

NEWCASTLE BONSAI SOCIETY

Newsletter

MARCH

2006



'The Friendly Club'

The next meeting will be on Saturday 11th March 2006 at the Warners Bay Guide Hall with a Committee Meeting commencing at 9-30 am and a Workshop at about 10-30am. The theme for this meeting will be the Cascade Style. Bring along something interesting for the Display Table.

Vacant Committee Positions have now been filled. Peter Coulton is the Vice President and Graham Wilson is a committee member and AABC delegate. Thanks for volunteering, Peter and Graham.

Bus Trip. The bus trip will be on 1st April. Nurseries visited will be Bonsai Environment where there will be good discounts and a bonus for our Club funds, Ray Nesci's where we will have lunch (BYO) and Bibo Nursery at Peats Ridge on the way back. Cost will be \$20 and there will be raffles and wine and cheese on the way home. **Please book in with Erika by 25th March.**

I don't have a lot of material for the newsletter this month. Where are all the regular contributors? Maybe next month—please?

Bob and Wendy have returned safely from their trip to Japan. They had a fabulous time and I have been promised an article for the next newsletter. It was so good that they are already planning another trip.

****COPY DEADLINE 20 th. OF THE MONTH****

NEWCASTLE BONSAI SOCIETY DETAILS.

Newcastle Bonsai Society meets on the second Saturday of every month at the Warners Bay Guide Hall Cnr Burton Rd and Lamington Drive, Mt. Hutton. A bonsai workshop commences at 10.30 a.m. which usually includes a demonstration.

There will be a committee meeting commencing at 9.30am and all members are welcome to attend.

www.newcastlebonsai.org.au

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GENERAL NEWS

The Monthly Raffle was won by President Max last month. There are a few unclaimed prizes from previous raffles. So if you are one of the people who usually leave before the raffle is drawn, then please speak to Erika at the next workshop as she may have a surprise for you.

Big Raffle. We have decided to hold a larger raffle over several months with a quality bonsai as the prize. Tickets will be available at the workshops as well as the usual monthly raffles.

July Workshop. In July, at our normal workshop/meeting we will be holding a workshop conducted by an outside tutor. The workshop will be for 8-10 participants and there will be a small fee for participants who will also need to bring their own material to work on. Others will be able to observe the workshop.

If you are interested in participating but do not have any suitable material you could buy a tree on the bus trip on 1st April when there will be plenty of experienced members to help you choose something suitable.

Bringing unsuitable material along to the workshop will waste everybody's time and you will not learn much from the experience (except, perhaps, what not to bring next time). If you need advice on what is suitable bring it along before July and ask Tutor Bob or one of his helpers for some advice.

2007 AABC Conference. It's now official—we will not be hosting the 2007 AABC Conference. We have decided to concentrate on consolidating and strengthening our own club rather than taking on other projects.

Newcastle Bonsai Society Website. Good News! Dave Wood, our resident video and computer expert has figured out the website and has uploaded the last three newsletters. Dave will continue to update the website regularly and will ensure that future newsletters are available at the site. So all you net surfers should be back on track. Thanks Dave.

AABC Website. The AABC also have a website, www.aabcltd.org with lots of useful info. So check it out. Look especially for the AABC Gold Coast Conference 2006 and the National Bonsai Photographic Competition.

Open Garden at Eleebana. The "Wilson Garden" at 20 Alpha Close, Eleebana will be open on Saturday 11th and Sunday 12th March 2006 from 10am to 4-30pm. Entry \$5. Refreshments will be available. Proceeds to World Vision. Erika has more details.

DISCLAIMER

The opinions and information expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributing author and not necessarily those of the Newcastle Bonsai Society.

Ulmus Parvifolia—Chinese Elm.

My Chinese Elm was originally one of Ray Nesci's Yamaha specials (profound apologies to Ray), apparently grown in the ground until it had a reasonable trunk caliper, pruned down by chain-saw and then transferred into a large pot for sale. The result is good basic bonsai material that only requires styling and development.

Unfortunately I have always taken a somewhat casual approach to keeping records and can only say that I have owned the tree for roughly 18 years. During that time it has undergone various transformations, one due to a misadventure. First transformation involved the removal of a number of over-heavy branches that cluttered the top section of the tree, then the usual creation of apex with a wired up side branch. This left me with a reasonably well balanced tree that measured 65 centimeters from the base.

However, the tree was still nothing remarkable. Instead of being roughly circular the trunk was oval at the base. Okay if you didn't look at the side aspect of the tree but a definite fault that seemed impossible to remedy (at that time I hadn't heard of the trunk thickening method). In addition the lower third of the tree was completely straight and out of character with the movement in the more interesting top section. Furthermore the root system was unremarkable to say the least. One thick straight root was quite ugly and, due to lack of any suitable replacement, impossible to remove without threatening the health of the tree.

Then misadventure, in the form of a hailstorm that snapped off several branches, made it necessary for me to re-style the tree. There are mis-adventures and mis-adventures and fortunately the accident to my tree was a lucky one as the necessary re-styling opened up the tree and improved it considerably. It still had faults, the straight and flattish lower trunk and the ugly root, and one other fault, the two lower branches were bar-branches.

An interesting point about foliage. The late Dick Stacey, whose advice I greatly respected, once told me that defoliation to reduce foliage size can also be carried out on Chinese Elms and I looked at him in sheer horror. I must admit that the tree Dick was referring to at the time was a smaller specimen I owned at the time and not my large elm but can you imagine removing roughly a couple of thousand already small leaves from one tree. For maintenance I only trim the tree regularly and never, never, defoliate—in my humble opinion that way lies madness. My advice—if you must, only defoliate miniature elms.

When my elm developed to the stage where it could be displayed on a show bench it gained a name, the only one of my trees to do so. Given its size Gargantua seem quite appropriate as its height was balanced by its width, and male club members felt it absolutely necessary to help me move it around. Moreover, the need to transport it to shows was a consideration when a new car was purchased. In fact the main thing going for the tree at this stage was its dimension.

The third, and to date, final transformation of the elm became necessary ten years later after I down-sized my car. This time the car dictating to the tree. Elms are one of the species that aerial layer readily and given the boringly straight lower trunk section this was the logical way of reducing the height of the tree. However, I chickened out and put it off for a year and when I finally made the decision it was still difficult. I chose the right season—early Spring but still sat and looked at the tree for some time before I plucked up the necessary courage and thought—here goes nothing. I either end up with a much better and smaller tree or I end up with the boring base and two lower branches.

I removed the necessary width of bark (width of trunk diameter) and to make double sure twisted copper wire tightly just above the lower cut and wrapped the whole in glad-wrap packed with sphagnum

moss, leaving a gap at top for watering. I really don't know why I was worried as the tree formed new roots in a reasonably short period. Moreover the trunk was now round at the base and there was a better spread of roots than I had on the original tree.

I waited a year before I separated the tree from the base and gingerly spread the delicate new roots out when I potted it. The tree was over-potted into a terracotta training pot to allow for greater root development and, as said above, the trunk is now round at the base with a good root spread. The tree is now 45 centimeters high.

In early spring I used the trunk thickening method on the base of the trunk and this appears to be working. As in the original tree the two lower branches are bar-branches. This fault was rectified by the careful wiring of the right hand branch to raise the foliage pads to a higher level thus concealing the defect. Bonsai is after all the creation of an illusion.

Gargantua is now my beautifully proportioned elm and only requires a suitable display pot before it can be shown, hopefully this year.

Janet



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(For pictures and additional information see above website)

For purchase enquiries phone number as above or email: raynescibonsai@bigpond.com

2006 AABC Conference

This year, the AABC National Conference will be held on the Gold Coast, hosted by the Gold Coast Tweed Bonsai Club, on the last weekend in May.

EARLY BIRD DISCOUNTS on registrations end on 26th February 2006. So don't miss out. Register now. Accommodation at Legends Hotel is filling up and you need to book now.

Gold Coast Tweed Bonsai Club have negotiated a good price at Legends (2004 prices in 2006).

Secretary Erika has registration forms available. Ask for one at the next meeting. That will be your last chance for early bird rego.



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OPEN 7 DAYS

9 am— 5pm

To The Editor,

After recently standing aside as newsletter editor, I have surprised myself that I have been motivated to again hit the keyboard, however, after reading an article in the last newsletter, I have been inspired to do so.

I always maintain that any advice is good advice, because after receiving it, one can either accept it or disregard it. With this thought in mind, I offer the following counter arguments to some advice given for beginners which appeared under the title "Interview With Peter", where he was quoted as advising beginners, "DON'T TRY TO BUY YOUR BONSAI READY MADE, YOU GET MUCH MORE PLEASURE CREATING YOUR OWN".

I would like to add a few observations that I have made since being involved in Bonsai which may give a different perspective to the thoughts of Peter (not sure which Peter was interviewed, but it doesn't matter as the comments are in keeping with a lot of enthusiasts of that era).

Firstly let me say I agree that enormous pleasure can be gained from developing your own Bonsai from scratch and some of my favourite trees have been by my own design, however, the mindset of the "Old School" of bonsai enthusiast in this country dictates that Australia will always lag behind other countries by virtue of the fact that no one is encouraged to purchase quality old trees and allow them to evolve for the next generation.

A large part of my collection has been purchased from other enthusiasts (ready made Bonsai if you like), which enables me to have trees from 50 – 100 years old. Every one of these trees now has been either restyled or refined by me and I have no embarrassment in declaring the trees my own even though I give acknowledgement to their previous owners.

I gain as much pleasure, if not more, by having a quality, aged specimen to look at, that I have applied modern techniques to or have just refined the tree's original beauty. As there is never a "finished" tree because it is always growing, the changes from year to year are very inspiring. To appreciate how a tree can evolve, just look at some photos in older bonsai magazines and see them today.

How will Australia ever have "Masterpiece Bonsai" to rival the 500 – 800 year old specimens from overseas if every new enthusiast is discouraged from purchasing "Ready Made Bonsai"? If everyone begins their bonsai experience with a \$2 starter plant and a 4" pot or a 5 year old Juniper, will this country ever see trees of more than 40-50 years old.

Further, if we were to be ruthlessly truthful (often to my own detriment), of all the Bonsai enthusiasts in the country, most derive great pleasure from being the custodians of the "Potted Tree". Plenty of enthusiasts learn the art of watering, trimming, general maintenance and basic design, however, just like all those who participate in sport with only a small percentage reaching the top, not everyone can create a work of Bonsai art. This in no way is to denigrate anyone, only to point out that if this country is to gain a bonsai collection of any note or age, surely some "ready made purchases" must be made.

Overseas it is not uncommon for trees to be sold for hundreds of thousands of dollars, yet in this country quality old Bonsai are for sale for a matter of a few hundred dollars and no one is encouraged to purchase them. How does any one put a reasonable price on a tree that is 40 year old, been watered every day of its life, repotted annually, fertilized, wired and loved and probably in a pot worth a hundred dollars?

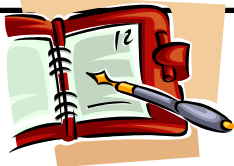
I recently spoke to a couple of leading Bonsai nursery men who advise that they are no longer putting the time and effort into creating "quality", aged Bonsai as the market place is dictating that \$20 trees in pots is what is required, with no one prepared to spend money on the better trees.

I would like to say that I fear for the future of Bonsai in this country unless there is a dramatic shift in our philosophy and bonsai politics, then again if everyone is gaining their own pleasure from Bonsai, although maybe selfishly and in a small way, that is all that matters.

By the time this article goes to press I hope my collection will be extremely small as I recently offered my entire collection, barring a few sentimental pieces, to some Bonsai nurseries. My life is heading in a new direction that no longer involves a huge commitment to Bonsai.

If I still have plenty of trees next time you see me, it will prove that the nurserymen agree with what I have written above and that there is no market out there for "Ready Made Trees".

Dave Kiernan



DIARY DATES

MARCH 11th Newcastle Bonsai Society Meeting and Workshop

MARCH 11th & 12th Open Garden at Eleebana 10am to 4-30pm

MARCH 25th Deadline for bookings for Bus Trip on 1st April

APRIL 1st Bus trip to Sydney and Central Coast Nurseries. Book by 25th March.

MAY 26-29th AABC Conference at Gold Coast. Register now for early bird discount.

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