

Winter 2018



SA Bonsai Newsletter

President's Report

Andrew Ward

Members of The SA Bonsai Society continue to enjoy a range of club activities. Included among these activities is a bonus spin-off from having a group of people meeting regularly who share a common passion. In our case the passion is bonsai.

Through the common interest of bonsai, many friendships have been fostered over the years. Some of these friendships have included friendly rivalry, others have included companionship and an opportunity to get together with others to share bonsai and other social opportunities.

I remember our club being referred to as a 'friendly club' and would like to see this label stick with us indefinitely. If we are to be 'the friendly club' then we need to consistently be welcoming of visitors and ensure that all people at our club are welcomed.

Hopefully we are here for the lifetime, whatever the time, I hope it is friendly.

Looking forward to seeing you at future club meetings and activities.

Bonsai Week at the National Bonsai and Penjing Collection of Australia

Matt Sharp

In late March I was lucky enough to attend the key events of Bonsai Week at the [National Bonsai and Penjing Collection of Australia](#) (NBPCA) in Canberra. This is an annual event that is growing by the year and there is a ballot for exhibitors and club nominees to enter for a chance to attend a masterclass with the main demonstrators. I was nominated by the committee (thanks guys) and by luck my name was chosen for both classes.

My main challenge was to get some trees to work on as I had to fly there and back rather than drive and I didn't fancy stuffing a nice tree into the overhead compartment. I put in a call for help on the [ausbonsai forums](#) and the first person to respond was Grant Bowie – inaugural curator of the collection and one of Australia's finest Bonsai artists! Wow! Maybe all those weeds in my bonsai are actually four leaf clovers because everything just seemed to fall into place for this trip.

I arrived with enough time up my sleeve to be able to spend some time looking at the collection and seriously people, you have to get over there if you get a chance. It's a world class facility staffed by friendly and knowledgeable people and the trees are to die for. I also dropped by Grant Bowie's house to pick up the loan trees and was struck by his beautiful personal collection.

First event was a talk by Ofer Grunwald, a bonsai and visual artist who discussed different methods of displaying bonsai and an overview of his exhibition "Disconnected Medium" in his homeland of Jerusalem. He had an interesting perspective regarding the personal relationship between a bonsai and its owner. He stated that we can get caught up with getting our trees looking good for a show or club meeting but a



tree is just as important when it's sitting on our benches, and sometimes they look their best unexpectedly, for instance while we're watering them or we catch a glance of them when we're in the backyard.

That evening the main event was a demonstration by both of the demonstrators – Carlos van der Vaart from Holland and Yannick Kiggen of Belgium. Both worked hard on individual trees while the rest of us watched while eating canapes and drinking wine, something I highly recommend. Carlos worked on a large shimpaku Juniper while Yannick had a Japanese Black Pine to test his jetlag. Carlos is a force of nature – a large presence and able to talk extensively while still working quickly on his tree. Yannick had to be prompted more to discuss what he was doing but his concentration on his task and speed of work were impressive. In fact, both demonstrators were able to finish their trees with plenty of time to spare despite the huge amount of work involved. I was able to



finish my canapes in pretty quick time too, so everyone did their bit.

I really love what was done to the tree and although the photos don't do it justice it has been transformed from a standard, somewhat static image to one with a strong direction, full of confidence.

I barely had time for a much needed coffee before the next workshop started with Yannick. This time I had a young Japanese Black Pine, still in its black plastic pot that had previously been bent into interesting shapes and left to grow. This workshop was done at a much less frenetic pace as this tree was much smaller, had less branches and frankly, less intimidating. Yannick once again made his

decisions quickly and I was able to spend some time talking to him about the design he was trying to achieve and the reasons for each of his branch placements.

Hugh Grant – visiting demonstrator

Annie Reid

We had a very stimulating period at the end of April with the visiting demonstrator from NSW, Hugh Grant.

Weekend workshop participants were a buzz with his novel approach. Hugh placed an emphasis on expecting participants to make suggestions on each tree based on the principles he initially outlined. The traditional styles (formal upright, semi cascade et al) were absent from the discussion as Hugh encouraged us to work with a five point chronological process.



This approach is one that focuses on the five aspects that identify the best qualities of a tree in an objective fashion to provide clear decision making and clarity in finding the best tree. They are:

1. **Base**

Referring to the lower section of the tree – the most stabilising point. Depending on the tree species, the base may not include a *nebari* so the idea of 'base' must be seen as the 'point of origin' of the tree.

- widest point
- most variation of texture and roots etc
- most three dimensionality

2. **Trunk Line**

The trunk line includes the best line created by the primary trunk line area from base to tip.

- most changes in direction
- most variation in those changes of direction

- o most three dimensional movement (back to front)

3. Defining Branch

The term 'first branch' is avoided as it implies the lowest branch rather than the branch that might offer the most possibilities for interesting design. The branch that defines movement.

4. Apical Region

'Apical region' is a preferred term as the 'apex' may not be located at the top of the tree. The process implies that we must only identify the region that would create the best apical portion of the tree.

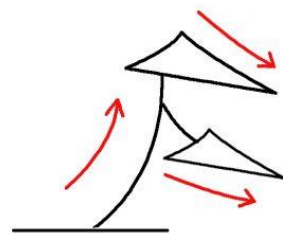
5. Characterising Feature

This element refers to what makes the tree unique species-wise or the specific tree eg. deadwood, bark, flare, interesting unique quirks – picking out these things avoids sterilising a tree.

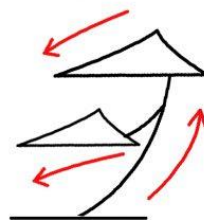
As we consider these **five fundamental** aspects of tree design there are another three conditions that should be considered when identifying these five elements. These three things will influence our decisions and must be considered in our identification process.

- **Species specificity** – how the species grows must be taken into account, not only for aesthetic reasons, but also to accommodate the horticultural needs of the species.
- **Tree in question** – we need to be sensitive to the nature of the tree in front of us rather than aiming for something that is out of character with this particular species.
- **Technique** – our individual level of skills will influence what we *think* we can do with the tree in front of us, so identifying what skills are required to create and build a tree should be considered.

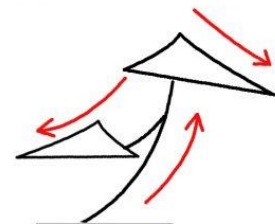
When we start building our tree once we have decided on the best aspect to design our tree from, there are three forms under which the design of a tree will fit. These are the relationship between the **trunk**



Harmonious



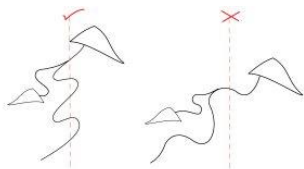
Tension



Dynamic

line, the **defining branch** and the **apex**. The direction of each one of these in relation to the others can create three very different design forms.

Playing with these three elements will influence how the design develops and moving and shifting these three elements can change how a tree 'feels'.



When working with **Dynamic** designs it is important that the *defining branch* and the *apex* are within close or touching proximity along the central axis of weight in order to make the design successful. Having these two elements too far from each other pulls the design apart, failing to function aesthetically.

Hugh left us with a great deal to think about.

You can stay in touch with Hugh's work through [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

The Weekend Workshops

Janet generously provided her place as the venue for the four workshops programmed during Hugh's visit.

Participants' comments below are evidence that these types of workshops are not to be missed if you want to hone your bonsai skills.

Luke Swalling: It was great to have the focus on design. I was amazed at what options both the group and Hugh saw in my tree. Sometimes you need to look at your own tree from a different perspective. I ended up with a completely new front and design and a much better tree as a result.

Joseph Rabig: Hugh's workshop was excellent. Not only did he guide us through designing our own trees, but helped develop skills to work on any tree.

Putting the theory, described at the start of the lesson, into practice really helped develop our understanding. Asking us to think about selecting the best base, trunk line and characteristic feature of each tree, rather than just tell us what he was going to do with them, made the workshop more interactive.

Applying knowledge immediately after learning was a great experience.

Hector Marcano: The workshop was priceless for me. The theory gave me a path to follow when I am in front of a bonsai and the time Hugh spent teaching me about my Juniper was of a very high value. Janet's house presented a lovely environment and the interaction with other members, experienced and less experienced was amazing. This should be repeated.

Greg Paterson: Hugh Grant is young, with a bit of a hippy look ... nothing like the masters we read about in the books. But don't be fooled – his method of assessing a tree for styling was simple and refreshing, concentrating on the base, trunk line, defining branch, and apex. This helped us to focus on the best character and features of our tree to create a bonsai – accepting the tree for what it offers, rather than trying to model it on the master pieces we see in books.

It was good to hear Hugh refer to olive trees as *introduced natives*. He recommended using the trees most suited to our part of the world – olives, ashes, elms, peppercorns etc. These trees were introduced to South Australia almost 200 hundred years ago and deserve to be regarded as *introduced natives*.

Hugh is very qualified, with an early start in bonsai and international experience. The future of bonsai in Australia is in good hands!

Winter Seasonal Notes

Marie Petersen

Generally, plants grow in spring, mature in summer, prepare for the cold in autumn and then rest in winter. Adelaide's winter is mild compared to many countries, hence care does not need to be so specialised (no snow, ice or very severe frosts).

The sunniest spot that is sheltered from strong wind is ideal. Watering is still necessary, preferably in the mornings. Do not rely on showers that may just run off the leaves without wetting the soil. On the other hand, if shallow pots appear water-logged, wedge one end up and this should help with drainage.

In winter, a tree only needs enough fertiliser to maintain its strength, so some people do not fertilise at this time. However, in our mild climate some trees such as junipers appear to continue growing so occasional weak doses of low nitrogen fertiliser is good.

Now is a good time to give trees a spray with a weak Lime-Sulphur solution to kill of fungus, also drench the pots and Bonsai area with Clensil to kill off any soil grubs, insects and ants that have made a home in the pots.

Winter is also a good time to wire trees, particularly deciduous trees as you can see all the branch structure. However, take care as branches may be more brittle at this time of the year, so hold off watering for a day or two before wiring (imagine a stick of celery that snaps when fresh, but left out in the open for a day or two without water – you can bend it without snapping). Also check wires that are already on trees and remove if cutting into the bark or getting tight.

Bonsai can be lightly pruned and shaped during winter months. Remove old flowers, fruit, berries, dead needles and twigs – generally clean up the trees.

Many people avoid June for repotting. The new feeder roots need warmth to develop and may not recover from the disturbance, just rot off in the pots. It may be cold, wet and dreary working on your trees, so get on with some other jobs – mix soil, clean tools collect moss, dig trees from the wild and (best on dreary days) sit in the warm and read the Bonsai books or magazines you have borrowed from our library.

Towards the end of winter the trees begin to come out of dormancy. If you have a large collection, now is the time to start repotting, as Ash will be starting to bud even in July, followed by Liquid Ambers, Maples, Mulberry, Zelkova and Elms. This leaves more time in spring to repot your other Bonsai. After care is very important as more trees are lost in this period than at any other time. Do not fertilise immediately after repotting as new potting mix should contain enough nourishment for at least a month.

August is a good time to graft Conifers – a word of advice to beginners – be patient! Trunks thicken best in the ground or in a large tub or box, so do not be too anxious to create a Bonsai which is really just a seedling in a pot.

Festival of Flowers

Annie Reid

An energetic crew of volunteers assembled at the Gilles Plains venue to set up the bonsai display for this annual event.

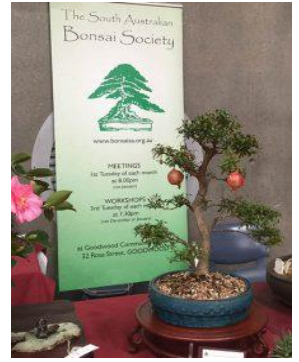
The number of people visiting the festival were higher than last year and to add to the atmosphere, the Bonsai Society organised the coffee cart that we use for your own annual show. Andrew Ward and Con Preston worked feverishly over the two days making their highly desirable coffee and their efforts ensured that the takings for the catering part of the show were considerably higher than previous years.

Andrew and Philip Ekers provided excellent bonsai demonstrations during the time that was allocated to our club and the rest of us were kept busy answering questions and chatting to curious visitors about all things bonsai.

The bonsai committee will shortly discuss the future of our involvement in this event as it is quite time consuming and relies on the same volunteers each year. In rationalising our commitment to other events, we may consider returning to the *Kodomo no hi Festival* which we withdrew from for 2018. If we do, we will offer to do demonstrations as staging a bonsai display is too difficult due to restricted access.

Special thanks go to the following volunteers:

Jennie and Boyce Carnie, Alan Jabs, Heather Matthews, Philip Ekers, Malcolm Roberts, Con Preston and Andrew Ward.



BONSAI EXPOSED – 31st AABC National Convention, Mantra Bell City,

Preston, Melbourne Vic. 20-23 July 2018

Just a final reminder to all clubs that registrations for the 2018 AABC convention close on **1 July 2018**. It is not too late to register. We've also been informed that Melbourne is expecting a mild winter so hopefully that will put some of the worry to ease!

Important note: Please let your members know that there will be no video recording and sharing online of the convention demonstrations. This is only fair to all registrants who are paying to come along to the convention to see the demonstrations in person.

Update:

As mentioned in previous updates, the nursery tour, workshop participants and critique session have all sold out and a waiting list has been started. Observers spots are still available and are the next best thing to doing a workshop.

With regards to the exhibition, we have hand selected some of the best trees from across Victoria. The exhibition is shaping up to be a fantastic collaborative display of Victorian bonsai and bonsai artists.

As for the demonstration material for Bjorn, we have acquired some excellent pieces for Bjorn to perform his magic on.

Below is a list by State (ex. Victoria) of convention registrants to encourage state rivalry.

ACT – 10
NSW – 69
QLD – 27
TAS – 9
SA – 6
WA – 6
New Zealand – 10

Preparing for our October Show – ‘having fun with bonsai’

Following the success of our *Out of the Box* bonsai display last year, we have decided to give members the opportunity to have another go in 2018 and hope that many more of you will join in the fun.

Keep in mind, there is no specific theme for this display – it's all about creating a bonsai that is novel or unconventional.



Now is the time to stimulate those creative ideas and get things organised.

What tree/trees might you use?

Have you an unusual pot or can you make one from alternative materials?

Will your bonsai have a message or a theme or will the interpretation be left to the viewer?

Can you join with another club member to create an unconventional bonsai?

Will you incorporate other objects into your creation?

It's time to have some fun!

And if you needed an extra incentive – first prize is \$100!



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

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