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The Yarra Valley Bonsai Society Newsletter

Highlights from September & October 2022

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
 **37 F3**
1-4:00pm on the **Last Saturday** of the month, at the same venue as monthlies!

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The first item on the agenda at the September meeting was the Club AGM. Following acceptance of the minutes from the previous AGM and the Officer's Reports, a special award of Life Membership was made to David R for his long service to the Club and his generous contributions over the years.



At the conclusion of the AGM, the outgoing Committee retired, and Returning Officer Victor B proceeded with the election for the new Committee—see the article later in this newsletter regarding the composition of the new Committee.

Following the AGM, a short presentation was made by Patrick I on "Taking Our Trees to the Next Level". He spoke about his own personal bonsai journey, and about raising our own personal satisfaction with our trees by improving their quality. The contribution of nebari and taper to a bonsai's quality was emphasized, and the importance of seeking vigorous growth through fertilization prior to applying normal bonsai techniques.



Patrick is also a big supporter of knowing and using the binomial scientific naming structure of our trees, believing that it makes it much easier and more reliable when searching for growing information online.

Upper - Marlene presents David with his Life Membership badge at the AGM.

Lower - Discussion on member trees at the September meeting.

The final item on the agenda was a discussion on certain members' trees which were presented to the meeting. It is always great to see and hear what others are doing with their trees, and especially so this year with a number of newer members prepared to put forward their trees for discussion.

The October Club meeting featured a presentation by club member and local potter Tracey F from Murrumbung Studio Ceramics on "Bonsai Pots—A Potter's View", with a supplementary brief review on bonsai pot selection by Steve M.

Tracey has been involved in ceramics for over 35 years, and now exclusively produces bonsai pots. She ships pots all over the world, including the USA and UK, and has even sent them as far as Iceland. She can produce 30—40 round pots per day, but the number drops to just 1—5 if they are square or oval.

Calendar Dates:

- 8th November (Tuesday) YVBS Monthly Meeting. 7:30pm. Chirnside Hub.
- 13th November Long Lunch at David's 12 noon.
- 12th November & 13th November (Saturday & Sunday) Geelong Bonsai Show. Belmont, Geelong.
- 26th November (Saturday) YVBS Sale Day. 10am to 1pm. Chirnside Hub.
- 26th November (Saturday) "Last Saturday of the Month" Workshop. 1:00pm. Chirnside Hub
- 3rd December (Saturday) Satsuki Interest Group Meeting. 1pm to 4pm. Bonsai Art, Heatherton.
- 13th December (Tuesday) YVBS Monthly Meeting. 7:30pm. Chirnside Hub.
- NO End of Month Workshop in December!

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

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Highlights from September & October - Cont. From Page 1

Tracey uses mostly three potting techniques—the traditional throwing on a wheel for round pots, carving out a lump of clay for abstract pots, and slab rolling for square, rectangular or geometric pots.

Pots are then left to dry for 24 hours, then comes the trimming, finishing and stamping stage. Once the pots are leather hard, she cuts feet into them or attaches them with “slip” - a runny clay suspension that acts as a glue and fuses the feet to the pot as one unit. The base is also trimmed to sharpen up the lines.

The pots are then left to further dry for some 2—3 days in summer and as long as 2—3 weeks in winter.

Oval pots have their sides formed as round pots and then left to dry for a while. When appropriately dry the sides are pushed together—effectively squashing the round pot into an oval, and then they are attached to an oval slab base.

Rectangular and square pots are built using rolled out slabs—this is done bearing in mind the overall shrinkage that happens through the overall pot making process. Done well, this results in a pot with the desired dimensions. Slow drying is the key to maintaining the shape and avoiding any sags. In summer, drying is retarded by wrapping pots in damp towels.

Holes in the pots are drilled out through the firm, semi-dry clay.

The pot is then bisque-fired unglazed—the first firing which burns out all carbonaceous material and drives out any remaining water. This is done at 1020—1040 degrees Celsius for 13—24 hours and then allowed to cool for 2—3 days.

Then comes the glazing process. Glazing materials are an almost infinitely varied blend of chemicals. Glazing is the big test—it makes or breaks the pot. Wax is painted on to mask any areas on the pot where the glaze is not wanted. Glaze is either painted on or dipped, and then allowed to dry.

The pot is then fired again at 1280—1300 degrees Celsius—a stoneware firing—which goes on for 12—20 hours depending on the size of the pot. It is then left to cool for 3 days.

Some shapes do not translate well into clay. Gravity-defying abstract shapes seen on the internet are made from steel or wire armature and concrete. An example of this would be wave shapes—these cannot be made from clay as they sag in the kiln during the firing process.

While some of Tracey’s glazing materials come from overseas, all her clay is Australian sourced.

Whew! I guess that we can all see now why bespoke pots tend to be expensive!



Top - Tracey F at the October meeting.

Middle—Steve M on selecting bonsai pots.

Bottom—Tracey makes some beautiful pots!

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.



Nursery Crawl

Our first Nursery Crawl since the beginning of Covid was held in September, when a number of members braved the somewhat inclement weather and toured Bonsai Sensation, Bonsai Art, and Garden World Collectors Corner.

Thanks to Tien and Trevor for offering significant discounts on some stock items to those attending on the day. Most members took advantage and happily went home with their treasures!

Another Nursery Crawl will be scheduled in 2023, possibly featuring some new nurseries—if any members have any specific requests, please advise a Committee member. A suggestion has been made that Conifer Gardens could be included—a great nursery for conifers of all kinds as well as a comprehensive range of deciduous trees. Feedback is welcomed!



Bonsai in the Community

The Club is asked from time to time to provide a speaker on bonsai topics by various community clubs or organisations, and we try to accommodate them when possible. We consider that part of the Club's charter is to spread the word and knowledge of bonsai to the public in general, which may coincidentally attract new members to our Club which will enable us to thrive and expand.

In 2022, we have done Bonsai Introduction presentations at Japara House in Kilsyth and at the Mooroolbark Library. While the turnout at Japara was somewhat disappointing, a good number of people attended the Mooroolbark Library session, and we have already had one of the attendees visit our Last Saturday of the Month Workshop in September!

The Club presenter on both occasions was Lindsay H, ably assisted by Marlene J at Japara and both Marlene and Patrick I at Mooroolbark.



Above - A goodly number of attendees at the Bonsai Introduction session held at the Mooroolbark Library.

New Committee

Following the Club Annual General Meeting in September, a new Committee has been elected which features plenty of familiar faces as well as some new members who have stepped forward. Office bearers are:

Patrick I—President	Lindsay H—Secretary	Richard J—Treasurer
Steve M—Vice-President	David R—Marketing	Marlene J—Membership

General Members are Alan H, Nick R, Danya H, and Stefan D.

Special thanks to Tracey F and Karen L who are retiring from the Committee, but will still be active club members. Thanks also to new committee members Danya and Stefan, who will bring new ideas to the club and a younger perspective!

The first task for the new Committee is to establish the program of activities for 2023, and much work has already commenced. We look forward to a number of external demonstrators, and some additional tutored workshops. If any members have any ideas or requests for topics or activities, please do not hesitate to communicate with Patrick, Steve, or any Committee member.

One continuing request is for a yamadori dig, so if anybody has access to a bush block or knows of land to be cleared, please advise a Committee member.



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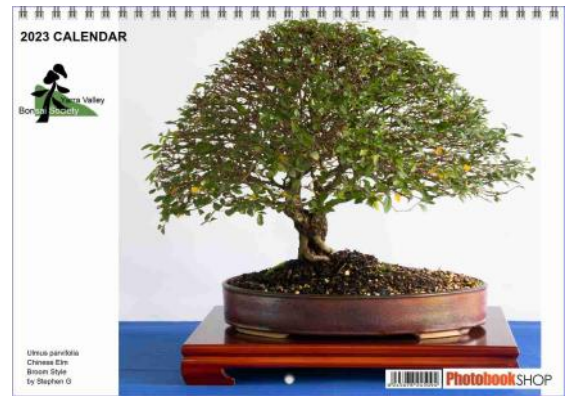
2023 Wall Calendar

As has been our recent practice, we will once again produce a wall calendar for 2023 which will feature photographs of selected trees from club members. Studio photos were taken during the 2023 YVBS Show and will feature in the calendar.

The price will be a very reasonable \$10 each—inflation has not yet hit us as this is the same price as last year!

The calendars should be available for purchase at the November Club meeting, or failing this, at the November end-of-month workshop.

Orders can be placed with Lindsay H (linhad14@gmail.com 0403 800 871) if you want to be sure to reserve your copy/ies, or to arrange prior delivery.



November Sale Day

A reminder that we are reverting to our normal practice of holding a Sale Day on Saturday 26th November from 10am to 1pm, at our normal venue, the Chirnside Park Community Hub. All sellers tables have already been fully booked and we currently have a wait list for others!

In addition to some of our members, tables have been reserved by Michael Simonetto and Peter Fewster—always popular as they are experienced growers and artists and usually have a great range of trees for sale.

We request all members to promote the Sale Day to friends, neighbours and work colleagues. Soft copy flyers will accompany Patrick's first of the month email—please forward to friends and acquaintances. Hard copy flyers will be available at the October workshop and November meeting if you have access to any public noticeboards. And please come along on the day—even if you do not need any more trees, it doesn't hurt to see what is available!



Above - The usual crowds from a previous Sale Day.

End-Of-Month Saturday Workshop

The September end-of-month workshop featured a special carving session led by our own Steve M, which attracted a larger turnout of members than normal. Dremels and die grinders contributed to the high noise level, although some members still worked quietly on trimming and wiring their trees. Styling advice was also available for newer members and guests.

The end-of-month workshops are usually a relaxed place to work on our trees, discuss our bonsai activities with like-minded people. Or seek advice or assistance. They also often provide a first point of contact for interested parties who are considering learning more about bonsai or joining the club. Visitors are always welcome! Bring along any trees that you may have for advice if needed—there is no obligation or cost.



Above - Members at work at the September Saturday Carving Workshop

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Tree Profile: *Satsuki Azalea - Rhododendron Indicum*

General Information: The azalea is a member of the genus *Rhododendron* and belongs to a huge and diverse family of shrubs that grow all over the world from Europe, North America and even Australia. It consists of over 1000 species, with the varieties *Satsuki* and *Kurume* commonly used for Bonsai, but also the garden varieties of *Indica* find their place on shelves.

Back to the *Satsuki Azalea* which is originated in Japan and is more dwarf than other hybrid groups. The name *Satsuki* (sats-key) in Japanese means "5th-month" in the old-time lunar calendar when the *Satsuki* flower, which is from late spring through to early summer. *Satsuki* have been bred since the 1600's and there are believed to be over 3000 varieties.

The most interesting feature of the *Satsuki azalea* is that it can produce flowers in multiple colors on the same plant. It carries unstable color genes, as a *Satsuki* ages the variation can increase and it's not uncommon to have white, red and pink at the same time. Different flower shapes can also be found on the same plant. In Japan, unexpected flower colors are prized as reminders of nature's unpredictability.

Kurume azaleas are also good for bonsai, as they generally have small flowers. They flower in September rather than November for *Satsuki*, so the enjoyment of the showy display can be extended!

Lighting & Temperature: Place the *Azalea* at a bright spot, not in full afternoon sun and protect from hot winds. During wintertime, protect the tree from freezing temperatures, but do not bring indoors.

Watering: Water is the most important "fertilizer"! Use the general watering practice of giving it a good soak when the surface is dry. The roots can dry out easily, which is fatal to the tree. **Note:** The *Azalea* dislikes hard-water, use rain water if possible.

Feeding: Once every two or three weeks during its growth season using fertilizer for flowering plants or azalea specific fertilizer. If the tree flowers, stop feeding altogether. If the tree is repotted in spring, do not feed until autumn. Don't feed during the hottest month of the summer.

Pruning and wiring: The *Azalea* is one of the very few tree-species that are basally-dominant. Therefore, prune its base harder than the top to distribute growth evenly. Prune branches and new shoots in late summer, using a sealing compound to seal wounds. New flower buds will develop generally in February. *Satsuki* have a great ability to bud almost anywhere on old wood and can be cut back very hard. They also have two main flushes of growth, the first is before and the second is after flowering. Shoots should be reduced to two and the remaining shoots shortened to two sets of leaves.

Remove spent flowers as soon as they wilted, otherwise they will go into seed production! Great if that's what you're after. You need to reduce the number to the minimum you like to have and remove ALL the remaining flowers including the stalk, pistil and shell to reduce the stress on your tree! This allows for new growth to shoot!

Wiring may be done from spring through to autumn. Use special care when bending branches, as older branches are brittle. If in doubt use guy wire instead! Skipping watering the day before wiring will make the branches more flexible.

Propagation: Usually by cuttings to maintain hybrid characteristics. Take 5 to 10 cm cuttings after spring growth has hardened or use winter cuttings, which are stronger - but need special protection from frost.

Repotting: After flowering, every year for young trees, every 2-3 years for older trees. *Azaleas* like well drained soils with a pH of 4.5 to 6. Experienced growers recommend using a soil mix that contains no small particles at all, because of the dense growth of azalea roots. Different growers use different mixes, in Japan only *Kanuma* is used. A very small amount of charcoal is beneficial. Air is essential in the root ball or rot will set in. I guarantee it!

Cut a cone shape into the root ball, right up to the bottom of the trunk. The roots are thickest here and must be removed to prevent rot. Cut out pie-shaped wedges around the outside of the root ball so that the roots can grow into the gaps.

Pests and Diseases: Aphids, lacebugs, white fly, leaf miners, spider mites, scale, stem borers. Diseases include petal blight, leaf gall and root rot.

Styles: Upright and slanting styles, windswept, cascade, semi-cascade, literati, multi-trunk styles, group planting in medium to large sizes, on the rocks and in the rocks.

Pots: Usually deeper than most - deep pots drain better, glazed or unglazed, all shapes and sizes are acceptable with the exception for literati - it should be small and round.



On The Display Table

A selection of trees on the Display Table at the September and October meetings.



Bonsai Calendar: November - December

This time of year is always an exciting time for any bonsai enthusiast. Small buds have turned to vigorous growth in just a few weeks. Vibrant greens and blues of fresh growth are spreading across most conifers. With this growth comes the need for increased water and food.

Always keep an eye on the weather this time of year. Winds, heavy rains and extended dry periods make for unpredictable growing conditions. Pay extra attention to the bonsai that have just been repotted. If you are relying on an irrigation system, perform regular inspections to ensure all trees are being watered properly. Prune your trees in order to keep the new growth nice and compact.

Here are a few tips to get you through the season.

Position

The sun and wind are good for your trees, however some varieties will benefit from protection (Beeches, Hornbeams, Maples, Azaleas), as the leaves will easily scorch if the tree is in the wrong position. When putting trees in strong sun, trees must have a consistent water cycle. Avoid using shade directly beneath overhanging trees as animal droppings and leaf debris can create problems.

Watering

Water thoroughly. Shallow watering encourages roots to grow at the surface of the potting mix (trees will dry out faster). If trees are root bound take extra care with saturating root ball. Organize bonsai in "like watering" sections to assist in your watering cycle. Potting mix should not be left to completely dry out.

Pinching and Pruning

Pinching and pruning should be attended to as soon as leaves develop and shoots elongate. Buds that develop where branches are not needed should be rubbed off immediately. If a branch is needed, allow bud to grow keeping the terminal bud to help increase the girth of the branch.

Conifers may require finger tip pruning- removing buds at the tip of the growth will push growth back onto the branch and create smaller foliage.

Potting

Most repotting should be complete. Varieties such as Chinese Elms, Azaleas, and Junipers can still be potted with care. Varieties such as Figs, Pomegranates, Pyracanthas and Natives can be potted even later. Pines should not be re-potted after spring finishes.

From the NBPCA—Book Available

It's not everyday you get to take the collection home with you!

A selection of trees from the National Bonsai & Penjing Collection of Australia have been expertly captured throughout the seasons of Australia's national capital, in the ultimate bonsai coffee table book.

Adam McGrath's photography captures the outstanding artistic talents of some of Australia's best bonsai & penjing artists. The book is a representation of these ancient arts in Australia featuring both Australian native and exotic species.

The Collection can be viewed at the National Arboretum Canberra and the book purchased through The Curatoreum. Grab your copy today in store or online here <https://bit.ly/3RYRqzx>

The National Bonsai and Penjing Collection of Australia wishes to publicly acknowledge the many donors and loan artists who have generously provided their trees, as well as the talented volunteers who help to maintain the Collection and provide interpretation and tours to visitors.

This book is enabled by the vision and financial support of the Bonsai Trust Fund and support of the Collection Advisory Committee.



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
November & December 2022*



The monthly meeting on Tuesday 8th November at 7:30pm will feature a demonstration and presentation by Scott Martin of Bonsai Matsu on "Partial and Full Defoliation of Deciduous Trees". Scott is an accomplished presenter and this is a great topic for this time of year, so this is a session not to be missed. Display Table—"Azaleas—Any Style", or Member's Choice.



Long Lunch at David's has been postponed, and will now occur on Sunday 13th November at 12 noon. BYO meat for BBQ and beverages. RSVP by 9th November is essential, direct to David at david@acefilters or 0402 032 001.



YVBS Sale Day is on Saturday 26th November from 10:00am to 1:00pm, at the Chirside Park Community Hub. All tables fully booked, so should be some great offerings!



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



The monthly meeting on Tuesday 13th December at 7:30pm will be our Christmas breakup, so bring along drinks and a plate to celebrate. There will be an informal discussion on members' trees—bring along something to "Show and Tell". Display Table—"On or In the Rocks or Driftwood", or Member's Choice.



NOTE—NO LAST SATURDAY OF THE MONTH WORKSHOP IN DECEMBER!



Other Events



The Geelong Bonsai Club will hold their 2022 Bonsai Show on Saturday 12th November from 9:00am to 5:30pm and Sunday 13th November from 9:00am to 3:00pm, at the Geelong Masonic Centre, 27 Regent St, Belmont. Entry \$5, Concession \$3.

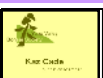


The next meeting of the Satsuki Azalea Interest Group will be held on Saturday 3rd December from 1:00pm to 4:00pm at Bonsai Art Nursery, 236 Old Dandenong Rd, Heatherton.



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.



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