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The Yarra Valley Bonsai Society Newsletter



Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!



Highlights from November & December 2023

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!

Inside this issue:

Trade & Lib Update	2
Training Courses	3
2024 Key Events	3
2023 Sale Day Report	3
Satsuki Azalea Tips	4
NBPCA News	4
Saturday Workshops	4
Tree Profile - Banksia	5
On The Display Table	6
Bonsai Calendar	7
Looking Ahead	8
Other Events	8
YVBS Online	8

The November meeting featured one of our favourite guest presenters, Scott Martin from Bonsai Matsu who spoke and demonstrated on Australian Natives as Bonsai. He intended to work on three of our members' trees—a casuarina from Lindsay H, a melaleuca from Stefan, and a nothofagus from Nick R—however, so much time was spent on the casuarina and in discussion that little time was left to do much work on the other trees.

As a starting point with the *Allocasuarina littoralis*, Scott felt that the tree had good nebari and developed bark, but selected the front largely on the basis that the tree arced backwards with the top then coming forward. He then proceeded to select branches to retain for the final design and pruned them back. Most of the branches were wired and positioned so that they were directed upwards and then outwards—Scott emphasized that he wanted to avoid making the tree look like a pine. His design decisions were made to try to accentuate its natural growth patterns, matched to the tree's horticultural needs.



While working on the tree, Scott answered questions and promoted discussion with the audience, which included some of the following points about this tree and Australian natives in general:

- Place natives in full sun and give them plenty of fertilizer and water. Native Osmocote is a safe fertilizer for natives.
- Scott's soil mix comprises pumice, pine bark nuggets, and scoria, which he uses for everything.
- Leaf size—as trees grow and ramify, leaves naturally get smaller. Also, by positioning the tree in more sun means there is less reason for the tree to develop large leaves.
- Repot trees when the tree is at its strongest and just about to grow—after winter for deciduous species and after a natural growth pause for evergreens and natives. For aftercare, position the tree out of the elements for a couple of weeks. Hold back on fertilizing after repotting to protect damaged roots and to avoid aggressive and coarse initial growth.
- Continually work on developing branch taper in a similar manner to trunk taper.

Calendar Dates:

- 9th January (Tuesday) YVBS Monthly Meeting. 7:30pm. Chirnside Hub.
- 27th January (Saturday) "Last Saturday of the Month" Workshop. 1:00pm. Chirnside Hub.
- 10th February (Saturday) Satsuki Society Interest Group Meeting. 1:30pm, Bonsai Art, Heatherton.
- 13th February (Tuesday) YVBS Monthly Meeting. 7:30pm. Chirnside Hub.
- 24th February (Saturday) "Last Saturday of the Month" Workshop. 1:00pm. Chirnside Hub.

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

Highlights from September & October - Cont. From Page 1

- Sacrifice branches may be used to thicken up the trunk below the branch location, however be careful to balance the strength of the sacrifice branch with the growth on the rest of the tree to ensure that it doesn't take over completely.
- Scott generally prefers to do one styling on a tree and then let it grow. He generally wires the primary branches and some secondary branches, letting the others grow and controlling them by pruning.

After spending most of the night on the casuarina, Scott turned to the *Melaleuca cuticularis* (Salt Water Paperbark). He made the point that we can often become too close to our trees and avoid making hard decisions. He would recommend removing the large lower branch completely, changing the angle slightly to position the apex over the nebari, and redirecting a hanging branch to fill in the space left by removing the lower branch. Scott did a little work on repositioning some branches and then left Stefan to think about the major branch removal!

A very interesting and informative night that was enjoyed by all attending members!

The December meeting was our Christmas Breakup, with a spread of yummys put on by the club and supplemented by plates brought in by members. Prior to enjoying the repast, there was a show-and-tell session on trees brought in by some of the attending members.

- Steve M brought in his maple forest constructed with assistance from Craig Wilson at the August meeting, to show its progress. He also brought in successful air layer examples done this year—a plum, an elm and a black pine. Steve is the king of air layers!
- Sohrab brought in a beech group planting and asked for assistance with reducing leaf size. Advice was offered, including that the trees might be hornbeams rather than beeches! He also brought in a very young blue cedar, and was advised to wire the trunk for shape while it is young.
- Stefan brought in his inside-out ficus bonsai—a permeable terra cotta pot with the tree attached to the outside, and the pot filled with water. Very unusual—it will be interesting to see how this develops over time. He also brought in a root over rock trident maple, and demonstrated how to snap a branch when trying to position it!
- Owen brought in his Chinese elm with an incredible amount of new growth following work on it with Deano at a previous workshop. Alan H assisted in setting up the tree for the next growth spurt.
- Patrick brought in a small pine and asked for advice on a better pot for the tree. The consensus was a brown unglazed pot, round, slightly larger in diameter and shallower.

The other feature of the night was the drawing of the display table prize for the year. Each tree on the display table throughout the year earns a ticket, and all tickets were put into a box and a draw was conducted by Patrick. The winner was Lindsay H and the prize was a beautiful shallow forest tray from Murrumbung Studio Ceramics—thanks Tracey!

Best wishes for a happy and safe Christmas and New Year to all members! We look forward to getting together again in 2024!



Top—Deano ponders Owen's elm, bottom—Stefan's inside-out ficus.

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.



Bonsai Training Courses

Preliminary registrations for the 2024 Introduction to Bonsai have exceeded the minimum requirements, so the course will proceed provided that the registrants confirm next year. Current registrants are Jess B, Simon B, Wayne M, James S, Wendy S, Clare S, and Christine S. If any other members wish to join the course, please advise Lindsay H (linhad14@gmail.com or 0403 800 671).

The course is in two sessions and is scheduled for Saturday 30th March and Saturday 27th April from 9:00am to 1:00pm on both days, at our normal venue, the Chirnside Park Community Hub. The cost is \$100 which includes a comprehensive set of course notes and a tree on which to work during the course.

2024 Key Events

The Committee has decided to change our normal program of major events around a little next year, with our Annual Bonsai Show moving to Spring/Summer rather than Autumn. The current dates booked are Saturday 23rd November and Sunday 24th November at the Chirnside Park Hub. Hopefully, we will have trees in flower as a feature for the Show!

Because of this later date for the Show, we have changed our Annual Sale Day to Saturday 25th May from 10:00am to 1:00pm.

We also have planned a Tutored Workshop with an AABC Visiting Tutor but have not yet confirmed the tutor or timing. This will be advised as soon as possible in the new Year.

All members are encouraged to plan ahead for these dates and to get your trees ready by organising the preliminary work necessary for each event.

A Nursery Crawl is also planned in 2024, with the preliminary date being Saturday 7th September, to be confirmed closer to the date. If any members have any requests for nurseries to visit, please advise Patrick I or Marlene J at any meeting.

2023 Sale Day

Our annual Sale Day for 2023 was held on Saturday 25th November and saw a total of 14 sellers book tables to display a wide range of bonsai, starter trees, pots and materials. A great selection of quality stock was available at great prices.

After a rush of the usual suspects when the doors opened, the flow of buyers continued throughout the session. It was great to see many members attend to checkout the wares and support the Club, and also encouraging to see the increased number of people from the local community who came along to check us out. Our advertising and promotional activity must be working!

Most sellers seemed to be happy with the sales that they made and went home with less stock than they brought!



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Satsuki Azalea Tips

Japanese Satsuki azalea expert Hiroharu Kobayashi visited Australia in October at the invitation of the Satsuki Society of Australia, and took the time to call into Bonsai Art Nursery in Heatherton, where he spent some time working with Trevor and Barry and imparting some of his knowledge. Unfortunately, with little prior notice of his visit, they were unable to organize any workshops for the wider community on this occasion.

The Satsuki Society has advised that some of the key message's that Hiro advised included:

- Focus on the health of trees, this included having good benches.
- Don't allow trees to dry out (drying out potting medium will damage roots and affect the health of your tree), keep potting medium moist.
- Place sphagnum moss over the surface of potting medium during warmer months (helps keep potting medium moist and helps with humidity).
- Use deeper pots (whilst in development), not shallow Bonsai pots.



NBPCA News

On the 1st of November 2023, Scott Saddler AM, Executive Branch Manager of the National Arboretum Canberra and Leigh Taafe, Curator at the National Bonsai and Penjing Collection of Australia (NBPCA), travelled to Japan to mark a significant moment in the history of bonsai art. A new collaboration with the Omiya Bonsai Art Museum (OBAM) in Saitama Japan, was formalised by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which the Japanese affectionately refer to as a "Sister Museum Agreement".

The essence of this agreement is one that emphasises collaboration and the exchange of knowledge between two renowned bonsai institutions. Our Curators at the National Bonsai & Penjing Collection anticipate the invaluable learning experiences that await them. The Omiya Bonsai Art Museum, a beacon of excellence in the world of public bonsai collections, is poised to become a rich source of inspiration and insight for our Curators.



Leigh Taafe and Scott Saddler in Japan

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 November workshop was particularly significant as a number of buyers from the morning Sale Day called in with their trees, resulting in several new members signing up.

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 ex-



Above - Members at work at the November Saturday Workshop

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Tree Profile: *Banksia Species*

General Information:

There are currently 76 known and identified species of *Banksia*, most of which are located in Western Australia. Eighteen *Banksia* are found in the eastern half of Australia or in tropical regions. *Banksia* are related to the *Protea* family of Africa, with which they share many similarities. *Banksia* are an evergreen tree or shrub, although prostrate versions also exist. They have usually either a single trunk with an irregular outline, or a multi-trunk shrubby appearance.

Banksia can have a variety of leaf shapes and sizes, but are usually tough and leathery. The leaves may grow alternately or in whorls. Flowers are also variable but are usually numerous on a spike which becomes woody. Flowers set at the end of new growth and take some time to mature. Flower spikes tend to be large, so are not often seen on *Banksia* bonsai.

Lighting: Full sun!!!

Temperature: Most of the common *Banksia* found locally can tolerate all temperatures found in Melbourne. They thrive in the warmer weather but can sulk a bit over winter.

Watering: Although *Banksia* can survive in the Australian bush during drought conditions, they need plenty of water in pot culture.

Feeding: *Banksia* are a hungry species! Fertilise generously with Native Osmocote in the potting mix and liquid feed every week or two (except winter) with a mild liquid fertilizer like Maxicrop, Charlie Carp, Powerfeed or similar. *Banksia* in the bush can be subject to proteoid roots which make them susceptible to high phosphorus fertilisers, however most *Banksia* sourced from nursery stock would not suffer from this problem. If in doubt, start your fertilizing regime with a diluted liquid fertilizer and gradually build up to full recommended strength.

Pruning and Wiring: Hard prune when the tree is growing strongly, typically from late spring through early summer. Full or partial defoliation can be done at this time to increase ramification and reduce leaf size. The foliage needs to be managed carefully to obtain small leaves and ramification. The internodes lengthen very quickly if the tree is allowed to grow unchecked. They should be pinched as soon as the terminal shoot begins to extend and before the second set of leaves develop, during the growing season. Leave a little more foliage on in Autumn to get them through the winter period.

Propagation: *Banksia* can be grown easily from seed, but cuttings and air layering are other options. Pot the young trees up and on quickly, always up to the next pot size. Do not over pot!

Repotting: *Banksia* have a fibrous root system which makes root pruning very easy, and provided it is done at the right time of the year (during the warmer months) recovery should be quick. Partially defoliate before repotting. Use a free-draining potting mix. Keep the tree in the shade for a few weeks after repotting until it shows signs of new growth.

Pests and Diseases: A healthy tree grown in free-draining mix in full sun should have few problems. As usual, be vigilant and if fungus, mould, caterpillars or scale is observed, then treat appropriately.

Species Suitable for Bonsai: There are three main varieties of *Banksia* used as bonsai in Victoria—*B. integrifolia*, *B. serrata*, and *B. marginata*. *Integrifolia* and *serrata* are best, *marginata* can be a bit delicate at times.

Banksia integrifolia—Coast *Banksia*. Variable in size up to 25m. Pale yellow flower spikes.

Banksia serrata—Old Man *Banksia* or Saw Tooth *Banksia*. A gnarled and mis-shapen tree ranging in size from 1m to 16m. Yellow or greyish-yellow flower spikes.

Banksia marginata—Silver *Banksia*. Dense foliage and highly variable, ranging from a small shrub to a 12m tree. Yellow Flower spikes.

Banksia spinulosa, var. 'Birthday Candles'. A dwarf form with dense foliage and golden flower spikes, which may be small enough to remain on bonsai forms of the tree.

References: Grant Bowie—YVBS newsletter 2008, Craig Wilson—YVBS newsletter 2011.

All photos are of YVBS members' trees.



Banksia serrata



Banksia integrifolia



Banksia spinulosa "Birthday Candles"

On The Display Table



A selection of trees from the November and December Display Table



Bonsai Calendar: January - February

Watering and Position should be the main focus during the summer months. It's a good time of year to be on the safe side when it comes to caring for your trees.

Watering

- Water evenly and thoroughly. This will encourage roots to grow at the bottom of the pot improving the health of the tree
- Water in the mornings. If this is not possible, water in the evenings but avoid wetting the foliage on species that are susceptible to mildew (Maples, Oaks, Crepe Myrtles). Note that on exceptionally hot days, some of your trees may need watering twice or even three times, to maintain optimum health.
- Bonsai that will require more water: Maples, Camellias, Azaleas, Liquidambar, Elms, Wisterias, Alders, Taxodiums, Beeches, Hornbeams, Pyracanthas, Banksias, Melaleucas, other natives
- Bonsai that will require less water: Pines, Cedars, Corokias,
- It can be a good idea to separate your trees into categories based on their watering needs.

Position

- Morning sun is best. Avoid the afternoon sun in summer. If you have to make a choice and put some trees in the afternoon sun, then most conifers and natives can handle these conditions the best.
- Consider the species and pot size when arranging your display. Take extra care when using small or shallow pots as they will dry out quickly.
- Species such as Beech, Hornbeam, Maples, Spruce will scorch if not protected from both the sun and the wind.
- When looking for shade, avoid placing bonsai directly under garden trees. Pests and diseases can be passed to your bonsai.

Summer is a great time to work on your benches, watering systems, shade cloth and weed around your display. If you are going away for the holidays, put some serious thought into how your trees will be looked after. Many bonsai are lost over this time of year.



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ヤラ谷間盆栽会

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Page 8

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
January & February 2024*



The monthly meeting on Tuesday 9th January at 7:30pm will be a general workshop, to kick off the New Year. Bring along your trees to work on and share your progress. Advice is freely available from experienced members when required. Display Table—"Figs—Any Style", or Member's Choice.



The Last Saturday of the Month Workshop will be on Saturday 27th January from 1:00pm to 4:00pm.



The monthly meeting on Tuesday 13th February at 7:30pm will be a presentation and demonstration on "Wiring and Heavy Bending". Display Table—"Natives—Any Style", or Member's Choice.



The Last Saturday of the Month Workshop will be on Saturday 24th February from 1:00pm to 4:00pm.



Other Events

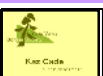


The Satsuki Azalea Interest Group will hold their first meeting for the year on Saturday 10th February at 1:30pm, at Bonsai Art Nursery, 236 Old Dandenong Road, Heatherton.



YVBS ONLINE:

Our Website can be found at www.yarravalleybonsai.org.au—check it out for the latest information on Club activities. Also, the Club is on Facebook and Instagram, and all members are invited to join up and participate in the information exchange.



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