



NEXT CLUB MEETINGS

Green Square Community Hall

3 Joynton Avenue Zetland

7pm Tuesday 11 December 2018

Fun Styling “competition” & Christmas get together

7pm Tuesday 12 Feb 2019

TBA Note: no meeting in January.

CONTACT DETAILS



0432 461 025



info@sydneycitybonsai.org.au



<http://sydneycitybonsai.org.au>



PO Box 486
Summerhill NSW 2130

COMMITTEE

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

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.

December Meeting

- Fun styling “competition”. Several trees have been purchased by the club to work on in small groups during the December meeting. We will hold a silent auction for the styled trees.
- Christmas get together – bring in a plate of food to share. Please don’t over cater as we want to minimise wasteful leftovers. SCBC Committee will supply beverages.
- Begin thinking about which tree/s you may like to prepare for our SCBC stand at the Sydney Easter Show or entry into the 2018 RAS bonsai competition. See Chris for details.
- Optional: Feel free to decorate a bonsai as part of the festivities



[Nacho Marin](#) created this beautiful Christmas Bonsai. It is a 100cm tall Callistemon which is a genuine work of art with or without decorations.

In this Issue:

- Robert Stevens Talks on Landscape Penjing– pages 2 & 3
- December-January Pine Diary by Jamie Milner -page 4
- Practical Hints on Bonsai Landscape Design – page 5
- Holiday Must Do’s for Bonsai – page 6
- Rehydrating Dried Out Bonsai – page 6
- Bonsai Events Calendar – page 6

ROBERT STEVENS – LANDSCAPE PENJING

Robert Stevens Talks on Landscape Penjing

At the Penjing Conference held earlier this year in Canberra, Robert Stevens gave a demonstration along with an explanation of the principles behind a good “Water and Landscape Penjing”.



Zhao Qingquan's "Quiet Forest"

A good landscape involves the following principles:

1. composition
2. perspective
3. dimension
4. proportion
5. illusion

Perspective and illusion is required because you are usually working on a narrow space but you need to create a 3-D image. The way you do this is to play with size, contour, scale and proportion to that you create a natural drama so that your design has impact.



Close Up of "Quiet Forest" Creek shows great depth with its varied structure interspersed with rocks of varying sizes

You must create a logical sense when placing trees in this direction or that direction. It is important to learn from nature. Go further than just the overall feeling that nature gives; you need to deconstruct it and evaluate the bits so that you can build a logical design that makes sense to our brain. Our brain constantly uses these natural references to evoke the drama of a scene.



The grasses dotted in and around the roots of the bigger land mass supports the focal point of the largest tree

When creating a landscape some people use the same style of tree but Robert advocates using trees of different styles and sizes and putting them into a “logical position” thus creating more variation and more drama. He also advocates a lot of practice in making landscapes.

The most important thing in composition of a landscape is the focal point. Without a focal point, our brain thinks there is “something missing”. The focal point is the most dominant part of the composition. It can be a tree, a group of trees or a group of rocks.

Many teachers advocate the “overall triangular shape with the most prominent tree just off centre. They also advocate that an odd number of trees should be placed in the landscape to more easily create asymmetrical balance. Whilst this goes part of the way, you can create much more variation and drama by playing around with different tree shapes, different placements, different directions, contours and perspective. The idea is to think in terms of creating the illusion of a natural panorama with impacts from natural phenomena such as hurricanes, erosion, wind, or lightning strikes.



Raw materials for Robert's Landscape Penjing

LANDSCAPE PENJING *CONTINUED*

Robert Stevens – Landscape Penjing *continued*

For the demonstration Robert used Junipers of various sizes and shapes. Junipers need a bit more root room so he decided to create a mountain. He began with the biggest tree. He wanted the image of this tree to be extremely tall on the top of a mountain.



Robert trialling the placement of the first two trees

Generally in books the advice is to begin the first branch one third up the trunk. However in a landscape, the illusion created with a lower first branch is that of a shorter tree. If the first branch is higher than normally advocated in a landscape then the tree looks taller.

He cut the lowest branch of this Juniper to make it look taller. This created a second problem – the trunk was too thin. To compensate for the thin trunk, Robert said he would need to build up the back of the tree by placing large piece of petrified wood (165 million years old from Queensland) directly behind the largest tree. Before finally placing the largest tree, he put tie wire through the rootball so that the second tree could be wired in close.



*Lower branch of largest tree was cut to make it look taller.
Rocks were set behind the tree to offset the thin trunk*

When you are creating the panorama never put trees at the same distance apart; never put them in a line line. You must have trees at varying distances and in zig-zag formation to create interest and perspective. When creating a contour make sure you create a concave curve. A convex shape will shrink the landscape. If you introduce a river into the landscape, it must not be straight and should be narrow at the back often a little obscured so that you can create mystery.

Once the trees and the rocks were in place he stabilised the roots covering them with “muck”(equal part mixture of clay, coco-peat, spagnum moss, and cow manure). He then “built” the landscape creating the contours making sure they were up and down and not in the same line or curve. Just to support the idea of “thinking outside the box”, Robert continued the landscape over parts of the front and side of the tray.

Figurines are often seen in penjing landscapes. Robert warned us that if used the type of figurine chosen must be in context with the landscape and it must be in the right scale. The figurine should not compete with the creation and should add to the overall story.



Play with the configuration – note the tree on far right

Empty space (*Su mi*) is a fundamental part of Chinese penjing. For his demonstration Robert created an empty space at the end of the tray. The idea here is to have a few rocks carefully placed to create a peaceful area. This empty space gives the brain a break from the rest of the drama. In Chinese penjing it is mostly about the feeling of nature you create rather than any hard and fast rules.



Removing tree on far right created an “empty quiet space”

DECEMBER-JANUARY PINE DIARY

December-January Pine Diary

JAMIE MILNER

In December

For small bonsai – no fertilising this month.

For medium size bonsai – continue with the fertilising program as in the previous months.

At the end of December (unfortunately for many this will also be vacation time) and just as you did with candle breaking:

- Cut off all new branch growth (this year's candles), right back to the terminal pair of the last year's needles in the weak growth area.
- Use very sharp scissors to make a clean, upwards facing, cut. I suggest this type of cut so that the majority of new buds that will form a little later will be positioned better than if the slope of the cut were down-wards facing.
- In ten days time, repeat the process in the medium growth area of the tree.
- Ten days after that, repeat the process in the strong growth area.

In January

About 1 week to 10 days later you will notice new bud growth. "Buds". Is this a new term? Yes, it's the first time it has been mentioned in this diary although it may not be the first time experienced Black Pine growers that seen them.

Buds can best be described as tiny green 'acorns' when they first appear around the newly cut branches. By the end of January they burst into new growth that looks a little like new growth on a cedar or larch. The new growth colour is lighter than mature needles with a touch of blue and they are also fatter than the standard black pine needles. As January turns into February, this is the time to start to thin the new buds.

In my experience, this is about the most critical part of the whole process. Depending on the health and age of the tree, some branches will form from three to six buds. Select the two buds that best suit the direction you want the new branches to grow in and remove the

rest carefully using tweezers. Work carefully because the new buds are not yet very firmly attached to the branch and can easily be damaged. Complete this process by the end of February. Do not remove any buds after that time.

From the time of branch cutting, be particularly attentive to your watering regime. Do not allow your tree to dry out or become distressed due to lack of water. Give them plenty of water. The coarse sandy soil mix will ensure that the roots do not become waterlogged.

Do not fertilise your trees this month, regardless of their size. (*Fertilising recommences in March*)

The cost of not undertaking the task of removing unwanted buds is that new branches will develop from those buds and the tree will expend energy on growing those branches that will spoil the shape. Also additional buds result in stronger growth. We don't want isolated areas of growth. We are striving through this technique to create balanced in vigour over the entire tree.

Summer bonsai tasks other than JBP

- Undo or cut wire that has commenced cutting into branches or trunk. Plants are growing fast at this time of the year so a regular check is a must. Keep pruning and pinching if you want to keep your plants in shape.
- Defoliate healthy deciduous trees. You can get a brand new crop of smaller leaves more in proportion to the size of the tree. Remember to cut off the leaf and leave the small stem (petiole) so that the new bud is not damaged. You can defoliate wisterias, Japanese maples, Chinese elms, ginkos etc. However do not defoliate Crepe Myrtles if you want flowers. Alternatively defoliate the large leaves over a longer period. This is less stressful to the tree.
- Review your bonsai collection. Take photos of each plant; assess the next developmental steps for each tree and choose which plants you want to keep and which one's should go.

PRACTICAL TIPS ON LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Practical Tips on landscape design

When choosing rocks for landscape design they should be of a manageable size so the composition is not too heavy to carry. Some artists use artificial rocks to keep their landscapes light and easily transportable.



*Well balanced distant landscape where the focal point peaks are reinforced by the small peaks on the right.
(Designer: Quio Hoggen)*

The rocks should have lots of crevices and crags and should look as realistic as possible to a natural mountain/s with a three dimensional view. Hard rocks like basalt or granite are often chosen rather than soft rocks like sandstone as the latter tends to disintegrate with constant watering. Also it helps to find rocks which have a flat bottom so that they can sit more firmly in the tray. You can also use “Knead-it” or “No Nails” to glue the rocks in place or if you haven’t found rocks that are large enough, so long as they are of the same type (i.e. same colour and texture) you can glue them together to create your own “mountain”. A good source of rocks is from aquarium shops or lapidary clubs.



Wind Eroded rocks

Different rocks used in bonsai landscapes



Turtle Shell Rocks



Petrified Wood

In terms of planning your landscape you need to first think if you are going to create a distant scene such as simulating a mountain range or if you want to create a near view scene. The frame of the scene is set by placing the main rocks before you start placing the trees. A distant view will mean that you should keep the trees small relative to the mountain whereas if it is a near view then you need to focus on taller trees where you can see the detail of the branching. The most important thing is to create a correct and meaningful perspective. This is where it is good to study actual natural landscapes or photographs of natural landscapes so that your landscape will resemble a realistic setting.

Whatever the setting you choose, you need to select trees that are appropriate to that setting. For example you might like to make a small setting where there really is only enough room for one species of plant such as small junipers. Alternatively if you have a larger tray you may like to portray a typical mountain scene in China where there are a mixture of Chinese elms in the lower sections and slopes of the mountain. Small leaved azaleas mixed in tiny crevices and under trees and lots of moss in the pocket areas. Alternatively you may wish to create an Australian outback scene where you have rich coloured reddish rocks and soil mixed in with small casuarinas, melaleucas and or tea trees with a mixture of a variety of small grasses.

To create added interest if appropriate to the setting you can add a river or creek or a path. However if you do add these aspects of the setting you must make sure they meander and that a river will be wider at the front of the setting and be narrower at its source at the back. In order to finish off a river bed or creek you can place very small pebbles or sand near the rock edges as you would find in nature.

One of the best things about creating landscapes is that you can use lots of your little seedlings and also pull the landscape apart after a time or if the setting gets out of proportion and create a new one.



Yao Nangong's "Early Spring" Chinese Tamarisk Water and Land Penging shows a beautiful contrast in the shape of the trees and complemented with turtle shell rocks

HOLIDAYS, REHYDRATION & EVENTS

Holiday Must Do's for Bonsai

- **Consistency of watering is even more important now that we enter Summer.** If you miss out on watering your trees just for one hot Summer day it could badly set them back. Its not the sun that kills trees, it is lack of water.
- **Protect your plants if you expect a 40^o day.** You can cover them with shade cloth or half bury the pots in trays of moist sand or put them under the protection of you garden trees. Don't leave them on hard concrete surfaces or next to stone or brick walls in full sun. Mames in small pots can be grouped together in trays of moist sand/newspaper to keep the humidity up.
- **If you are going on a holiday** it is an idea to show the person who is responsible for watering your trees just how much water you do give them as they may be unaware how much water a bonsai does need. If you have an automatic sprinkler system set up, it is advisable that you still get someone to pop around every couple of days to check it is functioning reliably as the computer settings can play up from time to time.
- **Leave any repotting until you have returned from holidays** as it is the after-care that really counts. If you have to do an emergency repot (e.g. curl grubs or root rot) make sure you put the plant in a sheltered area or shade house with instructions to your "carer".

Rehydrating Dried Out Bonsai

So the worst has happened – what to do? The leaves are yellow or brown. Leaves curl in on themselves, or are shrivelled. Leaves droop, appear wilted, or have even fallen off. The soil mix is dry to the touch and may pull away from the sides of the container.

To save a dried out bonsai tree you need to rehydrate it. Bonsai that are severely dry take more time for water to fully penetrate all the areas of the soil mix. Water will need to work it's way to the core of the root ball.

Severely dry bonsai trees should be watered bottom up. Put the tree in a bucket or bath of room temperature water that's slightly larger than the pot. Fill the basin up with water so that it is over the rim of the bonsai pot and completely submerge the bonsai waiting until it stops bubbling. Leave it in the water for 15 minutes or up to 24 hours with Seasol if you think you have over-heated the roots). Remove the bonsai from the water bath. Set it somewhere where it can freely drain excess water through holes on the bottom of the pot.

Your "sick" bonsai will need nursing to return it to full health. Place it in partial shade, out of full sunlight, for a minimum of a week. Keep it also out of the wind and be vigilant about its water needs checking it by hand each day. Take extra care to water when necessary, not on a schedule BUT don't overcompensate by keeping the bonsai constantly wet. Being well after being dried out does not mean being kept wet. You're out of the woods when you see fresh new growth on your tree. This might take two to three weeks depending on the species

Bonsai Events Calendar

Date	Event	Details
23-24 Feb 2019	Australian Native Plants as Bonsai Exhibition	Australian Botanical Gardens ACT www.cbs.org.au
25-31 Mar 2019	The 4 th Annual Bonsai Week	National Arboretum, Canberra
26-28 Apr 2019	Bonsai By The Beach	Wauchope Bonsai Club, Francis Retreat, 2 Thompson Place, Bonny Hills
17-20 May 2019	32 nd AABC Convention	Mantra Bell City, Melbourne. Hosted by Victorian Native Bonsai Club