



NEXT CLUB MEETINGS

Green Square Community Hall

3 Joynton Avenue Zetland

7pm Tuesday 14 November 2017

Peter will demonstrate root over rock

7pm Tuesday 12 December 2017

Christmas meeting – details next month

CONTACT DETAILS



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COMMITTEE

Patron	Sue Brennan
President	Bryan
Vice President	TBA
Secretary	David
Treasurer	Chris
Newsletter Editor	Roz
Librarian	Les
Committee	Frank & John

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.

November Meeting

- Peter will demonstrate root over rock
- Members styling hotspot and work on your trees.

Winning Trees of Bonsai Europa 2017

Best Evergreen Species went to Ian Stewartson for his Itoigawa Juniper

Beautifully presented this Itoigawa Juniper is vibrant with the swirling deadwood and beautifully styled foliage.



"Best in Show & Best Shohin" was won by Mark and Rita Cooper -Multi award winners both in Japan and Europe.

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BONSAI ACCENT PLANTS BY BRENDA

Bonsai Accent Plants by Brenda

At last month's meeting our demonstrator was Brenda Parker, President of the Illawarra Bonsai Society. Brenda is a specialist in accent plants, azaleas and suiseiki.



A sample of Brenda's accent plants

Bonsai are traditionally displayed in a *Tokonama* which consists of a bonsai, a scroll and an accent plant – representing man, heaven and earth. In bonsai exhibitions and displays exhibitors are encouraged to use accent plants to compliment their tree.



Tokonama with bonsai, scroll and accent plant

An accent plant can be a flowering plant, bamboo, grass, ferns, moss, even weeds can be used effectively. Accent plants can be chosen to compliment the season, the style of the bonsai and a host of other factors. In Japan there are hundreds of clubs which focus only on accent plants.

When you display an accent plant with a bonsai, the orientation of the accent plant and tree is extremely important. Accent plants are placed on the directional side of the bonsai and, in turn, if they have a direction it is toward the bonsai so the tree 'points' to the accent plant and the accent plant points back to the tree.



Tree and accent point towards each other

Also you need to choose an accent plant that is likely to be found where the bonsai grows. For example it is inappropriate to choose a succulent with a pine or azalea for example.

Rugged bonsai should be accompanied by hardy plants – nothing too luxurious or out of keeping with the tree. Taller trees can have grasses which can be unsuitable for smaller bonsai as the accent plant would be too dominant and spoil the visual balance. If the bonsai has flowers the accent plant should not – always remember... the accent plant is complimenting – NOT competing for attention.

If the accent plant has flowers they should be subdued and not too many. Again, the tree always has the greater importance and the accent plant should be of a type and size that compliments this. Flowering and fruiting bonsai should have non-flowering accent plants and deciduous trees look great with flowering accent plants.



Accent plants are normally displayed on their own stand or can be placed at the end of a slab.

Pots for accent plants can be all those very small bonsai pots that an enthusiast collects as well as special additions that have a particular charm or character and because of their much smaller size, add interest without dominating.

ACCENT PLANTS BY BRENDA *CONTINUED*

Suiseki [viewing stones] can also be used to accent a bonsai. Again it is important that they compliment the feeling of the tree and don't compete. it is very important that the tree always has dominance.

Small figurines can be used and, with larger bonsai, a small bonsai can be the accent plant.



Accent plants are easy and inexpensive and as well as improving your tree display can also brighten the bonsai benches at home with their various textures and colours.

Keeping accent plants alive

So how do you keep accent plants alive? Brenda has a shade house and also tucks some of her accent under trees. Brenda also groups her accent plants in a tray of stones and keeps the stones wet so that the environment remains humid. Just like bonsai, you need to match the natural conditions of the plant – so succulents will need less water than grasses and flowers and air plants will just need a spray of water. Water plants are just kept in shallow trays of water.

Below are some examples of accents that Brenda brought to show SCBC club members.



Rhodohypoxis

Rhodohypoxis – When flowering finishes the greed dies down. The plant is not dead as it is a bulb. When the bulbs shoot again they look like curl grubs. Repot this plant every 4-5 years.



Miniature sedum

Miniature sedum in a seashell with a hole drilled in the bottom for drainage. There are hundreds of different types of sedums – so just have fun.



Pineapple succulent

Other interesting succulents are the pineapple succulent and also the small leaf Chinese jade plant. With the jade plant treat it like a fig. However, if you want to keep it in a small pot, don't fertilise it and only replot it every 8-10 years. Otherwise it will outgrow the pot.



Panda grass is a great "bamboo" substitute. Other grasses like miniature mondo grass and small water grasses can be grown in water and pulled out of the water tray when required.



Use your imagination – for example stack three trays of grasses so that you have a layered accent.



Miniature orchids and air plants are also easy to keep – just put them in orchid mix.

THE ART OF WATERING BONSAI

The Art of Watering Bonsai

Watering is a task that should not be taken lightly, for it is true: you have the power of life or death in your hands. Our patron Sue has always told me that watering is the hardest part of bonsai to get right. Only two things can happen— overwatering or underwatering.

In general if you use good quality free-draining bonsai soil you will not have a problem with over-watering. However watch out for overwatering for 2-3 weeks after repotting when the recently cut roots are just beginning to re-establish the tiny microscopic hair roots and also heal from the cuts. At repotting you would have done a deep soak to get the air bubbles out from around the roots. Don't water until the soil has become slightly dry or you will risk root rot during the recovery time when the plant is kept in shade/filtered light and out of high wind.

Water your trees when the soil gets slightly dry. The best way is to test the soil by using your fingers to check the soil at around one centimetre deep. But never let a tree dry out completely! After a while you will get to know when the soil is "slightly dry" just by looking.

How often a tree needs to be watered depends on several factors (like species of tree, size of tree, size of pot, time of year, soil-mixture and climate), indicating that it is impossible to say how often you should water bonsai. So always check each tree before watering.

When the tree does require water though, it needs thorough soaking so the entire root system is wetted. A very good way to water is as follows. First, water the bonsai lightly; avoid using great quantities of water and use a fine shower spray so you do not wash away the soil. At first the soil is not yet ready to receive the full benefits from this moisture. Wait up to 10 minutes (usually go on to lightly spray the other bonsai in your garden before you come back to that plant).

During the ten minutes, the moisture in and around the container will have broken down the surface tension of the dry soil. Water will no longer be repulsed by the soil particles and will not bead up. The soil mass will have expanded slightly as well thereby closing off the large air passages along the inside edges of the container. Most of the first, light watering will have passed rapidly through these large channels and failed to moisten the bulk of the root ball.

Now with the second watering, apply a small but steady stream directly to the top of the pot. Occasionally, a short crisp blast of water is needed to knock off dust from the foliage; but for the most part, avoid watering the foliage. The tree will be cleaner, free of moss and algae on the trunk. The bonsai will also be less apt to attract insects and disease if the foliage is kept dry. After a thorough second watering, again leave the tree for ten minutes.

In this next ten-minute period of rest, undissolved minerals and salts, fertiliser waste products, and tiny muddy, organic soil particles will be emulsified or dissolved. They will be loosened from their attachments to the pot, to the roots and to the soil particles themselves. The third and final watering will cleanse the root ball thoroughly as the final flush of water carries this waste down the drain holes of the pot.

You can tell if you have not been doing your final water flush properly—when you see a fine white residue start to build up at the base of the trunk and nebari. If this does occur, then get a tooth brush and clean with water. Then put the bonsai in a tray of water covering the pot and soil. Leave for ten minutes and then quickly pull it out of the water. This will flush away the rest of the salt and waste residue on the pot and within the soil.

Despite your best efforts, you may find that the plant does not seem to be getting enough water! This when you should check that your plant may need a repot. The roots may have filled the pot or the organics in the soil may have broken down and fresh soil is needed.



When watering this tree, most water will flow right out of the pot; the roots are so compact that the soil-mass won't absorb water easily.

Repot this tree (from <https://www.bonsaiempire.com/basics/bonsai-care/watering>)

Underwatering is usually caused by scheduling problems – such as vacations, long work days, hot weather, or just rushing through the watering process. Investment on a watering system is an option. However no matter how sophisticated a watering system is, the bonsai will still need regular checking.

NOTES ON AZALEAS -BRENDA'S COMMENTS

Notes on Azaleas – Brenda's Comments

After Brenda's informative talk on accent plants last month, club members who had brought in their azaleas had a rare opportunity to get advice from an Azalea expert on how to manage and fix up issues that they had encountered with their azaleas.

Correct soil type is important for azaleas

Several members complained of experience die back of particular branches or even the sudden death of an azalea plant for "no apparent reason". Brenda explained that usually this experience is related to a soil problem but could be from a previous unsealed prune cut.

Bonsai potting mix broken down with sharp river sand or zeolite to make it very porous allows oxygen to reach the roots.

Forget using potting mixes with added peat moss if you have a watering system as the peat stays too moist and the soil then becomes rancid causing root rot. If you do use peat-based mixes in bonsai pots and forget to water a few days, the peat becomes very hard and will not allow water to penetrate to reach the roots and when the fine azalea roots dry out it means trouble. Maybe in a large garden pot it could be alright, but I am a bit wary in small pots. Remember they grow in well drained soil on mountain slopes in the wild only protected by decaying leaf litter.

Using one of the members trees, Brenda showed how the fibrous root system of this plant was packed so tightly so that the roots could barely get oxygen. Also there was a residual white on the base of the trunk which Brenda said was a sure sign of salt build up.

Brenda's solution was to repot the tree immediately into a fresh more porous potting mix and to get rid of the salt build up by soaking the plant deeply in water for half an hour and then quickly raising it out of the water so that you wash away the salt build up in the soil. You should also get a toothbrush and remove and wash off all of the salt build up on the base of the trunk.

Extended flowering- a problem or not?

Another question or comment that came in was about an azalea that had a habit of flowering twice in each year. Brenda in her years' of experience was somewhat suspicious of this. She explained that azaleas, like many

other plants often produce flowers out of season when under stress. You should check that the soil and roots of the azalea are OK and remediate if necessary. I checked out the web to see if there were any nurseries that claimed that they sold azaleas that bloomed more than once per year. In north America, Encore Azaleas, claim that they have created a number of hybrids that bloom more than once per year. See

<http://www.encoreazalea.com/garden-advice/article/encore-azaleas-the-best-selling-reblooming-azalea-on-the-market-today>

Single Branch Dieback

The issue of die back of single branches when the grower has changed nothing was also discussed. If it is not a soil problem where sometimes only one side of the plant is getting enough water and oxygen it could also be because of die back of the branch as a result of previous pruning even as long as five years ago. Brenda is adamant that you must immediately seal cuts for any branches thicker than a chopstick as die back can show up years later.

Tip pruning azaleas



Leggy Azalea – needs tip pruning

Another member brought in a very leggy azalea that had been lifted from a garden bed. Brenda demonstrated how to tip prune this azalea in order to get back budding to work on compacting the growth.



Brenda demonstrates how to tip prune azalea

AZALEA NOTES *CONTINUED* & EVENTS CALENDAR

When to prune azaleas

Pruning is always carried out after flowering as with all other trees. If pruning is not carried out after every flowering, the natural growth habit of azaleas is that they get very leggy with foliage mainly at the tips. Tip pruning is continually carried out right up until Christmas and no later than to the end of January, as this is the time when buds are starting to form for the next flowering season. Remember to also remove any seed heads as this will weaken your tree.

When is the best time to repot azaleas?

Brenda explained that it was best to repot is in mid-spring after flowering although with good after care you can repot azaleas anytime because of their fibrous root system. After repotting place the tree in a cool position and keep moist but not wet. A dose of Seasol helps with the disturbance of the roots. "I never add fertiliser when repotting only after when I can see new growth appearing." Only apply Osmocote on the soil surface and not under the tree in the pot. Azaleas are surface rooted and surface feeders and it will be only wasted out of the drainage holes.

Fertilising azaleas

You can give a couple of doses through the year of sulphate of potash, Phostrogen, More Bloom or Bloom Buster (usually used for orchids), but be warned, follow manufacturer's directions closely or if in doubt lower the dosage. You need to study the NPK's on the label of fertilisers and what you are looking for is a very high 'K' (Potassium) level to ensure lots of flowers. This will also improve flower quality and quantity.



NBPCA Bonsai Week 2018

The National Bonsai and Penjing Collection of Australia will hold a special Bonsai Week from 19 till 25 March 2018.

Part of the programme will include a FREE full day Master-class for a limited number of Club Nominated Artists (8 people). Clubs can nominate up to two people to attend the Master-Class. From the nominations Curator Leigh Taafe will randomly and fairly draw the names of eight artists to be involved.

The Club Nominations Master-class will be held from 9am till 4pm on Thursday 22 March 2018. Lunch will not be provided

To be eligible:

-the artist must be a financial member and nominated by their club

-the artist must be willing to share what they have learned with their club (e.g. talk/presentation about their experience at their next club meeting)

-have two suitable trees for two separate sessions within the Master-Class (this could be raw material, or a tree that needs re-working or refining; not repotting).

-have their own tools, suitable stock of wire and any other consumables required

-have an awareness of workshop etiquette (if unsure, please ask me)

-the artist must be able to make their own arrangements for travel and accommodation and be available on Thursday 22 March from 9am till 4pm.

-the artist must not have already been invited as a Volunteer, Lender or Donor.

More about NBPCA Bonsai Week will be provided at the next club meeting. It will be a packed week of fabulous bonsai tours and demonstrations.

Bonsai Events Calendar

Date	Event	Details
19-25 March 2018	NBPCA Bonsai Week 2018	National Bonsai & Penjing Collection Australia, National Arboretum Canberra.
20-23 July 2018	31 st Australian National Bonsai Convention – Bonsai Exposed	Mantra Bell City, Melbourne. http://www.aabcltd.org/next-convention/