



NEXT CLUB MEETINGS

Green Square Community Hall

3 Joynton Avenue
Zetland

7pm Tuesday 14 June 2016

Special demonstration by Clinton Nesci followed by light supper.

7pm Tuesday 12 July 2016

tba

CONTACT DETAILS



0432 461 025



info@sydneycitybonsai.org.au



sydneycitybonsai.org.au

21 PO Box 486
Summerhill NSW 2130

COMMITTEE

Patron Dorothy Koreshoff

President Bryan

Vice President Sue

Secretary tba

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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 February Newsletter

June Meeting

- Special guest demonstration by Clinton Nesci followed by light supper.
- Selection of Ray Nesci bonsai stock plants on sale
- Pick up your ordered bonsai potting mix



Will Fletcher from "Island Bonsai" provided the AABC Conference audience with a very informative talk on Tasmanian flora. This inspirational coastal teatree (Leptospermum eximium) has grown to about 2 metres high amongst extremely exposed rocks and shows the effects of strong winds and periods of high water stress. Will explained that he takes his bonsai inspiration from beautiful living sculptures such as this growing in the Tasmanian wilderness.

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14 June is a SCBC club meeting not to be missed!

SCBC is pleased to host Clinton Nesci doing a demonstration and Ray Nesci on the side selling some small stock. Clinton is a well-known demonstrator and one of our bonsai masters. His friendly, down to earth approach makes him easy listening and great to learn from. It will be a night of great learning, opportunity for buy some small stock and enjoy a light supper afterwards. And don't forget to pick up your ordered soil at the meeting!

ROBERT STEVEN AT 29th AABC, HOBART, MAY 2016

Robert Stevens, bonsai artist and “rule breaker” styles a Myrtle at 2016 AABC

With more than 200 bonsai awards and 36 years on bonsai artistry, Robert Stevens is recognised internationally as a true bonsai artist. At the conference he truly challenged the audience in terms of approach to styling bonsai. He sums up his approach to bonsai as follows:



*“In my intuition I find myself
In myself I find freedom
In nature I find the rule
In the rule I find wisdom”*

Robert explained that he likes Tasmanian native plants, especially trees like the tea tree and melaleuca as they have their own character. However after observing the bonsai exhibition he believed that Tasmanian native bonsai is not really developed in terms of style.

This is because many of the trees that he observed are still blocked by the mindset of the classic textbook. He argued that unless you look behind the rules creativity is blocked. Hence he “breaks the rules” so as to break through the barrier to creativity and aesthetic quality based on the tree itself – not the classic rules of bonsai styling.

He explained that in Japan most of the classic bonsai were pines and some maples. The classic rules of styling are appropriate for those plants but they severely limit aesthetic quality of styling for tropical and native Australian plants. By highlighting a series of issues based on classic bonsai styling, Robert explained that he “intended to change the mindset”.

Issue 1. Where is the front? - Should be changed to “viewing angle”

The “viewing angle” is where you want people to view the tree from. Changing “front” to “viewing angle’ gives you more scope in showing your bonsai by adding a new dimension and more excitement. It shows the best expression of the tree.



Note the new dimension and excitement created by the twisted front of the red figure compared to the full frontal of the blue figure.



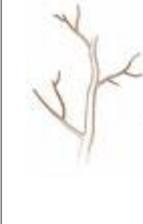
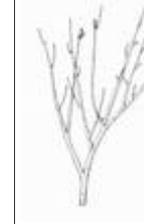
Robert does not have a problem with the Japanese concept of “front” for conifer centric and maples but this concept limits styling for tropical and non-conifer species such as Australian natives. Robert clarified that he would use the word “deciduous” for tropical and non-conifer species such as Australian natives from a branch structure point of view.

Issue 2. Forget about style type (formal upright, semi-cascade etc.) – creativity is blocked when you force a tree into a particular style.

Although you need to know the rules (e.g. the overall triangle shape – apical dominance, the first branch) you need to know when you can break the rules to create a different perspective just as it was illustrated with the body poses.

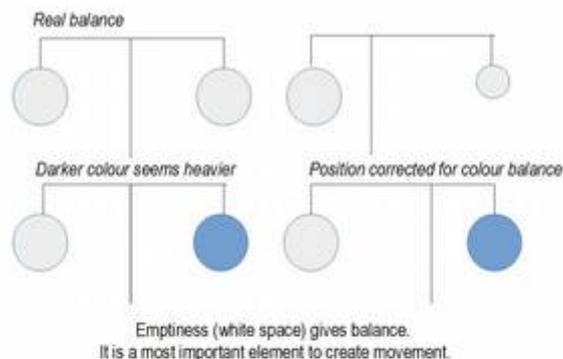
With the first branch rule movement is somewhat restricted but you can create dynamism on a formal upright through creating “empty space”.

For “deciduous” tree structure you need most importantly to work on is the tree ramification structure. In his experience this is generally not well refined in bonsai. If a bonsai has a good structure then you do not need dense foliage.

			
<i>Good ramification for conifers</i>	<i>Apical dominance for conifers</i>	<i>“Deciduous” (incl. tropical & Aussie natives) ramification</i>	<i>Forget about the apex -let tree spread out at top for “deciduous”</i>

See *Apical dominance on bonsai trees* video by Robert Steven <http://www.bonsaiempire.com/locations/bonsai-artists/robert-steven>

Issue 3. Forget about the first branch, second branch, back branch – The “mission of transformation” is to get the balance correct.



Emptiness (that is “white space) gives balance to the bonsai. Emptiness is a most important element to create movement in your bonsai.

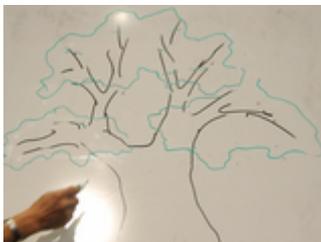
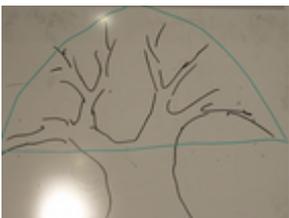
ROBERT STEVEN STYLES MYRTLE AT 2016 AABC

Robert Steven at AABC, Hobart 2016 *continued*

Issue 4. Refinement – Avoid topiary look but aim for a “big tree in miniature that captures the panorama of nature”

Robert believes that many bonsai look too refined. If you are aiming for a “big old tree in miniature” then over refinement makes the tree look artificial. Here are four tips to help the bonsai look more natural:

1. Avoid making the foliage pads round; make them contour, that is go in and out.
2. Avoid making branches have a straight line at the bottom and don't repeat the same curve in branches.
3. When viewed from top down create irregular shape at all angles. When views from the side, the irregular shapes are created by the empty spaces.
4. Except for conifers, never wire downwards immediately at the junction of the trunk and branch. Always allow the branch to go up and then down.



Top two pictures show topiary look rather than the natural irregular canopy

Working on the Myrtle

Using the Myrtle as his subject, Robert first found the viewing angle by closely examining the main trunk line in order to choose the best expression of the tree. He actually removed some of the twigs and leaves so he could get a clearer view and found a more interesting viewing angle. Once he chose the viewing angle he explained that the next step was to position the “arms and legs”, that is the trees design elements – branches, twigs, leaves and empty space.

“These elements must be positioned to fit with the trunk body line to give balance to the overall design so as to create a nice composition and harmony.”

When examining the myrtle Robert noted that the tree splits into three main branches instead of a single apical dominance. Robert's first pruning of the Myrtle was to break up the “triangles”.

After potting and carefully positioning the tree into the best viewing angle, Robert showed how the empty space created by taking off the lowest branch made the tree look more balanced and also allowed the trunk structure to feature.



Robert creates empty space by cutting off lower branches on one side and then breaks up the triangles to achieve ultimately an irregularly shaped overall canopy.

To give the audience a view of the “myrtle” in the future, Robert used the cuttings from the myrtle as dummy branches. He explained that after pruning when you wire you should only wire for direction in particular the first direction and don't wire too tightly. If you want to make a branch thicker, never cut the tip (apical meristem) If you cut the tip, then the branch will stay thin. When you have the branch thick enough then you cut the branch and a side branch will take over.

As Robert wired on the dummy branches he emphasised how he was ensuring that nothing was neat- in one line. Both branches and empty space were irregular. He also positioned the lower branch to counter balance the empty space he created on the other side of the trunk.



Robert has been nicknamed “the magician” by many bonsai enthusiasts and this myrtle demonstration reinforces his reputation as a true bonsai artist

REPORT ON AABC BONSAI CONVENTION, HOBART, MAY 2016

Report on 2016 AABC Bonsai Convention

The Convention attracted 203 delegates together with many partners. The Convention sessions were on Saturday and Sunday and international demonstrator (Robert Steven) and the three national demonstrators (Grant Bowie, Quentin Valentine and Chris Xepapas) did a great job at both entertaining and educating a very keen audience. Will Fletcher provided an excellent overview to the Tasmania flora and guidance to those species that lend themselves to bonsai.



The Exhibition was a huge success. We had expected about 800 of the general public to turn up over the weekend. The actual number passing through the doors exceeded 2200. In the selection of plants from the exhibition I have focussed on Tasmanian and Australian natives.



Tasmanian Pencil Pine (Athrotaxis cupressoides).

Age 20 yrs from seed.

“These two trees are reminiscent of a tree I admired on the sandy shore of Lake Rhona, in Tasmania’s south-west, heavily impacted by fire some 50 years ago, but resilient and healthy still. Most Pencil Pines away from the lake would have died in the fire

Fagus or Deciduous Beech (Nothofagus gunnii)

“Delightful, endemic Tasmanian, deciduous small tree from the central highlands. Astonishingly difficult to keep alive in cultivation! The autumn blaze of colour is beloved by all.”



White Kunzea (Kunzea ambigua) Age 20 yrs from seed. An Australian/Tasmanian native, and a great plant for bonsai.



White Peppermint (Eucalyptus pulchella). 10 yrs old from seed. ‘Pulchella’ means ‘beautiful, and this attractive smooth-barked gum, endemic to SE Tasmania is a very graceful tree. The small narrow leaves make it ideal for bonsai, but it has taken 10 years for the bark to gain some maturity and start peeling.



Myrtle Beech (Nothofagus cunninghamii). An evergreen tree native to Victoria and Tasmania. It grows mainly in the temperate rainforests.

JUNIPER MASS TO MINI BY LEE

Juniper Mass to Mini by Lee

The Rockdale Community Nursery crawl was not well attended but those who came did get some nicely advanced stock plants at great prices.

I opted for two of the bushy Junipers (*J. squamata prostrata*). Just for fun. The plants are exuberantly healthy and offered a number of styling options but I wanted to use the advanced plants to make minis or very small shohins.



Left: Advanced *J. squamata prostrata* stock plant
Right: Roots exposed by jet spray in order to examine nebari

First step was to discover the soil level and I scraped a bit and used the jet spray on my trigger nozzle to remove surface soil and then removed a lot of the higher roots to where I thought the tree presented the best ground level.

All these roots can go and removing them revealed a better nebari and greater width and slope to the lower trunk. It is always a good move to gently excavate the soil surface to see what the tree offers under the existing soil. It is also better to do this before styling so you get a good idea as to the best front.

I cleared away all the small branchlets that I knew would not be in the design and then studied the tree. The trunk slants nicely to the left with three possible main upper trunks. The thick one on the left side is growing to the back, the bare one in the foreground is unexciting with foliage too far from the trunk. There are two options on the left, the main trunk branch is very thick and close up is quite straight and too thick to bend. It is immediately out of contention. There is a smaller branch growing upwards that is a possibility but it will make the tree higher than I want.



"I viewed the tree from both sides to see how the branches presented. The nebari is better from the side pictured but it is a case of choosing the best option that shows more good aspects to the best advantage."



The heavy trunk branch has been cut and will be jinned which leaves three options. The right branch is thicker than ideal but the two left branches are thinner than ideal. Removing the right branch will add length to the trunk and that's bringing in a boring element. The tree needs some drama, stress, conflict and going for either left branch eliminates any dynamic element. Also, the lower left branch, being an under-layer branch, doesn't have much advanced branches. So the options are diminishing.



Now down to two branches

Again, the branch on the left could work but there is absolutely no tension in the tree. Removal of many branches has given a better feel of how the trunk and the left branch interact and the viewer can get a sense of dynamism coming into the design.



All that growth gone for this. The jin will be refined with a Dremel, the front has been changed. The nebari is marginally better on the other side but the positioning of the branch is better this way and that has decided the front of the tree. The jin has been sculpted much finer than the original branch and has been given an under curve to enhance the movement of the trunk. With the main branch going counter to the direction of the trunk more interest has been created.

MASS TO MINI; HUON PINE & BONSAI EVENTS CALENDAR

Mass to Mini *continued*



The original pot the juniper came in and its bonsai pot.

The next step is to wire the branch to establish foliage pads. The designing isn't over by any means. There are 2 options in the clump of foliage – a shorter branch and a longer one. At this stage both branches have been left and once shaping the foliage pads starts the next decision will be which one is retained.

From mass to mini.... while it hurts to cut off so much healthy foliage I am on the way to achieving a mini bonsai that has age, ruggedness, thick trunk and movement. All unified by the dynamism that has been created by having the trunk heading right and the foliage heading left.

I'm quite pleased with the design decisions that I have made and the cohesion in the tree. When I start the next stage of the design I will have to determine if I can condense this to a mini or if it becomes a shohin. It is going to be a close thing but the end size will be the one that achieves the best design with this material.

Huon Pine

The Huon Pine (*Lagarostrobos franklinii*) is a conifer and is endemic to Tasmania and generally grows among river-bank rainforest where it is cool and wet in the west and south-west of . It originates from the ancient super continent Gondwana and is Australia's oldest living tree and is one of the oldest living organisms living on earth. Individuals have been known to reach an age of 3,000 years.

The Huon Pine grows incredibly slowly, 0.3 – 2 mm per year and can reach a height of 40m. The foliage consists of tiny scales pressed closely to the stalk. A small number of trees produce male and female cones but this is quite rare. Reproduction in these trees occurs in 'mast' years (every 5-7 years).

Huon pines also reproduce vegetatively have aerial layering where a branch reaches the ground and starts to develop roots and establish as a new tree. The 10,000 year old stand at Mt Read has only male trees which have reproduced vegetatively although no individual tree is more than 1,500 years old. It is estimated that there is only about 10,500 hectares of living Huon pine left.



Left: Huon Pine at Mt Read

Right: Huon Pine bonsai at the National Arboretum

BONSAI EVENTS CALENDAR

Date	Event	Details
11-12 June 2016	Bonsai by the Harbour, Bonsai Federation of Australia (Northern)	Sydney Church of England Grammar Rowing Centre, 86 Wharf Rd, Gladesville
27-28 August 2016	Bonsai Society of Sydney Annual Bonsai Exhibition	Forestville RSL Club, 22 Melwood Av, Forestville
9-11 Sept 2016	17 th Stanwell Tops Conference, Illawarra Bonsai Club	Tops Conference Centre, Stanwell Tops
17-18 Sept, 2016	Bonsai Society of Australia Show "From the Mountains to the Sea"	Don Moore Centre, cnr North Rocks Rd & Farnell St, Carlingford
11-13 Nov 2016	Newcastle Bonsai Society Exhibition	Charlestown Bowling Club, 5 Lincoln St, Charlestown.