



NEXT CLUB MEETINGS

Green Square Community Hall

3 Joynton Avenue Zetland

7pm Tuesday 14 March 2017

Brief talk on developing bonsai from stock. Bring trees for Easter Show stand for Chris.

11 April meeting **CANCELLED** due to SCBC Commitment to Royal Easter Show.

CONTACT DETAILS



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COMMITTEE

Patron	Dorothy Koreshoff
President	Bryan
Vice President	Sue
Secretary	TBA
Treasurer	Chris
Newsletter Editor	Roz
Librarian	Les
Committee	Lee & Frank

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.

March Meeting

- Brief talk on developing bonsai from stock by Roz
- Bring in your trees for Easter Show stand for Chris
- Members styling hotspot and work on your trees.



One of Bryan's more advanced figs (root over rock) shown at the February meeting

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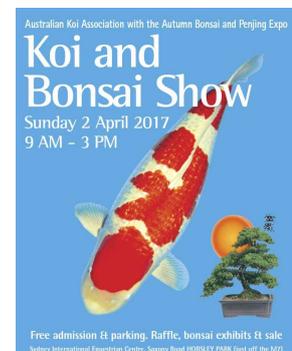
Easter Show!

PLEASE BRING IN YOUR “SHOW TREES” TO THE MARCH MEETING. Chris needs to finalise the arrangements for the Sydney City Easter Show Stand and also he needs to finalise rosters with volunteers so he can give out the free entry ticket.

Koi and Bonsai Show

Free admission & parking, raffle, bonsai exhibits and sale.

*Sydney International Equestrian Centre,
Saxony Road, Horsley Park*



GETTING TO THE ROOT OF THE SUBJECT

Bonsai for Beginners – Getting to the ‘Root’ of the Subject

BY SUE

Over the next couple of SCBC newsletter issues, we will publish a series of articles for our new club members designed to take the mystery out of bonsai for beginners.

It will cover the basics I wish I had known when first starting out in bonsai 30 years ago. For a beginner certain species of trees may not be suitable. Some trees coming from very cold climates may not be able to cope with Sydney temperatures well and others will have unsuitable growing habits or undesirable leaves that are extremely large. Some beginners are tempted to want ‘one of everything’, not realising how difficult some species can be.



Unsuitable for bonsai

Jacaranda is unsuitable for bonsai. It grows 20-30 metres tall with a 10-20m canopy. They send up ugly vertical shoots when pruned and have extremely large undesirable compound leaves.

Facts

1. A tree in bonsai form functions in exactly the same manner as a tree growing in the garden.
2. A tree in bonsai form has exactly the same needs as a tree growing in the garden. However, the bonsai grower must supply some of those needs, Mother Nature the rest.
3. Most bonsai trees die from lack of water.
4. A tree in bonsai form is kept small by cutting the top part; i.e., trunk, branches and foliage.
5. A tree in bonsai form is kept healthy by cutting the bottom part; i.e., roots.

How a Tree Works – The Root System

When the seed of a tree germinates it has a genetic code that tells it certain things. The tree knows how long it has to live, how tall it can grow, how wide its branches can spread, what it can do to fend off attack from insects and other trees that threaten its ground space or nutrient source, what temperature it prefers to

be grown in, what soil conditions are best for it, how to cope with extreme climate changes, etc.

This code is so efficient that some trees can live for thousands of years as can be seen by olive trees in the Middle East that are still alive and were producing olives in the days of Jesus Christ. Some Huon pines in Tasmania are over 10,000 years old and still going. Some bonsai trees in the Japanese Emperor’s collection are documented at being 700 and 800 years old.



“3rd Shogun”, Japanese White pine, aged 550 years, Japanese Imperial Collection. An historic item which is believed to have been treasured by 3rd Shogun, Tokugawa Iemitsu (1604-1651)

A tree is always growing under pressure

The roots put pressure on the top to grow and the top puts pressure on the roots for water and nutrients so it can grow. This pressure is done in complete harmony within the tree to enable it to successfully reach its genetic age.

The first and probably the most dominant part of the germination of a tree seed is the formation of a tap root. (once the tap root is removed in trees for bonsai it never grows back). The tap root initially seeks moisture and stabilisation before other parts of the genetic code of the tree start functioning. If the initial germination is successful and the tree grows to maturity, by then the tap root is mainly assisting stabilisation only and the thick side roots are providing stabilisation and forming a framework for the growth of fine feeder roots.

The most important part of a tree is the fine feeder root system

Without this, the tree will not live. Healthy and well growing feeder roots will be shown by healthy and well growing branches and leaves. If the feeder root system

TREE BASICS – THE ROOT SYSTEM CONTINUED

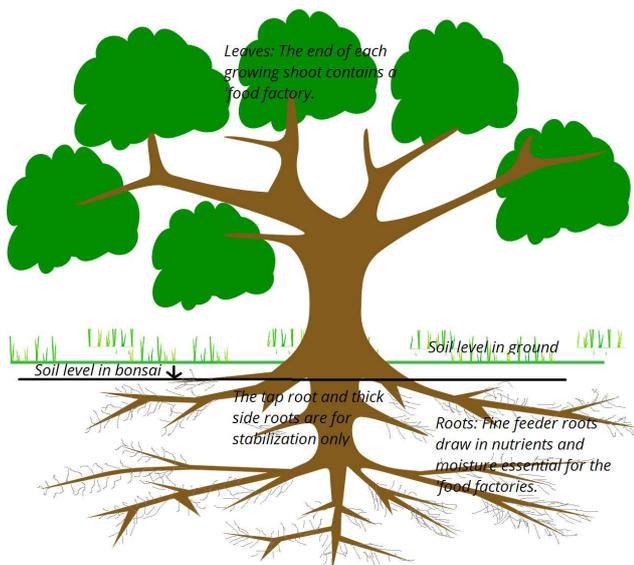
Tree basics – the root system *continued*

is not healthy, it will be reflected in weak growing habits and unhealthy looking foliage.

When fine feeder roots first grow and feed they grow for only about two weeks and then new feeder roots grow with the older feeder roots forming the channel for nutrients and moisture to travel to the tree to keep it healthy and growing.

A tree grows in harmonious pressure between top trunk, branches and foliage and bottom roots. For every branch on a tree there is a corresponding root. If a branch is growing particularly strongly it puts pressure on the corresponding root to grow strongly. When a bonsai has a well growing feeder root system, the nutrient and water supply comes evenly all the way around the trunk rather than relying on the necessity of 'one root for each branch'.

The feeder roots of a tree grow during the night. During the day they are busy supplying moisture and nutrients to the top of the tree.



*The trunk and branches are the framework for the leaves.
The thick roots are the framework for the fine roots.
Cutting the top of a bonsai keeps it small. Cutting of
the roots of a bonsai keeps it healthy.*

Effect of Seasonal Changes:

The seasonal changes in trees are triggered by the temperature of the soil during the night. This is when the root system is growing. With most varieties of trees the root system needs a certain temperature at night to

stimulate growth; it is when that temperature gets colder that the roots stop growing and the tree goes into dormancy. It now becomes logical when stressing the importance of keeping bonsai outside.

Genetic Coding

The genetic coding of a tree directs that it does everything it can to protect the root system first and foremost. Under stress (when damage occurs to the root system) a tree will shed leaves and sacrifice branches, if need be, to reduce pressure on the root system. A tree will not grow any bigger than the root system allows.

When we attach the word 'bonsai' to that knowledge of tree roots, it becomes logical that provided the tree has access to a feeder root system, in bonsai form it will not need the tap root and the long thick side roots for stabilisation, so they can be cut off. With some exceptions, most trees will survive the removal of these roots. We root prune in bonsai so we can supply fresh areas of soil and nutrients for the continuously growing feeder root system.

The most daunting task for beginners is 'root pruning'. The initial root pruning (i.e. removal of tap root) of a young tree grown from seed is only ever performed once. Once the tap root and long thick side roots have been removed they will never grow back. When you do this initial pruning you must remove a massive amount from the top of the tree, thus reducing the pressure that the top part of the tree can put on the much smaller feeder root system. If the top of the tree is not reduced accordingly in initial pruning the tree will die.

After the initial root pruning a young tree will need an annual root prune to give a fresh bed of soil in the pot to grow in.

Rule of Thumb: With most varieties root pruning and/or root trimming is done when the tree is dormant, late winter or early spring being the ideal times. If the tree is a deciduous variety, dormancy or "a full anaesthetic" is obvious, the tree has no leaves. If the tree is evergreen, root pruning/root trimming should only be done before signs of new growth appear. Figs are one exception to this "Rule of Thumb." and prefer to be done around Christmas time. Pruning at this time also helps with the development of leaves of a more even size.

Continues on page 5

HARD CUT TO VICTORY BY LEE

Hard Cut to Victory

BY LEE

At the 2016 Bonsai By the Harbour I took a punt on a clerodendron in their silent auction. It seemed to have a lot of potential and the \$25 I paid for it seemed quite reasonable. However, when I started working on it I found less and less to be glad about and my \$25 seemed destined to be a loss.

It had a nice lower trunk and branching with character but intense examination revealed that the branching was simply too thick. There was some good movement but it didn't match the base of the tree and was too far from the base to compliment it.



Tree has too many branches and they don't match the trunk

The other side was little better with reverse taper apparent just above the curve in the lower trunk. How very disappointing. And here's me thinking I could pick good stock.

So I cut into it. No matter how lovely the branches are if they are not in harmony with the trunk you have to do something serious.



A bit better on the other side but I note the reverse taper



Immediately after the first cut the lower trunk has more power

There are not a lot of options with a tree with branches this mature. With a conifer you would have an option to bend but these branches would break so that's out.

Whichever branch at the bar you remove it is going to highlight the very straight upper trunk. So what do you do.... you cut.

Now I must stress... you MUST know your species. You have to know how they grow and whether they will cope with really hard cutting back.

Most importantly, do they bud back on old wood. If the species doesn't then you have wasted your money.

HARD CUT TO VICTORY CONTINUED

Hard Cut to Victory *continued*

In this instance [having suddenly realised this was not a clerodendron but a *Serrisa foetida* (Snow Rose) unpleasant smell when leaves are rubbed will tell]. This serissa will bud back strongly and will cope with a severe lopping with adequate after care. So I cut it to billy-o.

Nine months later and the little shohin is already shaping up nicely. More development is needed on the apex and I'm working around the fact it has not budded back where I need it on the upper trunk. Also I have had to make do with a bar situation. The right bar branch has been wired to form a back branch and a shoot coming off that will be trained to be an offset side branch.



Nine months after the initial cut, this little shohin is shaping up nicely

Yes, there's more work, developing foliage pads and shaping the top... also putting a bit of movement into the upper trunk which I am doing by cutting back to a bud and that jig will give the upper structure more character.

When I repotted it I removed some too large and too high roots to get an even better spread of the lower trunk and a feeling of greater stability.

The silent auction buy was about 45 cm when I got it and when the apex is styled it will be around 20 cm. Now the beauty of the lower trunk and the textured bark is prominent and the branching is in proportion to the size of the tree. In 9 months it has gone a long way from an iffy buy to a potentially stylish little shohin.

Tree Basics -The Root System *continued from page 3*

Each year throughout the growing season the root system takes 'afternoon naps'. The feeder root system takes a rest from rapid growth rate and slows down a bit. Each variety has a different cycle and some trees grow at a faster rate or have more frequent 'afternoon naps' than others.

These 'afternoon naps' of the root system can be witnessed by the growing shoots in the top part of the tree not having fresh new growth.

New growth looks a brighter and fresher looking green at the growing tips of the foliage. For beginners this resting feeder root system is difficult to see in varieties such as pines and conifers.

'Afternoon naps' of the root system are important to remember because they can be used as signals for actions for a particular plant such as adjusting watering regime or for timings for dealing with the foliage of a tree.

Points to Remember

1. The most important part of the tree is the ROOT SYSTEM
2. The most important part of the root system is the FEEDER ROOTS
3. The top and bottom parts of a tree grow in harmonious pressure.

PS Beginners should avoid the temptation of buying unsuitable varieties of cold climate trees (e.g. Spruce or Picea) which survive in areas where there is snow for many months of the year and are difficult as bonsai subjects in Sydney.

On the other hand some varieties of cold climate trees do very well in warmer climates. As an example of how well some trees can adapt to 'alien' climates, in some areas of Queensland, Chinese Elms are the major 'weed' choking out native forest areas, just as privets are in Sydney bushland areas.

Next month we move above ground and deal with branches and foliage,

SOME STYLING HINTS

Some Styling Hints

BY BRYAN

At the February meeting Bryan showed members how he goes about making basic styling decisions. He brought in a number of his figs in various stages of development.



Bryan shows figs ranging from younger stock (on left) to more mature bonsai (on right)

Then using a couple of examples he explained the next steps in making his styling decisions. The first fig (blue pot) needed a reorientation and major pruning. Bryan used little ties to show where he intended to make his cuts.

The second fig (in brown pot) had to be severely pruned. Once pruned you can see the lovely trunk.



Fig in current position (above)



Fig in proposed orientation (right)



Severe pruning reveals the nicely formed trunk. Only the stubs of a couple of branches remain



Bryan explained that the trunk is the most important and you can then build the tree from this point. Don't be afraid to cut figs (in high summer).

Bonsai Events Calendar

Date	Event	Details
11-12 Mar 2017	Central Coast Annual Show	Erina Room, Erina Fair
20-26 Mar 2017	Bonsai Week, National Arboretum	Canberra. Guest demonstrator is Tony Tickle (UK)
2 April 2017	Koi and Bonsai Show	Sydney International Equestrian Centre, Saxony Rd. Horsley Park. 9 am – 3 pm
8-9 April 2017	Nepean Bonsai Society Show	Glenbrook Community Hall, Great Western Hwy 9 am-4 pm
12-19 Apr 2017	SCBC Royal Easter Show Stand – Bringing Bonsai to the Public	SCBC members and other bonsai clubs invited to participate. Enquiries: Chris – mcdent@optusnet.com.au
6-7 May 2017	Illawarra Bonsai Society Annual Show (Autumn)	Sutherland District Trade Union Club (Tradies) Kingsway, Gympie
19-22 May 2017	National Bonsai Convention, "Art by Nature"	www.aabcltd.org www.bonsaisocietyqld.asn.au