

NEWCASTLE BONSAI SOCIETY

Newsletter

MAY
2010



- **The next meeting and workshop** will be on Saturday 8 May 2010 at the Warners Bay Guide Hall. Committee meeting is at 9.30am All members are welcome to attend the committee meeting but cannot vote.
- **NEWCASTLE BONSAI SOCIETY SHOW** will be held at a new Venue
5th 6th & 7th November
Charlestown Bowling Club: 5 Lincoln Street, Charlestown, NSW, 2290.
www.charlestownbc.com.au
- **JAPANESE DATES**
When we recently handed out Japanese calendars from Ube, did anybody notice the big "22" on the front and do you know what it means? Until I went to Japan last year, I had not realised that the Japanese have their own system of numbering the years. Of course, when dealing with the rest of the world, they use 2010, but internally and on official documents (I noticed it on my Japan Rail Pass) the year is 22. This means it is the 22nd year of the Hei Sei period marked by the reign of the current emperor, Akihito. The year is usually written as Hei Sei 22, using the appropriate kanji (Chinese characters) for Hei Sei, of course. It is also interesting that the Japanese do not really have names for the months. You will notice on your calendar that the months are numbered 1, 2, 3,... This is because that is how they name the months, ichigatsu (one month), nigatsu (two month), sangatsu (three month) and so on. They also write the date the opposite way to us - for example, 8th May 2010 would be written 22-5-8. Geoff Farris
- **Last month** the display table had one tree only, we as a club can do better.
This is for you to show your trees so bring something along and display it or if you are working on a tree then start on another you can place the first one on the display table, if there is room, so all can see and admire. So please try and make an effort as this looks good for visitors and guests as well as for all our members.
David

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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Bunjin Today; Where Have all the Bunjin Gone

Author Tomio Yamada

Reprinted from Bonsai Today issue 100

It is said in this era there are very few bunjin and that taste for them has been corrupted by more conceptual styles. But if you ask what is a bunjin bonsai, the answers will surely vary.

The definition of bunjin (also called Literati) is very imprecise. It is sometimes thought of as a tree to pleasurably contemplate while taking tea, a tree that makes you a little sad to gaze upon it. Bunjin generally have long thin trunks and few branches; there age is conveyed by the graceful curves of the trunk and branches. Usually bunjin are trained in slant or informal upright style, although you will sometimes see them cascading down over the side of the pot, buffeted by the wind in a semi-cascade style or with multiple trunks.

Why is it so difficult to be definite about this style ? To learn why, we must study the history and the development of the bunjin style. If you understand what a bunjin is, you may look at present day bonsai with a fresh point of view.

The meaning of the word bunjin (as applied to Bonsai) has changed over the years. Historically, bunjin has passed through three main periods of development. The first one spanned the *Edo* period (1603—1877) the second began at the start of the *Meiji* period (1878—1912) and continued through the *Taisho* period (1912—1926) and into the *Showa* period. The third phase began at the end of the Second World War and continues to the present

To clarify any possibilities for confusion, the term bunjin literally means men of art and culture (the term Literati is also used for both the men and the bonsai style) Over time, the term was applied to bonsai that were appreciated by these aristocratic, learned men of the Edo period, who were generally influenced by Chinese culture. Bunjin bonsai from the second period were naturally influenced by the bonsai of the Edo period and became the bonsai that refined, educated men liked to display in their studies or at gatherings(it was almost a decorative fad)

Since the second world war, bunjin has come to be understood as a style for shaping bonsai.

However these are not fixed ideas, and you should not limit your definition of bunjin bonsai to a mere style. I would like to suggest that you study bunjin comprehensively—as a style, as a type of display and as a fashion—to appreciate its aspects

The Bunjin Era

To begin you have to go back to the early days of bonsai in Japan. At that time bonsai were simply potted trees that first came to Japan from trade expeditions to China. During the Edo period, interest in growing plants and trees in pots prospered and developed. This occurred during the third *Tokugawa* generation (1650's) due to a large part to the interest of General Iemitsu was shogun at the time. Later during this era, bonsai became a popular fad, spreading from merchants and feudal lords to the general public.

The basis of bonsai interest in those days was limited to collecting rare trees and plants with uncommon characteristics. Fashion demanded plants with patterns on the leaves, rare blossom, and unusual shapes and after time, enthusiasm was succeeded by speculation. When speculation at auctions became excessive, the government issued a decree prohibiting the sale of bonsai—but it was not effective and only lasted a short time.

Some of the pine bonsai that belonged to General Iemitsu are still living and their shapes are quite different from what you see today. The trunks and branches have exaggerated curves— what we now call octopus style.

From the middle to the end of the Edo period, the system of government began to totter as the people— who did not agree with what it was doing— matured politically and culturally. Action against the established regime , led by the groups of men of art and literature called bunjin. These scholars were interested in studying Chinese Arts and culture, because historically china was more advanced in these fields than Japan.

The protests of the bunjin began in Osaka and Kyoto, far from Tokyo, the capital of the Empire. writers, Haiku Poets (Yosa Buson), painters(Ike no Taiga, Tanomura Chikudan), Potters (Aoki Mokubei) Confucian Scholars (Rai Sanyo) and others gathered in teahouses according to Teiji Iwasa in his *Cultural History of Bonsai and Suiseki*. ' the bunjin read the Chinese classics in his studio, expressed his opinions and thoughts in writing and painting, polished his calligraphic style, listed to Kyoto music and played Go when friends gathered. And while he was relaxing, he drank tea with a bunjin bonsai adorning his alcove (tokonama). In their meetings in tearooms, they read Chinese philosophies that influenced them to appreciate the beauty of nature through contemplation of bonsai suiseki and other natural forms"

Continued next month

CHRIS GRAY

Our good friend and member of Newcastle Bonsai Society, Chris Gray, passed away recently. Bev Wakeling attended the funeral. Chris loved bonsai and joined Newcastle Bonsai Society in December 2003. He was a quiet and unassuming man who attended meetings regularly and was always willing to help although, as his health deteriorated, he was often not able to do so. Chris often took over the library when Bev was away. He was an avid reader and borrowed books and magazines regularly from the library. Although he was very ill for some time, Chris never complained and was always very pleasant and friendly to everyone. Chris will be sadly missed by his many friends at Newcastle Bonsai Society.

A card has been sent to his wife, Peggy, on behalf of all the members of Newcastle Bonsai Society.

The Monthly Tree

What is it?

Ligustrum obovatum (Small leaf privet)

How long have you had it?

Collected from a cow paddock 5yrs ago

What do you like about it?

It reminds me of a tree growing on a headland with the wind blowing thru it.

What would you like to improve?

To integrate the foliage pads a bit better.

Any other comments...

The tree is ready for a display pot, however, I am unsure at the moment about what would be the best pot to match it with



JOBS FOR MAY

- The growth of our trees is slowing down now, so you can take a bit of a breather. Keep up the weeding though and start wiring some branches.
- Time to enjoy the autumn colours and perhaps look for some great coloured trees for your collection.
- You still have a couple of weeks to complete potting evergreens.
- Clear away all fallen leaves from the soil surface of your pots to stop harbouring insects and mildew.
- Wiring can take place on all trees but be careful of new green branches. Let them turn brown and harden off before wiring is applied otherwise you can run the risk of damaging the new branch and causing die-back.
- Fertilizing can be cut right back now. If you are still repotting, Seasol can be safely used.

Penny



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(For pictures and additional information see above website)

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

The Challenge Part 2.

Following on from last month, the rest of the story.

I finally got round to carving out the large unnecessary trunk from the middle and a small one at the base of the primary 'trunk'. With the space now more clearly defined it was even more obvious that the only options were to completely hollow out the trunk or out take one or more layers and start again with the remains.

With the strength and vigour this tree had been showing since arriving from Sydney I decided to bite the bullet and proceed with starting the layer. Most advice for making aerial layers is to take them during spring/summer when the tree is actively growing. However, as seen in Bonsai Magazines, very large layers are often put on during late winter/ early spring before growth has started.

I decided to go ahead with the layer now for a number of reasons;

- 1, the tree is still growing strongly, even producing volumes of adventitious buds.
- 2, I still have a fair amount of growing time before the tree goes dormant.
- 3, to get a jump start on next year by having a good callus formed over the remaining season & winter. (hardwood cuttings are taken in winter)

The process is the same as a performing a layer on smaller material, the only extra difficulty is cutting the very hard thick bark. I used a friends mini Arbotech to cut a deep channel approx 25mm wide around my desired line. The cut line is not straight or even around the trunk to produce a bit more variation in the final nebari. Wrap and tie a huge piece of plastic around the lower edge, smear honey along the cut edge, slowly pack in as much sphagnum moss as I can and tie off the top (allowing an easy point to get extra water in if needed before spring.

In spring when this tree is getting ready to break bud I will remove the bag & moss to inspect the progress. Cutting back any bridges that the tree has formed to try and get around the ring-barking and trimming off the bottom edges of the callus to force the roots to come from the sides. If any roots have formed they will be either kept and shortened or removed dependant on where they have formed. The whole lot will then be over potted using my standard bonsai mix with a bit of extra sphagnum mixed in around the immediate base of the trunk for extra moisture retention.

Matt



Bus trip

On Sunday 18th April we went on a bus trip to Bilpin Plant fair as well as Bonsai environment at Vineyard.

All 25 members and guest that travelled to Sydney and outer area had a very nice day the weather was good to us and the company great.

First stop was the Bilpin Plant Fair we arrived at the front gate where we departed from our coach. Where a shuttle bus was waiting for those who wanted a lift, the rest of us walked to the entrance. Near the entrance a booth we set up to bring your plants for storage till we had to leave then it was transported to the coach when called for.

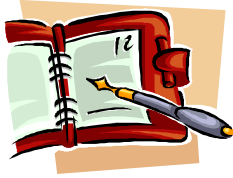
We spent about 2 Hours here with quite a few purchases made in this time. At the fair there was everything from carnivorous plants, bulbs, old tools and much more with over 40 stall holders throughout the weekend.

When we left the shuttle bus was waiting to take those who wanted a lift back to the top. On arriving at the top our coach was waiting for us. There was an area set aside for buses to wait with seating available once at the coach a call to the holding area was made and all our purchases were delivered to the coach.

About an hour later we arrive at Vineyard where we went on a spending spree. After filling up the storage area below the seats we board the coach for the return trip. But we had a little trouble with the bus the door would not shut the driver finally got it shut then held it shut with his belt. On the trip home we had cheese, biscuit and wine this will be the last trip that the cheese biscuit and wine will be served as the driver was not happy that we had to move around bus serving as we are out of the seat belts.

Picture is at Bilpin plant fair return trip





DIARY DATES

- 14—17 May AABC National Bonsai Convention at Bankstown Sports Club
- 8th May – Bonsai Study Group Annual Show. 10am-4.30pm. West Pymble Community Hall, Lofberg Rd, West Pymble
- 11-12 June – Bonsai by The Harbour – more details later.
- 3rd July – Macquarie Hills Potters present a one-day workshop with Janet Selby at Baulkham Hills. Secretary has more info.
- 7th September – Garden Clubs Of Australia AGM and 60th Anniversary luncheon at UTS, Broadway, Sydney
- 17—19 September Illawarra's 11th Weekend Workshop at Tops Conference Centre
- 15-17 October – New Zealand Bonsai Convention, featuring Robert Steven, at Hamilton, NZ. Secretary has more info.
- 17-20 October – The Australian Rhododendron Society celebrate their Golden Jubilee in the Dandenong Ranges. www.vicrhodo.org.au

DISCLAIMER

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