

# Spring 2018



## SA Bonsai Newsletter

### Visiting demonstrator – Joe Morgan-Payler

Annie Reid

As part of AABC Visiting Demonstrator Program, we were fortunate to secure the expertise of Level 1 bonsai practitioner, Joe Morgan-Payler, who conducted four weekend workshops and a demonstration at our July meeting. Joe has been practising bonsai since 1999 and since that time has made numerous visits to Japan, including studying under Mr Urushibata.

During his meeting demonstration Joe worked with a Juniper procumbens. As he considered how he might restyle the tree, he talked to us about several important aspects of bonsai practice which served to help clarify our thinking and reinforce those all-important points that can begin to fade in the hubbub of all that we are attempting to manage.

While he thought about how he might style or rework the Juniper in front of him, Joe began ‘cleaning’ the tree by removing downward growing branches and downward growth on other branches. He also reduced back to two branches at junctions where three or more were growing. He explained that this cleaning process gave him a chance to ‘get to know’ the tree as the initial first step in deciding what to do with it.

### The pinching/cutting debate



Only the long extensions should be pinched.

We’ve encountered the conflicting opinion about whether it is preferable to pinch Junipers to keep their shape or cut them and most would agree that Joe clarified this for us with a most convincing argument.

He suggests that the Japanese view on this has been ‘lost in translation’ to the point where we have begun to do damage to Junipers. When the Japanese talk about pinching foliage they are referring to the long vigorous extensions on scale type junipers such as *Shimpaku*.

They do not advocate pinching back new growth all over the tree (every shoot) as a method of maintaining shape because this technique will eventually damage the tree. Joe likened the constant pinching back of new growth to the annual pruning of a Cypress hedge which over time leaves the hedge with foliage confined to the very outside while the interior is a mass of bare branching. This is because when the new tips are removed, the tree will bud back closer and closer to that pinched tip with each successive year, eventually leaving the branches bare and leading to die back.

The correct method is to cut back into the branch structure deeper than where you eventually want the pad to be and then let the branch grow out to that point. This method also means that because buds are not being cut, there will be no browning of tips.



### Wiring technique

Joe is an advocate for using copper wire for styling because of its superior holding power which means that not only will the branch remain in position but only half the wire thickness is required in comparison to aluminium wire. Copper wire is therefore less visually intrusive and makes for a neater finish.

The correct wiring technique was carefully explained and the need to practice **transition wiring** was emphasised to ensure the best results. Transition wiring involves selecting the right sized wire for each section of the branch as it moves from its thickest section to the thinner tip area. Joe stressed the need to make one and half wraps beyond the point where you need to stop to change wire thickness so that no gaps exist between the change of wire size.

## Other important wiring advice:

- Fine wire used on the tips should be hooked backwards to prevent the tip from unravelling from the wire.
- If the purpose is to bend down a branch, the first wire wrap should be on top of the branch and vice versa.
- Wire should be only just touching the bark.
- Avoid crossing wires as it adds additional compression to the branch.
- To avoid excessive movement and damage to the branch during wiring, pinch the previous wrap with one hand to support the branch while the next wrap is made.
- Use pliers to give more control/strength to your wrapping arm.
- If in doubt, it is preferable to choose slightly thicker wire to ensure the branch doesn't move during bending rather than have undersized wire on a tree that will not hold.
- Avoid wiring pines and junipers when soft, delicate growth is apparent.
- Wire deciduous trees when they are bare (autumn/winter) or when they have been defoliated.
- Sap flow in conifers is reduced in winter so this is a good time to do strong bending.



During the demonstration Joe asked how many of us enjoy wiring and while there were a couple of enthusiasts, the groans within the audience were generally more numerous. His response was to liken wiring to a 'task-based meditation' and that we could and should be motivated by the knowledge that good wiring technique will provide very satisfying results for the tree.

He also suggested that we need to be realistic because as our trees develop and improve, they will require an even greater time commitment from us. This may mean that a collection has to be reduced over time to ensure that those tree remaining are managed properly and given the attention and time that will result in their refinement.

## Weekend workshops



Twenty four club members participated the weekend workshops, some of whom are our most experienced practitioners while others are beginning their bonsai journey.

The range of material worked on during each workshop varied considerably – there were large trees that had either recently been dug or had been left to grow for several years, and at the other end of the scale were trees that had been worked on previously but required Joe's 'fresh eye' to enhance the styling and refinement.

Below are the views of some of those who participated in one or more of the workshops.

**John Newland:** Firstly, Joe's task orientation and time management. He quickly assessed my tree, a black pine, came up with a plan and got me to work. Then, he demonstrated his preferred wiring method and backed this up with logical explanations. When the time came to bend the tree into shape, he explained his vision for it and the various steps that



will be required to advance it over the next year or so.

Put simply, he is a no-nonsense, clear communicator and obviously an expert bonsai exponent. Should he conduct future workshops, I would definitely attend.

**David Shields:** What a great experience the workshop was. A great group of people were given a chance to explore and use the brilliant insight into Joe's take on design, wiring and all of us were guided and given time to ask questions pertaining to our trees. I for one was thrilled with my result and inspired to go home and put into practice things I had learnt. No one was made to feel silly or inadequate by Joe who has a great knack of being able to explain in detail without becoming boring or talking down to people. I had not attended a workshop for some time and I definitely chose the right one to lift my creativity and the will to better wiring. Thank you so much for the capable organising, hope everyone enjoyed it as much as I did.

**Malcolm Jenkins:** Joe showed an excellent knowledge of all the trees presented by participants at the workshop. His styling ability was very good and he was able to explain some very useful wiring principles. I would definitely do another workshop with Joe if given the opportunity.



Often club members are reluctant to attend workshops because they don't have exactly the right material and there is always the message to discourage attending with what amounts to a 'twig in a pot'. However, neither does the material always have to be a fabulous *yamadori* from last year's dig. As I was deciding what to take to the workshop from my own meagre collection, Joe emphasised that material that has been neglected or that you feel frustrated with or that you've come to a dead-end with, can make ideal material for a workshop.

We all had a great time and learnt a tremendous amount so if you've been vacillating about attending visiting demonstrator workshops, don't miss the next one.

Special thanks to Heidi Timpano and her husband Luigi for hosting us over the weekend.

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## Learning from the Melbourne 2018 AABC Bonsai Convention

*Malcolm Jenkins*

Michael Simonetto delivered a presentation on bonsai styling. The subject matter was very much in the same vein as can be associated with the Black Scissors styling approach. Consequently the presentation was, perhaps, not the most popular of discussion topics amongst the hard core bonsai audience. The thrust of the presentation compared the

expressionist styling approach with an impressionist styling approach. And for those of you who don't know what I'm talking about, the expressionist will visualise a more artistic representation of a tree, much like most of the bonsai styles we frequently see in bonsai magazines whilst the impressionist will provide an impression of a tree as much identical to how the tree presents in nature. If you look at the two ash trees pictured below (exhibited at the Melbourne conference) you can see how the different styles are presented.

Michael's main argument is to present a tree that exhibits a balance between the attributes of 'dynamic'



and “vitality” and a style that looks similar to how the actual tree presents in nature rather than having all species in your collection look like a pine tree with drooping branches. Often in nature a tree will look quite chaotic and to copy verbatim would produce a very confusing and unattractive picture. The trick therefore is to remove the chaos and to enhance the major attractive lines that present in nature. Michael used a very clever pictorial tool to show a real tree branch structure and then over a series of slides he gradually removed the clutter (e.g. crossing & parallel branches) to reveal a very pleasing branch structure that moved towards the heavens rather than the ground.

One of Michael’s recommendations for your deciduous tree is to prune for shape and direction rather than using wire and always look at the fundamentals e.g. nebari, taper etc. and with the crown coming towards the viewer.

Styling of your bonsai is obviously a personal preference and the impressionist style for bonsai is not to everybody’s liking. For my collection I think that a balance of both stylistic approaches will provide for an interesting display.

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## Preparing for the October Bonsai Show

**Don’t forget** that there is a \$100 prize for the most creative entry in the **Having Fun with Bonsai** section of the display. This section of our show attracted lots of interest last year so its time to get involved.



### Reminders about selling stock

- It is important that all materials for sale are of a quality and price appropriate to maintaining our good name. The nominated Sales Stewards have the authority to reject material.
  - All items must have the appropriate tag clearly indicating price and personal code. The tags should be properly secured to items (to avoid tag swapping).
  - All sellers must register their code with the Treasurer and indicate how they wish to be paid after the show.
  - The club will charge 20% commission on items sold on behalf of members.
  - There may be a limit on the number of items accepted for sale. It is suggested that on the Friday, sellers only bring what fits within a square metre to ensure that everyone’s material is accommodated.
  - All items for sale must be your personal property.
  - All potted bonsai presented for sale must have been potted for a minimum period of six weeks prior to the show.
  - If assisting at the show, members cannot assist in the sale of their own material.
  - Members no longer have to exhibit to sell stock.
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## The Art of Bonsai Display – Ian Barnes

Ian Barnes is a longtime member of Bonsai Northwest in Victoria and he has very generously given us access to this series of six articles.

Their arrival is most timely given that we are preparing our trees for the October show so be sure to go through them carefully.



[Art of Bonsai Display – part 1](#)

[Art of Bonsai Display – part 2](#)

[Art of Bonsai Display – part 3](#)

[Art of Bonsai Display – part 4](#)

[Art of Bonsai Display – part 5](#)

[Art of Bonsai Display – part 6](#)



## Bonsai Exposed... AABC Convention – Melbourne

*Alan*

*Jabs*



Melbourne at its finest – the weather was typical Melbourne – mild, sunny followed by rain, sometimes heavy.

The unusual time of the year to host the AABC convention was the real feature, carefully designed to highlight Bonsai in the dead of winter. Host club Bonsai Northwest came up with a winner with a wonderful selection of trees in the exhibition, a program full of ideas, thought provoking concepts, humour, and demonstrators able to work off each other which is so essential at an event bringing well over 250 attendees together.



Friends new, old and long standing all eager to soak up everything Bonsai Northwest could present, began with the headline demonstrator Bjorn Bjorholm. Bjorn was simply a class act, easy to understand and eminently approachable. All seats taken proved just how interesting and in demand he was. Joe Morgan-Paylor worked the same stage often assisting Bjorn as well as working his stand alone demonstration. The pair of them were entertaining at all times.

Supporting were Michael Simonetto and Hanh Tran with sessions designed to test the grey matter with alternatives to much we understand Bonsai to be about.

Michael presented a session titled 'Breaking the Mould' which offered a different viewpoint on how Bonsai are seen and presented and Hanh simply had everything in knots. His pencil thin Black Pines were twisted and tied into shapes and knots showing that within a reasonable timeframe one could have a Japanese Black with a significant trunk line and development. I must admit this is the second time I have seen Hanh work his magic on the pines and never once was a crack, split or broken trunk heard or found.



The South Australian Bonsai Society were represented by just six members which is a little sad given what we were exposed to over the weekend but there were several more in the trade area selling their wares to eager customers and doing so successfully from what I understand.

Bonsai Northwest have a good deal of the [highlights up on their web site](#) which clearly shows that their efforts were well worth making the journey.

As for 2019 – well we are back at the same location in Melbourne. The 32nd Australian National Bonsai Convention is being held 17 – 20 May

Titled “*Australian Natives Breaking Through The Bonsai Ceiling*”, the convention will feature Ryan Neil from USA, as the headliner. The Australian demonstrators are Hugh Grant, Roger and Quentin Valentine. This convention back at the normal time of the year will be all about Australian Natives. One wonders what Ryan will make of that when on stage. One way to find out and I will see you there...



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## Volunteering at the National Collection in Canberra

*Alan Jabs*

We are all volunteers at some point in our lives and in fact we probably do it more than we realise. Often it is to satisfy a request here at home with family, friends or with organisations where we see help is required or we want to



make a difference. This may relate to the all-important committee work of the South Australian Bonsai Society or it may involve volunteering to promote the Bonsai Society at various community events.

This is most admirable and having volunteered for much of my life I am aware of what is involved.

There are fewer of us who may put up the hand when the volunteering is called for, but sometimes the reward can be worth making the effort. It is even better when that raising of the hand can be associated with something you absolutely love doing or being involved with. One such rewarding experience is to volunteer at the National Bonsai Collection if you ever get to Canberra. Leigh Taafe and his team welcome all club members to volunteer for a few hours, a day or a week. How much time one decides to give is up to the individual.



While in Canberra for a sporting weekend, I made time to spend a full day up on the hill at the National collection. I had previously notified Leigh Taafe about my visit and he was more than happy to have me. Arriving before the public arrived, I went through a re-familiarisation tour and after signing in and suiting up in the supplied uniform, my first task was to assess all trees on display to see what if any work was required for that week. With so many trees on display this task brings you up close and personal with them all and takes a while. As the public wander in and out there is also time to chat and demystify some of the aura surrounding bonsai or generally adding value to the visitor's experience.



A steady stream of visitors was comfortably handled by the local volunteers (and me) and the encounters with all these people is what makes the volunteering so special. Yes, the lessons from Leigh and Sam (his right hand person) are gold but the interaction with people and the ability to chat about all things bonsai really does boost the promotion of what we do in the back yard and leave one feeling good.

As for the collection – coming into autumn many of the trees were either starting or already showing their colour. The display is, as always, wonderful, well planned and reading the name tags one quickly finds some familiar names of friends or SA Bonsai Society members whose trees are there on loan. But it is about the people, and that is the special bit.

So if like me, you find yourself in Canberra, give Leigh a call and spend a few hours at the collection – the rewards are worth it.



## Our Club Patron – Dorothy Koreshoff

*"He (Vita) was already doing bonsai when I was born. I got married when I was 18 and from that time on I was as devoted and enthusiastic as he was. I had an artistic background and wanted to be an artist. Well, I'm an artist all right, I'm a horticultural artist."*

Dorothy Koreshoff

When each of us first joins the SA Bonsai Society it isn't long before we hear the name 'Dot Koreshoff' and discover that she is the much respected patron of our club who, as well as being influential in supporting the bonsai practice of our earliest members, is regarded as the driving force of early bonsai promotion throughout Australia.

### Background

Dorothy (nee Wellings) Koreshoff's interest in bonsai began following her marriage Vita Koreshoff in 1949. She originally met Vita when she worked in his family's machine embroidery business but Vita's interest in dwarf potted trees was infectious, despite the fact that at the time, growing bonsai was strictly trial and error. There was little or no information available in English and apparently no teachers in Australia, either Chinese or Japanese.



The first Koreshoff nursery was opened in 1951 and in 1965 they moved their business to a four acre property in the relatively undeveloped Castle Hill area. With Vita working elsewhere, the running of the nursery was very much in Dorothy's hands and within a short time the Koreshoffs became instrumental in filling a niche market and making a huge contribution to bonsai as a meaningful hobby and interest in Australia. Together they experimented with soil mixes, watering, environmental settings and bonsai styling techniques. Using their own bonsai as inspiration, they began holding classes at the Koreshoff nursery and as word spread, their reputation grew.

While offering a modest selection of stock plants, they specialized in offering both newly created and advanced bonsai. At the Koreshoff nursery 'art' predominated and well-styled trees were the norm.

When Vita died in 1985, Dorothy continued to run the nursery with the support of her daughters Deborah and Rustlana, both of whom are accomplished bonsai artists. They maintained the Koreshoff collection, with many of the most significant trees grown from seed in the 1930s and 40s and where later assisted in this endeavour by Deborah and Rustlana's respective husbands. Since her induction into the world of bonsai, Dorothy had become a world authority on growing and styling bonsai and received an Order of Australia medal for her services to horticulture.

### **Connection with SA Bonsai Society**

Dorothy Koreshoff had contact with SA Bonsai during the club's very early years and Janey Sabey, a founding member of the club, remembers her providing a series of lectures for the club around 1979.

Dorothy was staying with Janet at the time and it was decided that it might be fun to dig for some olives at a vineyard near Hackham. Many of the 'wild' olives surrounding the vineyard had beautiful great trunks but it was the huge pile of dug olives, removed to make way for more vineyard, that took Dorothy's eye and her response when she saw them was close to ecstatic. She promptly rang her family and instructed them to "start driving immediately".

The family returned with a truck and trailer and returned home with 100 of these stumps. Janet recalls that Dorothy needed to take 100 because she wanted to work out the percentage of survival. The stumps had already been dug for about a month, waiting to dry out prior to burning. Dorothy took them all back to Sydney and got 100% to take.

All of a sudden everybody became interested in the olives of South Australia.

Another South Australian product Dorothy became extremely enthusiastic about was our mallee roots. Janet had been using them as false trunks but Dorothy saw possibilities for using them as rocks in *saikei* settings, and as false roots for trees lacking good root spread.

Janet remembers her making a quick overnight visit for SA Bonsai's 35th birthday meeting but upon her arrival at the airport, Dorothy promptly said "take me to the wood yard!" Following a quick cup of tea, Janet and Dorothy drove to a wood yard at Pt. Adelaide which had just received a large load of mallee stumps. Janet was much amused to see Dorothy clambering like a monkey over a pile of mallee roots, looking for suitable pieces to take back to Sydney.

To assist in this bizarre adventure, Janet had unearthed an old suitcase in which to pack the mallee roots, and following quick meal, they set off for the airport. However, as Janet says, Dorothy being Dorothy, upon arrival in Sydney she took the wrong suitcase from the carousel and trundled home to Castle Hill, only to open it and find somebody else's clothes. Meanwhile Qantas was the lucky possessor of a ghastly old suitcase stuffed with something that resembled firewood.



*Dorothy in the Castle Hill Nursery*

Janet always speaks fondly of her interaction with Dorothy, describing her as inspirational – an accomplished artist with a wonderful temperament.

After the SA Bonsai Society was incorporated in 1987, it was Dorothy's daughter, Deborah, who designed the logo for the club and during the following year Dorothy judged bonsai at the Royal Adelaide Show and contributed to the club with workshops and a demonstration.

It was in 1991 that she accepted the request to become the patron of the SA Bonsai Society. At this time, Dorothy owned one of the largest collections of bonsai in the southern hemisphere and both she and Deborah were demonstrating in America, Europe and South Africa.



Dorothy, Rustlana and Rustlana's husband, Simon, all now live in Wales where they are restoring a magnificent old heritage building in preparation for running a bed and breakfast establishment. Dorothy is once again into bonsai and is starting her collection again from scratch.

### Significant Koreshoff contributions

- August 1965 they formed the *Bonsai Society of Australia Inc.*
- July 1970, assisted in the establishment of the [\*Illawarra Bonsai Society\*](#)
- September 1970 they initiated the bimonthly *Bonsai in Australia* magazine
- *The Eastern Districts Bonsai Society* was established by them in the 1970s and later became the *Sydney City Bonsai Club*
- In 1976 the Koreshoff Bonsai Nursery became the first authorized branch of the Nippon Bonsai-Saikei Institute outside of Tokyo.
- March 1976 they advised on the establishment of the [\*Newcastle Bonsai Society\*](#).
- In 1983 they publish *Bonsai with Australian Native Plants*
- In 1984 their daughter, Deborah, publishes *Bonsai: Its Art, Science, History and Philosophy*. It sold 50,000 copies worldwide and is an important reference book.
- Dorothy lectures/demonstrates at the Association of Australian Bonsai Clubs Ltd. conventions in 1988 (Brisbane), 1990 (Adelaide), 1997 (Coffs Harbour), and 2000 (Sydney).
- Dorothy and Deborah co-demonstrate at the European Bonsai Association convention in 1992 (Luxembourg).
- In 2008 two Japanese black pine bonsai (about 2.5 metres high) are transferred to the [\*National Bonsai and Penjing Collection of Australia\*](#) in Canberra. The trees had been germinated from seed imported in 1951 by Vita and Dorothy.
- In 2009 Dorothy completes two books for publication: *The Structural and Growing (Elements of) Bonsai* and *Art Principles: Structure and Design (The Underground Story)*.

Special thanks to Robert J. Baran for giving permission to use his material as a source for sections of this article

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## How To Grow Your Own Moss

*Alan Jabs*

While I cannot claim to be the originator of this story, I believe it may be of interest to many who are keen to further their knowledge as well as farm that killer moss for their displays. When I first read this information, I must admit to reading it twice to make sure I had not misunderstood. Moss from milk? Well, it seems it is possible so here goes:

We all love to see bonsai trees with richly textured blankets of moss as part of their display. It is a very healthy vegetation as it has no known pests or diseases and is also extremely forgiving, requiring little to no maintenance. Where it grows freely on the ground, it is soft underfoot if used as a ground cover, stays green throughout colder months with a little moisture, and is really easy to propagate.

### What You Need for propagation

#### Ingredients

Existing sample moss from the back garden or acquired from elsewhere. It can be dead or alive.  
Equal parts buttermilk and water

#### Tools

A blender  
A paintbrush (optional)

#### Instructions

1. Measure two cups of water and two cups of buttermilk.



2. Pour both into the blender.
3. Top with moss to fill the blender.
4. Blend until you have a milkshake consistency. You want the existing moss to separate.
5. Paint or pour the mixture on rocks, fences, foundation, bricks, ceramic pots, potting soil mix, trees or wherever you'd like to see moss grow.

**Additional Notes:**

Use a mister or some means to keep moss moist for the first couple of weeks, and if possible grow your moss in a shaded area. The moss should start to grow within 3 weeks.

And that is it – simple and who would have thought that whipping up such an earthy milkshake could be so beneficial.

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**AABC Update**

The 2019 National Convention will be hosted by the Victorian Native Bonsai Club. [“Australian Natives Breaking through the Bonsai Ceiling”](#) will be held in Melbourne from 17 – 20 May 2019.

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**[Bonsai Northwest Melbourne Newsletter September 2018](#)**

**Event:** 2018 Spring Show – Cactus and Succulent Society of SA

Date: Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> of November: 10:00am to 4:00pm

Payneham Library and Community Centre, Felixstow

Admission: \$3

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**Meeting Venue:**

Goodwood Community Centre

Rosa St

Goodwood

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

**Patrons:** Dorothy Koreshoff, Carlien Walter

**Office Bearers:**

**President:** Andrew Ward

**Vice President:** Matthew Sharp

**Secretary:** Annie Reid [secretary.sabonsai@gmail.com](mailto: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

Heather Matthews

Luke Parsons

Malcolm Roberts

Janet Sabey

Hugo Welling