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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 249 April 2014**

In an unusual circumstance, it was left to our new Secretary, Anita, assisted by Evelyn to open the March meeting at 7.40pm and welcome 16 members, including new member, Jarryd Bailey. There were several apologies - Noel (still recovering from surgery), Ambrose (away on business), David (overseas) Cameron (had the flu), Sue (sailing), Chris and Stephanie. And welcome to two visitors – Antony and Bob.

Andrew Ward's workshops 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> of April. A few participation places are still available, so if you would still like to do so, please let either our Secretary or Treasurer know ASAP.

On-line payments can be made directly into the Society's account – please contact Treasurer, Rob White for this information (his contact details appear on page 5 of this newsletter)

Morning sessions are from **9.30am – 12.30pm**; afternoon sessions are from **2.00-5.00pm**.

A little bird told me that home-made hot soup and crusty bread will be available on both days of the workshops, at \$2 a “bottomless mug”. Of course I'm sure there will also be the usual selection of goodies which grace the bench-tops in the kitchen! Don't forget your tree, tools (cleaned and sharpened!), and wire (which will be available for sale from the Society's supply just in case!). Other useful items include a white/light coloured cloth (ideal to hide a branch/section of your tree which you may be undecided about removing), and objects for tilting pots to decide future position when re-potting. Pen and paper useful for making notes with regard to future/on-going styling or helpful hints, and a camera for those before and after shots!

**Raffle:** Trish chose the tray; and Hans and Heather each chose a pot.

**April Meeting:** Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> at 7.30pm. presentation by visiting tutor, Andrew Ward. . This should be a most informative evening for members, so make sure you can attend.



Our own workshops commenced on Saturday, 22<sup>nd</sup> March at Bellerive Community Arts Centre with some 12 members working on various trees, ably assisted by Tony Hewer and Chris who gave their time with advice and assistance – both much appreciated.

The Huon Pine belongs to Gill who, with help from Chris, has pruned and wired into a very nice looking informal upright.

A dig for native species, including Myrtle, was organised for Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> March, with the following account and photos courtesy of Ambrose.



“The trip went well. We started with six vehicles leaving Huonville, about 9 or 10 people. The weather stayed fine and warm all day, even though we climbed up to about 500m above sea level. We chose to go to the southern forests Russel Road area, west of Judbury and under the Snowy Range. As we climbed Tony’s car boiled and we had to collect trees while it cooled down.



Further on near Falls Rivulet we found great areas along the roadside for Myrtles, they had been slashed back at some stage and so had thick trunks and low foliage. We collected four large Myrtle as potential convention demonstration trees. Club members also collected native trees for themselves. Our Forestry Tasmania permit is valid until 30<sup>th</sup> June so potentially Club members can go back.”

(Editor: Anyone interested in doing so, needs to ensure they have the permit with them.)

**Election of Committee for 2014-2015** – Noel has advised he won’t be standing for President and, as all positions are declared vacant anyway, it’s time to think about who you would like to nominate for next year. Membership fees will increase to \$35/member \$45/couple from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2014.



Activities came thick and fast, with a nursery crawl to Forcett on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> April. Chris and Tony had arranged for members to visit a private nursery belonging to Andrew Bradbury, who has visited the Society on a couple of occasions. Around 10 members took the opportunity to fossick amongst Andrew’s collection of oaks (several species), elms, maples, myrtles, larches, cedars, pines and beech to name a few – assisting with a bit of weeding on the way, and generally in their element.

*Gill & Alex investigate the stock*

Chris and Tony made suggestions and assisted with choosing appropriate material, besides making a few purchases themselves. Herbert found a lovely oak tree, which everyone agreed is well on its way to being a great bonsai. There were quite a number of purchases with a little bit of temporary financial assistance being required – no names mentioned! We returned to Sorell for some well-deserved refreshments.

*Diana & Lesley – what do you think?*

*(Photos courtesy of Chris)*



Thank you, Andrew for allowing us to search amongst your trees, and we hope to see you at meetings and/or workshops sometime in the future.



**Bonsai Calendar:** Some juggling was required re monthly topics/presentations so an amended calendar is included with the newsletter.

**Please Note:** our Society's next workshop will be held on Saturday, 24<sup>th</sup> May at Bellerive Community Arts Centre commencing at 1pm.

Anita, provided an interesting and very informative presentation on the subject of Jade as bonsai. (*This was downloaded from website: portulacaria afra*) Her notes appear on pages 5 & 6 of this newsletter.

### **Events:**

Next month's meeting 20<sup>th</sup> May – A review of trees from Andrew's workshops. How different do they look now? If possible, bring along before and after shots – a plain background helps to enhance the tree's shape.

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

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

**Our Website:** Continually being updated by our enthusiastic Treasurer.

### **Library Collection:**

The Society's selection of books and journals is available to members, who can borrow for a month at a time, at no charge. It's regarded as a further source of gaining information and improving our bonsai skills.

New members in particular might find copies of "Bonsai Today" especially helpful on re-potting, shaping and pruning, see numbers 50 – 52, 57 -60, 63, 65 and 66. The first 49 copies also include some useful information, with bonsai enthusiasts such as Peter Adams looking at optional designs for particular trees.

## Some Bonsai Notes for April

1.

If bonsai pots are weeded regularly it is easier to stop the spread of weeds and liverwort. Weeds compete with the tree for fertilizer and liverwort covers the soil and gradually prevents aeration, which is necessary for a healthy tree. (A cotton bud dipped in white vinegar and dabbed onto the foliage of liverwort will dry out the leaves if the pot is left in sunlight for an hour or two.)



Spaces around the tree, too, when kept clean, cut down on the numbers of slugs and snails. Occasionally scatter a few snail pellets near dishes and around the base of the benches to get rid of snails and slugs (not forgetting that snail killer can also kill cats and dogs).

2. Freshly potted trees should be soaked thoroughly and placed in an open position free from strong winds and very hot sun. They will not need watering again until the surface soil begins to dry.

3. Junipers are still making growth; pinch back the new shoots to encourage thicker growth nearer to the tree.

Pines may need to have branches shortened. This should only be back to a point above where new growth can be seen or buds are visible.

Pot most evergreens now, including pyracanthus, olives, cotoneasters and japonicas. This will give them time to be established before winter and not interfere with spring flowers and berries.

The following courtesy of Rob White:

### COMMERCIAL BONSAI POTTING MIX

At the March workshop there was some discussion about different potting mixes for bonsai. Those members with a large number of bonsai probably make up their own favourite blend. However, members with fewer trees often use commercially available mixes, usually sold in 5 or 10 litre bags available from many retail nurseries and larger hardware stores such as K&D and Bunnings.

I fall into this second group and have tried a number of brands. The SCOTTS mix is very black and VERY fine and most unlike my idea of a good bonsai mix. It drains very slowly and the fine particle size means that tree roots will be poorly aerated. The AMGROW and DEBCO mixes have a wider particles size range but both will still need some supplementing with coarse sand or fine gravel, especially in larger bonsai pots and trays. My experience is that my trees grow well in both mixes.

Be careful not to be fooled by the claims that the commercial mixes contain Osmocote and trace elements. I'm sure they do but, with the very frequent watering of bonsai, the nutrients will soon be washed out of the pot and regular fertilizing will always be necessary.

The Amgrow mix is widely available at many retail outlets but the Debco one is harder to find. I recently bought some at Stoneman's Garden Centre in Grove Road, Glenorchy. The Debco mix is much better value than the Amgrow one. I paid \$8.95 for a 10 litre bag; the Amgrow mix was \$7.95 but for only 5 litres!

Stoneman's Garden Centre also sell 20 kg bags of coarse potting sand at \$8.95. This sand is just the right type to mix with bonsai mix to give the right drainage and aeration.

*(Editor: It is planned to have a discussion on bonsai potting mixes at our monthly meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> June.)*

If you have something interesting you would like to share with other members, or a request for information, let's hear from you.

#### Committee Members & contact details:

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Vice Pres.: Ambrose Canning – Tel. (H)6225-4002	Email: <a href="mailto:ambrose.canning@internode.on.net">ambrose.canning@internode.on.net</a>
Secretary: Anita Shanahan – (See top of newsletter)	
Treasurer: Rob White – Tel.(H)6223-2009	Email: <a href="mailto:rob.white@utas.edu.au">rob.white@utas.edu.au</a>
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THE JADE TREE:- “The Beginners Bonsai Tree” by Anita Shanahan

**Crassula species:** including *Crassula ovata*, *Crassula arborescens*, & **Portulacaria species:**  
*Portulacaria afra*

**Common names** Jade Tree, Money Tree, Tree of Heaven, Little Jade Tree.

These are the most commonly used species as bonsai. Care of them is so similar that, for these notes, I have grouped them together.

All *Crassula* and *Portulacaria* species come from Sub-Sahara Africa originating in South Africa. They are all semi-arid succulents. In the wild both *C. ovata* and *C. arborescens* can grow to a height of 3m. *P. afra* will grow to 2m. All have round leaves. The leaves of *C. arborescens* are much larger and silver green in colour. Because of this it is not commonly used as a bonsai specimen. *C. ovata* and *P. afra* are the preferred species for bonsai. The leaves of both *C. ovata* and *P. afra* are smaller and jade green, and may develop a slight red tinge if grown in full sun. Newer types available may have variegated or even yellow tinged leaves. The stems are fleshy (as is normal for succulents). A thin papery bark layer may develop in older specimens. The stems of *C. arborescens* remain a pale green-gray colour. The new stems of the other two appear greenish-red in colour, changing to reddish-brown and finally brown-grey as they thicken and age. The stems retain their internodes as they age, producing “rings” (old leaf scars) on the older parts of the plant. Pale pink flowers on short stalks may appear in winter/spring on all three species.

The Jade Tree is a popular house plant especially in Asia. It has a reputation as a good “Fen Shui” plant. The Jade is believed to encourage money/prosperity to enter a house if grown at the front door. It should never be grown at the back door however, or money will constantly leave your home!

So tough and resilient that it has been described as indestructible, the Jade Tree requires little care and survives even if neglected. It is excellent as a “Beginner's Bonsai Tree” on which to practice all of the principles of basic bonsai care used with the hardwood tree species.

However, as species of *Crassula* and *Porticulus* do not develop true woody bark, in Japan they are not considered to be a true bonsai species, and are not developed as exhibition standard specimens. Smaller *Crassula* species such as *C. marginalis minuta* may be acceptable as a companion planting in the Japanese Style of Bonsai.

Nevertheless many Bonsai enthusiasts grow and style Jade trees for their own enjoyment.

Styling: includes upright informal, cascade, slanted, and group planting. African style resembling Baobab is a possibility as well.

Some limitations on styling of Jade exist due to the fact that it is not a hardwood tree. Branches cannot be grafted nor is it possible to create root grafts. Neither one will take and may cause rot.

It is not possible to create jin or sari for the same reason.

Jade Trees do not develop nebari as well as woody trees do. Roots tend to be fine and pale.

Temperature and Light:

The Jade will grow in a range of temperature from 38°C. to as low as 10°C. It will withstand light frost provided it has good drainage. Jade can be grown inside as well as outdoors. It prefers full sun but tolerates part shade and artificial light.

Pruning and Wiring:

Leaf growth is predictable. Leaves appear in pairs. The next set of new leaves appear as buds growing at right angles to the previous pair. The new leaf pair grow up creating the leaf internode

A dormant bud lies at the base of each leaf. This will shoot if stem is pruned back to that point, producing two new leaves. Hard pruning back to older branches will cause new bud shoots to appear on rings (old leaf scars).

Cut paste is not applied to seal wounds after pruning, rather the tree is kept in a dry place with good lighting until the wound develops a callous. Petroleum based products should not be used as they will cause burning of leaf or branch.

It is possible to wire the Jade Tree but it must be done loosely to protect the plant. Wiring is more easily performed on younger branches.

Care needs to be taken not to over bend the branch as cracking of the branch may occur. This may induce rot and dropping of the branch. The best way to remove wire is by cutting it off rather than attempting to unwind it.

#### Feeding Watering and Re-potting:

Although the Jade Tree can survive without feeding, it responds well to once-a-month feeding using a general purpose fertiliser at ½ strength from spring to early autumn. It doesn't need winter feeding.

Jade trees are drought tolerant and will show their need for water by slight wrinkling of the leaves. Once-a-week watering at most during the warmer months is all that is needed. In winter only water once every 3-4 weeks.

Jades are commonly re-potted every 2 years. However it is possible to keep a Jade in the same pot for many years without re-potting it. The size of the pot will influence the size to which the tree grows. Re-potting is best avoided in winter, as the plant is slower to recover then.

FREE DRAINING SOIL is a must. A mix that is 60% propagating sand and 40% garden loam works well. However the Jade Tree is not fussy, so long as it has good drainage it will grow. Colourful or ornamental pots are acceptable for use with Jade tree bonsai

#### Propagation:

Jades will strike from cuttings of any size taken at any time. They will even grow from a single leaf. Allow the cut edge of the cutting to dry out for 2-4 days before planting into a sandy mix just wet enough to support the cutting. Keep barely moist until new growth appears. The Jade tree is a water seeking plant. It grows roots in search of water. This is the opposite of most other plants which only root if water is already present. Growth of new leaf buds usually occurs within 2-3 weeks. New growth may be slower in winter.

#### Problems and Pests:

In South Africa elephants will eat all three species!! In Australia the Jade tree has few pests except for scale insects, and aphids which are best removed by hand. Weak dish washing solution will loosen waxy scale bugs. Avoid pesticides as they can cause chemical burns to the leaves.

The Jade is not disease prone. Root rot is a problem as it cannot tolerate its roots being constantly wet. Good draining soil and positioning in a dry spot is the best way to prevent this.

However if the Jade does develop root rot, it is possible to save the plant by removing it above the rotten segment and treating the healthy portion as a cutting.

#### References:

Colin Lewis:- Bonsai Survival Manual Storey Publishing London 1996

Harry Tomlinson :- The Complete Book of Bonsai Abbeville Press London 1990

www.bonsai4me.com article "The Jade Tree" author Harry Harrington 2013

www.PlantZAfrica.com This website has interesting articles on all three species and other South African plants

## *Your Bonsai Calendar for 2014*

Jan. 19 <sup>th</sup> (Sunday)	BBQ lunch at Island Bonsai
Feb. 18	Meeting – Chris Xepapas – pines & conifers
<b>Mar. 14<sup>th</sup> &amp; 15<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Dahlia, Gladioli &amp; Floral Art Show – Town Hall</b>
Mar. 18 <sup>th</sup>	Meeting – Anita's Jade presentation
Mar. 22 <sup>nd</sup> (Saturday)	Workshop – <b>Bellerive Community Arts Centre</b>
<b>Mar. 30<sup>th</sup> (Sunday)</b>	<b>Organising a dig for native Myrtle etc. Huon Valley area</b>
Apr. 12 <sup>th</sup> & 13 <sup>th</sup>	Andrew Ward Workshops
Apr. 15 <sup>th</sup>	Meeting - Andrew Ward Presentation
May 20 <sup>th</sup>	Meeting – Review trees from Andrew's workshops
May 24 <sup>th</sup> (Saturday)	Workshop – <b>Bellerive Community Arts Centre</b>
June 17 <sup>th</sup>	Meeting – Soil mixes for bonsai
June 22 <sup>nd</sup> (Sunday)	Workshop <b>Bellerive Community Arts Centre</b>
July 15 <sup>th</sup>	Meeting – Critique Wisteria with Ambrose
July 19 <sup>th</sup> (Saturday)	Workshop – <b>Bellerive Community Arts Centre</b>
Aug. 19 <sup>th</sup>	Meeting – AGM Chris Japan Bonsai Scene
Aug. 24 <sup>th</sup> (Sunday)	Workshop <b>Bellerive Community Arts Centre</b>
<b>Sept. 12<sup>th</sup> &amp; 13<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Daffodil, Camellia &amp; Floral Art Show – CITY HALL*</b>
Sept. 16 <sup>th</sup>	Meeting – Will's pencil pine presentation
Sept. 20 <sup>th</sup> (Saturday)	Workshop <b>Bellerive Community Arts Centre</b>
Oct. 21 <sup>st</sup>	Meeting – Companion planting with Tony Hower
Nov. 7 <sup>th</sup> & 8 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Rose, Iris &amp; Floral Art Show – Town Hall</b>
Nov. 18 <sup>th</sup>	Meeting – Re-visit Trees from November 2013
Nov. 22 <sup>nd</sup> or 23 <sup>rd</sup> ?	<b>Christmas Barbecue -to be decided</b>

\*Note: Change of venue for Daffodil, Camellia & Floral Art Show in September.