

Summer 2017/18



SA Bonsai Newsletter

President's Report

Andrew Ward

Why do we repot our bonsai?

We might have any number of reasons to repot our bonsai but at the core of why we need to repot is that we must attend to the future health of our plants.

Other reasons to repot might include that the pot wasn't quite right, that the bonsai had outgrown its container, the soil was hydrophobic, or maybe even that the old pot was broken.

Many people ask why we prune the foliage and/or the roots on our bonsai when we repot. A 'scientific' explanation might refer to the release of auxins and gibberellins that encourage the vigour and health of the plant. In less scientific terms we might allude to balancing the energy of the plant above and below the soil so that our trees are able to flourish and grow.

Regular repotting and pruning is an essential element of creating bonsai. Neither can be avoided as without attending to the basic health needs of our growing plants, we cannot create and maintain living sculptures.

One can draw parallels between the need for repotting bonsai and keeping a club active and vibrant. The strength of your club very much depends upon the input of you, our members. While The SA Bonsai Society is a healthy and diverse group of people, strong enough to cater for many differences, we do need club members to participate actively in as many of our club activities that you are able. This is one way in which we can maintain our club's strength and establish your ownership of club events and successes.

In what element of SA Bonsai Society activities would you like to be more active?

Perhaps you're happy simply attending our meetings and workshops ... in which case perhaps you would consider helping with the set up or pack up, in the kitchen, at the library or helping others move their plants in and out of the hall. It takes considerable effort for our members to bring trees along to the club for competition and for some, just getting their trees from their car into the hall and back again might be the hurdle that prevents them from displaying their trees. How disappointing would it be to attend meetings where competition benches were not full?

Maybe you'd like to consider being on the committee. The priority of your committee is to provide activities to the members that promote bonsai, encourage and educate people in this horticultural pursuit. The focus of what we do is about people and their little trees. We need to ensure that our activities meet the needs of our members, and are at all times engaging and fun allowing you to remain involved and active into the future. Nominations are currently sought for committee members and we are seeking a person who would be capable in the role of Secretary and Treasurer. Our current Secretary, Philip Ekers, has held the position for the last 8 years and is not seeking re-election. Our current Treasurer, Malcolm Jenkins is resigning at the March AGM and his position will be filled from within the Committee, with election to the position at the 2019 AGM as per our Society Constitution. The Committee meets every 6 – 8 weeks throughout the year at each other's homes – if you'd like to know more then please speak with any of your committee members.

Throughout the year your club is involved in promoting bonsai in the broader community. This has been at events like The Japan Australia Friendship Association Kodomo no Hi, The Royal Adelaide Show, The ABC Gardeners' Market and The Festival of Flowers. We do need you to be involved in these events ... without your participation the contribution falls to the same group of people. Without our presence at these events we are failing to promote bonsai to a broader South Australian audience. Helping at these events might include helping to set up, helping to look after a display and give out brochures, helping to pack up, growing plants, providing display bonsai. It's a lot of fun, but with more people involved not only is the contribution shared, but you are winning as you are more involved in your club.

Have you read an interesting article on bonsai? Perhaps it was in a book from our Library or even from the internet, wherever you found the information and if you found it interesting the chances are that others will find the article interesting also. Please share information with Annie Reid, our Newsletter Editor, or with Philip Ekers or

Sue Hines who co-manage the club web-page with Annie. Electronic files can be shared through emailing this to any of your committee or through the contacts page that is found on the club website.

I know that our members have beautiful bonsai! Why are you not exhibiting and competing with them at The Royal Adelaide Show? There is good prize money, ribbons and certificates are awarded. You receive access to The Show to drop off and collect your bonsai, and if necessary, a parking pass for a brief period of time to swap over bonsai. Your bonsai are well looked after throughout The Show and their security is a consistent priority. Bonsai classes are in a number of categories and are shown as Open and Novice/Junior Sections. It is really worthwhile having a check on the schedule at www.theshow.com.au and this is another way of contributing further to your club and being a real part of a wider community.

Every year we organise club digs for members. In recent years our digs have not been well attended. We do however need to encourage each other to attend, and everyone can contribute to the success of the digs. If you have enough bonsai then you are likely to be in the position of being able to provide advice to newer members on suitable material to dig. Perhaps even being on site for a barbecue/picnic and social event would certainly add to the value of our digs. One consistent reason why people join clubs is as a social outlet ... let's make every time we meet an opportunity for further social intercourse! If we stop having digs then we are not providing the chance for members to seek out new material from 'the wild' and consequently not allowing for the development of more bonsai and people with the skills necessary to nurture bonsai into the future.

Our club organises regular visitors to South Australia. In the past we were only able to have one visitor every year, and if you had wanted further bonsai experiences you needed to travel. Club members are provided with subsidised access to our expert visitors and you are encouraged to attend their workshops and demonstrations. Best experiences are gained through participation but if you do not have a tree to work on at a workshop, you are able to gain much benefit from observing. Sometimes we need to put ourselves out of our comfort zone a little and give these experiences a chance. I know that your bonsai skills can only develop with each opportunity, please get involved.

Without members' support a club ceases to have purpose and will no longer exist. There are many areas and opportunities for members to be further involved in South Australian Bonsai Society activities and events – consider what small contribution you can make to your club and know that your contribution will repay you many times through your shared experiences, camaraderie and friendship, and increased knowledge. Bonsai really is a beautiful social leveller and provides a platform for people from many backgrounds to come together.

Just as it is important to renew the vigour of your bonsai through repotting regularly, it is also important to put into your bonsai time, energy, sunlight, air, water and fertiliser. Bonsai is rather like life itself, you only get out what you put in!

I truly hope that you have a safe and happy Christmas and New Year. I look forward to your invigorated participation and involvement in South Australian Bonsai Society activities in 2018.

Christmas Meeting December 2017





Time For Reflection

Novice winner – Alan Jabbs

Following the success of the 2017 SA Bonsai Show, several members have offered observations

Reflection 1: Marie Petersen

In March 1975, Janet Sabey and I organised this club's first Show. It was held in the Wayville Institute, a small old hall with white ants included. A Sunday afternoon, (2 hours to prepare), with trestles hurriedly covered in butcher's paper, afternoon tea, and a very small trading table, but no demonstrations. Admission was 40 cents, children and pensioners 20 cents.

Naturally every year it has improved, with different venues, better bonsai and a spring time event. The 2017 Bonsai Show was "World Class". I say this because there was a stunning olive of Janet's that won a World Bonsai photographic competition, some bonsai that had been previously on loan to the Canberra Arboretum, and some that had won Championships at the Royal Adelaide Show! Even the novice bonsai were of an extremely high standard.

The Goodwood Community Centre is ideal, and every year I think 'Wow' that was the best ever! With the table clothes, backdrops, accent plants, scrolls etc. the whole display looked stunning. Thanks to great publicity, we had long queues waiting for the opening.



'Outside the Square' – Malcolm Roberts

Some years ago we were receiving comments that it was 'static or sterile,' and always the same. Not anymore! It is now a very family-friendly hands on show. The children were happy to create their own bonsai and enter the 'discovery contest', the adults had coffee and cake with demonstrations to watch, and the huge trading table was buzzing, with plenty of trees and bonsai-related items.

The stage with 'Bonsai Outside the Square' created a lot of interest thanks to the participants.

So many happy, smiling people. Keeping up the community spirit, we raised money for the Cancer Council with the sale of cards, and for SIDS from the children's bonsai school. The clinic/information table was a great success. The public were able to bring bonsai or their purchased stock for advice and get information about the club. Consequently there were a record number of new members.

A big thank you must go to all the members who helped over the 3 days, some tirelessly the whole time, as without this support the show would not happen. Exhausting but worth it.

Reflection 2: Dennis Stevens

It was good to see so many people turn up on Friday to help with the set up.

On both days, there were a lot club members wandering around, talking to visitors and explaining the different styles and at times, explaining how the trees were developed and from where some trees originated as in those from nursery stock, those that were dug in the wild and some started as cuttings. People left smiling having learnt something of the various techniques that are used to start and the methods used to train and style them. The parents of the children who paid to start their own tree seemed just as interested as their children were. In the arena of the demonstrations the area always seemed to be full.



In the sales area there was a lot of stock to sell but I wonder if some of the items were really suited for possible novices who bought plants then realised that they don't have the knowledge to do anything with their purchase. What I am trying to say is that maybe we should be bringing plants for sale that would be easier for the beginners to work with – something like a bonsai even if it doesn't meet the standards that we are used to seeing at the club. They may be happy enough to join the club or at least come back next year for another go?

I also wonder if the trestles of plants shouldn't be marked to indicate the different species i.e. figs, maples, pines etc and if there could perhaps be a small group of members looking over the plants being brought in and even suggesting plants not be offered for sale if considered too difficult for the new practitioner. We should ask ourselves what could I do with this plant and if the answer is nothing then perhaps leave it home or put in the green waste bin. If the plant is saleable then we might consider attaching a small note with some suggestions on what to do with it and how to look after it. If they should lose the plant for whatever reason it might encourage them to come back next year and try again and talk to a member about what they think went wrong and how to avoid it next time.

All in all I enjoyed the two days of the show.

Reflection 3: Ruth Creedy

After a wonderful season, the October weekend of our show did not disappoint with outstanding weather.

The exhibition this year featured a number of entries that expanded the concept of bonsai to incorporate a more creative aspect of display. On the stage area of the hall we had members' response to Janet Sabey's challenge to show their work conceptually – thinking 'outside the box' of what is usually associated with classical bonsai. One suggestion was to create something with a typically 'Aussie feel', hence the bonsai inside the birdcage being admired by a cocky sitting outside the cage.



This display was well received by the public and obviously inspiring for club members.

As we've found in previous years, the appetite for bonsai grows at an amazing pace. With many house holders occupying smaller living spaces and having courtyard gardens or apartments, the art of bonsai captures people's imaginations and allows for creativity. Also, exposure through educational demonstrations at the Royal Show by our President and wonderful feature displays of bonsai, many are now seeing the benefit, skill and challenges involved in nurturing small trees.



With the mild season not many flowering bonsai were ready for display, but the lack of colour was well compensated by the excellence and variety of displayed plants, as well as a wonderful contribution by the local Ikebana chapter, colourful Temari balls, ceramics, driftwood, tables, scrolls, fretwork and a fantastic variety of plants and accents on the member's trade tables.

Another excellent idea was the addition of the coffee barista service in the demonstration area – this not only gave the public a chance to relax while watching demonstrations but also gave people time to contemplate the quality exhibition of novice trees.

Congratulations to everyone involved, the show grows better each year with many new members joining to experience the 'joy' that is bonsai.



Thinking about style

Annie Reid

Two of our more recent visiting demonstrators have stimulated discussions about the need to open ourselves to bonsai styles that rely less on Japanese tradition so that we become more sensitive to the natural growing habits of the tree at hand. This reflects a change of thinking as bonsai becomes a global interest rather than a purely Japanese pursuit.



Our own demonstrators, Matt Sharp and Luke Parsons summarised the debate very neatly at the October meeting.

Luke presented two Olives and asked us to describe the difference in style between them, at which point Ruth Creedy replied, 'one looks natural and the other like a clipped poodle'.

As the laughter subsided it was clear the point had been made and we realised that while one tree could be described as natural and the other artistic and that it remains a matter of taste, we do need to consider more thoughtfully how we style our trees.

Matt cited Rui Ferreira who suggested that we treat our Olives as though we're doing conifers in the Japanese method of bonsai styling. Rui maintains its an approach that European bonsai practitioners left behind 20 years ago when they realised that ancient Olives looked nothing like the ancient conifers of Japan and that bonsai-ists needed to look to the natural habits of indigenous Olives for inspiration. Of course we in Australia don't have the ancient Olives to draw on but the point is still valid and we can learn from it.

Similar points were made by visiting demonstrator, Averil Stanley when she spoke about styling Ficus. She acknowledged that while Australia has some beautiful Ficus varieties, we are inclined to be too influenced by classical Japanese bonsai styles when working with them. Instead, we should observe how Ficus grow in nature and emulate this when styling. This means a large irregular canopy shading the root system which in turn, encourages the development of aerial roots.



The debate brings to mind the words of John Yoshio Naka, 'The object is not to make the tree look like a bonsai, but to make the bonsai look like a tree'.

Besides issues of style, Matt also talked about the Jin (a once live branch) and Shari (a length of dead wood along a trunk or branch).

Jins work well on Olive, Conifer and Juniper bonsai as these are all hard woods and in the wild such trees maintain dead branches. However, deciduous trees are softwoods and lose dead branches which means creating Jins on such bonsai will tend to look awkward and out of place. The natural tendency for dead sections on deciduous trees is for them to hollow out and although a hardwood, the Olive can also do this as well. Matt explained the importance of identifying the sap flow within the trunk/branches of a tree before attempting to create a Shari. For example if one was attempted directly under a branch, it could ruin the branch. A Shari can also serve to concentrate the flow of sap and thereby help to thicken a trunk.

[Bonsai Empire](#) provides excellent tutorials on creating Jin and Shari.

A visit to China for a Penjing workshop

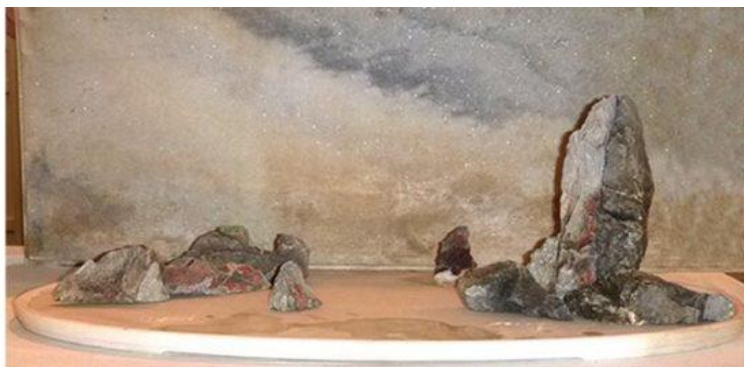
PhilipEkers



During late September this year I travelled to China to participate in the 'Five Masters Penjing Study Tour to Shanghai'

The course was organized by Penjing Australia group on the Australian end and conducted by Gianpietro Belotti (simply referred to as GP), an Italian businessman residing in China. The group consisted of around ten people from Australia, including a few native Chinese speakers.

We gathered in Shanghai ready to be transported to the venue and over the following three days of tuition, we were exposed to both the concepts and demonstrations concerning the five major styles of Penjing in China.



The venue provided by GP was in a word – simply magnificent. The calibre of the demonstrators and their ability to answer detailed questions 'right now' to assist our understanding was most appreciated. They were prepared to work very closely with us so we were shown one on one, where and why something was cut or not cut, and the exact direction of wiring – their approach was extremely valuable.

As a hands-on exercise, one afternoon we each created a 'rock landscape' under the tutelage of one of the Five Masters.

I can assure you that it is a lot harder than it looks! It took about an hour to complete and personally, I was exhausted when I had finished. Although I was reasonably happy with the result, those final little 'tweaks' by the master improved quite remarkably the symmetry and the perception of depth.

Later in the week the group visited a few select venues to view both public and private collections of Penjing, including the Shanghai Penjing Gardens. This was not my first visit to these gardens and they continue to amaze me. The improvements to English signage and the quality of displays have developed over the years and it continues to be a very worthwhile place to visit.

We also spent half a day at the Yangzhou Penjing Museum. Again, not my first visit but an experience I will never grow tired of.



Jottings from an accidental demonstrator

Philip Ekers



As part of the trip to China (discussed above) we also attended the 4th Zhongguo Feng Penjing Exhibition in Rugao, China

Rugao is approximately a three hours bus trip north west from Shanghai. We were collected from our hotel by a small bus and managed to squeeze the dozen delegates and their luggage on board in readiness for the uneventful trip on a typical Chinese freeway – four lanes each way – a strip of concrete as far as the eye can see.



The following morning, we attended the opening ceremony. As with other openings I have attended in China and elsewhere in Asia it was, by Australian standards, very long winded and elaborate with presentations to all and sundry. It seemed that anybody who was nobody was lauded and presented on stage.

The list of presenters in Rugao was a mix of well known presenters, some of whom I had previously seen and some embarking on their first international demonstration.

Robert Stevens of Black Scissors fame approached

Allan Harding and me asking if we could help him out. Allan and I responded that if we could we would. Robert proceeded to tell us that Pedro Morales was unable to make the event so would we select a tree from those available for demonstration, get up on stage and take Pedro's place doing the scheduled demonstration. (You may remember that a short time ago the Caribbean experienced a cyclone called Hurricane Maria. Consequently, Pedro Morales from Puerto Rico was unable to fulfil his demonstration obligation due to the cyclone).



To cut a long story short, Allan and I did the presentation. Allan was certainly the lead, giving direction about what to wire and where to jin. It was hot work in front of the very large LED display but the three hours seemed to fly by and at the end of it we had a tree we were happy with.

Doing the demonstration gave me a new perspective and respect for those who go up on stage. It made my subsequent interaction with other presenters more open and engaging and turned out to be absolutely one of the best things I've done. Not only did it force me from my comfort zone, it moved me from being a spectator to a participant.

A challenging and rewarding conclusion to a great trip!

For beautiful examples of Shohin displayed at the exhibition, view the [Bill Valavanos blog](#).



Alan Jabs visits the Crespi Bonsai Museum

Having had a stellar year in the bonsai world with the massive convention in Saitama, our own convention here in Brisbane and all the other bonsai related events, workshops, functions and simply backyard chats, I needed one more extraordinary experience to simply finish it off.

Well, the opportunity came with a visit Italy in late October/early November and after some research it was found that the Crespi Bonsai Museum was in Milan and not far from where I was staying while on that part of my travels.

So, early one damp morning I found myself at the Milan Central railway station catching a train to Parabiago (the closest station to the museum) and from the station, a walk of around three kilometres to the Crespi location.

Preconception had me believing it was a large place and indeed it was. The exhibition trees in the museum run in a semi circle area that despite the late autumn had many trees still on display including the semi tropical trees in the warmer area. Given free range (as I was the only person there at the time) I wandered and took photos, observing each tree and taking it all in.

The large space comes when entering the retail area where there is everything you can think of available for sale including an in-house produced magazine and guide booklets. Everything written in Italian made it a little difficult to read but descriptive images worked for me and I now have a couple of copies here at home. The area outside the nursery is also very large with the retail trees separated from those growing on in what looked to be around two acres of space. Clearly as Crespi has been around since 1991 the bonsai market here in Italy and Europe must be good business.

Unfortunately the Japanese garden was closed the day I visited so I leave that for a possible return trip.

They also hold exhibitions and teach all things bonsai with a wonderful area set aside for this purpose. Classes and demonstrations can be attended if you pre plan your visit to match the scheduled dates for such events.

The small entrance fee of four euros for the museum area is well worth handing over and the staff are all very friendly and keen to assist where they can. Indeed as the rain began to fall very heavily, the offer to drive me to the station was eagerly accepted and with my purchases in hand and the short drive I was soon back at the station and waiting for the return train to Milan.

Background on the Crespi Bonsai Museum and display

Opened in 1991, the Crespi Bonsai Museum, became the first permanent bonsai museum in the world, born from Luigi Crespi's resolution to allow everyone to admire a precious collection, including centuries-old plants, antique pots and books and manuscripts from Asia.

The Crespi collection consists of around two hundred trees, exposed on rotation according to seasons, since every species has a better moment to be exposed.

Year after year the collection improves, thanks to the devoted care of Luigi Crespi and the interventions of Master Nobuyuki Kajiwarra.

The masterpiece of the collection is the millennial *Ficus retusa* linn, placed at the centre of a pagoda between two nineteenth-century wooden Chinese temple dogs. on other tables of solid slate are displayed numerous other authentic specimens, many well over a hundred years old and trained by famous Japanese masters, among which are the works of Kaneko, Kato, Kawamoto, Kawahara and Ogasawara.

The collection of bonsai containers includes antique Chinese containers from the Ming and Ching dynasties. Of extreme value also is the library which houses both antique and modern volumes, precious incunabula and rare texts from all over the world. A place of importance is occupied by a reconstruction of the *Tokonoma* the corner which in every Japanese house is set aside for the displaying of objects of spiritual significance. The beautiful collection is tastefully complemented with authentic furnishings among which are antique Japanese lamps.

For more details about the Crespi Bonsai Museum

Useful information

[How to create an exposed root pine bonsai](#)



Meeting Venue:

Goodwood Community Centre
Rosa St
Goodwood

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