



sydney city
bonsai club inc.



NEXT CLUB MEETINGS

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

7pm Tuesday 12 December
Christmas party and general
workshop.

7pm Tuesday 13 February
Demonstration & workshop.
Sue Brennan will be massaging a
Privet – **be there for the slaughter!**
& bring along a tree to work on

CONTACT DETAILS

 0435 036 186

 info@sydneycitybonsai.org.au

 sydneycitybonsai.org.au

 PO Box 486
Summerhill NSW 2130

COMMITTEE

Patron Dorothy Koreshoff

President Neville Althaus

Vice President Sue Brennan

Secretary Lee Wright

Treasurer Neville Althaus

Public Officer Max Blanco

Newsletter Editor Tony Wilson

Librarian Philip Bell

Committee Philip Bell
Gary Graham

MEMBERSHIP

Full Membership \$25.00

Concession Membership \$15.00

Welcome to the December Newsletter

It's our Christmas meeting, so get into the spirit and decorate one of your bonsai in Christmas finery and bring it along – the club will provide finger food for our Christmas get together!



↑ *Syzygium australe* bonsai styled by Lee Wright for a friend,
[see page 2 for more member's trees](#) displayed at the November meeting.

See page 3 for a summary of [Lee Wright's bonsai tool talk](#)

For [before and after pictures of members bonsais](#), tune to page 4

[Aussie plants for bonsai](#) article & [Part two on Chinese Elms](#) by Lee Wilson
continues on page 5

Lee Wright has a tale to tell in her column '[Browsing My Benches](#)' on page 6.

Coming soon: - if you have missed a newsletter, or just misplaced one. You will soon be able to download back copies from our new newsletters page developed for us by Marika Kahle. Visit our website at:
<http://www.sydneycitybonsai.org.au/index.htm>

- Marika will also be developing a photo gallery for our website.

November Meeting Member's Trees on Display



← Sue Brennan's *Acer palmatum* bonsai

How much is that bonsai worth?



↑ Neville Althaus's Elm group planting



↑ Paul Roy's *Wisteria sinensis* bonsai

↑ This tree was designed and made during a 1 hour demonstration to the Newcastle Bonsai Society on the 11th of November 2006.

The demonstration was entitled 'How much is that bonsai worth?' and covered a basic understanding of what makes a true bonsai covering basic styling guidelines and balance.

The audience were mainly new comers to bonsai having been introduced to the horticultural art form only a week earlier at the New Castle Bonsai Society Annual Show.

The demonstration was done using only string to style the branches, the more permanent wire was added later.

<u>How much?</u>	Tree	\$18
	Pot	\$15
	Mallee Root	<u>\$20.</u>
	Total	\$53

The tools shown below are from Lee's own tool box:



Black Felt Marker – used to draw an outline for carving shari on a trunk

Bonsai rake – useful for raking the roots when repotting a bonsai, some models have a small trowel on the other end for tamping down soil

Bonsai scissors – Lee says these scissors can become blunt very quickly, Lee prefers spring loaded secateurs instead.

Bread knife – a useful tool for cutting through the root ball and soil. Get from garage sales.

Brush – Lee prefers brush for cleaning shavings when carving but can be used to smooth soil when repotting.

Chalk – used to draw an outline for carving shari on a trunk

Chop sticks – useful for working soil among the roots when repotting

Corks – handy for separating branches that are too close together

Crean stick – an abrasive tool that cleans sap off blades of knives, secateurs and scissors, etc. Best moistened before use.

Folding saw – the Japanese form of these saws cut on the pull action which allows very accurate cutting

Grafting knife – useful for carving shari and jins

Jinning pliers – used to lightly crush the bark on branch; used to lightly crush bark on branch and removing it or for better control when styling wired branches

Knob cutters – a handy tool for completely removing a branch and leaving a concave cut that will heal over flat. Lee warned us to be careful not to cut too deep and leave the branch weak and prone to breaking. The only essential tool for bonsai, useful in all 3 sizes

Leaf trimmer – handy for cutting leaves off a bonsai, very useful for getting into small spaces

Micropore tape – a tape for binding together spilt branches while they heal

Paste / Putty – a special formulation that protects wounds while they heal

Rubber gloves – used when handling soil to avoid harmful soil organisms

Side cutters – a useful tool for removing branches, leaves a shallow concave cut. Small versions are best for small bonsai

Toothbrush – handy for cleaning away moss, dirt etc

Tweezers – useful for weeding and cleaning dead leaves from tree.

Wedge – used to prop up the pot to try different angles to view the tree

Wire cutters – the Japanese models cut at the very end of the tool.

November meeting workshop highlights



↑ Sue Brennan's *Ficus rubiginosa* on a rock before transplanting



↑ Sue Brennan's *Ficus* after repotting

Attention Club Members:

We would like to run before and after pictures of members' trees as a regular feature in this newsletter. See the article on page 5 '[Aussie Natives as Bonsai](#)' for some excellent before and after pictures of Lee Wrights Kunzea bonsai.

It would be great to get photos from other club members' trees; showing the different stages the tree has gone through to become a bonsai. Your trees don't have to be finished works of art; it is the process we learn from. Don't feel you have to limit your photos to just two; a series of images is even more interesting!

The Editor

Before and after photos of member's trees worked on during the November workshop



↑ Anna Lee's Fig Tree prior to repotting and pruning



↑ Anna' Fig after pruning and repotting; watch for this tree in future issues. We will ask Anna to bring the tree back as it develops so we can take more photos of the trees progress.

Aussie Natives as Bonsai? Bonza!!!

Reprinted courtesy of Our Gardens 2006 summer issue

Australian native trees and shrubs trained as bonsai are attractive, challenging and very rewarding. The information on nursery labels ('likes drier conditions') is seldom applicable when you put a native in a small pot and it would be wise, if you are new to the game, to seek advice regarding the best cultivation methods and the best natives for bonsai.

Some misconceptions about Australian natives as bonsai are that they are touchy and they are good because they don't require a lot of water. Yes, some plants are touchy and a novice enthusiast could be well advised to stay away from them – instead of a Eucalypt try an Angophora. Water? Natives in a pot can be high water users and many enthusiasts keep some of their native species in water trays during the summer.



Kunzea before Lee Wright did her magic

Amenable trees for beginners as well as advanced enthusiasts are Banksias, Callistemons and Melaleucas.

Despite a mid winter bare rooting on a very neglected plant and then three major placement adjustments when doing basic styling a month later, my *Babingtonia pluriflora* (*Baeckea virgata*) has not lost a leaf. Kunzeas make attractive bonsai but plant selection needs to be good because some don't shoot back on old wood and you have to work with what you have.

There are the ubiquitous figs that have a fanatical following and appear in practically every bonsai collection in sizes from minis to massive – have you seen a Port Jackson with healthy leaves the size of your fingernail?

Bonsai shows have specific categories for native plants and it is a good way to see what plants can be grown and how they can be styled because Australian natives tend to have different growth habits to exotics.



Kunzea post Lee Wright's magic

Chinese Elms - Part Two

(Notes by Jan Briggs on demonstration by Lee Wilson 17/7/06)

Root Over Rock

- Take your tree to the next dimension by using rocks
- Lee glues his rocks together with Plastibond® - and puts feet on to stabilize the rocks.
- Use grafting tape to tie the tree to the rock – it stretches as the tree grows and therefore won't cut in – you can also use cable ties or wire
- Lee recommends using heavier wire so you don't damage the trunk
- Try plaiting several small trees together – 3 trees are best
- If you use elms with roots growing over the rock – the roots won't flatten flush with the rock as they would with figs or Trident Maples – they stay round, no matter how long the tree is tied onto the rock
- Age your pots – don't use bright shiny pots – keep the pots outside to get some character into them

Exposed Chinese Root Style

- In theory the trunk and the roots of the tree are the same, the only difference is one is underground and the other is above ground – in this style the roots become the trunk

Browsing My Benches – December

Lee Wright

BEE-WITCHED

When I bought my home in 1986 the backyard was graced with a stately eucalypt. It was seriously pruned every two years but eventually outgrew the yard and was removed. Over the years when the tree was in blossom a host of bees called my garden their nectar spot from dawn to noon. There was always a loud cumulative buzz that would cut off almost on the dot of 12:30. Then the tree went and only a few bees wandered by.

After a dinner table story of to-ing and fro-ing, I permanently secured a callistemon by purchase and after initial training and speedy development it went into a Mirkwood pot. It was quickly evident that this tree had a thirst greater than a lord and so it happily sat in a water tray for the better part of a year. Then a bee found it and boy did it promptly spread the word. The moisture from this particular bonsai may not be blossom nectar but nectar it definitely is.



Bees. Hundreds of bees. Weeeeell, maybe not hundreds but up to 3 dozen can cluster on the soil, bodies going in rapt motion as they imbibe moisture from the soil surface with the airspace around the pot busier than Mascot at peak hour. They are small; a friend assures me they are probably native bee.

I have always lived in harmony with the garden bees feeling that they have a god given right to the blossom nectar as I do to the enjoyment of the blossoms.

But trying to water a thirsty tree without overly disturbing the carpet of bees is not a task for the faint of heart. Occasionally I will find a loner who tries the moisture on another pot but even the lack of a crowd does not compensate for the less than fabulous flavours at other watering holes.

There are several bonsai in this area in water trays but it is only this callistemon that attracts them. The *Melaleucas*, the *Baeckeas*, the Lillipilli and the *Kunzeas* are all snubbed. The best Bee-grade café in town is in my backyard and unless I am prepared to rehome the *Callistemon* I can expect an increased water bill simply providing refreshment for the winged tribe out back.



I have never felt threatened by the bees and approach the teeming multitudes with a calm air and try to water without disturbing them. Usually 6:30 am only hosts the early morning crowd of maybe 9-12. By 7 am the group has swelled and mid morning to late afternoon it is like George Street at rush hour. Trimming or wiring the tree is best done by bringing it in the house at dusk and then working on it in the morning before putting it back in the flight path.

The only option I have with this *Callistemon* is to name it 'Bewitched'.

Bee-note: Roger Hnatiuk of Canberra has offered a possible explanation of this bee-haviour.:

"Plants exude a variety of carbohydrates from their roots into the soil. It is just possible that those exuded by the callistemon took the fancy of the bees, which have the habit of telling each other where the goodies are to be found. So once they fixate on a good source of what they like they spread the word."

These days all life revolves around water and the careful usage of it.

Remember: Bring a tree to every meeting.

EVENTS CALENDAR 2006

Date	Event	Details
18-21 May 2007	20th AABC National Bonsai Convention	Featuring Michale Persiano & Marco Invernizzi. Clocktower Centre, Moonee Ponds, Melbourne, Victoria. For more info visit www.bonsainorthwest.com.au/AABC2007