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The Yarra Valley Bonsai Society Newsletter

Highlights from March & April 2025

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 March Club meeting featured a special guest presenter, Anne Vu from Madam Bonsai, who chose to speak and demonstrate on “Cedars”, with an emphasis on blue cedars. Anne presented a very entertaining and energetic talk and clearly demonstrated her wealth of knowledge and experience—she started in bonsai when she was 4 or 5 years old!

Anne said that she has a collection of over 6000 trees at home, of which around 200 are blue cedars. Because she has so many, she works on her trees all year round, including repotting—she just ensures that the repotted trees are kept out of the wind and in shade, and also waters the foliage as well as the soil.

Also due to the large number of trees, she has to slow the growth down and so only fertilizes in late Autumn in general, or selectively at other times on certain trees if she has some specific growth goal in mind.

After a hard cut back, feed well and place in full sun. Wait 8 weeks then trim again.

Her repotting method is quite simple—she cuts off the bottom third of the root ball and around the perimeter. She then soaks the tree in a rooting hormone solution overnight prior to potting up again—treating the tree something like a cutting.

Anne uses a soil mix comprising 50% very fine akadama, with other components including kanuma for drainage, and sand. She stated that blue cedars like an acidic soil.

Anne mentioned a couple of little gems of information:

- Fertile cascade trees n the cascade side only.
- A good fungicide is a solution of 1 part vinegar to 4 parts water—but keep off the soil when applying.
- When repotting, compact the new soil on the outside of the pot, and not so much on the inside.
- Big branches can be more easily bent if they are first split, then taped and wired. She said that this can also be done on maples!

Members greatly enjoyed Anne’s presentation which included some novel new ideas for us all to think about.

The April Club meeting featured our own Grant L who spoke on “Fundamentals of Style and Design”. Grant handed out a ready



Above - Anne Vu, Madam Bonsai, demonstrating her repotting technique on a cedar.

Calendar Dates:

- 13th May (Tuesday) YVBS Monthly Meeting. 7:30pm. Chirnside Park Hub.
- 16th to 19th May (Friday through Monday). AABC National Convention. Canberra.
- 31st May (Saturday) YVBS Sale Day. 10am to 1pm. Chirnside Park Hub
- 31st May (Saturday) “Last Saturday of the Month” Workshop. 1pm. Chirnside Park Hub.
- 8th June (Sunday) Tutored Workshops with Kimberly Halter. Chirnside Park Hub.
- 10th June (Tuesday) YVBS Monthly Meeting. 7:30pm. Chirnside Park Hub.
- 28th June (Saturday) “Last Saturday of the Month” Workshop. 1pm. Chirnside Park Hub.

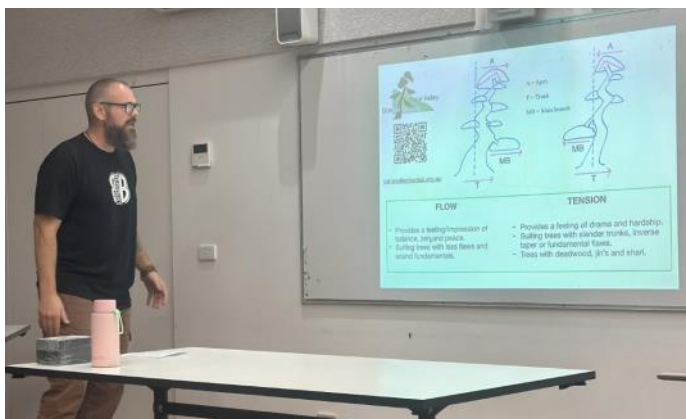
Highlights from March & April - Cont. From Page 1

reference sheet to members, spoke about certain design principles, and then had his audience look to the trees brought in by members to see how these principles had been applied.

The design principles Grant concentrated on were flow versus tension, and symmetry versus asymmetry.

He said that a tree in flow conjures words such as zen, peace and balance, which suits trees with sound fundamental qualities. Conversely, a tree in tension invokes drama and hardship, which suits with fundamental flaws.

For those members not present on the night, the Club has some additional copies of Grant's ready reference sheet on hand at our normal venue—see Marlene J if you would like a copy.



An additional important note was mentioned at the meeting by President Patrick on the suggestion made by Stephen G, that members using diatomite in their soil mix should be wary of the airborne dust. Diatomite is largely silica, and in light of the recent news regarding banning of constructed stone benchtops due to the danger of silicosis through inhaling silica dust during manufacture, it would be prudent for members to wear a good quality mask when handling dry diatomite. Note also that pumice typically contains a substantial amount of silica as well.

Left and Above - Grant L presenting on Design Principles, and leading member analysis of selected trees.



Kimberly Halter Workshops

Kimberly is a well regarded Bonsai Professional who operates the Bonsai Academy business from Toowoomba QLD.

Kimberly has studied under Australian and US Bonsai professionals and brings a wide range of experience to her bonsai teaching, demonstrations and workshops. She is known as the Queen of Black Pines which is her specialty, but of course has expertise in many other species as well.

We will be running tutored workshops on Sunday 8th June from 9am-12pm and again from 1-4pm. Cost is \$50 per session, and numbers are limited so as to give ample time to each participant. Bring along your own tree/s to work on under Kimberly's guidance and assistance.

There are a limited number of half day one-to-one private visits available on the 9th and 10th June. Cost is \$300, and Kimberly will visit your home to provide whatever guidance and assistance you require on your own collection.

Contact Lindsay H linhad14@gmail.com 0403 800 671 to book a spot for the Tutored Workshop or private visit.

Kimberly will also be presenting and demonstrating at our normal Club meeting on Tuesday 10th June on the subject of Pines. Should be a great session and not to be missed!



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.



Introduction to Bonsai Training Course

We will be running another Introduction to Bonsai Training Course in May in two parts—Saturday 10th May from 9am to 12pm, and Saturday 24th May from 9am to 12pm, at the Chirnside Park Community Hub. The cost is \$100 in total, and each participant will receive a comprehensive course booklet and a tree on which to work. The course is ideally suited to new members who are looking for a comprehensive introduction and overview to the art of bonsai.

Minimum numbers of participants have already registered, but we can accommodate a few more. Anybody interested in participating should immediately register with Lindsay H linhad14@gmail.com 0403 800 671, so we have time to print the appropriate number of booklets and source the trees.

Annual Sale Day 2025

Our Annual Sale Day is coming up on Saturday 31st May from 10am to 1pm at the Chirnside Park Community Hub. All available tables are fully booked, so we will have a bumper array of trees, pots, tools and materials on offer.

Of special note is that two tables have been booked for an Estate Sale of pots from our former member and treasurer Richard J. They will all be priced to sell as his family does not want to take anything home. Richard was involved with bonsai for 30+ years and his pot collection is impressive.

Pass the word to friends and acquaintances, and we hope to see all members there!



Left - Busy scene at the 2024 Sale Day.

Nursery Crawl 2025


Our annual Nursery Crawl was held in March, and for a change we were blessed with good weather! A good attendance of members and friends visited Coolwyn Wholesale Nursery in Monbulk, Conifer Gardens Nursey in Ferny Creek, Bonsai Sensation in Narre Warren South and Bonsai Art in Heatherton.

This was our first time visiting Coolwyn Nursery, but it hopefully won't be the last as all members took advantage of the great trees available at very attractive prices.

Special thanks to our member Nick R for arranging the visit to Coolwyn Nursery and also for opening up availability for his own stock held on site.

Members are invited to provide feedback to any Committee member about their preferences for the next nursery crawl in 2026.





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Critique at March Workshop

Noted local bonsai practitioner Quentin Valentine visited our Last Saturday of the Month Workshop in March on the invitation from Grant L, and performed a critique session on some members' trees. Quentin's insight and valuable suggestions were gratefully received and should lead to future improvements in many of our trees. Great to see Quentin out in the far east again after a gap of many years!

The following notes are for the benefit of attending members who may not have taken the opportunity during the session.

Lindsay H—Tristaniaopsis (Water Gum). Tilt slightly to the left, reduce heavy top and overall height, and work on extending branches.

Marlene J—Casuarina torulosa. Keep both trunks and tilt slightly. Remove stump near top and reduce foliage on secondary trunk to reduce growth. Wider and shallower pot.

Steve M—Prickly paperbark. Increase fertilizer and put in a water tray over summer. Larger pot. Move directional branch down slightly, reduce top branches, control vigour at the top.

Patrick—Eucalyptus vernicosa (Varnish Gum). Plenty of water, full sun. Change front, trim secondary trunk more than primary, lean secondary trunk forward. Remove stubs, rub off base suckers. Textured pot, reduced depth.

Stephen G—Coastal Tea Tree. Lots of water. Remove bottom part of strong top branch, tilt in movement direction. Front on current corner of pot. Reduce length of off branches or remove. Rustic looking pot.

John G—Chamaecyparis picifera. Yellowing through lack of water during a hot period. Needs wiring of all branches. Let shoots grow and then cut back. Does not back-bud.

Ken G—Leptospermum. Remove one of the tops, shorten branches on off side. Reduce branch length.

Lindsay H—Banksia integrifolia. Take heavy top branchlet off to make a more rounded top. Thin out.

Sohrab B—Juniper. Thin out before a workshop, tilt at extreme angle. Jin, shari down trunk.

Patrick I—Pine. Take off top, slight change of planting angle. Smaller, shallower pot.

Alison M—Chinese elm.



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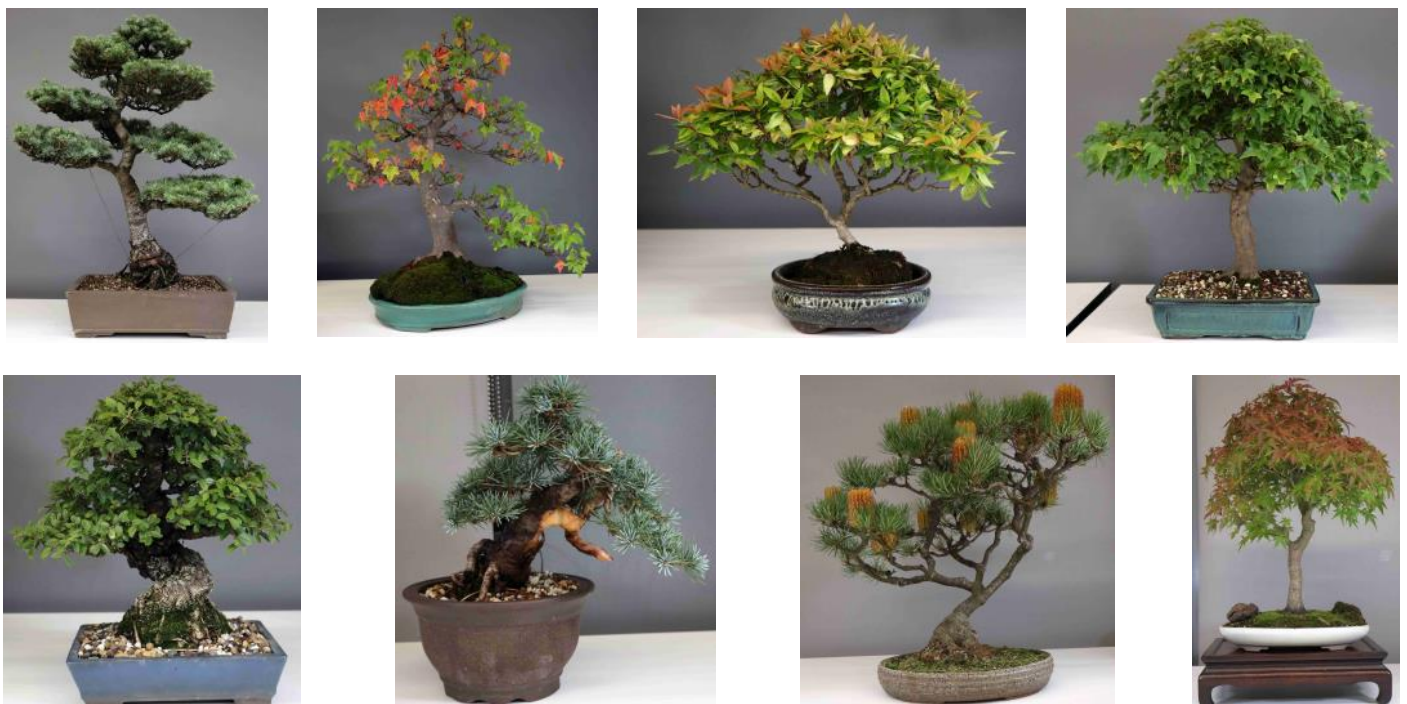
Visit our Facebook page and website BONSAISENSATION.COM.AU for more information



On The Display Table



A selection of trees on the Display Table at the March and April meetings.



Bonsai Calendar: May - June

As Autumn draws to a close, your deciduous trees have completed their growth cycle and are in preparation for dormancy. Evergreen varieties may not stop growing completely but their growth rate will slow down dramatically. Among many other tasks, winter is a great time to contemplate styling and restyling your bonsai (especially deciduous trees). Having the ability to see the skeleton of your trees will assist you in improving the basic branch structure and ramification of your bonsai.

Here are a few things to consider over the winter months.

- Remove all fruit and seeds from your trees as it can promote die back and disease.
- Once all the green leaves have changed or fallen you can begin cutting back on deciduous trees to shape with out fear of the tree bleeding.
- After all leaves have fallen, clean up all debris around your bonsai area (including the tops of the pots), to reduce potential homes and hiding places for pests.
- Any trees that have been protected from the summer sun can be pushed back into the open. The winter sun will promote bud development and tighten spring growth.
- Adjust your watering routine as your trees will be using less water. Rain may be more common. Avoid overwatering at this time of year as trees are extremely susceptible to root rot. Keep deciduous trees on the dry side to promote autumn colour.
- If possible, make a habit of watering at the warmest part of the day. This will give the excess water a chance to drain before the cold nights.
- Keep an eye on pots that get completely covered with moss. This may interrupt the water intake and increase the chance of root rot.
- May and June are the best times to do heavy pruning and shaping on most conifers.
- Wire and bend branches while trees are on the dry side of the watering cycle. This will improve the flexibility of the branches and so reduce cracking or breaking.

Fertilizing isn't required for any dormant trees, but evergreens can still benefit from a light feeding.

Kudos, Accolades and Thanks

- To the staff at Coolwyn Nursery for opening up for our visit on a Saturday morning during our Nursery Crawl.
- To Quentin Valentine for visiting our Club Workshop for a critiques session, after a very long absence.
- To Anne Vu, Madam Bonsai, for a very interesting and enthusiastic presentation 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.

After a one-off relocation of the Saturday workshop in April to Japara House due to our normal venue being used as a pre-polling centre for the Federal election, all future workshops will revert back to the Chirnside Park Community Hub.

Note that the May Last Saturday of the Month workshop will be immediately preceded by our Annual Sale Day, so come along early and maybe pick up a bargain. Any non-members attending the Sale Day are welcome to come along to the Workshop for advice and assistance on any purchases they have made.



Above - Members at work at the Saturday Workshop

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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
May & June 2025*



The monthly meeting on Tuesday 13th May at 7:30pm will feature special guest presenter Ali from Waverley Bonsai Group who will be speaking on "Artificial Rocks". Some of his creations seen at the Waverley Bonsai Shows have been incredible, so we expect to learn a lot—don't miss it! Display Table—"Forests or Groups", or Member's Choice.



Our Annual Sale Day will be on Saturday 31st May from 10am to 1pm, immediately preceding our normal Workshop. Not to be missed!



The Last Saturday of the Month Workshop will be on Saturday 31st May from 1pm to 4pm.



Tutored Workshops with Kimberly Halter from Queensland will be on Sunday 8th June, and private sessions on Monday 9th June and Tuesday 10th June, for those registered.



The monthly meeting on Tuesday 10th June at 7:30pm will feature special guest presenter Kimberly Halter from the Bonsai Academy in Queensland who will be speaking on "Pines". Our member David R who has seen her speak before describes her as "Queen of Pines", so should be a great night. Display Table—"Pines", or Member's Choice.



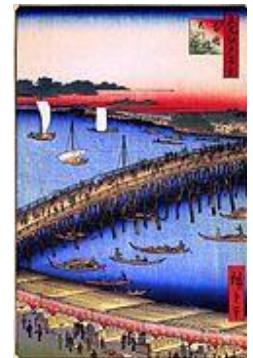
The Last Saturday of the Month Workshop will be on Saturday 28th June from 1pm to 4pm.



Other Events

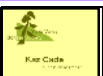


The AABC in conjunction with the Canberra Bonsai Society will hold the National Bonsai Convention in Canberra from Friday 16th May to Monday 19th May. Registrations have already closed.



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