



NEXT CLUB MEETINGS

Green Square Community Church
182 Victoria Street
(Cnr Collins Street) Beaconsfield

April 2009

Due to Royal Easter Show commitments this meeting has been cancelled.

7pm Tuesday 14 May 2009

Guest Speaker. Brenda Parker, presents the glory of decorative stones.

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COMMITTEE

Patron Dorothy Koreshoff

President Neville

Vice President Sue

Secretary Lee

Treasurer Tani

Public Officer Max

Newsletter Editor Tony

Librarian Philip

Committee Philip, Gary, Jennie, Damian

MEMBERSHIP

Full Membership \$30.00

Concession \$20.00

Family \$45.00

Pensioner \$15.00

Welcome to the April Newsletter

April Meeting: Due to Royal Easter Show Commitments the April meeting has been cancelled. The exhibition & judging of the bonsai at the show is on Wednesday 15th of April and Thursday 16th of April.



Ficus microcarpa retusa bonsai at Bonsai South Nursery – why do some Fig bonsai drop their leaves when moved when others don't – turn to page 3 for the answer

ATTENTION EVERYONE WE NEED VOLUNTEERS FOR THE CLUB STAND AT THE EASTER SHOW

Please speak to Sue or email Tony to go on the roster if you can give some time to work on the bonsai stand at the Easter Show. The Royal Easter Show runs for 14 day, please help.

In this months newsletter:

To see members trees on display at the March meeting turn to pages 2 & 3

For an article on roots and bonsai turn to pages 4 & 5

Suiseki explained – briefly see page 5

Page 6 has an article on propagating moss ready for use on bonsai

Bonsai Events page 6

BONSAI IN TRAINING ON SHOW AT THE MARCH MEETING



Sue's Juniper bonsai



Lee's Saotome Azalea bonsai



Another of Sue's Juniper bonsai



Lee's Serrisa bonsai

BONSAI IN TRAINING ON SHOW AT THE MARCH MEETING



Neville's Black Pine bonsai



Jenny's *Ficus microcarpa retusa* - Banyan bonsai

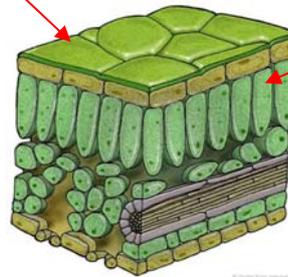


Chris's *Ficus rubiginosa* bonsai

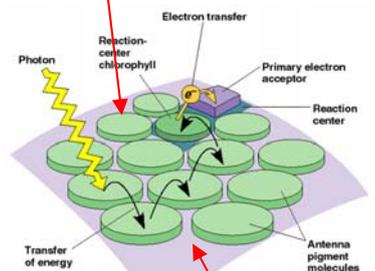
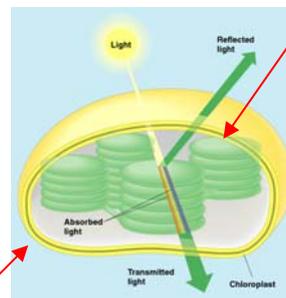
A report on the first Question Session at our March Meeting

After Neville opened the meeting Tony held the first questions session. Alan, a new member of our club provided an interesting first question for this part of our meeting by asking about his Weeping Fig. Alan was curious about why his fig had to stay in the same place or it would lose its leaves; when other types of figs did not lose their leaves if they were moved. The following is a simplified explanation of why

This is a cross section of a typical leaf



- (1) This part of the leaf houses cells that can convert light, gases, water and minerals into energy – this process is known as photosynthesis
- (2) Inside these cells are smaller cells that do the actual work



(3) In bright light situations the green cells that photosynthesise are stacked up so they do not work too quickly and burn out. The stacked cells leave clear spaces between the stacks so the leaves in bright light situations are pale green

(4) In low light situations the green cells that photosynthesise unstack (spread out) so that each cell can collect the maximum amount of light possible – the spread out green cells make leaves in low light situation dark green. In most figs the cells are not fixed in mature leaves; the cells that photosynthesise can stack and unstack if the light levels change.

(5) The Weeping Fig (*Ficus benjamina*) is not able to stack or unstack cells once the leaves are mature. If the light levels change then the only way the Weeping Fig can adapt to the new light level, is to drop its mature leaves and grow new leaves to suit the new light conditions.

(6) So if you are growing *Ficus benjamina* bonsai, find a good growing position and leave the trees in the one place or they will lose their leaves. Constantly losing their leaves can weaken these trees.

GETTING TO THE ROOT OF THE SUBJECT by Sue Brennan

This series of articles is designed to help take the mystery out of bonsai for absolute beginners. It will cover the basics that I wish I had known when first starting out in bonsai 20 years ago. For a beginner certain species of trees may not be suitable. Some trees coming from very cold climates may not be able to cope with Sydney temperatures well and others will have unsuitable growing habits or undesirable leaves that are extremely large. Some beginners are tempted to want 'one of everything', not realising how difficult some species can be.

FACTS

1. A tree in bonsai form functions in exactly the same manner as a tree growing in the garden.
2. A tree in bonsai form has exactly the same needs as a tree growing in the garden. However, the bonsai grower must supply some of those needs, Mother Nature the rest.
3. Most bonsai trees are willfully and feloniously murdered through lack of water.
4. A tree in bonsai form is kept small by cutting the top part: i.e. trunk/s, branches and foliage.
5. A tree in bonsai form is kept healthy by cutting the bottom part: i.e. roots.

HOW A TREE WORKS - The root system

When the seed of a tree germinates it has a genetic code that tells it certain things. The tree knows how long it has to live, how tall it can grow, how wide its branches can spread, what it can do to fend off attack from insects and other trees that threaten its ground space or nutrient source. What temperatures it prefers to grown in, what soil conditions are best for it, how to cope with extreme climate changes, etc, etc, etc.

This code is so efficient that some trees can live for thousands of years as can be seen by olive trees in the Middle East that are still alive and were producing olives in the days of Jesus Christ. Some Huon pines in Tasmania are over 10,000 years old and still going.

Imagine telling a new buyer of a bonsai when they ask how long it will live, "maybe 600 or 700 years". Some bonsai trees in the Japanese Emperor's collection are documented at being 700 and 800 years old and still going.

A tree is always growing under pressure. The roots put pressure on the top to grow and the top puts pressure on the roots for water and nutrients so it can grow. This pressure is done in complete harmony within the tree to enable it to successfully reach its genetic age.

The first and probably the most dominant part of the germination of a tree seed is the formation of a tap root. (Once the tap root is removed in trees for bonsai it never grows back). The tap root initially seeks moisture and stabilisation before other parts of the genetic code of the tree start functioning.

If the initial germination is successful and the tree grows to maturity, by then the tap root is mainly assisting stabilisation only and the thick side roots are providing stabilisation and forming a framework for the growth of fine feeder roots.

The most important part of a tree is the root system, without this the tree will not live. The most important part of the root system are the fine feeder roots. Healthy and well growing feeder roots will be shown by healthy and well growing branches and leaves.

It is what you don't see in a tree that is the most important part of its visual beauty. If the feeder root system is not healthy, it will be reflected in weak growing habits and unhealthy looking foliage.

When fine feeder roots first grow and feed they grow for only about two weeks and then new feeder roots grow with the older feeder roots forming the channel for nutrients and moisture to travel to the tree to keep it healthy and growing. The main large stabilising roots of a full size tree growing in the garden started off as fine feeder roots sometimes no bigger than a human hair.

As I said before, a tree grows in harmonious pressure between the top trunk, branches and foliage and the bottom roots.

The trunk and branches are the framework for the leaves. The thick roots are the framework for the fine roots. Cutting the top of a bonsai keeps it small. Cutting the roots of a bonsai keeps it healthy

Leaves: each leaf is a 'food factory'

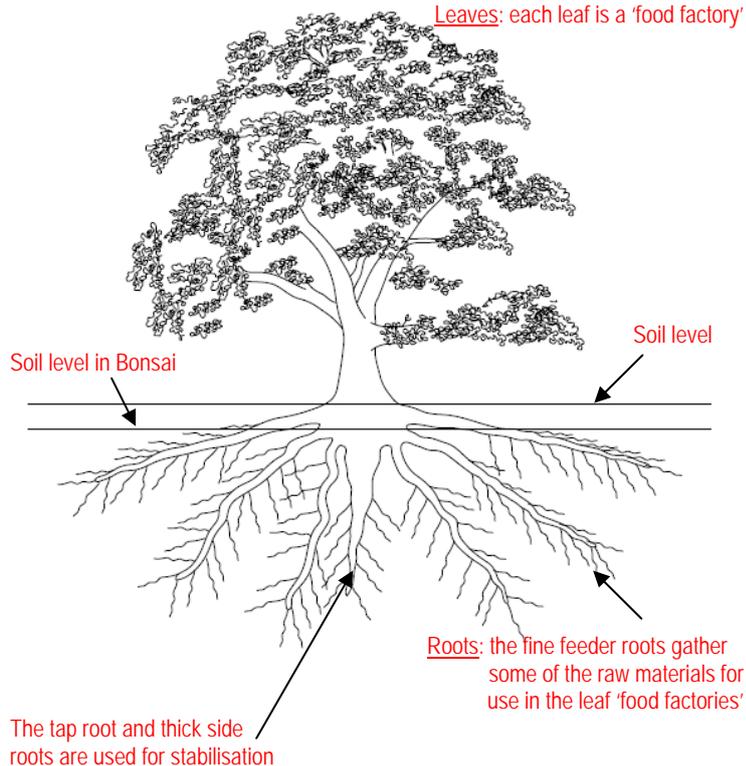


Diagram of a 'typical tree'

For every branch on a tree there is a corresponding root. If a branch is growing particularly strongly it puts pressure on the corresponding root to grow strongly.

The feeder roots of a tree grow during the night. During the day they are busy supplying moisture and nutrients to the top of the tree.

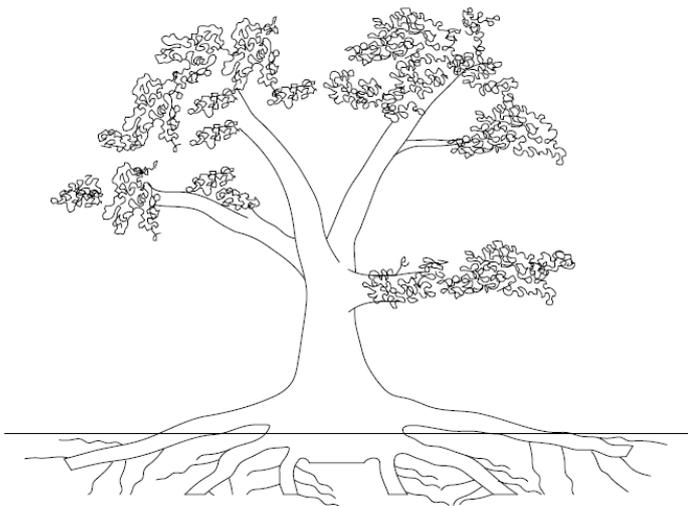
The seasonal changes in trees are triggered by the temperature of the soil during the night. This is when the root system is growing. With most varieties of trees the root system needs a certain temperature at night to stimulate growth; it is when that temperature gets colder that the roots stop growing and the tree goes into dormancy. It now becomes logical when stressing the importance of keeping bonsai outside.

The genetic coding of a tree directs that it does everything it can to protect the root system first and foremost. Under stress (when damage occurs to the root system) a tree will shed leaves and sacrifice branches, if need be, to reduce pressure on the root system. A tree will not grow any bigger than the root system allows.

When we attach the word 'bonsai' to that knowledge of tree roots, it becomes logical that provided the tree has access to a feeder root system, in bonsai form it will not need the tap root and the long thick side roots for stabilisation, so they can be cut off. With some exceptions, most trees will survive the removal of these roots.

GETTING TO THE ROOT OF THE SUBJECT by Sue Brennan

In bonsai we are encouraging a healthy fine feeder root system that will provide enough energy for the top of the tree to grow strongly. We root prune in bonsai so we can supply fresh areas of soil and nutrients for the continuously growing feeder root system.



Roots and top pruned to remove tap root and thick stabilising roots, leaving fine feeder roots

The most daunting task for beginners is 'root pruning'; especially with regard to the earlier statement that for every branch on a tree there is a supporting root.

The initial root pruning of a young tree grown from seed that has never been root pruned is only ever performed once. (See diagram above) We are pruning the roots that would one day support the tree if it were growing in the ground.

Once they have been removed for bonsai they will never grow back. As you see from the diagram, when this initial root pruning is done a massive amount is removed from the top of the tree, thus reducing the pressure that the top part of the tree can put on the now much smaller feeder root system. When this first root pruning is done, the top of the tree must be reduced accordingly or the tree will die.

Full sized Moreton Bay fig trees were successfully dug up and transported to the Olympic site at Homebush where they now grow strongly in the ground. This was done using the 'Mysterious Bonsai Technique'!

Bonsai enthusiasts use chopsticks and scissors, tree movers use front-end loaders, cranes and steam shovels to practice 'Mysterious Bonsai Technique'.

A small root system cannot support a large top. Remember that the tree grows best with both top and bottom putting harmonious pressure on each other. After the initial root pruning the tree will need annual root pruning for the earlier stated reason of removing excess fine roots and giving the root system a fresh bed of soil to grow in.

When a bonsai has a well growing feeder root system, the energy provided to the tree comes evenly from all the way around the trunk rather than relying on the necessity of lone root for each branch', as in a full size tree.

Rule of Thumb... With most varieties root pruning and/or root trimming is done when the tree is dormant, late winter or early spring being the ideal times. If the tree is a deciduous variety (loses its leaves in the winter), dormancy or 'a full anaesthetic' is obvious, the tree has no leaves. If the tree is evergreen (has leaves all the time), root pruning/root trimming should only be done before signs of new growth appear.

Figs are one exception to this Rule of Thumb. To help you remember the best time to root prune/root trim figs is to do it on Christmas Day!

Figs prefer to be done at this time of year and will have leaves of more even size then, than if they are pruned at other times of the year. In desperation a fig can be done at just about any time, they are real survivors, but only because of our mild climate. A Moreton Bay fig will not grow in Alaska.

PS: Beginners should avoid the temptation of buying unsuitable varieties of cold climate trees such as Spruce or Picea, which are often found at discounted prices in nurseries after Christmas, as unwanted Christmas trees. These trees survive in areas where there is snow for many months of the year and are difficult as bonsai subjects in Sydney.

On the other hand, some varieties of cold climate trees do very well in our warmer climates. As an example of how well some trees can adapt to 'alien' climates, in some areas of Queensland Chinese Elms are the major 'weed' choking out native forest areas, just as privets are in Sydney bushland areas.

Each year throughout the growing season the root system takes 'afternoon naps'. The feeder root system takes a rest from rapid growth rate and slows down a bit. Each variety has a different cycle and some trees grow at a faster rate than others. These 'afternoon naps' of the root system can be witnessed by the growing shoots in the top part of the tree not having fresh new growth. New growth looks a brighter and fresher looking green at the growing tips of the foliage. For beginners this resting feeder root system is difficult to see in varieties such as pines or conifers. It is important to remember the 'afternoon naps' of a tree root system when dealing with the foliage of a bonsai.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

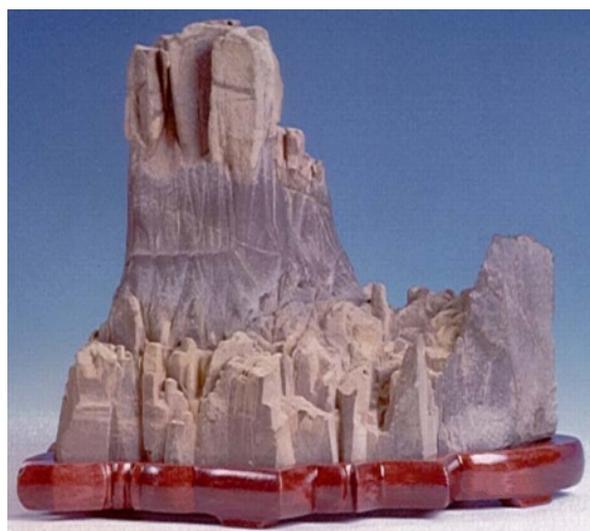
- 1: The most important part of a tree is the ROOT SYSTEM
- 2: The most important part of the root system is the FEEDER ROOTS
- 3: The top and bottom parts of a tree grow in harmonious pressure.

Next issue we move above ground and deal with branches and foliage.

Suiseki Australia - What is Suiseki ?

Well, it's an art form similar to bonsai - except that there are no trees involved. It uses rocks to create scenes of distant mountains, ravines, cliffs and other landscape features. It draws on the imagination of the creator and observer - similar to bonsai.

- Apologies Suiseki experts for the above abbreviated description.



From: http://www.artlex.com/ArtLex/s/images/suiseki_shearcliffs_lg.jpg

If you have some questions that you would like to ask about Suiseki Australia, you can contact Brenda by e-mail - brendap7@bigpond.com, or by home phone - (02) 9547 2157 or mobile - 0421384 834 or attend our May meeting and talk to Brenda directly

PROPAGATING MOSS & EVENTS CALENDAR

The information was adapted from the following webpage:

<http://www.knowledgeofbonsai.org/misc/moss.php>

If you find a sun loving moss you like here are two recommended ways of propagating and cultivating the moss. Having many different mosses at hand at all times gives the designer the opportunity to mix textures such as a fine green moss mixed with some feather moss to represent ferns which can add greatly to the overall presentation.

Mixing other textures and colors together can create a more natural looking presentation and there is room for so much creativity in this area that it is basically a blank unused canvas by many bonsai artists.

The two common techniques for propagating / cultivating moss are the "paste or brick" and the "tray" technique.

The paste technique is often the preferred method. When there is not enough moss to use this technique, as in the case of a small piece of silver moss; use the tray technique.



↑
Tray Cultivation

↑
Paste / Brick Cultivation

When you collect the moss, place it in a sunny spot and let it dry out a little but not completely – only enough so it is easy to crumble and cut.

Cultivation in Trays

Take a shallow container with small drainage holes and put 2.5cm of fines or sand into the bottom and mist it until it is damp. Then take the moss and mince it very fine with a razor blade and sprinkle it evenly on the surface of the sand or fines. Then mist again and put in a dappled shade spot; being sure that the top never completely dries out. It will usually require misting once a day.

In two weeks time the entire surface will be green and shortly there after you will have a perfect sheet of moss. The moss can be grown in its original container for over a year and it is a handy way to keep moss ready. The main draw back is that the sheet is always somewhat uneven, which if you are using pieces when applying, is not a big problem.

Cultivation on Bricks or Blocks

Collect the moss and let it dry slightly outside in the sun. Then use a blender dedicated to this use only and add beer (some people use butter milk or water) and blend until you have a paste with the consistency of mortar.

Place a brick into a tray without drainage holes and fill the container with water to about half way up the brick. The brick acts like a wick constantly drawing water up. Spread the paste on top of the brick and mist daily. Keep the brick in a shady location, in a few weeks the moss will begin to grow on the brick and eventually will create a solid carpet of moss. This technique will allow you to take perfect sheets off of the brick easily, whenever you need them.

Larger sized paving blocks can be used for bigger sheets. The paste can also be used on rocks in a shade garden; the moss will grow as long as it is kept moist.

REMEMBER BRING A TREE TO EVERY MEETING

Date	Event	Details
16 May	Bonsai Study Group Annual Show	Community Hall, Lofberg Rd, West Pymble
22-25 May	22nd National Bonsai Convention	Royal on the Park, Brisbane City. For more info download the flyer , program and registration form .
13 & 14 June 2009	Bonsai by the Harbour \$60 for 2 days plus \$25 for Saturday night BBQ	Shore Church of England Grammar School's Rowing Facility 86 Wharf Road, Gladesville NSW Enquiries: Ric 02.9953.1931 (email bonsairic@bigpond.com) or Jan 02.6585.3995 (email jan.briggs2@bigpond.com)
4/5/6 July	Ideas Summit	Dural Country Club - Peter Adams [English Master] will be demonstrating plus Monday workshop at Ray Nesci's
15-16 August	Bonsai Society of Sydney Annual Show	Chequers Resort, Terrey Hills
29-30 August	Illawarra Bonsai Society's Annual Show	Boys Club, Box Road, Sylvania
18/19/20 September	The Tops Weekend	Illawarra Bonsai Society's annual weekend workshop in Stanwell Tops
18/19/20 September	Bonsai Society of Australia's Annual Show and Marketplace.	Baulkham Hills Council Chambers, Carrington Rd at Showgrounds Rd, Castle Hill
24/25 October	School of Bonsai Show	Ray Nesci Bonsai Nursery 26 Sagar Rd, Kenthurst [plus sausage sizzle]