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The Yarra Valley Bonsai Society Newsletter

Highlights from September & October 2023

The September meeting was our 2023 AGM, followed by a general workshop. At the AGM, club officers' reports along with the minutes of the previous AGM were presented and accepted by members. In addition, Life Membership was approved for Steve M following a Committee recommendation—congratulations to Steve and many thanks for his previous and ongoing dedication to the club. Steve was a founding member of the club in 2008 and has been heavily involved on all activities since this time.

Following the AGM, all Committee members stood down and a new committee was elected. All previous members stood for re-election bar one, and were subsequently declared automatically re-elected. Thanks to Danya H for her previous service, and congratulations on the birth of her (now not so) new baby.



Above - Much activity at the workshop following the AGM.

While the Club appreciates the ongoing service of the current committee members, it would be preferable to have some new and younger blood stepping forward to assist. New ideas are vital if we are to remain a viable and progressive Club going forward. All members are requested to consider joining the Committee next year if they can spare a few hours a month to participate.

The good turnout of members at the meeting then turned their attention to their trees and a hive of activity resulted.

The October meeting combined a brief presentation by Club President Patrick I on An Introduction to Horticultural Techniques, a video and following panel discussion on Tool Sharpening Techniques, and a panel discussion on members' questions from the floor.

The tool sharpening session stressed the need to clean tools of sap and resin prior to sharpening, and the Crean Mate block was recommended as being the most effective methodology. Interestingly, the video showed Crean Mate being used in conjunction with oil, while all club panel members indicated that they used the Crean Mate dry. Crean Mate is available from the club trading table, and while it is relatively expensive, it was pointed out that the block will last for many years if not decades!

Sharpening utilizes diamond-impregnated stones, and the recommended ones are the small lapping tools available from Bunings and other sources such as eBay, identified as Eze Lap Diamond Hone and Stone Sharpener. (See page 7 for details).

The stone lap is moistened with oil or water and then run across the cutting

Continued Page 2

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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Calendar Dates:

- 4th Nov & 5th Nov (Saturday & Sunday) Ballarat Bonsai Exhibition. Ballarat.
- 11th Nov & 12th Nov (Saturday & Sunday) Geelong Bonsai Show. Geelong.
- 14th November (Tuesday) YVBS Monthly Meeting. 7:30pm. Chirnside Hub.
- 2nd December (Saturday) Satsuki Azalea Interest Group Meeting. 1:30pm. Bonsai Art Nursery
- 12th December (Tuesday) YVBS Monthly Meeting. 7:30pm. Chirnside Hub.

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

Highlights from September & October - Cont. From Page 1

edge of the scissors or knife a number of times, taking care to maintain the same angle of approach. This is followed by a single pass on the reverse, straight side, holding it flat to the surface, to remove any slight burr resulting from the sharpening passes. For severely blunt tools, a coarse stone lap should be used first followed by a fine stone lap, otherwise the fine stone should be sufficient to maintain an edge.

The sharpening of branch cutters uses a similar technique, applied to the outside of each cutting surface individually.

Sharpening of curved branch cutters and knob cutters will be the subject of a future session!

Patrick then gave a very interesting talk covering an introduction to the interrelationship between bonsai development and horticultural principles. He stated that there are three aspects to bonsai—Horticulture, Bonsai Techniques, and Artistry. All are related and should be considered together to create a bonsai work of art.

A major point made was that the horticultural energy structure and flow within the tree forms the basis of the bonsai techniques that we apply to form the tree that we envisage in our mind. Horticultural knowledge is required in order to have full confidence that an action we take on a tree will produce the results that we desire.

The trunk provides the central core to the tree, and interfaces to the branches, and via the nebari, to the root structure. The trunk is integral to the desired style of the tree.

The nebari and primary roots give support to the tree and add artistic style. Root flare is vital to a good bonsai, to give the impression of age. Secondary roots come off the primaries, and provide the framework for the tertiary roots which are the feeding root mass. Bonsai techniques manage the root system, unlike nursery horticulture which generally ignores what is happening below the soil. There is limited real estate in a bonsai pot, and so we need to maximise the effectiveness of the tree's root system.

As the roots divide, the total root surface area increases leading to a greater absorption of water and oxygen. The root tip of the fine roots has the least resistance to absorption, and also provides the interface with the soil mycorrhiza fungal system which has been proven to be a vital part of the overall ecosystem. It is where all the action is!

When removing branches from a tree, it is recommended to leave a stub, or even transition to total branch removal by progressive branch shortening, especially for thick, old branches. With a stub left, the tree swells slightly at the trunk in an attempt to seal off the missing branch. The stub reduces the chance of infection entering the trunk vascular system, and allows the tree to rebalance its energy flow. A transition reduction also allows the tree to rebalance energy flow progressively. The final branch removal via a flush cut occurs after the tree has successfully rebalanced its energy flow.

The balance of water and oxygen around the root mass is vital to the tree's health. A water column exists in the soil, where gravity drags down the water to an equilibrium level and oxygen is drawn in as the water drops. A free-draining soil which we often talk about facilitates this gravity drainage and indrawn oxygen. If the soil is not free-draining, the water column does not drop as much, and less oxygen is drawn in—not good for water and oxygen balance in the soil.

In the tree's branch structure, tertiary branches rule—the rest act as a transfer medium only. Trimming the branch tips changes the energy balance of the branch structure and encourages back-budding—i.e. forces the energy backwards into the tree.

Finally, always look at taper when trying to improve trees.

Patrick gave a very interesting talk about the reasons WHY we utilize various bonsai techniques, using his horticultural training to explain the reasons. This was an introductory session only—I am sure that we will learn more in future talks!



Above - Patrick I discusses horticultural techniques for bonsai at the October meeting.

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.



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.



November Sale Day

Members are reminded that our club Sale Day for 2023 will be held on Saturday 25th November from 10:00am to 1:00pm at the Chirnside Park Community Hub (i.e. immediately prior to our normal Last Saturday of the Month workshop). Table bookings are already strong, so we should have an excellent range of goods on offer. Some vacancies are still available—contact Marlene (mjerlitschka@iprimus.com.au, 0418 147 871) to book a table.

Please promote to your relatives, friends, and acquaintances. Show flyers are available from Marlene, and will be circulated with the What's Ahead email in November.

Entry fee is \$2. Great chance to pick up some quality material!



2024 Wall Calendar

We have once again produced a double A4 wall calendar for 2024, which is now available for purchase at any club meeting for \$10 each.

The photos are all of members' trees, and were largely taken at our Annual Show earlier this year. The quality of the trees continues to improve year after year! The striking front cover shows Steve M's incredible wire bonsai, however the tree photos within are all of the live variety.

Although many people use the calendars on their phones these days, it is always nice to have a wall calendar as well. Alternatively, use it as a coffee table book!



2024 AABC National Convention

The 36th AABC Bonsai National Convention, proudly hosted by the Bonsai Society of Queensland will be a chance to catch-up with the wider Australian bonsai community, and enhance bonsai learning. The AABC Executive are looking forward to this event being a big reunion after the low numbers attending this year's event in Perth. The AABC knows that financial constraints can impact on attendance but without a successful convention AABC initiatives like the Visiting Tutor Program can't continue to be supported. All members are encouraged to register for the Brisbane Convention, if they are planning to be in Brisbane at the time or if they would like to arrange a holiday along with some bonsai activities.

The Convention venue is: Royal on the Park hotel, 152 Alice Street, Brisbane City 4000. International Demonstrators are: Koji Hiramatsu, from Japan, and Martin Walters, from Auckland, New Zealand. Supporting Australian Demonstrators: Lindsay & Glen Bebb, and Andrew Sellman, (one of the AABC's VTs from Queensland).

Check out the Convention website for more details. <https://www.bonsaisocietyqld.asn.au/aabc2024.php>.

Also, to put into your forward calendar, the Canberra Bonsai Society will host the 37th National Convention in May 2025 in conjunction with the celebration of the Society's 50th Anniversary of founding.



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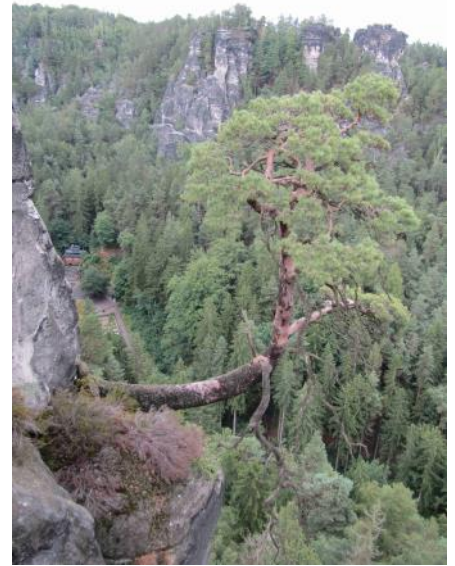
Lindsay H visited Europe on holiday this year, and one of the places he visited was a little place called Bastei in Eastern Germany near the Czech Republic. Set amongst sandstone rock formations over 190m in height above the Elbe River, it used to be the site of a medieval fortress constructed amid the rock pillars and dating back to the 1200's, the remains of which can clearly be seen.



There are only small pockets of soil on and in the rocks, but an amazing number of trees can be seen growing here. Growing conditions are harsh. And the trees are consequently stunted, but otherwise appear quite healthy. Natural Bonsai!

Left - The Bastei Bridge among the sandstone columns, a major tourist attraction

Right—a tree grows horizontally out of the rock, and then arches upwards.



Vale Derek Oakley

The Australian bonsai community lost a highly skilled bonsai artist, Derek Oakley in August. He was recognised for his skill and sharing of knowledge and agitating in the bonsai community for improving standards of bonsai. The first bonsai accepted into the National Bonsai & Penjing Collection was a magnificent Callistemon (bottlebrush) generously donated by Derek in 2007.

Many will recognize Derek from his moniker of "Pup" from the Ausbonsai forum.

Kudos, Accolades and Thanks

- Victor B for acting as Returning Officer at the September AGM.
- Shire of Yarra Ranges for their small Grant to enable us to purchase the EFTPOS Terminal that makes taking payments so much more convenient.
- Davor T for producing most of the stunning photos used in our Wall Calendar this year.

End-Of-Month Saturday Workshop

The regular Last Saturday of the Month workshops are a relaxed place to work on our trees, discuss our bonsai activities with like-minded people, or seek advice or assistance with our trees. The September workshop featured a special demonstration of air layering by Steve M.

The workshops 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, or just come along for an introduction to the art of bonsai. There is no obligation or cost.

Open from 1:00pm to 4:00pm on the last Saturday of each month except December, at the Chirnside Park Community Hub.



Above - Members at work at the Saturday Workshop

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Tree Profile: Birch - *Betula* Species

General Information: A birch is a thin-leaved deciduous hardwood tree of the genus *Betula*, in the family Betulaceae, which also includes alders, hazels, and hornbeams. It is closely related to the beech-oak family Fagaceae. The genus *Betula* contains 30 to 60 known taxa of which 11 are on the IUCN 2011 Red List of Threatened Species. (Wikipedia). It originates from cool regions of the northern hemisphere.

Hardy, quick growing, and relatively resistant to disease and insect attack, birches are considered pioneer trees, first to establish themselves on cleared land. Most require moist, sandy, and loamy soil; they are usually propagated by seeding or grafting.

Birches are handsome deciduous trees usually prized for their white to pinkish brown coloured trunks, often with peeling bark. Graceful branches provide perfect dappled shade, bursting with delicate fresh green leaves in spring, which turn to golden yellow in autumn before falling. Most are medium-sized trees growing between 6 and 30 metres high. Birches are often planted in groups, just as they are found in nature.

Leaves are alternate, toothed, ovate, mid to dark green turning to yellow or orange in Autumn.

The most common variety available in Australia is probably the silver birch, *Betula pendula*.

Lighting: Full sun, rotate often to expose all sides of the tree. Birches tend to have shiny brown trunks when immature and in a pot it, can take many years of growth before they form the familiar silvery-white bark. The bark must be exposed to direct summer sun to speed up this process, as specimens growing in shade take longer to change colour. Some protection from hot, drying winds may be of benefit.

Temperature: Birches require a generally cool temperate climate and are resistant to frost, however seem to tolerate Melbourne conditions quite well.

Watering: Require a lot of water during the hot summer or dry periods, due to their shallow, fibrous root system.

Feeding: For trees in development, fertilise regularly to rapidly thicken trunk and branches. For trees in refinement, do not start feeding until after initial spring growth has hardened, to minimise coarse growth.

Pruning and Wiring: Prune back new shoots to 2-3 leaves after flushes of growth through the growing season. Hard pruning can be carried out from budburst in Spring until late Summer but ensure wounds are well sealed as Birch bleed heavily and are prone to die-back around large cut areas. Try to avoid doing any pruning while the tree is not in active growth to reduce the possibility of dieback. Strong and healthy Birch can be defoliated in Summer.

Propagation: Sow seed outside in Autumn. Softwood cuttings in Summer.

Repotting: Every two to three years in Spring as buds extend, use a free-draining soil mix. Do not root prune Birch too early; it is better to root prune a little late after the new buds have opened than it is to root prune while still dormant.

Pests and Diseases: Generally resistant, but watch for rust, aphids and mildew and treat appropriately if detected.

Styling: Informal upright forms with single or multiple trunks in small to extra-large sizes.

Species Suitable for Bonsai: There are many species and hybrids that are also suitable for bonsai but the following are the most common:

Betula pendula – Silver Birch

Betula pubescens – Downy Birch

Betula nana – a dwarf birch variety



Photo courtesy of bonsai4me.com. Tree styled by Harry Harrington.



Photo courtesy of bonsaiempire.com.



 **Dean Shaw (Deano)**

 deano@bonsairoots.com.au

 **To Order OR Enquiries:**



On The Display Table



Accent Plants →



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 re-potted with care. Varieties such as Figs, Pomegranates, Pyracanthas and Natives can be re-potted even later. Pines should not be re-potted after spring finishes.

Tool Sharpeners

The tool sharpeners demonstrated at the October meeting are only one of many which are available from local hardware and tool shops, but they are easy to use, compact, and the choice of many of our members.

The Eze-Lap individual sharpeners are available from Bunnings, but they do not seem to have the three-pack set currently available. The triple set illustrated here was from the Total Tools website. The individual tool is priced at \$28 and the three-pack for \$90.

The same tools and alternatives can be found cheaper on eBay. When making a selection, the "fine" rating of 1000 to 1200 grit should be the first choice.

Members note that the Club has a tool sharpening kit available for your use. It may not be borrowed but can be used at any Club meeting or workshop. See Marlene if you would like to use it.



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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 2023*



The monthly meeting on Tuesday 14th November at 7:30pm will be a demonstration on "Australian Natives" by special guest and Club Sponsor Scott Martin from Bonsai Matsu. Scott is a versatile and knowledgeable presenter, so should be a great meeting. Display Table—"Azaleas—Any Style", or Member's Choice.



Our 2023 Sale Day will be on Saturday 25th November from 10:00am to 1:00pm—don't miss it! Stay around for the workshop in the afternoon.



The Last Saturday of the Month Workshop will be on Saturday 25th November from 1:00pm to 4:00pm.



The monthly meeting on Tuesday 12th December at 7:30pm will be our Christmas breakup and include refreshments plus an informal discussion on member's trees. Bring along a tree which may be of interest to the group! Display Table—"Pines and Cedars", or Member's Choice.



Note—No Saturday Workshop in December!



Other Events



The Ballarat Bonsai Society will hold their Bonsai Exhibition on Saturday 4th November from 10:00am to 5:00pm and Sunday 5th November from 10:00am to 4:00pm, at Robert Clarke Horticultural Centre on the Ballarat Botanical Gardens. Entry \$5.



The Geelong Bonsai Club will hold their 2023 Bonsai Show on Saturday 11th November from 9:00am to 5:30pm and Sunday 12th November from 9:00am to 3:00pm, at the Geelong Masonic Centre, 27 Regent Street, Belmont, Geelong. Entry \$5.

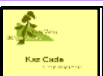


The Satsuki Azalea Interest Group will hold their final meeting for the year on Saturday 2nd December at 1:30pm, at Bonsai Art Nursery, 236 Old Dandenong Road, Heatherton.



YVBS FORUM:

Our apologies that our Forum disappeared with the rest of our old website! Our new website does not yet have an equivalent function available, but we hope to extend in the future to incorporate something similar. Stay tuned!



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