



NEXT CLUB MEETINGS

Green Square Community Hall

3 Joynton Avenue
Zetland

7pm Tuesday 8 September 2015

Lee will demonstrate carving
bonsai. Tree of the month is
Juniper.

7pm Tuesday 13 October 2015

Demystifying Judging Bonsai.
Take the challenge – bring in a
tree that you might want to enter
into the Easter Show or put on
SSBC Easter Show display booth.

CONTACT DETAILS



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COMMITTEE

Patron Dorothy Koreshoff

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 September Newsletter

September Meeting

- Demonstration by Lee on carving an Azalea bonsai.
- Tree of the month - Junipers but also bring in any tree that is in flower.
- Member Styling Hotspot led by President Bryan. One or two trees are needed each month for open discussion.



John explains the basic principles of sharpening tools

In this issue:

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Collection Clear Out! – Sale at September SCBC



Mini Black Pine \$100, Crabapple \$40, PJ Fig with carved front \$45,
Sargents juniper \$60, carved olive \$75, hollow olive \$65, orchids \$8 to \$20.

JOHN TALKS ON SHARPENING BONSAI TOOLS

John shows members how bonsai tools should be sharpened and maintained.

Dull or improperly sharpened bonsai tools can crush the stems and branches instead of cutting them clean, resulting in damaged plant tissue. Sharp clean tools also reduce the spread of diseases and fungi.

John explained that in general there are two types of bonsai tools that need sharpening: those that cut, such as bonsai shears; and those that bite, such as concave cutters and knob cutters. Each type has different sharpening instructions, and it's important to follow the correct steps.

Shears/scissors are designed to concentrate the force of the two blades along a single line, so it is important that the blades meet perfectly. Also bonsai shears have a flatter bevel angle, usually around 30°, compared to western scissors.

Sap will get on the back of the blades when you cut plants and the performance of your shears will greatly diminish. It will come off easily if wiped clean immediately after use with a cloth that has been dampened and wrung out well. It will become stubborn once it has hardened.

Rust is another detriment to blades. John uses a light spray of WD40 on both the blades and the hinge and then wipes off the excess. If the rust is really bad then rust remover can be used.

John had modified an old triangular-shaped file by grinding the three surfaces smooth. He uses this tool to effectively remove hardened sap and even rust.

Note: KANESHIN Crean Mate (available at bonsai nurseries) is also good for maintaining but not sharpening bonsai tools. It is a rubberized block with slight grit which removes gunk and sap build up easily thus reducing the frequency needed for sharpening.

Sharpening tools



Basic sharpening tools are the diamond lap (above) and sharpening stone (below)

The diamond lap is a steel plate, sometimes mounted on a plastic or resin base, coated with diamond grit, an abrasive that will grind metal. The plate may have a series of holes cut in it that capture the swarf cast off as grinding takes place. This sharpening block has different grades of

diamond grit on each of 4 surfaces of the block. John uses this dry. The tool available at Aldi and hardware stores.

Sharpening stones (whetstones/oilstones/waterstones) maybe natural or artificial stones. Artificial stones usually come in the form of bonded abrasive often presented as a double-sided block with a coarse grit on one side and a fine grit on the other enabling one stone to satisfy the basic requirements of sharpening. Stones are generally wet with water before commencing the sharpening. Japanese waterstones are softer than western-style stones and are often preferred for use in sharpening bonsai tools. However they hollow more easily with use and have to be levelled periodically with a diamond lap.

John maintains that all stones whether you use them wet or dry should be cleaned with a mild detergent solution and NOT oil.



Professionals like John generally use an electric water wheel. The stone wheel spins constantly moistened through a tray of water during the sharpening process. Once the basic sharpening is done, the leather wheel on the opposite side is used for finishing and polishing.

For sharpening bonsai shears, after cleaning and checking that the blades meet perfectly, open the blades and sharpen along the outside bevelled edge maintaining the current angle of the bevel. A good way to ensure that the correct bevel angle is maintained all along the blade is by using a black marker pen along the bevel edge. If your sharpening evenly cleans off the black then you are sharpening evenly along the bevel.

Using pressure only on the forward strike, pull the blade edge in a circular figure 8 action with a fine grade stone. After sharpening you simply close the blades slowly to remove the slight bur from the inside. If your use a stone on the inside flat surface, you will affect the way they meet and cut.

Concave cutters are trickier to sharpen. The edges have to match EXACTLY or they won't work properly. One edge should just barely overlap the other so that when they snap through a branch one edge will not jam and dull the other. They should close so precisely that you cannot see any light between the edges when they are closed. Branch cutters and Knob cutters only need to be sharpened on the outside of the undercutting blade. You should not need to run a stone over the inside of either blade at any time.

If in doubt get a professional to sharpen your expensive tools.

STEVE TOLLEY DEMONSTRATES AT TOPS WEEKEND, AUGUST 2015

STEVE TOLLEY DEMONSTRATION NOTES



Steve Tolley, an English bonsai master, was the headliner at this year's Stanwell Tops Weekend Workshop. He is entertaining, informative, humorous and VERY talented. Steve worked a shaggy substantial juniper into an upcoming bonsai.

Notes taken during his styling:



Juniper before styling by Steve

The strength of a juniper is in the foliage. The last thing we should do is to scalp the foliage. When we re-pot the tree we know that we can remove a lot of roots and the foliage will help to regrow roots. Where junipers grow they absorb a lot of moisture through the foliage. Feed via the soil one time, feed the foliage the next fortnight. With a weak or sick juniper spray the foliage with feed. This works for all junipers.

Pines get their strength from the roots so they cannot be root pruned hard and need soil based fertiliser.

MaxiCrop with seaweed is good for this. There are two Maxi crops, one without and one with seaweed.

Almost all trees can be bonsai'd but not all trees make good bonsai. You want trees that thrive, not just survive.

Bonsai in England...it started in late 50s with one or two people in London and really started to gain momentum in early 60s with masters like Peter Adams, Henry Tomlinson and Dan Barton. Now England has been left behind by the Italians and Spaniards.

There are 10 million bonsai stylists in Japan, but that's not saying that all are good - there are only about 12 true masters in Japan

A bonsai master is thoroughly knowledgeable in horticultural, styling, technique and care. The one thing the Japanese have is history and they have had trees in training for centuries where we have had trees for decades.



"Bonsai is the art of seeing the future. When you create a tree today you are creating it for the future. The first styling is not a bonsai - it is just the first step towards a bonsai."

From <http://www.stevetolleybonsai.com/before-and-after-2/peters-itoigawa/>

The important aspects of bonsai are horticulture, technique and aesthetics and of these horticulture is the most important. Plus time. Bonsai has four dimensions and the fourth is time.



"Sogno" Yamadori Shimpaku refined by Steve from <http://www.stevetolleybonsai.com/before-and-after-2/yamadori-shimpaku/>

An enthusiast must get their head around horticultural. It doesn't do any good to learn how it is done in Japan, you have to know your own growing conditions and work your trees to that. Otherwise you will kill your trees.

Mugo pine needs cold, needs frost to be healthy. Junipers give you the most scope for styling.

High mountain plants grow very compact because of the extreme conditions: thinner air, higher UV radiation; to cope with the conditions they have to grow very compact. When you bring yamadori down from high altitude they can go in shock. Then they are put in good potting mix and fed and they start growing coarsely with all the nutrients. In the mountains they often grown in their own needle litter, soil can be scarce.

STEVE TOLLEY DEMONSTRATES AT TOPS WEEKEND *continued*

Key points on styling

You can't follow styling guidelines pedantically. With mother/daughter, groups or forest planting the lowest branch must be on the smallest tree. If you are doing a multi trunk or a forest the tops should be different heights. The most powerful must be the tallest. In nature the oldest will be the tallest, the youngest will be closest to the ground. Bonsai must reflect this.

On the other hand – you can't follow the guidelines concerning first branch, second branch, back branch... If you have a tree with two branches and one is on the inside curve you are not going to remove it, otherwise the tree would be very boring. Look at the trunk, what does the trunk tell you. Is it feminine or masculine? The trunk should give you the insight as to what the tree is and how it should be styled.

If you have a straight tree you don't want curvy branches. What caused the trunk to grow straight or curvy will be the same thing that makes the branches grow in the same style.

If you take an upward growing branch and bring it down for a cascade branch you should leave the foliage long so there is sufficient foliage to pull the nutrient down. When the branch is acclimatised to its new position in a few months you can then start reducing and refining the styling on that branch. To do so earlier could jeopardise the health of that branch.



Jins made with the long shaggy branches and now Steve is wiring the remaining branches ready for shaping.



Reece from SCBC won the auction for the Juniper following Steve's demonstration

Refined and natural bonsai - there's a balance. A bonsai is a tree that has been artfully shaped by the hand of man; you can over refine and under refine.

Treating and texturing deadwood

Lime sulphur - do it regularly, not just once a year. Dilute it 1 to 5 so the colour is more silvery and not white. Do the lime sulphur regularly so that it builds up. If there is nothing to do with your bonsai, apply lime sulphur to any deadwood. Get any algae or moss off as that will cause the deadwood to deteriorate more rapidly.



A couple of close ups of the refined natural looking carving achieved by Steve. From <http://www.stevetolleybonsai.com/before-and-after-2/kevins-kishu/>

Silk thread carving is another way of texturing deadwood and has been developed by the Taiwanese. With a tool flick a piece of the deadwood - freshly prepared jins or shari - and pull that along the wood so the tear is with the grain. This only works on green wood, not seasoned timber. It will pull along the grain and can wrap around the tree so you get a very natural affect that is harder to achieve with tool carving. A crème brûlée burner burns stripes in the wood and you then use a wire brush to texture the burned area. Apply the torch for different lengths of time so the burn is different depths and when you use the brush it will give different affects.

Some trees rot from the inside out; others, like pines, erode away. When you are carving your carving must reflect the way a species would decay.

MASAKUNI KAWASUMI ON TOOLSHARPENING

Tool sharpening in Masakuni Kawasumi II's book: "The Secret Techniques of Bonsai"

Masakuni Kawasumi II has an excellent chapter on bonsai tools including sharpening in his book. He worked in the family bonsai business for decades, designing his own tools and cultivating bonsai on a professional level: "



Step 1. Carefully inspect the edges of the blades. The blades of branch cutters and similar tools will become misaligned. You will be able to clearly feel this by gently touching the tips with your finger. Make a note of how large the difference is.



Step 2. The blade that crosses over the other is called the upper blade, and the one underneath is called the under blade. (The branch cutter is turned over in the picture, so that the blade you see on the top is the under blade.) The outside of the under blade is sharpened first. The blade is narrow at the tip; apply the whetstone flat against this part of the blade. As with shears, just a few light strokes are enough. Next carefully shave off the burr on the inside of the blade.



Step 3: The upper blade is sharpened with the blades closed. Place the whetstone against the narrow part of the blade and hone it the same amount as the level difference that you noted in step one. When you have finished the outside shave off the inside burr.

Note: After repeated sharpening, the blades eventually will become short and no longer meet. When the blades have become too short, you can adjust the distance between them by filing down the part of the stopper that touches the shank until the tips meet again."

Maintenance pruning junipers in spring

In contrast to style pruning which gives the tree its basic style and shape, maintenance pruning is designed to maintain and refine the existing shape of a Bonsai and foster the health of the tree.

Trees have a natural tendency to distribute growth to the top (and to a lesser extent to the outer parts of the branches). This is called 'apical dominance' so that the tree gets optimum sun. By distributing growth to the top and outer edges the trees inner and lower branches get little sun and airflow and may eventually die particularly if the upper growth is particularly thick.

In order to counter apical dominance it is important to prune the top and outer portions of a tree, opening the inner branches up to sun and air and to redistribute the growth to the inner and lower parts.

At the August meeting, Sue brought in some examples of maintenance pruning of some of her Junipers.



Before and after shots of two of Sue's Junipers showing maintenance pruning

MEMBER TREES FOR AUGUST AND EVENTS CALENDAR

Member trees in August



Reece's Azalea 'kirin' in flower



Chris's Desert Ash



Jamie's newly acquired Persian Ironwood (Parrotia)



Naomi's Chinese Elm group setting

The Evolution of *Bonsai*

The Bonsai Society of Australia is holding its 50th Anniversary Friday-Saturday- Sunday 18th – 20 September 2015 at the Federation Pavillion Castle Hill Showground (entry Showground Rd).

Demonstrators: Sue Brennen, Dennis Barton, Chris di Nola and Pham Bao Khanh Linh

Market Place: Come along to find a bargain quality bonsai and stock from BSA members.

Clinic: Bring your bonsai for advice, pruning, maintenance, styling or any other problems

BONSAI EVENTS CALENDAR

| Date | Event | Details |
|----------------------|---|--|
| 18-20 September 2015 | Bonsai Society of Australia – The Evolution of Bonsai – 50 th Anniversary of BSA | Federation Pavilion Castle Hill Showground. Adults \$5 Concessions \$3 and children under 12 free. |
| 10-11 October 2015 | Canberra Bonsai Society Annual Show | Canberra Grammar School |
| 20-23 May 2016 | 29 th Australian Bonsai Convention | Wrest Point Convention Centre, Hobart, Tasmania |