

Sydney City Bonsai Club

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2023



Sydney City Bonsai Club

NEXT CLUB MEETING

12th December 2023

Marrickville Community Centre
Unit 44, 142 Addison Rd., Marrickville

Basics Classes @ 6.00pm

General Meeting @ 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	John
Vice President	Oli
Secretary	David
Treasurer	Bryan
Program Manager	Lee
Newsletter Editor	Oli
Committee	Frank + above

MEMBERSHIP

Full membership	\$40
Concession	\$25
Family	\$55
Pensioner	\$25

Note – 2023/24 feess are overdue.

Payment can be by cash or electronically (see John).

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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.



Sydney City Bonsai Club

MONTHLY MEETING RECAP - November

The November club meeting was focused on the ficus or fig variety of bonsai. Due to Sydney's climate, we can keep these trees with very little protection during the Winter. Ficus are wonderful beginner's trees, as well as offering ramification, styling and even identification challenges for more experienced growers.

For those that attended the October meet, they will remember a wonderful lady and grandson who brought a willow leaf fig into the club. Whilst this species often loses its leaves randomly, the club thought it may have occurred due to the lack of repotting in the past twenty years and there being virtually no soil left over. However, when brought in during November, it had some leaves! Despite looking healthier, a repot was seen as pivotal for the tree's health. Chris took up the charge and gave the tree some tender loving care. At the end, he potted it up into a bigger bonsai pot. We welcome both back to the club anytime.



Following this, Oli ran a session on developing Japanese Black pine shohin trees. This project is great for anyone, as you only need a \$10 seedling (at Bonsai World). A full breakdown of the process is discussed later in this newsletter.

At the end, the group went around and discussed various figs that were brought in and displayed. As you can see in the following section, the variety of trees was vast, including a fiddle leaf fig – a tree most seen as an indoor house plant.





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Display trees - November





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Shohin Japanese Black Pine Development by Oli

I heard somewhere they humans only retain about 5% of what they're told verbally. Whilst we retain approximately 30% of what is demonstrated to us. So, hopefully everyone that got to watch the demonstration took in a decent chunk, but for those reading this, I'm afraid you'll probably only retain 10% of this (but at least you'll have a record to go back to).

I've been doing bonsai for about a year now – in that short time, I've had a few people say to me “oh you're lucky, time is on your side” – But really, looking around my garden, what was I going to have in ten years? Would I look back and think, “if only I'd started that a few years earlier....” So, I endeavoured to look for some 10+ year projects, figuring getting them started was more important than just thinking about it – no matter how they turn out. So which project?

A Shohin Japanese Black Pine.

Whilst massive, crackled-bark pines are impressive simply by their scarcity and presence, I often found the shohin pines impressive, due to their compact, delicate branch structure – on a tree that is apically dominant and wants to grow to the stars. So, I scoured every inch of the internet, finding articles, videos from the early 2000s, and most importantly – a demonstration by Bjorn Bjorholm. Most of what follows here has been learnt from his demonstration.

Firstly, the rough goal:



Japanese Black Pine are a two-needle pine. They are also notorious for not back-budding on old, flaky wood (but can randomly on smoother bark – not to be relied upon). They grow apically dominant, resulting in them shedding lower foliage to prioritise the top of the tree. Think, how many times have you seen a pine tree with lots of branches down low? This begs the question, how do you grow a shohin tree, if the tree naturally wants to shed these branches + doesn't reliably back-bud if doing a major cutback.

Here's the basic breakdown of what we need to do:

STEP 1 – Acquire very young material (1-2 years old) with lots of very low buds / needle sheaths.

STEP 2 – Depending on time of year, ensure roots are in a good condition, not twisted and flare outwards when repotting.

STEP 3 - Wire movement into the young seedling, but don't crush the low buds – these will be our future branches

STEP 4 – keep the tree in a small plastic pot, to keep a compact root ball (as reducing JBP later will be difficult)



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STEP 5 – place the pot into a net pot or strainer with the same soil mix as the main pot to allow the roots to grow freely. Using the same type of soil allows for consistent watering.

STEP 6 - FERTILISE year around if in Sydney climate. You're not worried about needle length at this stage.

STEP 7 – Allow to grow freely for a year. There is no need to decandle until the low buds start pushing candles, it's essential you don't let these grow into branches too early.

STEP 8 – Either remove wire as it slightly bites in, or let it cage the tree and swell around the wire. The latter is often criticised as 'cheating' and looking ugly. However, it will rapidly increase trunk thickening and will eventually grow over the wire.

STEP 9 – Remove needles midway on the trunk and only keep needles at the bottom and top of the tree. Remove branching that extends off the main trunkline (you risk losing lower buds otherwise). We are trying to extend the top as far as possible to thicken the base.

STEP 10 – After managing this process year after year, you can cut back and develop the lower branches / buds.

Depending on tree health, this cutback might need to be done in stages. Depending on approach, if you cage wire the base or let it thicken naturally, this process will take between 6-10 years.



TIPS

- Keep as many buds low down to give optionality in the future
- Trim roots as they grow into the net pot every year or two
- Fertilise aggressively
- Don't overwater.
- Be patient

I'll provide yearly updates to show progression. For all other JBP info, check out this website:

[Black Pine Basics \(kusamurabonsai.org\)](http://kusamurabonsai.org)





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DECEMBER MEETING AGENDA – Xmas Party

December's meeting will be Christmas themed. Your trees can be decorated or invoke memories of Christmas

For the meeting, we have a few items:

1. Food and Drinks

We ask that everyone brings some food and drinks (bring as much as you would eat). The more participation, the better the evening shall be. Plates & cups shall be provided.

2. Lee's privet demonstration

Lee will woman-handle this little privet at December's Christmas get together. It's small, it's chunky, it has STIFF branches and the bonsai in the bush needs to be found. It is wired and ready to go so the demo should take no more than 15 minutes with a bit of a surprise in the styling angle.



3. Get a Tree

The club has been fortunate enough to be donated some trees from Ann Addison. As Ann says they're not in very good condition but she wanted them to go to someone who can care for them. We are hoping to make them available to members either by sale, auction or raffle. All proceeds will go towards club activities. Come to the meeting to be involved!

4. Top Australian demonstrator Saturday 13th April 2024.

Lee, our new Program Manager has managed line up Scott Martin, one of Australia's top Bonsai Artists and demonstrator for a workshop on Saturday 13th April 2024. Put the date in your diary. We'll have more details in coming meetings.

NOVEMBER BASICS LESSON – Summer list and displaying trees

The Basics lesson this month will be a discussion about things to do over Summer, how to prepare a tree for display and the all-important accent plants. We'll also have a chat about where to from here! The Basics lessons start at 6.00 p.m. and end at 7.00 p.m. in time for the General Meeting so best be on-time. NOTE - **financial** members can join in the Basics lessons if they wish, but, as a courtesy, please let John or Bryan know in advance via the Club e-mail.



A \$14 gamble? By Lee

Even before wiring I was caught by this lilac cap at Ray's nursery. Thirsty, hungry, desolate but it spoke to me so I parted with \$14 and adopted it. The trunk was very straight when I brought it home - that didn't last. I would have liked to have bent the straight section more but that put it too close to breaking. Three months later with good soil, regular water and feed and it is going well. Still needs development but looking very happy. It has profuse clusters of tiny lilac flowers at the end of the branchlets that turn white and then develop green berries that turn red.



ROYAL EASTER SHOW – MARCH 2024

The Royal Easter Show will soon be upon us. A few details are below:

Show Date	22 nd March to 2 nd April 2024
Bonsai Competition	28 th and 29 th March 2024
Entries Open	10 th January 2024
Entries Close	14 th February 2024

If you have any questions, please discuss with Chris.



Sydney City Bonsai Club

CLUB FEES

Club Fees are well overdue. Members are requested to settle their membership payments ASAP – time is marching on. Fees can be paid in cash to our Treasurer Bryan or by bank transfer. Electronic payment details are:-

Sydney City Bonsai Club

BSB: 032-152

A/C No.: 166305

Make sure to include your name in the transfer details so it is clear who has paid.

New members can receive a reduced fee if joining halfway through the financial year, so please encourage friends or prospective bonsai artists to join.

BUY & SWAP TABLE

There will be a Swap Table at the next meeting which will be stocked with whatever is brought along **AND** surplus trees from our street stall. Members are encouraged to contribute to the table so if you have surplus tree(s) or materials bring them along. Having some loose change available may see you with a bargain. The Swap Table was well supported at the August meeting.

To make things easy, owners should attach a price (even if it's free) and their name to their offerings. Also, a donation of 10% of the sale price is expected. The donation which should be included in the sale price, goes towards Club activities which all members are a beneficiary of.



Donations exceeding \$50 for the year will result in a free membership at the club the following year. So, get selling!

Bryan has recently brought some of his hand-made pots. We will always welcome any homemade additions!

FACEBOOK PAGE

The private Facebook page run by John Brown is still going strong and anyone interested in participating, particularly new members, should contact John for an invitation.

There has been increased activity on the clubs Facebook page of late, so we encourage all members to join in!



ARTICLES OF INTEREST

Illawarra Bonsai Society

For the best Christmas cookie recipe, please have a look at Illawarra's newsletter. They've got a similar meeting this month to us, so do enjoy a bit of a socialising before the festive season.

Canberra Bonsai Society

The Canberra Bonsai Society Newsletter "Wirrabara" discusses the Australian Plants as Bonsai Exhibition, where the theme is Bonsai in the palm of your hand!. The newsletter also has an article of different trees in unnatural landscapes. From a tree dividing a street in Adelaide to a lime tree in the outfield of a cricket ground.

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.

NEWS FROM NATIONAL BONSAI & PENJING COLLECTION OF AUSTRALIA

On the 1st of November 2023, Scott Saddler AM, Executive Branch Manager of the National Arboretum Canberra and Leigh Taafe, Curator at the National Bonsai and Penjing Collection of Australia (NBPCA), travelled to Japan to mark a significant moment in the history of bonsai art. A new collaboration with the Omiya Bonsai Art Museum (OBAM) in Saitama Japan, was formalised by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which the Japanese affectionately refer to as a "Sister Museum Agreement."

The OBAM is considered the most respected and influential public collection of bonsai in the world. The OBAM has similarities with the NBPCA in that both are publicly run bonsai collections staffed by government employees. Both collections strive to educate visitors through the representation of the art of bonsai as they exist in each respective country. One of the differences between our collections is that OBAM is a museum in the true sense of the word, with history and artefacts on display for public viewing, whereas the NBPCA is simply a living collection of bonsai and penjing grown in Australia.

The essence of this agreement is one that emphasises collaboration and the exchange of knowledge between two renowned bonsai institutions. Our Curators at the National Bonsai & Penjing Collection anticipate the invaluable learning experiences that await them. The Omiya Bonsai Art Museum, a beacon of excellence in the world of public bonsai collections, is poised to become a rich source of inspiration and insight for our Curators.

All-in-all, the Japan trip should be considered a great success for the future of Australian bonsai, the NBPCA and the NAC. This agreement will assist in forging very strong international relationships in the world of bonsai along with forming a very special relationship with the City of Saitama, Japan.

Article shortened but written by Leigh Taafe.





THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH by John

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, Callistemon and Melaleuca. They may need to stand in water trays.

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 and rust.
- 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.
- 5 De-candling of Japanese Black Pines.

Sources:

AusBonsai Wiki

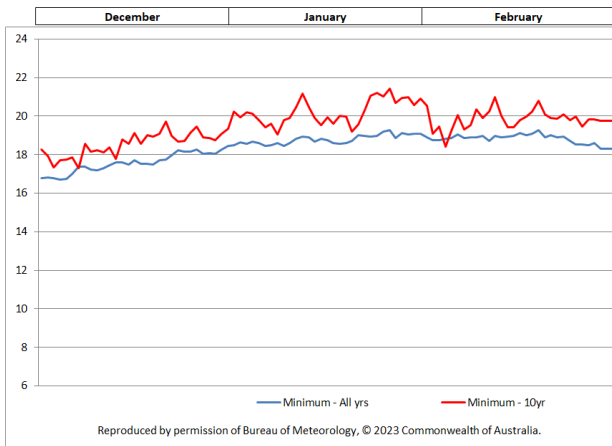
"Bonsai, Its Art, Science, History and Philosophy" by D R Koreshoff



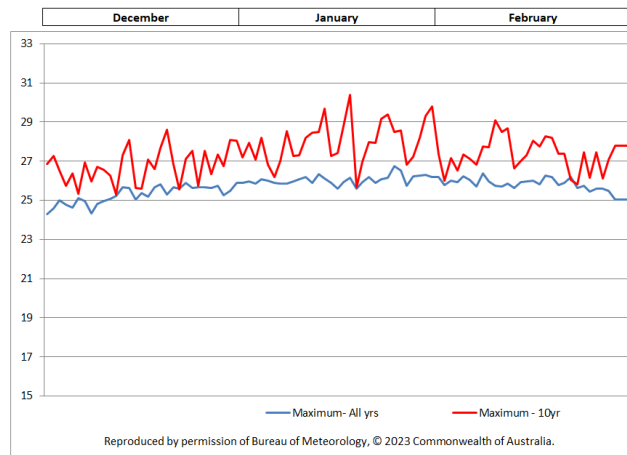
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WEATHER TRENDS

Sydney (Observatory Hill) Average Daily Minimum Temperatures



Sydney (Observatory Hill) Average Daily Maximum Temperatures



BONSAI EVENTS CALENDAR

19 th -21 st Jan = Bonsai Expo, Port Macquarie	Bonsai Society of Australia	Visit their website – www.bonsai.asn.au	
	Nepean Bonsai Society Newsletter	Visit their website - www.nepeanbonsaisociety.org -	
11 th December – Xmas party	Illawarra Bonsai Society	Visit their website – www.illawarrabonsaisociety.org	
6 th Feb – February Meeting	Bonsai Society of South Australia website	Website is worth a visit – www.bonsaisa.org.au	Head along if in South Australia!
	Yarra Valley Bonsai Newsletter	Visit their website - www.yarravalleybonsai.org.au	
	Victorian Native Bonsai Club	Visit their website – www.vicnativebonsai.com.au - well worth a look.	
	School of Bonsai	Visit their website www.schoolofbonsai.com.au	Check website for details.
	Canberra Bonsai Society	Put out a good newsletter - visit their website – www.cbs.org.au	
	Central Coast Bonsai Club	For more details go to http://www.centralcoastbonsai.com.au	
	Bonsai Society of Sydney	Go to http://www.bonsaisocietysydney.org.au	
	Newcastle Bonsai Society	Check out http://newcastlebonsai.org.au/	

MERRY CHRISTMAS ALL, WE WILL HAVE THE NEXT NEWSLETTER BEFORE FEBRUARY'S MEETING. ENJOY YOUR BONSAI THIS SUMMER.