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The Bonsai Society meets at the Bellerive Community Art Centre,
17 Cambridge Rd, Bellerive at 7:30 pm on the third Tuesday of the month
(February – November)

Website: www.key.org.au/bonsai

Newsletter No 195 – May 2009

April Meeting: Held on Tuesday 21st April –The display table had a collection of trees for viewing, including a large Ficus brought in by Noel, which is bearing fruit. Gill Roberts gave an interesting presentation on how best to achieve sekijoku – root-over-rock style. This style of bonsai may take several years to achieve, and as with all bonsai, one must be patient. Several plants were on sale, and David was in attendance with our library collection, which has an array of books and journals to inspire us all to greater things. We also had two visitors – Sean Bradley and Rebecca Lummak (hopefully this has been spelt correctly!).

Apologies: Will Fletcher was unable to join us – it seems he was travelling to the mainland chasing up bonsai pots by Pat Kennedy. Jenny Allford and Ian Lester were also unable to be with us.

Business Arising: Following the April executive meeting, President Noel gave a brief account to members that the Society may require to have its own Public Liability Insurance cover. The issue arises because our Society presumed we were covered by the Bellerive Community Art Centre's public liability, as we pay a nominal rent to them. However, their insurer has informed them that this is not the case. Our Treasurer, Stuart Clutterbuck is looking into the issue and will report further at our next executive meeting. Obviously we are trying to keep cost to a minimum, however it could mean an increase of about \$10 per member per year. To keep it all in perspective, it should be remembered that the rent we pay for the hall (\$10 per meeting) has not increased for a very long time! Members will be kept informed.

April Workshop: There were some fourteen members who took the opportunity to re-pot, wire, prune, and seek advice at a very enjoyable workshop on the 27th April. Noel complicated the issue by bringing in a large selection of pots for members to pick and choose from! But made up for it by providing some much-needed advice to those of us still struggling. A lot of camaraderie as well as a lot of work, and a most welcome afternoon tea/coffee and nibbles afterwards. These workshops are an invaluable source of information, and provide opportunities for improving our bonsai skills. Experienced members are on hand should assistance or advice be required, so we hope you can make it to the next one in May (see below).

May Meeting: Tuesday 19th May, 2009 – Noel will use a cypress to explain and demonstrate how to achieve successful jin and shari style. (Further information is included). **Members please note that Noel will be available at the May workshop with his pots. He will then be away for about ten weeks, returning in time for the August meeting and workshop.**

Display Table: We invite members to bring along trees for comment, or for advice with a problem tree. At this time of the year we are all thinking about re-potting, root and branch pruning, maybe wiring. It can sometimes be helpful to get advice before a particular branch is pruned or cut completely!

Next Workshop: Saturday 23rd May from 1-4 pm. Cost will be \$2.00 (A separate list is included with the newsletter which may prove a useful reminder about what to bring to our workshops.)

Future Workshops: Sunday 21st June, Saturday 25th July and Sunday 23rd August. (Members note that the June workshop replaces the outing of the same date.)

Outing on Saturday 19th September: Members decided on a dig for Conifers at Seven Mile Beach.

Suggested future outing:

- Viewing mature trees as inspiration for Bonsai. For example - Natives on Mt Wellington, Lake Dobson/Mt Field. European trees at our Hobart Botanical Gardens.

Your comments and volunteers to lead/co-ordinate these or other outings please.

Debco Potting Mix: Gill Roberts has paid for and received the potting mix. Members who wish to pick it up prior to the May meeting can contact Gill (Tel. 62479717). Otherwise it can be collected at the meeting, but please bring your payment with you.

Hobart Horticultural Society Inc Shows:

11, 12 & 13 September – Daffodil, Camellia & Floral Art Show (City Hall Hobart)

6 & 7 November – Rose, Iris & Floral Art Show (Hobart Town Hall)

Royal Hobart Show

22 to 24 October 2009

Bonsai Exhibitions & Conferences

22 to 25 May – “Shine on Bonsai” 22nd National Bonsai Convention, Royal on the Park, Brisbane see our notice board or www.aabcltd.org for details.

Interstate Bonsai Society/Club Websites

WA – www.bonsaisocietywa.com

Vic – www.bonsaisocietyvictoria.org

ACT – www.cbs.org.au

Aust – (Assoc of Australian Bonsai Clubs Ltd) www.aabcltd.org

Qld – www.Bonsiasocietyqld.asn.au

Workshops are probably the best way to learn more about Bonsai, and while everyone works on their own trees, the advantage is that plenty of advice is always available from those with more experience, as well as an extra pair of hands if needed. When coming to a workshop it's a good idea to bring along your tools and a few extra items which have been found to be most useful.

A List of Things to Bring to Workshops:

1. \$2.00 per member, which covers the cost of hiring the hall.
2. A plastic cover for the tables, alternatively a large plastic bag will do.
3. The most important thing – a tree or trees to work on. You can observe, but it is much more rewarding working on your own tree. If you have nothing else, try a cotoneaster from the garden if it is your first time.
4. Potting mix.
5. Gravel, preferably in with your potting mix.
6. Any tools you will need. Most of our tools are very simple, but if you do need to buy something, Noel may be able to arrange a purchase.
7. A rubbish bin or bag to remove your waste soil and trimmings. This material must not be placed in the dustbins.
8. Mesh to cover drainage holes. Old flyscreen from windows or doors is adequate for this.
9. A turntable makes it much easier to see all sides of a tree, but is not absolutely essential. An upturned plastic pot will help.
10. Moss – if you can find some. It helps improve the look of certain trees.
11. Pots and wire if you have it. However, both these items are available for purchase at the workshop, but remember to bring some extra money to pay for them. Wire varies in price per meter, depending on its thickness. Noel has a large collection of pots for sale.
12. A plate of something for afternoon tea – adds to the pleasure of the afternoon.

Perhaps the list can be placed somewhere handy (bonsai toolbox for example) as a reminder of what to bring.

Jin & Shari

Trees which grow in the wild, depending on their location, are often exposed to the rugged forces of Nature's elements, so it is not unusual to see one struggling for survival, where its trunk and branches are bare, twisted and fractured by erosion and weathering. This is referred to as "dead wood". Frequently the plants we use for Bonsai have been raised in a protected environment, such as a nursery, so the concept of dead wood must be created. It requires a great deal of imagination to effect a natural look. It is also important to consider the kind of trees which would be suitable for, in the wild, it is trees with wood hard enough to withstand the inclement weather and erosion without rotting, which will survive.

There are three types of dead wood:

Jin: is the small portion of a branch (either the apex, or a stump resulting from pruning) that is bare, splintered and bleached.

Shari: is the portion of the trunk of the tree that is bare and white and exposed to the elements.

Saba Miki: refers to the areas in which the trunk is cracked or has cavities.

As the discussion will be on Jin and Shari, let us focus on those two techniques.

Jin and shari is usually seen on conifers, whereas deciduous trees tend to heal over wounds and shed the branch as they do so.

Jins can be created from live branches that are not wanted in the bonsai design. If the branch is removed completely, the trunk of the tree could be scarred, making the bonsai look "man-made". A surplus branch, or stub of a pruned branch, stripped of bark and torn or carved to create a natural damaged effect, adds to the impression of age and contributes a strong visual element to the overall design. Sometimes a tree has two leaders, which looks unnatural. It might be worth considering turning the taller of the two into a jin, giving the impression of a tree which has suffered some trauma, such as being struck by lightning, also adding to the impression of age.

Shari is also used to age the tree, or to disguise a bad scar or defect on the trunk. In nature, shari is made by storms, rockslides, insect infestation and lightning.

Shari is done by cutting into the hard wood. It should be made in the direction of the growth of the trunk or branch. Small shari can probably be done in one treatment, whereas larger shari should be done over a long period of time because the removal of too much bark and live tissue can damage the tree.

Tools used in jin and shari include concave branch cutters, and jinning pliers which enable the user to grip the bark and crush it, thus separating the bark from the wood underneath.

A few days after removing the bark from a branch or part of a trunk, the bare area can be painted with lime sulphur (CaS_2). Lime sulphur (diluted) is commonly used by orchardists, for example, to reduce infestations of insect pests on fruit trees. For bonsai it is applied undiluted. It is best to use rubber gloves and an old or cheap, small (art-type) paint brush. Make sure you wash it out well when you have finished. The lime sulphur produces sulphur dioxide (SO_2) as it dries, and this acts as a preservative for the wood. The SO_2 also acts as a bleach on the wood, removing the colour and producing a stark white appearance. The bleaching effect is not permanent and with prolonged exposure to oxygen in the air, the bleached material is slowly oxidized and the natural, original colour or pigment of the stained material returns. Repainting the jin or shari about every 12 months will keep the whitened appearance. If you don't want the jin or shari vividly white, India Ink or carbon black can be added to the lime sulphur, this will produce a more subdued greyish colour. Take care not to splash the lime sulphur onto the living parts of the tree, or let it run down the trunk into the soil.