

President's Report - AGM

Andrew Ward

How quickly the seasons pass, and so busy!

It seems only the other week when I was elected as President in my first term ... that is now 5 years ago, and this 6th year will be my final year as President.

I wish to thank all members of our committee and all members who have contributed to our club's activities throughout the past 12 months.

Philip Ekers has now served 8 years as Secretary and is standing aside with Annie Reid to stand as our new Secretary. Many will realise that Annie has been responsible for our website, newsletter and has assisted Philip over the past few years so will be capable in this role. Although Philip has many family and travel plans for the year ahead he will continue to be part of our committee and assist Annie.

Our Treasurer, Malcolm Jenkins has resigned after 12 months. He has worked effectively during this time to transfer our record system from manual to electronic and has been successful in providing further analysis to our accounts. Malcolm has also transitioned our banking to electronic banking and taken action to move our banking from BankSA to Bendigo Bank. I am grateful to Malcolm for his attention to completing these duties with the utmost of care and responsibility. The committee will be appointing Terry Bertozzi to the position of Treasurer, as guided by our Constitution.

The conclusion to this year also farewells Heather Matthews from the position of Assistant Treasurer. Heather has been thorough in her approach to Assistant Treasurer responsibilities, streamlining the ordering process for our club, including that we do not hold excess quantities of stock at any one time. In the past we held a number of items for our members that were not otherwise readily available commercially but with the increase in South Australian bonsai suppliers and online sources this has no longer been such an essential role for our club. Heather will still be taking care of visiting tutor marketing and bookings as part of her role on the committee.

I thank Sue Hines for her contribution to The SA Bonsai Society through the past two years. Sue has been active in many discussions and research for changes that we have put into place. This has included development of our website, alongside Annie and Philip, and marketing to media supporters for our annual show. With developments starting to escalate for the building of a new home, Sue will not have the time available to contribute but it is hoped that she will continue to be our media marketing contact person for our show.

After almost 45 years of being a member of the committee of our club, Marie Petersen will be standing aside so that she is able to give further energies to her family. Marie has been a committee member, President, Vice-President, Secretary for our club. In recent times, she has been the go-to person for members, maintaining and updating members' badges and I believe that Marie will continue in this role.

A trend is evident that it is not essential to be a member of the committee to volunteer for our club. As with our Library looked after by Dennis and Nan, non-committee members are looking after other positions in our club. By spreading administrative responsibilities, the burden no longer hinges on the efforts of a small few.

The past 12 months have seen many changes in our club. We have had the first Constitutional change ever with thanks particularly to Philip, Annie, Malcolm, Sue and all other committee members who drafted, read, re-read, considered and forwarded suggestions for refinements. We are now compliant with current South Australian legislation concerning our constitution.

2017 saw the visit to South Australia by a number of bonsai and gardening professionals. These included Sophie Thomson, Averil Stanley, Rui Ferreira and Chris Xepapas. The committee took into consideration feedback from members and has now spread the role of considering future demonstrators for our members. This year we have

visits planned from Hugh Grant, Joe Morgan-Payler and John Marsh and already consideration and planning is underway for visitors in coming years.

The future of The South Australian Bonsai Society is strong and is firmly in the hands of our members. Members direct our club, are responsible for our club activities and participation in wider community events. Without membership support, these activities are not possible, so it is important that we get the balance right. To that end, we will no longer participate in the Kodomo no Hi as part of the Japan Australia Friendship Association. We no longer participate in the Spring and Autumn Home Expo and while we are currently participating in the 2018 Festival of Flowers and Royal Adelaide Show, without broader membership support these activities will need to be reconsidered.

Our club has future dig sites currently secured through The Department of Environment, and while we need to be vigilant to ensure that we meet the standards demanded of us to maintain this access, we are most fortunate to have secured this opportunity. We look forward to members supporting such events as there is much to be gained from them and this in itself justifies the investment in time and resources.

Exhibition Certificates awarded for 2018

Open Section

- 1st Chris Drinkwater
- 2nd Matt Sharp
- 3rd Tony Sperandio

Intermediate Section

- 1st Sven Kuusk
- 2nd Boyce Carnie
- 3rd Jenni Carnie

Novice Section

- 1st Annie Reid
- 2nd Darryl Gilby
- 3rd Benjamin Lawrance



Visiting Tutor Program for 2018

We have an exciting year ahead with visits from three excellent bonsai demonstrators. In fact as you're reading this newsletter you're either about to attend a Hugh Grant workshop or hopefully saving up to attend one of the other demonstrator workshops later in the year.

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



Hugh Grant
April 28/29



Joe Morgan-Payler
June 30 - July 1



John Marsh
Sept 1/2

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..

So polish up those tools and let's stimulate the bonsai brain cells!

Ficus thonningii - fast growing and great for bonsai

Annie Reid

At the March meeting Matt Sharp and Luke Parsons provided us with a stimulating demonstration about working with *Ficus thoningii* - one of the strangler figs, so-called for its habit of 'strangling' other plants as its roots and stems struggle to find nourishment and light in its original habitat.

While it may be difficult for us to achieve [aerial roots](#) in SA's drier climate, our demonstrators showed impressive examples of the beginnings of root over rock styles that lend themselves to the *Ficus* genus.

Cuttings will easily strike and once a healthy young root system is established the roots are draped over the rock and tied securely with grafting tape. Luke uses foil over this to keep the roots in darkness and support their adherence to the rock. As the roots develop and the soil is lowered, any roots not adhering to the rock are removed. Over summer, he also uses hessian covered with a scrap of towel (kept wet) to wrap the rock so that the rock itself is kept cool thereby putting less stress on the developing roots attached to the rock.

In addition, Luke provided the following explanation:

When I established the root over rock ficus used in the demonstration, I had already decided that it would be a han-kengai / semi cascade style tree. The reason for deciding on this style is that visually, with the rock being quite tall, an upright style tree atop the rock would make the overall composition very tall indeed. And so the semi cascade style was chosen, with the trunk line and branches of the tree mirroring the curves of the rock. The cascading branch forms a line that draws your eye away from the peak of the rock, and frames the important part of the composition – the roots covering the rock.



Having chosen this style/design early on in the process enables you to have a goal to work towards, rather than snipping away at the edges hoping that an interesting bonsai design will emerge. Having a design in mind is of paramount importance. First decide on the design to be created, then select the method to achieve that design, whether it be wiring or grafting etc, and then select the plant material. Selecting young plant material such as a newly rooted cutting enables you to easily direct the plant's growth, as young flexible shoots are easily wired into shape. The advantage of using a species such as *Ficus thoningii* is that the rapid growth habit transforms a new cutting into something recognisable as a bonsai in only two or three growing seasons.



Both Matt and Luke advise using normal potting soil mixed with copious amounts of Dynamic Lifter for the developmental phase of growing the fig. It is only when the bonsai is established and rapid growth is no longer required that a more free draining soil mixture is required.

Matt also suggested two methods for establishing a thick base to the trunk of a *Ficus*. The first was to do a cross cut into the base of a cutting and gently spread the four sections in the potting mix. The second tip was to keep lower branches and let them flourish rather than aiming for height.

Bonsai Potting Mixes - a brief summary

Matt Sharp

It seems that every Bonsai enthusiast has their own recipe for an effective potting medium, and that recipe can vary according to the size, species and position of the trees they own. Therefore, it's impossible to have a complete specific recipe list for all occasions so instead the basic principles will be covered. It's up to you to come up with a mix that suits your trees in your own backyard.

Rule 1. Drainage, Drainage, Drainage

Having good drainage is one of the most important principles for a good Bonsai potting medium. It is essential that water can drain away quickly to allow air to the roots, and a waterlogged tree will not last long. If you water a Bonsai and the water stays on the surface for more than a few seconds then it's not draining fast enough. Even water loving trees (e.g. Willow, Eucalyptus, Swamp Cypress) that stand in water need good drainage.

Rule 2. Never Use Garden Soil

It doesn't matter how good your garden soil is and how well your vegies grow, you must never use soil from the garden for your bonsai. Firstly, you will introduce pests and diseases to your Bonsai that they will not be able to cope with in the confines of a small pot. Secondly the very fine particles will clog up all the spaces in the soil and stop the water from draining. Remember Rule 1? They don't call this the death mix for nothing.

Rule 3. Ratio of Organic and Inorganic

OK, so you have the first 2 rules memorised and now you want to know what actually goes into a potting mix. Remember that this is a guide only but for a basic Bonsai medium - a good rule of thumb is: **1 third organic material, 2 thirds inorganic material.**

Examples of organic materials proven to work:

- Premium potting mix (the type you get from large warehouse hardware stores)
- Coconut coir (also from large warehouse hardware stores)
- Neem (available from Hydroponic shops)
- Orchid potting mix
- Pine bark (preferably aged)

Examples of inorganic material proven to work:

- Diatomite (available from the club) 4-6mm
- Other Diatomaceous stone products (sometimes found in kitty litter. No, seriously)
- Zeolite 4-6mm
- Crushed granite
- Crushed pumice
- Perlite (Hydroponic shops)

Rule 4. Vary According to Needs

This is where it gets complicated. Once you get your basic mix you'll probably start tweaking it according to the trees you have. Some of the changes you might make are:

- Finer particle sizes for small bonsai (under 30cm)
- Acidic potting medium for acid loving plants (Azaleas, Camellias)
- Slightly less inorganic material for sensitive deciduous species (e.g. Japanese Maples)
- Slightly more inorganic material for pines
- For some reason Junipers like a handful of finely crushed eggshells added to their mix.

I could go on as this is a huge topic. Talk to other members who will only be too happy to tell you what works for them. Don't expect the same answer from different people!

Sample Recipes

Recipe 1- Very basic mix that will work for most trees

- 1 part Premium potting mix (only use mixes marked as Premium, cheaper brands won't work as well)
- 2 parts either Zeolite or Diatomite, or a combo of both

Recipe 2– Slightly more advanced mix based on the previous recipe

- 2 parts Premium potting mix (larger particles sifted out)
- 1 part Neem coir (protects the tree from insects and diseases)
- 4 parts Diatomite
- 2 parts Zeolite

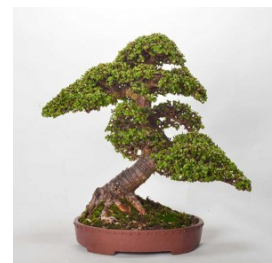
Recipe 3 – suggested by Averil Stanley

- 3 to 4 parts Diatomite
- 0.5 part Zeolite
- 0.5 part Perlite
- 1 part Pine bark
- 1 part Neem coir

JADE (*Portulacaria Afra*)

Janet Sabey

The jade plant which is very common in the home gardens of Adelaide. is a native of Africa where it is also referred to as 'the elephants' food tree'. Why? Well strangely enough although this plant is a succulent, it is full of water, consequently it can become very heavy, as those of us with large jade bonsai can attest.



The jade loves the heat of Adelaide and thrives in full sunshine. Do not keep it in humid or shady conditions although it enjoys water and fertiliser like any other plant.

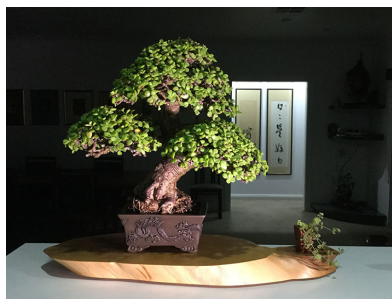
Because it is a succulent, the best time to take cuttings is between October and March. Outside this time frame you risk your cutting rotting

I cannot stress strongly enough the importance of beginning with a good trunk - it may not have taper, but try to have some movement in the trunk. We see too many 'telegraph pole' style jade bonsai. With the enormous supply of plants available to take cuttings from there is absolutely no excuse for straight and boring trunks. Also don't be too concerned about the growth further up the stem - this may all be removed in time. Keep in mind the old saying - *don't be seduced into keeping unwanted growth when creating a bonsai*. Some foliage should be left on the trunk and its worth keeping in mind another adage, *foliage is the food factory*, so don't remove too much of any plant which you are trying to propagate.

Let the cutting dry off, or harden before planting. This may mean a few days or more than a few weeks - this is a very hardy plant. After the trunk has dried a little I cut quite deeply into it vertically with something like a stanley knife almost like creating a skirt then I plant the cutting in dry well draining potting mix so that the "skirt" section is well covered and leave the plant to grow for at least 18 months. In this time, roots should protrude from the area of the trunk which has been scored, creating taper.

Then you can commence your styling.

Because of the water content of jade - they tend to be quite brittle and do not take to being wired easily so be extra careful when shaping, although they are such quick growers in the right conditions that if you damage a branch, it won't take long before some new growth appears for you to have another go. The clip and grow method of styling suits this plant extremely well. Don't even think about creating jin or shari.



Hopefully you had some style in mind when taking the cutting in the first place, however in the 18 months or so since planting the trunk, your ideas may have changed with the growth of the plant. Mark Noelanders stressed 'the most important branch' over and over to us when he was doing his demonstrations in Brisbane last year. With the vigorous growth habit of jade, even the tiniest shoot can become the main branch very quickly, given a chance. By that I mean do not leave shoots all over a trunk and wait for a miracle to happen - make it happen by choosing which shoot you want to become a branch and remove the other shoots which would only compete with it if left on the trunk. Allow the required shoot to grow until it becomes strong and thick. It can be shortened later on and then secondary branches can grow from it, but first of all create the frame of the bonsai.

When cutting any branch or shoot off never use your concave cutters, always use scissors making a flush cut and leave a stub of about 4 or 5 ml. This will dry off eventually like a scab and you can rub it off without leaving a scar. If you use concave cutters, the scab will actually grow back into the trunk and when it is removed, it will leave a hollow. Never use cut paste.

Once you have your frame established you can commence trimming to create tertiary branches, reduce the leaf size and maintain the outline. It is very easy to obtain small leaves with constant trimming - this can mean at least twice a week.

Don't over- water jade, and NEVER sit them in water because the roots will simply rot and the plant will die. Once again because of the water content these plants cannot tolerate frosts. Remember what happens when you forget to take that bottle of beer out of the freezer, well the same applies to your jade. Canberra should be designated a jade-free area in my opinion.



They don't object to being pot-bound so there is no urgency to repot regularly. You can create spaces between branches by placing pieces of stone, wood or foam into the plant - this is the lazy way of shaping them.

They look really good in bright red glazed containers.

This is a plant incredibly well suited to Adelaide conditions, so get involved with it. I love working with it and find it most rewarding.

But please please please don't tell me about the one that was sitting on your grandmother's front verandah for umpteen years and never got any water and never got any love blah blah blah. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred these plants are as ugly as can be and a very difficult bonsai subject. Do yourself a favour, let one of the other beneficiaries have it. Sentimentality does not always produce a good bonsai!

The Hidden Life of Trees Copyright Ludwig Verlag 2015 Munich (Random House). Published in Australia by Black Inc, Carlton Vic

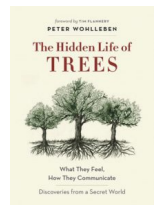
A book review by Hugo Welling

"I thoroughly enjoyed this book and learnt so much. I wanted to share some of my discoveries with you"

What they feel?

How they communicate?

Discoveries from a Secret World



In 'The Hidden Life of Trees', author and forester **Peter Wohlleben** shares his deep love of woods and forests. He explains the amazing processes of life, death and regeneration that he has observed in the woodland. These fascinating stories are backed by the latest scientific research illustrating how **trees** nurture and talk to each other. Are trees social beings? In this international bestseller, the author convincingly makes the case that, yes, the forest is a social network, describing how trees are like human families.

Leaves

- Leaves can recognise the saliva of an insect. When a tree senses that it is being attacked by insects eating its leaves, it sends an electric impulse from the fungi network around the tip of its roots, right up into the tree. This impulse travels at 3 centimetres per minute. It will take some time to reach the top! When it does reach the top, it releases a defensive compound that spoils the taste of those leaves, making them quite bitter. The impulse also releases pheromones that attract the predator of the attacking insect. The predator eliminates the insect and the leaves are saved.

NB: Leaves use their upper side for photosynthesising and the under-side for breathing.

- Elms and Pines support a small parasitic wasp that lays eggs inside their leaves. As those eggs develop, they eat the caterpillars that are feeding off them.
- Oaks carry bitter toxic tannin.
- Willows carry salicylic acid (or aspirin as we know it). The bark of the Willow can be used to make tea that can relieve headache and bring down fever (and put the local chemist out of business!)

- The distinction between plants and animals is arbitrary. It depends on the ways an organism feeds itself. One photosynthesises, the other eats other living organisms. The other difference between the two is how long each takes to process the food.

Fungi

- Fungi is classified between plants and animals and is actually the largest living organism in the world.
- Switzerland boasts a Honey Fungus that covers 120 acres and is 1000 years old. In fact, the main contender for the world's largest known organism is a Honey Fungus that lives in the Blue Mountains of Oregon. This humongous fungus occupies almost 2,400 acres of soil.
- Fungi weave an underground cottony web known as Mycelium. Fungi around the roots operate just like fibre-optic internet cables, translating information into action.
- Fungi requires sugar/carbohydrate to exist.
- The Fungi agenda is...*conciliation and the equitable distribution of information and resources*. If only mankind had the same agenda!
-

Mysteries of Moving Water

- Capillary action – this is all about the surge of water upwards. This force occurs in opposition to gravity, and the narrower the vessel, the higher the climb. Deciduous vessels are .02 inches wide, while Conifers are only .008 inches wide.
- Transpiration – did you know a Beech tree can exhale hundreds of gallons of water through its leaves?
- Osmosis – this works only through the roots and leaves. If the concentration of sugar is too high, then extra water will be drawn in by the plant to dilute the concentration.

Age of tree species

- Carbon 14 Dating is the measurement of radio active carbon. The lower the carbon, the older the tree tissue.
- Did you know that Deciduous trees developed 100 million years ago, while Conifers developed 170 million years ago... making Conifers the senior of the two.
- Only 3 species of Conifers drop all their leaves – the Larch, the Bald Cypress and the Dawn Redwood.
- It was no coincidence that, after the Second World War, some tuberculosis patients were sent to recover in hospitals that were built in pine forests. Phytoncides released by the needles of the pines acted as a germ-free disinfectant.

Native Plants

Native plants are plants indigenous to a given area in geologic time.

To define a native plant, one needs to determine its habitat – this includes water, terrain and topography

Do trees have brains?

The book poses the question...could we go so far as to claim that trees have brains?

Well, for something to be recognised as being a 'brain', it requires a neurological process to be occurring. Read further if you're game! To have this neurological process occurring there needs to be *electricity*... and that brings us back to the point that trees do actually send electrical impulses through their systems. 'Intelligence' on the other hand is a faculty of memory and emotion, so, does the question remain unanswered? Perhaps read the book and decide for yourself?

Bonsai in Singapore

Alan Jabs

Going places these days has never been easier with direct flights out of Adelaide. If you are planning any sort of travel and like me, are keen to bridge the distance across in the bonsai world and find new experiences and meet new and interesting people, then now is the best time to make all this happen.

Many of you will be aware of my previous posts where I explored what is on offer in the world of bonsai.

The latest opportunity came as a result of an email promoting inexpensive cruises at various locations across the globe. Our original plan was to go back to Tasmania because of the fond memories we had from the two weeks down there following the AABC Convention. However (and this is the shameful bit) it was cheaper to fly to Singapore, stay there, enjoy a cruise and then spend a few more days in Singapore.

So, when all was booked and paid for, one turned to the “what to do” questions while in Singapore. With the usual sights all pencilled in and Carol wanting to find fabric for her quilt obsession, I looked at the bonsai page in my search engine on the computer.

The *Singapore Botanic Gardens* has a display of bonsai amongst the tropical and exotic so working out the hop on/hop off bus stops meant a we alighted right outside the Botanic Gardens - *too easy!*

Thanks to the free map from the information booth, the bonsai were easily located on a hill top in a semi circular display. Given the tropical climate most are trees that can be found within this climatic zone.

Most of the trees were from the following families or species:

- Pithecolobium Flexicaule – Texas Ebony
- Ficus sp – Moracrae
- Ochna Harmandii – Apricot Tree
- Wrightia Religiosa – Wild Water Plum
- Celtis Sinensis – Chinese Hackberry
- Ficus Microcarpa – Chinese Banyan
- Triphasia Irifolia – Lime Berry



Neat, tidy and well presented even the wildlife could be found checking out the trees.

While in the Botanic Gardens, I can also recommend a visit to the National Orchid collection. Wandering through absolutely stunning colours within a the very large garden area makes for a very pleasant afternoon.

Gardens by the Bay is another garden area that is an absolute must and it is located behind the Marina Bay.

Full of all sorts of trees and plants of all kinds, it is best known for the super grove of artificial ‘trees’ which are lit at night and covered with orchids, bromeliads and other plants.



Nearby is the *Flower Dome and Cloud Forest* which is an absolute wonder of engineering and technology with an area similar to Adelaide Oval under glass and fully air-conditioned.

The Cloud Forest has a huge indoor waterfall and is the tropical glass house full of all equator region based plants

The Flower Dome is staggering in what it has on offer. Our visit coincided with a Japanese promotion of

the cherry blossom which was in flower as were carpets of Azaleas. Not to be outdone, also in flower were daffodils, Australian and African natives, fruit trees, vegetables, cacti and other succulents and just about



anything that has a flower of some kind. There were olive trees – massive and very old, some nearly 60 feet tall.

Did I mention there were Bonsai here too? Feature trees were placed in and around the Japanese area. All this under glass just seventy miles from the equator fully air-conditioned... as I say - well worth a visit!

Singapore does have a more regular bonsai fraternity. The following are nurseries or retail businesses where bonsai can be found.

[Boh's Bonsai and Art Collection](#)

[Bonsai Gallery](#)

[Chengtai Nursery](#)

[JIA Bonsai Singapore](#)

[Love In A Bottle](#)



While time did not allow for any visits to the listed shops, those venturing to Singapore can be assured of easy access via a transport network that is inexpensive and regular. Even taxis are cheap.

Singapore is easy to get to and inexpensive with direct flights from Adelaide. Well worth consideration next time you are looking to travel somewhere.

Meeting Venue:

Goodwood Community Centre
Rosa St
Goodwood

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

Patrons: Dorothy Koreshoff, Carlien Walter

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