



## NEXT CLUB MEETINGS

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

**7pm Tuesday 10 May 2016**  
Cotoneaster transformation by Lee.

**7pm Tuesday 14 June 2016**  
Special presentation by Clinton Nesci  
followed by light supper

## 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 May Newsletter

### May Meeting

- *Demonstration: When does a semi cascade become an informal upright? After Lee wields the side cutters!* Lee is going to take a rather nice semi cascade cotoneaster and give it a total makeover; changing its outlook on life forever. This is what you do when you get bored with a tree but like it enough not to want to sell it.
- Bring in your trees to work on.



### *Before the Cotoneaster transformation*

*Can you see the bonsai inside the bonsai? Study the tree before the meeting and watch the transformation unfold. Those who like semi cascades might want to bring a tissue to mop up their tears.*

## In this issue:

- Getting your bonsai creds – page 2
- Selecting stock for bonsai & Root work on Japanese Maple- page 3
- Eriocephalus africanus by Lee – page 4
- Some things about pine trees in autumn by Mick Balzary – page 5
- Where there is a will there is a root by Lee – page 6
- Bonsai Events Calendar – page 6

## Saturday May 14 nursery visit

Learn how to recognise a good stock plant for bonsai by joining long time SCBC enthusiasts at Rockdale Community nursery. See boxed item on page 2 for details.

## Bonsai soil

Prepaid orders will be taken for Nesci's bonsai soil which will be delivered to the JUNE meeting. It is \$12 per bag. A sample of the soil will be available at the May meeting and this is the last chance to get your order in. Anyone interested see Lee at the meeting. Payment must be made with the order.

## Guest presenter: Clinton Nesci at June meeting

Be sure to attend the 14 June meeting for Clinton Nesci's demonstration followed by a light supper.

# GETTING YOUR BONSAI CREDS

## Getting your bonsai creds

Are you serious about bonsai or just a dabbler? Is this art going to be part of your life or just a minor side interest: - easily picked up – easily put aside.

There is nothing wrong with either aspect but if you really want to give bonsai a chance to get under your skin you need to spread your wings. Club meetings are great – good advice, keen attendees, education, inspiration. However, anybody who does bonsai well has stepped outside club meetings to get other input.

Workshops Workshops are great places to learn, both hands on or watching. The bonsai people the members go to for advice got their knowledge and skills from attending many workshops. Attendees learn different aspects, different ways; watch different species being worked on. There is always the opportunity to ask questions and to interact. How the attendee prefers to handle it... there are heaps of opportunities to pick up tips, learn new skills and really start to delve into this wonderful passion called bonsai.

Most workshops are set up on a structured basis: – demonstrations and hands on. One of the best workshops of the year is coming in June – Bonsai By the Harbour. The cost is low, the location is stunning on a back harbour cove and the learning and inspiration never stop.

**Bonsai Federation of Australia Northern Inc.**  
Invites you to a weekend of  
**BONSAI BY THE HARBOUR**  
Saturday & Sunday 11 & 12 June 2016  
86 Wharf Road, Gladesville.



*Weekend \$70, Single Day \$40; booked workshop \$25  
Bookings by May 30<sup>th</sup> to Ric (02 9953 1931*

This year the headliners are strong. Don DeLuca from Hay is a sassy mouthed devotee with magic in his hands and an unending stream of humour – and information. He can turn a hopeless stock plant into a tree with a future. Hugh Grant is from the Central Coast, and bonsai is his lifestyle on national and international levels as well as teaching and mentoring all over the country. Now that is a lot of learning and skill up for grabs and you can't grab it unless you are there. There are several other feature artists and a good line-up of interesting talks and demos. Brochures will be available at the next meeting.

Another fantastic venue is the annual AABC National Bonsai Convention that runs over a weekend, usually in May, and features national and international masters. Each year it is held in a different capital city and it presents an amazing infusion of bonsai over two days.

Local clubs put on annual shows with a couple of free demonstrations daily and offer special events with feature artists.

One of the year's best bonsai bashes is the Stanwell Tops Weekend Workshop put on by the Illawarra Bonsai Society and open to anyone. You can go down for the day but it is great to go for the weekend. A couple of hundred dollars will buy full on bonsai, accommodation and food in a national park setting. This bonsai meet provides amazing inspiration.



*'The Tops Weekend Workshop' Stanwell Tops Conference Centre  
9-11 September 2016. Program soon to be released at  
<http://www.illawarrabonsaisociety.org/tops-weekend.html>*

Your skills have to get better if you take advantage of as much on offer as possible. Even one outside workshop a year is good but more is better. It all boils down to one thing... how keen are you really?

## SATURDAY 14 MAY NURSERY VISIT

Come along to the Rockdale Community Nursery for a chance to get a stock plant but, more importantly, take advantage of more advanced members and get an appraisal of the plant or plants you are considering. You can get guidance on what to look for and what to avoid when purchasing stock plants.

**Rockdale Community Nursery**  
**41 Beach Street, Rockdale**

*There is some on-site parking and street parking*

SCBCs long time enthusiasts will be on site from 10 am to 11 am to offer advice on plant selections. This will be ideal for newer members.

A late April foot patrol around the plants revealed that there were fat *Banksia integrifolia* that could be made into semi or full cascades [\$30 and quite thick trunks]; *Juniper procumbens* with softer foliage and thickish trunks for full or semi cascades [a steal at \$22], lillipilly, melaleuca claret tops, bougainvilleas, azaleas, box, berberis, gardenias, and lorapetalum [Chinese fringe flower].

If there is interest, the group could continue to Bonsai South.

# SELECTING STOCK FOR BONSAI & ROOT WORK ON JAPANESE MAPLE

## Selecting stock plants for bonsai novices

Whilst bonsai nurseries generally carry better bonsai stock, you can pick up some good bargains from local nurseries. However, you need to make sure that the stock you select is appropriate. Below is a selection of photos of stock plants with comments on the appropriateness or not for bonsai.



*You will never make this into a bonsai with that long bare trunk. It is a waste of effort.*

*The trunk is interesting and has character but the foliage is too high. Unless the plant has shoots on the lower trunk, it would be wiser to stay away from this type of tree. This is also NOT a bonsai...it is a plant that has been put into a bonsai pot. To qualify for the name 'bonsai' the foliage has to be styled in a manner that suits the trunk.*



*Too many new enthusiasts come in with something like this. There is literally nothing that can be done with it until it has grown and developed. Yes, you can put wire on the trunk and give it movement – but you have to wait a couple of years for secondary and tertiary branches to develop and the trunk to thicken. Buy an older plant to start with.*

*This is another typical first purchase. The trunk is too juvenile to support so much foliage and look good doing it. You could wire and style the branches and put the tree in the ground for several years to thicken up. But what newcomer has that patience? Get a thicker juniper and better developed lower branches and foliage growth closer to the trunk.*



It takes practice to spot bonsai stock with potential and the most efficient way is to join with long-term bonsai enthusiasts on nursery crawls such as the May 14 meet at Rockdale Community nursery or at various bonsai sale events.

## Root work on Japanese maple

By Lee

I got the tree in September at the BSA sale and immediately took it out of the large black plastic pot but I didn't want to do too much root disturbance out of season as Japanese maples are sensitive. Some of the lower rootage was removed but the tree was planted in a too deep pot to encompass the roots that were left.

This is a lovely little Japanese maple with a lot of movement and character. The nebari was another matter - the root spread on each side looked as though the tree was doing the splits and it was not a nice look. Happily the left root took its cue from the swathe of deadwood it would have supported and died as well. Normally I would have waited until the tree was dormant before doing major root work but removing the root could not hurt the tree so it came off.



*The Japanese maple*



*Close up showing 'the splits' roots and the front root newly discovered*

Digging deeper into the soil uncovered a frontal root with nice movement. When the tree is repotted in June more root work will be done to lower the soil level to enhance both left and front roots but the soil will have to stay high on the right side so the right root is 'on the ground' and not curved above the soil.



*Now a much better nebari with the left root removed and an under root now exposed. The tree has stability and an interesting nebari and the base of the trunk is marginally wider.*

This June more roots will be removed and the tree can be placed in a tray pot that will suit its style better.

When you get a new tree it is always good to remove some of the surface soil to see what might be covered. I either carefully pick away the soil or, more often, use the jet spray on the trigger nozzle so I don't damage roots that I might want to keep. It is not unusual to find a larger trunk spread and interesting roots that can become the nebari. If the tree has roots higher up on the trunk and the ones below are better than start removing the unwanted roots. It might have to be done over two seasons but you could still work on getting a better tree. Never think that the soil level of the purchased plant is the actual soil level that looks best for the tree.

# ERIOCEPHALUS AFRICANUS BY LEE

## Eriocephalus Africanus

By Lee

One can occasionally pick up something delightful and different at the major bonsai shows and conventions. In 2015 Roz and I went to the AABC Adelaide convention. We gatecrashed the Friday night welcome party only to snoop around the sales area looking at the plants. The next morning we were at the door 10 minutes before opening and grabbed the plants we spied the night before. Roz got a collected olive, I got an *Eriocephalus africanus*. Didn't know what it was and felt the \$25 was a bit high but it was different, it was interesting and it was mine.



*May 2015 as purchased at the Convention*

Since it came to Sydney it has not stopped growing and needs strong pruning every couple of months. The tree shoots from absolutely everywhere and inner leaves die and the dead leaves form clumps of bedding for pests. As well as a regular prune it also needs periodically cleaning out and possible pest removal. The branchlets are fairly pliable so gently combing the foliage and plucking the young growth works well. Use fine scissors to remove smaller branches.



*April 2016 and ready for yet another prune*

In Africa, possibly because of its fancied resemblance to rosemary and its pleasant herbal odour, various species have been used on a small scale in cooking. Free range livestock browse the plants to various degrees, and along with various other Karoo bushes, this lends the meat a distinctive flavour and a character that some people relish in Karoo lamb.

Various species also have been used widely in folk medicine. The leaf of *Eriocephalus africanus* when lightly rubbed, has a pleasant odour.

The plant yields 0.3% of a dark green petroleum ether extract, which, on steam distillation in vacuo, yields 10 to 15 per cent of a fairly viscous, yellowish, volatile oil. It has an herbaceous and balsamic odour.



*The bush in flower*

It is called Kapokbos because the flowering heads turns into a mass of soft downy white which from a distance looks like snow (kapok) against the mountain slopes. In the past people used to collect the heads and stuff pillows with it for a lovely fragrant sleep. It is also known as Wild Rosemary.

Locally it thrives in the Adelaide climate and is proving to be no shirker in Sydney's far more humid climatic conditions. It does like water but is not voracious in its need. The foliage can start to dehydrate on very hot days but I keep my plants fairly moist and I am sure that if it were used to less water it would cope.

Due to its rapid growth I will be surprised if my tree develops the flowers as I really don't want it to get out of shape sufficiently to allow the flowers to grow. The foliage is feather soft to the touch and its blue green shading is very pleasant. The trunk has a stringy bark.



*Close up showing the profusion of growth all over the main and subsidiary branches. Most of this needs to be removed to open the tree up and keep pests away from it.*

*After the prune - give it three weeks and it will be thick again.*



So far it is proving to be an up and coming bonsai and the *Eriocephalus africanus* bonsai on display in Adelaide were nice to stunning. I know Roz has taken cuttings and I am sure she would be happy to swap a rooted cutting for an article for the newsletter.

# SOME THINGS ABOUT PINE TREES IN AUTUMN BY MICK BALZARY

*Note from Editor: There is a plethora of different advices on pines. Here Mick Balzary who has been working with pines for 40 or more years shares some of his insights and practices growing pines in Canberra. Unlike the Ryan Neil two flush method being [see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yn1FiRw2JBo>] being followed by our club in Sydney, Mick does not summer prune. We can all learn from Mick's open-minded approach and continuous learning as is illustrated in this article.*

## Some things about pine trees as bonsai this time of year

By Mick Balzary

Its autumn and the pines are preparing themselves for winter and the coming spring. In simple terms the trees are taking up sugars and starches into their system so as to put on wood and prepare buds for the future.

Gone is the requirement for nitrogen, but potash [sulphate of potash] is needed. High nitrogen feeds are not required as the trees are putting on wood now. Already wired branches will expand and may cause the wire to bite into the wood. With my older pines [30 -40 years plus] I am prepared to leave wire in place for 3 years and more if necessary to achieve the result I want. Wire marks in pines will grow out in time.

In addition, you will notice at this time pines are shedding needles. These are the old needles and in the case of two and three needled pines, they shed their old needles every 3 years. The Japanese black and red pines are favourite two needled ones, while the Monterey pine [*Pinus Radiata*] or Radiata pine as we know it is the favourite of the 3 needled varieties.

Needles bundles on pines range from one needle, the single leaf pinyon- [*Pinus monophylla*] to 8 plus needles depending on variety.

You can replot pines this time of year [autumn] but if other work is to be done wait until spring. All heavy work on the trees is stressful for them. So choose what is necessary – replot now or schedule heavy pruning, restyling for work in late May or June.

### Needle Removal so as to promote back budding.

You can pull excess needles from your tree at this time of the year. Or you can cut them! If you pull the needles, one bundle at a time, you are pulling off the latent bud that is sitting at the base of the needle bundle. It is located between the needle pair. Pulling needles works and is a sound practice, but if I am looking for budding in a certain place I keep 3 pairs of needles and cut them, leaving about one half inch of needles remaining. Then you can carefully cut at the base of the pairs into the cambium of the branch with a pruning knife or razor blade. This cut will promote healing at that area and induce new buds to form.

When pulling needles leave say 3 to 5 pairs at the top of the pine and 5 to 7 pair at the lower part. This practice, besides inducing new buds to form helps to maintain equal growing

balance throughout the tree, as the apical section of the tree is the strongest, demanding the most food.

### Candle [Bud] Removal

Some growers take half the candle, some two thirds of the candle, and some the whole candle. As I do not summer prune my pines I take the whole candle at this time. IT IS IMPORTANT when taking the whole candle to cut slightly above its base, say one eighth of an inch. If you cut too close to the base you will remove the latent or newly formed buds.

### My Experience with Pavel Slovak

Pavel Slovak, from Czechoslovakia was invited to Australia by the National Arboretum during March 2016. His son Jacob Slovak came with him as interpreter. I was fortunate, as a donor of a tree to the NBC, to be included in a day long workshop with him.

What a treat! He is an international bonsai artist, both with pen, paper and bonsai, fast, helpful, explanatory, polite, courteous and friendly. So fast, that even toward the end of day he was running between participants. All I can say is "BRING HIM BACK!" Over the past 40 years of messing around with conifers as bonsai I am yet to meet a knowledgeable gentleman such as he.

I learnt several things, some different to what I have been shown or taught, and they are well worth passing on, even if you do not style this way.

### Wire

I brought with me a Japanese Red Pine [*P. Densiflora*] which was grown from seed in 1982. I explained my perceived shortcomings with it, including the apex. Pavel suggested some heavy bending. I said that the tree was very turgid [full of sap] and that because of my hands I did not use copper wire which is in vogue in Australia. He replied that he did not use copper either [aluminium only] and that when the tree was full of sap it was the time to bend. This is contrary to my learnings of drying the tree out, let the sap withdraw, and then wire and bend.

### Bending

Heavy branches were wrapped in wet raffia and black insulation tape applied. Nothing new here but he pointed out to me that in very hot weather the application of the insulation tape helps keep the raffia moist. I had not considered this in the past. More importantly, I was shown how to BEND AND TWIST so as to avoid breaking the branches. He bent the first branch with ease. I handled the rest using his technique. To illustrate the bending and twisting technique he produced a cigarette demonstrating that bending only broke the cigarette in half while when bending and twisting at the same time did not cause the cigarette to break.

### Apex

He was quick to point out that the apex consists of several branches, not one. I have his drawing of this. This was so refreshing and a view I have always held following long walks in pine forests and paddocks looking at pines and other trees. In any event over the life of a bonsai the apex will be cut and restyled quite a few times over.

I was very privileged, and have to say that we in Australia have a long way to go with our bonsai teachings and practices. The European standards are set very high.

# WHERE THERE'S A WILL THERE WILL BE A ROOT & BONSAI EVENTS CALENDAR

## Where There's a Will There Will be a Root By Lee



*Pyracantha in early training. It was much taller with a lot of deadwood and has been undergoing restyling.*

Nice pyracantha with lots of potential but the left side of the lower trunk had an under curved trunk that made the tree look a bit insecure. I got a young pyracantha that had a good left extending root. Roots on the right were trimmed off and the smaller roots around the left root were removed.



*The trunk curves under unattractively on the lower left and gives a feeling of instability*

I used the Dremel to cut a groove into the side of the tree and then used a grafting knife to ensure the cut edges were clean. The groove was created to a depth that would take the trunk and it was positioned so the major roots would lie along the surface.



*A young pyracantha was acquired with a lot of root growth on one side. Any roots on the right side were removed as were the smaller roots on top of the bigger ones.*

A thin nail was used to affix the young tree to the bonsai and sealent applied around the wound. Grafting tape was wound around the trunks to facilitate the bonding.



*A groove was made so the new tree will slot into the bonsai and once the two grow together the top of the young tree will be removed and its roots will enhance the existing bonsai. This is more productive than hoping that roots will develop where you need them.*

The foliage of the scion has been positioned around the trunk so it gets sun. Now it is a wait for up to a year for the two trees to meld and the large tree 'adopt' the smaller one. Once the inserted lower trunk has become part of the main tree its upper trunk will be removed, the cut area tailored to callous over and meld in with the parent. In this way the tree will have a stronger nebari.

## BONSAI EVENTS CALENDAR

| Date             | Event  | Details  |
|------------------|--|--|
| 20-23 May, 2016  | Bonsai – 29 <sup>th</sup> Australian National Bonsai Convention hosted by Bonsai | Hosted by Bonsai Society of Southern Tasmania, Wrest Point Convention Centre, Hobart, Tasmania                             |
| 11-12 June, 2016 | Bonsai by the Harbour  | Bonsai Federaton of Australia (Northern), Sydney Church of England Grammar Schools Rowing Facility 86 Wharf Rd Gladesville |
| 27-28 Aug, 2016  | Bonsai Society of Sydney Annual Show   | Forestville RSL Club Melwood Av Forestville  |
| 9-11 Sept, 2016  | 17 <sup>th</sup> Annual "Tops Weekend"   | Illawarra Bonsai Society, tops Resort Stanwell Tops  |
| 11-13 Nov, 2016  | Newcastle Bonsai Society Annual Exhibition                                       | Charlestown Bowling Club 5 Lincon St Charlestown   |