



Tree/Shrub of the month:

Luma apiculata—the cinnamon bark is picked out in the spring sun. The small leaves are a glossy dark green and aromatic, borne on purplish young growth that matures into a rich cinnamon brown. The flowers in summer are creamy white stars followed by edible purple berries. It originates from Chile and is hardy throughout most of the UK although soft growth may get knocked back by frost. It will grow to a height of 8—12m. It prefers well drained soil in sun or partial shade. Luma responds well to pruning and shaping as seen in the photograph on the right.



Wabi Sabi and Pruning:

I have come across the term Wabi Sabi, used in describing something with a natural organic form. Japanese pruning tends to avoid straight edges and uniformity with priority given to the creation of natural space and forms that fit into the landscape. Wabi Sabi has a close relationship to how things develop naturally over time, during pruning it focuses on replicating asymmetric shapes influenced by the elements, altitude and time, producing gnarled stems uneven branching and stunted growth. These features can be seen in our ancient trees, old pollards and wind blown hillside trees that have been sculpted by weather, time and man, often forming significant landscape features. The similar characteristics are sort after in Japanese gardens and Niwaki (garden trees) pruning using Wabi Sabi as a guide. Removing low branches to reveal the stem, branch removal retaining long branches on the outside of bends, creating space between branch layers and shortening back to form clouds all enhance the asymmetry and creates a look of natural aging as if trees are stunted with branches lost or broken by harsh conditions.

I have been pruning shrubs individually to try and bring out their natural form while also being part of a shrub border. This may create space within the plant itself and reveal previously unseen interesting branch and stem form and colour and also space between different plants. Sometimes plants are allowed to merge into one another in one organic flow which may follow the contour of the land or act as a contrast to a formal structure or hard landscaping. This can be done to give much more interest in the border and reinvigorate old plants without having to grub them out and replant. This can produce a sculptural look when applied to a garden situation, and can be used on many sizes and species of plants.



In Japan Shintoism, the national religion, has great reverence for nature as they believe that spirits called Kami inhabit rocks, trees and water and can bring good fortune to a household so Japanese gardens are formed to try to encourage Kami by pruning trees and shrubs to replicate nature.

I have found that it is easier to produce these new interesting forms with hand tools such as shears, secateurs and hand saws as I am much less likely to cut through important branches and foliage than with a hedge cutter. The powered hedge cutter is



still of use over large areas but the hand tools give better control for individual shaping/pruning.



Hand tools, as above, together with a powered hedgecutter were used in the garden below.



Fruit Trees: planting fruit trees in your garden is a great idea as you not only get fruit but also blossom in the spring. If space is a problem then you can use Espalier, Corden or Fan trained trees. These can be used against a wall or fence or to divide or screen an area of the garden.

Below—Espaliered Pear. This has been planted as a barrier at the top of a slope. Not necessarily the best place for a fruit tree



but it works, being ornamental and not too dense. When planting apples it is a good idea to work out the space you have and the type and size of tree you would like. Apples are budded or grafted onto various rootstocks which influence how they grow and the ultimate height. So for large orchard trees as below you want to have a tree that has been grafted onto an M25



rootstock, for a medium sized tree MM106. M9 and M27 are dwarfing rootstocks. Trees on M27 are often used for container growing. Below—grafting a scion from the cooking apple tree above on to an M25 rootstock. The apple is an local variety 'Golden King' it has large apples that cook wonderfully. The only drawback is that they don't store well so it is necessary to cut them up and freeze them.

Pears, Plums, Cherries and Peaches are also grown on root-



stocks which modify the growth of the tree in some way. By using a rootstock the nurseryman and grower are able to predict the ultimate height of the tree as both the stock and the scion are clones.

On a similar theme as espaliers, pleached trees can form a narrow hedge on stilts and be an attractive way creating a high screen where light may be required beneath for a boarder with screening above. Pleaches are trained from a young age by developing a straight trunk and selecting side branches at even spacing to form the horizontals. When ready they may be planted out at around two metre spaces and the branches of adjacent trees encouraged to graft together when they meet, they can also be used to form avenues or walkways. Limes (*Tilia sp*), Planes (*Platanus sp*), Evergreen Oak (*Quercus Ilex*) and fruit trees such as Apple (*Malus sp*) can be trained as pleaches and give all year round interest as they come into leaf, flower, provide winter foliage and interesting branch and trunk form.

