



# ILLAWARRA BONSAI SOCIETY INC

NEWSLETTER

## 2024, No.8 SEPTEMBER

NEXT MEETING 7.00PM MONDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2024  
(WORKSHOP/DEMONSTRATION/MARKETPLACE)

### PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dear Members,

HOORAY/!!! Spring has sprung and hopefully all the terrible weather we have had of late is behind us.

Spring is a time for renewal when our trees start to put on their new branches, leaves, flowers and berries. All of this invigorates us to get outdoors and tend to them. If you have a lot of trees, like most of us have, it will be a very busy time. To me it is so gratifying to see the results of all the hard work we put into our trees over the seasons and seeing the results in spring is such a delight!!

I hope all your trees have survived the copious amounts of rain and the terrible strong winds. It certainly has been a trying time for them and for us also to make sure that they survive all that has been handed to them.

Going out in the garden every day to check on them is the only way to help them through it all. With the beginning of spring hopefully the weather will settle down and we can get on with their care and survival?

Keep an eye on the "Handy Hints" in each newsletter to find out what we do at that particular time of the year. This will help our many new members to acquaint themselves with the practice of bonsai.

I think the winds have dried out the trees more than the sun has and making sure they get enough water each day is the only answer for the new spring growth to survive. Keep the shelves clean of all fallen litter to keep marauding insects at bay, fungal attacks and to let more air movement around the trees.

Also, we can help you by attending our Sunday workshops to see what other members are doing with their trees and what must be done at that time of the year. These Sunday workshops are a part of your membership with the club, and they are at no cost. Attending monthly meetings is sometimes not enough to find out what is needed to be done during each season. In the meantime, if you can't attend Sunday workshops, bring your problem tree/s to the club meeting nights to get some advice.

Next year in May, the Canberra Bonsai Society will be holding a 3-day bonsai convention with overseas and local demonstrators. I have been attending these conventions since the 80's and it is so rewarding what you see and learn from seeing what other bonsai enthusiasts do with their trees. For more information go to the Canberra Bonsai Society website, look up the convention details and this may whet your appetite to attend. These weekends are so enjoyable where you will mix with like-minded bonsai enthusiasts from all over Australia and see a great display of their club's members trees and do some great shopping in the vendor's area. If you book in before the end of October, you will get a \$50 discount on your registration. On the registration form you can structure your weekend to suit your budget and availability to attend on whatever day. Unfortunately, there are no flyers as it is all on the internet.

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**Meetings:**

7.00pm third Monday night each  
month, except January & December  
at GyMEA Community Centre,  
GyMEA Bay Road, GyMEA, NSW

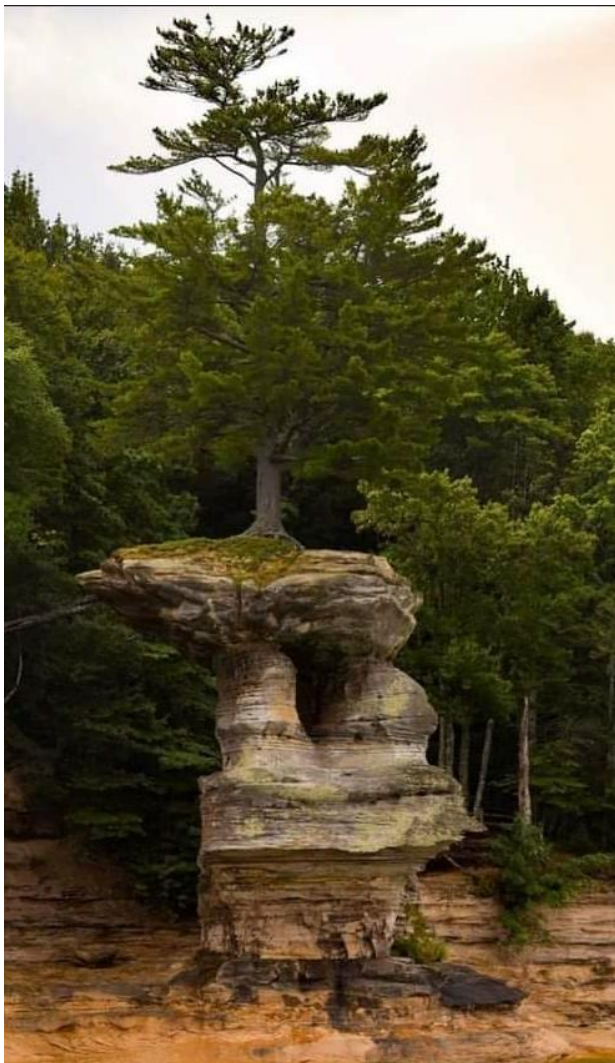


**NEXT MEETING** – There will be a quick talk on pruning and ramification of the new growth on trees, especially on maples, elms etc. This will help our newer members to better understand what we have to do at this time of year.

Enjoy the coming season and get outside to enjoy Spring's bounty of new flowers, leaves, berries, branches and.....oh! sunshine!!

**BRING A TREE TO WORK ON**

Till next time,  
Brenda



**Trees are just so amazing the places where they survive and grow.**

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**FINAL THOUGHT**

*'There is beauty in the incomplete. If we find something imperfect, then that is what we pursue. To beginner bonsai gardeners, owners of spindly lemon trees and nurturers of drought-stricken perennials, this is a message of hope. The path to enlightenment is not always strewn with dead plants.'*

- Shunmyo Masuno

## HANDY HINTS

- Keep an eye on your trees when we have strong winds. It is a known fact that the wind will dry out trees in pots faster than the sun will.
- Also, during strong winds, trees can easily be knocked out of their pots if they are not secured properly. Pots can also be broken if they fall off the bench. Tying them to the bench can save a lot of heartache.
- **Ready, get set.....go!!** Start feeding trees with the appropriate food especially after the heavy rains have leached everything from the potting mix. If you are unsure on what to use on what tree, please ask one of the more long-standing members or committee members for advice.
- With the new spring growth, check wiring that was put on in winter or before. With the spring growth spurt, you don't want the wire to start cutting in and causing scars on the branches. Wire on Japanese maples for example, can leave a 'silver' scar on the trunk and branches and that will stay there forever.
- Remove all spent flowers and seed pods on azaleas and camellias. This will give them a good tidy-up, even during their continuous flowering due to the extraordinary weather conditions.
- Deciduous trees are starting to come into leaf and to aid in ramification, let 3 to 5 leaves grow, then cut back and leave 2 or 3 leaves on every branch. This will help in ramifying the canopy. Obviously, if you need a particular branch to thicken to aid in your design, let it grow and then cut back when the thickness you require has been reached. This applies to all maples, Chinese elms, miniature wisterias (also known as Millettia) etc.
- To also aid in ramification, figs can also have a branch cut back and only taking 2 or 3 leaves with it. Fig branches can grow quite thick and fast especially after all the wet weather and now with the warmth. If this is not done, the ramification at the top of the tree will only thicken and will spoil the tree design and then the tree will grow too big for you to control, oh, and lift it!! More radical pruning can be done at repotting time in October, and this is the best time that figs enjoy growing properly when it is hot. So, remember, only 1 – 3 leaves from every branch to stop the spring growth thickening up the branches too much.
- It is so important to learn and get to know how each tree grows, so your treatment for each tree becomes second nature.
- Do not prune cotoneasters or pyracanthas at this time, as they are getting ready to flower and then eventually the red berries will appear from these flowers. Do not feed these trees while they are in flower, otherwise the flowers will not produce berries, but new green growth instead.
- Place all crab-apples in shallow trays of water to enhance flowering and ultimately tiny red, yellow or orange fruits. Mine live in these trays all year round.
- Some Australian native trees are setting flower buds e.g. Callistemon (bottle brush), so no pruning until after the flowers wane. This applies to all spring flowering native trees. Also stand all native trees in shallow trays of water as they are guzzlers.
- Remove any of the tiny fruits on flowering quinces. These will only zap the energy from the tree. These fruits are only ornamental and not for human consumption.

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## TREE COMPETITION –AUGUST RESULTS

<b>Large</b>	1 <sup>st</sup>	Elaine Bleazard	Azalea
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	James Shamoon	Sargents Juniper
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	-	
<b>Medium</b>	1 <sup>st</sup>	Garwin Phung	Chinese Elm
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	-	
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	-	
<b>Shohin</b>	1 <sup>st</sup>	Manfred Koch	Juniper Penjing Forrest
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	-	
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	-	
	3 <sup>rd</sup>		
<b>Mame</b>	1 <sup>st</sup>	Garwin Phung	Display- Sargents Juniper, Buxus Harlandii, Corky bark elm
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Brenda Parker	Black Pine
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	James Shamoon	Desert Ash
<b>Novice</b>	1 <sup>st</sup>	Simon Tran	Flowering Prunus
	2 <sup>nd</sup>		

## EVENTS

Club Meetings	
16 September 2024	Workshop, and mini demonstration on refinement and ramification and marketplace
21 October 2024	Workshop, and mini demonstration on tips and tricks.
18 November 2024	Workshop, and mini demonstration on problem trees and marketplace.
9 December 2024	AGM and Christmas Party.
Club Events	

Other Events*	
13 <sup>TH</sup> – 15 <sup>TH</sup> September 2024	“Grand Bonsai and Ikebana Exhibition” presented by Bonsai Society of Sydney and Megumi Bennett The Garden Gallery Royal Botanical Gardens Sydney
19 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> October 2024	School of Bonsai Annual Show Ray Nesci nursery Sugars Rd. Dural
8 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> November 2024	Newcastle Bonsai Society Annual Show Club Macquarie Lake Rd. Argenton
16 <sup>th</sup> -19 <sup>th</sup> May 2025	National Bonsai Convention presented by Canberra Bonsai Society. Rex Hotel 150 Northbourne Ave Braddon

The following article was written by one of our past members, **Ken Bean back in May 1992**. I have added some extracts from this article that may help a lot of our newer members.

### ROOT SYSTEMS AND DEVELOPMENT

Many trees have a predominant tap root, others a fibrous system. The purpose of the tap root is to anchor the tree until the finer surface roots, which extend radially from the trunk, develop. In the development of a tree for bonsai, the tap root and any other heavy roots are not required and are removed to encourage the production of finer roots. In particular the radial surface roots are encouraged as these aid considerably in the overall appearance of maturity imparted to the bonsai design as well as giving stability to the tree.

Soil fungus (mycorrhizae) also play a beneficial role in the absorption of minerals into the root system. This fungus can be observed as a white substance clinging to the roots and is particularly conspicuous in the roots of pines.

It is important to realise that it is only the fine root hairs at the tip of the root that are capable of absorbing nutrients. Hence the heavy pruning of the root system undertaken in bonsai development promotes the vigorous growth of the finer roots required as well as providing space for the bonsai in the pot.

### REPOTTING – WHY?

As bonsai culture utilises small containers with a minimal amount of soil, repotting is essential if the health of the tree is to be maintained. Although the growth of different species vary considerably, roots will eventually completely fill the pot and absorb all the nutrients in the soil. If left in this clogged up condition, the tree will wither and die.

Regular root pruning will rejuvenate the tree and together with an adequate watering and fertilising programme, the bonsai should last for many years. In effect, as the trunk and branches of the tree develop and mature, the root system is kept young and vigorous.

## **HOW OFTEN?**

This depends on the species and the general condition of the tree. If it has lost its vigour, repotting is advisable. Young trees require more frequent treatment than mature trees.

As a general rule, slow growing conifers (pines, junipers, etc), should be repotted every 2-3 years for young trees, extending to every 5 years for older trees. Faster growing maples, elms and tropical varieties should be repotted every 1 to 2 years.

## **WHEN?**

The most desirable time for most varieties is when the sap starts to move in late winter or early spring. This is evident by the swelling of buds. Usually, deciduous varieties are the first to move out of winter dormancy. Figs and other tropical varieties are best repotted in early summer.

If you miss out repotting in the Spring or late Summer, early Autumn is also a suitable time. Be less severe with root pruning at this time of the year.

## **HOW – TREE PREPARATION**

- Have the tree a little on the dry side before removing it from the pot.
- If the tree doesn't come out of the pot, run a flexible knife blade down the side of the pot.
- Prune before 1/3 and 1/2 off the root ball and then teasing out the finer roots so they develop a strong radial displacement called the nebari.
- Cut the roots cleanly and avoid crushing them. In hot weather keep the roots moist by spraying with an atomiser during repotting.

## **POT PREPARATION**

Drainage holes are covered with plastic mesh (not flyscreen wire as the holes are too small) as the drainage will not be too good and the roots could suffer.

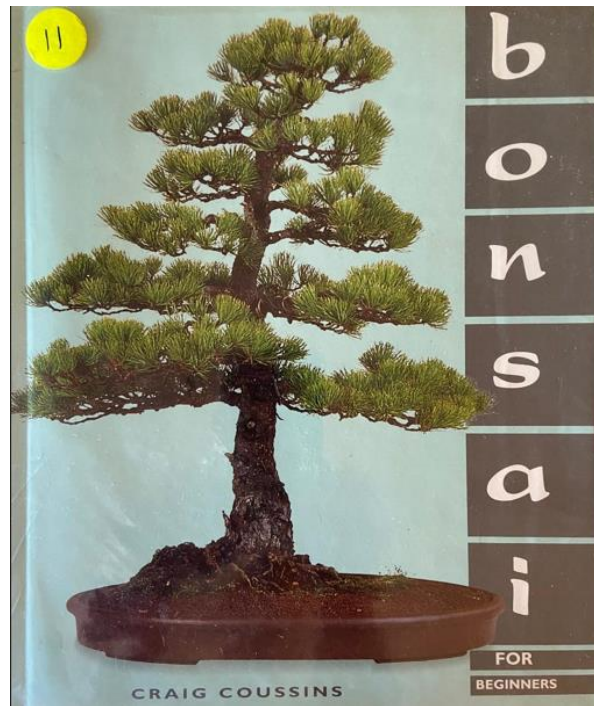
Placing trees in the pot – trees in round, square and hexagonal pots are located in the centre always. In the case of oval and rectangular pots they are offset 1/3 along the major axis and the direction of the tree will be more over the 'free space' of the pot.

## **PLANTING**

After placing in the pot in the right position, place moss and/or decorative small pebbles to help keep moisture in the pot. After watering, the tree should then be placed in a sheltered position for two weeks and if the weather is dry, give the tree periodic leaf spray as well. Morning sun is best for newly repotted trees.

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## THIS MONTH'S LIBRARY BOOK REVIEW



## **THIS MONTH'S LIBRARY BOOK REVIEW**

Bonsai For Beginners (No. 11 on the Club Bookshelf)

By Craig Cousins, Published by D&S Books, Hertfordshire England, 2000.

This hardcover book is fully illustrated throughout to provide a complete guide to starting bonsai, from selecting suitable plants through to care, styling, potting, troubleshooting and the long-term development of trees.

A brief guide to some of the main species is presented in a reference table and includes information on repotting, pruning and significant issues to watch out for. This could prove to be a handy tool for budding bonsai enthusiasts.

## WHAT ARE CURL GRUBS?



There have been some alternate and sometimes controversial views over the larval form of numerous species of beetles, native and non-native. One thing they all share is the common name of Curl Grubs.

## **Curl Grubs – Good or Bad? – A Guide for Southern Sydney Gardeners**

For Southern Sydney gardeners, curl grubs can present a puzzling dilemma. These larvae, often found wriggling beneath the soil, come in different varieties.

Some are notorious pests, while others are threatened native species. Understanding the difference is crucial for effective garden management and environmental conservation.

### **Identifying Curl Grubs**

Curl Grubs are the larvae of various beetles, and their impact on your garden depends on their species. The most common pest in Australian gardens is the African Black Beetle (*Heteronychus arator*). These grubs are notorious for damaging plant roots, particularly in lawns and vegetable gardens. They cause wilting and stunted growth, and their feeding can lead to significant garden damage if not controlled.

On the other hand, native beetle larvae, such as those from the Christmas Beetle (*Anoplognathus* spp.), are less harmful and often beneficial. These native grubs, which feed on decomposing organic matter, help recycle nutrients back into the soil and also help aerate the soil. However, they are also a threatened species, so their presence should be treated with care.

### **Determining Good and Bad Grubs**

To identify whether a curl grub is a pest or a native species, consider the following:

1. **Size and Colour:** African Black Beetle grubs are typically white with a distinct "C" shape and can be found in large numbers. Native beetle larvae might be smaller and vary in colour.
2. **Location:** African Black Beetle larvae are often found in lawn areas, whereas native larvae might be found in mulch or compost.
3. **Damage:** If the grubs are causing significant damage to your plants, they are likely pests. Native grubs generally do not cause noticeable damage.

### **Managing Curl Grubs**

**Pests:** If you identify curl grubs as pests, especially in potted plants or lawn areas, control measures are necessary. Organic options include introducing beneficial nematodes, which prey on these larvae, or using neem oil, which disrupts their life cycle. For severe infestations, chemical treatments might be required, but these should be a last resort due to their environmental impact.

**Native Grubs:** If you discover native grubs, consider relocating them rather than killing them. Carefully move them to a less invasive area like a natural garden bed or a forested part of your property. This way, you help maintain the ecological balance and support local biodiversity.

#### **Potted Plants vs Garden Beds**

In potted plants, grubs can cause quicker damage due to limited root space. If native grubs are found in potted plants, relocate them carefully. For pests, consider preventive measures like regular soil inspections and maintaining healthy plant growth to minimize damage.

In garden beds, monitoring and management are key. Ensure good garden hygiene and use organic controls to maintain a healthy balance between pests and beneficial organisms.

By distinguishing between harmful pests and valuable native species, Southern Sydney gardeners can make informed decisions that protect both their gardens and local biodiversity.

Curl grubs turn into scarab beetles. There are more than 30,000 species of these beetles worldwide. Australia is home to at least 2300 of these, including the iridescent Christmas Beetle. In Australia colourful Christmas beetles traditionally heralded the arrival of the Christmas holiday season. Sadly, Christmas beetle numbers have declined over the last few decades, likely due to habitat loss.

Since most root-feeding scarabs prefer grass roots, lawn turf is most at risk and damage is usually caused by the exotic scarab species.

Larvae found in decaying wood or mulch are wood feeders and are useful composters and they will not harm your plants and should be left where they are.

NOTE: Most parts of this article were kindly shared to us by the Caringbah Garden Club, so thanks to that club for sharing information.

