

Winter 2021



SA Bonsai Newsletter

President's report

Matt Sharp

Hi Everyone,

Crikey, it's cold today as I write this, but despite all that, Winter is one of my favourite times of the year. I like rugging up to go outside and I love Winter food, but most of all, I enjoy putting on the heater in the shed and working on a deciduous tree once the leaves have fallen, revealing the growth that has occurred over the previous growing



season. Clearing out evergreens ready for Spring growth is fun too, and once again with less foliage it's a good chance to see the structure of the trunk and branches.

Winter is also the time for digs! We recently had two days at Mt Crawford forest and I have to say that with the recent rains, the ground was so soft that digging up a tree was just a matter of getting a spade under and lifting. If only every dig was that easy! We had a good mixture of recent and experienced members and it was a great chance to get some fresh air and talk about trees with fellow enthusiasts, and talking about trees is always good.



We have another dig in August at the Onkaparinga River National Park, and although the digging won't be as easy there are literally thousands of trees to choose from, and it's a chance to fill your collection with whatever style you'd like, from forests and clumps to informal uprights and literati's. Small trees to fit in the palm of your hand to big bruisers that take two people to lift, it's all there so I encourage you to come along and get your hands dirty.

The purpose of Winter tasks is usually to get ready for Spring, and one of the things that happens in Spring is our annual show. You can see where this is going – we need to get our trees ready, both those for sale and those to go on display. Last year's show was a great success despite the Covid restrictions so we will be keeping

some of the changes we made, including restricting the number of trees we have on display. However, we want to include bonsai from more people, so if you have a tree (or trees) you'd like to display, please let us know so we can add you to the list. An email to the secretary with the species is a good way, or you can talk to someone on the committee at a meeting or workshop. If you're unsure you can show us a picture and we can advise.

It's not just our trees that need to rest in Winter, take the time to look after yourself as well. As the last 18 months has shown us, we need to put some time aside for ourselves to rest and recover, and we need to stay connected to others. Keep warm, keep healthy, look after your trees and I look forward to seeing you all at the next meeting.



May weekend workshops

Participant reflections

Annie Reid:

The participants at the May workshops attended with enthusiasm and we all came away with greater confidence

to manage a tree or two that had previously had us puzzled.

It was great to see some of our newest members involved but the old hands were there as well because we know the boost a workshop can provide. Philip Ekers was 'spot on' when he explained that we're inclined to doubt our own decisions about our trees but when we bounce ideas off others, we are reassured in our assessment and can proceed with more confidence.

Luke Parsons was the tutor for the workshops and it was refreshing to work with someone who is more inclined to look for the unusual than slavishly follow the 'rules'. Over the years, the juniper I was working on had gradually slid to quite an angle in the pot and I assumed the first task would be to return it to the original position. Not so thought Luke. Here was an opportunity go in a different direction and the result is one I would have been too hesitant to contemplate on my own.

David Collins:

The workshop with Luke was a fun day of learning, socialising and of course plenty of hands-on bonsai. Luke explained how he finds it useful to start by making a drawing of the final design, and to work towards that image when shaping the tree. I took along an odd and aimless young juniper, and we turned it into a captivating little cascade – it's now one of my favourite trees.

John Newland:

I took 5 trees to the workshops, each for a different reason ranging from where to go with a developing ficus through to what to do with a Grewia which was very healthy but had little else going for it. I also needed guidance with refining an old juniper which Janet Sabey gave me 11 years ago.

Enter Luke, our tutor! His sketch-driven design process and experience, combined with helpful input from the other work-shoppers successfully addressed the issues with my trees.

To sum up, the relaxed workshop setting and working together with like-minded people builds confidence and knowledge and is extremely satisfying.

Give it a go!

Volunteering at the National Arboretum

Janet Sabey

A few days after Easter I flew to Sydney to join my family on a road trip through the NSW Southern Highlands to Canberra. I can see and hear plenty of aircraft taking off and landing and thought that it was about time to dip my toe into the water of the travel pond.

First stop was Bowral, a beautiful town of gracious homes and lovely trees. Picnic lunch on lawns surrounding the Bowral cricket club watching two of the local teams play was really special. Our trip was probably a few weeks too early to experience the true autumn colours of the leaves, but then it was school holidays after all, and we missed the really cold nights.



Retford Park

After lunch, a visit to Retford Park, a National Trust property gifted by James Fairfax. The property comprises an imposing mansion built in 1887, together with extensive gardens, coach houses and stables and servants quarters together with art works both inside the house and throughout the gardens. Some of the more notable trees in the gardens were over 100 years old. It also features a resident snake – a copperhead – quite deadly, which had managed to slither into some bushes just ahead of me but was sighted by plenty of other visitors. Glad I missed that one!

On to spend the night in a tiny country town with a beautifully restored "destination" hotel. All very log fires and degustation menu. We stayed in a 150 year old wooden cottage, which had been tastefully modernised but still retained heaps of olde worlde charm, including lots of creaking noises during the windy night.



Janet and her grandchildren at the National Arboretum

Off to Canberra the next day arriving mid-afternoon, and no doubt you can believe that I requested that we go to the National Arboretum first before even booking into our accommodation. It was a lovely sunny Sunday afternoon and the visitor centre and section housing the national penjing and bonsai collection was heaving with people – lots of children. My grandchildren showed quite a bit of interest, surprisingly, and they were impressed to know a few of the names of exhibitors, some of whom they had met here in Adelaide and others they had heard me mention.

I have to admit, that when the idea of a national collection of bonsai was first mooted, I doubted that firstly it would ever get off the ground and secondly that it would ever be a success. Happy to report I was wrong on both counts.

My daughter had lucked in with our airbnb accommodation in Canberra, having booked a large, very comfortable modern home in a quiet suburb. It was the first time that I had the opportunity to immerse myself in suburban Canberra, as other stays have always been in hotels. It's amazing to observe the well designed streets, lined with large old trees, (our street featured oaks, but other streets had different species – usually deciduous). Every kilometre or so we seemed to find another small park, usually featuring native trees. We visited a friend who had recently transferred to Canberra with work who told us how she could sip her morning coffee on her balcony and often see wallabies hopping along in the park opposite. And she lived on a main road. The Canberra Bubble indeed! It crossed my mind that this was not the real world. Well not the world most Australians live in at any rate.



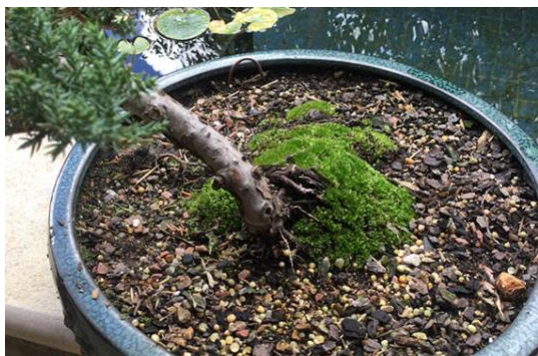
We spent a couple of days of sightseeing then I returned to the arboretum where I had arranged to spend the day volunteering "back of house" with the bonsai collection. The Curator, Leigh Tafe and Assistant Curator, Sam Thompson, are employed full time with the collection, and they are assisted by rostered volunteers who are members of the two bonsai societies in Canberra, the Canberra Bonsai Society and Western Creek Bonsai Society. Sam was my boss for the day. Truth be known, I would have been overjoyed to be handed a broom and told to sweep all day, but instead my first job was weeding starweed from the trees in the work area. Later in the

day I helped remove dead needles from a black pine. Little did Sam realise that I do not have a pine in my bonsai collection.



Bonsai and penjing on display in the collection, some donated, some lent, are rotated so that refining and maintenance work can be carried out out of the view of visitors. Some years ago I donated an ash, root over rock style, to the collection, and I was anxious to see it again. It was in the "back of house" area as it had recently been repotted. It is probably one of the oldest bonsai from South Australia, as I purchased it more than 50 years ago from a founding member of our club, Mrs. Sylvia Hawkes. It gave me immense pleasure to own it for at least 40 years, but I'm delighted to report that it now looks really magnificent, infinitely more beautiful than when Sylvia or I owned it. What a thrill to see it looking so good.

Whilst I was working there, two of the volunteers came up and said how wonderful it was to meet the lady who lent the big peppercorn some time ago and the interest it generated amongst visitors, as nearly everybody had a story to tell about a peppercorn from their youth, at their grandparent's farm or a holiday place they used to visit. Unfortunately I had to admit that the peppercorn hadn't been mine, but Marie Petersen's.



Keeping moss close to the trunk

Lots of swapping of ideas, tips and experiences. The trees in the national collection are vibrant and healthy (they are lightly fertilised every two weeks). But I was curious about the moss on all specimens – very green and lush. The secret recipe is very finely chopped sphagnum moss, mixed with well sieved and dried ordinary moss (as long as it isn't the hated star weed) and sprinkled on the trees, then watered in. I have already made one batch, and am working on a second batch. Either chop your sphagnum – I used sharp kitchen scissors, or put it in a food processor. If it's dried and hard you could try grating it. Moss is easy to find at the moment, try

to sieve as much soil off as possible. Just sprinkle your mixture around the trunk of the tree, not all over the soil surface as it can eventually soak up all the water and not allow moisture into the pot.

It was a wonderful day, and I enjoyed every part of it.

Pine Dig at Mt Crawford

A great time was had by our members who participated in a pine tree dig at Mt. Crawford. The weather was good, soft soil was easy to dig, and we're bound to see some exciting results in the future. Just one of the many benefits of being a member of the South Australian Bonsai Society!

Don't miss the Olive dig – 28th & 29th August in the Onkaparinga Gorge



Shane holds his prize pine and Harry gets ready to dig.

Rob with tree no 1 (left). Phoebe, Matt came well prepared

Newsletter from the National Arboretum Canberra

Neil Taafe

The National Bonsai & Penjing Collection of Australia (NBPCA) recently appointed its new Selection & Ambassadorial Committee (SAC). The SAC exists to act as ambassadors for the NBPCA at the grass roots level of the Australian bonsai community, to identify potential trees for loan or donation to the NBPCA, and to assist the Curator in assessing suitable trees amongst those on offer.

The NBPCA recently appointed a new SAC. The ambassadors are:

ACT

Mike Woolley

NSW

Chris Di Nola

Andrew Edge

Hugh Grant

Queensland

Tony Bebb
Beau Pett

SA

Luke Parsons
Matt Sharp

Tasmania

Jarryd Bailey

Victoria

Jeffry Farman
Scott Martin
Gerard Schoofs

WA

Pete Inglis

The NBPCA is a partnership between the ACT Government and the Australian bonsai community. The Australian bonsai community is represented in this relationship by the NBPCA Collection Advisory Committee (CAC). If any club or individual wishes to make comment regarding any matter associated with the NBPCA, they should write to the CAC, as the representative body of the Australian bonsai community. The CAC will then bring relevant matters to the attention of the NBPCA and/or the management of the National Arboretum Canberra (NAC), for action.

Please use the following email address, marked attention NBPCA CAC: arboretum@act.gov.au

The CAC welcomes and invites input. Your CAC representatives are:

Bruce Sullivan (Chair)
Amanda Beilby
David Nassar
Peter Odin
Keith Stanley

Staff and volunteers welcome both committees to the NBPCA and appreciate the valuable time and contributions that the members make to the ongoing success of our National Collection.



Winter is well underway in Canberra. A great time to view the Collection while the deciduous trees are allowing you to see the intricate structures and fine ramification of branching. Here is a very fine example of broom style bonsai using English elm. A favourite among our many visitors, this tree is often referred to by young children as "Mr Magee's tree" as it looks similar to the tree from the children's book of the same title.

This tree was grown and styled originally by Max Lehey from Victoria. There is a great article on how Max created the tree in an old copy of the publication "Bonsai Australis". If you would like me to send you a scanned copy of the article, just email me at leigh.taafe@act.gov.au. This tree was kindly donated to the NBPCA in 2016 by Frank Kelly in memory of his parents Kathleen and Raymond Kelly.

Thanks very much to all our wonderful volunteers who have worked hard and with enthusiasm to share our love of bonsai and penjing with the public and enthusiasts who have been visiting in large numbers.

Australian stamps – Native Bonsai

Australia Post has new stamp releases highlighting both the adaptability and fragility of nature. One of these features Australian Native Bonsai and may be of interest to those of you who enjoy collecting .

All trees are all from the NBPCA, and if you look closely the Callitris on the first day sheet is Matt Sharp's. The entire [Stamp Bulletin](#) has not but included in this link, only the section relating to bonsai.

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: Joseph Rabig

Newsletter Editor: Annie Reid

Committee:

Jenni Carnie

Michael Coward

Philip Ekers

Howard Hamon

Greg Horner

Malcolm Roberts

Janet Sabey

Andrew Ward

Shane Watson