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January—February 2009 Volume 2 No. 1

The Yarra Valley Bonsai Society Newsletter

Highlights from January and February

The YVBS meets on the second Tuesday of each month at Japara House in Montrose** (Melway 52 D7)

Informal/Review sessions begin at 7:00pm with a call to order at 7:30.

Saturday Workshops are 2pm on the first Saturday of the month. (Same Venue.) Check the web-site for details!



Despite the heat and the on-going bushfire threats so close to home, the first two months have seen plenty of activity in our group and we welcomed several new memberships.

At our substitute summer holiday venue provided by 1st Mt. Evelyn Scouts, the theme for the January meeting was 'Australian Native Plants as Bonsai.' Peter Raymakers led a discussion on the needs of various native plants in contrast to 'traditional' stock used for bonsai. A summary of key points in this session can be found on page 3. In February the theme looked at first aid for plants under stress, particularly from summer heat, sun, and pests. Bill and Neil began a chart with member input on triage and treatment. Over the next few months, this will be expanded and posted on the forum.

Behind the scenes, Committee Member and resident web guru Mark Condon put in a great deal of time to kick off the web forum as an extension of our website. This modified bulletin board/chat room allows members to post questions, track responses, search topics, and share knowledge. In the interest of widening our 'community' beyond the membership, several sections of the forum are open to the public at large (ie: any user). There is also an on-line archive of newsletters and announcements from other bonsai societies. Even in its first few weeks of operation, the Forum has proved useful in extending dialogues and discussion of items raised during meetings. If you haven't done so already, check it out via the link on our Society's home webpage or directly at:

<http://yarravalleybonsai.org.au/yabb/YaBB.pl>

Calendar Dates:

- Tuesday 10 March and 14 April 2009
YVBS Monthly Meeting 7.00-9.30pm
Japara House, Montrose (Melway Ref 52 D7)
Featured Theme: March— Tools and Sharpening
April: Working with Pines
- Saturday 7 March and 4 April 2009
2.00-4.30pm
YVBS Saturday Workshop
Japara House. Gold coin donation
- Saturday 4 April 1.00pm YVBS Public Talk/Demo
Lilydale Library, Anderson Street, Lilydale. Free
Melway Ref 38 F5
- Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 April: (9am-5pm)
Mornington Peninsula Bonsai Society Easter Show Rosebud Secondary College (Melway 170 A3)
- Saturday 11 April to Monday 13 April, **Bendigo Bonsai Club Autumn Exhibition** St Paul's Parish Hall, Myers St, Bendigo, 11th to 13th April Saturday, 10 am to 5 pm, Sunday 11 am to 5 pm, Monday, 10 am to 4 pm. Admission \$3, children free.

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Getting to Know You...



Margaret Wong: "I grew up in New Zealand, managing to win a few prizes at flower shows at school before moving to SE Asia for nearly 4 years. We then shifted to Melbourne and have stayed put since. Except of course for visits to New Zealand, where one gets such wonderful inspiration from the beautiful, green, lush trees....and it's never too hot for walking! I lecture in chemistry at Swinburne University of Technology in Glenferrie. As far as bonsai, I suppose I've been interested in it for 20+ years as an extension of my general gardening pursuits. However, it's really only been the last three or four years that I've moved to a more directed study. I suppose I have a fairly catholic taste, liking all sorts and styles. I'm especially drawn to flowering varieties, but I still have fun with some pines and junipers. I'm a Committee Member of the Waverley Garden Club—Bonsai Group as well as a member of this group." Margaret, never far from her camera, is also an avid photographer.

Trevor Jacobson: "I've lived in Mount Evelyn for 25 years with wife, son, daughter, mother in law and 2 dogs. I am a self-employed bricklayer (30 years), doing all types of masonry stonework, paving and landscaping. Slowing down now because of age and various injuries. I've been a member of the Yarra Valley Fly Fishers for over a decade, teaching casting and fly tying. I meet many people at casting tuition on Sunday mornings, even bonsai enthusiasts. I enjoy many outdoor activities, including...4W Driving, camping, water skiing, and [of course] fly fishing. I am a member of the Ulysses Motorbike Club, and ride regularly with a mate. To be a full member of his club you have to be over 50, and I ride with 60+ year olds. My favourite ride is up through the Reefton spur, and down to Marysville for breakfast on Sunday mornings, (not any more). My mother had a collection of bonsai's that triggered my interest; I started collecting bonsais about 15 years ago. I have a small collection with a variety of trees and styles. I have lost quite a few through possums, heat, neglect and misfortune. It is a huge disappointment to lose a bonsai that is over 10 years old. I have seen many superb trees at nurseries, private collections, and photos, etc. But the best ever was in Tasmania, when I went on a walk, with my daughter's outdoor education school class, on the overland track. The walk from Cradle Mountain to Lake St Clair is rated as one of the world's great walks. At the base of Mt Ossa (Tassie's highest) there is a forest of pines. A tall tree about 1.8 to 2 mtrs +, with everything down to stunted seedlings. Amazing tapered trunks and sculptured shapes and styles. Some with pale white trunks, branches with natural scars surrounded by rocks and moss gardens with natural ponds and streams, all weathered with the harshest conditions, climate and time."

In each newsletter, we profile a member or two as a means of getting to know each other better.

Ask Mr. Miyagi.....



Q: Dear Mr. Miyagi: I've usually avoided working with pines because they seem to be so 'fussy' compared to other stock. Particularly when it comes to potting and repotting, I've rarely been able to get it right, winding up with a distressed tree. They can be obviously so beautiful, yet are slow-growing and often unforgiving. How can I work with these trees more confidently, particularly when repotting?

A: Dear Reader: Yes, pines are certainly a challenge and not nearly so 'cooperative' as junipers. Without getting too Zen-like on you, I respect the challenge of black pines, for example, because it reminds me that bonsai is seldom about inflicting our human desire OVER nature but rather in seeing, hearing, and feeling (the latter two especially in branch bending!) and responding in kind.. Take any ten bonsai enthusiasts and you'll have often *at least* ten opinions on when/how to prune, candle-trim, and even pot. With the potting, use your eyes: avoid repotting when the tree appears to be most active in new growth. As with any tree, but particularly so for pines, the key is to have the tree as healthy as possible BEFORE submitting it to the stress of repotting....up OR down. A proper feeding and watering regimen, as well as inspection/treatment for pests, in the weeks and even months before transplanting will go a long way to securing your tree's survival. A key in transplanting is to retain (or inoculate) "mycorrhiza." [Several spellings used.] This is a fungus which exists in a symbiotic [mutually beneficial] relationship with the roots. It gathers food and moisture from the soil for transference to the root hairs. In return, the tree provides the mycorrhiza with needed carbon. An additional benefit seems to come from widening the allowable soil 'pH gap' for healthy growth of a pine. Scraping off the very top layer of pine needles in the wild, you'll find mycorrhiza, a white substance powdery or smear-like depending on recent precipitation. If you see this on sections of the rootball of the tree you are repotting, LEAVE IT ON! Also, mix some of this with the soil upon transplanting, and your pine will love it. Make sure the soil is well aerated and mind you don't go overboard with phosphorus. Some enthusiasts even keep a stash of pine needle compost to cultivate mycorrhiza and 'inoculate' their pine's soil with this substance as a part of on-going care.

Members may submit questions to Mr. Miyagi c/o the YVBS web forum or per the club email: info@yarravalleybonsai.org.au

“The Natives are Restless”

Some Summary Points from Peter Raymaker's Presentation at the January Meeting.

	Easy to Grow	Hard to Grow
Easy to Work On	**Small-leaved Lilly Pilly **Acacia: Cultriformis, Cardiophylla, Baileyana **Leptospermum Horizontalis **Melaleuca [not Paperbark] *Austromyrtus Dulcis **Calothamnus Quadrifidus **Casuarinas (Sheokes) **Ficus ** Callsitemon **Thryptomene **Banksia **Agonis **Melaleuca (some)	**Micromyrtus Ciliatus **Baeckea Linifolia **Acacia Pravissima **Leptospermum [Other than <u>horizontalis</u>] **Eleocarpus reticulatus (Blueberry Ash)
Hard to Work On	**Melaleuca Paperbark **Larger leafed banksias **Grivellea Robusta and Aquifolium **Eucalyptus Maculata and Eucalyptus Sideroxylon **Hakea	**Brachychton (Flame Tree) **Darwinia **MANY (most?) eucalyptus trees

Some Additional Points:

- 1.) The bigger the leaf, the bigger the challenge; consider ones with small close-packed leaves shooting from hardwood—these are easier to work with.
- 2.) While most natives exhibit continual growth, some have dormant periods before growth. Also to sustain growth periods, make sure you use a fertilizer for natives (=low phosphorus).
- 3.) Many natives must be pruned after flowering; for many species a prune BEFORE flowering can lead to excessive dieback.
- 4.) Transplanting works best at the first signs of new growth.
- 5.) Some native don't like to sprout on branches below a horizontal level (=when angle of branch with respect to apex is greater than 90 degrees.
- 6.) Use tie-downs rather than wire for shaping some sensitive-barked varieties;
- 7.) As a rule always seal your major cuts and try not to disturb the top/surface feeder roots.
- 8.) Just because they are natives does not mean you can be less vigilant in keep the soil moist. 9.) Check out <http://www.AusBonsai.com>. It's a great resource and forum for bonsai enthusiasts with a proclivity for natives.
- 10.) When choosing a native, have in mind the eventual size and shape.... Some specimens make superb larger bonsai but are virtually impossible to make a sustainable shohin or mid-size.
- 11.) In my view « Bonsai With Australian Native Plants » by Dorothy and Vita Koreshoff is THE single best book on the subject.



Saturday Workshops

Saturday Workshops continue each month. A casual time to just work on trees. To all beginners and novices in the club: Don't think this is just for the long-term bonsai addicts! EVERYBODY is welcome and everybody's experience and enthusiasm are valued. This opportunity is especially suited to



those who learn best from 'hands-on' work. The more experienced members really enjoy sharing their knowledge....and we all recognize that nobody's SO experienced they can't learn something new! It's also a great option for those thinking of becoming YVBS members to check us out and speak with club officers. Don't think you need to have some showpiece ready plant to bring along.....

First Saturday of each month

Japan House, Montrose / 2-4pm.

Beginners should not hesitate to attend the Saturday Workshops! As in life, unfounded fear or shame is the biggest hurdle to building your skills, appreciation, harmony & contentedness with life and all that stuff....



Quiz Question: No Quiz Questions at the Jan/Feb monthly meetings, so no results in the newsletter. We hope to get a couple for March/April....



A key challenge for us in Australia is keeping our trees alive during the scorching summer months. Folks often make the mistake of planning their watering based solely on atmospheric temperature. However, and as we've seen in this horrific bushfire season, relative humidity, wind speed and wind DIRECTION also play a key role. For example, here in south-central Victoria, a 30kph wind from the north is likely going to exert a greater drying force on your plants than a

"Tim's Tips" Corner

50kph wind from the south-west.

A couple of other things to keep in mind: OVER watering can be just as harmful as underwatering. Among deciduous trees, Liquid Ambers and Japanese Maples especially are prone to ill effects of overwatering, particularly when the water used is 'hard' (that is containing various salts) or when it has been overfertilised.. This is one of many advantages of using rain-water.

Also, even the best water strategy will not save a plant if the pot is allowed to be in direct sunlight for too long. Especially dark pots will

literally COOK the roots.

Baked or boiled....the result is the same. Wrapping a light-coloured material around these pots can help.

I've also found that using a wick system can assist in keeping moisture levels consistent. Just a few shoelaces with one end in a soda bottle of water and the other pinched into the soil to create an osmosis-based siphon can really help.

Tim Vivoda is the owner of "A to Z Bonsai" in Monbulk. His section appears each newsletter.



Wet T-Shirt Contest:

In 2009 we'll likely be doing a print run of YVBS T- or polo shirts. As a lead-up we'll be having a contest for best design. Winning design gets a free shirt. Comment on design variations on the trade table, sketch your own idea, or present you ideas on the Forum. Also, some have suggested items more useful than shirts: (bonsai aprons, canvas tool rolls, etc.)

Finalists will be presented on the Forum and voting will take place at the May monthly meeting.

"OUR FIRST SHOW?"

At our most recent Committee of Management Meeting we discussed the possibility of having our first show. We had been thinking of using the November 2009 Lilydale Show as a set of training wheels prior to our own show. However the timetable has gained a bit of momentum: probably only a one-day event (in contrast to most full-weekend shows sponsored by longer established clubs/societies) so we're looking at a Saturday in mid to late October, running concurrent with another local event or fete. This will still work well with the stated syllabus theme for October: Getting Your Trees Ready for Formal Display.

Tree Mini-Profile: *Pyracantha* (Firethorn)



This evergreen species, with its bright berries (yellow, orange, or red depending on variety) and small leaves is prized among many artisans. *Pyracantha augustifolia* is the most common, but the 'coccinea' species is said to be better suited for frost susceptible areas. Repot only as required, as this tree does not tolerate root disturbances as well as others. Can be propagated but not among the easiest to do so. Some sources report success in air layering. Care is required in wiring as even relatively

young wood becomes very brittle. Spiders like to

squat on these and common harmful pests include fireblight, scale, miners, aphids, and caterpillars: an organic pest oil works well as a broad spectrum. Fertilise as with any fruiting/flowering bonsai (=don't skimp on potash).



Ideograms of the Month

If you remember, the ideogram for tree (vol. 1, no. 1) is:



If you highlight the base of the tree, the resulting ideogram refers to 'source' or 'origin':



Now, if you place the ideogram for 'sun' (vol. 1 No. 2) prior to 'origin':

The two ideograms side-by-side



represent "Japan" (sun's origin)thence "Land of the Rising Sun"

Using a similar spatial logic, what might be this?



The sun behind a tree.....

The answer: "EAST": the direction in which we see the rising sun.

Website Of the Month:

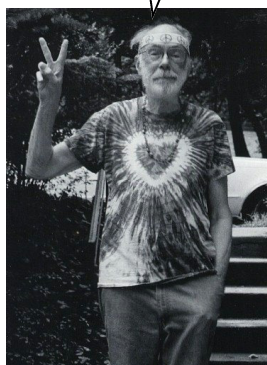
<http://www.bonsai-bci.com>

This is the website of Bonsai Clubs International. Their index of species (searchable by botanical and/or common names) has great info on feeding, shaping, and possible pests.



Choosing the Right Pot: *By members' request, from Chris' session on potting from last September.....*

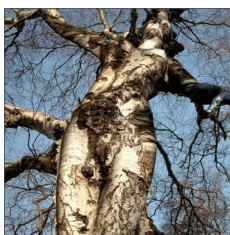
Hey man, I joined the Yarra Valley Bonsai Society cuz someone told me they could help me choose the best pot. Right On!



In choosing the right pot for your bonsai, you should consider the colour of the tree and any flowering, height and width of tree, thickness of trunk, and the style in which the tree is, or is to be, formed.

While it's really a question of personal taste and aesthetics, here are a few "rules" and tips:

1. For oval or rectangular pots the length (widest dimension) the pot should measure 2/3 of the height of the tree and no less than 2/3 the width of the canopy.
2. Some enthusiasts place emphasis on the symmetry between the leaf shape and the pot shape.
3. If "potting down" [=potting from a larger training pot or styro box to something of eventually MUCH less soil volume], go gradually.
4. Consider the stage of development: if the tree is not entirely formed, you'll want to provide slightly extra room for a good root system in order to encourage the remaining desired growth.
5. Specifics of the species is also a factor: Japanese maples and crabapples often require deeper soil.
6. Also consider the physical support need of the tree and whether dedicated wiring holes are required.
7. Beware of pots with indentations in the bottom where water could pool and lead to root rot.
8. For tall slim trees, the pot should be less broad than the width of the branches.
9. With the exception of cascades, the depth of the pot should be equal to between once and twice the thickness of the base of the trunk.
10. Traditionally, trees have been deemed 'masculine' or 'feminine'. Masculine trees are suited to more angular pots, whereas feminine trees are more 'at home' in softer or rounder pots. (See item below....)
11. With very few exceptions, the pot should have at least one drainage hole. Consider the drainage needs of the tree to be potted when deciding on number and size of drain holes. Ideally the pot should have 'feet' to allow for proper drainage.
12. Regarding tree placement, for square, round (drum), and polygonal pots, placement in the centre; for oval or rectangular pots, place tree off-center. (Note that style such as formal upright or slanting will also influence placement.)
13. The pot should compliment the tree rather than diverting attention to the pot itself.
14. Regarding colors: dark green and dark blue work well with trees of striking colors [yellow, orange, red] in flower, trunk or foliage. Grey or white pot: often for trees with a darker feature color (blue).
15. Traditionally pines and most conifers are best suited to unglazed pots.



"Gender" of Trees and Pot Selection

A so-called "masculine" tree gives an impression of strength, often possessing a heavily tapered trunk, craggy, mature bark, and/or strong angular branching, it may have deadwood. It may have a straight, powerful trunk or a dense canopy. A feminine tree will have a more delicate appearance, a smooth trunkline, smooth bark, sinuous movement in its trunk and branches and tending towards a light canopy and slow taper.

Some tree species are predisposed to being considered feminine or masculine; Pines or angular Hawthorns are often considered masculine whereas delicate Japanese Maples will be considered as naturally feminine. However, trees can have features of both genders.....or be considered androgynous. The artisan then considers which is dominant: A strong, heavily tapered Japanese Maple with delicate leaves and branching could be considered to be a feminine species with masculine features, whereas a tall elm with craggy, rough bark, gentle curves and very gradual taper could be considered a masculine species with a feminine characteristics. With trees such as these it is common to identify which is the dominant aspect and replicate this in pot selection. Is it the craggy, fissured bark of the hawthorn or the gentle curves of the trunk which have the strongest visual impact? Is it the delicate branching of the Maple or the powerful tapered trunk that attracts your eye most? Fortunately, it is possible to find pot designs that can reflect both femininity and masculinity. Pots are considered feminine or masculine. Deep pots with strong angular features are considered masculine whilst more feminine pots are shallower with softer lines. For instance, strong chunky, deep rectangles with sharp corners are very masculine pots, as are square pots. These are suited to thick heavy trunked masculine trees, especially conifers. For thick-trunked deciduous trees, the corners of the rectangle can be rounded thus reducing the masculinity of the pot a little. Working down through the 'scale of masculinity', deep chunky ovals come next and then we have drums/round pots that are androgynous i.e. are suitable for a masculine or feminine tree. The most "feminine" pots are often more shallow delicate ovals and very shallow round literati pots. They tend to have a less angular or pronounced rim. (Additional information provided by www.bonsai4me.com)

Supplies for Sale to YVBS Members

Below is a list of bonsai supplies currently for sale to club members. An order form is available at each meeting and workshop. Orders placed will be available for pickup the following meeting/workshop. If there are tools or pot types you'd like to see added to this inventory, contact Bill McKernan (yarravalleybonsai@gmail.com).

	Pruning Shears (Blue) Members' Price: \$6.00		Pruning Shears (Red) Members' Price: \$5.00
	Large Branch Bender Members' Price: \$9.00		Small Branch Bender Members' Price: \$7.00
	Knob Cutters (Small) Members' Price: \$20.00		Knob Cutters (Large) Members' Price: \$25.00
	Branch Cutter Members' Price: \$20.00		Rake Members' Price: \$12.00
	Trimming Shears Members' Price: \$15.00		Root Shears Members' Price: \$11.00
	Wire Cutters Members' Price: \$20.00		Round Deep Pot (Unglazed) Members' Price: \$25.00
	Cascade Pot (Blue) Members' Price: \$25.00		Glazed Oval Pot (Green) Members' Price: \$20.00
	Large Pot (Unglazed) Members' Price: \$30.00		No More 48 degree Summer Days Members' Price: Priceless....

No free lighter with each purchase; included in photo for scale illustration only.....

YVBS Members: Please refer to the Society Web Forum regarding polls on the purchase of sharpening tools and on a prospective group "Field Trip" to one of the nurseries beyond our immediate neighborhood. Access the Forum via the YVBS web page: <http://www.yarravalleybonsai.org.au>

ヤラ谷間盆栽会

January—
February 2009
Volume 2 No. 1

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

www.yarravalleybonsai.org.au



Not too early to mark on your calendar.....

On Sunday 23 August, "Bonsai—The Imagination Tree"

in



Monbulk is again offering its **SPECIAL CLUB DAY** from 9.00am to 4.30pm. One day a year, a 20% discount for all club members (of any bonsai club or society) is offered on ALL stock. With a sausage sizzle, tea, coffee, and soft drinks to sustain you as you peruse the field stock, advanced pieces, Japanese & Chinese pots, tools, potting mix and sundries, it's by far the best day of the year to save big at The Imagination Tree. For enquiries, contact Chris Sirre at (03) 9756 7995 or per nursery@sasheda.com.au.



Ref 122 K8

Sunday 23 August

Sunday 23 August

Sunday 23 August

Accolades, Kudos, and Thanks..

Our Thanks to Recent Sponsors & Contributors:

1. To Peter Raymakers, for leading the January discussion on natives and for providing a helpful hand-out.
2. To Geoff Pettman, for providing a large selection of pots from the estate of his father-in-law for purchase by members, with revenue donated to our Society.
3. To Mark Condron, for working to set up the YVBS Discussion Forum.



Member Benefits

Please refer to the website for a list of discounts received by members upon presentation of a current and valid YVBS Membership card. "Freebies" of donated items are also made available from time to time at monthly meetings. Next month's freebie: Styroboxes perfect for training!

Advertisers & Sponsors:

Advertising on our website and/or newsletter is available for any registered business or sole trader. Society Sponsorship opportunities exist for any business operating in an area related to the craft of bonsai.

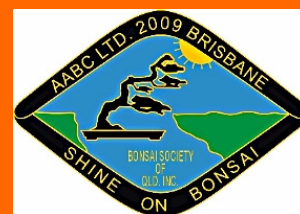
For details contact Peter Raymakers via the society's email: info@yarravalleybonsai.org.au

AABC Annual

Convention!

22-25 May 2009

"Royal on the Park Hotel"
Brisbane, Queensland



For more information and registration, details go to:

<http://www.bonsaisocietyqld.asn.au>