

ANPSA AUSTRALIAN PLANTS AS BONSAI STUDY GROUP

## MEMBERSHIP FORM

**Financial Year 1 July 2013 - 30 June 2014**

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I belong to ASGAP society: SGAP, APS, WSWA, ANPS or 'none' (**circle one**). If 'none', you are invited to join as a 'contributing member', though you will not be covered for insurance at any Group activity. Your fees are the same; you will receive the newsletter and can contribute in the same manner as an ASGAP member.

If you belong to a bonsai society, please specify: .....

Annual Membership Fee:

New member and member who contributed information relevant to the Group or worked on behalf of the Group in <u>2012/13</u>	\$10.00
Member who has not contributed information relevant to the Group in <u>2012/13</u>	\$14.00
Overseas member	A\$20.00

Please make cheque/money order payable to: ASGAP Australian Plants as Bonsai Study Group and forward with this Renewal Form to the following address:

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OR use bank transfer to: Bank: Community CPS Australia, BSB 805-022  
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**Include your name on transfer so we know who has sent the money!!**

If you pay by direct credit, please return this form so that I can ensure the contact details are correct – this includes **CLUBS**.

If you would like to receive the newsletter via email, please write your email address here:

.....  
Money saved will be put to the publication fund.

**Thank you to all who have contributed their information on the native species that they are growing. For those who haven't put pen to paper or fingers to key board, now it a good time to do it for at least one of the species you are growing. Every bit of information is important right now. Many thanks for your support. The information is needed for our first publication.**

Please provide details here:

Name.....

City/Town ..... State/Territory ..... Post Code .....

It is important that that your records can be geographically located, as well as your contribution acknowledged.

If you replied last time and nothing has changed, please don't repeat the information. If you missed last time, please pick up a pen and do it now – it is valuable information.

Name (Common and/or scientific)	Pruning Date(s)	Repotting date(s)	Notes



## Where is my APAB\_N?

By Roger Hnatiuk

‘Where is my APAB\_N?’ I hear, or rather read in emails from many of you. A good question too!

The main reason has to do with me, and the second reason has to do with you.

You will see that this issue is labelled ‘23/24’. That is because number 23, which should have been done in December 2012, didn’t get done, alas. I was spaced-out for sure. The time I would usually have allocated for the preparation of the 23<sup>rd</sup> newsletter was more than fully taken up with a variety of preparations for the move of the National Bonsai and Penjing Collection to its new and permanent home, as well many other tasks that as a volunteer of the Friends of the National Arboretum I was also doing. It was intense, but ever so well worth it. But my apologies to all who have been waiting and noticed that the newsletter wasn’t coming.

And your part in the delay? Well I had only received one piece of information to put into it. So I guess that nearly all of you were also too busy to send in any information on your experiences in growing, styling or just contemplating your Australian native bonsai.

I can understand why the small number of stalwarts of the newsletter haven’t sent anything in, but there are literally dozens of members who have sent in very little, and yet their experiences are all worth recording.

## Opening of the National Bonsai and Penjing Collection of Australia

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February, 2013, the NBPCA was formally opened to the public in its new permanent home location. The honours were done by the Chief Minister of the Australian Capital Territory, Ms Katy Gallaher MLA, and Mr Grant Bowie, Interim Curator of the NBPCA.



Figure 1. NBPCA’s new exhibition space, April 2013.

Several hundred bonsai enthusiasts from Canberra, Goulburn, Yackandandah as well as Sydney had come up to the national capital for the occasion. But there were others from

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much further afield that made much longer treks too, from Perth, Hobart, Adelaide, Melbourne, Brisbane, and many smaller centres as well. Once the ribbon was cut, once for the Arboretum and ACT Government, and once for the bonsai community, the public streamed-in by the hundreds. The flow has not stopped, and it is now nearly 5 months since opening.



Figure 2. Beautiful trees in beautiful places.

This was a most momentous day for bonsai in Australia. It is a day that has been in waiting for over a quarter of a century, and in the making for nearly 10 years. The architects and builders have produced an amazingly beautiful display space accented by local stone and coastal NSW timbers. The bonsai display benches are subtle but well suited to their purpose.

And of course, it is the trees that make it all so stunning and a place people want to come and see.

Around 80 trees were on display at the opening, though the number is declining now in order to give each tree a better viewing space.

From memory, about a quarter of the trees are Australian native species. For example, there are *Angophora*, *Callistemon* (2 spp), *Banksia* (5 spp), *Leptospermum* (2 spp), *Allocasuarina*, *Araucaria*, *Eucalyptus*, *Lagarostrobos*, *Ficus* (2 spp), *Melaleuca* (2 spp), plus one *Acacia* not currently on display. The native trees attract quite a lot of attention and admiration.

By the end of May, the Arboretum was able to announce the name of the new Curator for the Collection. It is Leigh Taafe. Leigh has been part time Assistant Curator for a couple of years. He has a strong background in growing and artistically styling bonsai. He ran his own bonsai nursery for many years, and he has a sound business and IT experience as well. The Collection is fortunate to have had a very strong field of candidates from which a choice was made. We can rest easy that the Collection will continue to have the highest possible level of care under its new leader. Leigh will be a strong person to carry on the tradition of quality curatorship that Grant Bowie established before he retired earlier this year.

## Centennial Bonsai Prize 2013

In APAB\_N 22, the national competition for the first Centennial Bonsai Prize was announced. The winner from a wonderful selection of possible trees was announced at the Conference Dinner at the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual AABC Bonsai Conference hosted this year by the Canberra Bonsai Club. The winner was Ian Hearn (NSW). You can see his amazingly creative and expressive tree in Figure 1.

The next Centennial Bonsai Prize will be awarded in 2023, so there is time for you to start planning what you will enter and then get to work on creating the nation's next top tree!



Figure 1. Awarding the first Centenary Bonsai Prize 2013. From the left are: Jason Brown, Managing Director National Arboretum Canberra, Ian Hearn, winning artist, and Dr Chris Bourke, MLA.

## ***FICUS CORONATA*** **Sandpaper Fig**

By Leigh Wright

Bonsai enthusiasts dote on the charms of the local Port Jackson fig, *Ficus rubiginosa*, but you don't often see sandpaper figs as bonsai. This is a pity and a lack that should change.

Sandpaper figs are native to Australia and occur from Queensland to mid Victoria. In NSW they grow on the coast, tablelands and western slopes along creeks and gullies, growing in sun and partial shade.

The sandpaper fig produces fruit readily, small furry figs that are bush tucker food and can be eaten when they are ripe. It is preferable to peel them as the spiny skin can be an irritant. The sap can be used on wounds to promote healing.

The sandpaper is a small tree that can grow to 12 metres with a grey/brown trunk and ovate or elliptical leaves that are 5-15 cm in length in its natural habitat. The leaves are sandpaper rough on the top side. This rough characteristic and the bright green leaf colour make sandpapers attractive as bonsai.

It is not as easy to locate sandpaper stock as it is the ubiquitous Port Jackson, but well worth looking for. Small, young stock can be ground grown or put in a large pot for a couple of years and the trunk will thicken rapidly. Keep control of the branching even in the ground so the thickness doesn't get away from you. Prune and shape regularly even if branches are left longer than for bonsai. It is easier to get what you want with ground care than ending up with a beautiful trunk and branches that are too thick and inappropriately placed when you dig the tree up. Lift the tree annually to trim the roots and remove any overly large ones.

You can defoliate as you would with Ports or continually remove leaves that are too large. Defoliate to get ramification but generally just remove the larger leaves. You don't get many so it is not an onerous job. The leaves miniaturise wonderfully well and can get to a quarter of the size of the normal leaf. Pinching back the growing tips keeps the tree compact.

Occasionally at bonsai club sales you can pick up interesting stock as in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Sandpaper fig acquired 10 September 2010 – Bonsai Society of Australia Marketplace.

The tree was leggy, branches inappropriately located and some wire marking on the trunk, but the hollow at the base of the trunk and the character of the tree definitely said 'potential'. Note the leaf size.

Excess growth was removed and shaping started (Figure 2.). Then it was potted in good soil and left to contemplate the pains of care and get started on its new life.



Figure 2. 10 September 2010 two hours after purchase.

Three months later, you have the tree in Figure 3.



Figure 3. December 2010 and note the new branchlet lower right – exactly where it is needed.

The hollow trunk has been dremelled to achieve an attractive natural look and the other wounds have been carved as well to emphasis the feeling of hardship and age (Figure 4.). You can also see how beautifully the leaves miniaturise with the controlled growth on the left small and tight and the rampant growth on the right big and leggy and the branchlet now achieving branch status.

## January 2012



Figure 4. March 2011 and the new branch is being allowed to grow wild while the other growth is being maintained.

16 months after training started the tree had developed into a very presentable bonsai (Figure 5). Although the two lower branches are in close proximity, there is just enough of an offset, plus the different growth directions, to miss 'bar branching'. A Penny Davis Mudlark Bonsai Pot sets the tree off superbly. Fresh wiring has corrected some branch



Figure 5. 16 months after training start.

angles and with this tree it is important to get foliage in front of the apex as the trunk tends to lean back a bit midway above the first left branch and while the apex grows forward, foliage can be encouraged to grow in front of this defect to hide it. The lower left branch is well established and looks a lot older than 16 months.

The development of this mature tree from a rangy stock plant to a well controlled and very natural looking bonsai has only taken 16 months... say 18 for the latest wiring to set. The rapidity of the growth and thickening of the lower right branch attests to the fact that you should watch this tree and prune and shape it regularly if you ground-grow a younger one so you can direct growth before it sets.

The tree is 28 cm high. It has pleasing if not fantastic surface roots, a trunk with heaps of character, beautiful leaves and a nice shape. The only 'back' branch is near the apex but a branchlet close to the trunk from the first left branch has been developed as a back branch and works very well. This sandpaper fig shows how styling can conceal and/or modify what could be considered as defects in a bonsai. But nothing is perfect and a bit of skill can make a tree with some serious issues into a very beautiful tree. This should also encourage enthusiasts to start looking for sandpaper stock in nurseries or find a nice creek and collect a tree. Because sandpapers like to grow near water they should have roots close to the base and be easy collecting material.

So let's see more of this beautiful native on the benches. It normally produces abundant fruit but in this instance the tree has been constantly nipped to encourage more foliage so any fruit has been 'nipped in the bud'. But next year....

## The Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize

The Woollahra Council offers an annual art prize. In 2012, noted Australian bonsai artist, Thor Beowulf, was amongst the winners. Certainly an indication that bonsai is coming of age and being accepted in the world of 'art'.

You can see Thor's winning piece, which includes a bonsai fig, by going to: [http://sculptureprize.woollahra.nsw.gov.au/past\\_prizes/2012\\_prize/2012\\_finalists](http://sculptureprize.woollahra.nsw.gov.au/past_prizes/2012_prize/2012_finalists).

Congratulations Thor. Well done!



### 2012 Finalists announced

A delicate glass piece measuring just 9mm x 5mm, called *Time*, by Sydney based emerging sculptor Jessica Tse, is the smallest ever sculpture to be shortlisted in the 12 year history of the Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize.

Other finalists include leading artists Nigel Harrison, Rodney Pople, Ron Robertson-Swann and Titania Henderson. Some of the found objects incorporated into the finalist's works include a living bonsai entitled *The Carbon Credit Machine* by Thor Beowulf, Susanna Strati's *1000 Memorialising Gestures* is comprised of 1000 communion wafers and Sheena Dodd has used Tjanpi desert grass to create a delightful work, *Tjulpu Uratja Kutjara or Two Waterbirds*.

This year the Prize has attracted 494 entries from Australia and countries including New Zealand, India, Ireland, USA, UK, Ireland, Latvia and Japan.

## The Future : Bonsai in the Hunter Wetlands.

by  Bob NIEASS

Back in October 2011, I started to do voluntary work at the Hunter Wetlands Centre. My love of plants of all types, sizes and growing methods saw me immediately gravitate to the nursery. After a shortish settling-in period, getting to know the other members of the willing crew, the nursery manager put a serious question to me. In consultation with the Site Manager, it was decided to ask if I would set up a supply of

bonsai that in the future could be sold from the customer information and service desk at the main entrance to the facility. How could I resist?

After an enjoyable Festive Season and ushering in of the year 2012, work (play?) commenced on setting up the foundation of the future sales stock. The nursery was quite blessed (plagued?) with *Casuarina* seedlings popping up from the medium used in growing the trees and grasses for the Wetlands' own requirements as well as those of the Ash Island Regeneration Scheme and other projects that we were growing for. It was quite easy to repot, for example a finger lime, and extract the "unwanted" *Casuarina*, give it a root prune, a wee haircut, a quick pot up and put on a tray on a bench in one corner of the large poly-tunnel.

Examples of other species were quickly added to the work in process; *Callistemon citrinus* (Figure 1), *Melaleuca fulgens* and the good old *Ficus rubiginosa* to name a few. I liberated a few trees from the "Please Give These Trees a Good Home" area in the



Figure 1. *Callistemon citrinus*.

neighbouring Australian Plant Society group area, especially *Eremophila maculata* x *alternifolia* and *Grevillea* 'Alfred's Folly' (Figures 2 & 3).

Blazing ahead with a great deal of enthusiasm, experiments began to happen. The ill-fated cascade *Casuarina* experiment

may well become a very short informal upright now. Ah! It was going well. Maybe I will have another try. I naively thought that I was breaking new ground when getting success with surface layering of callistemons and casuarinas. Talk about reinventing the wheel!

A session spent rereading my books on Australian Bonsai saw that I had indeed stumbled across techniques already documented by Dot and Vita Koreshoff.

Somehow I think that I've also 'confirmed' local Australian Plant Society knowledge that soft wood cuttings go better than hard wood when striking *Eremophila maculata* using



Figure 2. *Eremophila maculata* x *alternifolia*.

Clonex™ rooting solution and the nursery general purpose potting mix.

Initially I started to cut down six inch plastic pots from the nursery stock but quickly realised that I would wipe out the stock and they were really better served for nursery needs. I soon thought of using the base of two-litre soft drink bottles, suitably drilled for drainage and wire. These have proven to work well and are always on hand at home waiting to be cut down and drilled. Sugar free of course! Seedlings start off in 'forestry' tubes before graduating to the 'Bob Plastic Pots'. A "travel pack" of tools is now ever present in the bag I take with me when I'm in the nursery.



After twelve months, the collection is starting to take shape. The time is fast coming for repotting to get a nice root mass in readiness for a bonsai pot. Maybe only another year in the case of the callistemons. This will also be the time to start off a brand new stock that will later be the replacements for those trees

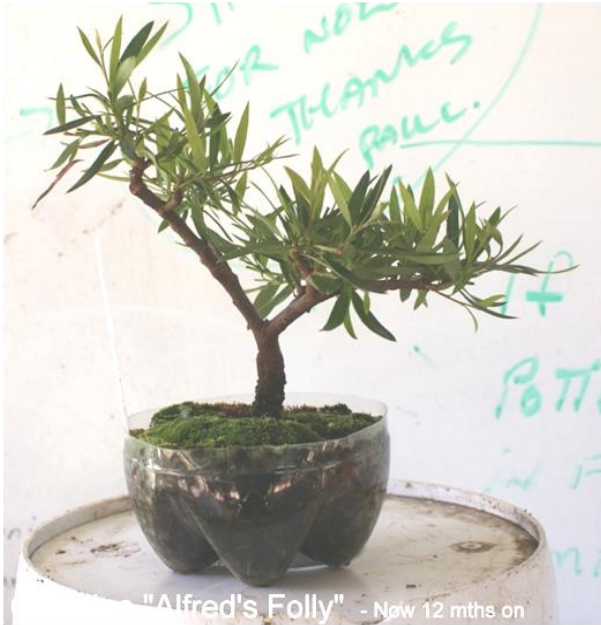


Figure 3. *Callistemon* 'Fred's Folly'.

I've spent the past 12 months working on. Of course some will take well over three years where some will take less. It will depend on how advanced the starter is.

Later this year a general public introduction session for bonsai at the Wetland Centre will be held.

Bonsai at the Hunter Wetlands certainly looks to be an ongoing commitment when I finally reach 65 and 'fully' retire.

## **New Native Bonsai Group: Melbourne**

By Quentin Valentine

The establishment of a 'Native Bonsai Group' in Melbourne has long been the goal of a few dedicated individuals. Whilst there are many bonsai enthusiasts in Melbourne growing native species there has not been any group concentrating specifically on them. This has resulted in a limited number species being grown, and the knowledge of their reactions to 'bonsai' treatment remains fairly limited.

For a number of years the Bendigo Bonsai Club has had a special Native Section at their annual Exhibition, and more recently the Bonsai Society of Victoria is planning to do the same. Last year there was a Native Display held at the opening of Stage Two of the Botanical Gardens at Cranbourne, and a larger display is planned for this year on September 7th and 8th.

Thus the word is getting out and more people are becoming interested in native species as bonsai, particularly newer and dare I say it younger enthusiasts. I have visited the display put on by the ACT. Australian Plants as Bonsai Group, usually held in March and have been most impressed by the quality and variety of species on display. I have not yet attended the Symposium held on the same week end but hope to next year.

Eventually I and a number of other enthusiasts would like to see the establishment of a 'Native Group' meeting regularly in Melbourne with a long term aim to hold a high class display open to the public.

Anybody interested in furthering the cause is free to contact me on 0411 137 613.

## **Copy Needed For Next Edition**

By Roger Hnatiuk

The closing date for copy for the next newsletter is 30 November 2013. I currently have a couple of photos and that's all.

If nothing is received, then little can be published. Please put finger to keyboards and let us know what is growing in your garden pots.



# *Australian Plants as Bonsai*

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If not delivered, please return to PO Box 450, Jamison Post Office, Macquarie ACT 2614.

## *Study Group Information*

The Australian Plants as Bonsai Study Group was formed in mid 2001. Its aims are:

- to determine which species of native Australian plants are grown as bonsai;
- to determine the horticultural characteristics and requirements of each species;
- to determine the artistic and aesthetic qualities of species; and
- to publish information to help people grow and enjoy Australian plants as bonsai.

To become a member, please send a cheque for \$14 (Aus.\$20 overseas) or postal money order to:

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