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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 240 – June 2013**

The May meeting was opened by President Noel at 7 40pm., welcoming 24 members and visitor Pete from Christchurch, NZ. There were apologies from Sue Cerutti, Will Fletcher and Alex Sutherland.

Gill has arranged for a member of the quarantine department to provide us with a talk which, hopefully, will resolve some of the issues of bringing plants into Tasmania among other things! This will feature at our September meeting.

Interstate demonstrator, Tony Bebb, is coming to Launceston for a demonstration and workshop day on Saturday, 31st August, organised by the Launceston Bonsai Workshop Group. Cost for this is \$80 per person. Members interested in participating, please contact Ambrose Canning (tel. H. 62254002) for a registration form.

**This Month's Meeting:** Tuesday, 18<sup>th</sup> June, commencing at 7.30pm, will find Gill attempting a group planting on the same slab of sandstone upon which, back in 1991, she had planted a Cotoneaster forest group. Sadly for Gill, the Cotoneaster group drowned a few months ago!

**Workshops:** Besides our host, Will, 14 members attended the workshop at Island Bonsai on 26<sup>th</sup> May, some getting advice, others pruning and wiring and one or two selecting more trees! Our next one will be held on Saturday, 22<sup>nd</sup> June at Bellerive Community Arts Centre, commencing at 12 noon. Cost is \$3 and a plate of something to share is always welcome. We will be without Noel (exploring the Caribbean), and Will who is heading off to the Kimberleys.

Tony Hewer has been making spatula tools used for tamping down soil when repotting – these are available for \$10 each. Evelyn still has sets of plastic waterers for \$2.50 a set of 3, as well as fine and medium Klingspor Sandflex cleaning/polishing blocks for \$7 each.

**Events:** September 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> – Daffodil, Camellia & Floral Art Show at the Town Hall  
October 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> our Exhibition at Rosny Barn, so get working on those bonsai!

**July Meeting:** Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> Tony Brown will be presenting a topic on thread grafting-creating a branch when none exists. He prefers to do it in July as his trees will be well and truly asleep and ready for the work to be done!

**Raffle:** Pinus Mugo donated by the Society was won by Yvonne Rush.

**Display Table:** included Gill's native Correa displaying its pretty bell-shaped flowers; Cameron's Atlantic Cedar; a very nice Sheoak which Ambrose is developing; Heather's *Pinus radiata* with curved trunk (collected from a Seven Mile Beach dig); and Noel showed us his Pot Belly Fig, a Fuchsia in a very nice pot and a maple displaying brilliant autumn colour.

**Meeting closed** at 8.20pm, and Phil Dilger introduced his topic “Making Pots”.

The tables were set up as one large oval configuration He had brought along two large blocks of clay which he cut into sections and handed out to each person. These, he explained could be divided into two or three smaller lumps – depending on what size pot (or pots) we wanted to make. Phil also suggested leaving sufficient if the intention was to put feet on our pots.



The idea was to throw the clay between our hands and, as it became workable, hollow and spread it by pressing into it with the thumb, while the remaining fingers gradually spread it into a bowl shape – while supporting it underneath. Once the shape was attained scrunched up newspaper was placed in the “bowl” and the pot could then be turned upside down if feet or a base rim were required. There was a lot of laughter and joking as everyone got into the fun of creating their own pots.

Phil had brought along some “tools” which could be used for making patterns on the clay; there was also a sharp, narrow knife which was useful to place name or initials on the base, and a wire cutter made cutting the rolled pieces into feet much easier. On completion, our pots were placed in a couple of large trays and Phil took them home to fire them. Once fired, they will be lighter in colour, and Phil suggested leaving them out in the garden somewhere shady and damp for a few weeks, during which time they will attract moss and take on a more weathered appearance.



They say “the proof is in the eating” and while I’m sure none of us intends eating them, it will be interesting to see what “works of art” have been created in this first foray (for most of us) into pot making.



Thank you Phil – it was a real fun night!

## **AABC 26<sup>th</sup> National Bonsai Convention, Canberra**

This year the annual convention was hosted by the Canberra Bonsai Society and was held during the year of Canberra's centenary celebrations. The event was titled The Australian Journey and took place in mid May. Six Tasmanians made it across, in addition to myself there was Will from our club, Lynne Farrell who owns the bonsai nursery in Launceston and from the club the Launceston Bonsai Workshop, as well as Kevin (Launceston) and Jan and Joe (George Town) also members from the Launceston Bonsai Workshop.

Canberra turned on glorious weather, cold frosty mornings followed by clear sunny days. At least that is what it looked like outside through the windows. I stayed in the hotel where the convention was held and I found that during the event I was inside for 48 hours straight. Will on the other hand stayed with friends across town and got a decent walk outside to and from the venue.

The convention followed the well-worn programme of a Friday evening welcome reception held on the 15<sup>th</sup> floor and I think would have had great views over Canberra and Lake Burley Griffin if it had not been dark. Saturday and Sunday had presentations and demonstrations. The international demonstrator this year was Ryan Neil from Portland, Oregon, USA. Ryan had completed a six year apprenticeship with Mr Kamura at his nursery in Japan. He has now returned to America and has set up the International Bonsai Mirai, more of which can be viewed at <http://www.bonsaimirai.com/> .

Ryan has obviously had a very classical bonsai education and it shows in his style and work with conifers. He had an amusing way of introducing new points, "now here's the thing" he would say, "now here's the thing ...." He was a good communicator with the ability to work on a bonsai and talk on a different subject at the same time. He had plenty of stories about his bonsai experiences, and he was a fast worker as well. He talked in detail with white-board notes about development then refinement of single flush and double flush pines. Double flush pines are such as Japanese black pines that are capable of producing two flushes of new growth in one season. While single flush pines obviously are only capable of a single flush of new growth in one growing season, and include Japanese red and white pines as well as European Mugo pines and Scotts pines. The detail of his techniques could be the basis of another newsletter article, but for those inquisitive and with internet access there are on-line videos available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YnIFiRw2JBo> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-lY6j2wgl2U> in which he provides exactly the same information.

He talked about Objective Bonsai Design and his priorities for:

- The base
- Trunk movement
- Special features
- Branch location
- The apex

Not all of these need be present in a good bonsai, but for a great bonsai most will be. He then talked about directions and flow in a bonsai, including in the: Trunk; Main branch (the one that defines the direction); Apex. These three directions work together or oppose each other to create harmony, tension or a dynamic style. Will I rush out and apply these ideas to my bonsai? Probably not, but I will try and keep them in mind as important aspects of bonsai style.

On the Sunday Ryan restyled a red pine from the National Bonsai and Penjing Collection of Australia that had been previously styled by the famous North American John Naka. This was fascinating to see him work on this already famous Australian bonsai. Red pines are brittle and he had the audience on the edge of their seats as he slowly bent large branches.

In my mind Ryan was amusing, entertaining, educational and thought provoking. He even talked very briefly about his observed Australian style after being driven cross-country from Sydney. But he was obviously skilled and practiced in a classical Japanese and now perhaps a Northern Hemisphere conifer style. But like all of us, and contradicting that famous John Naka saying, I think he tended to make his tree look like a bonsai rather than making his bonsai look like a tree.

On both days of the weekend there was a bonsai exhibition held in a next-door room with fine bonsai on display from the Canberra Bonsai Society.

On the Saturday evening there was a convention dinner during which the first awarding of the National Bonsai and Penjing Collection of Australia (the NBPCA) Centenary prize for \$6000 was awarded, to a large heavily styled needle juniper that as winner of the competition was acquired by the NBPCA and subsequently to go on display in their new venue at the visitors centre at the National Arboretum Canberra. I visited the NBPCA on the Friday afternoon and I can write about it in a separate newsletter article.

The highlight of the convention for many of us was actually an Australian presenter and demonstrator who is well known to us after visiting Tasmania last year. Andrew Ward from Adelaide gave a fantastic talk about his bonsai journey. As we know Andrew gets nervous then talks a lot, and he did not let us down. But he stayed on queue and finish exactly on time with a well planned presentation taking us on a journey through his childhood and bonsai inspirations, with pictures of his whole family and other inspirations. He completed two group plantings, the second of which was outstanding with five small nursery reject tea-tree arranged inside a large semi-spherical pot that was positioned on its side. It created an image of the ochre coloured Flinders Ranges with sparse but prominent trees.

Next year's AABC national convention will be held on the Gold Coast and in conjunction with the BCI or Bonsai Clubs International 2014 convention. It is being held a bit later in the year and over three days, from 21 to 24 August.

Finally, let me explain that all my photos were taken with a hand-held camera, inside in low light and without a flash, hence the graininess and movement in some, but it is a credit to modern digital cameras that they can do this.

Ambrose Canning.



*Eucalyptus nicholii*



English Oak



Ryan Neil with Juniper



Andrew Ward

(Ed. Note: Above photos courtesy of Ambrose)

**Tip:**

The first (or lowest) branch can be placed either to right or left, but never directly to the front or back. This is the most outstanding branch, and is placed approximately 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the height of the tree. For example, if your tree is 30cms from base to apex tip, the first branch should be 10cms from base, leaving 20cms for the remaining branches. Note that the first branch should also be the longest and thickest, and the most interesting.

(Source: "Bonsai Techniques" by John Yoshio Naka)

A reminder that membership fees fall due as from 1<sup>st</sup> July, and election nominations are being accepted for your new committee. The AGM will be held on 20<sup>th</sup> August.

