



## NEXT CLUB MEETINGS

### Green Square Community Hall

3 Joynton Avenue  
Zetland

### 7pm Tuesday 8 December 2015

Christmas get together. Short talk on watering in hot weather and when on vacation by Roz.

### 7pm Tuesday 9 February 2016

Topics and feature tree of the month to be advised.

## CONTACT DETAILS



0432 461 025



[info@sydneycitybonsai.org.au](mailto:info@sydneycitybonsai.org.au)



[sydneycitybonsai.org.au](http://sydneycitybonsai.org.au)



PO Box 486  
Summerhill NSW 2130

## COMMITTEE

**Patron** Dorothy Koreshoff

**President** Bryan

**Vice President** Sue

**Secretary** tba

**Treasurer** Chris

**Newsletter Editor** Roslyn

**Librarian** Naomi & Les

**Catering** Philip

**Committee** Lee, Naomi & Tony

## 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 December Newsletter

### December Meeting

- Christmas get together – lucky door prize; special raffle; bring a plate of food (e.g. nibbles for no more than four). Champagne toast and coffee/tea will be provided so you may choose to supplement with your own preferred beverage.
- Feature Tree of the month – Bring a tree of your own choosing decorated or not so we can share stories.
- Watering in hot weather and when on vacation by Roz.

## In this issue:

- Koji critiques selected display bonsai at AABC, May 2015– page 2
- Summer watering for bonsai in Sydney– page 3
- Photo-stories from SCBC club members - page 4
- An accidental experiment by Sue – page 5
- Plant wilting and leaf scorch by Roz – page 5
- Your bonsai when on holidays & Events Calendar – page 6



This Japanese Holly won a prize at the 2011 Taikan-ten Bonsai Exhibition. Photo was sourced from Peter Tea's blog <https://peterteabonsai.wordpress.com/2011/11/30/taikan-ten-2011/>.

Bring in a tree for our Christmas get together. It can be just one of your favourites or decorated (for the festive season or using any other theme).

# KOJI GIVES CRITIQUE ON SELECTED DISPLAY BONSAI AT AABC 2015

## Koji critiques AABC display trees at AABC



Koji Hiramatsu is the fourth generation owner of the famous Hiramatsu Shunshoen bonsai garden in Japan. At the 29<sup>th</sup> AABC held in Adelaide in May 2015 he was invited to critique some of the AABC display trees from the point of view of the Japanese bonsai tradition.

### Black pine



The tree does not have a big trunk so the tree could be made more compact.



Make this side the front so you can see the trunk.  
You will have to move this one branch.

When you design a tree you have to show movement. The lower branch is a big part of the tree. Make the foliage pad more compact. The tree has a lot of potential, make smaller pads, more compact so tree looks bigger. The pot is too big. The shape is okay. If you use a smaller pot the tree looks bigger. In Japan we try to use as small a pot as we can to make the tree look bigger. In hotter conditions the tree is in a training pot and at shows put into smaller pot. Put the tree into a show pot one week before the show. The tree would be better potted lower, it is too high in the pot.

### Weeping willow

The tree needs movement and direction so the left side of tree should be longer. Pot colour – I would use white or blue, not brown but the pot does suit the tree. The shape is good and suits the tree.



Koji suggests the branches on the left side of the tree should be longer to give more movement

### E. africanus



This tree is good for shohin. The pot is too big. The shape is good but it could be shallower. Could be good in a free form pot.

Lime sulphur the wood, especially on a shohin that gets watered several times a day in summer as the deadwood would always be wet.

### Banksia



"The foliage is too dense. It is potted on the wrong side of pot but roots won't let you move it over. The tree needs to be potted a bit left of centre."

You have to think about the side being the front. Needs a big space under the lowest branch rather than the other side. Need to make foliage pads and have distinctive sections. In Japan they would use a coloured pot, not brown.

# SUMMER WATERING FOR BONSAI IN SYDNEY

## Summer watering for bonsai in Sydney

By Roz

The climate of Sydney is temperate and prone to heat waves and drought which have become more common in recent years. In late spring and summer, dry and hot northwesterly winds from the outback can make temperatures soar above 38 °C, with relative humidity as low as 15%. Immediately following these winds often a "Southerly Buster", cold front sweeps up from the southeast abruptly cooling the temperature and brings thunderstorms and near gale (50—61 km/h) winds. Sydney gets around 30 thunderstorms per year.

Keeping in mind the variations due to each tree's size, variety, age, health, and microclimate positioning in your yard, the following are tips to help your bonsai survive Sydney's hot summers.

Positioning – protect leaves and keep soil relatively cool

It is important to protect your bonsai from the strong, hot winds that originate from our inland desert areas. These winds are very nasty and stress the leaves of bonsai, particularly delicate deciduous trees. They are like a hairdryer turned on all morning, drying the leaf surface. Provide shade-cloth overhead especially after noon. Or site your bonsai under landscape trees or shrubs. Set pots on low slatted workbenches over a lawn, mulch or gravel; less preferable is over concrete.

Use windbreaks such as fences, trees and/or walls to protect your bonsai from both the intense sun and hot wind. However, make sure you assess how much reflective heat comes from any hard surfaces such as walls or ground surfaces on or near where bonsai are placed so that you do not cook the soil and roots in your pots.

If you cannot put your bonsai on grass, ground or workbench area, then you might get some trays of wet sand in which to place your pots. Tall pots used for cascade are particularly vulnerable for heating from intense sun. By placing the whole bonsai pot in another larger plastic pot which has a layer of polystyrene bits in it acts as an insulator from the intense sun.

A bonsai species that is classified as "full sun", for example a Japanese black pine is not the same as planting that tree in the ground and letting it grow to its full size. Full sun does not mean blazing, all afternoon direct summer sun. Every bonsai appreciates some afternoon shade in when Sydney's weather is full on.

If I am going out for the day and the weather forecast is 35 - 38° C, all my plants are placed in the shade and out of the wind after early morning watering. My deciduous trees all go in doors for the day if the weather will be 39° C or above.

Watering in summer - it is a matter of bonsai life or death

The old Japanese adage is to water your bonsai three times: - once for the pot, once for the soil, and once for the tree. By doing this, it allows the water to soak into the soil and the pot and leave water for the tree to soak into the soil and the pot and leaves water for the tree to take in. A good, deep drink once a day is much better than fine misting for 10 minutes.

Watering bonsai is a constant balance between too much and too little. Be aware of the water-retention of each pot of soil mix. Slight differences in soil materials when each plant was potted up, the requirements of each type of tree, the siting of each pot -- all these prohibit a "one-method-fits-all" watering. Learn to customize to your plants' needs.

Watering your bonsai is a tricky thing to get a handle on, even in the best conditions. When it's 38°C degrees your bonsai trees life or death depends on watering this time of year. A day or two of neglect and the soil, and the important little root ends at the bottom of the pot will die. Those are the roots that bring water into the roots system and up to the leaves.

If you have natives such as melaleucas, Port Jackson Fig etc., you can sit them in a shallow saucer of water. This will keep the soil moist and in figs encourage aerial root formation. Usually the heat of the day dries the saucer by night and this ensures that the soil has plenty of air for night time respiration. If you have conifer bonsai such as cypress or pine it is best to water them once a day and on really hot days mist the needles with fine spray whenever you can. Conifers can get stressed in our summer heat.

Optimal watering time is in the early morning; watering during the day increases evaporative losses, and evening watering regimes in some instances can encourage establishment of some fungal pathogens.

Be careful that you do not start watering with a hose that has been lying in the sun as the water in it can reach scalding temperatures. Always turn on the hose away from your plants first to check that you are spraying cool water.

Humidity helps to reduce water loss through the processes of transpiration. You can increase the humidity by wetting the grass, ground, bench areas where pots are placed; placing your pots near ponds, swimming pool, or fountains; using humidity trays like wet pebbles or sand trays; or, misting your plants. Misting your bonsai is also a good way to keep up the humidity.

Fertilizing

Keep fertilizing this time of year as the frequent watering washes the fertilizer out of the pot. However, you need to be careful because over about 32°C air temperatures, fertilizer added to the soil works much faster, sometimes with disastrous results as extra levels of nutrients draw moisture out of the tree. So pre-water the tree half an hour before you add fertilizer and ensure that you do your fertilizing in the cooler parts of the day.

# PHOTO-STORIES FROM SCBC CLUB MEMBERS

## Tiger Fig (Ficus Retusa) on its bonsai journey

Tiger fig is used for bonsai but often the bonsai tend to have extended growth and are rarely compact. There was a tiger fig at Bonsai By the Harbour along with progression photos and it illustrates what can be done with this species.



Tall stock plant

Day one before its bonsai journey



Stage 1- Day one (pictured above) was a brave forward thinking cut



Stage 2 – branching and foliage developing

Several years in training and a nice shohin has developed. It is very compact and shows what can be done with retusas.

## Neville tidies up his Lilly Pilly



Before: Whilst healthy, pads and structure has been lost during Spring growth



After: What a difference – tree is now revealing its secrets

You can carve an area of deadwood to enhance a bonsai or you can do naturalizing carving that will eliminate the manmade look of a cut off area. If a scar is easily seen from the front it is necessary to naturalise this so it looks part of the tree's life rather than just a branch that was cut off – in frequent cases with a number of cuts that just looks off.

## Roz works on her Japanese Black Pine



Summer decandling and balancing Japanese Black Pine  
See Ryan Neil Lecture 1: Two flush per year pines

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yn1FiRw2JBo>

## AN ACCIDENTAL EXPERIMENT BY SUE; PLANT WILTING & SCORCH

### An accidental experiment by Sue

Question: What can happen to a bonsai that is sitting on concrete for extended periods of time in hot sunny weather?

I have always made it a rule to tell people not to leave a bonsai sitting directly on concrete, such as a balcony etc., where it will get lots of sun. The heat generates through the concrete into the pot and as a consequence the root system can bake and kill the tree in one day. (Just like baking it in an oven).

On Friday 20th November the temperature got to 41 degrees C in the shade. On that day two bonsai, a juniper and an elm, were sitting on a concrete veranda in a corner with concrete walls in blasting afternoon western sun.

The next morning when I saw the trees they showed the most unusual symptoms, the like of which I haven't seen in nearly 30 years in bonsai.

Most trees that suffer from water stress will have tip burn on the ends of the shoots, however, in this case the Chinese (seiju) elm had green healthy looking tips (although appearing dehydrated) with all the inner growth shrivelled and burnt off.

The tree had not dried out as the following morning was still damp without having been watered that morning. The green foliage remaining on the tree was unable to rehydrate itself, indicating that there was not one feeder root left on the tree, the tree had virtually been 'bare rooted'.

The foliage on the juniper was not burnt at all but was dehydrated and unable to rehydrate itself. Both these trees were average size bonsai, about 40 cm tall.

### Plant wilting and leaf scorch –by Roz

Little cells in the leaves (the stomata) open and close to regulate the flow of water vapour and carbon dioxide. Through transpiration the cells open, releasing water vapour from the leaves. That creates a pressure imbalance so more water is drawn up from the roots to replace it. That's how nutrients and water move from the roots to the rest of the plant. Up to 90% of water from a plant is lost through transpiration.

When a plant senses a harsh and potentially harmful condition, like excessive sunlight and heat, the stomata will close, effectively shutting down the conveyor system and no more water flows to the plant structure. The result is wilt. The plant is in protection mode. It's trying to keep water in its cells by limiting what it loses to the air. Once conditions improve, like less heat, the stomata open up again and the flow resumes. The plant is erect again.

However if the soil water availability is limited or non-existent, then the plant cells cannot rehydrate when conditions improve and eventually, a permanent wilt point is reached – a point of no return for the plant.

Don't just assume that a wilting plant needs water. Sure if the soil feels dry then it does. Watering won't reverse the wilt immediately, but also placing the plant in the shade to ease the drought conditions will also help the plant revive.

However if the soil is wet and the plant is wilting, then it might be that the soil is water-logged from too much water! A combination of compacted poor draining soil and too much water can actually result in wilt. The reason is that the roots rely on oxygen to function and if you make the soil deficient in oxygen then the roots cannot function. Excess water will fill soil pores and eliminate gas exchange. Without enough oxygen, root function shuts down and water uptake ceases. Leaf transpiration, however, continues and eventually leaves will wilt as their water content decreases. Ironically, the leaves suffer from drought stress even though soil moisture is more than adequate! Under these conditions, watering will make it worse. It is better to put the plant in the shade and aerate the soil.



Above: Leaf scorch on trident maple because these areas have least moisture.

Right: Sunburn on camelia leaf appears as yellowish or bronzed areas on upper side of leaves.



There are many causes of leaf scorch, but irrigation and/or misting with fresh water is certainly not one of them. What does cause damage, however, is suboptimal plant-water relations, which can result in tip and marginal leaf scorch, shoot dieback, stunted growth, and leaf abscission. After drought, the most common source of these problems is salt, in particular salts containing sodium (Na) and/or chlorine (Cl). So don't overuse fertilizers and pesticides with high salt content.

Besides drought and salt, other causes of leaf scorch include wind stress, high temperatures, reflected light, and cold stress. All of these environmental stressors are directly linked to decreasing water availability in leaves. Poor root health, worsened by soil compaction, over watering, or restricted space, will also induce leaf scorch.

# YOUR BONSAI WHEN ON HOLIDAYS AND EVENTS CALENDAR

## When on Holidays

When it comes to holidays, business trips, or the like, your challenge is to ensure that your bonsai remain alive and healthy. In summer trips of three days or more in length, require a bonsai babysitter. It is preferable to engage someone who does have their own bonsai (i.e. knowledge about watering bonsai). Unless you have a reciprocal arrangement, you need to be prepared to pay for this service, both time and travel expense is involved. You may choose to take your plants to your sitters' garden if there is room there to make it easier. This may be out of the question if you have many trees.

If you cannot engage an experienced bonsai gardener, you may negotiate with family, friends or neighbours. However, if you go down this path, you need to both show them how you water your bonsai and write down clear detailed instructions including special needs of any particular plants. It is better to pay them for this help as it acts as a moral incentive to remember and water properly.

Especially on longer holidays, whether you have an experienced bonsai sitter or family, friend or neighbour, it is good to have a back-up person who also gets your written instructions about your bonsai in case of emergencies or change of plans by your primary bonsai sitter. Make sure you add correct phone contact numbers in you instruction copies in case plans do change.

A reliable self-watering system is your next option if you do not have a bonsai babysitter. Before you go, make sure you use the self-watering system with its timer over a period of at least a week. Check that all plants are receiving sufficient water and that the timer does work properly.

Even if you have a reliable self-watering system, someone should be in to check that it is actually working every few of days and to check that some plants are not missing out on water by their position.

As a last ditch effort, you might try to plant some of your bonsai back in shaded ground areas or in much larger pots to reduce water stress and use your normal garden watering system. This last tactic is really a hope and pray approach and not recommended unless there is no other option. Be prepared to lose one or more trees using this option if you will be away for any length of time.



Photo from: Taikan-ten 2011 bonsai exhibition – persimmon tree  
<https://www.google.com.au/search?q=taikan+ten+bonsai+exhibition&spv=2&biw=1280&bih=699&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjHrlyW-b7JAhUCG6YKHfrWCcoQ7AkINQ>

Enjoy your Christmas and holiday break!

## BONSAI EVENTS CALENDAR



CHECK OUT OPULENT JOURNEYS FOR FULL DETAILS OF THIS EXCITING EVENT PLANNED FOR THE 10 -22 OCTOBER 2016

[http://opulentjourneys.com.au/special\\_interest\\_tours/Bonsai-Tour-to-Japan/6/](http://opulentjourneys.com.au/special_interest_tours/Bonsai-Tour-to-Japan/6/)

Date	Event	Details
31 April-1 May 2015	Illawarra Bonsai Society Annual (Autumn) Show	Sutherland District Trade Union Club (Tradies), Kingsway, Gymea
20-23 May 2016	29 <sup>th</sup> Australian Bonsai Convention	Wrest Point Convention Centre, Hobart, Tasmania