

Mythology

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What is a Myth? It is usually defined as a "widely held, but false notion - a fictitious person, thing, or idea". Well, eight members of the Memphis Bonsai Society stepped into the supernatural world of Mythology on 27 June at Brussel's Bonsai Nursery as they delved into the myth of the Phoenix, a mythical bird, the only one of its kind, that after living for 5 or 6 centuries on the Arabian Desert, burnt itself in a funeral pyre and rose from the ashes with renewed youth to live through another cycle.

This is what the 8 members experienced with the very capable guidance and artistry of Brussel Martin and the assistance of Darryl Bailey. The specimens of dead, aged, and sun-bleached Rocky Mountain Junipers, some 25 to 75 years old, came to life once more as the members worked on their own versions of the Phoenix Graft.

How did they do that? Members, after studying the pieces of the Rocky Mountain Juniper, selected the pieces that inspired them. They had decided on the shape and the arrangement of the dead wood (upright, slanted, cascade). Having made those decisions, they were ably guided on how two young shimpaku juniper slips would best be applied onto the dead wood. Brussel marked the courses the slips would follow on the dead wood and then he carved grooves for the slips to fit into. After the grooves were routed out and the slips trimmed to fit properly, Darryl nailed the slips into the groove for the member. The roots on the slip were pruned and the material was potted in a bonsai pot that had already been prepared. Proper anchoring and potting techniques were followed. Anchoring is particularly important because of the weight of the dead wood. Branches were then wired to display the plant at its very best. The members then had a tree that looked as if it had died but had two minor, live veins that provided an aesthetically pleasing tree that was struggling to live and was winning.

Instructions were given on plant protection for the next month including shielding from the wind and sun and insuring that the specimens were sufficiently watered.

How did it all turn out? There were many joyous and sincere compliments extended to Brussel by the workshop members both after the workshop and in e-mails later. The materials provided were all topnotch quality. The workmanship, artistry and guidance provided by Brussel were above expectations. One can be sure that some of those plantings will appear at some future Bonsai Shows.

Once again, our thanks to Brussel and to Darryl for a job well done. It was a great learning experience for the participants and for observers.