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Quotable Quotes
A pot in the hand is better than one dropped on your foot.
Anonymous



Proud sponsor of the Yarra Valley Bonsai Society
www.bonsaisensation.com.au



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The Yarra Valley Bonsai Society Newsletter

Highlights from March & April 2020

The March Monthly Meeting featured a presentation and demonstration by our Vice President Steve M. He spoke of his journey from Bonsai Novice to the Intermediate stage. His prime message was that it is a great advantage to sit with people and ask questions, and attend as many workshops with experienced

The YVBS meets on the second Tuesday of each month now at Chirside Park Community Hub
 33 Kimberley Drive
 Chirside Park
 Meetings begin at 7:30pm .



Saturday Workshops are 1-4:00pm on the **Last Saturday** of the month, at the same venue as monthlies!



Above - Steve M presents at the March meeting.

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bonsai practitioners as possible. And above all, “listen to your trees - they will tell you how they feel”.

Steve then went on to share some of the most significant points he has learned over his journey. He pointed out that when styling and shaping a tree, make sure that it is healthy before you begin. This will assist in its ability to cope with the changes. As a guide to selecting which aspect is to be the “front”, consider which angle presents the best root shaping, and that the tree is leaning toward the viewer.

Like most people new to bonsai, Steve was also initially fearful of cutting off the wrong branch when styling. He came to realize that this was more of an issue with evergreen trees, as deciduous ones can more easily regrow a branch.

Trees suitable for bonsai can be obtained from a number of sources. One way is to dig up an established tree from the wild – which may include a suburban garden. After digging up the tree, let it establish itself in a pot and

Calendar Dates:

- There are no scheduled events for the immediate future

See also the Events Calendar on our website: www.yarravalleybonsai.org.au to monitor any changes.

Highlights from May & June - Cont. From Page 1

grow new roots before trying to seriously style it. Don't bare root when digging up, leave a little of the original soil – especially for natives and azaleas. The remaining soil can be removed at first repotting, or progressively over the first few repots.

Remember above all, that a Bonsai tree is a growing entity, and so they are never a finished product. They require constant care and maintenance. All members present appreciated this advice, even the more experienced ones enjoyed the refresher.

Regrettably, we were forced to cancel the March Last-Saturday-of-the-Month Workshop, the April meeting, the April workshop, and the Bonsai Novice Training Course due to the Covid-19 restrictions. All future Club events are currently on hold, and the resumption of activities will be advised to all members when clearance is available.

Bonsai Training Courses

Thirteen members have signed up for the Bonsai Novice Training Course, which is planned to be held spanning two Saturday morning sessions. Originally planned for 25th April and 30th May, the course will be rescheduled as soon as practicable after Covid-19 restrictions are lifted. Registrants will be asked to reconfirm their involvement at that stage.

Cancellation of Other Bonsai Events

In addition to our own meetings and workshops, the following bonsai community events have also been cancelled:

- The YVBS Bonsai Show scheduled for 23rd and 24th May.
- Bonsai Week 2020 in Canberra, scheduled for March.
- Bendigo Bonsai Show scheduled for the April Easter weekend.
- Victorian Native Bonsai Exhibition scheduled for April
- AABC National Bonsai Convention scheduled for Sydney in May
- Waverley Bonsai Club Show scheduled for August.

Member Profile

Gail and Ken G are both retired, live in North Ringwood and have just celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. They have 3 married children and 6 grandchildren.

Their son has maintained a small bonsai collection for many years, which inspired them to take a bonsai course at Chojo. They are enthusiastic to learn more.

Their collection has grown fairly quickly, comprising several mature and developed trees. In addition, they have their own attempts to create Bonsai from starter trees and plants. A 25 year old Satsuki Azalea is Gail's favourite (a birthday present) and Ken loves the mature deciduous trees with their Autumn display. They want to continue learning and developing skills to enhance their bonsai collection.

They both enjoy time spent in their garden. In addition, Art and Galleries, Grandchildren and travel are an important part of their lives.



Library Check-out!

YVBS has a comprehensive range of bonsai books and magazines in our library, all of which are available for borrowing without charge. Remember, the checkout period for books and other library material is one month. If you check out a book and are not able to make the next meeting, you can return the book at a workshop or even post it to the club PO Box. Now under the management of new Librarian Fiona M!



Trade Table Cheque-out!

The trade table has been restocked with new tools, wire and other accessories. A selection of pots are also in stock. Don't forget the club's tool sharpening kit, available for use at meetings. Anything else you would like to see stocked? Just advise at the trade table or to any committee member.



From Clay Block to Rectangular Pot

By Tracey Francis
Murrumbung Studio Ceramics

Ceramics is a big interest these days for a lot of people. Pottery lessons have sprung up everywhere. But there are those of us who are unaware of what goes into making a ceramic container for our trees. I had thought a quick description in layman's terms might help those who don't know about ceramics, to understand the work and effort that goes into the containers potters produce. I am also speaking from my own experience and other potters may have differing methods of how they deal with their work.

Many people decide to place an order with me for a special container, and one of the first questions they ask me is "How long will it take to make?" Often I get a shocked reaction when I tell them that if all goes well and there are no drying, glazing or kiln issues, a particular container may take up to two or three weeks *in ideal drying weather*.

Bearing in mind there are a number of ways to make a ceramic container, the making process can also impact on the amount of time it takes to create a piece. Very briefly, the most common methods are:

Wheel 'throwing' on the potters' wheel is generally used to create round containers, walls for oval containers or containers that may start off round and be manipulated later. I find this one of the fastest forming methods.

Hand building encompasses a number of methods from pinch pots, slab built pots, the use of extrusions or a combination of all these methods in one container.

Slip casting is the term used to describe the use of a liquid clay (slip) that is poured into a plaster mould to create a container. It can be used to create multiples of the same pot without variations in size or shape.

Most people have seen how a Potter will make a round pot on the Potters' wheel. Fewer people will have seen a slab pot being built although many will remember playing around with slabs of clay at school. Because I am now getting an increasing number of requests for rectangular containers, I thought I would describe how they are constructed to give people an idea of why they take as long as they do, and why they are priced higher than an average round pot.

The clay comes in 10 or 12.5kg blocks. These blocks have to be rolled into slabs. If I am intending to use slabs, I roll them out the night before I need them, or at least in the morning so that I can work with them in the afternoon. Once the slabs are rolled they are left to 'set up' on pieces of cement sheet. This helps to suck out some of the moisture and encourage the slabs to firm a little before being handled.

Once the slabs are still fairly soft but starting to lose a bit of their tackiness, I will cut out the shapes to form the rectangle – ie: 1x base, 2 x ends and 2 x sides.

All clay has an element of shrinkage, both from wet to dry, dry to bisque fired and then to glaze fired. This can be anywhere from 10% to 15% shrinkage – which is why it is difficult for Potters when a client asks for something that must be an exact size. The shrinkage will vary to some degree with moisture content in the clay itself before the pot is even started, so whilst a clay may – on average – shrink 10%; a particular batch or part of a batch can possibly shrink 12 or even 15%.

When cutting out the panels for a rectangular container, we allow for the accepted level of shrinkage for a particular clay body, and for overlaps and joins.

Once the clay is firm enough to handle and keep its shape, assembly can begin. To attach the pieces of clay together, the areas of the join need to be scored with a scratching tool or needle tool, then painted with slip (a liquid



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NEW PRODUCT LINE....for those starting out or with a handful of bonsai, I have introduced a **50/50** mix of **ORCHIATA PINE BARK** and **DIATOMITE 2-7mm** in a **20L bucket @ \$25.00**. Also available are **DIATOMITE 35L bags @ \$25.00** and **ORCHIATA PINE BARK 40L bags (3-6 or 6-9mm) @ \$30.00**. **ORCHID POTS** are available in a range of sizes. To order call Julie **0419 870 240** or email julie@bonsairoots.com.au



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version of the clay body which acts like a kind of glue). All the panels are attached to each other in this way to form the basic shape of the container.

A coil or sausage of clay is then attached to the inside of any seams to strengthen the join; and smoothed down to a neat finish.

I usually leave the formed container to set up again and for the moisture in the slip and coils to dry off a bit before trying to go any further.

Next we need to attach feet to the formed container. Obviously the feet are on the underside, so the container needs to be flipped over. That's easy for a small container but bigger ones can be a 2 or 3 person job!

The example in the photos is 48cm long and 28cm wide. It is getting almost too big to be a solo flip. The clay is heavy and still malleable to some extent. In order to flip the formed piece, a chunk of foam rubber is put into the centre of the pot and a second piece of cement sheet laid over the top.

Now, not only do you have to flip a soft-ish clay shape, but the cement sheet it is sitting on *and* the cement sheet on top of it.

Once flipped, the feet can be added, the drainage holes and wire holes drilled and chops applied.

The whole pot needs to be given a general going over, checking joints, corners, finish and profile to make sure it is sound and with no potential weak spots. Sometimes at this point, you might notice a corner is not sharp or a slight gap where two panels are joined. This is the time to fix anything and finesse the shape.



Once again I would leave the pot to firm and for the slip holding the feet on to dry off a bit. If the container is not having any further surface treatment, I would leave the container upside down to dry out and maybe remove the foam support from inside it after a couple of days.

The pot in our example had some texture added to the surface. This needs to be done after the pot is firm enough to accept the extra moisture added to the walls from the texture, but before the pot is too dry to accept it. Trying to put a wet slip texture on an already dry pot can crack the piece as it dries.

Once the container is considered to be finished it has already been in the studio for over 24 hours – from slabs rolled the night before to a finished product.

The finished work is left on its piece of cement sheet in the studio for a couple of days to dry, and I then remove the foam support from under the centre of the pot.

If conditions are ideal and the weather warm I might have a totally dry pot within a couple of days. I have found in very hot weather I need to slow down the drying to prevent cracking and warping.

Conversely in wet, cold wintery weather, a pot can sit there drying for over two weeks and still contain moisture. This is when they need to be moved inside and will often cover the dining room table to try to dry them in time for a firing. A damp pot can crack or explode pieces off the pot if it is put into a kiln when it contains too much moisture.

If conditions are favourable and the container is dry within a couple of days, it can go into the kiln for a bisque firing. I twice fire all my ceramics. Lots of Potters single fire. It is personal preference and neither method is better than the other. I prefer the control I have with bisque fired work so I twice fire.

Bisque firing is usually between 1000 – 1040 degrees and is designed to burn out all the carbonaceous material present in the clay and render it 'semi-fired'. I bisque fire to 1040 degrees and it is usually a 13 hours firing. The kiln takes another 24 hours to cool before the work can be removed for glazing. It is hard and feels like ceramic, but porous so it will suck in the glaze that is applied to it.

Once glaze is applied, the container will go back into the kiln for a glaze firing up to 1290 – 1300 degrees for stoneware clay. This time the kiln only takes 10 – 12 hours as the temperature goes up a lot faster. The kiln will then take up to three days to cool before being emptied. It is only when the kiln is unpacked that you discover exactly how the pots went. Ceramics is not an exact science. After all this work, it is still possible to have an awful firing – or to open the kiln and be amazed at what you have created.



Tree Profile: Index of Trees from All Previous Newsletters

MONTH	YEAR	SUBJECT TREE	MONTH	YEAR	SUBJECT TREE
Sep/Oct	2008	Banksia Integrifolia	Nov/Dec	2013	Ulmus Parvifolia - Chinese Elm
Sep/Oct	2008	Chinese Elm	Nov/Dec	2013	Nothofagus
Nov/Dec	2008	Acacia	Jan/Feb	2014	Leptospermum Laevigatum - Coastal Tea Tree
Nov/Dec	2008	Acer Buergerianum - Trident Maple	Mar/Apr	2014	Osteomeles Schweriniae - Chinese Emperor Plum
Jan/Feb	2009	Pyracantha - Firethorn	May/June	2014	Wisteria
Mar/Apr	2009	Callistemon	Jul/Aug	2014	Punica Granatum - Dwarf Pomegranate
Mar/Apr 2009		Hornbeam	Sep/Oct	2014	Liquidambar - Sweetgum
May/June	2009	Syzygium - Lilly Pilly	Nov/Dec	2014	Crape Myrtle
May/June	2009	Satsuki Azalea	Jan/Feb	2015	Prunus
Jul/Aug	2009	Babingtonia Virgata - Baeckea	Mar/Apr	2015	Alder - Alnus
Jul/Aug	2009	Pieris Japonica	May/June	2015	Hawthorn - Crataegus
Sep/Oct	2009	Casuarina	Jul/Aug	2015	Forsythia
Sep/Oct	2009	Celtis Sinensis - Chinese Hackberry	Sep/Oct	2015	Lavender Star - Grewia Occidentalis
Nov/Dec	2009	Picea - Spruce	Nov/Dec	2015	New Zealand Tea Tree - Leptospermum
Jan/Feb	2010	Mugo Pine	Jan/Feb	2016	Hornbeam - Carpinus
Mar/Apr	2010	Cedar	Mar/Apr	2016	Olive - Olea
May/June	2010	Kunzea ambigua - Tick Bush	May/June	2016	Cotoneaster
May/June	2010	Cotoneaster	Jul/Aug	2016	Boxwood Harlandii - Chinese Buxus
Jul/Aug	2010	Olive	Sep/Oct	2016	Hackberry - Celtis
Sep/Oct	2010	Larch	Nov/Dec	2016	Acer Palmatum - Japanese Maple
Nov - Feb	2010/11	Japanese maple	Jan/Feb	2017	Sannantha Bidwillii - Twiggy Heath Myrtle
Mar/Apr	2011	Fagus - Beech	Mar/Apr	2017	Metrosideros - NZ Christmas Tree
Jul/Aug	2011	Prunus - Cherry	May/June	2017	Ginkgo Biloba
Jul/Aug	2011	Leptospermum - Tea Tree	Jul/Aug	2017	Fagus - Beech
Sep/Oct	2011	Gardenia	Sep/Oct	2017	Pieris Japonica
Sep/Oct	2011	Acer Palmatum	Nov/Dec	2017	Satsuki Azalea
Nov/Dec	2011	Buxus - Boxwood	Jan/Feb	2018	Gardenia
Nov/Dec	2011	Banksia Integrifolia	Mar/Apr	2018	Casuarina / Allocasuarina
Jan/Feb	2012	Ficus - fig	May/June	2018	Juniper
Mar/Apr	2012	Bougainvillea Glabra - Paper Flower	Jul/Aug	2018	Ash
May/June	2012	Chamaecyparis - False or Hinoki Cypress	Sep/Oct	2018	Buxus - Kingsville
Jul/Aug	2012	Serissa Foetida - Tree of a Thousand Stars	Nov/Dec	2018	Ficus
Sep/Oct	2012	Pyracantha - Firethorn	Jan/Feb	2019	Leptospermum - Lemon Scented Tea Tree
Nov/Dec	2012	Acer Buergerianum - Trident Maple	Mar/Apr	2019	Pinus thunbergii - Jap Black Pine
Nov/Dec	2012	Casuarina / Allocasuarina	May/June	2019	Callistemon
Jan/Feb	2013	Schefflera Arboricola - Dwarf Umbrella Tree	Jul/Aug	2019	Serissa Foetida - Tree of a Thousand Stars
Jan/Feb	2013	Ficus Rubiginosa - Port Jackson Fig	Sep/Oct	2019	Cedar
Mar/Apr	2013	Chaenomeles - Flowering Quince	Nov/Dec	2019	Pinus Mugo
Mar/Apr	2013	Cedars	Jan/Feb	2020	Melaleuca
May/June	2013	Malus - Crab Apple			
Jul/Aug	2013	Quercus Robur - European Oak			
Sep/Oct	2013	Rhododendron Indicum - Satsuki Azalea			

On The Display Table



A selection of trees on the Display Table at the March meeting.



BONSAI SENSATION NURSERY

MONDAY TO FRIDAY 9:00am – 5:00pm / WEEKENDS 10:00am – 3:00pm

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253 Centre Road, Narre Warren South, VIC 3805

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Visit our Facebook page and website BONSAISENSATION.COM.AU for more information



Bonsai Calendar: May - June

As Autumn draws to a close, your deciduous trees have completed their growth cycle and are in preparation for dormancy. Evergreen varieties may not stop growing completely but their growth rate will slow down dramatically. Among many other tasks, winter is a great time to contemplate styling and restyling your bonsai (especially deciduous trees). Having the ability to see the skeleton of your trees will assist you in improving the basic branch structure and ramification of your bonsai.

Here are a few things to consider over the winter months.

- Remove all fruit and seeds from your trees as it can promote die back and disease.
- Once all the green leaves have changed or fallen you can begin cutting back on deciduous trees to shape with out fear of the tree bleeding.
- After all leaves have fallen, clean up all debris around your bonsai area (including the tops of the pots), to reduce potential homes and hiding places for pests.
- Any trees that have been protected from the summer sun can be pushed back into the open. The winter sun will promote bud development and tighten spring growth.
- Adjust your watering routine as your trees will be using less water. Rain may be more common. Avoid over watering at this time of year as trees are extremely susceptible to root rot. Keep deciduous trees on the dry side to promote autumn colour.
- If possible, make a habit of watering at the warmest part of the day. This will give the excess water a chance to drain before the cold nights.
- Keep an eye on pots that get completely covered with moss. This may interrupt the water intake and increase the chance of root rot.
- May and June are the best times to do heavy pruning and shaping to most conifers.
- Wire and bend branches while trees are on the dry side of the watering cycle. This will improve the flexibility of the branches and so reduce cracking or breaking.
- Fertilizing isn't required for any dormant trees, but evergreens can still benefit from a light feeding.

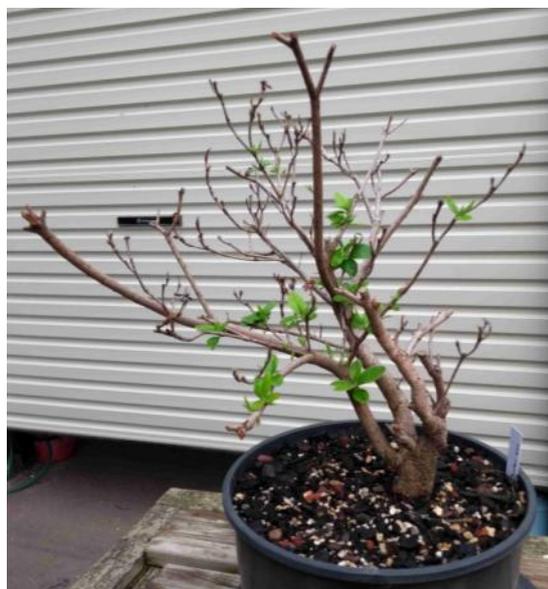
It Aint Dead Until.....

Lindsay reports that following a severe cutback after flowering in 2018, one of his garden azaleas went gradually downhill, gradually dropping leaves until mid-2019 when all signs of life were gone. After going through the 2019 flowering and growing season without any movement, the time came in March this year when it was time to kick up the stump and consign it to the green bin.

On closer examination of the removed stump, two green shoots were spotted just in time! Rather than the bin, it went into a grow pot instead and the attached picture shows the current status.

Of the three trunks, the right hand one is showing no growth. The left hand one is the most vigorous, and the centre trunk is also putting on good growth. It will be left now until the end of the year, at which time some design decisions will be made and it will be reduced to a single trunk - the centre one if it continues with its present vigour, or the left hand trunk if not.

The lesson to be learned - don't be too quick to discard an ailing or apparently dead tree!



Resumption of Club Activities

It is impossible for us at this time to predict when we may be able to resume our normal Club activities, however we will resume as soon as it is possible. Members will be advised via email, our Facebook page, future newsletters, and our website, in advance of any resumption. We look forward to getting together again, and in the meantime, we will all have plenty of time to look after our trees!

ヤラ谷間盆栽会

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www.yarravalleybonsai.org.au

A group for all lovers of bonsai in the "far east" of Melbourne



Yarra Valley Bonsai Society
PO Box 345
Mount Evelyn, Victoria 3796
Australia

*Looking Ahead to
May & June 2020*



NO ACTIVITIES SCHEDULED UNTIL CURRENT RESTRICTIONS ARE LIFTED!



Other Events



NO ACTIVITIES SCHEDULED UNTIL CURRENT RESTRICTIONS ARE LIFTED!



World Bonsai Convention 2021

The 9th World Bonsai Convention is scheduled to be held at the Crown Towers, Burswood in Perth from 14th to 17th October 2021. Speakers, demonstrators, and bonsai enthusiasts from all over the world will be attending, and it presents an ideal opportunity for us to participate in a world-class event and also to support and showcase our Australian capabilities. Further information and registration details should be available from May 2020, and more details will be advised in future newsletters and via our web site. Hopefully, we will be past the current travel restrictions by the time the Convention comes around.

YVBS FORUM: For new members, it bears repeating that our club has an on-line bulletin board and archive. In addition to the announcements and discussions on topics of bonsai interest, the forum also contains many newsletters from other clubs around Australia. These are to be found (surprise, surprise) in the folder entitled "Newsletters from Other Clubs" and are kept for approximately six months. If you visit the site and register as a user, or are having any difficulties, please email Lindsay via info@yarravalleybonsai.org.au so that he may activate your account as a club member user. Just visit our main webpage <http://www.yarravalleybonsai.org.au> and follow the FORUM link on the left menu to the forum.



Member Benefits Refer to the website for a list of discounts to members upon presentation of a current & valid YVBS Membership card. "Freebies" of donated items are also made available from time to time at monthly meetings.

ADVERTISERS & SPONSORS:

Advertising on our website and/or in the newsletter is available for any registered business or sole trader. Society Sponsorship opportunities are capped at three for any year, however supportership opportunities still remain for any business in an area related to the craft of bonsai.

For a prospectus or further information contact us via the society's external email: info@yarravalleybonsai.org.au