



Proud supporter of the Yarra Valley Bonsai Society

Quotable Quotes

The true meaning of life is to plant trees, under whose shade you do not expect to sit.
Nelson Henderson



Proud supporter of the Yarra Valley Bonsai Society

www.bonsaisensation.com.au



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The YVBS meets on the **second Tuesday** of each month at **Chirnside Park Community Hub**

33 Kimberley Drive Chirnside 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!

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The Yarra Valley Bonsai Society Newsletter

Highlights from January & February 2022

The 2022 YVBS year kicked off with a workshop night on the second Tuesday in January. Attendance was fairly light with some lingering Covid fears and the holiday period still in play, but the attending members did some good work on their trees amidst plentiful advice from more experienced members. Pity about those damned masks!



Above - Workshop at the January meeting.

The February meeting had a much bigger attendance, probably due in the main to the ever-popular guest speaker Michael Simonetto.

Michael spoke and demonstrated on his approach to growing and styling Australian native trees as bonsai. His belief is that there is nothing special about natives, and that each species should be treated as an individual according to its needs and its nature.



Natives can be propagated by seeds, cuttings and air layering. Seeds are often very fine, and are best grown using the bog method - keep the pot in a water tray to keep the soil raising mixture continually wet, and transplant the seedlings to individual pots when big enough to han-

Calendar Dates:

- 8th March (Tuesday) YVBS Monthly Meeting. 7:30pm. Chirnside Hub.
- 18th March & 19th March (Friday & Saturday) Vic Native Bonsai Exhibition. Preston City Hall.
- 24th March to 27th March (Thursday to Sunday) "Bonsai Reshaped 2022". National Arboretum, Canberra.
- 26th March (Saturday) "Last Saturday of the Month" Workshop. 1:00pm. Chirnside Hub.
- 9th April & 10th April (Saturday & Sunday) Ballarat Special Bonsai Exhibition. Ballarat Botanical Gardens.
- 10th April (Sunday) Tutored Workshop with Chris Xepapas. 9:00am, Chirnside Hub.
- 12th April (Tuesday) YVBS Monthly Meeting. 7:30pm. Chirnside Hub.
- 30th April (Saturday) "Last Saturday of the Month" Workshop. 1:00pm. Chirnside Hub.
- 30th April & 1st May (Saturday & Sunday) Symposium on Australian Plants as Bonsai. Hobart, Tasmania.

See also the Events Calendar on our website: www.yarravalleybonsai.org.au

Highlights from January & February - Cont. From Page 1

dle. Cuttings grow best with continual misting and bottom heat, but good results can also be obtained by just keeping the cuttings moist.

Michael advises that early wiring should be done on both seedlings and cuttings to initiate low movement - the first curve and exit from the ground is important and adds drama to the tree, but must be done when the tree is very young. As the tree grows, progressively cut back and wire a new leader, to add extra movement in the trunk. It is always a good idea to add twist to the wiring, and generally clockwise as this is how most natives grow naturally - check by noting the natural direction of the bark growth.

Michael recommends to remove any flowers forming while the tree is young, as this slows down development. Get the structure right, the trunk thick, and taper established as first priorities. Taper is achieved mainly through progressive leader replacement, although sacrifice branches may also play a part.

To develop trunk thickness in pots, progressively transfer to larger pots, but not too large an increase each time. They can also be grown in the ground for more rapid development, but beware that new tap roots can be formed. Michael favours the escape method - partially bury a pot in the ground and allow the roots to escape through the holes in the pot. Periodically remove the pot and trim the escaped roots, potting up to a larger size pot at the same time. Root work on natives including digging should be done during the warmer months of the year.

Michael characterizes natives into three categories with regards to pruning:

- some shoot on bare wood readily (e.g. *Melaleuca stypheloides*)
- some may shoot on bare wood (e.g. *Leptospermum laevigatum*)
- some never shoot on bare wood. (e.g. *Melaleuca nesophila*)

It is important to know to what category your tree belongs, as many trees quickly drop old leaves when shoots extend, so bare wood develops equally quickly! Michael gets around this problem on susceptible trees by continually hedge pruning to force back budding, keep the growth compact, maintain strength, and always have green shoots to which we can prune back.

Don't trim back new shoots too quickly, let leaves develop fully first along with the new incipient buds. When pruning large branches, Michael considers it advisable to leave a stub with a couple of leaves if possible. The stub can be removed at a later stage when the tree has adjusted the sap flow around the new structure.

With regards to fertilizing, most vigorous trees can handle Phosphorus, however some species are sensitive to it - banksia in particular. For anything sensitive, keep Phosphorus in fertiliser to below 0.5%, but go as high as 3% on others. (Editors note - Grant Bowie, ex curator of the NBPCA in Canberra, advises that all natives can be trained to be Phosphorus tolerant by gradually increasing their Phosphorus exposure over time).

Blood and Bone releases Phosphorus slowly and is probably the best. Osmocote for natives can be used for sensitive plants. Constantly feed natives for best results.

Natives are very thirsty when grown in pots - keep the water up to them, and consider the use of water trays below the pots in summer.



Above - Michael Simonetto, as always, provides a very informative and stimulating demonstration and discussion.

Continued Page 3

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.



Highlights from January & February - Cont. From Page 2

Michael has had poor results with Eucalypts as they can die back unpredictably. One idea floated from members was to try breaking branches rather than cutting, which might induce branching near the break.

Some of Michael's species recommendations:

- Kunzea punctella - blood red flowers, but hard to find.
- White Myrtle Heath - cut anywhere and it will re-shoot. (Michael couldn't remember the botanical name, but a Google search indicates that it may be Baeckea - Babingtonia virgata)
- Melaleuca cuticularis - has very white bark.

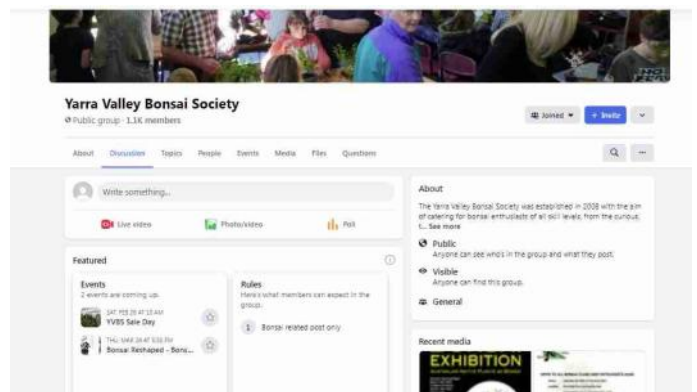
YVBS Online

Members are reminded that the Club hosts a website www.yarvalleybonsai.org.au which is continually updated with the latest information on Club meetings and activities. It also contains a complete archive of Club newsletters, as well as a Forum on which newsletters and information from other clubs and bonsai organizations can be found. Contact Lindsay H if you have any queries or difficulties in connecting.

The Club also features a Facebook group called, naturally enough, Yarra Valley Bonsai Society. The group also contains information on Club meetings and events, along with a range of postings from subscribers. All members are encouraged to join and contribute where possible. Contact Marlene J for further information or assistance.



Above - YVBS Website - [click HERE](http://www.yarvalleybonsai.org.au)




Above - YVBS Facebook Group - [click HERE](https://www.facebook.com/yarvalleybonsai)

Training Courses

The next Bonsai Introduction Training Course for novices is scheduled in two parts for Saturday 26th March and Saturday 30th April 2022, at the Chirside Park Hub, from 9:00am to 1:00pm immediately prior to the normal end of month workshop. Numbers are limited to minimum 6, maximum 12. Comprehensive course notes and a tree to work on are included in the course fee of \$100.

Three members have already enrolled in the course, interested others should advise Lindsay H (linhad14@gmail.com or 0403 800 671) as soon as possible. Enrolments will be restricted to members until mid January 2022, after which if there are still vacancies, the opportunity to enrol will be offered to the Chirside Park Hub administration, who have already had expressions of interest registered from a number of people.

Please note - numbers enrolled are still below the minimum. If you are thinking of doing this course, enrol now, otherwise the course may have to be cancelled!





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2022 YVBS Sale Day

Remember that the YVBS Sale Day is on Saturday 26th February from 10:00am to 1:00pm at the Chirnside Park Hub. We have a full complement of sellers, so there should be plenty of items of interest, at very good prices. Come along and check out the bargains - there could be an offer too good to refuse waiting for you! Established bonsai, starter plants, pots, tools, and soil all available.

The Sale Day immediately precedes our normal Last Saturday of the Month Workshop from 1:00pm to 4:00pm. This has been arranged this way so that buyers from the general public can stay on for the afternoon session to receive advice or assistance with their purchases.



2022 YVBS Bonsai Show

Our Bonsai Show for 2022 is now scheduled for Saturday 28th and Sunday 29th May, which will be safely after the upcoming Federal election. All members are strongly encouraged to offer at least one tree for display at the Show, so consider your collection now and start planning the work required to prepare the tree/s for display. The May meeting will be a workshop night for adding the final touches, but many things need to be done now. The Last Saturday of the Month Workshops in February, March, and April are also good opportunities to bring along potential display trees for advice and assistance.

Talk to any Committee Member if you have any concerns about your tree, and its worthiness for inclusion or the work which should be done to improve its appearance.



Above - A section of the display at the 2021 Show.

Bonsai In the Community

From time to time, we get asked to provide a talk on bonsai to various community groups, and we comply when possible so as to spread the knowledge of bonsai to the wider public and encourage other people to consider taking up this fascinating art as a hobby. Perhaps we can also get some new members as well!

Our latest outreach has been to the Donwood Community Centre in Croydon. Originally scheduled in 2021 but postponed due to Covid restrictions, Club Members Lindsay H presented a talk and demonstration in February to around 25 senior citizens, support staff and volunteers. Much interest was received and questions asked from the attendees.



Of course, an invitation was issued to visit our Sale Day at the end of February!

BONSAI SENSATION NURSERY

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Tree Profile: *Ficus Rubiginosa*- Port Jackson Fig

General information: According to Wikipedia the Ficus is a genus of about 850 species of woody trees, shrubs and vines, collectively known as fig trees or figs and is one of the most loved bonsai for many reasons.

Ficus rubiginosa (Port Jackson Fig) is just one of them but arguably the best for bonsai. The oval leaves are glossy green and measure from 2 to 19.5cm long and 0.5 to 13.5cm wide. Mature trees have a yellow-brown buttressed trunk.

It is an excellent tree for beginners, as most species of Ficus are fast growers, tolerant of most any soil and light conditions. They make fine indoor bonsai, and perhaps most importantly, are remarkably forgiving of those just learning bonsai watering techniques. Most Ficus grow "banyan" roots (aerial roots) naturally; this feature is often showcased by styling Ficus in dramatic air-root and root-over-rock styles.

Lighting: Like most Ficus it will grow decently in low light, but thrive in high light conditions of about 7 hours - morning to early afternoon.

Temperature: An excellent choice for an indoor bonsai. Indoor Ficus appreciate being left outdoors during summer. They don't like draughts, protect from frost.

Watering: This species enjoys ample water, 'immersion' watering in summer and decreasing in winter. Many Ficus are very tolerant of being over or under watered, which makes them ideal for beginners. Indoors Ficus like a daily misting to maintain humidity. Outdoors sitting them on a tray with water in summer with the increased humidity will encourage the growth of aerial roots!

Feeding: Every two weeks during growth period using a half-strength liquid fertilizer, none between April to August. Larger leaves develop if over fertilized!

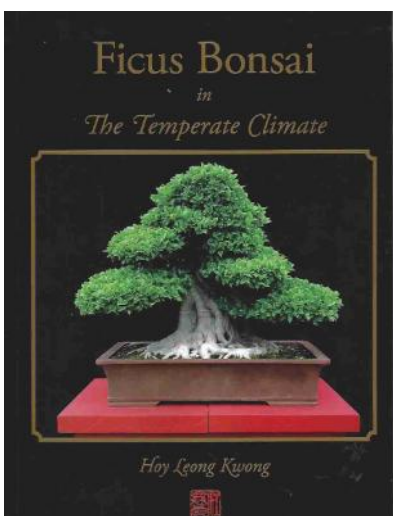
Pruning and wiring: Port Jackson fig can be styled to most bonsai styles and is very amenable to pruning, but are especially suitable for styles which make use of their propensity of extensive rooting, such as air-root and root-over-rock styles. Ficus can be used for all sizes of bonsai, although, obviously, the small-leaved species make the best miniature bonsai. Prune back to 1-4 leaves after 6-10 leaves have grown. Regular defoliation (up to 3 times per season for healthy trees) will improve ramification substantially. Any Ficus will bleed heavily - a milky latex, which a drop of water will stop.

Ficus can be wired, but become quite stiff when lignified, and thus are best wired while the shoots are a bit green. Watch carefully to see that the wire doesn't bite in, as Ficus is a very fast grower.

Propagation: One of the easiest plant to root from cuttings; although the specifics for maximum success vary with species, it's always worth sticking them into soil for the heck of it!

Repotting: Every 2-3 years in a well draining and neutral to slightly acidic mix, although some will grow rapidly enough that yearly repotting may be necessary. Ficus is the single most forgiving bonsai in terms of repotting season. The best time is before a new growth spurt, when the weather is warm, but Ficus can literally be repotted any time of year if reasonable after-care is given. Roots can easily be pruned by half.

Pests and diseases: Scale, eelworm, black fly, thrips, Anthracnose fungus, various forms of rot. Some ficus will lose leaves if overwatered or given too little light.



Recommended text book for ficus bonsai cultivation is "Ficus Bonsai in the Temperate Climate", by Hoy Leong Kwong. Hopefully, we will have a copy in our Club library soon. For anybody wishing to purchase a copy, see Zyggy R for details of suppliers.

On The Display Table

A selection of trees on the Display Table at the January and February meetings.



Bonsai Calendar: March - April

The occasional glimpse of brilliant colours is the most rewarding sign that autumn is on its way. For many species, this can be the most exciting time in the growing season. Deciduous trees such as Maples, Hornbeams, and Elms can put on a dazzling display of yellows, oranges and reds as they would in nature.

Here are a few tips to help make the most of this time of the year.

- When the weather begins to show signs of coolness, progressively give your deciduous trees more sun. This will encourage autumn colour throughout the foliage. Watch out for the occasional hot days - especially for Japanese maples!
- Some people also believe that reducing the amount of water given to deciduous trees may enhance autumn colours - but don't go too far and stress the plant!
- Don't water the foliage on deciduous trees in the evening to avoid mildew! You can lightly mist azaleas.
- Turn your bonsais fortnightly if they get uneven light. This will ensure next years buds will develop evenly around the tree.
- Species such as azaleas, camellias and many fruit trees should not be pruned at this time if early spring flowers are desired. Azalea can still be pruned if shape/style is the priority - seal the cuts! New shoots should be reduced to two and the remaining shoots shortened to two sets of leaves.
- Late summer and early autumn growth will strengthen and increase the girth of trunks and branches. Inspect for wire damage, remove wire and rewire if needed for shape.
- Late summer provides a small window of opportunity to carefully repot some bonsai. Eg figs, most natives and some pines and junipers. Be very conservative with root pruning conifers at this time. Weather can be unpredictable, keep them in a sheltered position for a few weeks after the work.
- Use an organic fertilizer (liquid) high in potassium and phosphorus to encourage woody growth in the trunk
- Remove old fruit and flowers.
- Fertilize pines in autumn (not spring) to help reduce needle size and to prepare them for the winter.

While enjoying your autumn display, put some thought into winter survival.

AABC Update - 9th World Bonsai Convention

The Convention website for this virtual online convention is now up and running, and open for registrations - go to <https://www.worldbonsaiconvention2022.com/> for details of the program and for registration.

Early bird registrations of \$90 for a full registration end on 30th June 2022, after which a full registration fee of \$140 will apply.

8-16 OCTOBER 2022

Virtual & Online

End-Of-Month Saturday Workshop

Regular Club workshops are held on the last Saturday of every month except for December at our normal venue, the Chirnside Park Hub, from 1:00pm to 4:00pm.

The workshops are a relaxed place to work on our trees, discuss our bonsai activities with like-minded people, or seek advice or assistance.

They also provide a first point of contact for interested parties who are considering learning more about bonsai or joining the Club.

Visitors are always welcome! Feel free to drop in for a tea or coffee and a look around and a chat. We are now able to open kitchen facilities again, and masks are no longer compulsory indoors!



Above - Members at work at the Saturday Workshop

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
March & April 2022*



The monthly meeting on Tuesday 8th March at 7:30pm is a workshop night, so bring along your trees to work on and seek advice or assistance if required - or just take advantage of some dedicated time to spend on your trees! Display Table - "Various Shohin or Mame" (i.e. small trees), or Member's Choice.



The Last Saturday of the Month Workshop will be on Saturday 26th March from 1:00pm to 4:00pm.



Special Tutored Workshops with Chris Xepapas will be held on Sunday 10th April from 9:00am to 1:00pm. Bookings are essential for participants, however observers may attend on the day.



The monthly meeting on Tuesday 12th April will feature special guest presenter and AABC Visiting Tutor Chris Xepapas from Tasmania who will talk and demonstrate on "Pine Trees". Chris is a very talented bonsai professional and an excellent speaker, so this is a session not to be missed. Display Table - "Pines Any Style", or Member's Choice.



The Last Saturday of the Month Workshop will be on Saturday 30th April from 1:00pm to 4:00pm.



Other Events



The Victorian Native Bonsai Club has their 2022 Exhibition scheduled for Friday 18th March from 5:30pm to 8:30pm and Saturday 19th March from 9:00am to 4:00pm at the Preston City Hall, 284 Gower St, Preston. Entry \$5.



The NBPCA will stage "Bonsai Reshaped 2022" on 24th - 27th March 2022 at the National Arboretum in Canberra. Refer https://www.nationalarboretum.act.gov.au/visit/whats-on/school-holidays-and-feature-events/bonsai-reshaped-2022/_recache for details.



The Ballarat Bonsai Society will hold a Special Bonsai Exhibition on Saturday 9th April from 12:00pm to 5:00pm and Sunday 10th April from 10:00am to 4:00pm, at Robert Clarke Horticultural Centre within the Ballarat Botanical Gardens.



The next meeting of the Satsuki Azalea Interest group will be held on Saturday 23rd April from 1:30pm to 4:00pm, at Bonsai Art Nursery, 236 Old Dandenong Road, Heatherton.



The 9th Symposium on Australian Plants as Bonsai, "Bonsai on the Edge", will be sponsored by the Bonsai Society of Southern Tasmania and held at Hadley's Orient Hotel, Hobart on Saturday 30th April and Sunday 1st May 2022.



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" or in "Library" and are kept for at least six months. If you visit the site and register as a user, please email Lindsay via the club gmail yarravalleybonsai@gmail.com so that he may add you as a club member user, or if you have any difficulties. Just visit our main webpage

<http://www.yarravalleybonsai.org.au> and follow the FORUM link on the left to the forum.

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