



NEXT CLUB MEETING

Tote Centre Community Hall
13 December 2022
100 Joynton Ave., Zetland @ 7.00pm

CONTACT DETAILS



0432 461 025



info@sydneycitybonsai.org.au



<http://sydneycitybonsai.org.au>



PO Box 486
Summerhill NSW 2130

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Patron	TBA
President	Bryan
Vice President	Ed
Secretary	David
Treasurer	John
Newsletter Editor	Chris
Librarian	Vacant
Committee	Frank + above

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 meeting hall at a concessional rate.

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EDITORIAL MATTERS

We always welcome any contributions from members, so if you have a project underway, have a query, want to sell/swap/buy something, or otherwise have a tale to share, please get in contact via info@sydneycitybonsai.org.au or one of the Committee members.



A true Cascade



**MONTHLY MEETING FEEDBACK -
November**

The November meeting was attended by established members and a couple of visitors which was pleasing. The meeting was a display of “current favourites” or trees that are looking good at

the moment. Frank also demonstrated making a tight bend in a tree with a large diameter trunk.

First the bending demo. Frank brought along an established Crepe Myrtle, in a plastic pot, with a long straight trunk about 30mm in diameter. It looked like a formidable task to get a bend in that trunk but Frank was not to be deterred. He cut the trunk most of the way through in three places and then cut out a wedge shape at those locations. The trunk was then bent so the opposite sides of the cuts met. Then another saw cut was made at each closed joint to ensure the faces of the joints matched as closely as possible. The joints were then pulled up tight, bound with grafting tape and tied down so they could not move. The critical points are that the cambium layers of the two side of each cut line up and once made, the joint should not be disturbed until it “took up”. That is likely to take months but who said anything happens fast in bonsai.



The end result was a serious bend as shown. It was an informative demo and it remains to be seen how successful it will be, but Frank is quietly confident and has agreed to provide progress reports periodically.

Members workshopped and presented their trees. There was a good turnout of trees and informative tales of their history and future. Enjoy a collage of trees (without much commentary as the editor lost the list of who brought what!)



PJ Fig just bursting into life



James' (?) PJ Fig



Neville's Melaleuca



Bryan's Swamp Cypress



Chris' Water Gum after a harsh trim



John's PJ Fig



John's Swamp Cypress



Nice Black Pine with a James' look to it



Simon's Azalea looking happy



Privet(?)



Toby and his PJ Figs group



Chris' "joined trunks" PJ Figs



DECEMBER MEETING AGENDA – CHRISTMAS AND STYLING

The theme for the December meeting will be “Christmas” so bring along a tree that reflects a bit of Xmas cheer. We will also have a tree for **everyone** to have a go at styling on an individual or small group basis – bonsai styled by a committee so to speak. Be prepared to make a bid for the tree after its ordeal – it will go to the highest bid above its original purchase price. Also, bring a plate of something to share with other members – there do not seem to be any current Covid restrictions but some members are justifiably sensitive to how food is handled etc., so bear that in mind please.

Lastly, as per previous years, **there will not be** a January meeting – our first meeting in 2023 will be in February and keep an ear/eye open for the venue – we are looking at alternative venues that have better access.

SWAP TABLE

There will be a Swap Table at the next meeting which will be stocked with whatever is brought along. Members are encouraged to contribute to the table. Bring some loose change and maybe grab a bargain.

FACEBOOK PAGE

The private Facebook page run by John Brown is still going strong and anyone interested in participating should contact John for an invitation. There is some good quality chat on the Facebook page and members are encouraged to join.

COMMUNITY BONSAI WORKSHOP

Frank and Chris attended a bonsai potting activity for Senior Citizens organised by the Inner West Neighbourhood Aid group. This was a follow-up to the bonsai talk delivered by Chris a couple of months ago to the same group. The venue was the Seven Sense Garden near Concord Hospital. Most plants and pots were sourced from Bonsai World (thanks for the discount BW) and some plants from Bonsai South. Approximately 10 Seniors attended and the exercise was well received by the participants who each departed with a nice little bonsai in hand.



HOME VISIT



Some of Chis' collection

Club members were invited to have a look at Chris' collection on a recent sunny Sunday morning. Five took up the offer. The visit went off well and was uneventful but as it turned out the event was a bit of a disaster for Chris (the Editor).

Having people over meant a bit of tidying up and getting trees in order. The first task was to trim next door's trees and while extracting the foliage a tree was knocked off its shelf and the result was a broken pot and an unscheduled re-pot. My wheelie bin was rolled out to take the foliage, and subsequently act as a convenient resting place for one of my heavier trees. Unfortunately, a gust of wind came along and blew the tree off the bin and it scored a direct hit on another large tree beside the bin – two more broken pots and two more re-pottings! To end it off, I later picked up a smallish tree (that I thought was root bound) by the trunk. Predictably, the pot dropped off and smashed. Four smashed pots in the space of a few hours – more than I have lost in years! I am not sure I can afford any more open days.



The carnage



A WHOLE IN ONE – By Lee

I have a fetish about putting all my trees into bonsai pots, even the ones in early training that don't begin to deserve a dedicated pot. My benches are just outside my dining room and kitchen

windows so you can see the trees all the time and they simply look nicer in nice pots. But I have a tendency to pot too early, a nice bonsai pot for an upcoming tree and the tree outgrows it ... or changes its style. My *Leptospermum* 'Twisted Sister' went from slanting [training pot] to full cascade [handmade pot] to semi cascade [another handmade pot purchased to suit it] and then it settled on informal upright. So now I have 2 pots that I don't need and a tree that is sitting, not altogether 100% compatible, in a commercial sale pot.

I have started a new trend. I scour op shops for ceramics that can become nice bonsai containers with the addition of one or two holes, sometimes three. The cost is substantially lower and I've had pretty good luck. I happened to hit a Salvos just as they unloaded someone's discarded ceramic pots, small but most very nice. At \$2 a pop I bought the lot, except the really ugly one. I did break one trying to put two holes in it but at \$2 there were no tears and a learning curve. Ironstone, ceramic or porcelain ... you can do it.

These are some of my finds.



This is one of the \$2 pots, beautiful glaze and nice for a mini Saotome in training.



This \$2 green irregular round is a beauty, finely made, lovely glaze and, until I can find a bonsai that suits it, holds my cheery windowsill plant.



Getting into bigger money, this \$6 handmade pot from a bonsai sale stole my heart in one quick snatch and two holes added and it is gorgeous. The *Privet* is in early training and the slant of the pot suits the tree and it is a lovely merger.

This is a \$12 bowl, now with three holes. The glaze is lovely, the back side is dark giving two options when utilising it. The little bowl holding the pot is another op shop purchase to grow on smaller trees that need deeper pots - \$4.





The Grewia has gone through three pots and it is HARD finding a cascade pot. I got this at Flower Power and while it is a bit over-decorative it works and it gives the tree a solid base. \$30 and an added hole. What would this have cost as a bonsai pot??

This is today's find. \$12 - lovely glaze on the outside with a matt finish.



The inside is beautiful too but it needs the hole and who will see these lovely shades of purple.

Now, it is not a hard job to put holes in ceramics. I have done about 20 pots and lost one, oddly enough the least expensive of the lot, which is a good success rate. You need a drill plus a concrete bit [which will cost about \$15 dollars]. A spray bottle helps as you need to keep the drilling site wet. I have a small board. I put a tea towel on the kitchen counter, a non-slip pad on that, the piece of board and then the pot. When I penetrate the pot [which can take time and effort] the drill will go into the wood and not my Caesarstone bench top. I could do it outside but I don't think the glass topped patio table is strong enough to take the pressure. It works, that's all that matters in the end. Start from the outside or the inside... mark your spots and expect the bit to skitter across smooth glaze. You have to work with it. But does it matter... who sees the holes and the fact they are not exactly placed? As long as they offer sufficient drainage... that is the crux.

I now have a number of alternate pots that do very well as bonsai pots. No feet... okay, no feet. But I have metal grid benches so it doesn't matter. You could use *Aqua Knead It* to make feet if you find it necessary. There's always a solution. And seeking suitable containers and adding holes makes collecting alternate bonsai pots much cheaper and a lot more fun.

**DISCUSSION WITH THE CURATOR OF
THE NATIONAL BONSAI COLLECTION,
CANBERRA – by John**

Recently, John Brown was lucky enough to have a discussion with Leigh Taafe who is the curator of the National Bonsai Collection at the Arboretum in Canberra. Leigh has consented to a summary of their discussion on Tue 25th Oct 2022 – take it away John ...

Since joining the NBPCA in 2010, firstly as Assistant Curator, now as Curator, Leigh has gained the respect and admiration of the bonsai community both in Australia and overseas. He joined after running his own Bonsai Nursery in Canberra for 13 years. The permanent display in Canberra is a credit to Leigh and his dedicated team of staff and volunteers and is a 'must see' for anyone visiting Canberra, both enthusiasts and novices alike. I was lucky enough to catch Leigh at the collection and put some questions to him.



JB How many staff and volunteers do you have at the NBPCA?

Leigh Just myself and the assistant curator. There is a large number of volunteers, probably over 50, but the regular volunteers amount to around 40, particularly from Canberra and Goulburn and beyond, of varying levels of experience who attend two or more at a time to help with visitors and some of tree maintenance tasks such as watering etc. We provide free training for those volunteers who need it.

JB The health of the trees in the collection always impresses me. Do you use acadama?

Leigh Yes we use acadama but we supplement it with products such as pumice, zeolite, occasionally scoria and other organic materials such as pine bark depending on how hungry or thirsty the tree is. Whenever I make a suggestion of acadama, I always put a proviso because there is a broad range of quality and the acadama being imported into Australia is generally of a low grade. We've had issues with the acadama breaking down within 6 months which leads to problems such as clogging of drainage holes. There is a product available called Sakadama which is similar but retains its consistency over a longer period. It is important that any clay products used are baked to a suitable temperature so that the material doesn't just crumble to dust.

JB On previous visits I've noticed a wall chart in your maintenance area with coloured dots corresponding to dots on the trees. I took it as a maintenance chart to indicate frequency of watering, feeding etc. Is that what it was?

Leigh Yes it was. It's something that we did when we had more hands involved with the watering tasks, but with mainly the two of us we know the requirements of the trees and don't need the chart any more.

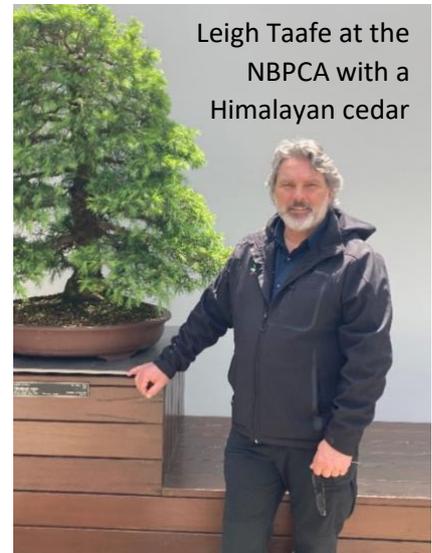
JB Of the trees on display how many are owned by the NBPCA and how many are here as part of the 'Loan Program'?

Leigh There are currently 63 trees here permanently which have been donated and we have a capacity of 120 trees. The actual number of trees varies considerably because of our loans program. We're currently down because of Covid and travel restrictions but we're building it up and will probably keep it at around 110 for the time being.

JB Have you seen a trend towards native species over the years both in the collection and generally in Australia?

Leigh Yes I think there is a definite trend towards Australian natives. There are definitely more natives being put up for loan submission. We try to have a good representation of all species in the collection and we have targets that we try to achieve. Our target for Australian natives is around 25% and in the last 12 to 18 months there's been a push through the National Selection and Advisory Committee to search for Australian native species to come via either loan or donation. We have our second iteration of the Centenary Bonsai prize coming up next year. Of course the best tree will win but we're hoping to have another native do well and judging criteria is weighted towards Australian native species. There are, of course, some clubs dedicated to Native Species such as the Victorian Native Bonsai Club and the Tasmanian Native BC and the Canberra Club specialise a lot in natives.

JB Have you noticed a growth in interest in bonsais lately, particularly since COVID?



Leigh Taafe at the NBPCA with a Himalayan cedar



Leigh Absolutely; Not surprisingly as people have been looking for activities and interests that could be satisfied at home. I think interest in bonsai is growing generally as people learn more about it and bonsai becomes more accessible and available. Interest in this collection has grown and has been featured on programs such as the ABC's Gardening Australia. One of my objectives is to raise the profile of this collection both Nationally and Internationally. That happens through social media and by writing articles for circulation through the Bonsai community but also by running events here where we try to give something back to the Australian bonsai community. [Also] by carefully selecting and bringing International Experts out who have big exposure and big digital footprints and a lot of followers on social media and who can take their photos and stories back with them about the Arboretum and the National Collection.

JB Has global warming been a challenge for the NBPCA?

Leigh Yes it has. Three years of El Nino with wetter and milder summers has meant that trees haven't been able to grow the way they normally would. We've had to adjust our maintenance programs significantly to accommodate that. We were caught off guard two years ago assuming that we would just have a normal Summer. We learned from that and we were better last year and we'll do even better this year. We're very reliant on weather forecasting to advise us and they've been very good but as soon as we get through this current 'bout of El Nino and return to La Nina I'm expecting to see even greater impacts of Global warming. It's going to be hotter and drier.

JB Can you explain how the NBPCA fits into the Bonsai community and with organisations such as the AABC?

Leigh The NBPCA is a partnership between the Australian Bonsai Community, that is all of the clubs and all the people who are involved in bonsai, and the ACT Government. In that partnership we needed somebody to be the voice for the clubs, the voice for Australian Bonsai so we've got the Collection Advisory Committee consisting of five people who are all well known in the Bonsai Community around the Country and anything that happens between the Government and the bonsai community is decided by myself and other staff here and that Advisory Committee. I would like to make sure that Clubs understand that the collection is not a Canberra thing or a Government thing but that it's an Australian collection with clubs involved and we hope to have them more involved in the future. So if any communication or issues or ideas come up, get in touch with your representative on the Advisory Committee to pass that on to us. The person in Sydney is Amanda Beilby. There's also one in Melbourne, two in Brisbane, because one relocated from Canberra, and one in Perth.

We also have our Selection and Ambassadorial Committee of 13 people who are responsible for loans selection, promotion of the NBPCA and attending club shows, identifying trees and owners, talking about the loans program and facilitating loans submissions to us. Once we get all submissions in for a particular area the whole committee votes on the trees and if the tree gets a majority of votes it is considered suitable for The Collection. Then I, as the Curator, will decide what we take in depending on what we have here already and how that tree would complement the collection.

The public are always welcome of course but the Bonsai Community, club members etc are especially welcome and I encourage them to let me know when they can come here so that I can make sure they get the most out of their visit.

JB Thank you Leigh for your time and very insightful comments today. I'd like to add my personal congratulations on having such a magnificent display of trees that you, your staff and Australia can be very proud of. I can't imagine a visit to Canberra without coming to the NBPCA and I look forward to many more visits.



WHAT PEOPLE GET UP TO

This month we get a peek into Committee Member John Brown's passions.

Over the years John's had a lot of interests and hobbies but time has forced him to narrow it down to a manageable few. These days it's just music, photography, golf and bonsai. He reluctantly had to give up playing piano when the arthritis in his thumbs became too much. He's been a keen golfer for over 50 years and until earlier this year was playing two or three times a week. He says that golf and bonsai both satisfy his love of nature and trees in particular. His career highlights are **three holes in one** and the **C grade championship** at Pennant Hills Golf Club in 1985. Rumours that he plans to turn professional in the near future are greatly exaggerated.

These days he says that bonsai takes most of his spare time and everything else takes a back seat. The photo is of John with golfing friends from March 2019 when he got a hole-in-one on the 17th at Northbridge Golf Club.



ARTICLES OF INTEREST

If you become aware of any articles on the web, or elsewhere, that may be of interest to members you can use this space to pass on the word. Just send an e-mail to the Club's address with the contact details for the article and we can put it in this section.

The Central Coast Bonsai Club is putting on its annual "Bonsai Open" with decent prizemoney and trophies in the offering on the 4th and 5th March 2023. Plenty of time to get organised.

The National Bonsai Collection at Canberra has a "coffee table" publication of trees from its collection. The Collection can be viewed at the National Arboretum Canberra and the book purchased through The Curatoreum - go to <https://bit.ly/3RYRqzx>.

THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH by John December

Tasks that can be undertaken throughout the Summer months include:

- 1 Watch for very hot days. Remember, excessive heat does not kill bonsai, a lack of water does. Water often enough to ensure the soil never dries out. This may mean watering 2 or 3 times a day. Mulching of the top of the soil can help reduce evaporation through the day and moss on top of the soil can be a good indicator of soil dampness.
- 2 Continue a [Fertilizing](#) regime through the summer months
- 3 Monitor trees through the Summer months as the warmer, humid weather, particularly in Sydney, can encourage pest and disease.
- 4 Most natives can be repotted throughout the summer months. Watch for bud movement and then repot and root prune. Alternatively cut back hard then wait for the new buds to start to appear, then repot. You can root prune very hard at this time.
- 5 Summer is the time to perform large chops on Japanese Maples and other [deciduous](#) trees. The wounds will heal faster and not bleed as much as they would if cut during winter.
- 6 Pinching tips and pruning new growth should continue on all trees through the Summer.
- 7 Some species need considerable moisture through Summer including Wisteria, Banksia, Swamp Cypress, Callistermon and Melaleuca. They may need to stand in water trays.
- 8 Start preparing trees for the Royal Easter Show competition in April 2023.



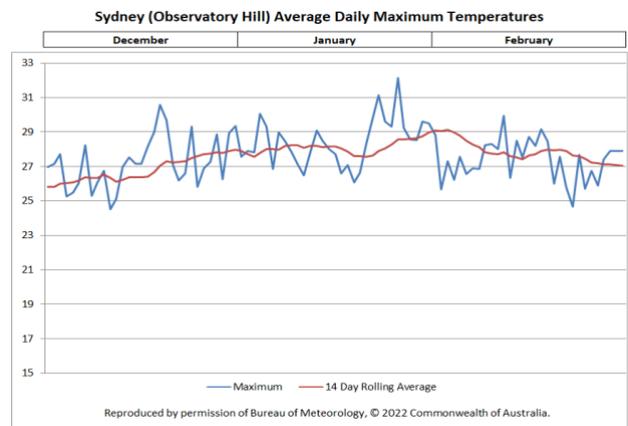
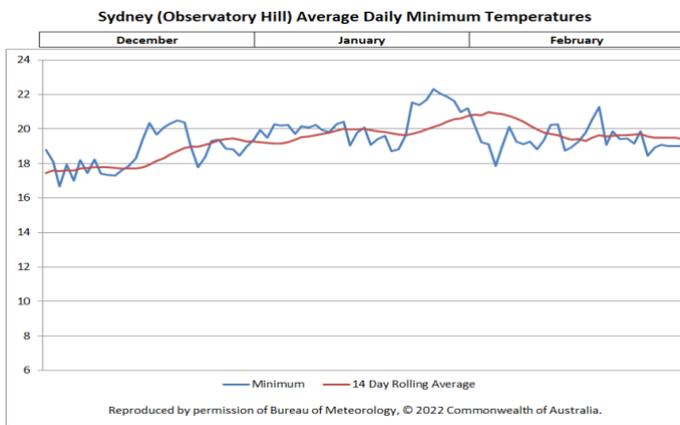
Specific tasks for December include:

- 1 Late in the month you can defoliate Elms and Maples so they will produce new smaller leaves.
- 2 [Defoliate Figs](#).
- 3 Continue monthly spraying of [Azaleas](#) for Lace Bug
- 4 Repot [Banksia](#) and add slow release [Osmocote](#) or similar to the soil. Liquid feed every 2 weeks but wait for two weeks after repotting.

Sources:

1. AusBonsai Wiki
2. "Bonsai, Its Art, Science, History and Philosophy" by D R Koreshoff

Min/Max BOM temperature forecasts (Observatory Hill) for the upcoming months including 14 day rolling average, provided by David follow:-



BONSAI EVENTS CALENDAR

Bonsai Society of Australia	Visit their website – www.bonsai.asn.au
Nepean Bonsai Society Newsletter	Visit their website - www.nepeanbonsaisociety.org - see what the mountain people get up to.
Illawarra Bonsai Society	Visit their website – www.illewarrabonsaisociety.org - good content in their newsletter
Bonsai Society of South Australia website	Website is worth a visit – www.bonsaisa.org.au
Yarra Valley Bonsai Newsletter	Visit their website - www.yarravalleybonsai.org.au
Victorian Native Bonsai Club Newsletter	Visit their website – www.vicnativebonsai.com.au - well worth a look.
School of Bonsai	Visit their website – www.schoolofbonsai.com.au
Canberra Bonsai Society	Put out a good newsletter - visit their website – www.cbs.org.au
Central Coast Bonsai 2023 4 th and 5 th March 2023	Bonsai Open exhibition. For more details go to www.centralcoastbonsai.com.au Good cash and trophy prizes
Bonsai Society of Sydney	Go to www.bonsai.societysydney.org.au

Most clubs have re-commenced meetings. Check out their web-sites or give them a call for meeting details. Attending another club is worth the effort.