



sydney city  
**bonsai club** inc.




## NEXT CLUB MEETINGS

**Green Square Community Hall**  
3 Joynton Avenue  
Zetland



**7pm Tuesday 11 September 2012**  
Workshop for broad leaf evergreen bonsai bring your trees.

**7pm Tuesday 9 October 2012**  
Workshop, broad leaf evergreens and fig bonsai.

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## COMMITTEE

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**President** Bryan  
**Vice President** Sue  
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**Committee** Richard

## MEMBERSHIP

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

## Welcome to the September Newsletter

### September Meeting

- Workshop for broad leaf evergreen bonsai
- Horticultural Tips (Tony)
- Raffle: 18 of Constantine's Donated Trees



Finally Possums that do not cause problems for bonsai – see page 2 for more info

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**We are back at 3 Joynton Ave, Zetland for the September Meeting**

**CONSTANTINE HAS DONATED 18 TREES FOR OUR AUCTION THIS MONTH – BRING YOUR MONEY WITH YOU**

### In this month's newsletter:

- Bonsai Tool Use, New Moss found page 2
- Pyracantha makeover pages 3
- Saotome Siamese Twins pages 3 & 4
- Commissioning Pots pages 5, 6, 7
- Events calendar page 7

## BONSAI TOOLS ONE HANDED & WHAT DID YOU CALL THAT MOSS?



You CANNOT use bonsai tools effectively trying to do it with two hands. You lose focus, force and clarity and the risk of cutting too much and damaging the tree is very high.

Most people do use tools with only one hand but some of the newer enthusiasts still find it awkward and don't realise that the real awkwardness is trying to remove a branch using a sidecutter in two hands. Imagine trying to eat with a chopstick in each hand. It can't be done well.

### POSSUMS and OTHER NATIVES

A curse in your backyard or amongst your trees but Hey, they are Aussie so what better way to give a touch of whimsy to an Aussie Native.



Sydney bonsai potter Janet Selby makes wombats, echidnas, snakes, frogs, lizards, koi carp and the occasional possum for those of us who want a touch of native fauna with our flora natives. She also creates soe pots with frogs or lizards perched on the rims and mini ceramic bonsai.

If your sense of humour stretches to a bit of native wildlife you can now satisfy it. Check out this link for the range of her animals and her mini ceramic bonsai. They are all fun and small enough that postage would be reasonable.

<https://picasaweb.google.com/107560637395243426575/MicroAnimals2012>  
[janetselby@bigpond.com](mailto:janetselby@bigpond.com) [www.janetselby.com.au](http://www.janetselby.com.au)

### 'PUBIC' MOSS



I've been growing bonsai since 2000 and collected moss over the years but this is the first time I have seen curly moss flowers. I found it on a friend's tree when I was watering and brought some home only to find that I had one bonsai in my collection of 74 with curly moss and there's a big natural patch in one of my dog walking parks. Maybe 'steel wool moss' is a better name but it looks like green youknowwhat.



## PYRACANTHA MAKEOVER

The majority of New Chums to bonsai are reluctant to cut back hard to get to the basic skeleton of a new tree. This reluctance is partly due to a lack of knowledge on how the tree grows and how it will develop after serious pruning and the oft heard phrase 'but I like that branch'.

My attitude to hard pruning was tempered early when I lost two years on a very nice tree & five years on another because I was timid in really getting to the heart of the tree when I first got it.

A lot more experience in how trees grow does increase confidence greatly but also one can take advice from tutors who have more knowledge than a beginner and can see further in the future to the tree's eventual development.

I have been looking for a potentially small pyracantha with a stocky base and not the formula zigzag trunk you tend to get in nursery stock. Pyracanthas are hardy trees; they develop rapidly and are forgiving. The sharp thorns can be nipped as they develop and there is the additional bonus of the creamy white flowers in spring, green berries in summer and coloured berries in autumn. But I was more interested in their rapid development than the flowers... at this stage.



I found this tree in a private nursery, studied it long and hard and decided that it had great potential for a shohin, a bonsai no higher than 25-30 cm. The trunk is approximately 9 cm thick and about 15cm tall. The tree was a large cutting and then ground grown for several years. There is definitely nothing 'formula' about it. But you have to look hard to see the potential bonsai and you have to be willing to take the plunge.

It went to a workshop and the tutor looked at it and asked me what I had in mind. I explained my game plan and he agreed. I had picked the best side for the front and read the crystal ball pretty well.

So I got out my sidecutters. A pruning saw was out of the question as the roots would not have withstood the tooting and froing that saw action would have delivered. It has a lot of roots but they are young and the tree is not firm in the pot yet.



This is what I saw. The one remaining branchlet on the left will be the lowest and most important branch. There is a small shoot emerging from the back that will possibly become the back branch and the header needs a bit of adjustment but that will form the upper structure of the tree. In 6-9 months when the tree is very stable in the pot I will carve the stumps to minimise them and work them in with the design. To do any more work now would jeopardise the tree's health. Now is the time to let it sit, let the roots strengthen and fill the pot, let the branching and foliage grow.

Pyracantha wood will rot easily. Carving cannot be very detailed and carving is also inappropriate on most pyracanthas. In natural surroundings the dead wood would rot off but you can do a bit. You must be prepared to regularly apply lime sulphur and wood hardener to maintain the dead wood.

Any flowers the tree produces this year or next will be removed to allow maximum energy to go into the development of the structure as flowering and fruiting takes a lot of the tree's energy. If the development goes as well as I envisage some flowers will be allowed to stay on to berry the second year.

The extent of the cutback has shocked a few people but if you are not prepared to work your vision you will not achieve a really nice tree. If you are at all unsure then hesitate. You can remove a branch next year, you can't put it back. With this pyracantha I was very sure. Despite the severity of the reduction... or because of it ... I can see a good future for this tree as a low growing tree with a stout trunk and a low foliage pad that will partially camouflage the stubs that will remain.



## SAOTOME SIAMESE TWINS

It's a well known workshop fact that you arrive with your workshop tree in the back of a ute and go home with it in the glove box. This time I turned tables on the adage and came home with two.

I purchased a saotome azalea with a thick base and the rest an absolute thicket so it was all but impossible to assess the tree and I took a chance and bought it. Once the tree was cleaned up and non-essential branches removed there were very major problems.

The saotome had a trunk interesting from three angles and three lovely major branches... all barring. The no-no on bar branching is relaxed in minis but I still find it off putting so the tree went to Stanwell Tops Weekend Workshop for a stoush with Tony Bebb.



The best option appeared to be to use a shapely branch and make a semi cascade. That meant removing the strong vertical trunk and that meant a very high risk of having the root complex that fed that trunk die off. Tony checked the tree and decided there was a good possibility of splitting the two sides.

With a pseudo chisel and a testosterone fired root fork as a hammer he gently started the separation. First a connecting root that comprised part of the trunk was severed and the two sections prised apart.

Not only was the job well done but the beautiful handmade pot was not damaged. Great care was taken but that's the hallmark of a good tutor and Tony is the BEST.

The two sections as one unit showing the possibility of two trees



The two sections separated



The left half has been planted as a semi cascade and one branch wired to form the header. The tree is planted low to develop roots for this angle. The forward plan is to compact the foliage pad on the main branch, develop the header to integrate with the left branch and have a balancing portion to the right. A round glazed pot will be chosen once the tree has stabilized and is growing nicely.

## SAOTOME SIAMESE TWINS & COMMISSIONING POTS



The right trunk has a longer way to go before it become a bonsai. Shoots are needed on the straight trunk so branches can grow and be developed into the structure.

Workshop trees are seldom overnight bonsai but these two now have a greater chance to be grown into miniature trees with beauty than they ever did as a singular plant. I thought I was pretty lateral thinking in styling but it just shows you what a lot more experience can achieve and that is why I have come home with twice as much as I took rather than half as much and why workshops are so advantageous.

### COMMISSIONING POTS

What do you do when you get a tree that simply does not look good in a conventional pot? What do you do when you have a special tree and you want something out of the ordinary to showcase it?

There are a great many trees that look fine in a commercial pot and because these are readily available this is the easiest option. But they don't always work. This olive simply does not gel with a standard pot.



The rugged nature of the tree and its small stature but heavily weighted base completely overwhelm conventional pots.

This bonsai gives 'rugged' a serious meaning and a smooth, even rimmed pot did it no justice at all regardless of how suitable the glaze was. I had purchased a pot from Pat Kennedy several years earlier for a very odd olive and I commissioned him to create a similar feeling pot in the necessary size.

The pot gives a rough country feel, the freeform adds to the tree's credibility and the visual weight of the pot harmonises with the bonsai without ever over shadowing it. There is no way a conventional pot could duplicate this feeling.

To prove this point here's another olive in a Japanese pot and in a Roger Hnatiuk pot. The Japanese pot is the right size and colour and a good shape to hold the tree but it doesn't sing with the tree. It's just there. The Roger Hnatiuk pot places the olive in the harsh, dry environs it would thrive in. The size of the pot anchors the tree and gives it great stability while the high rising textured trunk allows the olive to dominate and still co-ordinate beautifully and the two become a matching duo.



OLIVE CARR Jap



OLIVE CARR Roger

Bi-coloured leaves are not favourites with bonsai enthusiasts tho you do see them now and again. When I found this coprosma I was taken with the tortured, twisted trunk and the colour of the foliage. I felt it was imperative that a pot did not contrast with the tree; it had to embody the same colouration and also had to convey a sense of harshness that the growth of the trunk dictated.



## COMMISSIONING A POT

The pot was going to have to be substantially larger than the trunk to visually support the foliage pads yet have a delicacy to match the tree's airy structure. I contacted Janet Selby, showed her the tree and told her what I envisaged. This is the result and it works.



COPROSMA

When my sandpaper fig started achieving its potential I wanted a quiet pot with a textured surface and a matt glaze. Luckily I had visited Penny Davis at her Mudlark Pottery studio in Newcastle and snapped up this pot because it was a size I like and it was ideal for natives with its rustic refined elegance. The Sandpaper slid in and embraced it and the two unify beautifully. The pot conveys the undergrowth riverbank area the sandpaper would frequent. The pot is noticeable for its quality and suitability but the tree has the main say. Again, this is a perfect pairing that would be harder to achieve with the majority of conventional pots.



Another Penny Davis/Mudlark pot was bought because it screamed 'native' to my eyes and my Melaleuca linearifolia loves it. The darker glaze colouration on the left of the pot mimics a shadow of the trunk on the water and the viewer can easily conjure up an Australian native by a billabong.



MELALEUCA linearifolia

I commissioned Pat Kennedy of Mirkwood to make a pot for another hard to situate bonsai. The pot had to be rough and refined, it had to mimic a cliff side and its strength had to empower the delicacy of the tree growing from a cleft in a rock, stretching to the light for survival. Although this Kunzea simply does not photograph well it is beautiful and one of my favourites.



KUNZEA

Yes, I take my visual images very seriously. If I am creating a bonsai the tree and the pot have to say the same thing, promote and strengthen the same image. I don't just put a tree in a pot because I happen to have the pot. I have spent great lengths of time and love creating the artistry in a tree and the pot must enhance that. Otherwise where is the art? You can't have 'part art'. You can't create a nice tree and leave it at that... the pot MUST compliment the tree and amplify the story the tree is telling. Australian natives in particular do better in handmade pots.

### So how does one commission a pot?

Each potter has a distinct style and a preferred range of glazes so if you want a potter to make a pot in a particular colour you might be out of luck if it is not in their range. This is why it is good to have an idea of each potter's style and output.

# COMMISSIONING A POT & CALENDAR

It does help if you can attend bonsai shows or seminars where bonsai potters exhibit their handmade pots. You can also attend bonsai exhibitions and study the pots and chat with the show organisers to get the potter's contact details. This would necessitate their talking to the owner and then passing on the details as many owners prefer to remain anonymous. But it is worth the time and effort.

You can also read articles like this one and get a feel for potters and their pots.

You can ask a potter to duplicate a pot from a photograph but keep in mind that each potter has his own style and glazes and you won't get an identical pot. You will get their interpretation. This is not wrong. This is artistic imperative and if a potter is creating original works asking for an identical copy is doing a disservice to the original potter and the artist you are liaising with. I have discovered the hard fact of handmade potting is that it is all but impossible to duplicate exactly a pot size or glaze. There will be a variation and all the potters I deal with will make several pots for a commission and the buyer chooses the one closest to his preference. Everyone is individual.

Sometimes it doesn't happen but usually one of the pots is ideal. Sometimes there is an accident in the glazing and/or the kiln and the result is magic and never to be repeated and that's one you latch onto and find a tree for it if it is unsuitable for the tree in question.

There is no problem asking a potter to make one of his pots in a different size or glaze.

Travel to a potter's studio. Get some enthusiasts together, make an appointment with the potter and have a day out. You can end up with more pots than you planned on but what riches.

Back to commissioning... have a very good idea of the size you want. It is a good idea to put the tree in a pot the size you are considering to see how it suits. Silly? I commissioned three handmade pots for one tree over a year based on carefully taken measurements of what I thought the tree needed. In the end another tree is in one pot and I sold the other two.

Despite the fact the measurements seemed correct each pot was too big. With the carved olive in the first photo I bought two of these pots convinced that the smaller was the right one but the larger one was better. It is tricky but again, worth the effort. And I sell the unwanted pots on ausbonai so it is a win/win.

If you have an awkward tree take it to the potter and discuss the tree's needs. The potter will give you a price so you know where you stand. You must keep in mind that you are not buying off the shelf, it could take 6-8 weeks at least to get your pot made as the potter is reliant on weather conditions, drying times and filling a kiln as well as possible breakages and remaking. So don't commission today for a show next week because it won't happen.

I absolutely love bonsai and I have enlarged that love to include handmade pots. I'm a genuine certifiable Potoholic and every local potter knows it and they smile broadly when they see me heading towards their wares. My trees are better dressed than I am. Pots are very important to strengthen the quality of a good tree and a joy to work with. This side obsession might not be to everyone's preference but even a couple handmade pots will enhance your collection. Go for it. And to that end:

**Mirkwood Forest Bonsai Pots Potter: Pat Kennedy**  
Tumut NSW 6946 2956 0400 216 563

**Mudlark Bonsai Pots Potter: Penny Davis**  
Blackalls Park, Newcastle NSW 4959 4492  
[mudlarkpottery@bigpond.com](mailto:mudlarkpottery@bigpond.com)  
Or Google Mudlark Pottery Blog

**Janet Selby Pots Potter: Janet Selby**  
Canterbury NSW 9589 4636 0421 369 707  
[www.janetselby.com.au](http://www.janetselby.com.au) janetselby@bigpond.com

**Roger Hnatiuk** is very elusive about pot making. If you have one of his then treasure it and keep a lookout on club sale tables for a rare possibility to get one.

Date	Event	Details
14-16 September	Bonsai Society of Australia Annual Show	Baulkham Hills Council, Castle Hill
29 September	Goulburn Bonsai Society Annual Show	CWA Rooms, Goulburn
30 September, 1 October	AABC and BFA Sydney Bonsai Spectacular	Merrylands RSL, Merrylands CANCELLED DUE TO DELAYED RENOVATIONS
20-21 October	School of Bonsai Annual Show	Ray Nesci Bonsai, Dural
27-28 October	Urrimbirra Bonsai Society Annual Show	Ribbonwood Centre, Dapto
2-4 November	Newcastle Bonsai Society Annual Show	Charlestown Bowling Club
24-25 November	Campbelltown Bonsai Society Annual Show	Campbelltown Arts Centre, Campbelltown