

Wild Olive Symposium 1990

you lifted that tree from the ground and planted it into a bonsai pot, it became totally dependent on you, and as that tree started growing, it grew on you – you formed a relationship. You are the tree, the tree is you. If you want to grow that tree well, you need to understand the tree well and yourself well. If you want to improve that tree, you will have to improve yourself. If you cut an unnecessary branch from that tree, you need to remove something unnecessary from yourself. Your bonsai is a reflection of you. Before you started growing bonsai, you were not very aware of trees, but now you are. You realise that trees, bonsai and you are all part of nature.

The world is getting smaller, barriers are breaking down between East and West. Both ways of thinking will produce a new way of thought which will affect bonsai and everything else. Only by understanding both and combining the best in each, can we achieve it. Then there will be no limitations to bonsai or to yourself.

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STYLING AND CARING FOR YOUNGER WILD OLIVES

MATIE AND JOEY SCHEEPERS

INTRODUCTION

Of the approximately sixteen species of *Olea*, the following are the most suitable for bonsai:

Olea europaea subsp. *africana*

Olea europaea subsp. *exasperata*

Olea europaea subsp. *capensis*

Our experience is restricted to subsp. *africana* (wild olive), a beautiful evergreen tree growing up to 10 m tall. It is very adaptable and grows in virtually any habitat and is excellent as bonsai material.

By younger wild olives we mean trees of up to about thirty years of age. The older olive is normally single trunked with a rounded crown – this is generally becoming acknowledged as one of our country's own unique bonsai styles.

PRUNING TECHNIQUE

Regular pruning is essential for leaf reduction and twig ramification. Allow twigs to develop up to approximately three pairs of leaves and prune back to the first pair of leaves. Do not cut too close to the leaf axil, this causes branches to die back.

One of the problems with wild olives is that the parts of branches closest to the trunk become bare and leafless. A method of overcoming this is to allow a shoot to develop strongly. The tip of the growth is then cut off and all leaves removed except for the last four leaves at the tip of the branch. The reason for this is that young wild olives do not like being defoliated totally. The buds which occur at each leaf axil are thus activated and the shoot can be trimmed to the required length as soon as the new buds start opening.