



NEXT CLUB MEETINGS

Green Square Community Hall
3 Joynton Avenue
Zetland

7pm Tuesday 8 March 2016
Club workshop on junipers-
trimming, tricks of pruning.

7pm Tuesday 12 April 2016
Pines –pruning and root pruning.

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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.

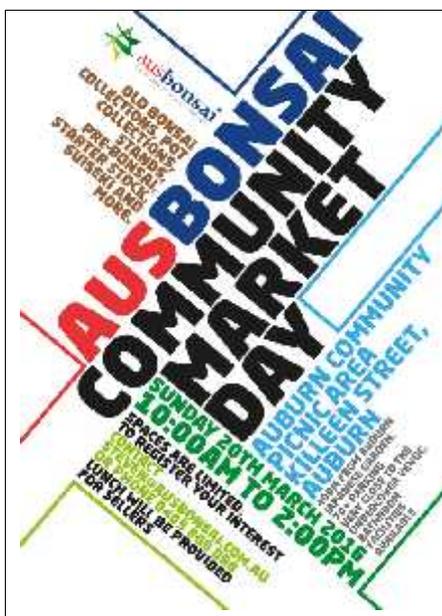
Welcome to the February Newsletter

April Meeting

- Club workshop on junipers – trimming and tricks of pruning
- Feature Tree of the month – junipers
- Reminder: Participate on SCBC stand at the Royal Easter Show

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Get fabulous bonsai bargains at the AUSBONSAI Community Market Day. This is where lots of bonsai enthusiasts bring their much loved plants and pots to sell. Make sure you are there early as the best plants go within the first hour because everyone loves a bargain and can't resist.

SCBC ACTIVITIES & NEW METHOD FOR TRANSPLANTING EUCALYPTS

SCBC February Activities

Sue shows the results of Japanese Black Pine after using Ryan Neil two flush per year technique



April 2015



Nov 2015 before trim



Nov 2015 after trim



February 2016

The next step in April will be trimming unwanted branchlets from the multiple second flush tips.



Lee shares her experience with poor growth from leaving her Melaleuca Revolution Gold in a water tray continuously. She explains that you need to watch your trees and take action. In this case the Melaleuca responded well to being out of the tray and watered twice daily.

Another method for transplanting Eucalypts

In their March newsletter, the Victorian Native Bonsai club described another method for transplanting those Eucalypts that have a "lignotuber".



A lignotuber is a woody swelling of the root crown possessed by some plants as a protection against destruction of the plant stem, such as by fire

A lignotuber consists of a large number of dormant epicormics shoots together with large stores of food reserves. This lignotuber is essentially a survival mechanism for a Eucalypt which has been damaged through drought, fire or trampling.

First find a suppressed specimen of the required Eucalypt, this suppression could have been caused by trampling, mowing, grazing, shading, competition, dryness, unfavourable site, or being pot bound. The seedling or tree is dug in Summer (January, February for best results) under the driest hottest conditions possible and all the roots no matter how thick cut off at the lignotuber. The stem or stems are also cut off about 3 – 4 inches above the tuber, making sure no leaves are left on. Stem and root scars are sealed with grafting wax or similar and the tuber then potted to a depth of 2/3rds of the tuber in a porous, acidic reaction, water retentive mixture, (e.g. sand, peat) in a 4 – 6 inch pot and kept moist. In the dry situation the application of regular water appears to break the tuber into growth.

After 3 or 4 weeks shoots will appear on the top of the lignotuber and at the same time root tips break from the buried portion. The number of top shoots will have to be thinned initially to four or five and eventually one.

The size of the tuber is not critical, the ratio of tuber diameter to stem diameter or sum of stem diameters is important and should be as wide as possible – 4 to 1 ratio gives excellent results. The percentage success is stated to be over 95% in summer, dropping to 35% at other times of the year.

This method is not meant to replace normal propagation methods but can be valuable when travelling or when seeds are unavailable.

Join the Victorian Native Bonsai Club as an interstate member and receive their great newsletter each month. Only \$15 to join. <http://www.vicnativebonsai.com.au/>. The VNBC would appreciate feedback on the above transplant technique if you give it a try.

I AM NOT YOUNG ENOUGH TO KNOW IT ALL: ON POTTING MIXES

Mick Balzary writes on bonsai potting mixes



Mick's interest in bonsai began in 1954 when he first visited Tokyo and saw bonsai on the then dusty streets on his return journey as a Nasho with the 22nd Squadron from Korea. His bonsai collection consists of pines, junipers, cedars and ficus, many big and "old" by Australian standards. Mick has contributed to the bonsai community with demonstrations and articles on bonsai over many years.

"Quite truthfully I prefer Chinese punsai and penjing to that of the Japanese. I have realized that nothing is perfect as is strived for in Japan, and nature is not perfect in the Japanese sense of styling. If I may say so nothing stands perfect next to God and with your trees be better than nature, but do not make a fool of it." Mick has donated bonsai to the NBPCA.

Over the past 40 years of bonsai I have learnt a little bit about conifer growing but unfortunately I reside on the far south coast away from the mainstream bonsai scene which in turn makes it difficult to impart it. This article is on potting mixes and nitrogen drawdown (when potting mixes containing bark, etc. are not stable and have the capacity to use nitrogen at the expense of the plant).

As bonsai growers we do certain things to our trees outside of the usual realm of horticulture. We remove the tap root of the tree! This is nature's anchor and we aim to substitute it with a mass of fibrous roots; the more the better. Because of this we can create instability and I have in the past always ensured my soil mixes contained ample heavy gravels so as to provide not only good drainage, but ballast to the tree in its container. Also the gravel must be sharp as I have found the feeder roots of the tree will split when meeting the sharp stuff leading to more fibrous roots in the pot. If the gravel is smooth and rounded the same roots will go around it without splitting, proceeding quickly to the edge of the pot and curling in turn causing root curl which is often seen in a badly slip potted tree.

As well most trees feed at their dripline where the feeder roots usually finish. We grow trees in pots well short of their dripline when the tree has a wider spread than that of the pot.

I, like many other bonsai enthusiasts, have had trouble with curl grubs found in my containers, usually after the damage has been done to the feeder roots of the tree[s]. The grub is usually a scarab grub, but down my way can also be the larvae of the roller tiller beetle. Usually it is too late to save the tree when the problem is discovered. Unfortunately over time I have lost some valuable trees to curl grub damage and for this reason I then considered the use of "no soil" or "inorganic" mixes so as to reduce the risk. I understand some members of the SCBC, Lee Wilson and Dorothy Koreshoff use Coir and Gravel. I was told that this mix prevents the intrusion of curl grubs.

Getting the proportion of organic and inorganic/inert mix right for your bonsai

I now grow in a mix of pumice, zeolite, diatomite, mini pine bark nuggets, and a small amount of crushed charcoal. Sometimes I add to it river sand and milled cow manure if I think the mix not right.



You can buy mini orchid bark nuggets in Sydney from Enfield Produce. They come in 50 litre bags. Also check out your local orchid society. Mick uses his local orchid society to buy old product (i.e. more broken down/composted)

Prior to this I made enquiries with Debco, some Sydney City Bonsai members, have received some feedback from Dorothy Koreshoff and Lee Wilson, and as well Grant Bowie and Ian Hearn have helped. There is definitely a tendency in Australia to use "soil less" mixes in bonsai and some general gardening practices. In addition to the "usual" sands and gravels that have been used for some time, we have witnessed the emergence of Pumice, Zeolite, Diatomite, Coco Coir, Coco Peat and Pine Bark mulches in the form of nuggets, and various other grades down to fines. As well Akadama from Japan has appeared on the scene which obviously has the permission of our quarantine authorities. Akadama, Zeolite and Diatomite, Pumice along with scoria, sand and gravel can said to be inert or inorganic materials while Coir Fibre, Coco Peat and Pine Bark are organic materials.

Some time ago when in Sydney to attend the Bonsai ByThe Harbour weekend I was fortunate enough to have some valuable discussions with some well qualified horticulturists who are very aware of the problem of nitrogen drawdown. The widespread use of wood based potting mixes has meant some changes in the way we fertilise.

Mixes containing bark, peat etc. are not stable and have the capacity to use nitrogen at the expense of the plant. For interest this feature is called nitrogen drawdown and is calculated as the nitrogen drawdown index or NDI. Mixes with an NDI of close to zero are those which have the greatest capacity to draw down nitrogen and are typically those containing pine bark or sawdust. An NDI of 1 does not drawdown nitrogen.

Coco Peat, also known as coir, coir fibre, is made from coconut husks, which are by products of other industries using coconuts. It is used as a soil additive and is not fully decomposed when sold in block or brick form. Coco peat will also use up available nitrogen [drawdown] competing with the tree. I have found that there are some contradictory claims made by some Sri Lankan suppliers of coco peat, pointing out that it is very high in Nitrogen! I am not sure these claims are correct as all information elsewhere points otherwise.

MICK BALZARY: ON POTTING MIXES continued

Non-organic/inert components of mixes

Pumice from New Zealand is imported into Sydney. It is available in various sizes. It is widely used in Hawaii, and other US States. I find it a wonderful and the best addition to my mix.

Akadama from Japan is imported into Western Australia by Arthur Robinson, a known grower of Satsuki Azaleas. Arthur, and other users praise it highly. They point out the Japanese have been using it for some 100's of years and so should we. I believe it is available from Scott Roxburgh of the Canberra Bonsai Society. I have not used it and do not intend to.



Pumice from New Zealand

Akadama from Japan

Zeolite is readily available in various grades. It has a very good cation [pronounced "kat iron"] exchange. Zeolite Australia were very informative and helpful. In 2004 I wrote to Zeolite Australia seeking assistance. I received the following reply;

"From my experience with potting mixes you are very much on the right track. The 5mm gravel is basically an inert filler in your mix [my mix then] providing an open pore space, the Zeolite used in its place will raise the cation exchange capacity of the mix and therefor hold more nutrients in the media. As it is porous and holds water it will increase the water holding capacity of the mix whilst not effecting drainage. It is wise to begin with a half gravel half Zeolite approach but it should not be a problem to move to 60% total zeolite. The difference will be the higher nutrient and water retention which may alter the growth so observe carefully and record the application rates of fertilizer used.

You may find with the greater nutrient holding capacity from the Zeolite that less fertiliser is required over time for the same rate of growth. I have not grown bonsai myself but unlike other potted horticulture you may not be wanting an optimal growth situation rather than a slow controlled rate of growth. The Zeolite will also be helpful in buffering any ammonium in the cow manure as well as providing a store of ammonium, potassium, calcium, magnesium and the trace element minerals that will not hold in sand and gravel."

Diatomite, known as diatomaceous earth is now mined in Australia and is a sedimentary rock largely composed of the skeletal remains of aquatic plants called diatoms. It is light in weight and has the capacity to absorb up to 200% of its own weight in water. This is very useful to us. When diatomite is incorporated into the soil, it serves to reduce compaction and increase the water and air permeation. It also increases plant available water; firms soggy soils, loosens hard to work soils, provides better drainage, aids in nutrient transfer, and improves root growth. As an aside I have found that any diatomite on or near the surface of my pots will wash out, or blow away in a wind. Diatomite is very light in weight.

Examples of Bonsai Mixes

NBPCA Mix: I noted with interest that Leigh Taafe advised that the NBPCA (National Bonsai and Penjing Collection of Australia) are using the new mix of 2 parts Diatomite, 1 part Pine Nuggets, 1 part Zeolite, and 1 part Coco Peat. Grant Bowie advised me that the organic materials are used "straight" from the pack and added Osmocote was put in the mix with a bi weekly liquid feed of 10% – 14% of nitrogen. It was pointed out that the most notable difference in growth of the trees was when Osmocote was not in the mix.

The NBPCA mix is equal to 60% inorganic and 40% organic.

I was unable to attend the last visit of the late Peter Adams but asked an attendee if his experience with nitrogen drawdown could be discussed. I understand Peter Adams mix to be 70% sand and 30% organic. Unfortunately I do not know what organic material is used but I was told he feeds the trees high in Nitrogen during the growing season.

Mick Balzary Mix: At present I am using a mix by volume of 3 parts pumice, one part zeolite, one part diatomite, 2 parts pine nuggets, and a small amount of crushed charcoal. As mentioned above I add the cow manure to assist with composting the pine bark, but I am not sure it is necessary. This has not been done without experiment and last autumn I repotted a Monterey pine using the mix as a trial. The tree is growing well.

I do not fertilise excessively. When available I sparingly use in spring two liquid fertilizers, being:
-Brunnings "Nitrophoska" - 16% N, 3% P - slow release and
-Bloom N' Grow "Cultisol" - 20% N, 9% P, 17% K – water soluble
As well seaweed based fertilisers are used.

Ian Hearn [a grower of pines] of Coffs Harbour now uses Debco "Pluggger Custom". I have in the past had regular contact with Ian who advised that Pluggger is used extensively in Coffs Harbour bonsai. It is available at Bonsai Environment, Sydney. Debco Pluggger is made with composted Pine Bark, Coir Fibre and mineral additives and has been pH balanced. Ian prepares his mix by concrete mixer and said he removes the larger pieces of pine bark material during the process. He reports good results, particularly with his pine trees.

2016 CHINESE GARDEN OF FRIENDSHIP PENJING COMPETITION

Sue wins 2016 Penjing Competition, Chinese Gardens of Friendship, Darling Harbour, Sydney

As part of the Chinese New Year celebrations at Darling Harbour, the Chinese Garden of Friendship in conjunction with Bonsai Environment held their second Penjing competition.

Vice-president Sue won the competition with her box landscape. Here are a few pictures of the penjing finalists.



Sue's winning landscape of box



Black pine finalist



Pyracantha finalist

Mick Balzary writes on Bonsai Potting Mixes (from Page 4)

I have never pushed the growth of my trees and have in the past fertilized sparingly and only when thought necessary. The tree always tells you when and what it needs. I liken heavy fertilizing to force feeding. How would you, replete after a fine meal and asleep in bed, like to be woken at Midnight and have a hamburger with the lot pushed down your throat? I think not, but as I am now using new materials I have revised my ways after 40 years or so of bonsai cultivation. I will not go overboard.

Remember there are Black cats and White cats – they are different, but they both catch mice. I am not sure if this is helpful, but I guess it is informative. Hopefully! I am a bonsai grower, not a continuous conference attendee. I am still learning.

Enjoy your bonsai!
Mick Balzary

Koreshoff Soil Mix

There are so many views about soil mixes and as Mick has implied above, there is a whole science behind bonsai soil mixes and that it is only through experience and careful observation that you will find out what works best for your bonsai.

After many years of experimental refining, Sydney City Bonsai Club's patron Dorothy Koreshoff's soil mix recommendation is

- 7 scoops of washed gravel (screenings)
- 3 scoops of choir peat
- 1 scoop of Standard Dynamic Lifter (make sure it is Standard only as other variations have chemicals added that will burn the roots.



Fractured Gravel Screening
– not smoothly round approx. size 2-5mm

The above "mix achieves the correct delicate balance between particle size and water tension."

New style jinning tool

If you want to purchase this tool, then the cost of each was around USD 14 with postage to Australia included. Let an SCBC Committee member know that you are interested so we can amalgamate the order through Mauro at stemberger@libero.it or stemberger@hotmail.com

BONSAI EVENTS CALENDAR



BONSAI by the BEACH



Featuring workshops and demonstrations by highly respected bonsai artists

Dennis McDermott (The School of Bonsai)
Clinton Neezi (The School of Bonsai)

This year at BBTB the emphasis will be on natives



NEPEAN BONSAI SOCIETY INC.

Presents

A CONTEMPORARY BONSAI DISPLAY

You are invited to Nepean Bonsai Society's annual show of members' bonsai for 2016, featuring a modern contemporary twist - on display at

The Glenbrook Community Hall,
Cnr. Ross St. & Great Western Highway, Glenbrook, NSW
Sunday 10th April 2016
10:00am - 4:00pm
Admission \$4, donation \$2, children under 18 free



Demonstrations, sales and advice on your bonsai available

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/nepeanbonsaisociety/>
Email: info@nepeanbonsaisociety.org
Web: www.nepeanbonsaisociety.org



In conjunction with the Australian Koi Association's 35th Koi Show, will be held the inaugural Autumn Bonsai and Penjing Expo.

This event will display some of the very best bonsai and penjing from in and around the Sydney area and these will be for sale - not just display! The event will also feature suiseki and viewing stones and there will be a general sales area as well. Free admission and free parking.

Please Note!

The 2016 Bosai Tour to Japan
has been cancelled

BONSAI EVENTS CALENDAR

Date	Event	Details
11-13 March 2016	Bonsai By The Beach	The Francis Retreat, 2 Thomson Place (off Ocean Dr), Bonny Hills
12-13 March 2016	Central Coast Bonsai Annual Show	Erina Fair, Erina (Erina Room near library) 9am-4pm
20 March 2016	AUSBONSAI Community Market Day	10am-2.00pm Auburn Community Picnic Area Killeen St, Auburn
10 April 2016	Nepean Bonsai Society Annual Show: A contemporary bonsai display	The Glenbrook Community Hall, Cnr. Ross St. & Great Western Highway, Glenbrook. NSW
31 April-1 May 2016	Illawarra Bonsai Society Annual (Autumn) Show	Sutherland District Trade Union Club (Tradies), Kingsway, Gymea
20-23 May 2016	29 th Australian Bonsai Convention	Wrest Point Convention Centre, Hobart, Tasmania
3 Sept 2016	Bonsai Study Group Annual Show	tba