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The Yarra Valley Bonsai Society Newsletter

Highlights from January & February 2025

The new year opened with our traditional workshop night in January, which was very well attended considering the heat and the proximity to the holiday season. Members enjoyed the air conditioning and got a lot of work done on their trees.

The February meeting featured special guest presenter Scott Martin from Bonsai Matsu, who is a club sponsor. The theme was Junipers, and we tried something a little different from normal in that Scott led a tutored workshop for members who brought along their own junipers on which to work. Members without trees were effectively observers, who listened as Scott explained the work to be done to individual participants.



Above - Workshop at the January Meeting.

The format can be considered a great success, with more than 15 active participants instead of the six to eight expected. Scott did a round to everybody at least twice, but he the night!

The trees on the tables ranged from bonsai starters to more developed and refined material, but everybody could be well-satisfied with the work achieved under Scott's guidance. Definitely a format to be seriously considered repeating next year!



Above - Tutored Workshop with Scott Martin at the February Meeting.

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:

- 8th March (Saturday) YVBS Nursery Crawl. 9:30am start at Colwyn Nursery.
- 11th March (Tuesday) YVBS Monthly Meeting. 7:30pm. Chirnside Park Hub.
- 21st March & 22nd March (Friday evening & Saturday) Vic Native Bonsai Exhibition. Preston City Hall.
- 29th March (Saturday) "Last Saturday of the Month" Workshop. 1:00pm. Chirnside Park Hub.
- 8th April (Tuesday) YVBS Monthly Meeting. 7:30pm. Chirnside Park Hub.
- 26th April (Saturday) "Last Saturday of the Month" Workshop. 1:00pm. Chirnside Park Hub.

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

Scott Martin Tutored Workshops

A separate series of tutored workshops with Scott Martin were held on the Saturday prior to the February meeting. Morning and afternoon sessions were held, with a maximum of 8 places available at each, which were all filled by Club members.

Members brought along their own tree/s and worked on them under Scott's guidance. Tree species were diverse, including exotics and natives—but generally a marked lack of junipers which were being saved for the Tuesday meeting session!

All participants worked hard and achieved great results from the workshops. The bin was full of offcuts and clippings by the end of the day!

Many thanks go to Scott for his time and attention—he is a great teacher and communicator and brings his wealth of experience and knowledge to these workshops, which he readily imparts to participants.

All members are encouraged to get involved with future tutored workshops as they come up—you will learn a lot and will not be disappointed.



Above - Scott discusses possible design changes with Steve, while other participants look on and listen in.

Community Workshop

The Club was approached to run a paid beginners Bonsai workshop in January by the Kildare Ministries, as part of their leadership seminar being held in the Yarra Valley. Seven participants joined the class run by Lindsay H, Patrick I and Marlene J at the Chirnside Park Hub.

Cedar bonsai starter trees were obtained from Nick R, which were styled by each participant, wired as appropriate, and then potted up into supplied bonsai pots using club soil medium. All of this was achieved within the three hour time allotment. A brief Introduction to Bonsai talk preceded the practical work.

The participants were all extremely enthusiastic about the session and proudly displayed the finished results, photo at right.



Introduction to Bonsai Training Course

New members in particular are reminded that the Club has scheduled an Introduction to Bonsai Training Course to be held in two parts on Saturday 3rd May and Saturday 24th May, from 9am to 1pm on both days.

This is a reasonably detailed overview of the theory and practice of the art of bonsai, and includes a detailed instruction manual as well as a tree on which participants will practice the skills taught during the course. It is a great way to begin and progress your bonsai journey.

The cost is \$100 in total, and a minimum number of six people are required for the course to be run. To date we have had four members sign up—Wendy M, Russell W, Owen C, and Bruce T. Any other interested members can register by adding their name to the form at any club event, or by contacting Lindsay H (linhad14@gmail.com, 0403 800 671).

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. 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

The annual Club Nursery Crawl will take place on Saturday 8th March. Members can join and leave at any time, on the following approximate schedule.

- 9:30am. Meet at Colwyn Nursery, 29 Victoria Ave, Monbulk.
- 11am. Conifer Gardens Nursery, 254 Mt Dandenong Tourist Rd, Ferny Creek.
- 12noon. Lunch break at Proserpina Bakehouse, 252 Mt Dandenong Tourist Rd, Ferny Creek (or member's choice).
- 1:30pm. Bonsai Sensation Nursery, 253 Centre Rd, Narre Warren South.
- 3pm. Bonsai Art Nursery, 236 Old Dandenong Rd, Heatherton.



Above - Members at Bonsai Sensation during a previous nursery crawl.

This will be the first time that the club will visit Colwyn Nursery, a large wholesale propagation and growing nursery which is the place of employment of our members Nick R and Adam L. Thanks to Nick for organizing permission to visit.

Members and guests are welcome, but should register with Marlene J (mjerlitschka@iprimus.com.au, 0418 147 871). Here's hoping for better weather than the Nursery Crawl last year!

Backyard Bonsai Blokes Podcast

A reminder about the Backyard Bonsai Blokes podcast, organized by our own Grant L and featuring Steve M amongst others. Accessible on Spotify and Podbean. A couple of Aussie blokes talking bonsai fundamentals and how they apply to the everyday suburban backyard bonsai enthusiast.



Unwrap the challenges, limitations, opportunities and reward of juggling full time work, relationships, family and many other life expectations all while turning our yards into small scale nurseries fueled by our passion for bonsai. Shining light on the opportunities available to us all through bonsai clubs, bonsai nurseries, local potters and bonsai professionals in Melbourne Victoria and the wider bonsai community within Australia.

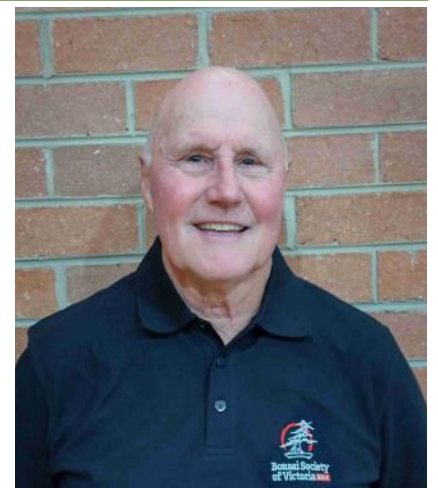


Quentin Valentine Critique

Quentin Valentine is a well-known local bonsai expert who is a member of a number of clubs around Melbourne, including the Victorian Native Bonsai Club. He has agreed to attend our End-of-Month Saturday workshop on 29th March and perform a critique session on selected member's bonsai trees. Quentin is an extremely knowledgeable judge of trees and will be sure to offer valuable suggestion of improvements that will take each tree to the next level.

Participation is entirely voluntary, but members with advanced trees are encouraged to bring along some specimens to gain Quentin's expert assessment and suggestions. While Australian natives are Quentin's current passion, he is also well experienced with all other exotic species.

Members can still work on their own trees at the rear of the room while Quentin is critiquing, or after the critique session is finished.



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2025 YVBS Sale Day

The annual YVBS Sale Day is scheduled for Saturday 31st May from 10am to 1pm. Tables are always in high demand and the numbers are limited by the available space, so book early if you are interested in selling excess trees and materials.

Contact Marlene J (mjerlitschka@iprimus.com.au, 0418 147 871) to book a table.

Promotional flyers will be available closer to the date.



Madam Bonsai at March Meeting

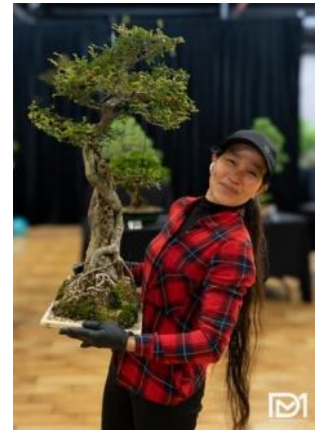
We have a special guest speaker coming to our meeting on Tuesday 11th March, Anne Vu who runs Madam Bonsai, a mainly on-line bonsai business in the south east suburbs of Melbourne which sells bonsai, bonsai-related products, and training services.

Some members may have visited her one-woman shows which have been held in recent years in Springvale. They featured an amazing array of quality bonsai.

Anne has been practicing the art of bonsai for over 30 years, but only started her business during the Covid years as a diversification from her sound and lighting business.

She states that her ultimate goal is to inspire more people to embrace bonsai, regardless of their age or gender, and eventually obtain a collection of mature bonsais that can be passed onto the next generation.

Anne will be talking on "Cedars" at our March meeting.



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. There is usually something interesting going on, and plenty of trees to look at, in various stages of development.

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.

Note that the March end of month workshop will also feature local bonsai artist Quentin Valentine who will offer a critique session on some of our trees.



Above - Members at work at the January Saturday Workshop

BONSAI SENSATION NURSERY

MONDAY TO FRIDAY 9:00am – 5:00pm / WEEKENDS 10:00am – 3:00pm

PHONE 8794 9668 / MOBILE 0425 722 827

253 Centre Road, Narre Warren South, VIC 3805

We have more than 30,000 plants for sale, including an extensive range of pots, tools, wire, and soil. Lessons, plant boarding, and restyling are also available.

Visit our Facebook page and website BONSAISENSATION.COM.AU for more information



Insecticides, Fungicides and Miticides

Some members have requested information of systemic insecticides and where to buy them. The following is not intended to be a comprehensive review of the subject but hopefully is of some assistance.

First of all, what is a systemic pesticide? A systemic pesticide is any pesticide that is absorbed into a plant and distributed throughout its tissues, reaching the plant's stem, leaves, roots, and any fruits or flowers. Systemic pesticides are water-soluble, so they easily move throughout a plant as it absorbs water and transports it to its tissues. Systemic insecticides are commonly used to suppress herbivorous sucking or chewing insects like aphids including root aphids, caterpillars and the like. Systemic fungicides do the same to fungal infections.

This is in contrast to contact insecticides, fungicides and miticides which must actually contact the pest when sprayed onto the plant to have any effect. Pyrethrum is an example of a contact insecticide, but there are many other natural and chemical treatments.

Systemic insecticides have been removed from the shelves of Bunnings due to their propensity to also affect beneficial insects such as bees, which tend to lose their ability to navigate back to the hive when collecting affected pollen from flowers. However, they are still available from various nurseries.

Systemic insecticides are generally based around the compound Imidacloprid, and this is what you should look for on the label when searching out a systemic insecticide.

The photos at right were taken at Mt Evelyn Garden Centre on York Road, Mt Evelyn, showing the stock that they carry. Other nurseries may also carry similar stock. Bug Killa is a granular form of Imidacloprid which is sprinkled on the soil surface and watered in, after which it is taken up by the tree roots. Contendor is a premixed spray form and Conguard is a concentrate which you can mix into spray bottles, both of which are then applied by spray to the foliage for absorption.

Imidacloprid reputedly provides systemic action against chewing insects for up to 6 weeks from application.



Cautions:

- DO NOT USE when plants are flowering or expected to flower within 6 weeks of application.
- BEWARE when fruiting—fruits may be toxic to birds, animals and humans within 3 weeks of application.
- DO NOT ALLOW to enter drains, sewers or streams.

Fungicides are used to control fungal problems like molds, mildew and rust.

Some fungicides can work through the plants vascular system, but most seem to adhere to the plant surfaces instead. There are many types of fungicides both chemical and natural, but the one recommended by Scott Martin during his recent visit and also used by other club members is Mancozeb. Other types are listed as copper-based and phosphorous acid based. The phosphorous acid fungicide claims to be systemic, but the others do not. Yates Anti Rot and Yates Liquid Copper are two readily-available fungicides of the copper and phosphorous types.

All of the fungicides are available through Bunnings and most plant nurseries.

Mites on plants are very hard to spot as they are tiny, almost microscopic. Look for damage to the leaf surface in the form of pale spots or possibly tiny webs. Some claim that holding a white sheet of paper under the leaves and then tapping the leaves will dislodge a few mites, which may then be seen moving on the paper. Mites appear to be a different problem, in that most insecticides do not claim to kill them. One that does is Yates Mavrik, which also kills a range of insects through contact action. The fungicide Mancozeb Plus also contains a miticide as well as the fungicide.

Sprayed lime sulphur is also a contact fungicide, insecticide and miticide.

Remember that all contact based treatments rely on the spray actually contacting the pest, so ensure that you spray the tops and underneath the foliage and trunk thoroughly. Repeat treatments are probably necessary to ensure that all life stages of the insect and mite are treated.

Always read and strictly follow the directions for each product which are printed on the labels.

Note that it is always better not to use any treatment unless you absolutely have to—there are many beneficial insects, mites and fungus that will also be killed. Think ladybugs, mycorrhiza, and predatory mites. Providing air flow through your trees and plenty of bench spacing will help your trees fight off any problems without your interference.

Also be vigilant and try to spot any potential problems early. Early treatment is easier than battling a heavy infestation.



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 winter.

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

2025 AABC Convention

The Association of Australian Bonsai Clubs 2025 National Convention will be held in Canberra from 16th to 19th May 2025, hosted by the Canberra Bonsai Society. Featured international artists will be from USA - Jennifer Price from Chicago and Michael Hagedorn from Portland. In addition,

three Australian artists will be on the program as demonstrators—Jarryd Bailey from Tasmania, Sam Thompson from the NBP-CA in Canberra, and Marcela Ferreira from Melbourne. The venue will be the Canberra Rex Hotel and the National Arboretum.

Members are encouraged to consider attending the Convention to improve their bonsai knowledge, and as a side benefit to view the National Bonsai and Penjing Collection at the Arboretum.

Full registration fee is \$395. Note that places are limited due to venue size, so anybody wanting to attend is advised to book as soon as possible. As of January, there were only 40 remaining places available.

Further information is available at https://www.canberrabonsai.club/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=139:2025-aabc-bonsai-convention-3&catid=85&Itemid=2374

Please also note that we have received early notice that the 2026 Convention will be held in Hobart, Tasmania, on the first weekend of May. This is a fortnight earlier than usual but was necessary as there was a prior booking at the venue for the usual mid-May timing.



Federal Election Interruption to Our Program

We have been forewarned that the Chirnside Park Community Hub has been booked by the Federal Government as a pre-polling and polling booth for the upcoming Federal Election. Regrettably, they take precedence over all other prior bookings!

This may have an impact on our scheduled activities, however we will not know to what extent until the actual election date is announced. Members will be notified via email and Facebook of any event cancellations or changes in venue for our meetings and workshops.

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Volume 5 No 82
January &
February 2024

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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 2025*



The annual Nursery Crawl will be on Saturday 8th March, commencing at Colwyn Nursery in Monbulk at 9:30am and also visiting Conifer Gardens Nursery, Bonsai Sensation Nursery and Bonsai Art Nursery. Always a great trip to browse the trees on offer and hopefully uncover a gem or two. See separate article in this newsletter for details.



The monthly meeting on Tuesday 11th March at 7:30pm will feature special guest presenter Anne Vu, Madam Bonsai, who will talk on "Cedars". Great to have another viewpoint on this popular species. Display Table—"Cedars", or Member's Choice.



The Last Saturday of the Month Workshop will be on Saturday 29th March from 1:00pm to 4:00pm. Also featuring a critique session by Quentin Valentine on selected trees.



The monthly meeting on Tuesday 8th April at 7:30pm will feature a presentation by our own Grant L on "Style Design". Come along and hear Grant's take on this subject. Display Table—"Autumn Colours", or Member's Choice.



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



Other Events

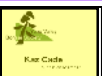


The Victorian Native Bonsai Club will hold their 2025 Exhibition on Friday evening 21st March from 5:30pm to 8:00pm, and Saturday 22nd March from 9:00am to 4:00pm. Preston City Hall, 284 Gower St, Preston. Entry \$7.



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. All of the Tree Profiles from previous newsletters are also contained on the website for members to consult or download.



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