



NEXT CLUB MEETINGS

Green Square Community Hall
3 Joynton Avenue
Zetland

7pm Tuesday 12 August 2014

Repotting and root pruning for deciduous trees, junipers & privets.

7pm Tuesday 9 September 2014

Special guest presentation, Steve Falcioni from ECO products talks on plant pests, diseases, root stimulants and plant food.

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MEMBERSHIP

Full Membership \$40.00

Concession \$25.00

Family \$55.00

Pensioner \$25.00

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

Welcome to the August Newsletter

August Meeting

- Have all your potting mix and pots ready and bring for the members repotting and root pruning of deciduous trees, junipers & privets. It is a very busy month particularly if you have many trees.

In this issue:

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ECO special guest at the September meeting:

Make a special mark in your diary to hear an eye opening talk on how we can better our bonsai. Steve Falcioni from ECO products will be at the September meeting talking about good and bad insects - how to encourage the good and control the bad [without wiping out the good]. The presentation covers plant pests and diseases, root stimulants and plant food and a few other products to improve the health of your trees.

So save the predators in your patch of green – not the local thieves but the Good Guys who eat the baddies on your plants.

Steve Falcioni is General Manager of Organic Crop Protectants (OCP) makers of the ECO-organic garden range. Their range includes organic pesticides and fertilisers which are designed to promote plant health and protect beneficial insects. Steve goes through the range explaining the how and whys of sustainable feeding and pest and disease control. He is informative, down to earth, easily understandable and interesting. You'll come away with a better grasp of how and why you use certain pesticides and plant foods or root stimulants.

This is a talk not to be missed as it will help improve your bonsai care. ECO products will be available for sale at the end of Steve's presentation for less than you would pay at nurseries.

Mark your diaries now and be sure to attend.



ROOT PRUNING AND REPOTTING DECIDUOUS TREES

Notes from Sue's July workshop on root pruning and repotting a Trident Maple

Scrape the surface soil off your tree to see what the top roots are like and then remove a lot of the soil on the sides and bottoms. Tridents can be heavily root pruned while Japanese maples need more root left.

Roots are pruned to allow fresh soil in the pot, to give the tree growing room and to stimulate the tree's growth. The objective is to have just fine feeder roots under the trunk.



Roots with majority of soil removed and before pruning

Sue removed the majority of the soil and cut off a lot of the old feeder roots. Then she cut off thicker roots which allow more room in the pot and the thicker roots do not feed the tree, only the fine, feeder roots feed a tree. Don't reuse soil that has a lot of weeds as you will be forever weeding.



Thicker roots are cut off to allow more room in pot and only fine feeder roots are left which feed the tree.

Put grating in the base of the pot to cover the drainage hole. Whether or not you wire this in is an individual choice. When doing group settings wiring the grating in is necessary as it will move when you adjust the tree's position. With one or two trees it is not usually necessary.

If there is a hollow under the tree put a mound of soil in the pot where you want to place the tree.

Position the tree in the correct position and at the best angle and start putting soil in. Be sure the soil is firmly around the roots with no air pockets. Take time putting the soil in to be sure the tree is firmly in the pot.

Very few trees go in the middle of a pot. Standard position is just to the left or right of centre, depending on the tree's direction and the centre of the tree just a bit behind the centre line.

Always keep the soil just a bit below the rim of the pot to catch water when you water it.

When you repot deciduous trees it is not necessary to keep them in the shade for a couple of weeks after root pruning because the tree has no leaves to draw water.

To moss the soil collect moss when the weather is wet. Put several sheets of newspaper in the tray and put your moss in that. Keep it in a semi shady spot and water daily. When you are ready to moss your soil surface trim any excess dirt from the bottom of the moss, let the moss stand in a little water to saturate it, flatten the moss with a spatula or similar flat implement and press the flattened moss firmly into the soil on the pot.

When you are root pruning be sure to do the trees in the season best for each type. Deciduous in the winter months when they are bare of leaves, azaleas after flowering or in the spring, evergreens in spring, figs in the hotter months, pines in winter, natives in late spring, junipers aren't fussy but preferably not in the high heat of summer or the cold of mid-winter. Whenever you repot it is always necessary for good after care for 2 weeks after the root prune. Keep evergreens in semi shade to minimise the tree's water needs while the new roots are growing.

Pot choice makes a difference. This Trident Maple was originally planted in the wrong sized pot and a pot that did not suit the tree—that is it was in a rectangular brown "male" pot. See how the Trident Maple bonsai transforms after repotting into a more appropriate pot.



Before



*Apex of tree will be wired upward
After*

HOW TO JUDGE WHEN TO ROOT PRUNE AND REPOT YOUR BONSAI

Judging when to root prune –notes from Harry Harrington (bonsai4me.com)

Harry Harrington is a well-known international bonsai artist who has authored a number of books on bonsai and has developed a comprehensive website on bonsai. For the full article on when to repot your bonsai visit:

<http://www.bonsai4me.com/Basics/BasicsWhen%20to%20Repot%20your%20Bonsai.htm>

Harry explains that for the majority of species, particularly deciduous trees, there is a small window of opportunity in Spring to disturb and prune roots and repot bonsai with “reduced risk of danger to the tree’s health”. That is not to say that you cannot repot some species at other times of the year – but the focus is on the optimal time.

Rather than specifying calendar dates for repotting, Harry explains that it is best to look for the “stages of bud growth in Spring and these can be used to identify the best time to repot your bonsai”. This approach overcomes differences in tree species, climatic differences, local environmental differences and even individual tree differences.

Harry explains that the signal for when the tree is coming out of dormancy is when the dormant buds that were produced late Summer and Autumn of the previous year begin to swell.

The energy resources of the tree that have been stored in the roots over winter moves from the roots up into the tree ready for the explosion of new growth. When this happens “the roots stop being an energy store and their primary function is to supply the newly opening leaves with moisture from the ground.”

By observing the visible differences in bud development, 4 stages can be identified:-

Stage One, Winter/Dormant Buds: On most trees these are tiny and are typically colourless. The roots are dormant and for the majority of the trees energy resources are contained within the roots.

Stage Two, Swelling Buds/Bud Swell: In early Spring, after the roots begin to wake, the buds on the branches will begin to swell. In many (but not all) species, the swelling buds will have a stronger colour than those that are still dormant (Winter buds). New adventitious buds can appear on the trunk and existing branches of the tree at this stage.

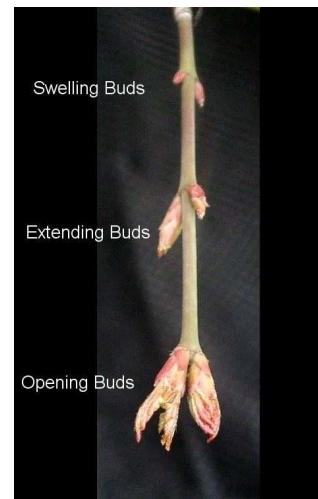
Stage Three, Extending Buds/Bud Extension: The buds will lengthen, take a stronger colour and in many cases appear to be on the verge of opening. By this point the majority of the tree's resources are no longer in the roots but are in the above ground parts of the tree. This is the best time to repot.

Stage Four, Bud Burst/Bud Opening: The buds open and the tiny new leaves begin to appear. Repotting must be finished by now.

Harry explains that during Stage One, the tree can be lifted from the ground and repotted but he warns that if you root prune at this time you will remove some of the stored energy of the tree which may affect the forthcoming growing season and any tears of damage during the pruning will not be repaired until the roots are more active. There is a higher risk of dieback and root infection with root pruning at Stage One.



4 identifiable bud stages
(pictures by Harry Harrington
sourced from
www.bonsai4me.com)



In Stage 2 (Swelling bud) repotting and root pruning can be carried out safely. If commenced very early then you will deprive the tree of some energy – but enthusiasts with large collections may need to commence repotting early particularly on trees that have many Swelling Buds

“Stage 3, Extending Buds/Bud Extension is the best time to repot and root prune as the roots are very active and can repair themselves rapidly, and the majority of the trees resources are contained in the tree. In other words, pruning and removal of the roots will not deplete the tree of energy.” Harry Harrington

He explains that for the majority of tree species you should aim to have all of your repotting completed by the time Stage 4 occurs. As the first opening buds appear, the roots are required to supply moisture to the new foliage and should not be disturbed.

Note from editor: Figs such as the Port Jackson Fig and many Australian natives are some species that will not fully fit this guide. However this guide is particularly valuable for deciduous tree species and also evergreens such as junipers, privets etc.



This Hawthorn now has swelling buds all over the branches and a few extending buds. These will begin to open soon and repotting must be carried out
(Source: www.bonsai4me.com)

PROGRESS ON SCBC “TREES IN TRAINING”

Port Jackson Fig adopted by Lee

I was given a club fig to look after and style. It had been cut back very hard and was little more than a stump and had then been allowed to grow. Although winter is not the time to work on figs I wanted to get a start on styling and remove branches that would not be necessary and to see what possibilities the fig had.

I removed it from the pot and lowered the soil level a couple of centimetres, taking care not to disturb the main body of roots. Figs are the only tree that prefer to be worked on when they are in full growth mode in the warmer months and do not like being root pruned in cold weather.

The roots hold a potential horror story. When the initial styling was done there was no root work at all and it is VERY important when you are styling a new stock plant that the roots get proper attention and are pruned to make the base of the tree suitable for a future shallow pot.



No root work done at initial styling. Note the bad scar where two large branches were previously removed (left picture)

In fact, you really cannot properly style a new tree unless you know what the roots are doing as they can negate any styling you have achieved if they are not compatible with the above ground vision. With figs you can greatly reduce problem roots – when night temperatures don't go below 16 degrees. But not in the winter but one root was so ugly I took the risk and removed it.

One side of the tree was badly scarred where two large branches had been removed and the callous was already rolling over the cut marks. I chose this as the front of the tree because it was far more interesting than any other viewing angle. I dremoled out the deadwood to make the damage a feature.



*Initial dremel work on the deadwood to turn the damage into a feature.
Note ugly intrusive root on the right.*

It is not a practice to carve figs or to have deadwood as the ficus wood is very soft and rots easily. In this instance it was the only possibility to work towards an interesting tree and when any damaged cambium tissue heals I will use a wood hardener to preserve the wood. Once the carving naturalises to a soft grey-beige it will blend with the trunk and not stand out as much as fresh carving does.



*The ugly root is removed.
This is a possible front but
the carving is too prominent.*

Excess branches were removed. The branches were wired to several centimetres beyond the trunk. No sense wiring to the end as that will eventually be removed to encourage back budding but for the moment leaving the branches longer will help thicken them.

The styled tree was carefully repotted and placed in a sunny spot to start the next stage of its development. In early summer I will bare root it and see what additional alterations the roots need. From what I could see some very large roots are heading straight down into the soil.



*The front has been adjusted to the left.
The carving is still apparent but more subtle.*

Progress on Chris's Maple

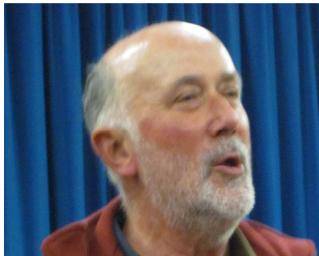
*Chris's maple is developing well.
It has excellent movement in
the trunk and has been
planted in a great pot very
appropriate for the tree.*



ROSS MILLER WORKSHOP - TRAINING OF TWO FLUSH PINES

Training of Two-Flush Pines

BY ROSS MILLER



Ross Miller is a highly experienced bonsai enthusiast and member of the Illawarra Bonsai Society. These notes developed for a workshop he gave to members on the training/growth cycle of pines is reproduced from the Illawarra Bonsai Society newsletter.

Two-flush pines are pines which produce two flushes of growth during each spring/summer growing period. Such pines include Japanese Black, Japanese Red and Radiata Pines.

I have over 30 two-flush pines none of which are showable. Part of the reason for them not being showable is that until a year ago I did not have an approach to training them which seemed logical, which gave consistent results, and which I could manage to do in the time which I had available.

At the AABC convention in Canberra last year the main speaker was a Japanese-trained American called Ryan Neil. He spoke of a method which both seemed logical and required less commitment of time per tree than methods I have tried over many years. His method makes a direct connection between when to apply fertiliser, when to withhold fertiliser, and the annual growth/training cycle. I have been following a method similar to his for the past year with very pleasing results.

My trees are healthy, the needle length is short, and the internode length is short. The only problem I found was that if the first flush of growth is removed too late in the growing season, then the second flush has needles which are too short to be good for the health of the tree.



Above: Correct needle length when training.

Left: Needles too short

The program I am now using is as follows:

What	When	Why
March to October	Fertilise regularly with a complete fertiliser.	Promote plant health and vigour. This is the period from the end of the growth of the second flush until a month before the removal of the first flush of growth.

What	When	Why
March to August	Prune to thin-out the second flush of growth so that there are only two branchlets remaining at each growth point. Aim to retain branchlets of the same size all over the tree, and branchlets which are pointing in the best direction in terms of the shape of the tree. Wire the tree as necessary.	Give shape and proportion to the tree.
June to August	Needle pluck all branches so that the number of needles is equal to that on the weakest significant branch, but not to less than 10-12 pairs of needles per branch.	To equalise the vigour throughout the tree.
September to November	The first flush of growth will occur. Do not prune or needle-pluck. Let all growth to proceed unchecked.	Promote plant health and vigour.
November to February	Do not fertilise	This means that the second flush of growth, when it occurs, will be significantly less vigorous than the first. It is this second flush of growth that will become the permanent part of the tree. Note: It is important that you do not put slow release fertiliser in your potting mix. If you do, then it is not possible to suddenly stop fertilising.
Early December	Remove all of the first flush of growth except for a 3 to 5 mm section at the base, i.e., remove all growth which occurred in the spring. Needle pluck to retain only 6 to 8 pairs of last year's needles on each branchlet.	This will force a second flush of growth to occur from the base of the first flush of growth. This second flush of growth will be much less vigorous than the first because fertiliser will not be applied until the second flush of growth is fully developed. Note: Last summer I did this in late December / early January which was too late for the climate I live in (the Southern Highlands) and resulted in needles and internodes which were too small for the health of the tree.
December to February	The second flush of growth occurs and reaches full size. Do not remove any buds or new growth during this period.	Allowing all shoots to grow will ensure that some of the shoots at each growth point are small.

ROOTS AS PART OF STYLING BONSAI AND EVENTS CALENDAR

S. Hattori, www.bonsaiexperience.com, explains how roots training is fundamental to making quality bonsai

The roots along with the trunk are fundamental to a bonsai plant. They are the starting point for making a quality bonsai.

In root training, a surface root structure, called *nebari*, is important to demonstrate the plant's natural beauty. You need to develop a quality *nebari*. Root training is intimately involved in the training of the whole bonsai plant.

It is more convenient to prune the roots during repotting. To realize "Keisho-sodai" in bonsai, the roots of the plant must be nurtured with care in two aspects. One aspect is the exposed surface roots, which can demonstrate "Keisho-sodai" if you develop a fine *nebari* (root spread). The other aspect is the part of the roots buried in the soil which cannot be seen by the eye. Pruning the roots in the soil has a tremendous effect on the above-ground part of the bonsai plant. It is an integral part in making the bonsai style

Ancient trees in nature have sound and extensive roots in the earth. To imitate in bonsai the roots of such tree as the pine, ficus, and juniper in forests, it is necessary to develop a quality *nebari* in bonsai. For trees whose trunks grow vertically upwards starting from the base, the roots should evenly extend in various directions to form a very stable shape, for example "stretching in eight directions" (*happo-barai*), also "roots in eight directions" (*happo-ne*) in *chokkan* and *hokidachi* in traditional bonsai styles.

On the other hand, take *kengai* style for instance the trunk of the bonsai plant leans in a particular direction. If in the opposite direction the roots are well developed, then you achieve an overall balanced bonsai. In contrast, if the roots entwine and cross into each other, or U-shaped gyration occurs, then these types of roots are called *imi-ne*, literally "dreadful roots". This is undesired and must be avoided. You can develop a quality *nebari* by repeatedly pruning the surface roots during each repotting.

Here are the details of how to do this. You should make sure the roots grow evenly in all directions from where the trunk makes contact with the soil. You then eliminate the superfluous roots and *imi-ne* before planting the plant into the soil in a new bonsai pot. The pruned roots will grow in the new pot. If any superfluous roots grow out, you just repeat this pruning process during the next repotting.

The roots are pruned in the same way as the branches above the ground. Pruning the branches stimulates the growth of more small branches. Similarly, pruning the taproot that grows vertically downwards, clipping other-thick and long roots, or reducing the roots in overall abundance all contribute to the growth of more small roots. The taproot is vital to trees that grow in nature. For example, a strong taproot can prevent the tree from being torn down by storms. However, the taproot is of little significance to a bonsai plant. Not only is any thick root unnecessary, but also thick roots inhibit the growth of other roots and hence reduce the total amount of roots available to the bonsai plant. This will lead to sparse branches and thin foliage of the plant and will compromise the beauty of the bonsai. The roots of a quality bonsai plant should be made of dense shallow balls of lateral and hair roots.

For the full article see
<http://www.bonsaiexperience.com/BonsaiStyle1.html>

BONSAI EVENTS CALENDAR

Date	Event	Details
August 16-17	Bonsai Society of Sydney- 15th Annual Show	Checker's Resort and Conference Centre. 331 Mona Vale Rd, Terry Hills. 10.00am to 4.00 pm. Admission \$5
August 21-24	27th National Bonsai Convention, "Sunrise on Australian Bonsai"	Gold Coast, Queensland
September 5-7	Illawarra Bonsai Society The 15th Annual Weekend Workshops at the Tops	Tops Conference Centre, Stanwell Tops
September 13-14	Bonsai Society of Australia Annual Show,	Don Moore Community Centre, North Rocks
September 20	Shoalhaven Bonsai Club – Visiting Demonstrator Brenda Parker	Gerringong Bowling Club
October 5-6	Sydney Bonsai Spectacular	Merrylands RSL Club
November 7-9	Newcastle Bonsai Society Annual Show	Charlestown Bowling Club, Lincoln Street, Charlestown