



NEXT CLUB MEETINGS

Green Square Community Hall

3 Joynton Avenue
Zetland

7pm Tuesday 13 October 2015

Lee will talk about "cleaning" azaleas when the flowering is over. Tree of the month - flowering bonsai.

7pm Tuesday 10 November 2015

Demystifying Judging Bonsai. Bring in a tree that you want put on SSBC Easter Show display booth. Tree of the month: figs

CONTACT DETAILS



0432 461 025



info@sydneycitybonsai.org.au



sydneycitybonsai.org.au



PO Box 486
Summerhill NSW 2130

COMMITTEE

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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 October Newsletter

October Meeting

- Lee will talk about how and why "cleaning" azaleas when the flowering is over is important.
- Tree of the month – flowering bonsai
- Member Styling Hotspot led by President Bryan. One or two trees are needed each month for open discussion.



Lee's beautiful carving has transformed this azalea

In this issue:

- Lee demonstrates carving an azalea– page 2-4
- 'Ollow' the Misfortunes of an Elm by Lee– page 4
- Extract from Masakuni Kawasumi II's book –"The Secret Techniques of Bonsai" – from section on Bud Trimming - page 5
- Spring season new shoot pruning and trimming – page 5
- Member trees from September & Events Calendar – page 6

LEE DEMONSTRATES CARVING AN AZALEA

Carving by LEE

SCBC members were given a superb demonstration on carving at the September meeting. She has provided an excellent article on the principles of good carving and how to get started. Note the amazing transformation of her subject, an azalea, where one side of the trunk and branches had died and badly needed to be naturalized.

An ability to carve realistically can serve a bonsai artist well. It can also become an interesting facet to working with bonsai by utilising carving skills on different media to enhance an appearance of age or minimise an unsightly part of the tree.

MAJOR REASONS TO CARVE, beyond the sheer fun of it, would be to:

- Minimise or beautify damaged areas on the tree
- Minimise or beautify branch stubs
- Increase the character of a tree
- Eliminate a fault, such as reverse taper
- Moderate the direction of jin so it flows with the tree

CARVING TOOLS can be

- Hand held carvers and a small mallet - for the traditionalists
- Dremel with Dremel Flexishaft and appropriate bits - good for small to medium jobs or fine tuning larger carvings
- Ozito with flexishaft and bits - cheaper than the Dremel but doesn't have the guts - you get what you pay for!!
- Angle Grinder and carving heads and bits - this is big time stuff and requires strength as well as the necessary accessories but if you are working on large material a Dremel would drive you mad.
- Bits - the Dremel pack comes with a number of bits, very few of which are appropriate for tree carving and you need to buy additional bits. There is a list at the end of the article of bit numbers that I have found effective.

SAFETY is one of the constant features of carving and can never be overlooked.

Safety Goggles: First and foremost are safety goggles to protect your most precious carving asset - your eyes. You will find that during refinement stages using the wire brush, bits of the wire will break off and hit your face. They don't puncture the skin but it is not the wisest move to get one in your eye.

Earplugs: Not necessary all the time but some woods can be noisy to carve and protection is better than damaged hearing.

Facemask: This is essential as some woods, such as olive, are poisonous and inhaling the dust can be detrimental.

WHAT TO CARVE

Hardwoods such as olives and elms are ideal for carving as the wood does not deteriorate quickly. Conifers have a natural resin that offers them some protection. The harder the timber the more risk you run in breaking equipment [or burning out the Dremel, but the more fine detail you can do to flaunt your skill.

WHAT TO CARVE CAREFULLY

Softwood trees are not ideal subjects for carving but you can work on them with consideration to their natural habitats and the fact that the wood must be regularly treated to minimise deterioration. It is true that softwood such as maples would not carry jins for long enough in their natural environment to offer them as a feature so basically, NO jins on deciduous trees. But branches do get damaged, shari and cavities do develop naturally so you can replicate them.



Lee's carving subject: One side of the trunk of this azalea has died and major branch stubs need to be naturalised.

THREE RULES for carving

- RULE ONE – the work MUST be natural. It must never look manmade
- RULE TWO – It must tell a story. You don't carve to carve but to enhance some aspect of the tree and that aspect must be in line with the individual tree as well as the natural environment it would live in and possible damages it would incur.
- RULE THREE - You must remove ALL traces of your work so the carved areas look weathered by wind, rain and other elements. Any trace of man's hand and it is wrong. This includes round holes, straight lines, symmetry and other aspects that simply would not happen in nature.

LEE DEMONSTRATES CARVING AN AZALEA *continued*

WHERE TO START

Study the tree. What are you trying to say? Was the tree damaged when a branch broke off in a windstorm, did lightning strike it and create a shari? Did insect damage lead to rot and a hole for an animal or insect?



Major branches had to be removed leaving ugly stubs. You have to tailor the stub to mimic natural dieback to the trunk.

Taking the most common aspect... a major branch has been removed leaving either a large cut or a branch stub. How can you work that into a story? You do not just carve lines in the round cut area... you have to extend it to mimic a falling branch that has taken part of the trunk bark/wood with it. Some branches would die back to the tree, some would actually cause a bit of dieback on the trunk.... You can start tailoring the stub until you get a believable look. A thick branch was removed because it was growing in the wrong direction so the stub is not right. Curve one side and shape the other so it gives the impression of the direction you want. At all times whatever you do must look realistic and probable.

When you are working on sharis, try to avoid taking the deadwood to the soil. Deadwood in constant contact with damp soil will rot faster. However, it is much easier to say than do as often the naturally dead areas run down to the soil when they involve dead roots. You often cannot avoid it so just be aware of the problems that can come.



Naturalising begins from the top stub. Note how she has removed the lower stub merging it in with the overall decay along the trunk.

BACK TO RULE THREE – REFINEMENT

The hardest, longest, most tedious part is removing traces of your handiwork. Once the tree is close to how you envisage it you need the metal brushes to start erasing the unnatural lines and soften the carving into a weathered image. By doing that you also reduce some of the contrasts so you need to go back and deepen areas. Then refine. This goes for quite a number of bit and collet changes.

SHADOWS & DEPTH

The most effective carving has interest because of the shadows that have been created. Flat carving is boring and looks unfinished. Carving with depth and shadows has interest and character - keeping in mind that you don't go too deep on softwood.



Lee has now refined the carving and is applying wood preserver. Azalea is a soft wood and this trunk has decayed significantly so it is inadvisable to wait some months before applying Lime Sulphur.

FINISHING

Once you are satisfied with the carving let the tree stand for several months to allow any nicks on and around the cambium to heal. Lime Sulphur will be applied to strengthen the wood and it can kill the roots if it gets into the soil.

When applying Lime Sulphur, first spray your tree a number of times over half an hour or an hour period until the wood is wet but not dripping. If you apply Lime Sulphur to dry wood it runs like crazy, it will dry yellow and it takes some months before that ages to the greys you want. If you apply Lime Sulphur to wet timber it does not run as fast [it is like water] and it dries white. In a short time the white will start to age to a range of greys from silver to slate, increasing the depth and naturalism of the work.

Some advise adding real India Ink or Sumo ink [tattoo parlours] to the Lime Sulphur to colour it but I have tried the sumo ink and found I had a flat, ugly shade of dirty grey. I much prefer the Lime Sulphur and the natural way it ages. One bonsai artist advocates acrylic paint as it has wood preservatives in it but I don't see that this treatment gives a natural look. (continued on page 4)

'OLLOW' THE MISFORTUNES OF AN ELM

'Ollow', The Misfortunes of an Elm by Lee

I snaffled this tree from a friend's bonsai bench and took it home to carve it. There was a huge apex removal scar, two holes on opposite sides of the tree where large roots have been removed and the tree was almost unredeemable ugly.



This tree is a real challenge to redeem!

The original plan was to just naturalise the major scar but the excavation kept getting deeper and deeper. The tree had enough of a surround to allow hollowing out the interior and the two root holes were used, one consumed in the excavation and the other hollowed out to remove more heartwood. A major branch on the left had too prominent and unchangeable upward growth so that was removed and hopefully it will shoot on the right side.



Close up view of 'ollow' showing the root hole where light can penetrate creating added interest to this carving.



The trunk has obvious wire marks but once the foliage is out and the carving has aged to a grey the tree will be quite pleasant with a pretty strong survival story.

Carving by Lee (continued from page 3)

No deadwood is one flat colour, it has a soft range of colourations developed over time. You simply cannot get that with paint. And on this subject... look around.... jins and sharis are NOT white. The oldest deadwood can be weathered to a soft, silvery grey but not white. White deadwood is not a natural state of affairs.

And the last bit of advice from one who learned the hard way. You cannot carve character in a trunk if it has no character to begin with. You can use your tool to make a negative into a positive but you cannot use carving to make a plain, uninteresting trunk attractive.

Many enthusiasts use knob cutters, side cutters, knives and other implements to naturalise branch stubs and cuts but picking up a Dremel and teaching yourself to carve opens a new side of bonsai that can be great fun and offer a great artistic offshoot. Give it a go.

Recommended Dremel Bits:

www.dremel.com Click country, click Tools & Accessories, click Bits & Accessories, click Rotary Tool Bits, click Carving and scroll across the pages to see the heads. Bits have to be sourced by keeping a list and stopping in every nearby hardware as few stores carry much of a range.

Bold/Underlined are my preferences but I use them all 107, 110, 115, 116, 117, 117, 121, 124, 190, 193, 194, 196, 7144, 9906



The dremel and bits from Lee's carving kit

Kaizen UK: <http://www.kaizenbonsai.com/shop/bonsai-carving-tools/power-carving-bits-small-shaft> check out Wood Carving Wire Brushes, Termite Bits both coarse and fine and the Wood Carving 6 piece burr set.

SPRING SEASON NEW SHOOT PRUNING AND TRIMMING

Spring season new shoot pruning: Deciduous trees.

From Masakuni Kawasumi, *The Secret Techniques of Bonsai*

"Spring is the season in which new buds unfurl. Each tree, however, will bud differently. The amount of sunlight and the temperature greatly affect the manner of budding, as does the health of the individual tree. Bonsai that have been kept well from the year before will bud vigorously, whereas those that have received improper care or repotting will bud poorly. Spring budding is like a report card on the care you have given the bonsai over the previous year.

The young buds that have sprouted should not be left to grow unchecked. In bonsai bud trimming is always performed, for it is fundamental to determining and maintaining the shape of your bonsai. Bud trimming allows you to control branch length and create intricate branching. If you neglect the task, you may end up with longer branches, which will deform a bonsai you have already trained into shape. Trimming the buds is particularly vital for achieving intricately ramifying ends that do not crisscross.

As a general rule, the buds of deciduous trees are trimmed by just keeping the first two leaves and nipping off what extends beyond them though if you want a shoot to grow out, you can wait until it reaches the desired length and trim the end later if it grows any longer; a new bud will emerge from between the remaining leaves. The branches of any bonsai should bifurcate. Where you can foresee buds growing into trifurcating branches, bud trimming is performed so that just two branches are left.

The young buds of deciduous trees are vigorous in early spring, and will grow out in no time if you neglect to trim them for two or three days. Cultivators who own many deciduous bonsai are thus kept very busy in spring."

New shoot pruning: Flowering trees

From David Prescott, *The Bonsai Handbook*

"For each species of flowering bonsai, you can find many special pruning regimes. My best advice is to explore these in detail [and take into account your local environment and climate] to maximize the care of your own specimens. A good rule is to prune back new shoots to two or three leaves shortly after flowering. A few (such as pyracantha, willow, and tamarisk) benefit from very early spring pruning of old wood because it encourages compact new growth in the coming season. Do not use this old-wood pruning for most early flowering trees (for example crab apple, hawthorn, winter jasmine, wisteria, apricots and cherries) or you will remove the flower buds formed on the previous season's wood.

Some flowering trees are encouraged to grow long sacrificial branches through summer. This takes the majority of the tree's vegetative growth and encourages, other, shorter shoots to be even more compact. It is only from the compact shoots that next year's flowers will grow (for example crab apple, hawthorn, pear, pyracantha and wisteria) the best times to remove these large sacrificial branches is after leaf fall or, better still in [August], leaving all of the short shoots alone to bear flowers.

I do not routinely prune the new shoots of your trees in growing boxes or beds. I do, however, perform structural pruning regularly to balance strength and shape and to reduce excess growth mass in hot periods. This helps to avoid dieback of lower, weaker areas. Incidentally, pruning techniques do not reduce the size of the flowers or the fruit."

Continually trimming your bonsai: allow your tree to grow

From Bonsai for me -

<http://www.bonsai4me.com/Basics/Basics%20Bonsai%20Continual%20trimming.htm>

Bonsai are pruned on a regular basis so they keep their diminutive size. Without pruning, their natural apically dominant growth habit will take over; the upper and outer branches and shoots will extend strongly at the expense of the inner and lower growth that could eventually dieback.

Without the restriction at the roots in the confines of a bonsai pot, the tree would theoretically grow to a natural height. It is therefore important that growth is restrained. Unpruned upper branches can quickly lose their taper and delicacy, and in time, can become coarse and too thick for their position at the top of the trunk.

However, there is a balance that must be struck. A bonsai must be allowed to grow. New growth is not only a sign of a healthy plant (and therefore a healthy bonsai) but in turn it generates a refreshing of the tree's structure, new root growth and vitality. Therefore a bonsai must be allowed periods of growth, periods of time where it is allowed to grow; enough to revitalise its energy but not so much that growth becomes coarse or the shape of the tree is completely lost and apical dominance is allowed to take over.

A bonsai that is continually trimmed without respite will be continually regenerating new buds and shoots; the repeated production of these new buds deplete the energy reserves of a tree when it is unable to recoup its lost energy levels by means of photosynthesis.

It must be realised that it is a myth to think that bonsai should and must be trimmed on a daily or weekly basis. It is also a myth to think that great bonsai look perfect all year round. Most bonsai are exhibited, photographed and displayed in perfect condition but this state is only temporary. These same trees are allowed (or should be allowed) periods of the necessary free growth to allow shoot extension and therefore re-energise the tree; the perfect image is temporarily lost

MEMBER TREES FOR AUGUST AND EVENTS CALENDAR

Member trees in September



Sue's wisteria in flower



Chris's giant sequoia in training.

Note: See <https://www.giant-sequoia.com/about-sequoia-trees/giant-sequoia-bonsai-care/> for care of this species as a bonsai



Colin's Deodar (*Cedrus Deodara*). Sue and Colin retrieved this tree from near death as it had no more than a couple of tiny live roots left. As an emergency procedure they immersed the tree in water for 48 hours and then provided after care for recovery. The tree has now recovered with new spring shoots emerging.



Les's crab apple beginning to flower

BONSAI EVENTS CALENDAR

Date	Event	Details
6 & 7 October 2015	Andrew Ward Demonstration at Bonsai Society of Australia, 7.30 pm, 6 Oct, \$10	West Pennant Hills Community Hall, 42 Hill Road, West Pennant Hills. Note: 7.30 pm, 7 October is a workshop, observer cost \$10.
10-11 October 2015	Canberra Bonsai Society Annual Show	Level 1 War Memorial Hall, Canberra Grammar School, 40 Monaro Crescent, Red Hill
17-15 October 2015	School of Bonsai 34 th Bonsai Annual Exhibition	Ray Nesci Nursery, Sagars Rd, Dural
20-23 May 2016	29 th Australian Bonsai Convention	Wrest Point Convention Centre, Hobart, Tasmania