



sydney city  
**bonsai club** inc.



## NEXT CLUB MEETINGS

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

**7pm Tuesday 10 July 2012**  
Workshop, bring your trees.

**7pm Tuesday 14 August 2012**  
Workshop, bring your trees.

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## COMMITTEE

**Patron** Dorothy Koreshoff

**President** Bryan

**Vice President** Sue

**Secretary** Alan

**Treasurer** Chris

**Public Officer** Warwick

**Newsletter Editor** Tony

**Librarian** Marianna

**Catering** Philip

**Committee** Richard

## MEMBERSHIP

**Full Membership** \$40.00

**Concession** \$25.00

**Family** \$55.00

**Pensioner** \$25.00

## Welcome to the July Newsletter

### July Meeting

- Workshop – repotting deciduous tree bonsai
- Horticultural Tips (Tony)
- Talk about a tree & Raffle



*Cedrus deodara* – Himalayan Cedar Bonsai from the 2009 Illawarra Bonsai Show

We will again be meeting at the:  
**St Helen's Community Centre**  
184 Glebe Point Rd, Glebe

### In this month's newsletter:

- Letters to the editor page 2
- Lessons from street trees pages 2 – 5
- Pruning flowering & fruiting bonsai page 6
- Events calendar page 6

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR – LESSONS FROM STREET TREES

## Letters to the Editor

*Hi Tony,*

*I was quite distressed to read the article on Lantana as bonsai. It fails my understanding how anyone can openly acknowledge that a species such as Lantana in Australia is a declared noxious weed and then go on to extol its beauty and how it can be used as bonsai. The reason for declaring it 'noxious' and not allowing it to be sold is clear to all. Somehow, the fact that it is beautiful does not provide a sufficient reason to encourage others to use it for bonsai. Sorry, but it really seems to be so anti-social.*

*Roger*

*Dear Tony,*

*I can understand Roger's distress about promoting lantana with its noxious weed category... beauty is obviously not an excuse for being. Does this mean that I should bin my many olive, elm, privet and pyracantha bonsai? What about hawthorn and other plants that are pests but make stunning miniature trees? I really can't see the bonsai fraternity dumping all these treasures just because they are reviled in various areas as noxious weeds. I will continue to cultivate my lantana and my olives, elms and pyras [I don't yet have any Hawthorns]*

*Lee Wright.*

### Definition of a weed:

*"A plant growing where it is not wanted"*

This is the most commonly accepted definition of a weed. Therefore if the plant is wanted; then it is no longer a weed

A weed is declared noxious because its control will provide a benefit to the community over and above the cost of implementing control programs. Controls differ depending on where the plant is growing.

In a bonsai situation stopping fruiting is sufficient control.

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/pests-weeds/weeds/definition/faqs>

Trees in nature are the inspiration but often not role models for well designed bonsai.

### **BAR BRANCHING**

Novices invariably ask 'what is bar branching'. Rather than say it is like a telephone pole this example cannot be more clear.



Some trees shoot branches opposite and others off set. In bonsai, especially the lower branching, one of the opposite shoots should be removed to avoid this ponderous, cactus like structure. As well as being unpleasing in many trees the two branches coming from the same point cause the trunk to thicken in that area and reverse taper develops. With this tree it would be reasonable to remove the lower left branch and start to develop one of the next branches on the right if you were working with a bonsai.

### **BRANCH ACROSS THE TRUNK**

Nature is not concerned with aesthetics and this tree is showing why. A right branch has grown across the trunk and checking the advanced development of the nebari on the right you can see why this branch is the thickest. It is unsightly, unbalanced and far too dominant for the size of the tree, especially disrupting the eye's view of the trunk.



If this was a stock plant you could remove this branch to the back branch that is coming from it. Treat the large scar as a natural wound and turn it into shari [dead wood on the trunk] and work with the next right growing branch to start to balance this tree. The thick branch higher up growing on the left would also have to go as it is too big too high and disrupts the balance of the tree.

# LESSONS FROM STREET TREES

## REVERSE TAPER (1)

Reverse taper is another of the big sins of bonsai. It makes the bonsai look unstable and the stylist is always encouraged to work for taper, taper, taper.



If you saw this as a stock plant it would be good to pass it by. It has some good roots and one that is far too dominant, the reverse taper is simply too prominent and we won't even start on the branch growth.

## ROOT DEVELOPMENT

This tree has a slight slant and roots that have compensated for that and one is always encouraged to try to work towards this sort of root development in bonsai. The tree is leaning to the right. The nebari [surface roots] on the right have extended and spread to physically and visually support the weight of the leaning tree. The roots on the left side appear to be grabbing the soil surface to hang on while still with a spread to give balance and taper to this nebari and trunk. This tree is a good example of what you are trying to achieve with root structure. The tree gives a pleasing sense of stability.



## RADIATING ROOTS

This is far easier to talk about than to achieve because in many cases a tree will do what a tree will do but here is an example of a tree with nicely radiating roots of fairly even size that compliment the trunk and give stability to the tree.



Analysing street or paddock trees is a good pastime and helps in identifying good and bad points that the artist wants to incorporate or avoid. The knowledge will help in the selection of better stock plants as well as onward styling.

## REVERSE TAPER (2)

Reverse taper is ugly as previously discussed but frequently you can turn the trunk and find a position where the reverse taper is either modified or doesn't exist or a rock can be used to conceal it.



Reverse taper.... Bad side



Same tree but a different side has a much more pleasing balance. This tree is not necessarily a good subject for further improvements as the large and heavy trunk on the left would be difficult to alter and unbalances the tree higher up. There is a large root complex going off to the left but that could be reduced in a bonsai and still keep a good nebari on the tree.

# LESSONS FROM STREET TREES

## HELMET STYLE of foliage



Often you can see a bonsai with an impressive array of leaves but care needs to be taken that the result does not look like a mushroom, an umbrella or a helmet. In this example nature has opened some areas in the foliage that lightens the look and minimizes the helmet syndrome. It is also important to open the foliage in order to allow light and air into the inner part of the tree. This encourages growth and development and goes some way to discouraging the development of fungal diseases & bug infestations.

## BAD BRANCHING



You can find stock plants like this. What's wrong? The brown bark still hanging on the left side could be covering reverse taper, the tree is leaning well away and the thickness of the left branch is out of proportion to the thickness of the trunk. Taper. One must always consider taper to get a balanced tree. And the trunk extension above the bar branching is out of proportion to the main trunk. Definitely a plant to avoid if you see similar development in a stock plant.

## NICE TREE

The tree gives a feeling of balance and stability, the taper is apparent in every section from the trunk to the top, from the branches at the trunk to their ends.



The foliage is very open so you can see the structure. The twin apical trunk is not the best in bonsai but it would be difficult to remove one on this subject and have the tree look as good. As long as the tops of the two trunks were not at the same height you could do it. Bonsai is about making the best of what you have and this tree gives a nice feel. No bar branching, no reverse taper. It is slightly outside the guidelines for an informal upright but they are guidelines, not hard and fast rules.

## NOT A NICE TREE



This trunk structure is typical of advanced Trident Maples, fruit trees, Saotome Azaleas and Buxus to mention just a few. At first glance you have a nice trunk with thickness and gentle movement and then the eye reaches the branching and stalls. There are too many branches from one point. They have all grown about the same time so are similar sizes and have forced each other outwards to get sun and air. There is the bugbear of reverse taper and the unanswerable question of 'which trunks do you remove to get a tree like structure suitable for a bonsai'. Huge scars would be left and difficult to camouflage or rationalize, there is no one trunk to use towards a suitable apex and the result would be a trunk and an upper structure at odds with each other.

# LESSONS FROM STREET TREES – PRIVET MAKEOVER

The next time you are looking for a stock plant see how many of these you can find. Sometimes by eliminating a number of inappropriate branches you can work with an unusual style but in a tree like this unless you create a head of foliage that all but covers the upper trunk you are stuffed, pure and simple.

Sometimes you can find a similar stock plant and you can salvage it because its individual growth gives you an interesting option... but study it carefully before you buy. There are faults that cannot be successfully overcome.



This tree is nothing but fault and I have seen similar structures in stock plants. Basically the upper structure is too large for the trunk. The left branch is too straight and too thick for the main branch. The main branch is coming far too far forward and too thick and the right branch is also clunky and too thick.

The trunk is the most important aspect of stock plants. Roots are important, branch structure is important but often you can graft, encourage new growth, restyle. But it is hard to restyle a trunk. If the trunk is wrong or the major branches are wrong trying to get a pleasing style is all but impossible.

There is also the fact that has not been mentioned, that of turning the tree to a better angle. Often that works. Often it doesn't. But these examples are presenting aspects to look for when you are looking for a stock plant. Sometimes if you get a good trunk and a lousy top structure and you know the tree shoots back on old wood you simply cut off the branches and encourage the tree to grow as you want it. Sometimes you can cut almost all the branches off and use the branch base and work with new shoots. There are all sorts of ways to turn a sow's ear into a silk purse but sharpen your eyes so you can see the good and bad points and start to work out how to improve them.



*The perfect tree, never needs watering, feeding or pruning – beautiful too*

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH THIS??



It is a flaky bark privet, yet another of the seedling variations of a plant. Somehow I saw some potential in this when I bought it but lost the potential vision when I looked at it at home. So out came the side cutters.

This is better... those UGLY roots have gone but there is still a lot of lanky growth and it wasn't too keen to throw out shoots lower down. So what did it actually have to work with?

A trunk with movement and interesting bark and a pretty weird shape



While it is true that you cannot have a bench full of informal uprights there are also tree shapes that are hard to make into a viable bonsai. When all is said and done the tree must please someone's eye.

Out came the side cutters... the big ones this time.



It is still in a training pot while the apex develops a nice crown but what was ugly before has now had the potential realized and in the new growing season the crown will make this a nice mini about 15-16 cm high. Great recovery!! Sometimes you have to cut hard to find the bonsai in the bush.

# PRUNING FRUITING & FLOWERING TREES & CALENDAR

Brenda Parker courtesy of Illawarra Bonsai Society, June 2012 newsletter

I will explain when to prune so you don't risk missing out on seeing the 'fruits of your labour'.

There are times on when and not to prune. This all ties in with your feeding regime and are fool proof. To make it simple for you, I will list the most common trees that produce fruit or flowers so there won't be any confusion.

## Crepe Myrtles

Repot in late winter/early spring. When new growth starts keep pruning branches back to two or three leaves and then **STOP** on the 1<sup>st</sup> December (a good date to remember). This is when the flowers are being produced for mid-summer. Then after flowering prune each branch back to 2 or 3 leaves and continue to do so until autumn when they become deciduous. This continual pruning induces ramification.

## Camellias and Azaleas

Repot in early spring and when new growth occurs, start shortening back new growth again back to 2 or 3 sets of leaves. Keep doing this pruning and then **STOP** by the end of January. This is when the flower buds are beginning to form at the ends of the branches. Prune after flowering to keep the shape of the tree and also to induce ramification.

## Wisteria

Repot when fully deciduous. Prune after flowering (in spring) back to 2 leaf nodes on every branch to again induce ramification. There is usually another growth spurt in summer so keep the long growth in check. Then leave alone till next flowering.

## Pomegranate

Repot in late winter to early spring. In spring allow new growth to remain until after flowering and fruiting, then trim back to required shape. Winter is the best time to do a full and proper prune.

## Flowering Quince

Repot late autumn to late winter or when fully deciduous. Allow the new spring growth to extend unpruned all through the growing season to 5 – 7 leaves then cut back new growth to the second leaf node in autumn for the flowers. **Remember** new growth bears next year's flowers.

## Crab-apple

Repot in late winter. Some people repot in late autumn but the trees seem to forget that it is the wrong season and will push out lots of flowers. These must be removed so as to not stress the tree. Let it flower only in spring. When they flower in spring you can choose how many flowers you want to keep on the tree to produce the fruit and to keep it in shape. Advisable not to let a smallish tree produce too many flowers otherwise this can weaken the tree considerably.

## Pyracanthas and Cotoneasters

Repot early spring before flowers appear. When the flowers appear there will be some long growth and 'zig-zaggy' long growth that needs to be removed. Just leave behind the flowers you require to produce those lovely red berries and to keep the tree in shape.

The main thing to remember is to take note when the tree flowers and to prune after flowering. Keep pruning the strong long growth up until autumn and you will be amazed at the ramification that has improved your tree no end.

Many of you may know that I do grow lots of fruiting and flowering trees so a lot of this information is what I have experienced (together with frustrations) over many years of growing them. I have simplified it in an effort to make it easy to understand and hopefully for you to have successes as well. Many, many times I get asked these questions about how to get a good crop so now there will hopefully be no confusion. Don't give up if you do have some mishaps – remember there is always next year and you would have learnt by your mistakes.

Date	Event	Details
18-19 August	Bonsai Society of Sydney Annual Show	Checkers Resort, Terrey Hills
1 September	Bonsai Study Group Annual Show	Community Hall West Pymble
14-16 September	Bonsai Society of Australia Annual Show	Baulkham Hills Council, Castle Hill
29 September	Goulburn Bonsai Society Annual Show	CWA Rooms, Goulburn
30 September, 1 October	AABC and BFA Sydney Bonsai Spectacular	Merrylands RSL, Merrylands
20-21 October	School of Bonsai Annual Show	Ray Nesci Bonsai, Dural
27-28 October	Urrimbirra Bonsai Society Annual Show	Ribbonwood Centre, Dapto
2-4 November	Newcastle Bonsai Society Annual Show	Charlestown Bowling Club
24-25 November	Campbelltown Bonsai Society Annual Show	Campbelltown Arts Centre, Campbelltown