

# Albury Wodonga Bonsai

## newsletter- November 2015

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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, November 24, 2015 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: End of year social function.**

4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday in December is just a few days before Christmas so we don't have a meeting in December. That makes the November meeting the last for the year so we'll finish with a social evening. We'll still talk bonsai but you can come a bit earlier and have some dinner and drinks if you wish.

Turn up any time after 6:30 pm. Bring whatever you want to eat, plates, cutlery and drinks. There are BBQs at Harry's hut if you want to cook something. Being next to the lagoon, insect repellent is advisable!

We'll spend a bit of time trying to put next year's program together but there will still be time for bonsai so feel free to bring along a tree or 2 to work on or ask questions about and any questions or queries that have built up over the last month.

### Last Month:

Ian gave us an impromptu talk on azaleas as bonsai last month. It was interesting to hear that he has had little success transplanting garden azaleas to pots while I have collected quite a few in the last few years with no losses.

Azaleas like slightly acid mix. Avoid lime and dolomite because they are alkaline and can kill azaleas. Many azalea growers will not use dynamic lifter chook poo fertilizer on azaleas. They claim it is alkaline and azaleas have died from dynamic lifter fertilizer.

Azaleas make lots of new shoots even on very old wood after pruning so you can cut them back really hard if you need to.

Azalea wood is hard and brittle so wire carefully. The bark also marks easily so some growers recommend using special wrapped wire to reduce scars from wire.

## Bonsai Events:

I'm sure there are still shows and other bonsai activities scheduled but I don't know of any.

## Albury Show Bonsai display:

A small team from your club set up a display of bonsai and spent time talking to passers by over the 2 days of the Albury show. Here are 4 of the culprits in front of the display. (Helen was missing at the point that photo was taken)



As well as the club display there was fierce competition for the 2 bonsai classes in the horticulture competition and the prizes were shared between all 3 entrants.

And the winners were:



Congratulations to Rodney with second prize in the 'large bonsai' class with that weeping maple on his first competition. The hort. society asked whether we'd like to make any minor changes to the bonsai classes (maybe change the size range? Add a novice class?)

## Albury Wodonga events for the coming year:

November – End of year Social function

## Seasonal Notes:

It has been a very busy bonsai month for Shibui Bonsai with shows and activities every weekend and in between lots of bonsai maintenance.

The new growing season means it is pinching time in the bonsai world. When to pinch new shoots depends on how developed your bonsai is. If you are still trying to get the trunk and branches to thicken you should let the new shoots grow a little longer - say 4-6 sets of leaves - before cutting them back to leave 1 or 2 new leaves.

Many of my trees are more mature and don't need to grow any more so I pinch new shoots before they grow that long. I try to take the tips off new maple shoots as soon as the first set of leaves have opened. At that stage the shoots are very soft so they can be pulled off with thumb and finger hence the term 'pinching'. On a well developed tree this can mean pinching 50 or 100 shoots and then there are more a few days later so plenty for me to do each afternoon.

Watering properly at this time of year can be a challenge. Hot, dry and windy followed by rain or thunderstorms. I find that even after moderate rain the pots are often still quite dry. A lovely, thick bonsai canopy can direct the raindrops over the edge of the pot so that the roots stay dry. Best to check rather than hoping that passing storm has watered your trees for you.

As usual, I've been fertilizing as regularly as I think of it - aiming for every 2-3 weeks to keep my trees happy and healthy.

October, November and December are good months to repot Aussie native plants. So far I've root pruned and repotted some banksias and a couple of Callistemons. There's still plenty to go so I'll keep at it until Christmas. The figs I grow are also Australian natives and they do best when repotted, pruned and defoliated during summer. We have traditionally allocated the January club meeting to figs so if you want some help with them bring them along to the meeting for a practical guide to dealing with ficus bonsai.

I have also started to defoliate some of my bonsai. Defoliation is a technique shrouded in mystery for many beginners. It is not a magic bullet to make small leaves but taking leaves off a bonsai can be useful in some circumstances. Cutting off leaves forces the tree to activate dormant buds at the base of the leaf stalk. Where there was just 1 leaf there will now be a new shoot with several leaves. This gives a couple of advantages - It increases ramification by forcing more shoots to grow and sometimes the leaves are a little smaller. Defoliation can also be used to redirect strength. Usually the top branches are strong and lower ones are weaker. By cutting the leaves off the stronger branches but leaving them on the weakest ones the strong ones lose some vigour and the weaker ones get a little stronger. Taking the leaves off a very dense tree also allows you to see the structure so you can find and prune out unwanted shoots before they make the ends of the branches too thick. Small shoots in the interior of a dense canopy don't get much light and can get weak or even die. Defoliating will also let light penetrate to those inner buds and shoots so that they will grow and get stronger. Please note that growing new leaves takes a lot of energy so you should only defoliate healthy, well fed trees.

## My Bonsai Notes:

**No contributions from members this month!!!** (other than the photograph Rodney sent in of the Albury Show 'team' thanks!)

About time someone gave us some words or pictures of their bonsai journey.

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](mailto: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.

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Fees for 2015 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