

Albury Wodonga Bonsai

newsletter- April 2016

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Fees have been set at \$20 per member or \$30 per couple for the coming year. You can pay Neil at a meeting or post subs to Neil at P.O. Box 135, Yackandandah, 3749

Next Meeting: Tuesday, April 26, 2016 at Harry's Hut, Olive St. South Albury at 7:30 pm. For those who have not been before, Harry's Hut is the meeting room at the Gardens beside Brown's Lagoon. Entry off Olive St., opposite the end of Nurigong St., South Albury.

Topic for next meeting: Natives for Bonsai.

Once again we will all benefit from Annalea's expertise when she travels all the way up from Benalla to give us all the best info about Aussie natives as bonsai. Annalea has just presented this talk to the Vic Native Bonsai Club in Melbourne so she has had some practice and we should get an even better presentation than they got.

Last Month:

Pruning and Pinching: When you hear someone referring to pinching a bonsai they are not usually talking about thievery.

Pinching is when we cut the young, tender shoots. Often this can be done with fingers hence the name. Pinching can be done whenever there is tender young shoots on the tree. If the shoots will not break off easily with fingers scissors can be used.

Pinching is usually performed on trees that have already achieved good size and thickness. If you are trying to get your tree to grow larger or thicker don't pinch new shoots - let the shoots grow quite long, maybe for the entire season before pruning back. Lots of growth = quicker thickening.

Trees that are approaching the required size should be pinched whenever the shoots are growing. We usually allow new shoots to grow until they are 4-6 leaves (or pairs of leaves) long then pinch the shoot back leaving only the 1 or maybe 2 pairs of leaves near the base. Actively

growing trees will soon sprout new buds from the base of the leaves you have left and new shoots will start to grow. Allow these new shoots to grow again then pinch those ones as before. Keep this up as long as the tree keeps growing new shoots. Regular pinching should give you great ramification of branches and, as an added benefit you'll usually get smaller leaves as well.

Pruning refers to cutting larger twigs and branches. You'll need sharp tools to prune - branch cutters, saw, etc are tools used to prune bonsai. A chainsaw may be the best tool if drastic pruning of a larger bonsai is required.

Pruning leaves larger wounds on the tree which can take longer to heal. You can just let pruning cuts heal naturally but I prefer to use a wound sealer to protect cuts larger than about 1 cm across. I have found that the sealer helps the wounds to heal over much quicker than untreated cuts. One of the bonsai sealants is like plasticine and comes in a small plastic tub. The other has similar consistency to toothpaste and comes in a tube similar to toothpaste as well. Smaller cuts will heal quite naturally without our help.

You can prune most species any time of the year without endangering the tree but sometimes it is easier to wait until winter so you can see the branch structure easier.

Remember that some species produce buds easily on older, bare branches and you can prune these anywhere (eg maples, elms, banksias, ficus) but some will only grow new buds where there are healthy leaves (eg pines, junipers, grevilleas, acacias). Know your tree and how it should respond before pruning back hard.

Bonsai Events:

May 20 - 23 - AABC Bonsai Convention, Hobart - <http://bonsai-southern-tasmania.org.au/resources/Booklet%20FINAL.compressed.pdf>

Business:

Last month was also the annual meeting.

We welcome Theo as our new secretary. Thanks mate.

Subs have remained at \$20 for individual and \$30 for a couple and are now due. You can pay at a meeting or send payment and contact details to Neil.

Members have expressed interest in Grant Bowie from Canberra for a demonstration/ workshop this winter. Grant was interim curator for the National Bonsai and Penjing Collection and is highly regarded for his bonsai skills. I have contacted Grant and he has confirmed his availability and charges which we can talk about at this next meeting. If you would be interested in attending either a workshop (where Grant will help 6-8 people style a tree each) or a

demonstration (where he will show us how to(subject to be determined)) or both. Please let me know what you would like so we can get a feel for numbers and preferences.

Proposed 2016 program:

Members at the November meeting tossed around lots of possible ideas for meeting topics. Here's what I've come up with. Still time to make changes if you want to propose some alternatives.

January: annual Ficus workshop – figs, natives and other summer species

Feb: Developing a bonsai – slow V fast growth

Mar: Pruning and pinching – What's the difference and when do you do it?

April: Natives as bonsai - Annalea

May: Fusion to create interesting trunks and shapes – Les??

June: Shaping bonsai – wiring V pruning V hook and hold

July: Root pruning and repotting

August: Plums and hawthorns

September: Collecting trees for bonsai – what to look for and when

October: Exotics & growing them out - Annalea

November: Suggestions welcome

December: no meeting due to proximity to Christmas.

Seasonal Notes:

Even though we have had little rain the water needs of trees has reduced. I am now only watering once a day and could possibly reduce that even further for some trees. Just need to make sur the water you put on is actually penetrating into the poot ball rather than running around the potting mix and straight out the drain holes. I still like to 'double water'. That means water each pot util the water runs off or out the bottom then go back to the first one and water it again. As I have said before, the first watering only soaks in a little but it prepares the dry potting mix so that the second watering soaks in much better. A watering system has the patience to stand and water the pot for 10 or 15 minutes so that water soaks in properly but few of us will spend more than a few seconds watering the tree so double watering makes up for our lack of staying power.

Some cool nights have triggered some trees to start autumn colour change. I now have trident maples, English elm, zelkova with some coloured leaves. It is interesting to note that though some tridents have coloured, others are still very green and still growing.

Autumn is a great time of year for bonsai growers.



In the last few weeks I have pruned some black pines. These are trees that I am growing rapidly to increase trunk size. Allowing the tree to grow freely then pruning hard in autumn should promote lots of vigorous back budding in spring.



Young, developing black pine - Before (left) and after pruning (below)

Note that I have pruned the sacrifice branch but left plenty of needles on the tree where shoots can develop in spring.

Some of those long low shoots are also sacrifice branches to help thicken the base of this tree.



The more advanced black pines that I am refining were candle pruned in mid December. Over summer they produced lots of new buds that have developed into quite short shoots with shorter needles which looks great. Now that these new shoots have stopped growing it is time to remove some of the shoots. In spots where more than 2 have grown I need to cut off the extras. Remember that having more than 2 branches at one place on any bonsai can lead to localised thickening which looks bad. In strong parts of the tree I cut off the stronger shoots and leave smaller ones. On lower

branches and weaker spots I will leave stronger shoots to help feed the branch and encourage that area to grow stronger. This is one way of equalising vigour over an entire pine. Also at this time I'll remove any older needles left from last year.



Japanese black pine that was candle pruned mid December. Note the relatively short new shoots and the neat needles.



New buds grow around the base of the candles that were cut in December. A healthy tree will usually grow 4 or 5 new buds from each place you pruned like this one has.



Reduce the number of new shoots back to leave just 2 at each spot. Here I have cut off the strongest ones and left 2 smaller ones to reduce the strength of this branch which is near the top of the tree.

My Bonsai Notes: - news from members

Ian has sent us some photos of a talk he did with the Myrtleford Probus club. He does a great job promoting bonsai and our club. Thanks Ian.

Here's the audience. Ian says they asked lots of good questions and showed a lot of real interest.



Maybe someone else can give us some words or pictures of their bonsai journey for next month.

Even if you just email me some pictures I'll put them in so we can all enjoy something different. If you want to add some words that would be even better.

If you can't get to a meeting (or even if you can) why not email Neil neil@shibuibonsai.com.au with a question or a comment or even a few photos to go in the newsletter?

Does anyone have anything for next month's

newsletter?

Members and visitors are always welcome to bring a tree (or 2 or even more) to our meetings if you want to show off your successes (or failures!), to work on a tree, or to ask about a problem.

Fees for 2016 are now due. Please forward your payment to Neil ASAP.

We also need to confirm members contact details to keep club records up to date. Please complete this membership details form and lodge it with your payment.

Name:

Postal address:

Telephone:

Email address:

Membership type: family Individual Concession