



Guidance for Bonsai Clubs & Societies

Bonsai Guidance Handbook #4

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ukbaeducational.weebly.com/bonsai-guidance-handbook.html



1. Introduction

The UK Bonsai Association was established on the 21st of October 2018 as an umbrella association bringing together all aspects of UK Bonsai. As a non-profit association, our purpose is to promote knowledge and interest in all aspects of bonsai and to connect the whole UK bonsai community.

We publish the UKBA monthly bulletin, which enables us to fulfil our main criteria of communicating all information about UK bonsai events directly to all bonsai enthusiasts. The administrators and helpers of the UKBA are volunteers who are dedicated to spreading the word about all aspects of bonsai within the UK and also promoting UK bonsai abroad.

The UK Bonsai Association is open to all individuals free of charge, we invite you to join us.

For many years now there has been lots of discussion over the value of bonsai clubs and societies and we, the UKBA are in full support of them forming, growing and developing as we see them as a valuable element of our bonsai community.

The guidance set out in this handbook is intended for use across all levels of those within the hobby of bonsai from the beginner through to the experienced bonsai artist to help provide constructive guidance on how to get the best out of bonsai clubs. There is no one set way of running a bonsai club or society but this handbook is intended to help those starting a new bonsai club or looking to reinvigorate an existing one.

This handbook has been compiled following discussions with many bonsai artists, judges and enthusiasts across all levels of bonsai and seeks to provide options and guidance as opposed to one specific set of rules.

2. Setting up a bonsai club

Here are some key steps to consider before starting a bonsai club:

Step 1: Know why your club exists

Why are we forming a bonsai club or group?

Is there an existing bonsai group already within easy reach?

What is our bonsai club's mission statement?

What are our club's long-term goals?

- do we want to hold events?
- will we need to fundraise?
- do we want to organise to lobby?
- will we offer services or resources to members?
- do we need to charge membership fees?
- how often do we want to meet?
- where will we meet?
- what will take place during meetings?

NB: Clubs and Societies definition is interchangeable however, Clubs are associated with sports and physical activities in the UK while Societies are based on common social interests or hobbies.

A Club or Society is defined as a group originating from interest generated in the areas of academics, politics, recreation, culture, leisure, or other commonality.

Step 2: Structure your club & governance

Do you need a loose or formal club structure?

Table 1: Type of structure of your club

Loose structure	Formal structure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where no funding is needed • Where meetings are informal and as and when • Where you have no overheads • Self organising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where you need a steady cashflow • Where you are collecting recurring dues • Where you are raising funds • Where you plan to host large events • Where you intend to rent venues or equipment

Develop a leadership or governance structure

Table 2 sets out the main types of leadership and organisational structure for a club. This is not essential but can help to share the workload and also encourage club members to become more engaged with the club or society.

Table 2: Leadership and Organisational Structure Guidance

Type	Example titles	Role
Leader	President	Key representative who can lead the club and act as a spokesperson
	Chairman	
Deputy Leader	Vice president	Supportive role that offers a back up for the leader
	Vice Chair	
Treasurer	Treasurer	Responsible for keeping track of club money, fees, expenses, paying bills etc
Secretary	Communications Manager	Responsible for internal communications, meeting minutes, dates for gatherings, sending out meeting reminders and invitations etc
Membership Manager	Membership Manager	Responsible for maintaining member records and developing member recruitment strategies
Other types	Web master	To run the website
	Show Manager	To help organise shows and events
	Marketing Manager	To help promote the club
	Committee members	Other elected members of the club to help with the overall running of the club and aid with decision making

Develop a Charter, Bylaws and/or Constitution

Once you've established your organisational and leadership structure, as founders, you can help finalise the club's mission statement. You'll do this by establishing a charter and/or set of bylaws that govern the club and its members.

A formalised document whether a constitution, charter, terms of reference, or set of bylaws helps create a standard set of practices that are shared by club members, and creates a sense of order for your organisation.

Example Constitution

1. Name

The Society shall be called "***** Bonsai Society" and is hereinafter referred to as the Society.

2. Objects

The objects of the Society shall be to promote, educate and further interest in the art of Bonsai together with any associated activity.

To hold one or more shows each year designed to encourage the aesthetic appreciation of Bonsai as an art form.

To participate in shows organised by other organisations or bodies to promote the art of Bonsai.

In furtherance of the said objectives, the Society may do all such lawful things as are necessary for the attainment of the said objectives.

3. Officers

The Officers of the Society shall be:

Chairman

Vice Chairman

Secretary

Show Secretary

Treasurer

4. Committee

4.1. The Society shall be managed by a committee which shall comprise the officers, listed in paragraph 3 of this constitution, and up to five other paid-up members.

4.2. The committee shall meet at least twice in each year and the proceedings at such meetings shall be recorded.

4.3. The quorum for meetings of the committee shall be 5 members.

5. Powers of the Committee

5.1. The property and/or assets of the Society shall be controlled by the Committee.

5.2. The Committee may, if a position of officer or Committee member falls vacant, appoint a member of the Society to fill such vacancy until the next Annual General Meeting.

5.3. The Committee may appoint such Sub-Committees as it deems necessary and shall receive reports of such Sub-Committees at its meetings. A member of the committee must be present at all Sub-Committee meetings.

5.4. The Committee shall have powers to accept or reject any application for membership of the Society and to suspend or expel any member deemed guilty of conduct prejudicial to the good name of the Society.

5.5. The Committee shall have the power to declare a seat vacant should a member absent himself from three consecutive meetings without an explanation deemed satisfactory by the Committee.

5.6. The Committee shall have the power to set members' annual subscriptions and any other fees which may be chargeable to members and relating to the Society.

5.7. The Committee shall be able to do any lawful thing in furtherance of the objectives of the Society.

6. Membership

6.1. Membership shall be open to any person upon completion of an application form and payment of the annual subscription.

1. Honorary members of the Society may be appointed by the Committee.

2. Annual Subscriptions will be due for payment immediately following the Annual General Meeting each year.

3. If a member's annual subscription has not been paid by 30th June in any year the member will be deemed to have resigned from the Society and their name will be removed from the Register of Members.

7. Accounts

7.1. The Society's Financial Year shall be from 1st March until the last day of February in any year.

7.2. The Treasurer shall keep a cash book recording all receipts and payments by the Society. This cash book must be made available to the Committee should the Committee so request.

7.3. The Treasurer shall present a financial statement to members at every Annual General Meeting.

8. Annual General Meeting

- 8.1. The Annual General Meeting shall be held within three months of the end of the Society's Financial Year.
- 8.2. The Secretary shall give at least fourteen clear days notice of the meeting. (Publication of the date of the meeting in the Society's Annual Programme of activities shall be deemed to be notice in accordance with this paragraph.)
- 8.3. The meeting shall receive a report of the Chairman
- 8.4. The meeting shall receive and approve the Treasurer's Financial Statement.
- 8.5. The Officers of the Society shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting.
- 8.6. The meeting shall appoint up to five additional members of the Society to act as Committee members.
- 8.7. The meeting shall conduct any other business which may lawfully be conducted at an Annual General Meeting and delegation of any matter to the Committee shall not preclude the Annual General Meeting from considering such matter.
- 8.8. The quorum for the Annual General Meeting shall be ten members.

9. Extraordinary General Meeting

- 9.1. An extraordinary general meeting may be convened at the request of the Chairman and shall be convened upon written request to the Chairman by ten Members of the Society.
- 9.2. The Secretary shall give at least fourteen clear days notice of an Extraordinary General Meeting to all members by an announcement at a Society meeting.
- 9.3. The quorum for an Extraordinary General Meeting shall be ten members.

10. Voting

- 10.1. At all meetings of the Society, including the Annual General Meeting, an Extraordinary General Meeting, a Committee and a Sub-Committee meeting, a member shall have one vote, except in the circumstances referred to in paragraph 10.3 below. Society members present at a committee or sub-committee meeting, apart from members of the committee or sub-committee, cannot vote.
- 10.2. A postal vote may be arranged at the discretion of the Committee
- 10.3. In the event of votes cast for a motion equalling the votes cast against a motion, the Chairman of the meeting shall have a second or casting vote.

11. Finance

- 11.1. The Committee shall cause proper records of account to be kept and such accounts shall be audited or examined by a competent person annually and over a set level by an accountant as appointed by the Committee.
- 11.2. The Committee shall authorise the Treasurer to open bank or building society accounts in the name of the Society.
- 11.3. The Committee shall authorise the signature of cheques by any two of the Chairman, Treasurer and any two other members of the Society nominated by the Committee for that purpose.

12. Limited Financial Liability

- 12.1. The Committee shall not enter into any financial transaction that cannot be met from the current financial assets held within the Society's accounts. No member shall enter into any financial transaction on behalf of the Society without the approval of a majority vote from the full committee or from a General Meeting.
- 12.2. An individual member's liability shall be limited to the sum of money equal to and no more than the current year's membership subscription.

13. Winding Up

- 13.1. In the event of a winding up of the Society, any funds remaining after the deduction of all proper liabilities and expenses shall be donated to a nominated charity *****.
- 13.2. Any non-financial assets shall be divided amongst the membership and in the event of a dispute as to the division of such non-financial assets the Chairman be authorised to make a decision

14. Amendment of Constitution

- 14.1. This constitution may be amended by an Annual General Meeting or an Extraordinary General Meeting, convened or that purpose, subject to the support of two-thirds of the members present and voting at the meeting.
- 14.2. Notice of a proposed alteration to this constitution must be given in writing to the Secretary and shall be notified by him to members at least fourteen clear days prior to the meeting by an announcement at a Society meeting.

15. Other Business

Any matters pertaining to the management or conduct of the society and not specifically referred to in this constitution shall be decided by the Committee and their decision shall be final and binding.

Step 3: How to get new members

Here are some key questions to answer around how to get new members:

- what criteria do new members need to have?
- are there any restrictions to new membership?
- are there ideal demographics or psychographics for new members?
- what are your operating costs and how can membership fees offset them?
- what are the benefits can your club offer to new members?
- will there be different types of members or membership levels?
- if you charge dues, will your membership be monthly or yearly?

Decide on how to market and recruit new members, this can really help boost membership:

- have an online application form
- invite the general public to events
- start a membership referral scheme
- host a bonsai club open house
- use professional networks to recruit new members
- put together a new member welcome pack

Step 4: Outline the financial structure

Developing and maintaining effective financial records is the key to success for any club or organisation. As your membership grows, financial record-keeping will become increasingly important. Get your financial records off on the right foot with these quick tips:

- identify any and all sources of income (membership fees, fundraisers, donations)
- itemise all potential club expenses – think meetings or events for this year as well as plans for the next year (meeting room costs, food, equipment, bank fees, promotional costs, member service costs)
- develop a draft budget* as most activities have some associated costs
- draft financial policies for the club (member fees, meeting fees, sponsorship levels)
- have your leadership team review and finalise the budget and financial processes together

Once this is finalised set up a club bank account and get at least two signatories for the accounts. This is useful if this is both online and has an actual bank for paying in cash or cheques.

Think about methods of payment and whether to invest in a card payment system or PayPal account to take fees and make payments more easily.

Decide on a reserve fund to build up in case of any eventualities and draft out what this would be for.

Organise the relevant insurance for the club activities to ensure it covers the members. Current bonsai club insurance is available from the Royal Horticultural Society by becoming an Affiliated member which also brings additional benefits. It can also be bought by joining the Federation of British Bonsai (FoBBS) or directly from an insurance broker like the NFU Mutual.

3. Marketing your bonsai club

Step 5: Create a club website and e-mail

There are many ways in which to get your bonsai club noticed by others, here are a few examples:

- attend events in your local area to promote your bonsai club ie fetes, fairs, shows
- have your own club website
- add yourself to the UKBA Clubs & Societies list and map
- set up a Bonsai Club Facebook group or Discord group
- put any events on social media
- put leaflets in local garden centres
- visiting other gardening clubs and societies to promote your hobby
- holding meetings in local venues like coffee shops to improve the visibility of the hobby
- connect with local businesses / collaborate with others ie put on a bonsai event alongside a larger event
- talk to people

If you do decide on a website or internet presence you can have a wide range of different types of websites as per Table 3. It would be worth getting e-mail set up from the website as well.

Table 3: Website and social media options

Options for websites / internet presence	Pro's	Con's
Static advert single page website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheap • Simple • Basis information • Doesn't require a lot of updates • Easy to put together - just need main details of club meeting location and times etc • Just signposts that the club exists • It is a business card online 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doesn't show any club activities • Limited exposure if not getting hits • Still requires someone to manage it even on an annual basis • If you want it advert free there is an ongoing cost for the domain name and hosting and SSL encryption certificate • If a free version it will have advertising on it which can be distracting

Options for websites / internet presence	Pro's	Con's
Detailed website with multiple pages and content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows the club activities each month to show what is happening • Hosts a multitude of information and marketing • More versatile • More interactive • Makes the club look alive and energetic • Provides a useful resource for information about wider bonsai topics • Can be fun to put together • Helps record the history of the club through photos of club members and their trees • Keeps everyone updated on a regular basis • Rates higher in search engine rankings • Doesn't require a social media account so open public access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires a lot of input and content in the form of photos and text • Can be more tricky to set up • More costly to set up • More time consuming to keep up to date • If not kept up to date it makes the club look less active • Requires domain name, annual hosting fee and SSL encryption certificate
Facebook group or any social media channel, discord, twitter (now X), instagram, LinkedIn, Youtube etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No cost to set up • Relatively easy to update • Allows social interaction across social media platform easily for those that use it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only limited to those on Facebook • Need club e-mail account to set up otherwise if set up by someone personally it is linked to their own personal e-mail

Example of what to put on your website

There are many options in website design, here are a few ideas to get you started in Table 4.

Table 4: Detail for the website or social media pages

Options for websites / internet presence	Essential	Non essential
Static advert single page website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of the Bonsai club • Where you meet - location plus postcode • When you meet - dates, frequency, time to and from • Contact details of someone that is available to respond 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Club programme • Cost of joining or attending meetings • Policies - documents as links • News
Detailed website with multiple pages and content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home page / landing page - main content • About page - including policies, constitution etc • Meetings page including club program for the year • Show page or events page is hosting or attending events • Contact us - with a form and who to contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gallery • Frequently asked questions • Any other pages

Options for websites / internet presence	Essential	Non essential
Facebook group or any social media channel, discord, twitter, instagram, LinkedIn, Youtube etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of the Bonsai club • Make it public • Group rules - respect everyones privacy, be kind and courteous, no promotions or spam, no hate speech or bullying etc • About the group including where you meet - location plus postcode, when you meet - dates, frequency, time to and from • Contact details of someone that is available to respond 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequently asked questions

Here are a few FAQs to include on your website or in a new member handout tailored to your bonsai club:

What is a bonsai club or society?

A Bonsai club is a club of amateur hobbyists who enjoy the hobby of bonsai and meet to work on their trees and share knowledge and help one another and share the art of bonsai.

What is bonsai?

Bonsai is the art of keeping trees in pots whether inside or outside depending on the tree species.

What are bonsai?

Bonsai are trees kept in pots through the use of various techniques to ensure they remain healthy whilst being grown and maintained in pots.

Can you use all tree species as bonsai?

Yes, any tree species can be used for bonsai however some species are more suitable for the hobby than others due to their characteristics.

Who can join a Bonsai Club?

Anyone can join a Bonsai Club there are no restrictions on membership and joining.

How much does it cost to join a Bonsai Club?

Membership is usually offered on an annual basis for a set fee for 12 months.

Annual cost £* per person or £* for a couple.

Children’s rate it open to children but be aware they need to be accompanied by an adult at all times and photographs can only be used if the parents sign a form.

Charges per meeting can be applied without membership for example £2.50 per club night per person.

Does it cost to attend my first meeting?

If you want to come along to a club night and see whether this is the hobby for you there is no cost for your first meeting.

Do I have to join a Bonsai Club or Society?

There is no obligation to join, you can still attend a club meeting and pay £2.50 for each meeting without becoming a member.

How long does my membership last?

Your membership runs from *January to *December from one year to the next so will require renewal each year.

Where are the bonsai club meetings held?

The club night meetings are held at ...

When are the bonsai club meetings?

Club meetings occur on the ... of every month throughout the year.

What time are the bonsai club meetings?

The bonsai club meetings are held ...

What do I need to bring to a club night?

You do not need to bring anything if you do not want to and can spend time talking to other club members about their trees.

If you do have a bonsai tree, you can bring along your bonsai tree or trees for discussion and work on. It is useful if you bring a plastic gardening tray for you to work on them in as well as a few basic tools like scissors and branch cutters. Depending on the time of year and type of work this will vary as more items are needed for repotting.

Do Bonsai clubs have bonsai workshops?

Bonsai workshops are held throughout the year usually on a Saturday for a full-day workshop and details will be made available to members when these events are programmed in.

Who is the Chairman of the Bonsai Club?

Contact details for the Chairman or main contact for the Bonsai club

Name

E-mail

Phone number

How many members does a Bonsai Club have?

This will vary, some clubs have a few members whilst others can have many members, however not all members may turn up to each and every club night as there is no obligation to attend every club night even though it is nice to see you.

Where do I see what Bonsai Clubs are doing?

Visit the UKBA website for more details or individual bonsai club websites for updates.

How else can I contact Bonsai Clubs?

Many Bonsai clubs now have Facebook groups and provide a free public open group which you can join for free without being a member of the Bonsai Club.

Where can I see Bonsai Club bonsai displays?

For more information see the UK Bonsai Association for the latest list of bonsai shows in the UK - <https://www.ukbonsaiassoc.org/event-calendar.html>.

A typical format for an evening club meeting

A typical format is to arrive at 19.30 pm and help with the set up of the tables and chairs for the evening.

Followed by a quick chat with the Chairman before getting started working on your tree or trees.

You are free to chat with all club members throughout the evening and share thoughts and ideas. Refreshments are provided throughout the evening for you to help yourself.

The evening finishes at 22.00 and we tend to start packing away the tables and chairs and sweeping the floor before then to ensure we finish by 22.00.

Tree of the Month competition

This is a monthly competition between members of their best tree. Each member is encouraged to bring in their best bonsai tree for that month and display it with the other bonsai trees. All club members then vote on their favourite tree and each club night the winner is announced as well as scores points. These points are added up throughout the year and the overall club member with the highest number of points is awarded a trophy for their efforts.

Other bonsai club competitions

There is also a Christmas decorate your tree competition where club members are encouraged to come up with creative Christmas and winter scenes and decorations for their bonsai and present a display. These are then voted upon by club members and the winner is announced on the night and presented with a trophy. This is usually during the December meeting which is also the Christmas social evening.

You do not need to have a club website before you start running your bonsai club but it will help when it comes to getting new members as it allows people to find you more easily.

4. Running your bonsai club

Step 6: Hold your first club meeting

Once you have gone through all the previous steps and you have got members, it's time to host your first meeting. Although this may seem intimidating, don't worry: all your new members are just as nervous as you.

It's best to keep it simple for the first meeting and follow a structure such as:

1. introducing the club and its mission
2. introducing the founding members
3. describing the general meeting structure
4. asking members why they joined and what they're hoping to get from the club
5. opening nominations for open positions such as secretary and treasurer

Don't forget to provide some time to mingle, the faster new members get to know each other, the easier it'll be to keep them coming back to your next meetings.

As you wrap up the meeting, you should also let members know what they can expect from the club going forward. For example, will you hold weekly meetings, or limit it to once a month? Will the meeting location change? Setting out clear expectations will ensure members can feel comfortable coming back.

General meetings format

It does depend on what you want from your bonsai club as to when, how often and for how long you hold meetings. For example, most bonsai clubs in the UK hold a monthly meeting on a set day of the week each month for an evening meeting from around 19.30 until 22.00. This timing is not ideal for all club members as during the winter months driving at night can be an issue especially if club members have to travel long distances.

However, more recently some clubs and societies have started to hold weekend meetings in addition to supplementary weekend workshops if members request this as it provides a longer period of time to work on bonsai for some of the longer tasks like repotting.

Table 5: Here is an outline of a general workshop evening

Time	Activity
1930	Arrive and set up the tables and chairs in the hall and cover tables with plastic or cloth to protect them, set up tea, coffee and biscuits and bring in bonsai trees and working trays and tools etc
1940	Introduction by Chairman to the evening and welcome to any new members
1945	Start workshop session - individual members working on their trees and able to circulate to chat to others throughout the evening
1945- 2115	Voting for tree of the month competition throughout the evening
2030	Tea/ coffee break but depending on facilities as to whether this is available all the time
2130	Announcement of tree of the month winners
2145	Start to clear up your bonsai gear and take trees back out to cars. Start to pack up tables and chairs, tidy away tea and coffee making facilities, wash up any cups etc and clean room to ensure no debris left behind
2200	Close up the hall or hand over keys to the Caretaker

Programs

Each bonsai club usually draws up their annual programme with their committee and programs during the year can include auctions of bonsai material, demonstrations by professional bonsai artists, interactive workshops, and social events.

Members can take pictures, question the speakers, and generally participate and also request items for the programme each year that they may want to know about. Table 6 sets out a list of programme ideas for the annual bonsai club meetings.

Table 6: List of examples of topics for club nights and an idea of resources needed.

UKBA Bonsai Club Programme Ideas for Bonsai Clubs			
Topic	Month	Details / Resources needed	Type
Show preparation ('do's and don'ts)	January	Tree ready for show, tree not ready for show, tools used to clean up trees, top dressing examples moss, akadama etc	Talk with examples
Pot selection	January	Selection of various pots	Talk with examples
Repotting	January	Soils, mesh, wire, chopsticks, root pruning scissors and cutters, toothbrush, bucket of water, tray to work in, container for used soil, selection of pots, plastic tubing	Guided workshop / Demonstration / Talk
Growing from seed	February		Talk
Frost protection	February		Talk
Repotting	February	Soils, mesh, wire, chopsticks, root pruning scissors and cutters, toothbrush, bucket of water, tray to work in, container for used soil, selection of pots, plastic tubing	Workshop
Feeding regimes	March		Talk
Watering regimes, bonsai irrigation techniques	March		Talk
Early pests and problems	March		Talk
Spring workshop	April	Club members to bring trees in to work on	Workshop
Propagating from cuttings	April		Practical session / Talk
Pot on last years seedlings	April		Practical session
Ramification	April		Talk with examples
Air layering	May	Small bags of Spaghnum moss, sharp clean scalpels, clear and black plastic squares, zip ties, cut branches to practice on and cheap material to practice on	Practical session
Defoliation	May	Club members to bring trees in need of defoliation in to work on	Practical session / Talk
Defoliation general	May		Talk
Defoliation of Acers	May	Club members to bring Acers in need of defoliation in to work on	Practical session / Talk
General pruning techniques	May		Talk
General Pruning	May	Club members to bring trees in to work on	Workshop
Japanese Black pines candle pinching & techniques	May	Japanese Black Pine examples to demonstrate on if needed	Talk
Maples	May	Different examples of Maples as bonsai	Talk with examples
Grafting	May	Scalpel, grafting material - scion and stock, grafting tape	Practical session
Flowering bonsai	May	Bring in examples of different types of flowering trees	Talk with examples

UKBA Bonsai Club Programme Ideas for Bonsai Clubs

Topic	Month	Details / Resources needed	Type
Azalea as Bonsai	May	Examples of Azaleas	Talk with examples
Fruiting bonsai	May	Bring in examples of different types of fruiting trees	Talk
Tropical trees	June	Bring in examples of different types of tropical trees	Talk with examples
Summer protection - shading/ cooling	June		Talk
Refinement pruning	June		Talk with demonstration
Foliage feeding	June		Talk
Summer workshop	July	Club members to bring trees in to work on	Workshop
Styling	July		Demonstration / Guided practical session
Watering	July		Talk
Feeding	July		Talk
Pest & diseases	July		Talk
Pottery	July	Club members to get the opportunity to have a go at making a bonsai pot	Practical workshop guided by a potter
Summer social	July	BBQ / Pub / Afternoon tea / Coffee morning / Japanese Garden visit, Arboretum visit, Bonsai nursery visit	Social
Tokanomas	August	Tokanoma displays	Talk with examples set up
Displaying bonsai	August	After talk, club members to have a go setting up a solo and group or club display	Talk / Practical session
Autumn workshop	September	Club members to bring trees in to work on	Workshop
Japanese Black pines techniques part ii	October		Talk
Wiring techniques	October	Wire, branches to practice on or cheap material	Talk with practical session
Branch and trunk bending	October	Wire, wet raffia, vet wrap, sphagnum moss, wet towels, material to bend	Demonstration
Cleaning up your bonsai - moss removal / old leaf removal	October	Club members to bring in their bonsai trees to clean them up prior to winter	Workshop
Dead wood, jin and shari	October		Talk / Practical session
Tree nursery stock (where to buy, what to look for)	November		Talk or visit to tree nursery
Yamadori	November	Site with permission to dig or collect	Talk / Practical dig
Penjing	November	Materials to allow club members to create a penjing including accent plants, moss, soils, stones, accessories, figurines, wood, rocks, pots, rooted cuttings, saplings	Practical session / Talk
Winter checks and winter protection	November		Talk
Soils	November	Examples of different soil types	Talk
Moss removal	November		Talk
Structural pruning	November		Talk with demonstration
Winter preparation	November		Talk
Root pruning	November		Talk with practical session
Group plantings	November	Whips / Saplings or range of aged stock to make up groups, group pots, soils, wire, kato, mesh	Talk with practical session
Garden centre material challenge	December	Club members given a piece of garden centre material to work on	Workshop / Practical session / Fun

UKBA Bonsai Club Programme Ideas for Bonsai Clubs

Topic	Month	Details / Resources needed	Type
Winter workshop	December	Club members to bring trees in to work on	Workshop
Christmas social	December	Food & Drink	Fun
Christmas Quiz	December	Food & Drink and Quiz	Fun
Decorate your bonsai	December	Accessories for club members to decorate their tree on the night	Fun
Decorated tree	December	Club members to bring in a decorated bonsai tree	Fun
Root development	December	Examples of good and poor root development	Talk
Making scrolls	Any month	Scroll parchment, pens, coloured pencils, paints, pain brushes	Practical session
Penjing	Any month		Talk
Junipers	Any month	Examples of Junipers	Talk
Kokadama	Any month	Moss, saplings to create moss balls with, string / cotton	Practical session
Photographic night	Any month	Camera	Fun
Tree critique	Any month	Club members bonsai trees to talk about and discuss	Show & Tell
Competition night	Any month	Club members to bring in their bonsai for a club competition	Competition
Shohin trees	Any month	Examples of shohin trees	Talk with examples
My favourite tree	Any month	Club members to bring in their favourite bonsai tree to talk about and discuss	Discussion
Mame trees	Any month	Examples of Mame trees	Talk with examples
Ginkgos	Any month	Examples of Ginkgos	Talk
Pines	Any month	Examples of Pines	Talk
Making accents	Any month	Accent plants, pots, soil, moss	Practical session
Round up of bonsai shows	Any month		Picture presentation of bonsai at shows
Displaying accents	Any month	Accent plants and stands	Talk / Display
Nature as inspiration for bonsai design	Any month		Talk
Top dressing	Any month	Examples of top dressing	Talk
Stand selection	Any month	Examples of stands	Talk
Styling deciduous trees	Any month		Talk
Styling coniferous trees	Any month		Talk
Bonsai tasks and calendar	Every month	Short 10 minute talk at each club night on the tasks for that month or the next month	Talk
Keeping records (Photographs, notes, observations, database or spreadsheet)	Any month		Talk
Tree health in general	Any month		Talk
Cascades	Any month		Talk

UKBA Bonsai Club Programme Ideas for Bonsai Clubs

Topic	Month	Details / Resources needed	Type
Rafting	Any month		Talk
Bring and buy bonsai night or swap shop	Any month	Could invite a trader as well	Buy and sell bonsai
Rules of design and aesthetics	Any month		Talk
Bonsai tools and cleaning tools, care and maintenance	Any month		Talk with practical session
Tanuki (driftwood bonsai)	Any month		Talk
Succulents as bonsai	Any month	Examples of succulents as bonsai	Talk
Different bonsai styles	Any month	Different styles of bonsai	Talk with examples
Keeping bonsai - sharing knowledge and experiences	Any month	Sharing experiences amongst the club members on how they each keep their trees - benches, green houses, poly tunnels, indoors, outdoors, shade, shelter, garage, time, position, aspect etc	Discussion
Tree Shrub Species selection	Any month	Different tree species examples as bonsai	Talk with examples
Tree of the month	Any month	Club members to bring in their best tree each month or as per the theme of the month - could judge them to start helping club members to learn about judging or just discuss them	
Showing bonsai and where to see them (Different types of bonsai shows, club shows, Flower Shows, Local, Regional, National and world events)	Any month		Talk
Judging bonsai	Any month	After the talk, get Club members to try out judging using example judging sheets and different methods	Talk with practical session
Guying and propping	Any month	Wire, string, zip ties, mesh, plastic tubing, wire cutters, tree that needs guying	Talk with demonstration
Buying bonsai - what to look for and where to buy them	Any month		Talk
Root over rock	Any month	Examples of root over rock style bonsai	Talk / Practical session
Pop bonsai	Any month	Made up example of Pop Bonsai	Talk / Practical session
Suiseki	Any month	Example to show / display	Talk / Display
Before & after of bonsai development	Any month	Club members to bring in their tree before they develop it and again once they have developed it or photo of before and talk about it now and how they got to where it is now	Discussion
Bonsai around the world	Any month		Talk
Bonsai, Arboriculture and Horticulture	Any month		Talk
Niwaki and Bonsai sharing knowledge	Any month		Talk
Tree biology	Any month		Talk
Bonsai experiences	Any month	Club members to share experiences of their own bonsai journeys	Discussion
Bonsai talk - Guest speaker	Any month		Guest Speaker

UKBA Bonsai Club Programme Ideas for Bonsai Clubs			
Topic	Month	Details / Resources needed	Type
Bonsai demo - Guest demonstrator	Any month		Guest demonstrator
Club sales or Auction night	Any month	Club members to sell off or auction spare bonsai trees	Auction / Sales
Tree species	Any month		Talk
Propagation of bonsai - techniques - Seed / Cutting / Air layering / Growing in the ground	Any month		Talk
Project tree	Any month	Club members to bring in their project trees to work on or be photographed	Discussion / Feedback on progress
Photographic evening of World wide bonsai show/ event	Any month	Club members to bring in their bonsai trees to be photographed	Practical session
Ugly duckling night - tree that you have lost your way with	Any month	Club members to bring in any tree they have lost their way with to let some else work on it to improve it / develop it further	Practical session
Days out	Any month	Bonsai shows, Bonsai events, Bonsai Nursery visits, Garden centres, Collecting trees from approved sites, Arboretum visits, Flower Shows, Japanese Garden visits	Days out with Club members

Setting out the hall or room

Depending on the style of club night this will vary from a theatre style if you have a speaker to that of a table and chairs set up for a workshop.

Think about access and think about communication between club members when setting out the tables and chairs to provide an opportunity for engagement during the club night.

If the hall is hired, then details like how high to stack the chairs or where the tables are stored is useful to pass onto members and ensure you consider health and safety around moving chairs and tables from store cupboards to the hall and this should be captured in the risk assessment.

Ensure that everyone knows they can help with the setting out of the hall as this makes light work if more people help out on a club night.

Health and safety

This is an area that can often be overlooked, but a site specific risk assessment should be completed for the use of a hall or space. The hall being used may already have one which you can use and update or create your own version. The following information in Table 7 is an example of some of the general considerations for inclusion within a risk assessment for use of a hall.

Table 7: Example of a simple risk assessment set of considerations

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further actions are necessary (controls)
<p>Slips, trips and falls Eg uneven surface of car park, cleaning floors, drain covers etc.</p>	<p>Users of the hall and car park may suffer injuries such as fractures or bruising if they slip, eg on spillages or trip over objects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Car park surface maintained to be as even as possible. ■ Parking spaces for visitors with disabilities available next to hall entrance. ■ Good lighting in car park and all rooms and corridors in hall. ■ Users know to clear up spillages immediately and know where equipment for this is kept. ■ Mats at entrances to stop rain water being carried in. ■ No storage in corridors. ■ Drain covers secured. ■ Crawler board areas of roof identified and access to roof space strictly controlled via keys. ■ Signs and notices posted. ■ No trailing electrical leads/cables. ■ Keep kitchen free from clutter. ■ Personal supervision of elderly / vulnerable up paths or steps ■ Emergency access routes clear of obstructions, operable and maintained. ■ Essential paths and roads included in ice and snow clearance plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Surface to be inspected regularly and repaired as necessary. ■ Check that hall cleaner knows which products to use on which type of floor. ■ Salt / grit bin to be purchased and placed in the car park for use.
<p>Vehicle movement</p>	<p>Pedestrians could suffer serious injury if struck by cars entering/ leaving car park or moving in it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Entrance/exit to car park clearly marked. ■ For large events, parking controlled by marshals wearing high-visibility vests. ■ Car park well lit. ■ Skip/recycling collection takes place at times when hall not in use. ■ Emergency access routes clear of obstructions, operable and maintained. ■ Essential paths and roads included in ice and snow clearance plans. ■ Speed limit imposed in car park of 5mph. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Apply 5 mph speed limit in car park and put up signs. ■ Advise users of hall, through hire agreement, to consider whether they need to control car parking.
<p>Electricity</p>	<p>Users risk electric shocks or burns from faulty equipment or installation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fixed installation correctly installed by qualified electrician, and inspected regularly. ■ All repairs by qualified electrician. ■ Safety plugs in sockets. ■ Portable equipment checked for visual signs of damage before use. ■ Hall users know they are responsible for any equipment used on site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Make sure hall users know where the fuse box is and how to switch supply off in an emergency. ■ Remind users that portable equipment considered unsafe should be marked and taken out of use.

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further actions are necessary (controls)
Stored equipment (Falling items and injuries from items falling from storage cupboards)	Users could be injured by collapsing stacks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Users know that they must stack tables and chairs carefully so that they do not collapse. ■ Shelves and any racking maintained safely. ■ Do not stack chairs more than 5 high. ■ Items stored appropriately and in stable way and not too high. ■ Hall caretaker to monitor the situation regularly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No further action needed
Manual handling (injuries from moving or lifting chairs / tables/. Kitchen equipment etc)	Users may suffer back pain if they try to lift objects that are too heavy or awkward.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Trolleys available to move heavy equipment and users know where they are kept. ■ Do not stack chairs more than 5 high. ■ Adopt recommended safe lifting / manual handling techniques. ■ Items stored appropriately and in stable way and not too high. ■ Hall caretaker to monitor the situation regularly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No further action needed

Welcome pack

Think about building a new club members welcome pack and use any of the guidance within this handbook to aid with that. To get the most out of club members it is worth setting out some guidance on what they can do to help if they want to.

This could include becoming a committee member, taking on an informal role, running tree of the month, taking photographs for the club website or newsletter, making teas and coffees etc.

Also, add in that photographs taken on the club nights will be used on the website so it is important to let everyone know this in case they do not want their photo used for marketing purposes.

This should be a short pack that contains relevant and useful information about costs, times, the programme, regular events or workshops, contact details, etc.

Fees / Charges

There are different ways to charge for a club night and the costs should be based on ensuring that the club expenditure for any hire of a hall for the evening should be covered by the overall membership costs or in addition to the cost charged on the door. An example of charges for joining and attending a bonsai club is set out in Table 8.

Table 8: Annual costs of joining a bonsai club

Type of annual costs for joining a bonsai club	Charge
Annual membership per person	£ 15.00
Monthly attendance or subs paid in advance or on the door	£ 2.50
Total cost for annual membership and 12 months attendance	£ 45.00

You can charge an annual membership per person, per year in addition to monthly attendance or an annual membership inclusive of the monthly attendance fee. You may want to offer a slight discount for payment in advance and for the full year to encourage more people to sign up for the full year to aid with helping cover any hall hire costs.

You can also consider charging non-members a higher rate for the monthly attendance for those not wanting to join on an annual basis. For example £3.50 per attendance as opposed to the £2.50 in the example above.

You can also offer concessions for under 16s for example if you can offer this but will need to consider the safeguarding element for having under 16s on site including a need for additional risk assessments, parental supervision, safeguarding policies and DBS checks.

With regard to charges a club experiences throughout a year Table 9 sets out an example of the annual running costs for a small bonsai club or society as of 2024.

Table 9: Example of annual costs for running a small bonsai club or society as of 2024

Description	Example cost per year	Status
Hire of hall (Once a month)	£ 360.00	Essential but costs can vary
Insurance	£ 40.00	Essential
Refreshments	£ 80.00	Members could bring their own to save on costs
Reserve fund	£ 0.00	Optional
Bank account (charges and fees may apply)	£ 0.00	Optional and some banks do not charge clubs and societies
Web site hosting and domain name	£ 70.00	Optional
Administration (Printing, Stationary, marketing etc)	£ 0.00	Carried out by volunteers
Workshops	£ 0.00	Optional with variable costs
Speakers	£ 0.00	Optional with variable costs
Running a Show	£ 0.00	Optional with wider associated costs
Accountant	£ 0.00	Only required if over a certain value. Basic book keeping done by Treasurer role.
Total	£ 550.00	

Minimum number of members to make the club viable financially.

Example for 14 members = £585 who pay an annual membership and attend 12 months of the year.

Options for payment could be included in a welcome pack including the various methods of payment ie Bank transfer, Direct Debit, Cash, Paypal, Cheque and Card machine.

There are options for raising additional funds to cover costs at club nights and these could include a sales table where a % of sales is retained by the club. Often clubs are the beneficiary of trees or bonsai materials and the sale of these can also raise club funds.

5. Maintaining your bonsai club

Step 7: Attract and engage your members

It is important for the sustainability of any bonsai club or group to maintain good communication with its members on a regular basis.

Keeping in touch with members

1. Send out an e-mail circulation regularly to all members but remember to BCC in members or ensure they have agreed to share their e-mail address with the entire membership and fulfil any General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements
2. Send out a paper newsletter for those members who are not on e-mail
3. Create a WhatsApp group to keep in touch and allow instant communication between members regardless of the time
4. Create an exclusive members-only space on the website to allow members to login and chat on a forum-like space or upload content
5. Build up your social media presence
6. Create a membership database
7. Check-in with your members - annual general meeting (AGM), at club nights, member survey
8. Encourage engagement by encouraging members to join in with club events and shows

Transparency

At club nights it is hard to remember everyone's name and therefore it may be worth supplying club members with name Tags for improved communication. They can be printed cards put into a plastic sleeve on a lanyard and handed out at the start of the evening and collected at the end to avoid them being lost.

Resources

Most bonsai clubs and societies rent their hall space on a monthly or weekly basis and most halls do not come with storage facilities or these are extra to hire. Therefore for the majority, all items needed for a bonsai club night need to be brought to each club night by club members.

If any club member is interested they can bring in books and other resources to club nights but it is unlikely many will now offer library facilities like they used to.

Traders

Bonsai traders can be invited to attend bonsai club meetings to sell soil, tools, pots, and sometimes trees. They are more likely to attend full-day workshops where they are providing training as well as supplies. Not all vendors accept credit cards though so cash may be appropriate. There is a list of bonsai traders on the UKBA website.

ukbonsaiassoc.org/traders-suppliers.html

Speakers

To provide your club members with a diversity of information and club nights you can hire bonsai speakers to attend and talk on a wide range of subjects. There is a speakers list available on the UKBA website. ukbonsaiassoc.org/speaks-demonstrators.html

However, please be respectful of the program speaker and keep conversations brief and quiet during the program presentation.

Club Merchandise

Not all clubs will have sufficient funds to purchase club merchandise on behalf of their club members. However, each club member can individually fund their own items and this can be coordinated into a pre-order once they have sufficient numbers to make the minimum order on logo T-shirts, caps and other merchandise with the club logo. Not all members will want club merchandise but for those who want to join in this can be a great way of building on the community spirit of the club and looks great at events when the club members are present as a club.

Raffle

To aid with raising club funds, clubs could hold a raffle at their monthly meetings. All proceeds would go to the club treasury and donations would be welcome.

Tree of the Month competition

This aids with engagement with club members and encourages them to bring in one of their bonsai trees each month, regardless of its development stage. It can be a judged competition with set guidelines or based on nominating your favourite tree and the one with the most votes wins. It is a good opportunity for discussion of the bonsai trees brought in each month and a way of tracking their progress if the competition trees are photographed each month for use on the website or in a newsletter.

Shows and Exhibits

Hosting a bonsai show is no mean feat but it is a great way to engage with your club members and show off their trees even within a club or to a wider audience. Clubs can also put on club displays at other events like local fetes and shows and be invited to join in with larger events like the Heathrow Show, run by the UKBA. For more information on running a bonsai show see handbook 3.

Club Sales or Swops night

This is a good way for members to swap or buy bonsai trees and bonsai material from one another and a % of the sale could be held for the club funds.

Members Merit Awards

One way to encourage members and to show that they are progressing is to set out a merit award system for club members and this could be agreed upon and voted on by the Committee to annually nominate and award a club merit award to the member who has shown the most progress with their bonsai journey. A certificate and prize could be awarded like a free workshop or bonsai tools.

Auctions

Another way to interact with club members is to run an auction, this is a good way to move on bonsai trees as well within the bonsai community as well as a fun social event. Auctions can be quite time-consuming to organise though and payment methods need to be considered upfront.

Bring and buy nights

This is an easier way for club members to get hold of good bonsai material from fellow club members takes less time to organise or manage and is a transaction between club members. It is also a good opportunity to move on bonsai material that club members have finished working with or reduce the number of bonsai trees in their collection. Clubs can also take a % towards running the club and propose to take perhaps 10% of any club sales to aid with fundraising for the club.

Workshops and Classes

Running additional workshops or classes in addition to the regular club meeting can be another way to encourage members to maintain their membership. Not all club members perhaps have the space at home to repot their trees in a warm environment so running repotting workshops is a good way to help with this. Also, club members may need help and advice while they work on their trees and this is a good way to share knowledge even without a demonstrator or speaker.

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

This is an opportunity to run through the year's activities and feedback to club members on the year as well as encourage members to feedback on their thoughts and ideas for the future. It can be a short meeting with an example agenda set out below:

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the last AGM
3. Matters arising from minutes
4. Chairperson's Report
5. Secretary's Report and Programme for the year ahead
6. Treasurer's Report
7. Membership fees
8. Show Managers Report (Only if you held a show)
9. Tree of the month competition winners
10. Members Merit Award Winner
11. Election of Committee:
 - a. Chairperson
 - b. Vice Chairperson
 - c. Secretary
 - d. Treasurer
 - e. Committee Members
12. Any other business