



SA Bonsai Newsletter

President's report

Matt Sharp

Hi Everyone,

I've just spent the day repotting so there's dirt under my fingernails and in my hair somehow but it's always a nice feeling to know that your repotted trees will respond with good growth, and that watering will be easier this summer as the water will drain nice and easy through the new soil.

The small olive that I got at our last dig is all potted up and ready to go, easing into place amongst all the other olives that have been collected over the years.

Our most recent dig at the Onkaparinga national park the other week was one of more successful, especially in terms of the quality of the trees on offer. We moved further seaward from our usual spot and were rewarded with literally thousands of olives, many with thick lower branches and twisting trunks. Although I hate to see a national park get overrun with feral species, there's an opportunity for club members to collect many high quality trees for many years to come.

After the dig was over, I headed further up the park to where the olive monoculture gave way to actual native bushland, and I spent an hour wandering through the Eucalyptus strands. I was particularly taken with the Mallee Box (*Eucalyptus porosa*) forming natural rafts with plenty of twisting branches full of deadwood and interesting turns.



Mallee Box (Eucalyptus porosa)

Increasingly these days I've been taking notice of the more interesting native flora that grows locally. River Red Gums never fail to impress, especially those huge specimens you see in paddocks in the hills that survived land clearing and have been left alone. Recently on a family trip to Robe I had to pull over and spend some time looking at some of the remaining strands of original bushland in the lower Coorong, dominated by ancient Melaleuca.



Melaleuca



Sticky Hop Bush (Dodonaea viscosa)

When Luke and I were scouting locations for our last dig, we came across some Sticky Hop Bush (*Dodonaea viscosa*) with amazing twisted and looped trunks.

Translating these forms into Bonsai is a challenge, especially as they don't conform to the more traditional shapes we work with and we don't have hundreds of years of horticultural knowledge behind us. But by experimenting with local species and looking closely at the forms they produce in the wild, I believe that we are in a position to create something unique to our area and provide a foundation for future Bonsai enthusiasts to build on. Creating Bonsai with species we are familiar with and drawing knowledge and inspiration from the Japanese is still one of the best ways to learn the art, but while we are doing this, we can also be stretching ourselves and expand the possibilities of what we can create with native trees.

Rant over. Look after yourself and I hope to see you at the next meeting. Our annual show is full steam ahead so get your trees ready!

The rewards of an Olive dig



Extraordinary potential in these Olive finds

Malcolm and Luke hard at work



SALA Exhibition – Bonsai: An Australian Perspective

Over an August weekend Matt Sharp and Luke Parsons exhibited a selection of their bonsai as part of SALA week and used the opportunity to promote a uniquely Australian approach to bonsai – each tree was associated with fond memories, a particular place or an unusual theme.



Title: ***Ruins near Strathalbyn***

Artist: *Matthew Sharp*

Tree Species: Desert Ash *Fraxinus angustifolia*

Pot: Chinese

Description: Farmhouse ruins are a common sight in the Adelaide hills, along with occasional survivors of long-lost gardens. Exotic trees and stone walls blend into the surrounding landscape, continuing long after the lives of those who create them.

Title: ***Ships Graveyard***

Artist: *Luke Parsons*

Tree species: ficus microcarpa

Pot: 'shipwreck' form in dark stoneware, produced by Luke Parsons

Description: *Ships Graveyard* represents the environment of the same name that exists in the North Arm of the Port River, where vessels dating from 1856 have been abandoned, but which are now a home for many species of avian and marine animals, and also most noticeably, mangroves. The composition attempts to communicate the transitory nature of human activities and the tenacity of nature.



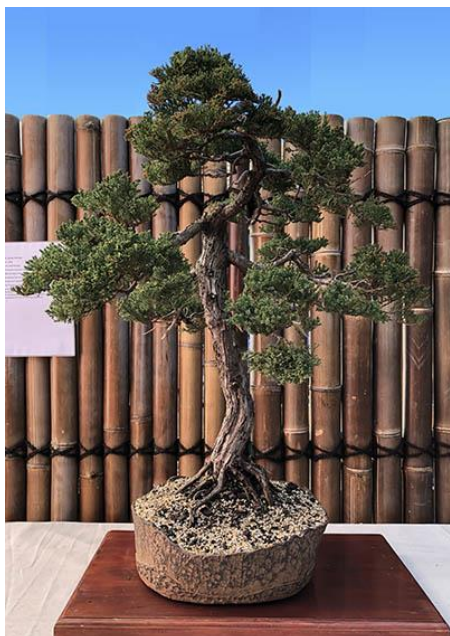
Title: ***Grandpa's shed***

Artist: *Matthew Sharp*

Tree Species: Small leaved Jade *Portulacaria afra*

Pot: Korean in Kintsugi style

Description: Grandpa could fix anything he put his mind to, and nothing was wasted. With his green thumb, every plant was in full health. Even the succulents were the envy of his neighbours



Title: ***All The Tall Trees***

Artist: Luke Parsons

Tree species: juniperus squamata

Pot: abstract form in dark stoneware, produced by Luke Parsons

Description: *All The Tall Trees* attempts to convey the feelings experienced when in close proximity to a truly tall tree; the sense of awe and grandeur, yet deeply humbling emotions that may be felt in the presence of a tree of towering proportions.

July workshops



Don receives Matt's advice (left). A fig after restyling (right).

The weather may have been cold but by all accounts the enthusiastic participants involved in the July weekend workshops had a great time.

Matt Sharp was the lead demonstrator and Luke Parsons provided his home as the venue.

Rob Eggers has kindly provided his reflection on the experience.

I arrived a bit early as was suggested, and was warmly welcomed by both Luke and Matt. I found myself a good spot at one of the tables and carried in my tool box and a few trees.

Matt took 'before' photos of all the trees, so that we could compare the trees after the work was done on them.

I took along a black pine literati style and a semi informal juniper that needed lots of styling.

Matt drew a picture of what he thought the tree could look like and we jumped in.

A few branches were removed that I would never had the nerve to cut off then we wrapped the rest of the branches with raffia and Matt proceeded to start bending. The tree looked very different when we had finished, and I was thrilled with the results.

The second tree was my juniper, which had been neglected for far too long but time was limited so Matt pointed out how I should attack the monster.

I got about half way through what I had to do at the workshop, and finished it off at home.

Both Matt and Luke inspired confidence to do what I had to do.

One always doubts oneself when it comes to major work on one of your babies, but with their help I was able to

see past my fear and do what was necessary.

Both trees are now significantly different and so much better from how they started out.

Perhaps I'm rambling but I wanted to pass on my appreciation to both guys for their willingness to openly share their knowledge.



David looks well pleased with his efforts, as does

Janet.

All I can say to anyone who doubts their ability or thinks they might not be able to do what they have to with their trees, is to definitely go along to any workshop they can, because it will improve both their knowledge and confidence.

PS: I was delighted to see Janet Sabey taking advantage of Matts' knowledge as well.

If such a doyen of our hobby is willing to take advice from others, then the rest of us can only improve our skills by absorbing advice too.



Heather Matthew's Cotoneaster



Brian Richardson's Black Pine

Drawing Bonsai

We are often encouraged to make sketches of the bonsai we are intending to create so that we remain true to a particular direction over the period of time it takes for the bonsai to evolve.



Philip Ekers has secured [an article by Dr Neville Dawson](#) who is a firm believer in the need to sketch ideas for bonsai.

Librarians change over

Annie Reid

Nan Hersey and **Dennis Stevens** have managed the SA Bonsai Society library for many years (at least 10 years that I'm aware of) and now they wish to retire from the role. They have done wonderful work and we have all benefitted from their efforts to support us improving our knowledge and understanding of the art of bonsai. *We thank you Nan and Dennis.*

Fortunately the call for volunteers has been answered and we look forward to the new library team settling into the task – **Nady Harris**, **David Collins** and **Greg Paterson**.

The new team is hoping to share the load and they are keen for other club members to join them so that a roster system might be established.

An Assistant Treasurer required

Regretfully, our current Assistant Treasurer, **Joseph Rabig**, has resigned from this role.

Joe has been in the position for several years and has played a vital part in keeping finances organised and supporting the Treasurer. We thank him for his invaluable contribution.

In fact, Terry is desperate for one of our members to take on the role so if you would like to have trial period in the position before the more permanent election occurs in March, please contact the secretary or express your interest with Terry Bertozzi at a meeting.

Putting on a good Show

Selling bonsai, plants and bonsai related items at our October show

As you may recall from our show last year, the sales area was extremely popular, perhaps even more so because the first COVID lockdown had people taking additional interest in plants for their house and garden.

For this reason, the sales table should continue be a source of good quality plant material that is healthy and free of weeds and disease.

Plants should not be pot-bound and neither should they have been recently potted. It is vital that the items offered for sale represent the SA Bonsai Society positively and encourage others to engage in bonsai.

While perhaps only costing a few dollars, discovering that your purchase is quickly weakening is not a positive reflection on our society.

If the novice bonsai enthusiasts' motivation is to be encouraged, then it is important that the plants we sell through our trading table have a high chance of thriving, not just surviving.

Members who volunteer for the sales area have an important role to play in assisting would-be purchasers. They need to discuss and assess the 'customers' horticultural experience and give useful advice about the care of the newly purchased 'bonsai'.



To help ensure that only quality material is offered for sale in clean, proper containers, we have allocated two 'stewards' to oversee the placement and quality of the material brought in for sale. This initiative is also

intended to keep order over the sales area during the two days of the show given that new stock is able to be brought in on the Sunday morning.
It is expected that items for sale will be labelled correctly with the name of the plant species, the price and the member's sales code.
Labels must be soundly attached to the plant/pot so that they are not easily dislodged or lost.

The by-laws to our constitution explicitly outline the protocols to be observed in the sale of items at bonsai shows. These are as follows:

- financial members offering items for sale are also expected to provide assistance during the weekend of the show;
- items offered for sale will be quality, well-established and offered in acceptable containers (if sold in 'growing boxes' such as polystyrene or wooden crates, these must be sturdy and sound;
- members should not advise buyers on the purchase of items that they have personally offered for sale;
- members may not offer merchandise for sale outside of the show trading area or in the proximity of the show venue whilst the show is open to the public.

Meeting Venue: Goodwood Community Centre, Rosa St. Goodwood

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

Patrons: Dorothy Koreshoff, Carlien Walter

Office Bearers:

President: Matthew Sharp

Vice President: Luke Parsons

Secretary: Annie Reid secretary.sabonsai@gmail.com

Treasurer: Terry Bertozzi

Assistant Treasurer:

Newsletter Editor: Annie Reid

Committee:

Jenni Carnie

Michael Coward

Philip Ekers

Howard Hamon

Greg Horner

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