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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.bonsai-southern-tasmania.org.au](http://www.bonsai-southern-tasmania.org.au)**

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## **Newsletter No 246 December 2013**

I'm sure I can hear some members saying "I can't remember a wetter Spring!" Yet, according to the Bureau of Meteorology, they have occurred. And I suppose they should know – given their records go back much further than we do! We certainly won't need to water our gardens for a little while.

Indeed the wet November meeting, which was opened at 7.50pm by President Noel Kemp, could have been a deterrent for those who didn't join us. For the 22 members who did, it proved a very interesting evening. Apologies from Trish and Sue, and there was one visitor - Motohiro.

Members were reminded of Andrew Ward's workshops and the Committee's request for expressions of interest. While this event doesn't occur until April 2014, the Society needs to confirm the facilities will be available to us for that weekend.

Evelyn is creating next year's bonsai calendar and members were asked if there were any specific demonstrations/presentations they would like included at monthly meetings. Chris Xepapas has offered a presentation on Pines at February's meeting which may spill over to March.

Treasurer, Rob White gave a brief report on the Exhibition which, despite numbers being down, still put something back into the bank book. Main area of concern is the need for better promotion of the event, something that is changing with the impact of social media via the internet. After quoting some statistics re voting for the People's Choice Award, he announced that Will Fletcher was the winner. Congratulations Will!

Rob also provided an update on our website, pointing out it's had 203 visitors from 41 different countries already. Information is still being added, so if you have some photos or an article about the Society, or about bonsai, let Rob or Evelyn know.

*(Ed.: And at time of going to print there have been further contributions – exciting times!)*

**Next Meeting:** Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2014 commencing at 7.30pm.

**Events:** 19<sup>th</sup> January 2014 – Barbecue at Island Bonsai – commencing at 12 noon. A get-together before resumption of our monthly meetings, providing an opportunity to talk about anything besides bonsai! Well, it does give our "other halves" a break, I suppose! So, bring along a salad/sweet to share, wine (if you prefer) and a spare chair. The Society will provide meat. I'm sure there will be time to check out Will's supply of natives – should the conversation bring "bonsai" to the fore!

April 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014 - Andrew Ward will be holding workshops, followed by a demonstration at our Society meeting on Tuesday, 15<sup>th</sup> April. Judging by the variety of trees

in training that were on display at our November meeting, some members already have their specimen to bring along.

August 21<sup>st</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014 Bonsai Convention International, Gold Coast, Qld. You can find all the details at the following websites:

[www.goldcoast2014.bonsai-bci.com](http://www.goldcoast2014.bonsai-bci.com) or [www.aabcltd.org](http://www.aabcltd.org)

**Raffle:** Cameron chose the metal chopsticks (donated by Anita); the blue pot was won by Jon; Chris Spratt won a pink rectangular pot; & Evelyn won a deciduous alder in bonsai pot (donated by Chris Xepapas). Thank you to Anita and Chris X for their generosity.

**Display Table with a Difference:** Members were asked to bring one tree, which had to be in training as a bonsai. And what an array of trees there were! Noel, ably assisted by Stuart (who flexed his muscles transferring the heavier bonsai!), introduced each tree with assistance from its owner. While some required minimum comment, others created varying opinions and ideas among our more experienced members as to what should be done with this or that tree to attain its full potential. Next year's workshops are going to be very busy ones indeed!

**Meeting closed** around 9.40pm (a little later than normal) due to the excellent response. Perhaps we can arrange a recall of those same trees next November to see what's happened!

Tony Hewer has been making spatula tools used for tamping down soil when re-potting – 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.



Perth WA Visit – Ambrose Canning

At the end of November we headed across to Western Australia for ten days holiday and visiting ex Tasmanian friends. Initially we were in Perth and it gave me the opportunity to visit Dianne Boekhout who is the AABC's Bonsai Convention Coordinator and also the current president of the Bonsai Society of Western Australia. We caught up with Dianne at her home on a cool, for Perth, Sunday afternoon and I had the chance to question her about the upcoming Tasmanian convention in 2016. That information will get fed back to our club's subcommittee who are planning for the event.

I actually put on my jumper and it rained a little. It is surprising that Perth actually has a larger annual average rainfall than Hobart, but their rain is concentrated mainly in winter and is followed by a long and very hot dry summer.

It was interesting seeing the preparation Dianne was doing to get her bonsai ready to survive the Perth summer. The aim is to stop them drying out too quickly and to keep the pots cool, so the soil and roots cooler. This is done by putting the pots into polystyrene boxes to protect them from direct sun.



Also, the soil surface is mulched, just like for the vegi garden, with a well-rotted straw type of product. This protects the soil surface from direct sunshine, reduces water evaporation, but still allows watering. You can see these techniques in the photos.

*Photos left:*

Bonsai prepared for Perth's hot summer, mulch on top of the soil and a polystyrene surround to keep the pot cooler.



One method used for smaller bonsai was to sit them in or on a tray full of gravel or crushed stone and water. Mostly the pots are not sitting deeply in water, except for some water loving species. But even with the pot bottom only touching the water surface it helps maintain humidity and keep them cooler.



Another technique I had not seen before was fertiliser bags, or tubes like sausages, on the bonsai soil surface. Dianne said these contained Dynamic Lifter and allowed the nutrients to leach out during watering but which retained all the fine particles and grit to prevent it clogging up the bonsai soil. These sausages were made from nylon stocking legs knotted into about 10cm long tubes.

On the Monday evening I went along to the Bonsai Society of Western Australia's monthly meeting in South Perth, their last before Christmas. It was Christmas themed and members brought bonsai that were decorated and also brought food. Evidently the club has about 90 members and there



were probably about 40 present at the meeting that was held in a large Local Council owned hall. They had a club owned projector and I gave a presentation with photos on Tasmania. I had some Tasmania scenery pictures with me and also some of our past club exhibitions. The audience appreciated it and we have a couple of starters for our 2016 convention already. WA shares similarities with Tasmania in a degree of separation from the main East Coast states and similar quarantine restriction limiting the import of trees. Because of the heat many northern hemisphere temperate species do not grow well in Perth, such as Japanese pines and maples for example.



One of their club members Peter Odin gave a short demonstration on a large fig. This tree actually belongs to their club and I understand has been developed during numerous club meetings and workshops. Eventually it will be raffled amongst club members.

Then there was a presentation and pictures from Dianne about her recent bonsai trip to China. Incredible numbers of bonsai, incredibly large bonsai, interesting different styles and an increasing quality of bonsai. A growing number of super wealthy Chinese with large private collections who can employ staff to care for them. Dianne had attended the World Bonsai Convention, with a pre-arranged bonsai tour, and said that the advantage of an organised tour is that it gives access to bonsai collections that the public would not be able to see, and may not even be aware of.

We know that recognisable bonsai originated from China, and that it suffered and declined during the cultural upheavals, but now it is extremely popular again and given the huge population of China they will become a dominant bonsai influence. Already many of the pots we use originate from China.

The WA Club meeting finished with food and drinks brought by members especially for the Christmas meeting.

Ambrose

I'd like to take the opportunity of wishing all members and their families a Very Merry Christmas and a Healthy, Happy New Year. Whatever you are doing over this Festive Season – stay safe. And may your bonsai flourish in bounteous good measure! (Editor)





## Bonsai Notes for January & February

### Watering

How much water do you give bonsai in summer? It's easy to say "whatever they need", but that does not always answer the question (especially this year with such a wet spring). At this time of year regular, thorough watering is necessary. If a dish is put in a soaking tray so that the water comes about half way up and is left until the top surface is quite wet, then the whole of the soil should be wet and, when the dish is taken out of the tray, excess water will run out of the drain holes.

Surface watering also needs to be thorough. When hosing a dish, go over it two or three times, allowing each lot of water to soak in.

On extremely hot days it may be necessary to water more than once, or move trees to a place where they will not dry out so quickly.

A tree which has soggy soil needs to be looked at. Check the drain holes, loosen the top soil a little, move it into a warmer, airier position and water it less.

Some trees do not like too much heat. Azaleas do better without extremely hot afternoon sun; japonica too, which likes full sun for most of the year, needs filtered afternoon sunlight in the hot summer.

Very tiny trees which dry out very quickly, benefit from standing on a tray of damp sand (with drain holes covered with fibreglass mesh beneath the sand). These also do better with less summer afternoon sun.

Continue to rotate trees so that all sides of the trees get sunlight, making sure that the trees are not too close together. When all trees begin to put out growth the space available for each tree suddenly gets less!

### Fertilizing

Fertilize using your favourite fertilizer, or use several fertilizers in rotation. When using packaged complete fertilizers which are dissolved in water, keep to half the recommended strength (see Fertilizer Notes). From the beginning of February branches and trunks thicken slightly, so a slightly increased amount of fertilizer is helpful to the tree. Of course, where trees are wired a constant watch is needed to see that wire does not cut into the trees; always remove tight wire.

Water trees well before fertilizing but do not feed on a very hot day.

Dry fertilizer such as blood and bone, cottonseed meal, John Innes Base Fertilizer, cow manure, etc. are best placed in tiny heaps near the corner of a pot. When the soil is wet the fertilizer stays in a pile and does not clog up the surface soil in the pot.



### Sprays

Watch for caterpillars. Sprays such as Clensel, Dipel, Metasystox, etc. are useful; Slaysafe and House & Garden sprays are good for less energetic gardeners. There are many good sprays available. Read the directions carefully to find out what the spray is intended to do.

There is not much problem with mildew if trees have good growing conditions. Japanese maples and oaks need moving air and sufficient growing space for good air circulation. Oaks also need some sunshine each day. If there has been a problem the trees can be sprayed in winter or early spring with a fungicide. All diseased leaves should be removed and burnt. Used soil should be discarded.

### Re-potting

Summer is not regarded as a good time to pot many trees. However Ficus do not mind being root and top pruned even in the hottest weather. After re-potting stand them in a shallow tray of water for a few days.

Most native trees have a growing period in spring and some, such as bottle-brush, tea-tree, etc., flower. Like most other trees the best time to re-pot them is after a 'dormant' period when new buds appear and are about to come into leaf. Native trees do not appear to be dormant because they remain in leaf, but they grow best when there are good growing conditions. In very hot, dry weather they often enter a period of semi-dormancy and then they can be re-potted and watered in the normal way. If the summer is wet, dormancy may not occur. To induce dormancy, reduce the amount of water given to native trees for a week or two.

A native tree which is top-pruned without root pruning recovers very quickly; but if it is root-pruned heavily without top pruning, the tree may not recover. Native trees which have lignotubers, e.g. eucalypts, casuarinas, figs, etc., will also go into semi-dormancy if water is kept to a minimum for one or two weeks.

Figs which dry out in pots often lose all their leaves but, if watering is kept up, a new crop of leaves usually grows. While these types of trees are dormant, they can be given drastic root pruning right back to the lignotuber. At the same time the top is shaped and all leaves removed. Replant the tree and water in the usual way. Allow all shoots to grow for a short time, as they use photosynthesis to provide for the needs of the tree and stimulate the growth of new roots. When the tree seems to be growing well, then remove unwanted growth.

### Cuttings

It is surprising how often pieces which have been pruned from trees and stuck around the edge of their containers begin to grow. Mid-summer and autumn are good times to take cuttings. Suitable trees include elms, ficus, trident maples, japonica, nothofagus, olive, ivy, jade, gardenia, azalea, etc. Juniper, chamaecyparis, thuya, yew, etc. are best grown from short side shoots with a heel of older wood.

Place the cuttings around the edge of a small pot containing a mixture of peat moss and sharp sand. Keep it moist but not wet in a warm, sheltered position. Dipping the cut end of the cutting in a rooting hormone powder before planting is also a help in inducing growth.

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