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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 204 – February 2010

Meeting Commenced: at 7.45pm. In the absence of President Noel, Vice President Herbert Harding opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

Thirteen members were present for our first meeting of the New Year, with apologies from Noel (who is in Burma at the moment) and Helene Browne.

Diana reported on the first meeting of the working committee for this year's Royal Hobart Show in October. Some changes have been suggested which will affect members helping on the stand. As Friday is regarded as family day, the organizers want to keep the sheds open until 7pm, which effectively means we may need to have three shifts on that day. Secondly, we have been asked to include a demonstration each day as part of an educational focus. Cedars and firs could be worked on and perhaps someone who went on the dig last year has a macrocarpa they would like to do something with. Diana has a plentiful supply of cotoneasters available as well.

The Committee held a meeting on the 9th of February during which the following items were discussed:

1. The Constitution and Incorporation is a work in progress which Treasurer Stuart Clutterbuck advised is nearing completion.
2. The Bonsai Exhibition planned for October 16th and 17th. Rosny Barn has been chosen as the venue. The main purpose of the exhibition is to encourage and foster the art of bonsai, and at the same time promote our Society and encourage new members to our organisation. A lot of issues were raised re promotion/advertising of the event, activities to be included, and preparations both for setting up and general running. Demonstrations will be organised, and a selection of bonsai will be on display. Invitations will be sent out to garden clubs. A volunteer register will be set up and we hope members will offer their assistance where possible. Further information will be available via the newsletter.
3. The treasurer confirmed the hourly hire cost for the Bellerive Community Arts Centre will be \$7.50, not the \$11/hour originally proposed. This is still more than the \$10/meeting or workshop we were paying originally. With this in mind, Will Fletcher has offered his facilities at Island Bonsai for our first three workshops. This should help to reduce the cost of hiring the Arts Centre, and therefore maintain the present charge to members who attend the workshops. Feedback from members re what they think of these arrangements will enable your Committee to plan for next year.

Your Committee has held its first two meetings for the year at members' homes in lieu of using the Arts Centre, as a way of reducing costs.

A bonsai calendar was included with the last newsletter setting out dates for meetings, workshops and shows for the year ahead. Some meeting dates do not have topics at this stage, and we are looking for suggestions and ideas from members. Perhaps there is a particular style of bonsai you would like to see or have explained/demonstrated; or other issues which are relevant to bonsai. Maybe you know someone who would be an interesting speaker – even on a different topic. So let's have some feedback on the issues which are important to you.

Note that any amendments or changes to the bonsai calendar will be announced at meetings, and in coming newsletters.

Outing: 20th March – Will Fletcher takes us on a trip to Mt. Wellington to look at our amazing Tasmanian plants, and how they manage to survive in the varying weather extremes of their environment. Meet Will at the Springs at 10am and remember, our weather can be changeable, so bring a raincoat and/or warm gear, and a picnic lunch. Walking boosts the appetite! And don't forget something for the thirst as well. (A reminder that it is polling day as well – so don't forget to vote!)

Outing: 1st May – Our trip to Mt Field. Further information will be supplied in March/April Newsletters.

Raffle: Seasol fertilizer was the prize, which was won by Tony Brown.

Display Table: A variety of plants which were presented by Will Fletcher. Eva brought several bonsai along with a particular emphasis on use of small accent plants instead of mosses.

Gill's bonsai included a lovely miniature pink fuchsia, a maple, azalea and pink Correa. Diana had her 5 year old *Luma apiculata*, a well established Cedar heavily wired from Ambrose, Will showed his *Calytrix tetragona* and *Orytes diversifolia* and Evelyn brought along an ampelopsis.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, 16th March 2010 at 7.30pm and the topic is the future development of trees in bonsai. Members are invited to bring trees for this discussion. They may be trees already in training as bonsai that you want to enhance, change, maybe this or that branch should be removed. Maybe a particular tree you would like to use as a bonsai, but aren't quite sure which style would suit it best. Our bonsai are developed over several years – what we do with them now will have ramifications for later.

Meeting Closed at: 8.30pm

Diana then introduced us to several insects and diseases, together with the results of their activities on various plants, and some suggestions on what to do to control and/or get rid of them.

The first part of her talk dealt with various methods to deter blackbirds from removing moss from her bonsai pots – these ranged from use of string bags (the kind oranges come in) to small pieces of gutter guard weighed down with a stone. Other possibilities include the use of screening material (such as that used for flyscreens), alternative groundcover plants such as Eva used, or fine gravel which also keeps the soil in place.

Insects included the following:

Woolly aphid (which look like white woolly balls) treat using a cotton bud dipped in methylated spirits.

Leaf Miners – larvae of a number of different insects which lay their eggs on or in the leaf. The adults may be beetles, wasps, sawflies, moths or flies. Each species always produces the same shape and size of “mine”. Some look like blisters, while others are thin meandering lines. Some may be a combination of both. Pupation may occur inside the leaf or elsewhere. Not much can be done here except remove those leaves which have been affected – hopefully without denuding the tree completely!

Loopers – these are caterpillars of some members of the moth family Noctuidae. The green looper is one of this group. Loopers hide on foliage during the day and feed mainly at night. Being difficult to see, look for small dry brown droppings on leaves or on surfaces beneath plants. Hand-pick and squash.

Scale – squash, or spray with white oil. Lay plant down so white oil doesn't get into the soil.

Red spider mite – this creature is eaten by its larger cousin the two-spotted mite. And the best way to arrange it's dinner is to place a few apple leaves on your affected bonsai which will attract the two-spotted mite.

However, in the event that you don't have an apple tree available, the following alternatives may work:-

1. Blend together ½ cup of starch or flour, ½ cup of milk and 4 litres of water. When sprayed over the mites this mixture will trap them as it dries into a thin film. Repeat every 4-5 days until control established. Dead mites will turn black making them easier to see.
2. Try the soap and water treatment given for other insects.

Root rot – if your plant slowly dies back, it can be a sign of root rot. Usually the first noticeable signs to us are the ones above ground – foliage yellowing and dying. Unfortunately, damage has begun below soil where the root hairs and fine roots are infected first. As the fungus takes hold, rotting of larger roots and the stem base follow. Branches die back from the tips. The plant may die quickly in hot weather or linger for some time without putting on any new growth. If only part of the root system is destroyed, one or two branches will die and the remainder of the plant may remain alive. Examination of the root system will show there are very few small fibrous roots. Those present are dark and brittle instead of whitish.

Control: Improve drainage; avoid overwatering. Remove and destroy affected plants.

Prior to re-use, thoroughly sterilize pot, wire and any other items which came into contact with the plant, in bleach.

(Editor's Note: Some of the above information was obtained from “What Garden Pest or Disease is That?” by Judy McMaugh.)

Jobs to do this time of year –

- a. light pruning e.g. leptospermum (Diana has lightly pruned hers three or four times already).
- b. Gravel - prior to using gravel on your bonsai, rinse it well in cold water to remove dust.
- c. Make sure bonsai tools are well maintained and ready for use.
- d. Ensure pots are clean ready for their next occupant!

Azaleas and Camellias can be repotted soon after they finish flowering.