

THE MIDWAY NEWS



Midway Bonsai Society
January 2026
www.midwaybonsai.co.za



Inside this issue:

- Chairman's report.
- Club News.
- January's meeting: "V cut" or V-notching Workshop
- Editors Letter

Chairmans Report



Hi all,

I hope this letter finds you well.

Thanks to all who attended our meeting on the 17th Jan26, and the topic of the day was a demo talk about Trunk/Vee Shaping, by Pieter, and those who attended I think learnt something very interesting, and we will have to do this again, and follow up with the one done by Pieter, and something more complicated.

At our next meeting on 20th Feb26, we will have workshop on tree design by Hardus, in preparation for the New Talent Competition in May26, and this is a good opportunity to come to grips with the rules of competition and guidance on tree shaping. The New Talent competition is aimed at any new member of a club with less than 10 years experience and is a great way to come to grips with what is required. The Club winner will go to the Brat Day, and if they win, will go on to the SABA Competition.

At the 15th Nov25 meeting the new club logo was accepted by the attendees and will be implemented from Jan2026. Jonathan and Hardus will drive the process with support from all the members, as well as the new T-shirts, banners etc, should be something great to see.

Midway is hosting The Brat Day on 30th May26, we will need to prepare for the event with a venue, and raffle items, so if you have goodies, bring these to our meetings and any sponsorship assistance will be helpful.

As the weather continues to be uncertain, either hot and dry or blustery, mixed with big torrents of rain, and now recently the hail, so keeping an eye on watering your trees is essential, continue your light fertilizing regime, and some light pruning always helps.

We need to keep up our interests with different species so please bring a NOSE Tree, (Not Often Seen) that you can present to the members (just 5 minutes), something that you believe makes doing Bonsai fun for you and advise the committee if you are interested in this.

If you have any tree/trees you would like to show off, bring these as well, and pics will show in the newsletter.

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.

Thanks all and keep those scissors sharp 😊

Mack

(John Hecht)

Club news

You're Invited to our next meeting!

Join us on 21th of February 2026, as we gather for a Bonsai shaping workshop.

Here's the agenda:

- 12:00-14:00: Work on your own trees
- 14:00: Workshop: Shaping bonsai.

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 2026

21 February 2026:

For our 21 February meeting, we're excited to host a hands-on workshop on bonsai Shaping. We will be practising on what to do during the initial shaping of a bonsai tree.

What to Bring:

- Bonsai Scissors
- Box cutter, sharp knife or saw
- Bonsai wire
- Bonsai Pliers
- Cut paste or wound sealant (optional)

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

Introduction to V-Cut or V-Notching in Bonsai

V-cutting, also called V-notching or trunk notching, is a structural bending technique used when branches are too thick, stiff, or old to bend with wire alone. It involves cutting a controlled wedge into the wood to reduce resistance, allowing dramatic repositioning without fully severing the branch. This method is particularly useful for species with stiff or brittle branches, and has been demonstrated extensively on ficus, juniper, and other bonsai materials. The principle is to weaken internal tension so the branch can compress smoothly into a new angle without cracking.

Below: The Spekboom (Portulacaria afra “Limpopo”) that I used. Grown as a large cutting.



Why Use V-Cuts for Thick, Unyielding Branches

V-cutting is often preferred over heavy wiring when dealing with trunks or branches that have grown too rigid to manipulate safely. Standard wiring applies tension externally, but notching lowers internal structural resistance. This enables more drastic bends that would otherwise risk breaking. Experienced practitioners note that V-cuts help reshape long, straight, or awkward sections that ruin design flow. While some artists advocate multiple small cuts instead of a single deep V, the technique remains one of the most dependable ways to create immediate movement in heavy wood when done with care.

Below: V-cut made on the straight middle section.



Choosing the Right Tree for V-Cut Applications

My choice of a large-leaf Portulacaria afra "Limpopo" was strategic—its mid-trunk straight section made it ideal for dramatic correction. Portulacaria is forgiving, resilient, and capable of healing large wounds over time. Though primarily treated as a succulent, it forms woody tissue that responds well to structural interventions when healthy. Bonsai growers often cut or chop Portulacaria aggressively with minimal long-term harm, as it readily produces new roots, callus tissue, and shoots after damage. This regenerative nature makes it well-suited for experimental bending or corrective trunk work.

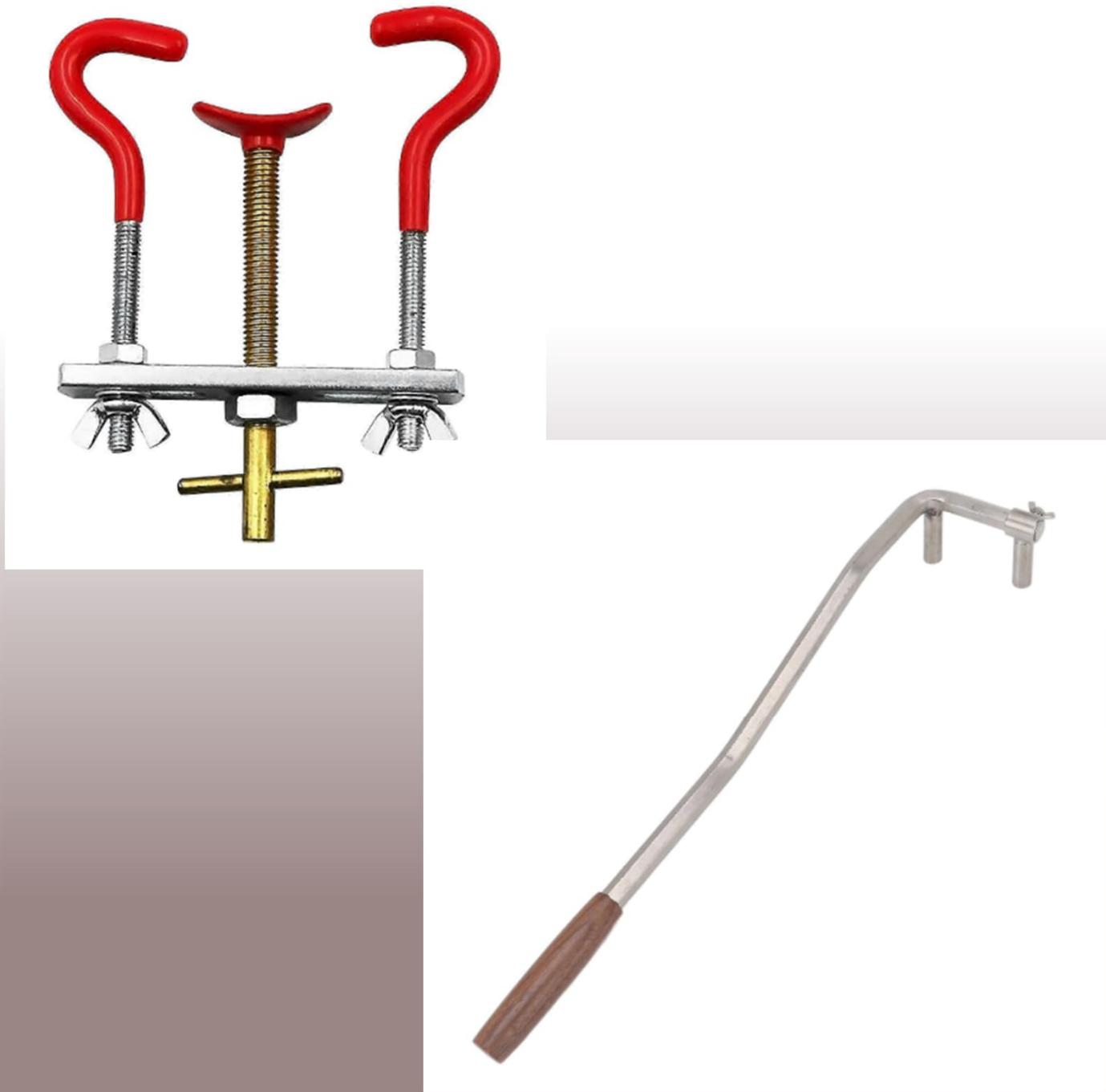
Below: The turn-buckle has been placed. Now for the slow process of bending it. I will take my time with this.



Understanding the Tools: Pull Saws, Guy Wires & Benders

For proper V-notching, tool selection is critical. A pull saw is commonly recommended because its single-direction cutting action minimizes vibration and stress while creating a clean incision. After cutting, a guy wire or mechanical tensioner is used to compress the cut until both sides meet tightly, preventing gaps that impede healing. Some practitioners use pliers to twist and tighten the wire gradually until the V-cut fully closes. Branch benders and turnbuckles can also be introduced for more controlled adjustment and long-term stabilization during healing.

Below: These branch benders and the mechanical tensioner would be a major advantage for getting the V-cut sides flush and keeping them perfectly aligned.



Making the V-Cut: Placement and Safety

A proper V-cut is typically placed on the inside of the intended bend. Cutting on the underside allows the branch to compress safely, reducing the chance of future tearing or accidental breakage. Most experts advise cutting roughly $\frac{3}{4}$ through the branch, deep enough to allow movement, but not so deep that structural integrity fails. Clean, straight cuts reduce healing time and make it easier to close the wound tightly afterward. Avoid cutting from the top, which weakens the branch against downward forces and increases long-term risk.



Executing the Bend: Compression, Closure & Adjustment

Once the V-cut is open, the branch must be bent gradually while tightening the guy wire or tensioning system. The objective is to close the cut so tightly that no visible gap remains. Any gap slows healing and may lead to dieback. If more bend is required, the saw can be reinserted into the original cut to reopen it slightly, then the process repeated. Keeping pressure stable while adjusting prevents tearing. **Overbending should be avoided**, aim for gradual bending over multiple controlled sessions instead of forcing movement in one attempt



Healing and Aftercare of V-Cut Operations

Healing after a V-cut can take significantly longer than expected, especially on species with water-laden or soft tissue structures like Portulacaria. Large wounds require time to callus, bridge, and eventually produce internal bonding fibers. Some practitioners report using waterproof adhesive tape rather than cut paste to seal the wound and retain moisture while excluding pathogens. Tape also helps compress the wound during initial healing phases. Best results occur when the tree is worked during seasons of strong growth, spring or early autumn, allowing enough time for recovery and callus formation before dormancy. I will leave it uncovered, as I did the previous and only success I had doing this.

Below: We also worked on this group that Belongs to Hardus. One of the trees has a very straight trunk, and he wanted to introduce some movement in that area.



My Experience: Slow Healing & Root-Like Fiber Bridging

My experience: where the V-cut did not fully close, leading to fibrous, root-like bridging, is consistent with incomplete compression during closure. When any space remains between the cut surfaces, the tree fills gaps with erratic callus strands rather than flat, unified healing tissue. This can still work structurally, but it extends the healing timeline significantly. Portulacaria produces vigorous growth when healthy, but its succulent nature means it must be kept slightly drier before major operations to prevent excessive sap flow, which can complicate wound bonding.



Improving Technique: Multiple Cuts, Benders and Drying Cycles

Some bonsai artists prefer multiple shallow cuts instead of a single deep V to reduce stress and produce more controlled bending. For especially rigid branches, combining notching with mechanical branch benders or trunk adjusters improves precision and reduces risk. With Portulacaria, allowing the tree to dry slightly before major bending increases pliability and prevents branch breakage. The species' moisture-laden tissue becomes more cooperative when partially dehydrated, making wiring or notching safer and more predictable. These strategies help avoid unintended snapping and accelerate stable healing.



Final Thoughts: When V-Cutting Creates New Opportunities

Even if a V-cut fails and the branch snaps, the result is two viable trees from the split. This is a welcome outcome with species like Portulacaria, which propagate easily from cuttings. While your first attempt was successful, your long healing time and partial gap closure provide valuable insights for future improvements. By refining compression, using stronger bending hardware, working in the optimal season, and preparing the plant properly, you can achieve cleaner bends with faster healing. V-notching remains one of the most transformative techniques for correcting straight, uninteresting bonsai material



Below: Healing on my other Spekboom.



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