

NEWCASTLE BONSAI SOCIETY

Newsletter

**FEBRUARY
2008**



The next meeting will be on Saturday 9th February 2008 at the Warners Bay Guide Hall with a Committee Meeting commencing at 9-30 am.

Raffle winners from last months workshop were Ann K, Kelsey H and Liz G.

Bus trip. A bus trip is planned for the 5th or 6th April to Bonsai South Nursery (Caringbah), and either Bonsai Environment (Vineyard) or Ray Nesci Bonsai Nursery (Dural). If you would like to come along please register your interest with David W at the next meeting.

Newsletter Articles. To those budding authors out there, if you have any articles you would like included in future newsletters then please feel free to give them to me at a future club meetings.

Message from Bob N:

In my article last month I used the incorrect American botanical name for the Japanese Black Pine. The correct naming is *Pinus thunbergii* as listed in Botanical references, not "ia" as was sloppily used in Bonsai Today magazine for number of issues. Obviously I'd spent too much time delving into said magazine trying to develop a database of all articles, species, techniques etc.

During last year Wendy and I reacquainted ourselves with the shops at Birkenhead Point in Sydney. Not only do they have a pet shop that sell our Fur Children's favourite flea repellent at a fraction of the price at the local vet, there is a shop that sell stands for Bonsai. The shop is called "Gallery Orientique" and is shop 71 in the overall scheme of the complex. It is in the upper level on the right hand side if you stand with Victoria Road at your back while looking down along the central concourse in front and the shops are in wings to your left and your right. The stands are Buddha stands and while not bargain price but very well made and sturdy.

NEWCASTLE BONSAI SOCIETY

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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“CARE & MAINTENANCE”

1. PESTS.

The normal run of garden pests that annoy the trees and shrubs in the garden can be diabolical to your Bonsai. “**Prevention is better than cure**” is the best approach to adopt.

A regular inspection of your collection for nasties should become a habit rather than an odd occurrence because those nasty little creatures are always on the look out to either eat or live in or on your trees.

- a) **Aphids** – Called “green fly” by the Yanks, these little sap suckers try to drain the life out of our trees if left unchecked. The eco-friendly approach is a thumb and fore finger to squash and remove them. If that is not preferred, use your favourite brand of Aphid spray. A word of caution, **READ** the label for the instructions on mixing. **NEVER** make it stronger than recommended, always make it a little bit weaker than recommended. Aphids are attended by our next pest on the “most wanted” list.
- b) **Ants** - These hard working little nuisances can affect your tree in two ways. They farm aphids for their “nectar” which in my view then encourages the aphids to suck more sap with the obvious results. These little treasures also love to make a nest in your tree’s root mass. This is an air pocket which means that the roots are not in full contact with the soil mix and so get less moisture or nutrients in this section. Because of this, the effected roots can die, reducing what is already a small root mass which is trying to keep your tree growing healthily. If you suspect an infestation, the easiest way to upset the ants is to totally immerse the pot and soil mass in water for at least thirty minutes. A few drops, and I stress, **a few drops**, of Pyrethrum in the water would also help give them the message. If it was a large infestation, consider re-potting to fill in the air pockets, carefully cutting out any dead sections of root and leaving the healthy sections to get on with the job of helping the tree get over its malaise.
- c) The next pest is another type of sap sucker, **SCALE**. These encased little terrors can be bad news for your trees and can be scraped off the effected branches with a finger nail or ice cream stick or whatever is handy. This can take time and be a bit messy and you can miss the odd one or two. The other alternative is to spray with an anti scale-spray. Once again, pay strict attention to the mixing instructions and any other health warnings on the label. Some commercial potions can be dangerous to you, the Bonsai addict, if precautions are not taken.
- d) Yet another pest is the tiny **RED SPIDER** that loves to infest the underside of leaves on your favourite Azaleas. All the printed information that I’ve come across gives the non chemical solution as keeping the tree moist, ensuring that it does not live in a dry microclimate. I’ll touch on microclimates later. If the environmentally friendly method is not successful, we are drawn back to the good old reliable standby, chemicals. Once again, please read the label, mix it up as recommended and take all safety precautions as recommended.

- e) **GRUBS** or **CATERPILLARS** are another nuisance that you'll no doubt encounter. I get a lot of angst from a couple of my callistemons which seem to attract tiny green grubs that live and dine in the growing tips after binding the leaves together. Some may say that they are cute and deserve to live but when it comes at the expense of flowers and tree health, they must go. By the time that they are detected, the growing tip inside their leaf house has been devoured so do not be afraid to regularly spray as a preventative measure. I have a medium size (for me) Callistemon sp Hannah Ray which finally gave me a couple of pathetic misshapen little flower heads after waiting quite a few years. Obviously something was wrong when compared with two Callistemon minis which give an honest account of themselves every year. A couple of sprays of an appropriate concoction saw a welcome number of fuller flower heads appear and subsequently bloom. I cannot stress strongly enough to follow instructions. I caused severe leaf drop on my largest Callistemon by not following mixing instructions and perhaps mixing up the spray container used at the time. You may wish to invest in one trigger spray for each type of chemical used to help avoid heartache. Dipel™ is quite effective. The Callistemon Sawfly is another particularly nasty and ugly little number that also has a chomp on Melaleucas as well. This one is from the Melaleucas around our native garden that were set upon again.

Note: With most of the nasties listed above, if you have a verdant large garden, you must treat that as well because it is a prime source of pests to reacquaint themselves fixing an infestation in your Bonsai collection.

- f) I'm going to lump the next lot of pests together. These are **FUNGUS, MILDEW, LIVERWORT** and **BLACKSPOT**. These are all cause by moisture. Liverwort is a fleshy flattish shape and if not carefully scraped off, can end up in repelling water and causing the root mass below no end of trouble. They can also indicate that your tree is root-bound and needs to be re-potted. A preventative is to ensure that you have clean gravel top of your soil mix as a good cover of moss can promote Liverwort growth. Mildew and fungus can be held at bay by having your trees in a well ventilated location. If like me, you have wooden benches for your trees, treat the wood with 1 part vinegar to 3 parts water to destroy the mildew, scrub with a "Jex" type pad, rinse off and then spray the benches with lime sulphur to act as a preventative. If you raise your pots with wooden blocks, treat them as well. Black spot thrives in humidity. You must remove the effected leaves and put them into the rubbish bin. Do not let any effected leaves lay on the soil as the spores will get into the mix ready to reinfect. Mancozeb™ or any similar spray can be used but these require regular applications as they wash off easily. An effective non commercial spray is 1 part full strength milk to 10 parts water. It works a well as the commercial sprays and as with those sprays, needs to be reapplied after it has rained.

Cheers.

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Bob NIEASS

Interview with Chris Di Nola

1. What got you interested in bonsai?
 - A friend had a few small ones on a windowsill and he knew I liked them. I had seen them in shows and exhibitions and never thought I could do it, then I saw his. His trees got me interested. He bought me one for a housewarming present and that was the beginning of the end.
2. How long have you been working with them?
 - Since 1999.
3. What was your first tree?
 - Ficus Rubignosia - Little Ruby
4. How successful was it? Do you still have it?
 - No. It's dead. It was as thick as a pencil.
5. What different types (trees) of bonsai do you have?
 - You name it - I've got it!
6. What is your favourite bonsai and why?
 - A Shores Juniper -Juniperus C It's my favourite because it was free and it won Grand Champion at the Royal Easter Show. It's going into the National Arboretum and Penjing Collection.
7. What is the most difficult bonsai you've worked on so far (elaborate)?
 - The most difficult one would be a collected Bookleaf Juniper. It was the most difficult because it's not suitable for bonsai but he wouldn't listen and dug it out anyway. (The owner says that it looks great).
8. Are there any styles more suitable for some trees and not others?
 - Absolutely! Pines and Junipers lean (no pun intended) towards a Bunjin or Literati style more so than fruiting or flowering trees.
9. Do you have an opinion on suitability of pots to styles and types of trees?
 - Just your standard rules if you're going to have your tree shown. However, for your own enjoyment, do whatever you like.
10. What is your opinion on soil types or potting mixes?
 - Talking about soils is like talking about politics or religion.
11. What fertilizers do you use and when do you use them?
 - Nitrophoska, Charlie Carp, Dynamic Lifter, Osmocote and Maxicrop. I start my fertilizing regimen in mid to late August because I want the fertilizer there when the trees wake up.
12. Do you have any problems with diseases?
 - Chronic Fatigue Syndrome from taking care of too many bonsais, scale and curl grubs.
13. Do you have any other problems to deal with?
 - Not enough time!
14. What is important to remember when working with a particular specimen?
 - When dealing with Hawthorns, wear BIG, THICK gloves and where digging without permission, work fast
15. What, in your opinion, is a good tree for beginners to start with?
 - Privet, Olives and Figs.
16. What basic tools do you think are indispensable? What tools do you use most?
 - The tools I think are indispensable are good wire cutters and good bonsai pliers. I use all the normal basic tools.

17. Can you recommend any books or authors?
 - John Naka and Deborah Koreshof books are indispensable. Craig Coussins writes a very good book.
18. Is there a place or nursery you go to, to get special trees?
 - Any good nursery should supply you with good trees. In Sydney, what one nursery doesn't have, another one will.
19. Do you have a story or incident you'd like to share with us?
 - I dug out a very large Japanese Yew and had it growing in my backyard for a while and after styling it, it was time to pot it up but it was too heavy to lift, so I put a block and tackle over the rafters of the garage and lifted the tree. Sliding a large pot underneath it (after root pruning), we potted it up using five bags of potting mix and then spent the next two hours trying to get it out of the garage. We slowly slid it out on the milk crates it was resting on.
20. What haven't you yet done with bonsai that you would like to do?
 - Demonstrate internationally and travel to Japan.
21. Any advice for beginners?
 - Be patient and don't be scared to take advice from more experienced people.
22. Can you think of anything else you'd like to mention? Any questions you'd like to see here?
 - Yes. I'd like to acknowledge people who have been an inspiration to me. They include -Kevin Wilson, Kimura and especially my mentor, Noel Sommerill. (apologies if I have the spelling wrong)

Thanks, Chris for both the interview and the wonderful workshop you gave
(with Ben's help).



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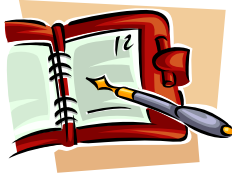
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(For pictures and additional information see above website)

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



DIARY DATES

FEBRUARY 9 Newcastle Bonsai Society monthly workshop

MARCH 8 Newcastle Bonsai Society monthly workshop. Demonstration by Bob Nieass on Natives

APRIL 5 or 6 Bus Trip to Sydney nurseries.

APRIL 12 Newcastle Bonsai Society monthly workshop

MAY 10 Newcastle Bonsai Society monthly workshop

MAY 16 to 19 AABC Adelaide

JUNE 14 Newcastle Bonsai Society monthly workshop

JULY 12 Newcastle Bonsai Society monthly workshop

AUGUST 9 Newcastle Bonsai Society monthly workshop and Annual General Meeting

DISCLAIMER

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