

Autumn 2019



SA Bonsai Newsletter

AGM March 2019

Following elections at this year's AGM we congratulate **Matthew Sharp** who becomes the club President for the next two years and **Terry Bertozzi** who continues in the role of Treasurer. **Luke Parsons** will temporarily fill the position of Vice President until that position comes up for election next year. **Heather Matthews** has resigned from the committee and we thank Heather for all the work she has done to support the smooth functioning of the club. **Andrew Ward** will remain on the committee which is most fortunate as we will continue to benefit from his experience and expertise.

President's Report

Matt Sharp

Welcome Everybody to the first newsletter for 2019.

Firstly, I need to acknowledge Andrew Ward as the outgoing President and give a huge thanks for the amazing efforts he has put into the club during his tenure. His passion, energy and commitment have seen the club grow and prosper, and we have been fortunate to have him represent us. Thanks Andrew.

I'm really pleased to take on the role of President, mainly because this club has been very good to me and I'm keen to give something back. When I first joined the club nearly 20 years ago I thought I already knew a lot about Bonsai, but it became clear pretty quickly that there was a lot to learn. Luckily back then, as now, there were plenty of people who were happy to pass on their knowledge and techniques and so I was able to progress through the Novice and Intermediate sections and eventually got to a point where people started to ask *me* questions. So now I want to give others the opportunities that I've had, to learn the practices and methods of creating Bonsai, to better understand the aesthetics and philosophy behind the practice, and to seek feedback on their own trees and see what others are doing with theirs. Also important is to meet like minded people who are happy to spend hours talking about trees!

I encourage everyone to take full advantage of the resources the club has to offer, whether it's from the library, the experienced members or the Scotch Fingers from the kitchen. What I love about our club is that it doesn't matter if you have just a couple of trees on a balcony or a whole backyard full of them that are threatening to completely take over, or if you just want to learn how to keep your trees alive or you want to really push the boundaries of this ancient practice, when you come to a club meeting or workshop you can always find someone to help you realise your goals. My advice is to find those that have bonsai you admire and start asking questions. It's easy, we have a great club full of friendly people, and everyone likes talking about their own trees!

What would I like to see in the future? I'd like the standard of our trees to continue to improve and the confidence of our members grow with their trees. I look forward to seeing the next wave of club members who will become the future presenters and committee members. I'd also like to see us develop a local style that matches the trees we see in the wild and an increased representation of local species. But aside from these aspirations I mostly just look forward to our regular meetings where I get a chance to talk to fellow bonsai enthusiasts and admire their trees.

See you at the next meeting.

Exhibition Certificates awarded for 2018

Open Section

- 1st Chris Drinkwater
- 2nd Sven Kuusk
- 3rd Matt Sharp

Intermediate Section

1st Boyce Carnie
2nd Jenni Carnie
3rd Malcolm Roberts

Novice Section

1st Luke Swalling
2nd Joseph Rabig
3rd Malcolm Jenkins; Brett Harrison

Visiting Tutor Program for 2019

We have another exciting year ahead with visits from three excellent bonsai demonstrators.

Club members are urged to take advantage of these opportunities by securing a spot as soon as bookings open. Keep in mind that the club subsidises this program to ensure that costs to members are kept to a minimum.

Each of these tutors brings a wealth of experience that you can take advantage of so start looking through your trees and find the one that most challenges you or that you're despairing of and make it a project for a workshop.

If you're new to participating in the visiting tutor program and don't have suitable material to work on, keep in mind the 'club junipers' available for sale at monthly meetings.

There is often good 'starter' material available on Member's Sales Nights so don't miss the next one scheduled for the workshop night in June.

Take a look at the [guidelines for workshop participation](#) to familiarise yourself with how a session with a visiting demonstrator is conducted.

Normally each demonstrator offers two half day sessions on each day of a weekend and members can book in for more than one session if they wish. The cost for a session is usually about \$30 and the number of participants is limited to about eight, however, these details will be clarified closer to the time of the visit.

There are a few places still available for the Tony Bebb workshops. Email the Secretary if you wish to secure one.

Three opportunities not to be missed!

February featured the Ficus

Annie Reid



This f. rubiginosa, is 6 years old, grown from seed. The root over rock style still incorporates the rounded canopy of a natural Pt. Jackson fig.

Little wonder that February is the time to concentrate on our fig trees. They enjoy the warm summers and while they thrive in the humidity of the tropics, they generally don't disappoint in our drier climate.

There were excellent examples of ficus bonsai on exhibition at the first meeting for 2019 and this was further enhanced with demonstrations from Philip Ekers and Luke Parsons.

While ficus will grow in full sun, Philip keeps most of his under 70% shade in the heat of summer. To avoid the long growth that occurs at this time of year he avoids feeding the trees in the spring, waiting until February to regularly apply liquid fertiliser and this regime continues until colder nights become the norm.

Philip defoliates all of his figs in February to ensure that the leaves remain small and he confines repotting to the period between New Year's Day and Australia Day. He repots his figs every 3-4 years.



This f. rubiginosa is 6 years old, grown from seed. It was recently defoliated in order to be able to see the whole before restructuring.

Luke began his address by spruiking the fruit that can be found on a beautiful old *Ficus rubiginosa*, commonly known as 'Pt Jackson' fig, located in Halsey Road, Fulham (near No 95). As he sent around a bag of fruit for people to select from, he explained how the fruit contains hundreds of seeds that will readily germinate when spread on some perlite.

As well as the Pt Jackson fig, Luke's other favourite figs are *Ficus retusa*, commonly known as 'Tiger Bark' fig and *Ficus thonningii* or 'Strangler' fig. Others mentioned as suitable for bonsai were *Ficus salicifolia* or 'Willow Leaf' fig and *Ficus rubiginosa* var. 'Little Ruby'.



Ficus retusa, 5-6 years old from a cutting. The Tiger Bark fig tends to shed old leaves quite readily, and needs to be cut back regularly in order to promote ramification and a canopy of fresh green growth.

It was clear from the ficus that Luke brought to talk about, that he favours the root-over-rock style and he made the process of creating one sound very easy – spread the roots of a seedling over a thoughtfully selected rock; secure the roots to the rock with sphagnum moss and cover this with aluminium foil before submerging in soil.

To stress the importance of protecting roots in contact with a rock in the heat of summer, one of his trees had layers of fabric covering it to illustrate how necessary it is to protect the roots from a rock that will readily heat in direct sun.

It was interesting to compare the way two different practitioners approached the task of keeping the leaves small on their tree because while Philip totally defoliates, Luke cuts off only the larger outer leaves to enable the smaller, inner leaves to continue to provide energy for the tree as it develops structure. While demonstrating how he goes about this process, Luke also explained the importance of keeping bonsai tools clean to ensure disease isn't spread and for this he uses the multi purpose cleaner, Gumption.

Something I found particularly appealing about Luke's ficus bonsai was the predominance of the Banyan style, making his trees look more natural than the contrived appearance that can occur when the more traditional form of Japanese pine styling is employed.

Malcolm's mechanical stands

At the March meeting Malcolm Roberts gave a short presentation about his new venture into constructing bonsai stands from old machine parts.

These creative and highly unusual constructions provide impetus to exhibit bonsai in ways that break with convention and challenge the traditions we have come to expect.

In this respect they should set us thinking about new approaches that perhaps better reflect where we live and the type of trees we shape into bonsai.



Keeping Junipers healthy

Ruth Creedy is often asked about her methods for keeping her junipers so lush and healthy.

Certainly the cascade juniper she exhibited at the March meeting is testament to her feeding regime.

Below is her summary of information about Junipers and some her growing techniques.

JUNIPERUS (cupressaceae) Preferable pH 5.5 > 7.0

Main species favoured for bonsai:

Juniperus communis (the cones are used to flavour gin)

Juniperus chinensis



Juniperus procumbens
Juniperus squamat

Junipers are widely distributed around the world – Europe, Africa, Asia, North and Central America, West Indies and the Canary Islands.

The Rocky Mountain Juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*) can live for 2000+ years.

Juniperus communis has the widest distribution from Greenland and Siberia to the mountains of North Africa.

While Junipers as a group are extremely hardy and ideal bonsai subjects, our water and soils in SA are generally fairly alkaline and so I've found mine respond well to some **additional acid**.

- Grow them in the open where possible, in full sun for most of the day and plenty of air movement.
- Plant in a very open mix.
- Water well every other day until you see water drain from the base of the container – allow to dry out in between.
- In autumn (March) and spring (Aug-Sept) use MANUTEK ACID PLANT FOOD (previously known as Miracid). Dissolve 2 heaped measures in your small blue bonsai watering can and apply to the soil and over the roots but NOT to the foliage. Alternatively, use YATES ACITONE – sprinkle 5gms of the powder on the soil and water in well.
- At other times use a good pelletised fertilizer like SEAMUNGUS and water in well or use POWERFEED. Powerfeed diluted can be applied over foliage, especially before winter. This will help them to power away in the spring.

93rd Kokufu-ten 2019

Alan Jabs

Japan is a very big draw when one says *bonsai*. There is so much to see and the Japanese seem to have an exhibition or event almost weekly so with Tokyo an easy destination to get to from Adelaide, my choice was to attend the 93rd Kokufu-ten.

The trip was twelve months in the planning after sourcing information from others who had attended the 2018 version (92nd). The Kokufu-ten is primarily for the professionals to exhibit their best along with the owners who can have their trees maintained by those deemed to offer the best chance to win celebrated awards handed out by the Nippon Bonsai Association who now facilitate and run the event.



So with flights, hotel and rail passes all booked several weeks of bonsai was ahead of me. After checking into my hotel in Ueno it was time to plan what to do and when keeping in mind that it was February and still winter in Japan.

Early on the Monday morning I am outside the gates with around one hundred others in the lightly falling snow and promptly at the correct time the gates are opened and we filter in. Tickets purchased, I am free to wander and be amazed. Spread over several levels in the building, the lower level focusses on the more traditional sized trees and the Mame and Mini's are on the mezzanine floor.

This is the 93rd Kokufu-ten exhibition but interestingly I discovered that this doesn't mean that it has been running for 93 years because in

earlier years they held this event twice a year for several years to highlight the changing seasons in the trees presented. The very first Kokufu-ten was held in March 1934 in Ueno at the Tokyo Prefectural Art Museum then run by an organisation called Kusamura-kai headed by one Toshio Kobayashi. He is an interesting person and famous within the Japanese Bonsai community (and not related to Kunio Kobayashi) where he dedicated much of his life to Bonsai including running the shows as well as being the editor and writer for a Bonsai magazine for fifty years.



I had the pleasure of being greeted at the door by Shinji Suzuki (Bonsai Master) where we discussed my previous visit to the Saitama Convention in 2017 and recalled my visit to his garden. Later I saw Bill Valavanis while wandering the hall and these two experiences set up the day as something special. I later had the chance to sit next to Bill on the bus to Ueno Park so we discussed the weather among other topics (his very cold Rochester and mine very hot Adelaide 48c).



Shinkyo Bridge, Nikko

The crowds swelled quickly and filled the walkways with all of us appreciating the display before us. One hundred and fifty one displays and nearly two hundred individual trees filled the exhibition area. It was interesting to see that the locals for the most part simply walk continuously without stopping at each tree and as a consequence are done in a short time. For me the visit took several hours.

The exhibition has two parts spread over ten days. During the first four days and the last four days there are different trees presented, which means to appreciate the whole of Kokufu-ten, one must be there for at least ten days.

Attached to the Kokufu-ten is a free shuttle bus to the [Ueno Green Club](#) which is itself, an institution in Bonsai in Japan. If one could try and describe the best lolly store for Bonsai this would be it. Trees of all sizes, stones, tools, pots, magazines, antique everything. From the inexpensive to *'if you have to ask you cannot afford it'*. Using my first trip to the Green Club as a reconnaissance, several items were purchased but I kept the more expensive items for the visit later in the week.

With several days until my next visit to the Kokufu-ten later in the week, filling in the days is not difficult. Having a Japan Rail pass allows unlimited travel on all JR trains including the Shinkansen or Bullet Trains. One day was spent in Nikko north of Tokyo, another in the Japanese Alps to see the snow monkeys near Nagano, a third picking up my order of Masakuni Bonsai tools from the factory and finally into the 'fabric town' in Nippori to see if I could secure Japanese themed fabric to take home for Carol my lovely and very understanding wife who is an avid quilter.

Below: Good friend Ikko and me – Tokoname



I also made a full day visit to Tokoname to see good friend and master potter Ikko Watanabe. We spent several hours at his recently

renovated studio, then to his house to see his trees followed by a lunch. The rest of the day was spent walking the potters trail around Tokoname.

Ikko's wife, Kei, is also a very good potter and I am the proud owner of not only some of Ikko's fine work but a personal gift of a pot from Kei. The world of Bonsai never fails to amaze me with the opportunities and people one meets.

With the second part of the Kokufu-ten now available the gates opened punctually and we all make our way back into the exhibition.

Again we find another 151 exhibits with a similar number of trees. It is immediately noticeable that the main trees are all larger and there are no Mame upstairs but instead the more traditional mid sized trees (except in the area set aside for the very small mini's where we find around a dozen collective displays).

Today it is Kunio Kobayashi who is found wandering the aisles and I am able to offer a respectful greeting before he is gone.



Again the locals for the most part filter through, barely stopping – me another several hours. Today we also

have a bonus as on several floors above is a Suiseki exhibition. Almost equal in the number of stones exhibited to that of the Kokufu-ten exhibition downstairs, the 6th Japan Suiseki Exhibition featured some significant stones. The star attraction was a unique golden hued stone with a 500 year old history shared between China and Japan and now residing in Kyoto. The small entry fee offers access to the world of stones in Japan with some significant stones, pots and trays on display.

After all this, its back to the Green Club where I discovered that the building has upper floors also loaded with all those treasures one just has to have. A perfect end to the day!



To round off this trip I again visit Omiya and the Bonsai Village. To my surprise I find in the Bonsai Museum that they also have a display of the early Kokufu-ten including many of the Bonsai Magazines edited by Toshio Kobayashi.

My last day was spent across the island to Niigata, a city on the Sea of Japan. Travelling through the alps yet again, the snow only stopped around ten kilometres from the coast.

Japan offers much in the world of Bonsai and is easy to get to from Australia. This is my sixth trip up there and will not be my last. Adelaide shares much with Japan including a sister city Himeiji. I can personally recommend a visit here in spring when the cherry blossom is in full swing.

There are Bonsai shows and exhibitions held throughout the year all over Japan which cater to all tastes so attending something that interests you is easy. All one has to do is find the time which I can guarantee will be well spent.

I am fortunate that I can experience what is on offer in all my travels. I am also excited that my submission of two articles to the BCI Bonsai magazine on the Kokufu-ten and one on accent plants at the Kokufu-ten, has been accepted and will appear in the May and August editions.

Accent Plants and Bonsai

The focus of the April meeting was a lively presentation by Luke Parsons about how we can present bonsai with accent plants in a more thoughtful way.

Luke prefaced his approach by reminding us that *Bonsai is an Art > Art is Communication > so what are we saying with our bonsai?*

When an accent plant or figurine or rock accompanies a bonsai, we should ask ourselves what is being communicated? Is it a sense of place, a feeling, a season or is it to convey a sense of formality or informality.

Using bonsai and accent plants/items Luke and Matt demonstrated how different ideas can be conveyed by bringing different items together. It illustrated that many aspects need to be considered which makes the decision not quite as simple as it first looks. Firstly there is the style of the bonsai itself as well as the style of its own pot. The stand that this sits on must also be considered and then comes the nature of the accent item to accompany the whole. Bringing these elements together in a way that meaningfully conveys a sense of place or a season must be carefully thought about if the viewer is to make the connection.

Useful resources about displaying bonsai with accent plants

[Kusamono – Young Choe](#)

[The Art of Bonsai Display – Ian Barnes](#)

[Sydney City Bonsai Club Newsletter](#)

A life within two cultures – *Nature's Child*

Alan Jabs

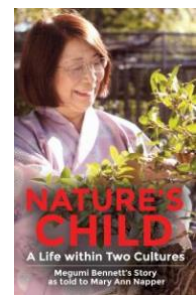
Anyone remember libraries?

Well they are still out there and open for all to make use of. Recently we too wondered what our library still had to offer and surprise, surprise – membership opens the world to not only your own local library but all libraries in South Australia as they are now one big resource where you can borrow from any of them from your local branch.

So in checking out my local and renewing the all important card, I checked for any Bonsai books (I do not already have) and was surprised to find a local book all about one of our own.

Many will know Megumi Bennett from Sydney who is a regular at conventions as well as active in the Bonsai scene in and around where she resides.

An autobiography written by Mary Ann Napper details Megumi's life from the early days in Japan through to moves to Australia as well as detailing her Bonsai experiences and achievements.



The book has many images supplied by Megumi to add to the read. So next time you are looking for a distraction from the daily grind head to the library for a look.

You never know what you may find ...

Generous Donations to the SA Bonsai Society Raffle

Each year some club members are prepared to donate prizes for the various raffles that assist to keep us financially buoyant and add to the fun of being part of the club.

We wish to acknowledge the generosity of the following who have donated trees, pots and other bonsai accessories over the last six months:

Jenni Carnie
Boyce Carnie
Chris Drinkwater
Mavis Dutschke
Philip Ekers
Howard Hamon
Greg Horner
Janet Sabey
Matt Sharp
Hugo Welling

Meeting Venue

Goodwood Community Centre
Rosa St
Goodwood

Postal Address: PO Box 159, Goodwood, SA, 5034

Patrons: Dorothy Koreshoff, Carlien Walter

Office Bearers:

President: Matthew Sharp

Vice President: Luke Parsons

Secretary: Annie Reid secretary.sabonsai@gmail.com

Treasurer: Terry Bertozzi

Assistant Treasurer: Joseph Rabig

Newsletter Editor: Annie Reid

Committee:

Jenni Carnie

Philip Ekers (assistant to the Secretary)

Howard Hamon

Greg Horner

Malcolm Roberts

Janet Sabey

Andrew Ward

Hugo Welling