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## NEXT CLUB MEETINGS

### Green Square Community Hall

3 Joynton Avenue Zetland

### 7pm Tuesday 12 Nov 2019

Fig workshop-repotting and pruning.  
Peter will uncover his root over rock.

### 7pm Tuesday 10 Dec 2019

Christmas at SCBC – decorate tree &  
bring goodies.

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## CONTACT DETAILS



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## COMMITTEE

Patron	TBA
President	Chris
Vice President	Neville
Secretary	David
Treasurer	Bryan
Newsletter Editor	Roz
Librarian	Les
Committee	Frank, John, Ed & Lee

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## 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.

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## November Meeting

- Club workshop – fig repotting and pruning.
- Peter will uncover the root over rock commenced 2 years ago.
- Display focus – Figs or any other tree.



*English Oak (from a seedling in 1980). This is one of my favourite trees in my garden. It is just a little bit too big for me to take to the club meeting - Roz*

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## In this Issue:

- Brenda Parker Talks on Propagation for Bonsai - page 2-3
- Three Stages of Bonsai Development – Setting Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Structures - page 4-5
- Jonas Dupuich's "Bonsai Tonight" blog – Bonsai Development Series - page 5-6
- Bonsai Events Calendar - page 6

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## Reminders

### Start Thinking About Our Christmas Get Together

We always have fun when members decorate a bonsai for our Christmas do. You can choose a theme from a well known movie, song, book title, saying or make people guess what your tree represents. A Christmas theme is OK too.

# BRENDA TALKS ON PROPAGATION

## Brenda Parker Talks on Propagation for Bonsai

At last month's SCBC meeting Brenda Parker gave us a great talk on propagation methods for growing bonsai.

### Growing from seed

Growing bonsai from seed is an option if you do have the time as there are not many bonsai nurseries in the Sydney area. Of course you can pick up some bargains at bonsai shows or resurrect plants from mainstream nurseries.

One thing you should note when growing plants for bonsai from seed is that the plant characteristics will not exactly match the parent plant. Usually when you grow from seed you generate a few plants and you can cull out those you don't want.

When you grow from seed you do need to know when a seed is ready to plant and if you have to treat it in some way (e.g. soak, wait for seed pod to burst, collect in paper bag whilst on the plant).

Kumquats are very easy to grow and work best if you plant them immediately. Soil for seed should be good potting mix (e.g. seed raising mix) or bonsai soil with sand. Whatever size the seed is you should plant the seed one and a half times down from the surface. Keep your planted seed damp and in a sheltered position.

Eucalypts, grevillias and liquid ambers make nicer trunks when grown from seed.

Camellia is an easy plant to grow from seeds. You need to wait until the seed pods turn brown and snap open. You can generate wonderful a twisty trunk by planting the seed in a screw top jar that is packed with damp spagnum moss. Then every two weeks turn the jar upside down.



*Camellia grown from seed in 4 cm pot. Next time I will try Brenda's method to generate a curvaceous trunk.*

### Growing from cuttings

Plants produced from cuttings have exactly the same characteristics as the parent plant.

For broad-leaf plants use a sharp knife and take a cutting that has several nodes and cut off the lowest leaves and the growing tip. Remove half of each leaf on the cutting to reduce water loss. Use a dibble stick to create a hole in your seed/cutting raising mix and carefully place the cutting to about one-third of the length and firm in with your hand. Multiple cuttings side by side generally strike better than a single cutting in a pot.

You can treat your cutting with rooting powder or rooting gel. However a great homemade rooting hormone is willow water. Willows have the highest natural concentrations of the hormone auxin. All you need to do is to get a 2-3 inch length of willow stem and put it in a heat-proof bowl. Steep it overnight using boiling water. It will stay viable for 2-3 months.



*Left: Heel cutting for conifers  
Right: Planted cuttings.*

For conifers, take a heel cutting by pulling down on the shoot until it breaks free. (The "heel" refers to a small amount of hardwood material from the branch that will come off with the shoot). Reduce the foliage taking off the lower sections.

A few things to watch out for when using rooting hormones are cross contamination by dipping your cuttings in the original bottle; leaving the hormone out in the light; and if the gel goes liquid then it will no longer be active.



*Creating humid environment for cuttings*

# PROPAGATING FOR BONSAI *CONTINUED*

## Propagating For Bonsai *continued*

After care is critical with cuttings – because until roots form, the plant will be susceptible to dehydration. You should create a humid environment by placing a plastic dome over the cuttings. Don't remove the dome until the plant is actively growing new shoots. Also cuttings are susceptible to fungal attack so it is a good idea to spray your cuttings when you first plant them with a mixture of water and fungicide.

### Aerial Layering

When aerial layering you need to ringbark the trunk/branch, that is slit the cambium to the heartwood.

Using a very sharp knife cut a ring around the bark and make a similar second cut about 2.5 cm below the first. After making a vertical cut between the two ringed cuts, remove the ring of bark so that now the two areas of bark are separated. There must not be any green cambium remaining in the cut areas for this technique to work.



*Top left: Peeling off bark for air layering*

*Above: Make sure all cambium is removed.*



*Left: Wrap area with sphagnum moss and cover with thick clear plastic securing with cable ties.*

Then wrap thick clear plastic (not gladwrap) around the tree (like a "bon-bon") and attach tightly to the bottom section of bark using a cable tie. Fill the inside of the thick plastic with damp sphagnum moss firmly. Close the area by attaching a cable tie on the top area of bark.

Now wrap black heavy plastic around the area, again attaching it both bottom and top with a cable tie or

string. The black plastic keeps the root area dark and captures heat.



*After the clear plastic, finally wrap and secure with black plastic*

It generally takes about 6 weeks for the roots to develop. The optimum time for aerial layering is mid-September to November. You can check for root growth after 6 weeks but don't touch the roots nor remove the sphagnum moss. When you see significant root development within the sphagnum moss, carefully plant it in a pot and put it in a protected area until the roots fully establish in the soil and the plant is producing new growth.

### Root cuttings

Plants that are often used for propagation using root cuttings are Crepe Myrtle, Hawthorn, Crab Apple and Chinese Elms. You can get some weird and wonderful shapes of exposed roots but bear in mind that shoots will only grow from the top of the actual cutting. Several shoots usually form. Let them grow and harden off first and then pick the dominant shoot to begin your bonsai plant journey.



*Shoots from a root cutting will only grow from the top of the actual cutting. Next step will be to pick strong leader and remove unwanted shoots. Otherwise you will get a reverse taper*

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# BONSAI DEVELOPMENT

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## 3 Stages of Bonsai Development

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So you now have a healthy seedling, cutting or nursery stock that is a few seasons old. How do you develop it into a bonsai? There are three basic phases in the development of a bonsai.

### Step 1. Setting the primary structure

This is where you work to thicken the trunk and set the major branches. It is about setting the initial structure. Usually when you go to bonsai demonstrations the bonsai master only goes so far as to set the basic structure. He/she selects the viewing angle for the trunk line and nebari and then selects major primary branches that will form the basic lines of the tree and wires them. Because the demonstrator is usually given advanced nursery stock then he/she will work on the secondary branching and wire it and then explain that this is as far as he/she can take this bonsai at this point in time.

There are a number of bonsai development techniques that can be used with young trees to help with early development of the primary structure. They include using sacrifice branches to thicken the trunk and help with taper; getting rid of straight branches mid season that will not contribute the overall development of the design; wiring early to get movement in trunks before they get too thick to move; and getting rid of shoots up from base of tree that rob the tree of nutrients. Usually you should look at your trees in early development at least a couple of times a year- in early autumn and also late spring/early summer and make appropriate adjustments.

Because you are trying to thicken the tree and its primary branches, if you are working to develop primary structure then you should heavily fertilise the tree during this early stage. Do not worry about the leaf size and pinching tips. You want your tree to gain strength building up its vascular tissue so that it can support growth in the secondary branches and also begin healing from any major cuts that you have made in this primary stage.

### Step 2. Setting the secondary structure

Using a deciduous tree such as a Beech as an example, if you have set the primary structure say late winter of the first year you will get some growth but probably not enough development for setting the secondary

structure yet. Just remove any “leggie” growth that just weakens the tree. However after another year’s growth after the spring flush, you tree should be in a position to secondary structure development – “post-flush pruning”. This is done in late spring. You may be able to do further work on secondary structure if your tree has a second flush in late summer.

The reason for working on secondary structure in late spring (post-flush) is that after growth and hardening off of leaves the tree is in an energy positive state and after pruning it will grow strongly. You should be fertilising moderately in the secondary structure stage.

When undertaking post-flush pruning, you need to cut back those tips that have developed enough thickness as a secondary branch and in doing so choose which direction you want the branch to go next if it is to elongate further. Where you want ramification you need to shorten to get two buds. You then need to work to redistribute where the energy of the tree will be stored.



*After shortening to two buds, cut leaves in half on larger leaf deciduous trees to increase light into interior*

To undertake this “balancing” you can cut big leaves in half in the strongest areas; leave less vigorous growing inner leaves as they are; and don’t cut back as far where you need additional thickness or length in the branches.



*Post spring flush pruning of beech*

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# BONSAI DEVELOPMENT *CONTINUED*

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## Stages of Bonsai Development *cont.*

If you were working with maples, you would not cut the leaves in half, but you would control the growth by selectively defoliating up to 50% of the leaves, depending on the vigour of the tree.

This process of post-flush pruning will help stimulate back budding and by introducing air and light to the inner area of the tree stimulate the secondary branching. In this secondary stage you slow the growth by reducing the “solar” foliar pads but still make it possible to force vascular storage so that the tree can generate new foliage after its winter dormancy.

After the post-flush prune, you may need to do some wiring to reposition some of the branches in keeping with your design plan.

Your watering needs for the tree will decline after your post-flush prune. However be aware that it will take 3-4 days before the tree will respond to its change in watering needs. You need to protect the tree from the sun until the second flush emerges.

### Step 3. Developing the Tertiary Structure

Once the secondary structure has been developed, you are then in a position to develop the tertiary structure. The primary activities are tip pinching and clip and grow.



*Tip prune to two viable buds for ramification*

So the next season, do not fertilise until after the spring flush and when you do fertilise you only need a light application. The tip pinching is to keep the internodes short and the clip/grow to two buds for ramification or branch tip direction.

Source: Neil Ryan on his Mirai website:

<https://bonsaimirai.com/>

## Jonas Dupuich - “Bonsai Tonight” Blog

Jonas Dupuich has a great series on Bonsai Development on the “Bonsai Tonight” blog. Subscription is free and the blog is filled with practical information. Below are a few excerpts from the development series.

### #8 Removing Unnecessary Branches (early summer & autumn)

“When developing material for bonsai, it’s best to avoid creating straight trunks and branches. Many varieties, however, naturally produce straight growth. This gives us two options: cut or wire. Cutting is often preferable to wiring as cuts can be used to create taper and angular movement. Wiring has its place too as it’s a quick way to put a branch where you want it.”

John uses some cutting grown plums to demonstrate where cuts should be made and why.



*Left: The shoot that emerges from the soil isn't helping the design so I'll cut it off. Likewise the shoot that grows downward from the inside of the curve.*

*Right: I left a single sacrifice branch on the back of the tree to help thicken the trunk but plan to remove it in fall to avoid a knuckle from forming.*



*Left: This is a great example of what happens if you don't wire shoots when they're young and supple. You end up with long, straight shoots that don't help the design.*

*Right: The three straight branches were removed leaving the very small side branches and apex to commence growing.*

A big reason to prune more than once a year is to discourage growth that doesn't contribute to the overall design.”

# BONSAI TONIGHT & EVENTS CALENDAR

## Jonas Dupuich – Bonsai Tonight *cont.*

### #9 Evaluating Sacrifice Branches (mid summer)

“For my young trees in development, I tend to focus on a single question during the growing season: do I prune now or wait until fall?”

1. If the sacrifice branches look good, I’ll let them grow.
2. If there are significant flaws in the branching, I’ll remove the offending branches.
3. If I need to develop a new section of trunk, I’ll wire available branches, if any, to set curves before the branches thicken.

It’s also a good time to apply more fertilizer as these trees typically grow through summer and into fall.”



*Top: The quince above has a “sling-shot” type of branch division. By cutting this branch now, I can avoid swelling in and let the tree can begin to heal sooner rather than later.*

*Bottom Left: After removing the entire branch on the right.*

*Bottom Right: “Because the two larger branches are too coarse to bend, I’ll leave them alone for now so they can help the trunk thicken but plan to remove them later.”*



*After wiring the thinner branches which will form part of the ultimate design.*

### #12 Avoid Growing Trunks With Straight Sections

“I’ve set a simple goal for a group of cutting-grown plums: avoid straight growth. The idea is to produce trunks with undulating movement. Each year these plums produce new shoots in spring. I typically wire these shoots in summer and then shorten them in fall. If I find anything straight, I shorten it or wire it.

I’m not sure how large I want these trees to become, but I’ll have some flexibility as long as the trees have interesting movement and taper.”



*“This seasonal work will continue for the next several years until I’m happy with the size of the trunks. At that stage I’ll shift focus to the branches and work to better ramify the trees.”*

See Bonsai Tonight: <https://bonsaitonight.com/tag/bds/>

## Bonsai Events Calendar

Date	Event	Details
8-10 Nov 2019	Newcastle Bonsai Society Annual Exhibition	Charlestown Bowling Club, Charlestown
23-29 Mar 2020	National Arboretum Bonsai Week	National Arboretum, Canberra
15-18 May 2020	AABC National Convention	Hosted by Illawarra Bonsai Society. Bankstown Sports Club, Sydney