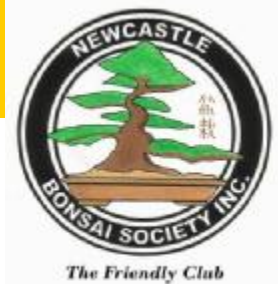


NEWCASTLE BONSAI SOCIETY

Newsletter

JUNE
2011



- **The next meeting and workshop** will be on Saturday June 11th 2011 at the Warners Bay Guide Hall. Committee meeting is at 9.30am All members are welcome to attend the committee meeting but cannot vote.
- **Raffle winners** March meeting— Margaret, Bob and Jessica
- **Proposed bus trip in August:** a bus trip has been proposed for Saturday 20th August 2011 to the Bonsai Society of Sydney show at Terry Hills and a visit to another nursery to be announced. If interested in the bus trip, please leave your name with Assistant Treasurer, Ann, so that we may assess the level of interest. Cost will be about \$20 BYO lunch
- **Andrew Ward from Adelaide** will be demonstrating his skills in creating forest plantings at the July meeting see his Biography in last months newsletter
- Our Annual General Meeting will be held on 13th August 2011 and you will all receive an official notice before then. This year we will elect a new committee – this happens every two years. Please think about what you might contribute in the next two years. The President and Secretary have both been doing those jobs for four years and it is probably somebody else's turn now. Please speak to David or Geoff if you are interested in taking on a position on the committee. Or if you know someone you think might make a good committee member or executive member, please talk to that person about it soon. The AGM is only two months away. You need to do something now about helping us to elect a new committee.
- **Membership Fees.** Fees are due on 1st July. The committee has decided that the annual fee will stay at \$52 single and \$57 for a family. The treasurer will happily accept payments from this meeting onward
- **Commission on Sales.** At the last committee meeting, the committee decided that there will be no commission charged on sales by members at club meetings. Non-members will be charged 20% commission and commission will still be charged on sales by members at the annual bonsai exhibition

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

P.O. Box 521 KOTARA N.S.W. 2289

PRESIDENT: David Wood (49 664 312)
TREASURER:

SECRETARY: Geoff Farris (49 529 376)
EDITOR: Baden Willmott (0423 626 290)

BANKSIA INTEGRIFOLIA AS BONSAI

By **GRANT BOWIE**

Original article written Nov 05

INTRODUCTION

There are currently 76 known species of Banksia in Australia, most of which are found in Western Australia. 16 species grow on the east coast only of Australia and it is from these Banksia that I have drawn my experiences. All Western Australian species have died in my local environment within a short time, even those grafted on east coast understock. I have, however, seen some Western Australian Banksia growing quite happily in Canberra, so it will come down to your own local environment.

Banksia are related to the Protea family of Africa, with which they have many similarities. Banksia are an evergreen tree or shrub, although some prostrate species and cultivars occur as well. They can be a large, single trunk tree with an irregular outline or have a shrubby, multi trunk appearance. The leaves come in a large variety of shapes and sizes and the growth habits are also very varied. Flowers are also variable but are usually numerous on a spike that becomes woody. The flowers set at the end of new growth and take some time to mature. Not all the flowers become seed as there are just too many on each spike.

Some 36 species are fire-tolerant; having thick bark and/or a woody base or lignotuber. These Banksia can take heavy pruning quite well. The fire-sensitive Banksia are thin barked and do not sprout back easily or at all. They respond to light but frequent trimming but not heavy pruning.

The continent of Australia is very old and the soils are very thin and poor in nutrients. The Banksia have evolved over 100 million years to be able to cope quite well with the poor or sandy soils of Australia.

HINTS FOR GROWING NURSERY STOCK.

First try whichever Banksia already grow in or near your area, and remember that the larger growing, tree type Banksia will probably be the best for Bonsai. Some of these will have large leaves (up to 6"/150mm) and be quite vigorous growers but with the correct techniques the leaf size can be reduced dramatically.

I have grown Banksia ericifolia (Heath Banksia), B. paludosa (Swamp Banksia), B. marginata (Silver Banksia), B. serrata (Old Man Banksia), and B. integrifolia (Coast Banksia). I hope to try others as well but so far my favorites are Banksia serrata and Banksia integrifolia.

Banksia can be easily grown from seed or cuttings but must be potted up and on quickly; always pot up to the next size and do not over pot! The potting mix should be neither too fine nor too coarse but above all should freely drain. The roots of Banksia are very fine and will fill the pot quickly; in summer you will need to water more often than most other plants in pots.

You can pot up to the next size pot every year while growing the tree on. I use the recommended dose of Native or Standard Osmocote in the potting mix and liquid feed every week or two (except winter) with a mild liquid fertilizer like Maxicrop, Nitrosol, or Charlie Carp etc.

USE FERTILIZERS AT FULL RECOMMENDED STRENGTH UNLESS PLANTS ARE SICK OR NEW TO YOUR COLLECTION!!! I believe it is better to have healthy, vigorous plants and then deal with the resultant growth in the shaping process, rather than having weak,

sickly plants that have been dwarfed by starvation. If you choose to follow a higher fertilizing regime than you have been using or I am recommending you should build up to it gradually.

Banksias are both hungry and thirsty in pots so please give them what they need and they will repay you with many years of pleasure.

DO NOT POT-ON A BANKSIA AT ANY STAGE IF IT IS WEAK, SKINNY OR WOBBLY.

If it is weak or scrawny looking just give it a light trim and put it back; if it is wobbly you should investigate the soil for Curl Grubs. If you find the roots have been severely eaten by the grubs then you give it a hard root prune and put it back in a similar size pot and lightly trim the foliage.

I AVOID POTTING BANKSIA IN WINTER!

Banksia need to be grown in full sun, so except for immediately after repotting I keep my nursery stock and Bonsai in as full sun and wind as they can take. Growing in full sun gives you a healthier, more disease and pest free tree. It also keeps the foliage more compact. Do not sit a Banksia in water unless you are trying to grow on a tree very quickly, and definitely never in winter. Banksia can suffer from root rot so I try to keep the foliage as full as possible to keep sucking the water out of the pot and thereby keeping the roots on the dry side.

If you repot in winter or don't leave enough foliage on the tree over winter you may encourage root rot, the tree sort of drowns in the excess soil and water.

BANKSIA AS BONSAI.

B. marginata, *B. serrata* and *B. integrifolia* all make good Bonsai, but my experiences with *B. integrifolia* are the most extensive and it is my personal favorite.

Banksia integrifolia, the Coast Banksia, grows in many locations in the wild, from the most exposed, windswept coastal headland where it may grow flat against a cliff or it may be a 25 mtr high tree growing in snowy conditions in the mountains.

Its leaves are large, long and smooth edged, but as a Bonsai the leaves can be small, blunt and toothed. This is because the constant trimming causes the tree to put out a juvenile form of leaf that is most suitable for Bonsai. The leaf is still strong and vigorous and not deformed or delicate in any way.

The frequent potting, fertilizing and trimming gives us a very quick growing, thick trunked tree that buds back on old wood very well.

If you live in Sydney or further north, you may be able to pot-on nursery stock every six months or so to achieve quick growth. If you live in Canberra or cold areas of Victoria or N.S.W, you may need to allow more time in each size pot, say twelve months. Pot in early summer to avoid excessive new growth on the tree going into winter; soft new foliage can be badly damaged by frost and lead to problems with die-back etc.

My reason for avoiding potting in winter or early spring is that the tree just sits and sulks until the warmer weather arrives; there is no advantage in potting early. In fact by sitting in a larger pot in wet conditions for 3-6 months you may encourage root rot, die back or excessive new growth when it is too cold.

Some Australian Natives will grow at any time of year if the conditions are right, but in pots you may accidentally trigger growth at the wrong time of year.

As a Bonsai the *B. integrifolia* is also very quick growing and is usually my 'waterweed'. That is, it is usually the first tree to droop if it is in fresh growth.

Continued next month

Photos' from The Annual AABC Show in Perth Thanks Dave



Bonsai Federation of Australia Northern Inc

invites you to a weekend of

BONSAI by the HARBOUR

A unique program will be presented with multiple demonstrations occurring throughout the day – a friendly, informal gathering of bonsai friends in a stunning harbourside setting. You will be free to move between the various demonstrations or participate in a selection of workshops. A silent auction will be held over the two days.

Saturday & Sunday 11 & 12 June 2011

Sydney Church of England Grammar School's Rowing Facility
86 Wharf Road, Gladesville NSW

Enquiries: Ric 02.9953.1931 (email bonsairic@bigpond.com)
Jan 02.6585.3995 (email jan.briggs2@bigpond.com)



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**RAY NESCI
BONSAI NURSERY**

26 Sagers Road Dural NSW 2158

*** New Carving Tool Attachments Just In* (As seen by past European Demonstrators)**

From : Bonsai Design Holland, www.samurai.nl

Samurai 6mm shaft - \$259 (Very powerful & efficient in bulk clearing of wood)

Samurai jr 6mm shaft - \$173 (Ideal for detailed work in difficult places)

Ninja 6mm shaft - \$199 (For work on medium and large size trees where precision & accuracy are needed)

Shogun short 6mm shaft - \$168 (Long length carving attachment of 62mm, enables insertation deep into the tree to create Saba miki)

Shogun long 6mm shaft - \$188 (As per Shogun short)

(For pictures and additional information see above website)

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

INTERVIEW WITH GRANT

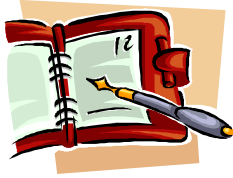
- *What got you interested in bonsai?*
 - When I was about thirteen, I saw a display by Len Webber. I was learning Indonesian at school and we had an excursion to another school on the North Shore and he was there. Soon after, I joined the Bonsai Society of Australia about 1970 or 71.
 - *How long have you been working with them?*
 - Since then – both as a hobby and as a business.
 - *What was your first tree? How successful was it, do you still have it?*
 - I can't remember. It certainly didn't survive. A Golden Himalayan Cedar is the one I've had the longest – since about 1975.
 - *What different types of bonsai do you have?*
 - I've a number of different trees including pines, cedars, junipers and some natives.
 - *What is your favourite bonsai and why?*
 - Banksia are my favourite because they are a lovely iconic Australian tree and I love working on them.
 - *What is the most difficult bonsai you've worked on so far?*
 - The most complex, rather than difficult, was the Five-needle pine at the National collection. It needed a good overhaul. About 100 hours was spent on it by myself and a number of helpers.
 - *What is your opinion on soil types or potting mixes?*
 - You must use a mixture appropriate to your climate, size of tree and your personal habits. I am using a mix of 40% Diatomite, 20% gravel, 20% Coco Peat and 20% Pine Bark Mini Nuggets. Smaller particles for smaller bonsai.
 - *In Grant's talk to the Central Coast Club on 30th April, he went into great detail about growing media. You will be able to read about it in more detail when I have the time to write it up.*
 - *What fertilizers do you use and when do you use them?*
 - I use Osmocote in the potting mix and liquid feed at the recommended rate with Power feed or Nitrosol etc. I also top dress the bonsai with Osmocote if the tree has been one year in a pot.
 - *Do you have any problems with diseases?*
 - I tend to spray preventatively with Confidor, pestoil and Mavrik (for mites).
 - *Do you have any other problems to deal with?*
 - Just getting the trees used to the climate here in Canberra.
 - *What is important to remember when working with a particular specimen?*
 - Just know the type of material you are working with.
 - *What basic tools do you think are indispensable? What tools do you use most?*
 - I have a very extensive tool kit and believe if you want to do bonsai well, you should have a decent tool kit.
 - *Can you recommend any books or authors?*
 - John Naka's books "Bonsai Techniques 1 and 2. Deborah Koreshof's book and Harry Tomlinson's plus the various Peter Adams' books.
 - *Is there a special place or nursery you go to, to get special trees?*
 - A lot of my trees have been grown by me from seed, but I also now look for old bonsai to overhaul.
 - *Do you have a story or incident you'd like to share with us?*
 - When I was in the US visiting John Naka in 1979, he had quite a famous tree which he showed me. It was about 90% dead which goes to prove s**t happens to all of us. Looking after bonsai is a big commitment.
 - *What haven't you yet done with bonsai that you would like to do?*
- I'd like to do more travelling, especially overseas and see more quality bonsai. I would like to work more with overseas artists/masters as well but this is difficult.

Thanks, Grant for taking the time to be interviewed and share your knowledge with us.

JOBS FOR JUNE

- About the only pruning to be done at this quiet time of the year is to remove any unwanted elongated growth that spoils the canopy shape. Deciduous trees can be re-potted, re-shaped, pruned and styled now.
 - Assemble deciduous forests, group plantings or Saikei in large flat trays complete with moss, rocks and under-plantings. Doing groups like this is a good way of using up those not-so-special trees taking up room on your benches. You'll be amazed at just how good they look when formed into a group. Remember to use different sized trunks and different height trees to give some perspective to your composition.
 - Keep your eyes open for new material at nurseries or neighbourhood gardens for unwanted plants.
 - Conifers and pines are ideal for wiring at this time of year. Their sluggish sap flow means they can be bent more easily than at other times of the year.
 - Winter is a good time to clean up. Your benches can be scrubbed down now to get rid of any build-up of grime and sediment. Scrubbing will help control unwanted bugs and disease as well as making the area look better.
 - Clean out the old needles from the branches of pines so air and light can penetrate to stimulate new budding in spring and to keep the tree healthy and insect infestations away.
 - If you live in an area of frost, you can start putting your trees under shade cloth or in bush houses or ferneries –even under a tree will help to protect them.
- Start collecting moss now as it's growing well. Try to find different textures to give the surface of your potted trees a more natural look.





DIARY DATES

June 11-12	Bonsai By The Harbour
July 2-3	Peter Adams-Ideas Summit The School Of Bonsai
July 9	Andrew Ward demonstrates at Newcastle Bonsai Society
August 20-21	Bonsai Society of Sydney annual show at Terrey Hills
August 27-28	Illawarra Bonsai Society annual show at Gynea
September 16-18	12 th annual workshop weekend at The Tops conference centre, Stanwell Tops, hosted by Illawarra Bonsai Society
October 15-16	Canberra Bonsai Society annual show
November 4-6	Newcastle Bonsai Society annual show at Charlestown Bowling Club
November 18-21	11 th Asia Pacific Bonsai & Suiseki Convention & Exhibition, Takamatsu, Japan
November 26th	Campbelltown Bonsai Society annual show

DISCLAIMER

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