

Summer 2021



SA Bonsai Newsletter

President's report

Matt Sharp

Hi Everyone,

As I write this we are experiencing the first really hot day of the Summer, so I've spent the morning throwing shadecloth over the tomatoes, checking that the misters are working and blowing up the kiddies inflatable pool (a task much easier since I bought a battery powered air pump). It's been such a mild Spring most of my trees still have soft sappy growth, so this burst of heat will no doubt slow down a lot of them and hopefully the weeds too. Heat loving species like Jade and Ficus will now start powering on so it's time to start fertilising them strongly. The trees I had on display at our annual show look nothing like they did back in October, when I had trimmed and wired them to look at their best, but looking at their shaggy growth and unkept outlines is a reminder that Bonsai are always changing and they only appear at their best for a short time. There's some message there about the transience of beauty and whatnot, but I'll leave that to someone else.



October seems a long time ago but looking back I'm really pleased with how our annual show went. It's hard to predict how public events will pan out during these strange times but the quality of our display trees and the items for sale are a testament to the skills and hard work of our members. Sales weren't as brisk as last year (when you could have sold a soursob in a pot for a good price) but we made another good profit that will pay the rent for another 12 months and allow us to (hopefully) get back to having overseas and interstate demonstrators in the future. I've seen other Community clubs really struggle in the COVID climate and there no doubt will be some casualties, so for our club to not only survive but thrive has been especially pleasing and again reflects the hard work of our committee and members.

We are all hoping that once the borders are open and we've ridden out the next wave of the virus that we can go interstate and overseas visitors back on our schedule. There are no certainties but the committee are striving to get some Bonsai professionals back to Adelaide and run some demonstrations and workshops. We are also running a number of club workshops on weekends and other times for those who can't always make Tuesday nights. If the response is good then these might become a permanent feature. I'm also hoping we can return to having supper at our meetings too, as I miss the Scotch fingers!

As always, we will respond to whatever obstacles get thrown our way, and our members have shown themselves to be a resilient lot, so I look forward to seeing you all in 2022. Have a safe break, drive carefully, keep the sunscreen up and look after yourselves and your families.

MARIE VIVIENE ADAMS

In Memory of a dear friend and passionate Bonsai artist

I met Marie and Dave Adams at my first Bonsai Conference, held in the South Parklands. One of Marie's spectacular trees, a Juniper *comminus* covered in gorgeous blue berries had attracted my attention. This species is rarely shown in exhibition and is quite stunning in fruit.

Marie embraced life in every aspect. Her family came first, and her involvement in the local community was outstanding. She was a wonderful, wife, mother, cook, dressmaker, quilter, potter, secretary, traveller and Bonsai enthusiast. Marie together with her devoted husband Dave had attended Bonsai meetings and Conferences for at least 25 years.

Marie was a compassionate, lovely, genuine person, whom we shall miss, especially her good company, humour and smile.

Ruth Creedy

Annual SA Bonsai Show Reflections

Don Gillis

As a novice I've been quietly improving my skills, knowledge and trees to be able to eventually have them to a standard where I felt they were worthy of public display. I was somewhat humbled to be invited to participate in this year's exhibition, even if it was just topping up the 'weeds section'.



Photo courtesy Alan Jabs

The exhibition was well attended by the public. Occasionally getting close to our COVID limit, we were rewarded with a fairly constant stream of visitors across the weekend, with many of them happy to open their wallets in the sales area.

While I believe sales may have been down a little on last year's grab fest, we still managed to satisfy the appetite for bonsai materials. It was quite obvious that many of the public look forward to our exhibition, and especially the sales. As I was stood among the pots on Saturday morning, there was a great rush as a couple of obvious regulars to the event snapped up armfuls of pots as they exchanged snide pleasantries at having missed out on whatever the other had grabbed.

The quality of the trees displayed continues to excel, with many of the visitors drawing members into lengthy conversations about the trees on display. Those same people were often subsequently motivated to not only purchase products, but also take up membership.



Photo courtesy Alan Jabs

Those of us with less experience also find much inspiration not only in the quality on display, but also the varied techniques employed to achieve such beautiful outcomes and the opportunity to engage in conversation without the time constraints of meetings or workshops.

The exhibition rightly holds pride of place in our calendar, for not only the public but for club members as well. It gives us an opportunity to show off the fruits of our labour and openly speak of our somewhat odd hobby of torturing tiny trees.

So if you harbour an inner desire to display a tree, set some goals, maybe knock up a few sketches and get stuck in now. You've got less than a year to have something ready.



Photo courtesy Alan Jabs

Mick Coward

The Bonsai show of 2021! What a bright spot in the gloom after being 'locked in', 'locked down' and 'locked out'. This was the second year of COVID 19 and had us mumbling through masks and struggling to understand each other. Despite these discomforts, my first impression was the stunning display of groomed trees. I especially liked the fruiting mulberry and the Lebanese cedar – almost biblical.

There was also a bountiful supply of trees to buy from a Cape Honey Suckle almost ready to leap to freedom, down to delicate little cacti. Lots a pots, pebbles and personalities. Friendly advice abounded from members to questions posed.

In summary, the show was well orchestrated, well run and a great starting point for all levels of bonsai enthusiast.

PS: I joined the society 3 years ago after visiting the bonsai show!



Photo courtesy Alan Jabs

Connie Holland

The Bonsai Show this year was the second one I've attended. I was so impressed last year that I became a member so for me this year was even better.

A credit to Matt and Luke and all the committee members who give so selflessly of their time, their expertise and their vision.

The display was exceptional, the plant sale too, was fantastic – displaying a great variety of bonsai in all different stages and for sale in different price ranges.

There were plenty of members to help with explanations with regard to plants and the architectural aspects of bonsai. There were plenty of pots, equipment, books and other items for sale

The organising of the event can't be faulted and I continue to be impressed by the skill, generosity and helpfulness of long standing members.

I am very glad to be a member and am very grateful that the enthusiastic support of members is contributing to my passion for the art of bonsai and that this will continue for many years to come.

Jude Lobow

I want to take the time to congratulate the committee on another beautiful event. I was lucky enough to have the day off to help set up for the occasion with many other community members. It was great to see everyone come together and celebrate all things bonsai! In these challenging times, it's good to know we can still meet with one another and continue to "grow" excitement around what we do. I look forward to seeing everyone at the next event.



Photo courtesy Alan Jabs



Photo courtesy Alan Jabs

Pearl Driver

I joined the Bonsai Society at this year's October show.

I was really impressed.

Unfortunately when I returned home my house sitters had forgotten to water my new bonsai and it was dry as a bone. Of course I tried to revive it with new potting and soaking the roots in rain water but all to no avail.

The small bonsai I bought at the show has also died although I tried to give it all the correct attention. Am feeling sad about this.

There are no available bonsais here in Coober Pedy so I will have to buy another one when I next come to Adelaide.

Not a good outcome so far but I did enjoy the show and especially the demonstrations.

I hope I can come next year.



Sogetsu Ikebana

Annie Reid

COVID is a horror but there is no doubt it has forced us to steam line our show in such a way that improved presence has been given to the bonsai on display.

Entry/exit procedures are another one of the elements that have been improved although I think we all miss the coffee cart and will find a way to reintroduce a Novice display next year .

Once again, we were joined by our friends from Ikebana International Adelaide Chapter and their presentation of flowers drew many admiring glances.

The highlight for me this year was the strength of the stage display. The theme was 'Trash and Treasure', showing how plants considered weeds around Adelaide, such as olive, hawthorn and ash trees can be transformed into beautiful bonsai. Each tree was powerful in its own right



but collectively they were a knockout.

Luke Parsons gets the hero award for the display, particularly as I know he put it together at the last minute.

My Bonsai Journey

Barbara Hill

I decided to join the Bonsai Society in February 2021 and a very big thank you for making me feel welcome. Thank you to Janet and Luke for hosting workshops in their homes and the many other members who have selflessly added their words of wisdom in advice for me

It's pleasantly relaxing to listen to the eggshells crushing under my fingers until the quiet is interrupted by the grandson – "what are they for?" "Obvious", I say "the junipers" – he'll go away and think on it and come back with "why" at a later time! This secret about the eggshells was what I had learned last month at the club meeting and caused me to reflect on my first contact with bonsai around 60 years ago.

On relocating to Adelaide, my mother, with more time on her hands and within walking distance of Lasscock's Nursery, found pots and her first purchase, a Moreton Bay fig – which is disputed, but I shall still refer to it as such.

How my mother decided bonsai was for her, I have no idea. She had no knowledge of wiring – "you pruned the tips and roots when necessary" and she would occasionally hang a weight on a branch to get some shape!!! But in saying that, she produced what I remember to be some beautiful Ginko forests, a Cotoneaster (dug from friend's gardens) many other Ficus and a Sophora which over the years, would take pride of place in the lounge for a few days at a time and drew many comments.

No internet and limited access to information, she just experimented and enjoyed her results. On her death most were given away. I took a few but with lack of time – disastrous results – but one has survived.

Over time, one of my daughters, looking for gifts, weddings, funerals, birthdays discovered *Spirit of Bonsai* and would present her friends with a tree. I too inherited a few from my shopping visits with her, but they were sadly placed in areas where they mostly had to fend for themselves, with not much love and attention apart from the very occasional lift from the pot – "prune the tips and roots" and a return to its spot in the garden. I did a workshop at *Bonsai Mujo* about 9 years ago with the same daughter and then had a Juniper to add to the little collection. We never potted them up so I again "pruned the tips and roots" and sometime later placed it in a pot – this was "my way" bonsai!!

January 2020 with no knowledge of how COVID would wreak havoc on our lives, I decided to do a little upgrade to my courtyard which grew to a major overhaul. My garden furniture was looking very average beside some new stained timber. There had been a progression of Golden Retriever puppies chewing over many years, so, what else to do when most things were shut down – I sanded and stained – nothing will ever look quite the same, but I say "rustic" is ok! Now I had an area in which to display and that needed to be filled. I retrieved my trees, an Elm covered in scale which was looking very sad, 2 Junipers, an Olive, self-sown in my driveway, a few assorted Ficus and my pride and joy the "original" Moreton Bay fig now some 60 years old and a tangible memory of a very special person in my life.



The annual show of the Bonsai Society 2020 again ignited my interest in bonsai as I became aware of what my little "trees in pots" might become with a improved knowledge and care from me.

So, this is the survivor of so many years of neglect – I wonder what it could have been in another's hands? I know its trunk is a little ugly and too many other faults to mention, but as I say, it is a treasured memory, even the rocks as my mother placed them all that time ago – it remains special to me.

Now at least I am learning that there is more to bonsai than "prune the tips and roots when necessary". And hopefully my little "trees in pots" will take on a new dimension in the future.

Workshops are the winner

Cheryl King

I thoroughly enjoy all bonsai workshops and feedback at the meetings.

I enjoy looking after the plants but have difficulty with the shallow pots -the deeper ones work best for me.

I took up bonsai when I retired but once I had a tree I realised I needed advice in order to keep it alive so that is when I joined the bonsai society. I did not realise the processes involved in repotting, how to fertilise and what type of potting mixes to use. Pruning and styling of plants is always a challenge as the plants decide which way they want to grow. I did succeed in keeping my first bonsai alive and got it through a few dry summers which is always a hard thing to do.

I have to conclude that workshops by visiting bonsai experts have been the most enjoyable in terms of my learning.

Event of the year

Alan Jabs

Have you ever had one of those times where for just a split second something good or funny happens in front of you and that image or incident stays with you for some time?

As we are now at the end of 2021 and for better or worse we have all made it safely to this point, for me I knew I was going to write this post for the newsletter and it's about that moment.

Due to other commitments, I do not get to many Tuesday nights but this once (I think there were actually three



times this year) – this one night we have Howard doing a presentation where he needed the able assistance of Luke and the end result was the birth of a whole lot of foam packing...

I know why it was there and what it was for but it was the effort and almost comedic scene that unfolded before all of us that has made my number one incident for this last year. If you were there you will know what happened. If not then the image I took on the phone covers the scene but not the fun we all had watching that unfold before us all.

Enjoy the image... Oh, and see you all in 2022.

Bonsai at the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden, Pt Augusta

Jim Hayward

In 2015 I moved to live in Pt Augusta and became a Friend of the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden.



At that stage I had two bonsai; a fig and a juniper. Seeing a rock fig (*Ficus brachypoda*) I wondered if it would live in a bonsai pot ... and was pleased when this was successful. Here are my 2021 efforts; these cuttings were taken in early Autumn.

I joined the Victorian Native Bonsai Club in 2018 and was much encouraged. I began to look at plants in our Botanic Garden, wondering if they would work as bonsai.

My first three efforts all died, because I didn't know enough about potting mixes. As a bonsai novice I just used Australian Native potting mix. But of course this plant is an arid plant, it doesn't like to get too wet.

This is in a 50% organic mix ... I bring it in out of the rain and water it sparingly.





Eremophila tetraptera with twisted branches, over 20yrs old.

I encourage you all to explore Australian Native plants as bonsai, to visit the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden in Pt Augusta, and see some hard to find plants that might just do very well as bonsai.



Here is a challenge for the bonsai enthusiast – *Eucalyptus crucis*. Note the beautiful bark.

Challenge for 2022

Alan Jabs

We all grow Bonsai – and for many different reasons some more personal than others.

Given that here in SA we have been lucky up to a point where restrictions were few but the quiet times got me thinking about a 'what if' scenario – what if you had to stay home and yet still be Bonsai active?

Sure, weeding and wiring as well as the usual repot and prune, but how about building the skills and knowledge through a special project.



Why not challenge yourself to try something a little different and what better than to grow and have ready for the 2022 SABS Show a Shohin or Mini Bonsai. Easy you say and yes we have a few members who do excel at this (so Hint No1 – these people are a great resource worthy of a chat). I am writing this in early December and the year has finished as far as meetings go, so sourcing material and getting started will be that first challenge, but why not get out there and give this a go.

Species are many with Ficus, Olives, Chinese Elm, Juniper and even Jade good candidates. With the summer heat and very small pots, keeping them healthy will be a challenge in itself as will feeding and watering to maintain vigour to have them looking their best come October and the show,

And if they are not featured at the show, the sales table beckons or as might happen you fall in love with them and they stay in your backyard.

A National Treasure

Leigh Taafe

Curator – National Arboretum Canberra

The bonsai pictured below is believed to be the oldest living tree in Australia to have been grown and designed specifically for bonsai. It was kindly donated to the National Bonsai & Penjing Collection of Australia (NBPCA) by Dorothy Koreshoff and was originally grown by her late husband Vita.



Tree dimensions – 1200 high (including pot) x

1300 wide

Vita arrived in Brisbane, Australia, from Manchuria in 1928, with his parents and sister. Initially because his mother was feeling homesick, Vita was prompted to make a few bonsai, thinking that these would serve to remind his mother of their previous home. This began Vita's interest and enjoyment in creating and growing bonsai, an interest that he continued to enjoy for the rest of his life.

In their home in Brisbane, some of the trees that Vita had propagated were planted into the ground when the decision was made to move from Brisbane to Sydney. However, a number of trees were brought to Sydney at the time of this move, one of them being the pictured "Sawara cypress" (*Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Squarrosa'), grown from cutting in 1937.

The tree has had many techniques applied to it. It was split down the centre to alter a bar branched appearance, but after 50 years the callous has almost filled the gap. Vita also formed sinews on the trunk by making a sliced cut down the trunk, allowing it to callous before slicing again and again, which produced depth and appeal as a raised sinew. As time passed, the trunk has developed into the most interesting feature to reflect its age.

Meeting Venue: Goodwood Community Centre, Rosa St. Goodwood

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