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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.chooseit.org.au/bonsai](http://www.chooseit.org.au/bonsai)**

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## **Newsletter No 217 – May 2011**

**This month's Meeting is on Tuesday, 17<sup>th</sup> May commencing at 7.30pm** and, continuing our topic on native trees as bonsai, Will Fletcher is demonstrating using *Leptospermum* (Tea Tree) for his subject.

President Noel Kemp opened the April meeting at 7.45pm, welcoming 13 members and our visitor, Rob White, who is now a fully fledged member – Welcome Rob, and we look forward to seeing more of your bonsai on our display table. And Diana was warmly welcomed, having recovered from recent surgery. Apologies were received from Rose, Helene, Irene and Phil Dilger.

Members' attention was drawn to our questionnaire for the Hobart Show, details of which were in the April newsletter. As explained, the Show involves considerable consideration each year, not only setting up the display, but also with assistance on the stand. We are hoping the Show Committee will come up with an arrangement whereby our presence on the stand might not be such an issue. However, we do hope more of you are willing to participate in both areas. It was also announced that "The Barn" has been booked tentatively for our next exhibition, to be held on 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> April 2012. Further information will be provided. As there has been additional information for the calendar, an amended copy will be sent to everyone with this newsletter.

President Noel reported that seven members took the opportunity of fine weather to dig for native species near Geeveston. Myrtles, sassafras, eucalypt and quite a few tea trees were "spirited" away, and we look forward to seeing them on the display table in the near future. Our appreciation, and thank you to Amy Robertson for her assistance in arranging the permit and maps, and Forestry Tasmania for selecting the collection area and waiving their collection fees. (See photos on page 5)

The Australian Association of Bonsai Clubs is producing "*Bonsai magazine*" and after some discussion, it was decided that our Society will commit to a year's subscription for our library collection.

**Workshop:** Our next workshop is on Sunday, 22nd May, from 1- 4pm at the Bellerive Community Arts Centre.

**Next Meeting:** Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> June at Bellerive Community Arts Centre, Ambrose will be presenting the topic "pruning deciduous trees".

**Happy Birthday Greetings** to Gill Roberts (23<sup>rd</sup>) and any other members who will be celebrating in May. Your birthstone is the Emerald.

**Raffle:** *Leptospermum* donated by Will Fletcher and won by Tony Brown.

**Display Table:** Gill brought the cotoneaster and ivy she had worked on last month. Her Maple is full of beautiful autumn colours at the moment.

Diana's white azalea is still flowering.

Herbert's baeckea seemed to be "doing its own thing" – cascading all round! He also presented a creeping tea tree; a pencil pine which Noel told us will take about 20 years before it gets hard wood; a lovely sheoak; and a Huon pine.

Rob brought in a 10 year old pyracantha, displaying a mass of dark red berries.

Ambrose displayed a beautiful wisteria (26 years old), which flowers in late spring.

Heather asked for identification of her twin trunked tree, which appears to be a juniper.

Meeting closed at 8.25pm after which Ambrose provided a brief report on the Canberra Symposium. There had been much discussion on the rules of bonsai and in what ways they can be applied to our native species. Ambrose accompanied his report with some photos of bonsai which were on display during the symposium. One interesting specimen, *Euc. nicholii* had been rescued from the Canberra tip! Another, described as a "water swept" bottle brush (*callistemon*), it was explained that, as some of this species grow close to water, they are often affected by floodwaters washing over them. Ambrose also reported that Grant Bowie (Canberra curator) has been experimenting with the following growing medium for bonsai in the Arboretum: 40% diatomite; 20% gravel; 20% coconut fibre and 20% ground pine bark.

**Editor's note:** If you haven't heard of diatomite, there is plenty of information available on the internet, the following courtesy of Wikipedia:-

*"Diatomite is a naturally occurring, soft, siliceous sedimentary rock that is easily crumbled into a fine white to off-white powder. It has a particle size ranging from less than 1 micrometre to more than 1 millimeter, but typically 10 – 200 micrometres. This powder has an abrasive feel, similar to pumice powder, and is very light, due to its high porosity. The typical chemical composition of oven dried diatomaceous earth is 80 to 90% silica, with 2 to 4% alumina (attributed mostly to clay minerals) and 0.5 to 2% iron oxide.*

*Freshwater diatomite can be used as a growing medium in hydroponic gardens. It is also used as a growing medium in potted plants, particularly as bonsai soil. Bonsai enthusiasts use it as a soil additive, or pot a bonsai tree in 100% diatomaceous earth. Like perlite, vermiculite, and expanded clay, it retains water and nutrients, while draining fast and freely, allowing high oxygen circulation within the growing medium."*

Following Ambrose, Will Fletcher provided a very entertaining and most interesting talk on *Leptospermum*, having scoured Tasmania seeking out the different varieties in their natural habitats. His wanderings took him to Arthur River in the North-west, Freycinet Nat. Park on the East coast, Tasman peninsular, Cockle Creek and Mt. Wellington. The photographs showed these beautiful natives deserve to be considered for bonsai, with their small foliage and delicate flowers, coarse-textured bark and interesting growth. Depending on variety and habitat, height ranges from 2-3 metres up to 20-30 metres. Will has provided a copy of his discussion paper which he presented to the Canberra Symposium in March.

**Because of its size it was decided to place a link to it on the [Homepage](#) of our website. Members can also access the paper directly via this link; [www.chooseit.org.au/bonsai/docs/Teatree\\_Talk\\_2011.pdf](http://www.chooseit.org.au/bonsai/docs/Teatree_Talk_2011.pdf)**

***For those who don't have internet access, can you let the editor know and a copy will be printed and mailed to you.***

Our first workshop saw 12 members take advantage of the mild afternoon to work on their plants at Island Bonsai. As usual, everyone enjoyed the refreshments after their hard work! (Photos courtesy of your roving reporter.)



Diana in contemplation

Herbert, Rose & Zoe looking very busy.





Renato working on his Pinus



Rob gets some advice from Noel & Gill on his Ficus.

Will Fletcher “in the bush”, so to speak!





Top left: So many to pick and choose from.

Above: Overweight problem? Will I have to leave some behind?

Left: Let's make a little more room.

Bottom left: What about this one, David?

(Photos courtesy of Ambrose Canning)

