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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 219 – July 2011**

**Our Annual General Meeting is on Tuesday, 19<sup>th</sup> July commencing at 7.30pm** after which there will be a report on the WA AABC conference, which was attended by Ambrose and Will Fletcher.

President Noel Kemp opened the June meeting at 7.45 welcoming 12 members who braved the cold weather to attend. There were also 2 apologies.

There was no general business, the inwards correspondence consisting of interstate newsletters, an AABC update, and information from the AABC about the Melbourne convention which will be held in May 2012.

President Noel informed members he will be departing our shores on the 30<sup>th</sup> June for far-flung shores – AGAIN! He will return to our fair state in late August, but we probably won't see him until the September meeting.

**Workshop:** Our next workshop will be held on Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> July at the Bellerive Community Arts Centre from 1-4pm.

The June workshop at Island Bonsai attracted 11 members, including President Noel who was happy to offer advice to those in need. Will was nursing a sore shoulder, which didn't prevent him from re-designing a *Nothofagus cunninghamii*, and Ona was giving away Crab apple roots from her tree which had come originally from roots of Gill's tree! Ambrose very quietly worked on his Cedar, pruning and wiring – I have to admire his patience and dedication to the task! Outgoing VP Herbert kept us entertained with a few jokes, and we all enjoyed the tasty afternoon spread after our work.

**Next Meeting:** Tuesday, 16<sup>th</sup> August at Bellerive Community Arts Centre

**Birthday Greetings:** to those celebrating this month – your birthstone is the beautiful ruby.

**Raffle:** Two prizes donated by the Society, consisting of a blue glazed pot won by Heather, and a cream pot won by Rose. We look forward to seeing them on a display table at some stage - complete with bonsai, of course!

**Display Table:** Rather bare, consisting of Diana's *Nothofagus cunninghamii*, which is about 12 years old. I know our trees look rather sad and dejected this time of year when bereft of their foliage, but even "nudity" has a certain beauty!

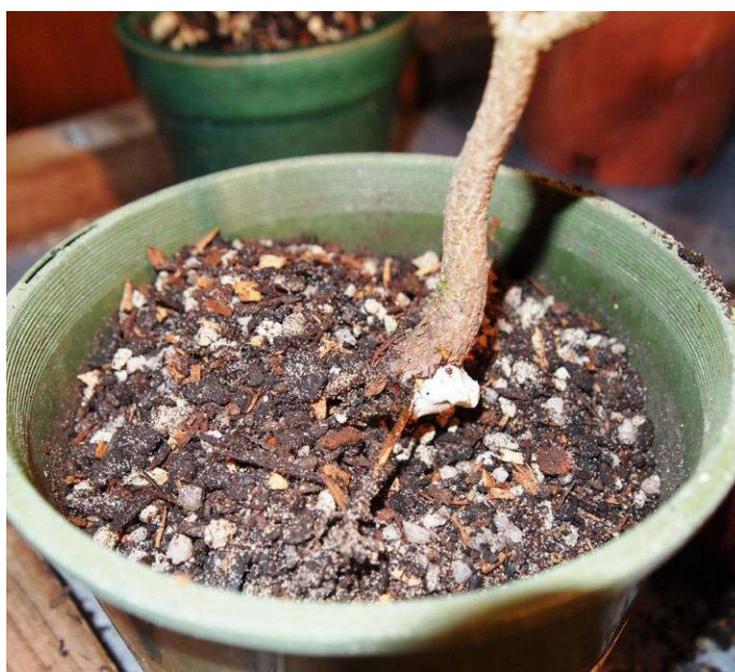
**Something to think about:** The 25<sup>th</sup> National AABC convention will be held in Melbourne from the 18–21 May 2012. The host club is Bonsai Northwest which is entering its 40<sup>th</sup> year, some of whose members will be assisting visiting demonstrators during the convention. Titled "Be Inspired", and considering it's not too far away, perhaps there are some members who would like to travel as a group to this event. A few brochures will be available for perusal at the meeting.

Meeting closed at 7.50 pm after which even Ambrose was surprised by the new root development which had occurred on his aerial layered specimens! His article on the results follows, complete with photographs.

At the June meeting I undertook a demonstration with four pre-bonsai, as I described in the last newsletter. These are all potential future bonsai but at the moment are in early stages of training and still replanted into common plastic garden pots. I was relieved to discover during the demonstration that all four plants were doing well, generally with plenty of new roots, and the techniques being tried had all worked well.

**The first was a small variegated maple.** It is not a Japanese type of maple but one with broader leaves with rounded lobes, more North American. However, the leaves have always remained small varying between 10 and 20 cent coin size. The tree is slow growing possibly I think due to its variegation meaning it is weaker. This is the tree I started an aerial layering on at a Society meeting back in late 2009, and described in Newsletter 202. Repeating what I wrote last newsletter, my aim was to reduce its trunk length, removing a bend and bulge, and developing good surface roots because it previously had none. I had planned to separate it last winter, 2010, after one growing season. But when I looked it had not developed roots above the layering point. So I scraped the trunk around the layering ring again to make sure all cambium layer was gone, applied new rooting hormone powder, and re-potted it. During last summer I saw the tips of new roots emerge through the fly-screen walls holding soil (sphagnum moss and propagation sand) around the layering point. When I took the maple out of its pot at the recent demonstration and cleared off all the soil there were new roots above the layering point, but only on three sides. I was able to cut the trunk below the roots and separate the upper trunk plus new roots. The roots were trimmed by about 50% before replanting.

The following weekend I did a little more work which involved taking the tree back out of its training pot and soil again. I removed one root that was much higher than the others. On the side with no new roots I used a knife to put some vertical cuts into the bark on the trunk, then using the knife tip I levered up the bark to separate it a little from the trunk. This was harder than it sounds, I stabbed myself three times in the left thumb with the knife in the process, luckily only minor jabs. I put a tiny pebble under the two separated flaps of bark to hold them proud of the trunk. I mixed some rooting hormone into a paste and applied it to the area. I then replanted the tree with the planting level a bit deeper in the soil. The aim is to get some new roots to grow on the side where they are missing.



Photos (page 2)

(Left): Maple after separation showing new roots missing on one side.

(Right): Maple being replanted showing rooting hormone paste over cuts where new roots are still needed. More soil to be added to bury the roots.

The next tree was the [Winter Sweet \(\*Chimonanthus praecox\*\)](#). It previously had a thin trunk with a large bulge on top and no good surface roots, so I had performed an aerial layering to get new roots around the base of the bulge. My objective is to develop a small multi trunked bonsai stemming from a relatively wide base, and to enjoy it flowering in mid-winter when it has no leaves. I had started the layering in early summer 2010, about December. I knew it was doing well because by late summer I could see plenty of roots poking out the side through my temporary fly-screen walls. At the recent demonstration when I removed it from its pot and cleared away all soil there was an abundance of new roots. I was able to cut off the old trunk below the new roots, and then root-prune the new roots. I did not prune the upper growth of new stems because they were short and weak, and I want them to grow more before I start training it. This bonsai I also revisited the following weekend after the demonstration to trim the roots a little more, and remove a few high roots. I also cut the old trunk shorter under the new roots, then used wound sealant on the cut trunk. It was then replanted into a plastic training pot.



Winter Sweet after separation, with trimmed new roots and sealed cut underneath where old trunk was separated.

The third I worked on at the demonstration was the [Tasmanian native Sassafras \(\*Atherosperma moschatum\*\)](#). This was already 10 to 15 years old but had always been in a plastic pot with what I considered an unattractive lower trunk and lack of surface roots. Typical of a collected seedling it had only one overly thick surface root. This tree was also aerial layered on the trunk about 5cm above the old soil level, just above a large pruning scar, also early last summer. I knew this had been successful because I could also see root tips appearing out through the sides of my

temporary fly-screen walls. At this recent demonstration when clear of its pot and soil there was a thick mass of new roots above the layering point. Similar to the others, the old trunk was cut off below the new roots, the new roots pruned back, the tree replanted into a plastic training pot. Also, similar to the others, I revisited it the weekend after the demonstration to cut off some high roots, shorten and seal the old cut off trunk below the new roots, and trim off downward pointing roots. It was once again replanted into its plastic pot.



Photo (left): Sassafras after separation, with plenty of new roots that have been trimmed  
Photo (right): Sassafras from below new roots showing cut and sealed old trunk

The fourth and final bonsai was a group of Red Barked Dogwood (*Cornus alba*) cuttings that I had worked on at a demonstration at the July 2010 meeting. This was the new (to me) technique of placing multiple rooted cuttings through small holes drilled in an aluminium plate and then planting with the plate about 1 or 2 cm below soil surface level. The aim was to get the trunks to fill the holes then swell out above the holes, and to develop new roots above the holed plate. During the last summer it had grown vigorously with most cuttings growing from their initial about 5cm length up to about 20 or 30 cm length. It was in a larger plastic pot and when removed the soil was completely packed with roots. At the recent demonstration I cleared away the roots to find the aluminium plate from below so I could cut the old stems or trunks below the plate. The aluminium plate could then be removed. In total probably about two thirds of the original root mass has been trimmed off but still leaving plenty of healthy fibrous roots remaining above where the plate had been. It is not clear yet exactly how much the trunk bases have swelled, or even whether they have fused together at all. In future years as it grows further I will expose more of the trunk bases and surface roots, and as it grows they may fuse together. On top I trimmed all the longer stems back by about a half, to points above where twin buds were obvious. I also checked it again the weekend after the demonstration, to trim the new roots a bit further on the bottom, sides and on top, before properly replanting it back into its large plastic training pot. My objective is to grow a medium sized multi-trunked bonsai, in particular to show off the red coloured trunks and branches.



Red Barked Dogwood after separation, root pruning and stem or trunk pruning.

Ambrose.

*(Editor: Hopefully Ambrose's ideas and his report will stimulate some of our members to be adventurous and try an experiment of their own! Good luck, and thank you Ambrose.)*

## **HH (ex-)VP**

Herbert Harding has stepped down from his long-held position of Vice-President of our Society. Herb said something about he feels it is time for someone younger to take up the position, but, we all know ageless!

The Society is deeply indebted to Herbert for his services – he was elected to the position of Vice-President in 1987 – and has been a very committed member since then. His inimitable sense of humour has amused us, and often eased some situations over the years. He has certainly “earnt his keep” at many AGMs as the (supposedly) presiding person (no names ...) keeps flitting off overseas, usually in winter..

Thank you Herb from the President, the Committee and all the members, past and present, for your contribution to the Society over the past 24 years, and thanks too, in anticipation, for your continuing service as a Committee Member.

NRK