

Spring 2017



SA Bonsai Newsletter

Spring 2017

President's Report

Andrew Ward

After what seems to have been a cold and long winter, albeit no colder or any wetter than many others for Adelaide, we now continue into spring. It is the end of dreary months and the start of months that I'd like to consider as being 'more fun'.

I always think that Adelaide's spring is heralded with the start of The Royal Adelaide Show and celebrates a time for optimism. Although the consistently warm days encouraging our plants to burst into growth really don't happen until the start of October, it is with the first week of September that the first promise of new season of growth begins to emerge. At this time we have the first of our deciduous blossom trees daring to display their colour and the flowering late winter/early spring bulbs and annuals are most splendid. This time does bring with it huge differences in weather; there are both warm and cool days as there are warm and cool evenings and nights, some of the days are clear while others have storms. The consistently improved weather patterns have not yet been established, and yet we know that the season will begin to improve and with it growing conditions and opportunities for us to spend more time in our gardens.

This year heralded a range of activities in which our members could choose to participate. Just prior to The Royal Show, The SA Bonsai Society hosted David Allen from The Bendigo Bonsai Society to educate and support members in a dig for olives, followed by a demonstration at our August meeting on basic and improved wiring techniques. The day was well attended and those members who made the effort to come along were rewarded with support to find a better olive base that would be more useful in developing a future olive bonsai than many others. The essence of this activity was about being more selective in choosing what material we use to develop our bonsai. One of my grandmothers often said 'you can't make a silk purse out of a sour's ear' ... it is a lesson worth remembering.



The Royal Adelaide Show again supported the SA bonsai community by arranging airfares and transport for our national judge Chris Xepapas. The visit to South Australia by a national demonstrator who is on The AABC Visiting Tutor list is additional to the support which has been traditionally provided by The AABC to The SA Bonsai Society as a member club. This support, for a voluntary judge, has been negotiated over a number of years and was seen by a number of competitors as necessary to ensure the impartiality of judging for bonsai at The Royal Adelaide Show. While Chris Xepapas was visiting, the opportunity was available for us to host a workshop for our members with him, and to also follow this with a demonstration. Chris's workshops were fully booked, members received valuable information and support and Chris proved his improved confidence and knowledge that has developed as a result of his many years working with bonsai and his more recent experiences in training programs in Japan. Members were treated to a terrific demonstration at our September meeting from Chris when he did a first styling on a Juniper species he had previously seen at 'Spirit of Bonsai' on his last visit. The tree proved to be excellent demonstration material and members were able to experience the process of overcoming flaws in material, no living material is ever going to be *exactly perfect*.



The SA Bonsai Society is a member of The Bonsai Federation of Australia (Southern) who have recently organised bi-annual visits from international bonsai professionals. We have previously participated in visits from Mauro Stemberger, although the BFA has also hosted visits to Victoria from Hirotohi Saito in conjunction with Bonsai Society of Victoria. This year Rui Ferreira from Portugal was identified as a suitable demonstrator – he had been a demonstrator in the 2016 Bonsai Without Borders Event in China where AABC President Dianne Boekhout had the opportunity to become acquainted with his abilities and his communication style. Rui visited us for a special demonstration meeting on Friday 8 September followed by workshops on Saturday 9 September. He also facilitated an advanced workshop for club leaders on the morning of Friday 8 September

so that more positions could be made available to other members for the Saturday program. Although workshops were slow to book, all workshop positions ended up being filled and it was agreed that Rui's visit was exceptionally valuable for those members who were able to participate.

It was an extremely busy month of bonsai – David Allen Demonstration, Olive Yamadori Dig, Preparations for The Royal Adelaide Show, Chris Xepapas Demonstration and Workshops, Rui Ferreira Demonstration and Workshops. We were once a club that was very isolated and I remember within the past ten years comments such as 'but we are so far away' and 'no one ever comes to Adelaide' being given as excuses as to why SA bonsai were not as refined as bonsai in other Australian states. Apart from club members who travelled interstate to attend national bonsai events, most of our members had only the opportunity to participate in annual AABC Visiting Tutor weekends, our members had very little exposure to other bonsai knowledge nationally or internationally.

Our club has grown in strength due to the consistent hard work and dedication of your committee, and the participation of a number of members in these activities. We have hosted two AABC National Bonsai Conventions in the last ten years and consequently are resourced to be able to provide a range of programs to our members. Not all programs will suit all members – we are a large enough club to respectfully acknowledge that there are a variety of learning styles just as there are a variety of bonsai styles. I know that our 'time in the woods' is no longer and that South Australian bonsai is at an exciting stage, mainly due to our members' increased participation in national and international programs.

Over the past 10 years we have moved from a 'one visitor a year club' with 'nice bonsai' to a club with world standard bonsai as a result of programs that include a variety of visitors each year. These visitors have included Peter Adams (UK), Lindsay Bebb (Australia), Yusuke Uchida (Japan), Glenis Bebb (Australia), Grant Bowie (Australia), Tony Bebb (Australia), Lee Wilson (Australia), John Marsh (Australia), Brenda Parker (Australia), Joe Morgan-Payler (Australia), Mauro Stemberger (Italy), Averil Stanley (Australia), Chris Xepapas (Australia), Koji Hiramatsu (Japan).

Other visitors to our club have added more general gardening knowledge to our program and have included Sophie Thomson (ABC Gardening Australia), Neutrog Australia Representatives, John Batchelor (grafting techniques) from Valley Horticulture.

Visits have been complemented with continued input from local talent including Chris Drinkwater (*Eriocephalus africanus*), Janet Sabey, Matt Sharp, Luke Parsons, Howard Hamon, Philip Ekers, Bob Smith, Marie Petersen, Philip Ekers, Janice Kain ... even me! ... who continue to evolve and provide demonstrations and presentations that meet the needs of many of our members. Although you may not always agree with all that a demonstrator has to present, members are presented with a variety of ideas and concepts that can be considered for bonsai development.

A visitor at The Royal Adelaide Show from The Kentucky State Fair when asked about what it is that keeps him motivated in being involved in the annual show events, commented that for many people 'the fair is the one piece of fun that is the highlight of their year'. I believe that he summarised the importance of so much that we do in our lives, and without becoming a decadent and hedonistic society, we do need to remember that it is for a number of reasons that people are attracted to, and remain, being involved in bonsai. It is not only for our trees and plants, although this is the central and common interest that we hold – I believe we need to remember that it should always be fun.

Celebrate and enjoy spring while you prepare for summer knowing that there are blue skies ahead. Hope to see you at our club show on 14 and 15 October and at our other regular club events.



Chris Xepapas transforms a blue cypress

Annie Reid

Our September meeting featured visiting Tasmanian bonsai demonstrator, Chris Xepapas, who talked us through the process of creating the beginnings of a bonsai as he worked on a 15-20 year old blue cypress, recently acquired from [Spirit of Bonsai](#).

The first step involved a very confident attack on unwanted branches using a saw. While this appeared a little unnerving for the observer, Chris admitted that he had previously taken time to examine the tree and so knew which branches had to go.

As he began to consider the next step to refinement, he was quick to point out that the tree had some 'issues'. Of course this was music to the ears of a novice bonsai enthusiast, as one assumes that an experienced practitioner would only ever (magically) choose to work with near perfect material. The primary faults needing attention in this case included a straight trunk, rather obvious wire indentation on the second trunk and inverse taper at the base.

Solutions included covering the straight trunk by forming a foliage pad in front of it and creating a jin and shari to cover the wire marking.

As he cut into the bark around the perimeter of the shari with a Stanley knife and used branch splitters to gently ease away the lower layers, Chris talked about his time in Japan, learning from bonsai masters. One of the most profitable experiences was the expectation that one should sit at length in front of a tree and take time to contemplate it because

it is believed that every tree can be improved, no matter how perfect it might appear at first glance. He also spoke about the difference between the 'front' of a tree and the 'viewing angle' as these may not necessarily be the same – careful contemplation would reveal the difference.

As he began to wire the branches, Chris explained how the Japanese gain maximum benefit from their wire by wiring at an angle of 50-60 degrees instead of the accepted 40-45 degrees. This not only saves wire but provides more contact space between the wire and the branch, thereby better supporting the bending process.

Copper wire was used in preference to aluminium as it is able to resist the movement of conifers which have a tendency to change direction as they grow.

As this twin trunk bonsai began to emerge, Chris reminded us of the need to make the smaller trunk (or first branch in the twin trunk style) lean away from the main trunk, likening it to a runaway child moving away from the protective parent. He concluded with his '3 point guideline' – that the tree's movement, first branch and apex all go in the same direction.

This was a most informative and lively demonstration, providing incentive for the rest of us to take time, take risks and continue to improve our wiring practice.



The 2017 Adelaide Royal Show

Alan Jabs

Again, as in past years the South Australian Bonsai Society was allocated its 6 x 4 metre patch and it was Malcolm Roberts who put up his hand to set in place a design of 'Bonsai in the Garden' featuring members' trees.

Given planning such as this takes many months and the plants in some cases required twelve months growth to a suitable standard, this was no short term project.





Malcolm and I spent three days setting out and filling our little patch with assistance on sawdust from Janet, layout from Marie and moss placement from Annie.

As I was busy working on our display I overheard extremely favourable comments from other exhibitors with many saying we were the best exhibit in the hall. Guess the hard work paid off... However, as time to set up was short and the days long in doing the work, it was a little disappointing not to see more assisting with the work load as the promotional aspect of the plot is huge for the Bonsai Society. As this is an annual opportunity I am sure there

will be more volunteers next year.

This year the competition trees were ably judged by Chris Xepapas who travelled from Tassie, spending just over a week here in Adelaide. He also gave several workshops and presented a live demonstration to commemorate the third anniversary of the Black Scissors on the last Sunday of his stay here. This demonstration can be viewed on the net and is a short 30 minutes worth watching.

Trees were rotated over the duration of the show and several rounds of judging occurred to decide the Grand Champion which culminated in the award going to a tree by Chris Drinkwater.

At Show's end the clean up only took several hours with the added bonus of being able to purchase at good prices, plants from many of the exhibitions.

Thank you to all who assisted.

[Bonsai competition results from the Adelaide Royal Show](#)



Return of Chris Xepapas



Alan Jabs

September seems to have taken on a significant offering of bonsai related activities beginning with Chris Xepapas arriving in Adelaide to judge the entries in the 2017 Adelaide Royal Show.

Chris also presented at the Tuesday night club meeting and held a workshop for those seeking his guidance and bonsai wisdom.

Several workshop participants were also at Chris's previous workshop two years ago and it was particularly poignant when Chris acknowledged that their skills and confidence had clearly improved. We also had a few new to the club participating in the workshops so it was great to see new members taking advantage of this valuable opportunity. Clearly feathers in the cap for the society and committee in promoting and supporting important events such as workshops.



The weather was pleasant although precautions had been put in place should the threatened rain eventuate – it didn't. The venue was Janet's back garden and garage so there was plenty of room to get comfortable and enjoy the experience.

Varying species of trees were tabled for work and all who participated went home happy with the outcome. There was one 'minor' disaster when Annie removed the wrong branch from an Olive she was working on but even that turned out OK in the end as a quick decision on a restyle had it looking all good in the end.

Chris will be back in the future, more than keen to see how the results have moved along.

Many thanks to Janet for the use of the garden.

Rui Ferreira work shops and demonstration

Alan Jabs

Early September and club members had the opportunity to experience a full on week of bonsai related events.



Midweek during the Adelaide Royal Show I was once again at the airport to pick up the SA

Bonsai Society's VIP demonstrator who had been travelling all over southern parts of Australia visiting clubs and giving workshops and presentations.

Rui Ferreira left his home in southern Portugal for this whirlwind visit down-under and said he'd 'been having a great time' because he was not living out of hotels but rather, visiting and staying with people which added to the pleasure of the experience.

After collecting him from the airport, Rui, Chris Xepapas and I enjoyed a quick lunch at the Adelaide Central Market (at Adelaide oldest and very first pizza shop) before spending time in the Botanic Gardens and then the Himeji Garden on South Terrace. It was amusing to observe that we all seemed to take pictures of trees no matter where we were and the three of us wandered around, snapping away – despite the drizzle.

A quietly spoken man who certainly knows his stuff, Rui gave a wonderful demonstration using an over grown Olive. The Olive was given its initial styling during a very informative and open conversation. Around 25 people made the trip to Dernancourt to see this demonstration and they were not disappointed.

The same venue was used the next day as we settled in for the normal two session workshop format, with several members participating in both sessions – truly keen not to

miss this opportunity! The lesson here was to set up your material for the future and not to worry too much about creating that 'instant' shape or bonsai. As a consequence, many trees were severely cut back and angles altered to give the best opportunity for that tree in the future.

No one was disappointed with their work as Rui's explanations about where their tree would take them clearly made sense. The SA Bonsai Society Facebook page has all the images posted so a visit there will show the results.

The end result – that Rui Ferreira would be most welcome to visit again.



Seasonal notes for September

September is a good time for repotting and it is useful to have bonsai potting mixture mixed and ready at this time of the year. You can continue repotting deciduous and deciduous flowering trees until the buds begin to swell. Leave pines until the new spring growth begins. Leave figs until the weather is more consistently warm (October and November). The best time for evergreen flowering plants is immediately after they have finished flowering.

Begin to feed trees in September. Use higher nitrogen fertilisers applying at half the recommended strength and at weekly to fortnightly intervals. Only start applying fertilisers to flowering trees after they have finished flowering, with evergreens – start in September when the weather becomes more consistently warm.

If you have attained the shape of a tree be on top of the pinching. Constant pruning and pinching back is important. Maples and Ash trees need to be pinched back to the first pair of leaves after growing at least three sets of leaves. This will keep the internodes short and compact. Chinese Elms shoot like ‘fishing lines’ with long straight growth and these need constant attention to encourage branching.

Avoid wiring until new growth is established. It is better to avoid wiring deciduous and flowering plants as this may damage the emerging buds – wait until the new growth has hardened off usually by November/December.

September, with warmer days and drying winds can also be more difficult – especially with delicate spring growth. Be diligent in observing your bonsai and water regularly. Water both the foliage and the soil.

And watch out for those bugs! Most of the common pests such as scale and mites on conifers; woolly aphid on black pine; thrips and scale on figs; mealy bugs and caterpillars are becoming more active as the weather warms. Maintain a keen eye on plants for early signs of pest infestation and treat accordingly.

Get ready for our show and get trees in top condition. Collect moss and put around the trunk of the tree, not all over the pot.

Bonsai Dig – 30 July 2017

Philip Ekers

After repeated requests from members, we finally conducted another dig for Olives.

Over the last few years the locations for legally and safely digging Olives have declined to the point where we thought there was no longer any areas available to us.

After several false starts investigating new sites as far away as Kapunda and surrounding areas in the north, it was suggested we investigate obtaining permission to dig in a National Park. In the past, this option had been considered but as we had no access or permission it was discounted as being a really good idea but unworkable.

However, through a contact recommended by a society member we were able to negotiate with the DEWNR Department’s Senior Ranger in the Willunga Basin, for access to the Onkaparinga River National Park. We had to comply with a few extra conditions prior to accessing the region, including a safety briefing and decontamination of footwear but none of this proved onerous or prevented us from having a great day.

We met at the Hungry Jack’s car park, enabling some to gather substance and a coffee, prior to setting out on our endeavour. After a brief talk from David Allen and an explanation of the Park procedures as well as another Metho spray of footwear, we set forth to hunt down our trees.

To say we were spoilt for choice would be a gross understatement. From our initial vantage point we looked out over a flat area which rapidly dropped away down to the Onkaparinga Gorge with literally hundreds of Olives to choose from. As diggers fanned out to make their selections, they disappeared into the surrounding scrub.

With the good rain over the preceding couple of weeks, digging was relatively easy. Some new equipment soon came into view with a recently acquired “root slayer” spade and some members made short work of removing the complete lignotuber or root ball which means excellent potential for a future bonsai.

There were trees of all sizes collected – some were able to be removed with a light tug of the hand while others required substantially more work with spades, picks and crowbars coming into play. Some people lived up to nick names such as “Bobcat” and took trees of Biblical proportions that would have challenged Samson to move. But I think the prize for the monster tree of day goes to Daryl. To see him struggling up the hill with his prize across his shoulders was truly inspirational.

For the most part members were able to comply with the requirements to gather debris for removal at a later time, and backfill the holes created by any removal of the selected tree. It is really important that we conform to the requirements from the DEWNR if we wish to continue to use this area for future digs.

Our thanks to all who made the day possible and to members who complied with the requirements to make the day a very successful dig.

Speaking of which, we are proposing another dig late October, weather permitting, in the same area so don't put away your picks or root busters just yet.

Forest Planting

Annie Reid

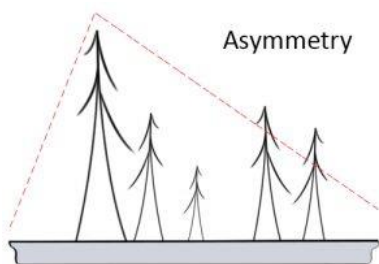
The rocks assembled with plasticine and various twigs to give an idea of the tree positions.

At the July meeting, Matt Sharp and Luke Parsons provided us with an excellent demonstration on assembling a forest planting of Trident Maples.

Matt had already positioned the horizontal rocks in a flat rectangular pot and surrounded them with a forest of fine wires that would assist him to secure the 16 (oops – 16 is an even number, I meant 19) or so trees in place. Each one was very slender and upright in form with few lateral branches although they varied in thickness and height. These characteristics make them ideal for a forest planting.

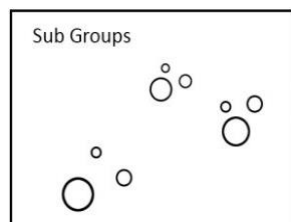
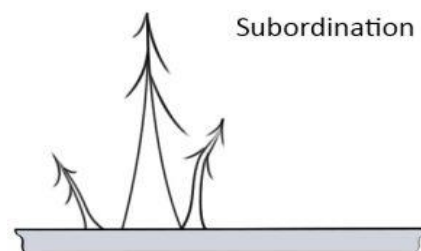
As he began positioning the trees, Luke explained the design principles that must guide the placement process.

Firstly, tall trees are positioned at the front of the pot and smaller trees toward the back to create a feeling of greater depth.



He explained the concept of **asymmetry** by asking us to imagine an invisible triangle encompassing the silhouette of our bonsai, then that triangle would be asymmetrical. Trees in their natural habitat tend to grow with movement to one side or another due to environmental factors. Basically the principle that applies to individual trees, where the shape of the tree dictates movement to the left or right of centre, applies to group plantings also. So if a group of trees has the largest tree planted on the right, with smaller trees planted on the left, then the movement of the group is towards the left. An asymmetrical form will usually look more natural than a symmetrical form.

The principle of **subordination** occurs naturally where one tree, the focal point, is more dominant than surrounding trees. The larger tree is physically and visually the focal point and demanding more attention. The smaller trees surrounding it are standing in the shadow of this tree; they are perhaps stunted and leaning away from the main tree, in search of light.



A forest planting will usually look more cohesive if the trees within the total planting are separated into **groups or sub groups**. The formula used when planting the first three, and therefore three most important trees in a group can be duplicated again and again to complete a group planting. The diagram shows three groups of three trees. The pattern of planting for the first group of three is replicated in the other two groups. The trees are planted such that the distance between each tree is varied, all trees are visible from the 'front' of the planting, no two trees are in line from either the sides, or from front to back.

Planting larger trees at the front, and smaller trees at the back of a group planting can help provide a sense of depth.

We look forward to seeing this forest planting in the years to come!

For more information about forest planting investigate [Bonsai Empire](#) and [Forest Style- Malta](#)

SPECIAL THANKS

SA Bonsai relies on the generosity of its members and wants to especially thank those who have supported the club by donating gifts, plants, tables and other items that have been used as prizes for the raffle.

Jenni Carnie, Ruth Creedy, Chris Drinkwater, Howard Hamon, Janet Sabey, Jim Silkstone, Andrew Ward, Collin Warren

Preparing for the October Bonsai Show

Reminders about selling stock at the South Australian Bonsai Society Show

- **New** > members no longer have to exhibit to sell stock.
 - It is important that all materials for sale are of a quality and price appropriate to maintaining our good name.
 - All items must have the appropriate tag (available from H. Matthews) clearly indicating price and personal code.
 - 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.
 - 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.
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Where Bonsai can take you...

Alan Jabs

Upon joining the South Australian Bonsai Society not all the benefits are immediately apparent. The friendship and information are there from the start as is access to the many events and promotions the Society has within the SA confines.

Other enthusiasts can be found along the bonsai journey particularly when travelling to conventions or on holidays when a bonsai side trip is added. The shared interest and opportunities are out there just waiting to be enjoyed.

Recently in the last newsletter I wrote about the WBFF Bonsai Convention in Saitama and highlighted the experiences we had while attending this once in a lifetime event.



On my return home, another opportunity arose with a request to write an article for an international bonsai magazine – The Bonsai Clubs International Journal, Bonsai and Stone magazine. I must say this was a daunting task but after a few drafts it was submitted and I am excited to say accepted and published.

Why am I promoting this? Well I believe it shows that anyone can pursue those opportunities when they come along, whether it is attending club meetings, workshops, national conventions or writing articles for the newsletter you are now viewing.

Our newsletter survives because there are readers and contributors; I have found over the years that a story on almost anything ‘bonsai’ can be a great source of interest and information to others. I urge others to give it a go – get away



from sitting in the background and send in your thoughts. Be proactive as that is the way we can all participate – I would love to read a range of different articles in this newsletter.

Copies of the BCI Magazine will be available to read from the library so you too can see what the convention was all about.

Upcoming Events

- **Annual Bonsai Show** – Saturday 14 and Sunday 15 October
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Meeting Venue:

Goodwood Community Centre
Rosa St
Goodwood

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

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