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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 235 ~ December 2012

Despite the flippant weather that waxes and wanes more frequently than the moon, our bonsai don't seem to be any worse for it, getting on with the business of producing foliage and thickening trunks and branches, although there does seem to be an increase in aphid and scale activity, probably as a result of the moisture and fluctuating conditions we are experiencing. (I've just discarded our winter blanket! And I did dispense with a gardenia which was so badly infested with scale, it was beyond redemption.)

President Noel opened the November meeting at 7.45pm, with a welcome to 22 members and visitor Ruth Rees. There were apologies from Rose Osborne who is on the sick list with back problems (Get well soon Rose!), and Yvonne Rush who sends Seasons' greetings to everyone and hopes to be more settled next year.

Special Announcement: Tony Brown and his wife have recently celebrated the safe arrival of their baby girl, Sarah Grace. Congratulations and very best wishes to you all!

Next Meeting: Tuesday, 19th February 2013 commencing at 7.30pm, the topic being "Pond Experience" to be presented by Will Fletcher.

Workshops: First one will be at Island Bonsai on Sunday 24th March 2013 commencing at 12 noon.

Raffle: Three prizes on offer – Helene won the azalea, Simon chose the figurine and David has some wire donated by Rob White.

From the Library: Hopefully everyone returned their borrowed books, despite us not being able to access the collection, the key not being in its usual place since restoration of the kitchen. Speaking of which, it does look very nice – much more functional and, I'm sure, easier to clean.

Events:

January get-together – at Island Bonsai on Sunday, 20th January 2013 for a 12pm start. Bring the following;

- few snags for the bbq etc. and something of the "savoury or sweet variety" to share. And
- don't forget our wives/husbands/partners etc. They are always welcome at both the pre-Christmas and January events.

AABC National convention – 17-20th May 2013 in Canberra (Full registration is \$280.) Venue is Rydges Lakeside Hotel with a discounted room rate for the convention of \$175.

Birthday Greetings: I tend to have some sympathy for those with birthdays at this time of year. It being so close to Christmas, most people seem to have the Festive Season mentally prioritised over anything else. So to those of you who do – **Happy birthday – it's your special day!**

Display Table: was almost groaning with the selection brought in, not forgetting the array of plants available on the back tables – some for sale, others were free. New members were asked to bring in something they had worked on at our monthly workshops during the year and, judging by their achievements, it has been worthwhile. Some are listed below, and the remainder will follow in our first newsletter for 2013:-

Alison (our resident “firebug”) is very fond of setting a light to her native plants –albeit to imitate what happens in a bushfire - then sits back to see what happens. Her *banksia serrata* seems to like this treatment, with new small-leaf foliage appearing on its charred trunk!

Jan Fleming’s Escallonia shows promise – small, oval, glossy green leaves and flowers.

Tony Hewer showed what can be done with a combination of rhodohypoxis (in two shades of pink), green hood orchids and violets – which have been growing in a large, shallow pot for a number of years, and also a Satsuki azalea displaying mauve/white flowers (some blooms were pure white).

Herbert displayed a lovely pink azalea which he may turn into a semi-cascade.

Noel’s pyracantha looked really lovely – it’s cream blossom contrasted against green foliage. And of course his Macrocarpa literati (still in that “special plastic pot”) seems to be coping with the heavy wiring it endured at Andrew Ward’s workshop in May.





(Above photos from our last meeting for 2012 courtesy of Ambrose Canning.)

Meeting closed at 8.55pm, after which Noel gave us a brief pictorial tour (plus commentary) of his visits to “the Stans”. Obviously there were many highlights, but being an itinerant traveller, did not prepare him for some of the incidents which occurred along the way. One thinks of their bus being bogged for several hours in the hot sun, while several of their group were most unwell; the visit to Derweze and the “Door to Hell”, which looks both frightening and mesmerizing;



A crater made by geologists more than 40 years ago, and the flames within have been burning ever since in the heart of the Karakum Desert, Turkmenistan.

There were a few groans from his audience at the sight of a ferocious battle among local mounted riders, wrestling each other for the corpse of a headless goat, in a game called *kok boru*. And a few more, when Noel talked of drinking a proffered bowl of mare's milk, and the rather gory sight of a horse being slaughtered and prepared for eating.

Turkmen woman at the entrance to a yurt (*Source: Wikipedia*).

Some of the group were involved in helping construct a yurt, which takes around 2 hours. They are designed to be dismantled, the parts carried compactly on camels or yaks and rebuilt elsewhere.

Note the colourful dress of the lady in the photo, which is still very common – judging from some of Noel's photographs.



There were long journeys of several hundred kilometres through treeless tracts of land and deserts, contrasting with beautiful green valleys gouged out by rivers swollen from melting snow of the surrounding mountains, whose peaks towered thousands of meters above. An interesting journey to a part of the world few of us will see, a reminder that not everyone lives like us, that there are still places on our planet where people lead more simple and, perhaps, less complicated lives than we do.

Thank you Noel, for allowing us a glimpse into another part of this wonderful world we live in.

Our pre-Christmas barbecue on the 24th November went well with a group of 23 making the most of the warm conditions - the weather again living up to its frivolousness. Still, I suppose we're approaching the time of year that brings out a bit of frivolity in us all! Chef Glen did a wonderful job cooking sausages and tasty home-made patties, which were garnished with a selection of appetising salads. And, of course, mention needs to be made of the rather delectable choice of cakes and desserts, which really were yummy!

Heather Wiggers and Will Fletcher vied for the best Christmas tree – it’s a difficult choice, since both let their imaginations run riot – at least Heather’s had some green foliage complete with lights and baubles, whereas Will had put a completely different “spin” on his – no greenery in sight, but the gold baubles looked very elegant ! The judges are out – perhaps a result will be forthcoming in time for the January get-together at Island Bonsai!

Many thanks to Gill and Glen Roberts for their efforts – it was most appreciated by everyone!

**This leaves me to wish everyone a most enjoyable
Festive Season, and may 2013 be a peaceful,
healthy one for you all...
Merry Christmas & Happy New Year**



Your Bonsai Calendar for 2013

Jan. 20 th	Get-together at Island Bonsai BBQ lunch
Feb. 19 th	Meeting – “Will’s Pond Experience”
Mar. 8 th & 9 th	Dahlia, Gladioli & Floral Art Show
Mar. 19 th	Meeting – Wiring, potting mixes & fertilizers
Mar. 24 th (Sunday)	Workshop at Island Bonsai
Apr. 16 th	Meeting – Will’s “dug up tree”
Apr. 20 th (Saturday)	Workshop – Island Bonsai
May 3 rd , 4 th & 5 th	Chrysanthemum & Floral Art Show
May 17 th - 20 th	Canberra Bonsai Convention
May 21 st	Meeting – Making pots with Phil Dilger (TBA)
May 26 th (Sunday)	Workshop – Island Bonsai
June 18 th	Meeting – to be advised (Gill Roberts or Tony Brown)
June 22 nd (Saturday)	Workshop Bellerive
July 16 th	Meeting – to be advised (Gill Roberts or Tony Brown)
July 21 st (Sunday)	Workshop – Bellerive
Aug. 20 th	Meeting – presentation by Tony Hewer
Aug. 24 th (Saturday)	Workshop Bellerive
Sept. 6 th & 7 th	Daffodil, Camellia & Floral Art Show
Sept. 17 th	Meeting – topic to be advised
Sept. 22 nd (Sunday)	Workshop – Island Bonsai
Oct. 15 th	Meeting – finalising details for Exhibition
Oct. 19 th & 20 th	3 rd Bonsai Exhibition at The Barn, Rosny
Nov. 1 st & 2 nd	Rose, Iris & Floral Art Show
Nov. 19 th	Meeting – topic to be advised
Nov. 23 rd or 24 th ?	Christmas Barbecue – location?

Note: All Horticultural Society shows are held at the Hobart Town Hall

(Editor's Note: The following is part 2 of the article on Azaleas which appeared in November's newsletter.)

Azaleas as Bonsai **by Brenda Parker**
Excerpts from article Published in "Bonsai Magazine" May/June 2012

Pests & Diseases

I am still of the belief that if the soil is perfect, the tree is healthy, there is always that chance that these bugs come along to spoil your day. When the weather starts to warm up (about mid September), I spray the underside and top of the leaves with **Confidor** or **Sharp Shooter** and continue to do this again in about mid October and then again in late December. This is a systemic spray to abate the red spider and lace bug that like to gnaw at the under surface of the leaves resulting in the leaves getting a "silver" appearance. It looks unsightly but it will not harm the tree. When the new growth appears these old leaves usually are shed and are renewed all over again, but for displaying purposes, you would not display a tree in this condition.

Once the flowers emerge there is a fungal disease that makes the flowers wilt and turn very mushy. It is called **petal blight**, and spraying with **Bayleton** at the time you start to see colour in the buds is a good time to stop or reduce it. This fungus attacks the base of the flower where the petals join the calyx and it is advisable to remove these damaged flowers and dispose in the garbage bin, not in the compost bin, otherwise the problem will be compounded next year. When azaleas are in flower it is advisable to water the soil level only and not the flowers, and usually when they are in flower my watering system is turned off.

Chlorosis is a condition where the leaves usually turn yellow with very defined green veins which indicates a lack of iron and/or magnesium. As the deficiency of iron or magnesium is hard to detect, mix 30 grams (1 oz) of iron sulphate (or iron chelates) and 30 grams (1 oz) of magnesium sulphate (Epsom Salts) in 5 litres of water and apply over foliage and soil surface.

Pruning

Pruning is always carried out after flowering, as with all other trees. If pruning is not carried out after every flowering, the natural growth habit of azaleas is that they get very leggy with foliage mainly at the tips. Tip pruning is continually carried out right up until Christmas and no later than to the end of January, as this is the time when buds are starting to form for the next flowering season. Remember to also remove any seed heads as this will weaken your tree.

Styling

Azalea branches are very brittle and snap very easily. I only put wire on very flexible branches and then I put it on very loosely as they mark very easily. If a branch does snap (not completely off), use it to your advantage and tape over with sealant and then grafting tape – they heal really well. This is a unique way to make bends in a somewhat straight branch.

Re-potting

You can re-pot an azalea at any time of the year even in full flower because of the fibrous root system. After re-potting place the tree in a cool position and keep moist but not wet. A dose of **Seasol** helps with the disturbance of the roots. Ideally the best time to re-pot is after flowering in spring. I never add fertilizer when re-potting, only after when I can see new growth appearing. Only apply **Osmocote** on the soil surface and not under the tree in the pot. Azaleas are surface rooted and surface feeders and it will only be wasted out of the drainage holes.

Propagation

The usual applies to azaleas – seeds (not common), cuttings, aerial layers, ground layering and of course dig-ups from old gardens or demolition sites, grafting, etc. Cuttings are easy to strike and usually are taken in late December to early February, about 6-10cms long with only the leaves left at the tip, placed in a mix of very sandy soil and lots crammed into a 10cm pot, watered and kept in a very damp and semi shaded spot in a fern or shade house. I don't usually cover the cuttings with a plastic bag as my shade house is always damp and humid and my success rate is very high.

Pots

These are usually deeper than most and coloured to compliment the flowers. Remember that deep pots drain better than shallow pots.

Did you know?

The first botanical book in Japan was called "Motokatsu Mizuno" written in 1681 and contained 147 varieties of indigenous azaleas. The first book on azaleas called "Kinshuku makura" was published about 1692 by the Ihei Ito in five volumes and contained references to about 350 azaleas.

Satsuki azaleas are less hardy than most azaleas and have a low and twiggy habit and have funnel shaped single flowers. They flower in late spring to early summer not like other varieties that flower in winter to spring.

Kurumes are hardier than most azaleas and can be grown in full sun in gardens.

Gumpos make great garden specimens and have large single flowers in white, pink and a light cerise. They are very low growing and make more growth on the lower branches and only reach up to about 200 mm. The flowers have a frilly edge to them.

R. Kiusianum (Kyushu Azalea) is the father of the Kurume azaleas and used for hybridizing. These are semi to full deciduous types.

You may recognise some of these names of azaleas and where they were developed:-

Belgium Hybrids – *Comtesse de Kerchove*, *Elsa Kaerger*, *Hexe*, *Leopold Astrid*, *Paul Schaeme*, *Red Poppy*, *Red Wing*, *Rosa Belton*, *Southern Aurora*, *Violacea*, *Mdme Auguste Haaerens*

Rutherford Indicas (developed in USA) – *Dorothy Gish*, *Rose Queen*

Satsuki – *Chojuho* ('treasure of longevity'). Flowers stay on for most of the year and fade to a lighter colour.

Kerrigan Indicas (USA derived form of Belgium Hybrids) – *Brides Bouquet*, *Ripples*.

Indicum & Mucronatum Hybrids – *Balsaminaeflora*

Kurumes (Japan) – *Blaauw's Pink*, *Christmas Cheer*, *Fairy Queen*, *Kirin*, *Ward's Ruby*.

Gumpos – dwarf shrubs smothered in single flowers with frilly edges.

August Kehr Hybrids (USA) – *Anna Kehr*, *White Rosebud*.

Nuccio Hybrids (USA) – *Purple Glitters* and *Rose Glitters*.

Conclusion

I hope my experience with azaleas will entice you to try some for yourselves and I am sure with great success. They are such a diverse group of plants that you will be enthralled with them for many years. To complete your bench display you could also add some small camellia bonsai that enjoy exactly the same conditions and perform just as well.

Note: for the first time in Kokufu-ten history in Japan, azaleas are now allowed to be included in the formal display.