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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

Newsletter No 230 – July 2012

President Noel Kemp opened the meeting at 7.40pm, welcoming 19 members and visitor, Joe Kadsha. There were apologies from Tony Brown, Jan Fleming, and Rob White who is travelling overseas.

Members are reminded membership renewal is now due, and committee nominations can still be proposed, as the AGM will not be held until the 21st August meeting.

Information has been received about the AABC 2013 convention in Canberra from 17th – 20th May. The theme for the convention is “The Australian Journey” – the focus being on the use of our native species in bonsai – something which I’m sure will please Will Fletcher, at least!

Our intrepid travelling president is well on his way to visit “the stans” – so I’m sure we will get an update on his adventures over the next nine or so weeks. Watch this space!

This Month’s Meeting: Tuesday, July 17th – Stuart Clutterbuck’s presentation.

Next Workshop: Sunday 22nd July at Bellerive Community Arts Centre from 1 – 4pm.

August Meeting: This will include also the AGM and election of officers for the new year. Get your nominations in please! Will Fletcher will be our presenter on the night.

Raffle: Pot donated by Ambrose, won by Richard Forcey, and wire donated by Rob won by Herbert.

From the Library: We are now receiving newsletters from the SA Bonsai Society which, although doing the rounds at the moment, will be a worthwhile addition to our collection. There are a lot of useful tips and ideas relevant to bonsai within the pages of many interstate newsletters we receive, besides our own collection of bonsai books and journals, so they are worth checking out.

Happy Birthday: Greetings to those celebrating their special day during July. Star signs include Cancer and Leo, and your birthstone is the ruby. Cancer is a water sign, considered artistic, emotional and perceptive. Cancer is one of the cardinal signs which are regarded as enterprising instigators. Julius Caesar was born on the 12th of July 100BC and on the 21st of July 1969 Neil Armstrong took one giant leap for mankind when he set foot on the moon.-

Display Table: Diana brought in a lovely camellia, “Sweet Jane”, displaying small white flowers with a shading of pink on each petal; Gill showed us an azalea, and a fern in a small pot; Heather has been working on a Melaleuca squamea (Swamp Melaleuca) which Will seemed rather envious of – considering he had lost his! But he has had more success with his Nothofagus gunnii (deciduous beech) set between two rocks and looking very healthy; Noel brought along a lovely Prunus praecox showing off small, delicate pink blossom gradually shading to white; and Ambrose decided to go small too, with a succulent in a mame pot. **Don’t forget something for this month’s display table!**

Meeting closed at 8.10pm after which interest turned to trees some of our members had worked on during Andrew Ward’s workshops.

Noel's *macrocarpa* (still held within its plastic pot although the roots, which had been spilling out of it, have been pruned!) was showing some signs of decay, which Noel worked on to remove the damaged wood, and has all the hallmarks of a literati complete with jin and shari. It has also been heavily wired in order to bend the trunk over and downwards. Noel demonstrated how tightly packed into the pot it is, picking it up by the top of its trunk!



Noel's Atlantic Cedar, in a formal upright style, has been heavily wired, something he will have to keep an eye on.



David's *Picea abies* (Norwegian Spruce) – given to him by a neighbour who had intended throwing it away, but thought David might like the challenge of making a bonsai out of it!

A lot of cleaning out of dead needles, and wired branches to create a new direction, have already improved its appearance but, as with all bonsai, it's a work in progress.



Simon's Podocarpus (a genus of conifers endemic to the ancient super continent of Gondwana) probably had the biggest shock of all, being substantially reduced in height, to commence training into a pseudo twin trunk style, using the front leader to disguise the second trunk's branching point, as the second leader starts a bit high.

Tony Hewer completed substantial wiring of a well-established olive during his workshop session.

I worked on three trees:-

Syzigium paniculatum – small variety of native Lilly Pilly, which came from the “homeless plants” section of my local nursery. It began to show signs of dying, so was relegated to a smaller pot in the shelter of the patio. Having removed all the withered/dead material, ensuring it was regularly watered, new growth appeared and by the time I brought it to the workshop it was looking healthy once more. A large quantity of foliage was removed, leaving 3 main branches on a bent trunk. It will be re-positioned when potted, and trained as an informal upright.

Widdringtonia - a conifer in the cypress family, native to South Africa, has soft, dark green foliage, and is capable of regrowth on older wood – important in growing bonsai. Again I lost some foliage, but this will help to bring shape to the tree. It will be re-potted in Sept/October and angled in the pot.

The Juniper gave pause for consideration, as Andrew suggested removing the bulk of the foliage back to one small branch which would become the main trunk. After much turning, twisting, tipping and talking with other like-minded enthusiasts, I decided against this advice, opting to retain the bulk of the tree, wiring it instead to alter its informal upright shape. A small amount was removed from the top, and a new leader wired. It will remain in its present pot for some time to allow for further root/trunk development.

The following information has been extracted from a topic titled “Building Support for Substantial Branch Placement” written by Andrew Ward, which appeared in the *SA Bonsai* newsletter, Issue 3 June-July 2011.

Protecting the precious bark:

Those of you who attended Andrew’s workshops and demonstration, will recall his mentioning a product called “vet wrap”. Described as an elasticized bandage, vet wrap sticks to itself – not to the bark of the tree on which it is used, so reducing the chances of damaging the bark. It can be used instead of raffia, which must be wet before being applied round the branch or trunk in situations where a lot of movement is required. While there is nothing wrong with using raffia, in its “wet” state, it can become a messy and time consuming procedure, whereas several layers of vet wrap cut into 2.54cms (1”) strips, can be applied easily and more quickly.

Other options for protecting the bark include the use of electrical tape wrapped over the raffia to better protect the cambium layer against wire damage, as well as reducing the risk of snapping a trunk/branch where shaping is particularly dramatic.

Bicycle rubber inner tubes can be cut into strips and used either over the raffia or, alternatively, placed directly on the trunk/branch. However, direct placement against the bark comes with a warning to observe closely whether any burning of the bark occurs, given the higher temperatures of our summer weather. Bonsai enthusiasts who have used this method differ in their opinions as to its merits.

Of course, the issue of bark protection presents itself because wiring is the most often used method of bending and shaping branches and trunks. On this issue, there are differing opinions on what gauge of wire should be applied, with some presenters advocating against the use of wire heavier than 3mm gauge. There are those who also favour copper wire over aluminium, because it is much stronger, and therefore less forgiving than aluminium. Regardless of the type or gauge of wire, the use of raffia, vet wrap, electrical tape or inner tubing helps support the limb being moved, as well as protecting that precious bark.

Obviously the care, development and protection of our bonsai specimens is paramount, and it is through learning about different ideas that we increase our knowledge and enhance our skills in this pursuit.

Wiring Tip: If you don't have strong enough wire for the material you wish to bend, try using two thinner wires wrapped in parallel.

The following information from "Bonsai Landscapes" by Peter Adams

Basic bonsai techniques: Removing the Tap Root

In nature, a tree has a major tap root that ties it firmly into the ground, along with many flanking radial roots that spread from the surface down and underneath the tree. In bonsai, the tap root is removed, as are any other heavy roots, and these will then be replaced with a copious growth of fine feeding roots. With the removal of the tap root, root activity is transferred back under the trunk and the finer root pad enables the tree to grow happily within the limits of a small pot.

The root activity of a bonsai confined in a small pot slows down and as the roots fill the container a tidier type of top growth ensues. After a year or two, according to age and species, the plant becomes pot-bound and it is repotted when all available soil has been utilized. The tree is removed from the container and a third of the old soil is removed. Half the exposed root length is pruned away, particularly the old lower roots, to encourage the production of new feeder roots. The upper surfaced roots are part of the design and are not pruned – they add an important aged quality to the trunk and the image being created. The tree can then be replanted in the same pot, unless a cosmetic change is to be made to one that suits it better.

Editor: Read an article from the website of *Science Daily*, called "Want Bigger Plants? Get to the Root of the Matter". Web address: <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/07/120701191636.htm>

It reported that "plant scientists had imaged and analysed, for the first time, how a potted plant's roots are arranged in the soil as the plant develops. In the study the team had also found that doubling plant pot size makes plants grow over 40% larger. (A 3-D MRI root scan is included with the report) which goes on to describe "how the researchers were able to observe that potted plants quickly extend their roots to the pot's walls", and that "it is likely that the plants use their roots to 'sense' the size of the pot, although the details of how the roots relay the message about the pot's size remain the plant's secret.

Having looked at 65 independent studies across a wide range of species including tomato, corn, pine tree, cactus, wheat and cotton plants, they found all species reach larger sizes when grown in a bigger pot – on average, doubling pot size allowed plants to grow 43% larger."

For those of you with internet access, it's worth reading the remainder of the report. For myself, it enhances the argument that, as far as the development of bonsai is concerned, young trees need to be grown on for a few years (either in a garden bed, or larger pot) taken out annually to be root pruned, and branch pruned if necessary, thus encouraging development of new roots, a strong trunk and branches.