



sydney city
bonsai club inc.



NEXT CLUB MEETINGS

Green Square Community Hall
3 Joynton Avenue
Zetland

7pm Tuesday 8 November 2011
Wiring, Pruning & repotting of Figs
& broad leaf evergreen trees

7pm Tuesday 13 December 2011
Christmas part, team styling, bring
a tree decorated in a Christmas
theme

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COMMITTEE

Patron Dorothy Koreshoff
President Bryan
Vice President Sue
Secretary Alan
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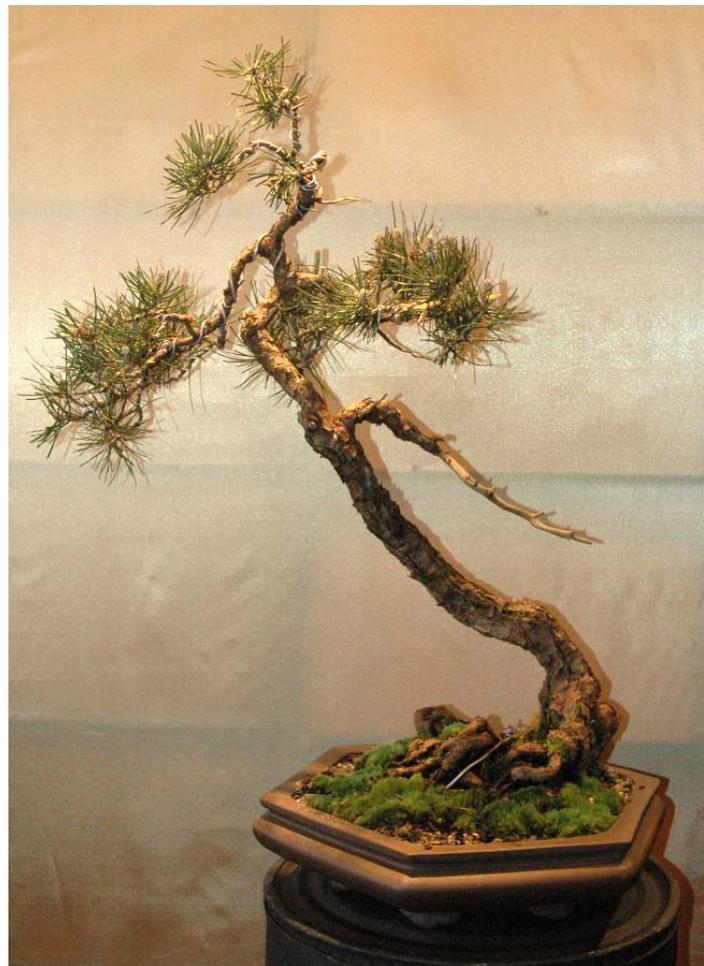
MEMBERSHIP

Full Membership \$40.00
Concession \$25.00
Family \$55.00
Pensioner \$25.00

Welcome to the November Newsletter

November Meeting

Figs & other evergreens (Buxus, Azaleas, Junipers, most natives) can be pruned, wired and repotted this month



A beautiful literati style Black Pine bonsai

In this month's newsletter:

- For picture taken at last month's meeting see pages 2 & 3
- Sue's styling tips pages 3 - 5
- Events Calendar page 5

Pictures from the October Club Meeting



Black Pine bonsai before pruning



Black Pine bonsai after pruning



Another tree with beautiful ramification (Zelkova) on display at last month's meeting



A beautiful Black Pine bonsai – the same tree is shown below; viewed from above to show the terrific ramification on the branches



This is the aim of regular pruning, dense ramification

THE GREEN BELT by Sue Brennen

Bonsai is an art form; your canvas is the tree. The art of bonsai is done by controlling where the branches will grow, where the foliage grows and at what angle the trunk grows in an effort to create the illusion of a full size tree growing in miniature form in a pot.

People are amazed by the mystery surrounding bonsai when really they are nothing more than 'real' trees cut very small. Trees trimmed into perfect symmetrical shapes are called topiary, not bonsai. If you look at a tree growing in the ground and try to imagine it shrunk down to 30 cms and growing in a bonsai pot, most trees wouldn't make a well styled bonsai. However, most people don't look at trees from that viewpoint. When seeing their first true bonsai, most people will say 'wow, it looks like a real tree', without realising how far from accurate that comment is. A good bonsai should stimulate the imagination. Although a bonsai tree and a tree in the ground have exactly the same horticultural needs, visually a bonsai is a lie coated in honey.

The famous saying, 'Rome wasn't built in a day' is relevant in bonsai. The dimension of the art form that is most overlooked is time. A beautiful bonsai takes time to grow and with some of the slower varieties many years are needed.

When dealing with trees in bonsai form it is imperative that you have a reasonable understanding of how the top of the tree works. I have avoided horticultural terms and extremely detailed information of how trees eat (photosynthesis) because it is not necessary for absolute beginners and can cause confusion or, worse still, boredom!

When a seed germinates and sends down a root system it also sends up a shoot that will become the trunk of the tree. This shoot will grow up and out in harmony with available moisture and nutrients being sent up by the root system. In turn this shoot will form solar panels (leaves) to collect food and energy to grow and send food to the root system. The top and bottom of the tree look after each other's needs. The trunk and branches of a tree provide a framework for the solar panels (leaves) to grow. As the shoot on a tree grows, it thickens up and keeps growing from the tip. As the leaves along the shoot mature they reach their full size and provide solar panels to help the tip of the shoot to keep growing. The 'food factory' for each shoot is the growing tip and is easy to see because it has fresher, newer looking growth, especially when compared to the green of the mature leaves.

MOST TREES WOULDN'T MAKE A WELL STYLED BONSAI

During the growing season a tree almost seems to take steps as the shoots grow for several weeks then rest, grow again for several weeks and rest. This can be seen by the leaves at the 'growing tip' maturing to the appearance of the mature leaves further back on the shoot, and the shoot looking woody, not green. For example, a Chinese elm will vigorously grow new shoots in spring for about six weeks then 'have a rest'.

The 'have a rest' in the shoots coincides with the 'afternoon nap' of the feeder root system. If the feeder root system is not growing, the top part of the tree will not be actively growing. This 'rest' may last several weeks but varies widely with each variety.

Sue allows new members hone their pruning skills on her trees, last month's volunteer's are shown working below:

Both volunteer's show intense concentration on their pruning projects



One of the finished trees

THE GREEN BELT by Sue Brennen

When this shoot has reached its maturity, the green colour of the shoot will appear woody and will have hardened up. In bonsai it is advisable to allow the shoots to reach this stage of maturity before trimming them. With some of my Chinese elms, I may have to trim six times between spring and autumn. Between trimming sessions the bonsai goes from a neatly trimmed bonsai to a shaggy dog tree.

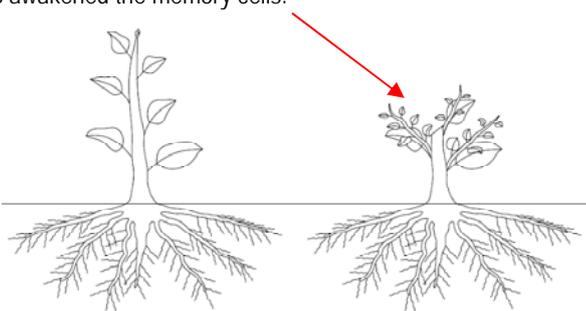
As the tree shoot is growing and reaching maturity the genetic code within that shoot is also completing its cycle (about 6 weeks for a Chinese elm). When the cycle is complete this leaves a genetic code within the shoot so that it can grow from other areas of the shoot rather than just the growing tip. I call this genetic code 'Memory Cells'. Many varieties of trees have these 'memory cells' and they are extremely important for the bonsai grower to be aware of. Most pine trees do not have memory cells and many conifers have inefficient memory cells.

'Memory Cells' are located at the point that a leaf is attached to the shoot. It seems that these cells remain viable for the life of the tree.

How many times have you seen a tree that has been cut down growing new shoots around the stump? Provided the root system is left undisturbed, in many varieties of tree it is impossible to kill the tree by merely cutting it down.

On some places on a shoot the 'memory cells' are clearly visible, that is, they will be seen as a tightly formed bud. As the tree matures the memory cells on trunk and thick branches become invisible, however they are still viable and are just waiting for a chance to waken up.

If the branch or stem is cut in half and the tree is a variety that holds memory cells, it won't be long until you see shoots appearing from old looking wood. In other words, this cutting of the branch has awakened the memory cells.



It is vital to allow a shoot on a bonsai to set properly before cutting it. If you continually cut soft green shoots on a bonsai you will kill it. The feeder root system needs what the top leaf growth (solar panels) provides. If the 'memory cells' on the shoots have not matured before being woken up, they will not function and will not shoot.

BONSAI TAKE TIME - PATIENCE IS A MUST

When a shoot wakes up from its rest and discovers that its growing tip has been removed, the memory cells activate and almost instantly provide at least twice the foliage. Where once there was only a leaf there now grows a new shoot with many leaves providing more energy to the root system.

As this process is repeated over the growing season the amount of foliage is continually increasing.

Some varieties of trees grow very vigorously while others may grow particularly slowly. Look at the tree and let it tell you when it's time to trim by making sure that the signs of mature memory cells are apparent i.e., the tip growth has matured and the shoot has turned from green to a woody appearance.

Trees have a preference to grow more strongly at the top. This is so the tree can reach its genetic height and sunlight. When we do bonsai we have to control this top growth as it takes the energy away from the lower branches. Along with the fact that trees grow more vigorously from the top, a bonsai grower must be aware that a shoot that grows vertically will grow more vigorously than shoots growing in a more horizontal direction. Growing a tree for a bonsai is done in stages. The most obvious thing that gives a tree growing in the ground its dimension of size and its appearance of great age are the trunk and buttress of the roots. In bonsai we first go for trunk thickness and then concentrate on growing the lower branches first, working our way up the tree with the branches, etc, until the tree reaches the desired height.

When starting out in bonsai it is hard to understand how far ahead you have to imagine a little 10 cm tall, 2 year old seedling is going to grow. Try to imagine what the young seedling will look like in 5 years time. You must understand that you are dealing with a plant that is capable of living for 100s of years, not something that is created in a couple of weeks. Time is the dimension of the art of bonsai that is least understood by the general public and the beginner in bonsai.

The importance of the correct soil mixture for bonsai cannot be stressed enough. The beginner is advised to take the advice of other club members when discussing soil mixtures. However, to put a logical spin onto what trees like to grow in, go back to the trees growing in the ground.

First we must understand that trees need to be able to get air around their root systems. Believe it or not, there is air available underground for the roots of trees to grow in. However, you can't just go and easily stick your fingers into the ground where trees grow - it is too hard! Sometimes it appears that trees grow in areas of almost solid rock!

Once you put soil into a pot it behaves differently. We have to be able to reproduce the conundrum of having a soil that feels as hard as the ground (you shouldn't be able to push your fingers straight into a bonsai mixture, it needs to be really solid), is as porous as a sieve (bonsai need excellent drainage) and retains air and moisture in well balanced proportions. The best base to use for a bonsai soil mixture is crushed gravel, so buy your soil from bonsai nurseries that supply that type of mixture.

The most important things about caring for your bonsai are correct soil mixture and watering levels. A tree needs to be kept damp, not sopping wet or bone dry. A well draining bonsai soil should go from soaking wet to damp quickly but be able to retain just the right amount of moisture for the tree's daily needs.

LOOK AT YOUR TREE EVERY DAY

Look at your tree every day and see if it needs water. In summer a tree will use lots of water and will need watering every day.

THE GREEN BELT by Sue Brennen

During dormancy when the leaves are not growing it will need less water, maybe only once or twice a week.

A good bonsai soil will drain to the ideal level where enough air is available with moisture for the tree to use when it wants to and is capable of remaining damp for long periods and still retain lots of air. You have to watch and only add more water after the tree has used what is available. Tree roots must be kept damp. If they are allowed to dry out completely the tree will die.

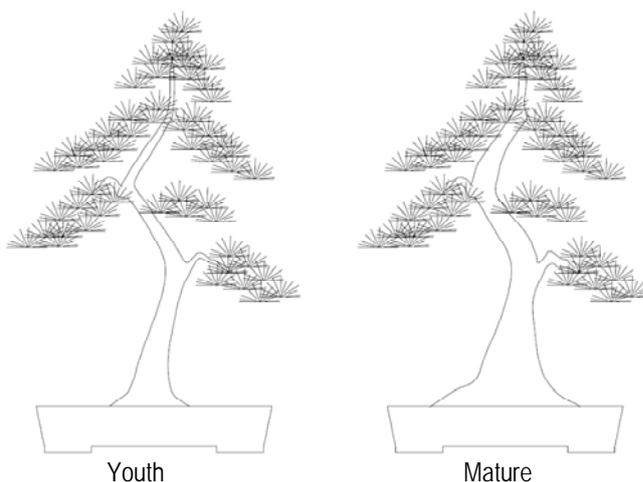
There are no short cuts to watering your bonsai. Don't stand them in a tray of water in the hope of avoiding the daily look at your tree ritual. You will cause all sorts of problems; the worst may be drowning your tree.

The more sun a tree gets the more water it will need. Be aware that wind will dry out a bonsai just as effectively as sun. In cold weather when it is windy with no sun bonsai trees dry out very quickly. As a rule of thumb, keep your trees where they get lots of morning sun but are protected from long periods of afternoon sun, most particularly in summer. Look at your tree every day.

In rainy weather the canopy of a bonsai can stop the rain getting to the soil by acting like an umbrella. Trees sense when rain is coming and open the pores on the leaves to accept the nitrogen rich rain water.

Trees enjoy rain with thunder and lightening even more as it charges up the coming nitrogen feed. Unless your bonsai is about to get crushed by his brother tree growing in the garden, leave it outside during these storms.

Your bonsai will love it. However, never rely on rain to do your watering. Look at your tree every day.



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POINTS TO REMEMBER:

1. Don't trim shoots until they have matured.
2. Look at your bonsai every day and water if necessary
3. Keep your bonsai outside in all weather except hail.
4. Use correct bonsai soil mixture
5. Do not rely on rain to water your tree

Date	Event	Details
26 – 27 November	Campbelltown Bonsai Society Annual Show	