beauty of natural erosion.

Below: Snipping the tags of the cable ties that is holding the roots in place.



Selecting the Right Tree Species

Not all trees are suitable for root-over-rock. Ideal candidates include species with vigorous root growth and flexibility, such as Ficus, Trident Maple, Chinese Elm, and certain Junipers. These trees adapt well to being trained over rocks and can develop strong, exposed root systems.

Below: Longer roots on trees can easily be grown in cooldrink bottles or pipes.





Choosing and Preparing the Rock

The rock is central to the composition. Look for a stone with interesting texture, natural crevices, and a shape that complements the tree. Porous rocks like lava stone or sandstone are preferred because they allow roots to grip and grow into the surface. Wash and sterilize the rock before use to remove any contaminants.

Below: The roots are held in place with pieces of polystyrene and cable ties. Many other methods can be used, find one that works for you.



Growing Long Roots for the Technique

To prepare trees for root-over-rock, grow them in deep containers such as long PVC pipes or recycled cooldrink bottles. This encourages downward root growth, producing long, straight roots that can be wrapped around the rock later. This method is especially useful for seedlings or young cuttings.

Below: Ensure that the cable ties are firmly fastened, holding the roots securely against the rock without cutting into the bark.



Positioning the Roots on the Rock

Once the roots are long enough, carefully spread them over the rock's surface, guiding them into grooves and around protrusions. The goal is to create a natural-looking flow that mimics how roots would grow in the wild.

Below: Desiree's tree exposed



Securing the Roots in Place

Use cable ties, bonsai wire, or soft string to gently hold the roots against the rock. For added stability, polystyrene blocks can be used to hold the roots in place. Be careful not to damage the roots during this process.

Below: Arnold just got planted.



Wrapping the Assembly for Root Development

To encourage root bonding with the rock, wrap the entire root-rock assembly in moist sphagnum moss (optional), then cover it tightly with cling wrap or pantyhose. This keeps the environment humid and promotes root growth. The wrapping should stay in place until the roots are securely attached to the rock.

Below: Arnold just got planted.



Potting and Soil Setup

After wrapping, place the rock and tree into a deep training pot with well-draining bonsai soil. The roots should be partially buried to encourage downward growth while the upper section remains wrapped. Over time, the roots will thicken and grip the rock naturally.

Below: Let's make sure those roots are not going anywhere.



Aftercare and Monitoring

Keep the tree in a shaded area initially and maintain consistent moisture. Avoid fertilizing heavily until the roots have established. Monitor for signs of rot or drying. Unwrap the assembly only once the roots have visibly fused with the rock.

Below: How many does it take to get the job done?



Displaying Mature Root-over-Rock Bonsai

Once the roots are strong and the wrapping is removed, the tree can be repotted into a shallow display pot. The exposed roots and rock become the focal point, creating a striking visual that tells a story of survival and adaptation.

Below: Let's observe how this project develops over the next few years. Fingers crossed for a successful outcome.





SOUTH AFRICAN
Bonsai
Association



SABA MINI-CONVENTION 2025

BONSAI

Road trip

across South Africa



WOODLANDS
International College

29-30 NOV 2025

Woodlands
International College
Boksburg





Editors Letter

Dear Readers,

I hope you enjoyed this month's issue of the Midway News.

If you have any questions, comments, or would like to share your own tree photos, please feel free to contact me directly.

I would be happy to include your trees in a future edition of the newsletter.

Best regards,

Pieter Bosch