



## NEXT CLUB MEETINGS

**Green Square Community Hall**  
3 Joynton Avenue Zetland

**7pm Tuesday 10 April 2018**

Your experience with Australian Natives – bring a native

**7pm Tuesday 8 May 2018**

Lee will talk on selecting appropriate pots for trees.

## CONTACT DETAILS



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## COMMITTEE

Patron	TBA
President	Bryan
Vice President	TBA
Secretary	David
Treasurer	Chris
Newsletter Editor	Roz
Librarian	Les
Committee	Frank & John

## MEMBERSHIP

Full Membership	\$40
Concession	\$25
Family	\$55
Pensioner	\$25

SCBC wishes to thank Sydney City Council for their continued support for our club by providing the hall at a reduced rate.

## April Meeting

- Your experience with Australian Natives – **Members to bring an Australian Native** (if you have one) and share experiences in growing, pruning and styling it.
- Feedback on Royal Easter Show – Chris and volunteers



*Sydney City Bonsai Stand at the 2018 Royal Easter Show*

## In this Issue:

- About Attending Bonsai Workshops (Robert Stevens article) & photos from Workshops from National Arboretum Bonsai Week page 2, 3 & 6
- Fig Restyling by Lee– page 4
- Root Prune from Hell by Lee– page 5
- 2018 Royal Easter Show– page 5
- Bonsai Events Calendar – page 6

## Reminders

### Pots for the Gaol Initiative

Chris has asked for any spare small pots that can be donated for the Gaol Bonsai initiative.

### Changed Car Access to Greensquare Community Hall

Car access to the Community Hall via Joynton is no longer available so you need to enter from the back at Portman Street. Please view the map attached with this month's email.

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# BONSAI WORKSHOPS

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## Bonsai Workshops with Yannick Kiggen and Carlos van der Vaart

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As part of the National Arboretum's Bonsai Week in Canberra two free workshops were offered to nominees from bonsai clubs across Australia. John and Amanda from our club were winners in the draw for workshops with international guest artists Carlos van der Vaart from Holland and Yannick Kiggen from Belgium.



*Participants in the workshop with Carlos van der Vaart*

Choosing the right material and preparing for these workshops is important if you want to maximise your learning experience from such an opportunity. Below is an article written by the international artist Robert Stevens on attending bonsai workshops. I have used pictures from the Canberra workshop to illustrate.

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## About Attending Bonsai Workshops

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BY ROBERT STEVENS

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Have you been to a bonsai workshop conducted by international guest? Have you ever been disappointed with a bonsai workshop you attended and why? I have been doing hundreds of bonsai workshops all over the world and I believe I had been disappointing many participants. That's the reason I think I need to share with you, not only for those who are going to attend a bonsai workshop but also to the clubs who are going to organise workshops so you can gain the best benefit from the teachers and avoid disappointment of learning nothing.

From my experience, most of the participants are either over expected from a workshop or do not have learning target to the workshop. Many people are coming to a workshop with any material they have and expecting a nice bonsai to bring home; some are expecting the teacher to do the work for them on the material while the material is not ideal for a workshop.

Some are coming with a very pre-mature material while they don't even have a basic skill on wiring; but some are coming with an almost finished bonsai and do not know what they are exactly expecting from the workshop. So these people are either disappointed or happy but learn nothing from the workshop.

So before going for a workshop, especially workshops conducted by international guest teachers, there are few things need to understand:

### Materials

Preparing material for a workshop is very crucial, one needs to know which material fit to his purpose and works for his learning target in the workshop. In bonsai, there are different condition stages of material e.g.:

a. **Programming Stage.** Pre-mature The materials at this stage are not ideal for workshop because they do not have sufficient anatomical features to work on, it might be a stump with few shoots or simply a very young tree. Such material should be on a growing stage for long term programming, at least to let it grow to have more sufficient feature for styling.



*Whilst this originally tree had significant top of foliage, Yannick Kiggen explained that this tree could never be a good bonsai without cutting it right back and starting again. The trunk had little or not taper.*

Unfortunately many people are coming to a workshop with such material expecting the teacher do something to make it into bonsai. However, some intermediate or advance students might be able to use such material to learn specific design concept providing it is a complicated yamadori, then it can be used to learn how to find the hidden design potential, different design option; it is more about learning why rather than how. In this case, the student does not expect the technical aspect but rather learning the aesthetic instead.

b. **Styling Stage, including wiring skill.** The materials at this stage are those already have sufficient branches for styling process, looks rather wild with various design option.

# BONSAI WORKSHOPS *CONTINUED*

## Robert Stevens on Workshops *continued*

With such materials, the students can learn the design concept, the aesthetic principles including the technical aspect such as wiring, pruning and potting; so such materials are the best for workshop. The more complicated the better for learning something in the workshop.



*Above - Now this Juniper is a styling challenge.*

*Right - Carlos discussed styling options before taking off major branches.*



*Much was learnt about styling decisions!*

c. Refining Stage, including wiring, pruning skill and repotting/ pot selection. Some students are coming to workshop with a pre-bonsai or almost finished bonsai without having clear objective of what he want to learn from the workshop. It will be absolutely a waste of chance for one to come with such material to a workshop conducted by international guest teacher, because not much he can learn neither the aesthetic nor the technical; unless he is simply expecting certain

advice on restyling the tree or refinement technique or on pot selection.

Wiring technique can be learned from local club because come to an international guest teachers' workshop to learn wiring is a waste of time and money.

### Teacher

Before coming to a workshop, one need to know who the teacher is, what his expertise is and what kind of knowledge or technique he can expect from him/her. Some teachers may like to teach technical things in details and some have better knowledge in teaching advanced design concept and aesthetic principles. By knowing the teacher, one can choose the material that works the best to learn from.



*Another example of maximising learning - Carlos worked with a challenging tree - but what a transformation. Carlos is well known for his advanced design techniques*

### Participant Level

One needs to understand his own level. Before coming to an international guest teacher workshop, he needs to have had sufficient basic knowledge of bonsai design and basic technique such as wiring and pruning.

Assuming a club will not invite an international teacher to just teach wiring or basic technique but to learn something more advance; so it can be frustrated for the student as well as the teacher if one comes with pre-mature material while he does not know how to wire.

*Continued on Page 6*

# FIG RESTYLING

## Fig Restyling

BY LEE

I received a number of trees for boarding and was given permission to work on them. This fig irritated me and there's only one thing to do when that happens. Work on it.

It is not a sterling example of figs- at this stage- but it has promise. But it is very higgly-piggly with no direction and too much on top.

The thick branch on the upper right is really too thick for the apex and it is growing on the same level as two other branches. This adds weight to the top of the tree and also means reverse taper will develop if something is not done. The skinny lower right branch is boring and well... boring. But, it is well placed as far as its location and the size is quite reasonable for the tree.



Left: Initial Tree

Right: Heavy upper branch removed

So the first cut was to remove the heavy upper right branch. In bonsai taper is very important so you must weigh up the advantages of removing a thick curvy branch for a thinner branch and do it if it creates a better balance. In this instance it was the right move.

Now the trunk starts to gain dominance and there is far less weight at the top of the tree. Taper again – heavier at the bottom- thinner at the top. The little shoot lower right was removed as well as quite a few of the aerial roots all over the trunk. They were not adding to the design and had not been trained to lie close to the trunk.

With the tree cut to its basic shape wire was added to reposition the branches. It is not the time of year to repot figs and I have changed the front slightly but will not disturb the roots until warmer weather.



Pruned tree (left) and wired for initial style (right)

In late October the branches will be cut back hard to encourage new shoots closer to the trunk and at the tree's second styling the future secondary branches will be selected. Even the boring right branch will be cut back. It will have time enough to thicken and develop character over the next couple of years and boring will no longer apply. Also, the whole feel of the tree will change when leaves are closer to the trunk. Proportion has been restored, balance will be there when foliage develops and this will be a nice tree in a couple more years.

## 2018 Royal Easter Show

The 2018 Royal was held in hot and sunny conditions and over the Easter break the Showgrounds teemed.

The Sydney City Bonsai Club Stand had a broad selection of well styled trees and Chris, who did the organisation, deserves full congratulations.

The judging display was mixed quality with quite a few unstyled trees losing out to some imposing and well maintained trees. Paulette from the Bonsai Society of Australia did very well.

The Royal crowd was blown away by the Club's display and it was equal to the trees in for judging.

A viewer's description of a full cascade- "the one that's falling down the side of the pot".

The SCBC thanks all the enthusiasts from our club and the BSA for loaning trees and staffing the stand. Most especially - WELL DONE CHRIS!!

# ROOT PRUNE FROM HELL

## Root Prune from Hell

BY LEE

Melaleuca Claret Tops with a trunk as thick as my index finger and a lovely crop of foliage.... looked to be a good plant to turn into a small shohin but when I removed the tree from the pot.... life took on a whole new twist.



*The pot was literally crammed with advanced roots, hardened to wood stage and growing straight down or wrapped.*

Melaleucas are known for wrapping roots around the trunk and you have to be aware of this when you are looking for stock plants. Can you remove the wrapped root? Can you incorporate it in the design? Well the tree grow into it. With this stock plant the roots near the surface were not suitable to be incorporated into a nebari. They had to be removed as did the very strong woody roots growing down.

This was not a job for an amateur unless the plant was cheap and win or lose you would gain experience. At \$24 it wasn't cheap but I am familiar with melaleucas and know they are strong trees, can cope with a heavy root prune as long as sufficient foliage is removed from the top. If the tree looks to be in danger it can go into a water tray to ensure constant moisture.

It took about half hour to 'refine' [i.e. plunder] the roots and the tree was left with.....



*After root pruning*

The stronger roots were flexible enough to be moved sideways and the tree was planted in a very open mix and watered well. Aussie natives in bonsai pots like a lot of water so I wasn't worried about having the soil too wet.

The branching was reduced to a skeleton and foliage reduced as much as I felt would support the tree. So far it is soldiering on and shows no signs of termination. What is important when you are doing any root prune, especially one this drastic... keep the roots moist. Keep a sprayer handy or a bucket and spray or dunk frequently so there is no drying out.

The pot is too big but I wanted growing room and I have planted the trunk deeper than I would normally in order to stabilise the trunk until new roots grow to hold it. The tree sits in my ICU area where it gets morning sun and early shade. This is just the basic tree- I envisage new branching developing and when the second styling is done there will be a lot more to work with. Now it is up to the tree to adjust and start growing. There are very few instant bonsai. I cut hard at the first styling, allow the tree to recover and start showing its growth preferences and then the second styling. That continues until the tree is shaped and has a definite bonsai look about it.

The melaleuca has been planted on a slight angle to bring the apex upright and give it a bit more character. Its one of these trees when the nursery potential is not necessarily borne out once styling gets underway. But it is early days and a lot could change. At the very worst it will be a pleasing tree, at best it could be quite striking. But that's the future. Now is recovery.



*Recovery first then continue styling to develop character*

When you are root pruning a tree as drastic as this turned out to be it is wise to be familiar with the species you are working with and know whether or not it will cope with losing so much root. Sometimes you have no choice and it is a case of doing your best. But even if it dies you have learned something and that will give more confidence on the next root prune.

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# WORKSHOPS, EASTER SHOW & EVENTS CALENDAR

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## Robert Stevens on Workshops

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

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### Tools

One should come to a workshop with at least basic tools e.g. pruning shears, concave cutter, branch cutter, wire cutter and wires in different sizes. Don't to bring fancy tools when the material used does not need it.

Before coming for a workshop, prepare the material accordingly in advance, do not select material on the spot. This is not a good way as he may not find proper material for the workshop that fit to his benefit.

Broad-leaf (deciduous/ tropical) tree are the most difficult materials for workshop because they are unlike conifers which can be simply bended and wired into nice shape. Broad-leaf bonsai is about ramification structure which can only be obtained by long time process. Unfortunately, many broad-leaf materials (especially at nurseries) are programmed instantly; most of the branches are cut too early which cause those branches stop growing thick.

A good teacher may tell you honestly to chop back all the branches and teach you how to properly program to obtain proportional ramification structure although this may be very frustrating.

However some teachers are so friendly and try to make everyone happy by styling such material instantly, wiring and pruning every tiny branches into shape; but this may misdirect the student into wrong way of making good bonsai. So be very careful when selecting broad-leaf tree material for workshop; always try to find one with many branches, the wilder the better!



*Amanda brought a selection of trees to work with. Carlos chose a juniper as it offered the best learning experience.*

So workshop is about learning something technically and conceptually, not a class to make bonsai instantly in few hours. Workshop is a class to practice, to make mistakes and to learn. It is not an opportunity to have the international teacher to work on your bonsai while you learn nothing!

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## Bonsai Events Calendar

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Date	Event	Details
8 April 2018	Koi and Bonsai Show	Sydney International Equestrian Centre, Saxony Road Horsely Park. Sunday, 9.00 am to 3.00 pm
14- 15 April 2018	Nepean Bonsai Society Annual Show 'A Walk in the Forest'	Glenbrook Community Hall. Great Western Highway Glenbrook.
20-23 April 2018	"Bonsai by the Beach"	Wauchope Bonsai Workshop Group, 2 Thomson Place Bonny Hills N.S.W.
5-6 May 2018	Illawarra Bonsai Society Annual Show (Autumn)	Sutherland District Trade Union Club (Tradies) Kingsway Gymea
9-10 June 2018	"Bonsai by the Harbour"	Sydney C of E Grammar School of rowing facility Wharf Rd. Gladesville.
20-23 July 2018	31 <sup>st</sup> Australian National Bonsai Convention – Bonsai Exposed	Mantra Bell City, Melbourne. <a href="http://www.abcltd.org/next-convention/">http://www.abcltd.org/next-convention/</a>