

APAB—N

the Newsletter of the Australian Plants as Bonsai
Study Group



an Association of Societies for
Growing Australian Plants
Study Group

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1st National Exhibition of Australian Plants as Bonsai A Great Success!!

November 8 – 16 2003 may
long be remembered as a
'Landmark for Australian
Bonsai', as one visitor wrote in the Visitor's

Book. Never before has
their been a national
exhibition devoted entirely
to Australian species being
grown as bonsai. Twelve
photographs of trees from
Perth, Townsville, Coffs
Harbour and Sydney
complimented twenty-five
superb trees from the ACT
and NSW, making the
display truly national in
character.

The most popular tree by the public vote was a
large *Banksia integrifolia* (Coast Banksia, Private
Collection, NSW), in the classical Japanese style.
In close second place was *Callicoma serratifolia*
(Black Wattle, Ray Nesci), also in a tightly
controlled, meticulously formed classical
Japanese style. A number of viewers saw the

crown as a samurai's helmet, but when bending
down to look inside they saw not a face but a
strong and elegant miniature tree trunk and
branches. A stunning experience.

Eucalyptus nicholii (willow-leaved peppermint,
Private Collection, ACT) was in third place and

was styled to look like a
eucalypt, thus drawing
much admiration and
interest. The votes were
wide spread after that,
with many trees that
evoked the natural shapes
of the species in the wild
getting significant votes
as well. There were so
many compliments about
the exceptional quality of
the trees and the amazing



diversity of species being used. It was a
significant event that viewers and contributors
alike will remember for years to come.

Of the trees displayed as photographs, the most
popular was *Babingtonia virgata* (Tea Tree,
previously known as *Baekkea virgata*, Merv
Ebling, NSW). Second most popular photo went

to *Melaleuca incana* (Grey Honey Myrtle, Private Collection WA). A flowering *Leptospermum* sp. (Tea tree, Private Collection WA) ranked third, also in a classical style.

Around 700 people visited the exhibition and they were effusive in the comments about the show. Many found it inspiring and many also asked for it to be repeated next year. Many visitors were greatly taken by a number of the pots that were specifically designed to evoke a feeling for the natural environment, breaking with the long tradition of Chinese and Japanese inspired designs. They found them most suitable for the Australian species.

The Exhibition was a joint project by the Australian National Botanic Gardens and the bonsai community. Many hours of volunteer effort went to making the program a success, showing that joint exercises by major institutions and the community can produce worthwhile results. Plans for future events are being worked on now.

Table 1. List of the plants (**in bold**) and photos (light) on display at the Exhibition.

Sci Name	Common Name
<i>Acacia howittii</i>	Prostrate Sticky Wattle
<i>Acmena</i> sp. ?	Lilly Pilly
<i>Agonis flexuosa</i>	Peppermint
<i>Allocasuarina torulosa</i>	Forest Oak
<i>Babingtonia virgata</i>	
<i>Banksia integrifolia</i>	Coast Banksia
<i>Banksia serrata</i>	Saw Banksia
<i>Callicoma serratifolia</i>	Black Wattle
<i>Callistemon 'Candy Pink'</i>	Bottlebrush
<i>Callistemon 'Captain Cook'</i>	Bottlebrush
<i>Callistemon</i> sp.	Bottlebrush
<i>Callitris glaucophylla</i>	White Cypress Pine
<i>Calytrix tetragona</i>	Fringed Myrtle
<i>Elaeocarpus reticulatus</i>	Blueberry Ash
	Willow-leaved
	Peppermint
<i>Eucalyptus nicholii</i>	
<i>Ficus benjamina</i>	
	Port Jackson Fig ,
<i>Ficus rubiginosa</i>	rust-leaved fig
<i>Ficus virens</i>	White Fig

<i>Leptospermum obovatum</i>	River Tea Tree
<i>Leptospermum</i> sp.	Tea Tree
<i>Melaleuca bracteata</i>	Black Tea Tree
<i>Melaleuca capitata</i>	
<i>Melaleuca 'Golden Gem'</i>	
<i>Melaleuca incana</i>	Grey honey-myrtle
<i>Melaleuca linariifolia</i>	Melaleuca 'Snowstorm'
<i>Melaleuca preissiana</i>	White Swamp-Paperbark
<i>Melaleuca</i> sp	
<i>Melaleuca styphelioides</i>	Prickly Paper Bark
<i>Nothofagus cunninghamii</i>	Myrtle Beech
<i>Tristaniopsis laurina</i>	Water Gum
<i>Zieria prostrata 'Carpet Star'</i>	Zieria

A total of 37 bonsai, representing 31 species and cultivars were displayed at the Exhibition, demonstrating a rich diversity of species being used now (see Gallery pages). Although we know that over 300 different types have been recorded as being used as bonsai, this show greatly widened the public's appreciation of the richness available for displaying as bonsai.

The Exhibition also showed plants that ranged from 2 to 30 years in training as bonsai. Some of these were clearly many years older than this. Having such a wide range of years-in-training on display for this first Exhibition provided a good representation of where the practice of bonsai with native Australian species is at: a small number of relatively old specimens, a fair number of medium aged ones, and a growing number of quite young ones. It will be interesting to see how this profile changes over the years.

Due to the generosity of new Study Group Member, **Betty Crawford**, we are able to feature another 'Gallery' page in the Newsletter. In it you will find a selection of images of some of the trees that were on display. Let us know what you think about them.



Letters

STOP PRESS !!

APAB THANKS NEW MAJOR SPONSOR

It's hard to describe the elation I felt on opening a letter in early July this year. Expecting the usual and much welcome membership cheque, I could hardly believe what I read: 'To follow our Australian ideas as to our own style for our native trees is very exciting and I would ask your Group to accept a donation of Two Hundred and Fifty dollars so that this work may continue.'

I quickly replied, on behalf of the Study Group, to Mrs Betty Crawford, NSW, expressing our great appreciation for such a generous donation. Betty also wrote: 'The information, ideas and enthusiasm by the authors of the articles contained in the Newsletter will, I am sure, be of great interest ... to all bonsai clubs in Australia.'

To all who have made the Newsletter such a great source of ideas, THANK YOU. Please keep up the good work and share your knowledge and ideas with others. And, thank you Betty. I hope you continue to find the Newsletter an inspiration.

Roger

An Australian Bonsai

I had to write a little talk for a group of TAFE students the other day and came up with a quandary. How do you identify the difference between bonsai, the Japanese design and the design of Australian natives?

In Football there is Soccer, Rugby League, Rugby Union, AFL (Aussie Rules), Gridiron and Gaelic Football. Balls and rules changed to suit the country of origin. Given a name of the game and most people can identify with the basic rules. Why can't we have this with bonsai? We already have the differentiation between Penjing and Bonsai. Did the Japanese ask permission of the Chinese to create the rules for bonsai?

Lets formulate a new name (possible, an aboriginal name could be appropriate) and create the styles and any rules required. From the Aboriginal Kurna language, *Birairi* or *Wirrairi*. Where *iri* means "belong to the country", *birira* means "native vegetation" and *wirra* means "forest/ wool/bush". From the Wambawenba language *Tyapapiyol*, where *tyapa* means "to plant" and *piyol* means "tree". Maybe *Iripiyol*. It would be polite for us to ask permission to use the language like this and to get the appropriate meanings correct. Possible styles could be rainforest, eucalyptus, coastal

shrub and mallee. Yes, we must create styles and rules or otherwise it will be just a native plant in a bonsai pot.

I, predominately, will continue to create and work with bonsai. I will use Australian native plants trained in line with bonsai rules. I know, that not all native plants can be used in bonsai, as some natives can never be grown to fit the rules of bonsai. I want to grow natives outside the bounds of bonsai. We need a new structure and we need it yesterday, as more people play with our native plants, people are going off and doing their own thing. Yes this is how new art styles are formed, but once formed they are regulated and isn't this what we now require?

Lets have artistic pot plants that include penjing, bonsai, "African Style" trees and Iribirira an "Australian Style" tree. I had a friend review an earlier version of this letter and they came back with "... Its only through such exchanges that we will eventually arrive at our desired destination - that is, Australian styles for bonsai.". This is the point of the letter, bonsai is pre-ordained, its rules are set for Japanese philosophy. I don't think they should be changed. I believe we need a new name and a set of criteria, so we can differentiate. Just like Soccer and Aussie Rules, different games and different rules.

Sorry Roger but this line of thought would

probably require a name change for the club. Could other people please express their views or do I stand alone in this line of thought.

Chris Allnutt

Some views on Aussie bonsai

I have been toying with what I call "Australian Miniature" as apart from bonsai mainly because bonsai 'aims' to recreate natural trees (plants) in a "microcosm" if you like but the view and aspect of the result is an Asian one. Not that this bothers me at all for those plants that are "Bonsai."

I have taken the approach that Australian bonsai are Australian plants with a bonsai aspect or perception. Most of Asia is tropical and the resultant miniaturised plants have a well-watered aspect rather than natural Australian plants (the majority any way) have an arid, aspect and perception. Hence I have termed my failed attempts as Australian Native Miniatures.

So far I have been successful with *Ficus* (any one can do that). I've managed semi-success with black bean, batwing coral, grevillea, a hoop pine, a bunya pine and some other stuff, which is not successful at all. I'm hopeful of the future of a swamp bloodwood. None of my stuff is older than 8 years except a Tamarind from Maccassan stock collected as a 100mm seedling at Umbakumba on Groote Eylandt 25 years ago.

During the past drought I have had to stop training as water was a problem and I only managed to save less than 20% of my stock in pots and was forced to plant out the baobab for fear it would perish.

I'm preparing to grow *Ficus* (I think Morton Bay) in hollowed stumps. Many figs grow out of fence post here.

Next years I intend to get stock of desert and arid region plants and seed for development and my wife is currently into Banksias, which I will also try to miniaturise. Unfortunately for every success there are so many failures that sometimes I get just a little despondent.

I suppose if I can pass on a couple of really successful plants to my children on my passing I will have succeeded. Miniatures do take time and I don't want to push it. **Dieter Moeckel**

[Dieter has been working very hard at recording the profiles of mature trees – remember my request? I will progressively include them in the Newsletter as they provide some excellent information on some Australian species. The following image of a Brachychiton from N Qld is a fine example. Thanks Dieter.]



An 'Australian' Bonsai

This topic is generating much interest in these columns, at club meetings, at public talks and shows. The discussion is both healthy and necessary.

I don't have 'the answer', not yet anyway! For me, I see the way forward is in working through just what the real issues are, for example, is the name 'bonsai' part of the problem? If we successfully replaced it with another name, where would we be then – all problems solved?

Many people have identified particular tree growth forms as the characterising aspect of an 'Australian bonsai', for example the 'mallee form', the 'gum tree form'. These are not simple concepts as there are hundreds of eucalypt species and probably dozens of characteristic growth forms amongst them. Do we want to limit our concept of 'Australian bonsai' to the tree forms that first get named? Is naming them the key issue?

For me, I'd be happy to see people learning what trees on this continent look like as they mature and then try developing bonsai specimens to evoke those characteristic shapes. I'm sure that as we start to actually see miniature trees that we can relate to the mature trees, we will see an 'Australian' style evolve naturally.

Roger

Callistemons as Bonsai

By Derek Oatley

The bottlebrush is a spectacular plant when it is in flower and as a bonsai even more so. To cultivate them as bonsai is, in my opinion, a must because when they are in flower you can bring them inside the house and appreciate them.

Cultivation of Callistemons as bonsai is fairly easy. They tolerate root pruning well and I have done this when the plant is in flower with no loss although that is not the preferable choice. However when faced with 'dig it out today because it won't be there tomorrow' then you have no choice.

PRUNING & REPOTTING

Prune after flowering. To get the best results, cut back hard behind the seedpods or old flowers. I prefer to cut before seeds actually set, that is, as soon as the flowers wilt. In Perth this time is late October early November [*but can vary around the country; in Canberra it varies from October through December depending on weather and the species, editor*]. At whichever time is suitable to your area, cut back hard and be sure to get all the crossing branches. The plant is a prolific grower and actually benefits from this.

The best time to repot is the same as for pruning. Repot about every two to three years.

WIRING

Wiring is no problem other than do not forget that you have done it or it will cut in as the growth, as I said, is quick.

FERTILISING

Bottlebrushes are not fussy as to whether it is inorganic or organic fertiliser. I have used both with good results. I do feed little and often and I alternate with high nitrogen and high potassium. I also use the home brew recommended by Dorothy & Vita Koreschhoff in their book on natives. I use Phostrogen, and Miracid. The



latter one acidifies the soil, which I find most natives like.



WATERING

They like water, as contrary too belief, I have found most natives do. Remember though, that a free draining mix is always best. The flowers will wilt quickly if they get wet so try not to wet them. I have had the misfortune when I have been away and my babysitter did not realise

this and within a week I had lost all the flowers. [*Has anyone else had this experience with water on Callistemon flowers? Editor*]

SOIL

The potting mix I use is the same mix for all of my natives. Which is as follows:

- one part of coco peat (coir peat)

- one part of a good quality commercial potting mix

As many natives like an acid soil you can use a good quality Azalea mix and two parts crushed granite. I find this mix works very well and see no reason to change it. As with all potting mixes if it works then stick with it. If it does not, then change it.



STYLING

The plant controls styling, as with any styling. When working on collected material, use the main features that attracted you to the plant in the first place. When shopping for nursery stock, look for usual features. Try for the small flowering varieties of which there are many. Plus more varieties continue to be produced. They are fast growing, so if you wish to get a decent size tree in a short time put it in the

ground. Treat it as you would one in a pot with respect to water, fertilizer and shaping.

I have found that inarch grafting is no problem. I have not tried thread grafting or air layering, but can see no reason for it not to work [*air layering has worked for me, editor*].

CONCLUSION

I made a statement in an article I wrote for Bonsai Clubs International. If you can grow Bottlebrushes then you can grow Paperbarks. Well it does work in reverse as I've been growing paperbarks and now am growing bottlebrushes. Good growing, yours in bonsai,

Derek.

APAB to Meet in Tasmania

For Members who can make it to Launceston January 9 – 16, our umbrella organisation ASGAP (Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants) is holding their biennial Seminar. Study Groups will have a special day for presentations and meeting with members of other groups to talk about experiences and common issues. One of our local members, Will Fletcher will read a paper to the session on progress with the Study Group. Will has also offered to lead Group members to see some

special bonsai sites as well as his own newly re-vamped bonsai nursery that specialises in Tasmanian species. What a splendid opportunity this will be! So if you have ever thought that a visit to the Apple Isle was something you wanted to do, you could hardly have a better time to visit this exciting part of Australia and get personal help to find sites for inspiration for bonsai.

Please let Will know if you are coming: fletcher-costin@bigpond.com. Details for registration can be found at: <http://asgap2004.trump.net.au>

Boabs as Bonsai

By Kevin Trimmer

Whilst traveling on a trip to the Northern Territory in the year 2000, the BOAB trees (*Adansonia gregorii*) that are spread around the southwestern side of Darwin towards the WA border fascinated me. I had to have a specimen and digging one up was not an option, as the roots seem to go all the way to China. I ventured into the only museum in the small town called

Wyndham in northern Western Australia and apart from the usual historical features saw a BOAB in a nursery pot. It was a small specimen but being a bonsai enthusiast saw the potential for a small tree in a pot. The lady on duty gave me a few notes on growing boabs, which I tried to follow.

Boabs are different to most trees found in OZ. They look different; they grow differently and are food for the "bush tucker" person. No, they are not the water oasis as you may expect, but

Editor

the root stock tastes OK – maybe a little like some nuts. Cattle eat them during the dry season. Each time I re-pot them I chew on the roots with satisfaction.

A name tagged to the BOAB is the "upside down tree". In the winter (dry months) they look like their roots are up in the air and the foliage should be beneath the ground.

At home in Townsville, I do not water them from May until October (NO water at all - they look horrible as if they are dead and gone) and then after repotting them in early October they get drenched every day until new growth appears. They seem to respond better to the two-season climate (wet & dry), such as we experience in the tropics in northern Oz.

The seeds are shaped like a kidney and are imbedded in a pithy flesh inside a seedpod. I separated the seeds from the pith, gave each seed a 'nick' with a sharp knife on the inside of the kidney and boiled them for one (1) minute before placing them about two centimetres below the soil level. They sprouted one month later.

A tree propagated from seed immediately produces a taproot that needs to be shortened as early as possible and gradually pruned to encourage the growth of lateral roots.

Pests love the foliage and need constant attention, whilst regular pruning during the growing season encourages canopy growth.

Although, we do not experience frosts in Townsville I expect frosts or severe cold would kill the Boab.

I have yet to place them into a regular bonsai pot, but cannot wait for that time in the future so as to show them off to my friends.

I welcome any comment on the Boab, especially if it will help me grow them better.



Pruned boab



Boab with new growth after pruning

Kevin Trimmer
Townsville
kevsuet@iprimus.com.au

[Kevin's notes on growing boabs (also called baobabs, at least overseas, are good. If you are interested, try the following web address:

Jaco Kruger

LISTSERVE Bonsai Archives

<http://www.internetbonsaiclub.com>

August 27, 2000

Also, try web searches for Adansoniabonsai or baobabs. There is some excellent African experience out there. The number of African and Madagascan species is huge and the variation in growth form is fascinating.

Editor

Facts and Fables About Mycorrhizae. By Alison Copperfield

It is important to realise that not all fungi are harmful to our bonsai. Just as all bacteria do not cause diseases. For example we would be in a sorry state without the bacteria that help us with the digestion of our food.

The mycorrhizal types of fungi which we find, perhaps best known on the roots of pine trees, are 'the Good Guys' even though they are classified as a fungus. Put simply the name means myco- a type of fungus and rhizo - a root.

There are two types- one of which is found within the roots and the other, which is the one that concerns us, forms a mycelial mantle around the outside of the root (Figure 1). (The mycelium is the group of threads - the hyphae - that form the mass of the mycorrhiza) For this reason they are called ectomycorrhizae, since 'ecto' means on the outside of. This structure is clearly seen in the highly magnified photomicrograph (Figure 1) of the mantle around the root of a *Eucalyptus* tree.

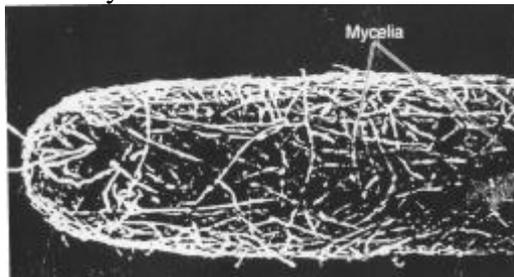


Figure 1. A sheath of fungal strands from a mycorrhizal fungus, associated with the tip of a eucalypt root.

Mycorrhizae are commonly found on the roots of some conifers, and especially on pines, but also on other species such as oaks and many native trees. It is doubtful if, in our impoverished soils, our magnificent eucalypts could have developed to such a size, were it not for the help given by these fungi.

Often the simplest way to check that your tree/ soil does contain mycorrhizae is to give it a good sniff. If it has a good mushroomy or truffle smell, then they are present, even if they have not reached the stage of being visible. A really good, well established growth will show up as a layer of creamy white strands spread across the root area. The species that works in with the pines has almost a sheet-like appearance as shown in Figure 2.

The main function of the mycorrhizae, from a trees point of view, is to increase the surface area over which nutrients (and especially the hard to obtain phosphorous) can be absorbed.

Remember that in pines, and most other species, the main absorption areas are only the little white tips

on the ends of the roots.

These nutrients are then converted by the tree partner into the more complex substances needed by the fungal partner. Because of the very close physical association between both the partners these substances can cross the boundaries and so benefit both of them.

In practical terms, it may be advisable to collect the visible structures for use at every repotting. Include some with the

new soil and put some away in your reserve pine soil. As the food supply decreases and then finishes with the consequent death of the roots, the mycelium will make highly resistant spores, which have very long viability.

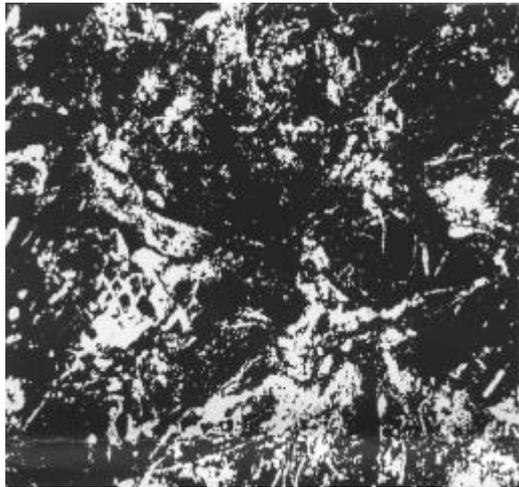


Figure 2. The white areas in this photograph of soil from where pines were growing are areas of fungal strands – the mycorrhizae.

Upon coming in contact with any suitable living roots they will put out new hyphae and so restart the association.

The use of strong fungicides will of course kill them ... and do so before they

have had a chance to make the spores. However after about 6-8 weeks you can re-infect the soil from your reserve soil with spores. Remove 1-3 cms of the top layer of the soil and replace with the impregnated mixture.

Source Material.

Tortora. *Microbiology, An Introduction.*

Funke & Case.

Barton, Don. *The Bonsai Book.*

The Minka Bonsai Study Group. *Teaching Notes.*

Membership Renewals

Thanks everyone who has sent in their renewals. There are still a few who haven't remembered. If you are one, please send it in NOW. I've marked your address label with a coloured spot.

Some members have asked about direct transfers from their account to the Group's account. This can be done by telling your bank to transfer the appropriate amount of money to CPS Credit Union Co-operative, BSB number 801003, Account number 332798. This is useful for those without cheque accounts or easy access to Postal Money Orders.

The Study Group financial year runs from 1 July to 30 June. If you are not financial by the time of the next newsletter your name will be deleted from the mailing list.

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 & 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 \$8 (\$15 overseas) or postal money order to: 'Australian Plants as Bonsai, PO Box 450, Jamison Post Office, Macquarie ACT 2614. Direct credit transfers can be made to CPS Credit Union BSB 801003 acct no. 332798 S-70.

Indicate to which ASGAP group you belong. If you aren't a member, you can join as a newsletter subscriber with all benefits except insurance at group outings. The cheapest insurance is to join your local ASGAP society.

The current Study Group Leader is Roger Hnatiuk. Contact him at the above postal address or via email: hnatiuk1@cyberone.com.au.

Reports from Regions

This is the first in a new series of 'regional' reports. I have started it by asking a couple of regions to gather information on which Australian native species are being grown in their area, what horticultural techniques are being used, how styling is approached and any other information they find useful.

I am delighted to present the first part of an excellent report from the dynamic Tokonama Bonsai Society in Coffs Harbour. This first report presents a good perspective on growing Oz species in the sub-tropics. There is good information about when and how to prune that can be applied to much wider parts of the country with little or a bit more care to take account of climatic differences.

I hope to be able to present other such reports from other areas of the country in later Newsletters. If you want to gather the information from your friends and send it in before I get to asking you, please do so! If you want to comment on differences between the Coffs Harbour experience and your part of the country, that would also be most welcome.

A special thanks to all the Coffs Harbour bonsai growers who contributed to this first regional report.

Editor

Continued p 9

Part 1: Coffs Harbour

Callitris rhomboidea,

Port Jackson Pine

(Kalev Margus)

Seeds: All my trees have been grown from seed collected during April 1992 and 1999 on the sandy coastal strip on both the NSW south coast (Merimbula/Pambula area) and the north coast (Iluka/Yamba area). The seed germinated very easily within a few weeks. The taproots were pruned early the following spring and the seedlings pricked out in the normal manner into 200 mm plastic pots. Initial training was in 200 mm pots or a bonsai pot for a group setting.

Roots/Repotting: When potting up two years later I found the roots in all cases were tangled

into knots. During August I decided that, because I did not know what the impact of pruning the roots would be, I would minimise root pruning. However I did prune about 50% of the roots on 6 trees all of which subsequently died. The lightly pruned (<30%) trees all survived. The pruned roots are memorably aromatic. Light root pruning (associated with corresponding branch reduction) and transplanting during January proved fatal for 5 out of 6 trees. The lesson is that gentle root pruning appears to be more successful in August (early spring) before new growth than in January during an active growth period.

Styles: *Callitris rhomboidea* often grows as a spindly, single-stemmed shrub <5 metres high in open exposed locations, eg heath margins and headlands. However, in coastal woodlands, I have seen it growing as an open, tall understory tree 10-15 m high. It tends to have an upright habit with a thin, pole-like trunk and generally upward-pointing branches with light, feathery foliage. It is a delicately attractive tree, somewhat like a young pine, with dark, coarse, not rough, bark often with blotches of grey lichen. To me all this points to one of the upright or forest styles of bonsai once the horticulture is properly worked out.

Styling experiments: The trunks and older branches are fairly stiff and brittle. I have experimented with trunk bending to achieve a semi-cascade style but the species strongly resists and tries to re-establish its normal upright habit. Nevertheless, with perseverance and extended wiring, I was able to wire and reposition older branches. This took about 18 months before the wood set successfully. It is, however, more successful to design the basic tree earlier in its life when the branches are more supple and are easier to bend and wire. The branch can then grow into its new position rather than the cells being forced and possibly damaged during later bending. Growing into position achieves a quicker result with minimum pruning scars. As with all species, care needs to be taken to avoid wire marks on the expanding wood.

Trunks are a bit more difficult. I achieved quite severe trunk bends over a period of about 2 years. But I also observed an interesting phenomenon: the inside of each bend tends to thicken and creates a thicker section of trunk in the vicinity of the bend. When viewed in the direction of the bend the trunk is obviously flatter in the vicinity of the bend. In other words,

if seen in section the trunk has become oval-shaped in the vicinity of the bend with the long axis of the oval aligning with the direction of the bend. (Apologies for this rather convoluted description.) Therefore it appears that the trunk should be wired early while it is supple so it can grow and expand into its new position without undue deformity.

Finally, the lowest branches frequently turn brown and readily die, even if they have not been interfered with. This appears to be the natural habit of *C. rhomboidea* and, while somewhat frustrating when trying to develop a particular profile for the tree, it also limits and therefore simplifies its styling options. With the branches tending to concentrate towards the top of the tree the bonsai forest setting works quite well.

Trunk: Like most bonsai plants, if wire is wound around it the trunk tends to thicken and expand fairly evenly onto the wire. With care, this could be used to develop a better trunk taper than might occur naturally. Overall, however, the trunk will usually remain evenly pole-like. *[In my experience, nearly all Callitris are characterised by erect pole-like trunks, whether single or multiple trunked. To what extent this feature is used as a major feature in styling Callitris will be seen in what bonsai artists exhibit in years to come. Editor]*

Foliage: While the branches grow outwards, or are inclined upwards, the foliage tends often to grow in any direction, including down. The foliage's feathery nature is open, light and delicate. But in attempting to design a compact tree it is also desirable to establish somewhat denser foliage pads. With some success I have trimmed new foliage with scissors during the growing period to direct branch growth. Because the foliage looks superficially somewhat like scale-leaved junipers, I have attempted pinching foliage during its active growth (January - March) to promote denser foliage. Success has been mediocre. While some pinched areas do become a little denser, other areas show no new growth at all and the foliage pinched 8-9 months ago is still thin and obvious. My preliminary conclusion is that pinching does not work well and that scissor-trimming works better in at least achieving direction of growth. Following scissor-trimming, new growth is often quite vigorous and needs regular trimming to maintain its profile.

Back-budding/branches: Regardless of the season or method used, I have been unable to promote any back-budding on old wood. However, new growth will readily sprout if supple green branchlets are trimmed with some foliage remaining below the cut.

Soil/fertiliser: *C. rhomboidea* usually occurs naturally in coastal or near-coastal areas in very sandy, well-drained soils. In the bonsai pot I have had greatest success with well-drained sandy soils containing a fair amount of clean, sieved grit to improve drainage. I also use a light sprinkling of slow release Osmocote fertiliser, just under the soil surface.

Pests: The only problem appears to be the interest taken during spring-summer by a small, long-legged, bright green grasshopper, which likes to dine on new growth.

Brachychiton discolor (Queensland) lacebark or white kurrajong (Kalev Margus)

Seeds: All my trees were grown from seeds collected beside the Bruce Highway in north Queensland during June 1974 in the false and naive early impression they were bottle trees (*B. rupestris*). The seeds were scattered among relatives in Wagga Wagga, Pambula and Sydney, potted into plastic nursery pots and forgotten for years.

Roots/Repotting: When the Sydney and Pambula trees were rediscovered in about August 1978, they were around 100 cm tall. Upon removal from the plastic pots the thick, tuberous roots were strongly intertwined, had partly circled the bottom of the plastic pot and took some untangling. The few fibrous roots were carefully preserved and the trees were planted into a rectangular mica pot with a significant amount of the vertical tuberous root (ie. the below-soil extension of the trunks) left exposed.

Trunk: The trees were left to recover until 1980. As potential bonsai, they were relatively featureless and, to put it mildly, boring. In August 1980 I completely removed the top of each tree leaving about 250 mm of trunk (probably just above the base of the original trunks). Fortunately, the cuts were at about 45

degrees, which, in retrospect, was probably the correct angle of cut. In my ignorance I did not seal the cuts. For up to six months, every time the trees received water there was a heavy gel-like sap flow from the open cuts in the cambium layer. Eventually the cuts self-sealed, although the cut-scar is still visible on each tree.

Branches/foliage: About three months later, 2 or 3 shoots appeared just below each cut and a new leaf and branchlet developed with a small heart-shaped leaf at the end of each shoot. The branches were pruned back in August every 2 - 3 years to develop ramification but each trunk seems to only want to support 2-4 branches. Perhaps larger trunks may possibly support more branches. To increase ramification, I have also cut branches during August just above a leaf petiole. This has certainly reduced the length of the branch but has usually only produced one shoot from the closest dormant leaf bud. So, while I have been able to change the direction of growth of the branch, better ramification has so far not followed. Consequently, the trees have had to be content with only 2-4 branches each.

Branches remain fairly flexible for quite a long time and need prolonged wiring to set. Even so, over time branches have a tendency to grow straight upwards. A combination of 'clip-and-grow' and wiring appears to be the only training solution.

Older leaves, which develop after the juvenile heart-shaped form, are larger than the juvenile ones and are five-lobed. With periodic branch pruning, leaves remain small enough and can be managed so that they are not too disproportionate to the size selected for the bonsai. My trees are semi-deciduous in late winter to early spring.

Styles: As the trees have matured, they developed a beautiful, knobbly, smooth, green bark (ie. a smooth bark with small bumps over it) overlain with a greyish, lacy pattern. The knobbiness gives the trees a very robust look. They would be well suited for bonsai as single trees or in a group setting. Presently my trees are styled as informal uprights and are planted in a large, dark brown, shallow, oval bonsai tray. The setting is interspersed with four, light brown, almost cylindrical, sandstone rocks standing on their ends. The rocks simulate large termite mounds as are often found in northern Australia. The rocks also complement the robust vertical nature of the trees. The soil surface is covered with small pisolite pebbles of similar colour to the termite mounds and a sprinkling of darker

sandstone/ironstone gravel. The composition needs refinement, but overall it seems to work pretty well.

Cuttings: In August 1990 I planted some of the branch cuttings (using hormone powder) in a sandy, well-drained mix. Two cuttings struck and developed fine roots (not tuberous). Both survived until a watering problem killed them in 1999.

Pests: The new leaves are very attractive to a small, black, inchworm-like caterpillar, which grows rapidly and turns a dull motley brown. It then latches itself to a branch and looks like another branch - excellent camouflage. Recently- chewed leaves are a giveaway, and I carefully examine my trees until I find the culprit, which I quickly dispatch. If the bonsai environs are humid or damp, slugs may also have a nightly feast. Snail pellets are the quick solution.

Note: *B. discolor* is a tree which in its natural range receives summer rainfall and a relatively dry winter. Its tuberous roots and trunk can store water for many months. I have found that it is important not to over-water, as root rot can occur. Cutting off the rotted area and planting the tree into a freer draining, gritty soil mix can solve root rot.

Other Brachychitons: Within the last twelve months I have started to experiment with *B. rupestris* (bottle tree) - presently in a plastic nursery pot - and *B. bidwillii* - planted into the ground. There are no results to report at this stage. I have also propagated from seed collected June 2002 a number of *B. populneus* to experiment with.

Help Wanted: ACCESS Programming

Is there a member reading this who either has the skills or knows someone with the skills to set up an Access database? I have set up a rather simple Access database to handle a number of data types for the Study Group (membership, horticulture, aesthetics, contributions). While it 'works', it is not efficient for entering certain kinds of data, for example, I'm having trouble getting my mind around how to handle the kinds of data coming in concerning horticulture), and the reporting facilities are not too good. I'm approaching the limits of my abilities and know I could use a bit of help.

If you think you could help, please let me know.

Roger
Study Group Leader

Thanks to Donors

I'd like to acknowledge the following people for their contributions since the last newsletter:

Donor	Donation
APS Victoria	\$2
B. Cliff	Photos
B. Crawford	\$250
B. Galey	\$4
D. Moeckel	Photos
D. Oakley	Photos
D. Sweet	Species names
F. Kelly	\$2
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N. Harvey-Hall	Photos
N. Summerell	Horticultural notes
R. Hinrichsen	\$22
SGAP Queensland	\$10
V. Rose	\$2

Update on Species Grown as Bonsai

Who's Growing What?

The list of which species are being grown as bonsai is impressive (see the earlier issues of APAB-N). It is, however, based on the records of relatively few people. I've supplemented it with information from published sources and some private listings made when visiting collections. I know it still has a long way to go.

The only way that we can find out which species are being grown most commonly, and most successfully, from region to region in the country is if we get records from across the country, as well as multiple records from each place.

Often I get a letter that says 'I only have a few plants' or 'I only recently started growing Australian native species', but there is no list of what is being grown. At other times people have been growing for years, and still no list is provided. If you are put off because you can't name every species, don't worry; give me what you can NOW. A partial list is infinitely better than no list. Common names will often do.

Come on members – just a few minutes, a piece of paper, a pencil or key board, an envelope and stamp or hit the 'send' button on your PC and Bob's your uncle, you've made a significant contribution. It's not about how beautiful your plant looks, whether its been weeded recently or needs pruning (again). Just a list of what you are growing. Remember, this is a Study Group, not a Club.

With less than 15% of members taking the time to contribute this most simple piece of information, I'm sure we can do better than that. Anyone who has ever grown even one species for a year can contribute usefully. So deluge me with mails and emails in the early part of 2004! You can be as irate as you like, but only if you include your species list!

Have a great Christmas – New Year period, and good bonsaiing!

Roger
Study Group Leader



Australian Plants as Bonsai

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



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Back Page Musings

What's in a name?

Sometimes everything. It can be the key to great knowledge or deep love or passionate dislikes. Its part of how we tell each other about our feelings and ideas.

In bonsai it is the same. Names describe what we do or how we do it.

The name 'bonsai' now belongs to the world, not to single people. It is even necessary now to say 'Japanese bonsai' to distinguish it from that of any other region. I hope that the world of bonsai peace and friendship never goes down the route of some European nations of claiming 'ownership' of regional names as has happened in wine for purely commercial purposes.