

lastly something icy for the great thirst.

When we take the trouble to hunt for a tree in the veld, we try to make it worth the effort and so we look for low main branches and only if we are satisfied that the trunk is thick enough and can be shortened satisfactorily, will we start pruning very carefully with a sharp saw. Now you learn to make quick decisions. If there is any doubt as to whether a branch should come off, leave enough so that it can be utilized – it can always be taken off completely later.

Once the major pruning has been done and the remaining stump with its main branches looks very promising, we don't want to take any chances with its survival. The roots are cut fairly long, to a length of about thirty centimetres from the trunk (depending on its thickness) and to a depth of about twenty centimetres. The whole stump is now wrapped in wet cloth and then in plastic and put in a shady spot until we are ready to leave for home.

At home the wounds or sawn surfaces are hollowed out using a chisel or router or short drill bit. All hollowing and detail carving is done before the tree is planted. Only working areas are exposed in order to prevent the tree from drying. Once it is planted, further carving should not be done as the tree will be shaken loose and the probability of survival is greatly reduced.

Thick roots that were badly bruised during the removal operation are now neatly shortened with the saw so that the cut faces downwards, ready for the future ponsai pot. Dip the roots into water again and apply rooting hormone powder.

The tree is now planted in a soil mix containing a lot of coarse river sand or finely crushed stone (chips) to ensure good drainage. The container into which it is planted is much larger than the eventual pot that will be used but preferably not deeper. A transparent plastic bag is put over the tree and it is frequently sprayed, from below, in the bag. A miniature glasshouse effect is obtained with raised humidity.

The tree is now placed in a fairly warm spot with semi-shade and is watched carefully. The first buds will normally appear approximately three weeks after planting. It can also take very much longer. After buds appear a hole as large as a five cent coin can be cut in the bag roughly every second day until there is more hole than bag when the bag can be removed.

Unwanted new twigs can now be removed and we can begin to pinch out growth tips to build planes.

Once the tree has developed satisfactorily and it is ready to be transplanted into its proper pot, it is advisable to apply the old procedure of tree removal. Roots are cut off in four phases, i.e. left, right, front and back at intervals of one month and plastic is inserted to prevent the developing of long roots. This technique will ensure successful transplantation.

WHEN

We have rescued wild olives successfully in this way at any time from January to December, but in our opinion March to April is the ideal time. Treasures with an estimated age of one hundred years and older have been rescued using these methods.