

ASGAP AUSTRALIAN PLANTS AS BONSAI STUDY GROUP

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Financial Year 1 July 2009 - 30 June 2010

Surname Given Name

Postal Address

.....
.....

State Postcode

Telephone No. (.....)

E-mail address:

.....

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>2006/07</u>	\$10.00
Member who has not contributed information relevant to the Group in 2006/07	\$14.00
Overseas member	A\$19.00

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

Australian Plants as Bonsai Study Group, PO Box 450, Jamison Post Office,
Macquarie ACT 2614, Australia

Fees can also be paid by bank transfer to: Bank: Community CPS Australia, BSB 805-022
Account No. 03276718, Acct name: ASGAP (**note: you must NOW include the account name**).

Include your name on transfer so we know who has sent the money!!

If you have already paid for 2009/10, you don't need to return this form.

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

Note fees have increased to cover increasing postage and the inflating cost of our goal to publish our results. Those who have paid already, you don't need to send in the extra money for this year. Thank you for being so organised!



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HOW TO GET AN OLDER LOOKING TREE...

START BIG – CUT BACK – GROW ON

By Lee Wright

Do you want an older looking bonsai sooner than later?

Starting bonsai with seedlings or saplings is enterprising but means you are in for the long haul. It's all very well to have ambitious plans for future development but what about starting bigger and getting there faster? Advanced trees can cost a packet but nurseries have sales and it can be worthwhile to keep your eyes open for a 1- 2 metre specimen that can be cut back and developed from there.

You need to look for good nebari [surface roots] and a pleasing lower trunk with movement, and it is important to swivel your finger around the trunk as the roots can be potted deep. It is essential to choose a tree that shoots back on old wood. If you cut a juniper or black pine back to bare trunk you have a dead tree, but if you do the same to melaleucas, callistemons, casuarinas, lillypillys and a host of other native species you can get a head start on a good tree. Walk the streets of your suburb ... look for these species and look at the trunks. Most have suckers all over the bark. These are trees that shoot back with a passion.

Once you have bought your tree from a nursery, cut it off several centimetres above the height you envisage for the trunk. Saw horizontally across the trunk, seal the wound and then give the tree good care. As the shoots develop and get a bit thicker, remove the ones that you know you don't want or where too many have shot at the same spot. Remove shoots on the insides of curves.

Watch for a shoot that will become the new leader and when it is developing strongly you can reduce

the trunk to a slanting cut with the point at the apical shoot. Leave enough extra wood so the shoot is not damaged – excess can be trimmed off later.

As the shoots strengthen into branchlets, start wiring and shaping the lower branches. Leave the leader to grow tall and wild so it will thicken at the connection point and continue the trunk's taper upwards. Let the lower branches grow long as well to thicken at the trunk and get that look of age and solidity. As they approach the thickness you want, cut them back and start training for ramification.

It is rewarding to start with a 'trunk with attitude' and develop it from there instead of developing a very young tree. In the same amount of time you will have a tree that looks quite old because of the thickness and character of the trunk.

[The following is a 'workshop gallery' of several trees that Lee has started, following the method she has described here. The early results clearly show what she describes and the amazing results in terms of trunk reduction and stimulation of new branching from which to choose those you will keep. It would be good to hear from other members about their experiences with other species – both good and bad results are of interest. Editor.]

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***The Picture Story of Melaleuca
stymphelioides***

Rightly called the Prickly Leaf Paperbark \$50 reduced to \$10. 8 cm of lower part of the trunk was buried. Potting produced a lovely surprise.

Started in Nov 2008 when tree was 2 metres tall (Fig. 1).

Nov 2008. Initial reduction hoping to use entire trunk (Fig. 2).

Feb 2009. Refused to produce shoots on lower trunk so used branch as leader. Once branch was established in position and thickening, it started shooting lower on trunk.

May 2009 6 months growth – growing wild to balance join of trunk/leader. Needs shaping to branches (Fig. 3).

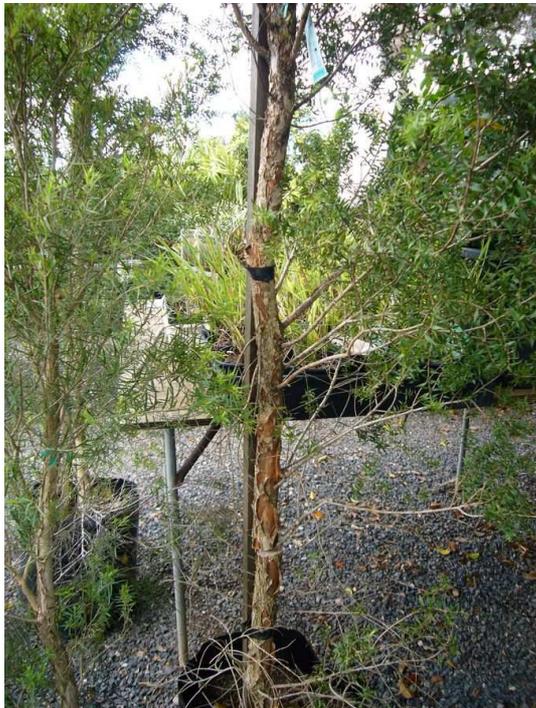


Fig. 1. Tree in nursery.



Fig. 2. Trunk cut to size.



Fig. 3. After further wild growth to develop new apex.

***The Picture Storey:
Melaleuca 'Revolution Gold'***



Fig. 4. After first cut and trim from nursery stock.



Fig. 5. After some regrowth and further cutting of trunk.



Fig. 6. After next spurt of growth.



Fig. 7. After further growing out of branches and development of new apex.



**The Picture
Story of
*Melaleuca
linariifolia***

Fig. 8. As seen in the nursery.



Fig. 9. After cutting trunk and allowing regrowth.



Fig. 10. After further growing and some trimming to select branches and form new apex.

Just to show that I use this technique on more than my beloved Melas, here are the results with a casuarina (*Allocasuarina* sp.).

The Picture Story of *Allocasuarina* sp.



Fig. 11. As seen in the nursery.



Fig. 12. After cutting back trunk and selecting branches. Root ball also greatly reduced.

The next image is of the tree after it has had a chance to grow out. Notice how prolifically it has produced new branchlets. Also take a good look at the beautiful bark developing on the base of the trunk.



Fig. 13. After further regrowth.

Wanted. Newsletter Editor

APAB-N, the newsletter you are reading now, needs help in its production. Many of you have noticed that the last few issues have been rather late. Apart from the continuing saga of my collapsing computer hard-drives, the current editor, me, just isn't finding the time needed to put the information together in a timely way.

If there is a member, with access to a computer and internet, the newsletter could be compiled by them and forwarded to me. I'm happy to continue to arrange the printing and distribution.

The newsletter is produced twice a year, aiming for distribution in June and December. Material is provided by members, but the editor also has the chance to see their own work published too.

Please let me know *immediately* if you could help. Maybe you have a friend who is looking for something new and might be interested in this community service job.

Roger Hnatiuk
Study Group Leader

Setting Fire to Eucalypt Bonsai

By Libby Ottaway
[From emails]

23 January 2009

“Hi Roger,

I set fire to my two pink gums [possibly *Eucalyptus fasciculosa*] on Tuesday [Jan 20]. I was trying for a few cooler days afterwards to give them a chance to recover because I read the notes from Mavis Dutschke, one of the members of our club who has been growing gums as bonsai for almost 40 years. She set fire to her trees every two to three years and then put them in her fish pond for a couple of days and then repotted them - to quote her "all the shocks over in one hit. I would normally repot mine in about October but I decided to try her method.

My two trees had been very neglected and one in particular had got very leggy, so I decided to cut the top off it after firing it and try for a better shape. Both trees had already got new growth on them when I decided for better or worse to set fire to them.

I had no luck with Mavis's method of using a very tightly rolled up newspaper to fire them but instead I used a blow torch attached to a gas bottle. The idea is to burn only the leaves and not the main branches.

Afterwards I put them in one of our fish ponds on the side to immerse them completely, but unlike Mavis, who leaves them there for a couple of days, I only left mine in there for about 8 hours. By using the fishpond, I was able to immerse them fully.

I then repotted them but I am a little anxious because I discovered a fungal infection on the roots of both trees. I hope the combined effect of that and all the other shocks will not be too much for them. I did remove most of the soil.

Mavis is elderly and so when she repots now she usually only removes a band of soil around the outside of the pot.

I have attached two pictures of the pink gums but I suggest that you wait till a later newsletter to use this information as I hopefully will have new shoots on the trees and so be able to give you a more complete picture. Or it may be that I have lost both trees!!”

31 May 2009

“Hi Roger

Please find attached photos of the two pink gums which I set fire to and repotted in January.

The gum in Fig. 1 (before firing) did not reshoot on the



Fig. 1. Pink gum (1) before firing.

former trunk which I shortened, but shot out from the



Fig. 2. Pink gum (1) after firing and regrowth.

stump (Fig 2.).



Fig. 3. Pink gum (2) before firing.



Fig. 4. Pink gum (2) after firing and regrowth.

One tree (Figs. 3 & 4), which had been a twin trunk, shot out along one of the trunks, but again the trunk which I shortened has no shoots. It would seem that it would be better not to shorten trunks before setting fire to them but to do it after they have reshot.

I have not decided yet whether to remove the trunks which have not shot or to jin them.

I have just let the trees grow on since they started shooting but recently I did remove a couple of excess shoots."

[Editor: Has anyone else had experience with 'firing' their gums or other native species? If so, please let me know what you did. I've never been game to try the firing route, but I have cut off trunks that were too tall, leaving no leaves whatever. The response was similar to Libby's with fire – massive shooting from the remaining trunk (trunk diameter varied from 15 – 30 mm), or in some cases from the lignotuber only.]

More Fire in the Bonsai

By Brenda Galey, Victoria

[I extracted the following from emails. Editor]

"It's been a mess up here since the fire and I'm just now getting my head back on straight. I have a new spreadsheet for you and have updated every little thing. I will be taking photos of them all as well soon and will send those if interested, although all are still in black pots for training. I think a few are ready this spring to go the big move! I lost several of my favourites during the fires. The winds were so harsh it knocked them over and at 45 degrees C there wasn't much hope after not finding them until 2 days later. I wasn't directly impacted but I work for DSE and I spent every waking moment there for 3 months. I LOVE winter!

I think I might have to burn one of my plants in honour of the fires and get that look. I've got a couple that aren't too great and it would be interesting to experiment. It is a part of our natural landscape."

Hakea bonsai in flower

By Pam Russell
[from email]

Hi Roger,

Thought you would like to see the picture of my *Hakea verrucosa* in flower (Fig. 1), it has many buds still to come (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. *Hakea verrucosa*.

Report on Data Gathering

By Roger Hnatiuk

In the last newsletter I ran an experiment to try to encourage greater involvement and thus returns of information by members.

I selected seven species reported on in the Group's records, and determined who were the members that had ever reported against any of these species. I thus knew that they knew something about at least one of the species in the list.

I then sent each of them a form showing the summary of what we knew about these species with respect to time of repotting, time of pruning, plus a couple of items such as flowering and rooting times. As the data included reports from quite different climatic zones in the country, I asked people to say whether what was recorded there applied to their own place so that we could get a better idea of the effect of different climatic zones across the country. So, even if the member had sent in information before, it was important to know whether their experience matched that of others. It would provide a way of flagging where there were likely differences that should be noted.

I printed the form in such a way that it could be folded twice, leaving my return address clearly visible (a bit like the way you received this newsletter). I then attached a \$0.55 stamp so that the whole process could be as easy and cost free as possible. In total the forms were sent to 55 people, about half the membership.

I received forms back from 7 people. To them, and all the others who have contributed their knowledge and experience previously, I am most grateful. If it were not for them, the Study Group would not be worth the considerable effort required to make it viable.

To the rest, I know that nearly everyone is exceedingly busy these days. But if you could find just 10 minutes, once during this year, to let me know about just one or a few of your native species bonsai, that would make a significant contribution. You don't need to report on all of them to make a worthwhile contribution. It would lift the data into a very high quality set for the country. We would really know how well we understood what native species need in order to grow them as bonsai. So please, if you haven't taken the time before, just do it once for yourself and once for the Group and then once for all those thousands out there who want to know 'how do you do it with native species'.

Report on Linking to AusBonsai

By Roger Hnatiuk

In the last newsletter I asked how members felt about linking some of our work with the efforts of Steven on the AusBonsai website. Four people responded and all were positive, though some had problems with the AusBonsai site, which I will report back to Steven.

While not a resounding affirmation by the Group as a whole, it is not that different from the proportion of active contributors to AusBonsai compared to the total who have registered on their website.

I'll thus contact Steven and let him know that we can go ahead and see if we can progress the gathering and making available high quality information about how to grow Australian plants species as bonsai. If there are any members who would like to help with extracting information from the AusBonsai website, please contact me.

Progress Report from Tasmania

By Will Fletcher

[I extracted the following from a letter I received from Will in Feb 2009 - Editor]

“Thanks for the last APAB newsletter – great read as usual! I especially enjoyed Lee’s article on bare-rooting her Australian plant purchases and successes thereafter (I must admit, I’ve never been game to try bare-rooting my plants!)

I have been game to work on plants though, when they are in active growth, which I regularly do. In fact I think it’s a good time to work on them, as they come away again fairly quickly thereafter. Invariably though I take off just about all the new growth (and more if I’m root-pruning) at this time, stick them in a shady sheltered spot for a couple of weeks or more, and ensure they get watered a bit more often, especially in hot or windy conditions.

I do believe that the reputation of ‘natives’ being touchy, probably originated from people digging them up and subsequently failing, and from buying potted plants, root-pruning heavily and not providing the appropriate aftercare. I believe most Australian plants when artificially propagated and grown in pots should be able to handle quite severe root-pruning as long as the foliage is heavily reduced and the aftercare is appropriate, just as Lee has demonstrated.

In Lee’s last paragraph, she wonders if her success is good luck or good management. It’s good management, and it’s good horticulture! Well done Lee.”

Problems or Joy with Ceratopetalum gummiferum Christmas Bush

By Barbara Bates

The fascinating *Ceratopetalum gummiferum* is a challenge - not because it won’t grow, the trick is to be able to do something with it BETWEEN growth.

Earlier this year, I enjoyed the flowers and the stunning red bracts for months. Finally I felt I had waited long enough to savour the pleasure and took to it with the secateurs. I trimmed lightly as I intended taking it out of the training pot and placing it in its bonsai pot. Yes, it beat me. Before I got around to it, the shoots were sprouting, so I decided to wait until they matured slightly before disturbing them.

However, when I got around to attending to the potting, a flood of very pretty coloured new shoots had appeared, complete with flower buds almost bursting.

So it’s beaten me again! Can’t bear to cut the buds off, can’t bear to cut the bracts off when they appear - I will have to get more attentive or give up and grow a lily pilly. I hope someone can benefit from my bad timing experience - then again, perhaps someone has been more successful than I.

A Proposition to Members

By Roger Hnatiuk

As I indicated earlier in this Newsletter, I need help with newsletter production. Our first goal was to gather together the experiences of people in growing native Australian species. I feel that we are probably close to receiving as much information from members as we are likely to get for now, which is not to say that there isn’t a huge lot more that could be made available, in theory at least. Thus I feel that we should now move our focus on to our next major goal, and that is summarising our experiences into a form that members and the wider bonsai community can use.

My proposal is that if we don’t get a editor in time to do the next newsletter (November this year – 2009), that I and the two people who have indicated they have time to help, concentrate on producing readable summaries of our information. This material should be produced in a form or forms that can be published. Georgina K and Steve W have indicated that they can help. If there are others who have a few spare hours, there will be work that can be readily done by other willing hands and minds.

During this time, members will be contacted from time to time, asking them to preview and check text to see that it is correct etc. Anyone wanting to be involved in either the initial summarising and writing or in the subsequent checking should contact me as soon as possible.

Also during this time, the newsletters will focus on reporting progress with producing the summaries and seeking help on specific issues that arise.

I strongly recommend that members continue to renew their memberships as the Group will have costs associated with the production process and subsequent publication. Speaking of which, I’d like some discussion about how members would like to see the publication with respect to ‘paper and ink’ *versus* ‘web-based’, or both. Other Study Groups have used the proceeds of sales of edition one to help fund the next edition. It is very likely that many comments will be received when edition one comes out that really should be incorporated in an updated subsequent edition. But

whether paper or web, there are likely to be costs, and cash returns seem much harder to organise via the web.

We will be needing a range of photos for the publication. These will be of advanced and mature bonsai to illustrate what can be done with Australian native species, as well as of young plants illustrating what things look like in the developmental stages and after major horticultural treatments. Additionally, pictures of full-size mature trees would be great so that people have some idea of the richness and diversity of these trees in nature. So, please think about what you have and either organise to take some images with a good quality camera and plain backing, or ask a friend to help! We have some of the development stages already in hand for some species as some members have been very good at supplying such images.

Please let me know what you think on all of the above.

National Exhibition of Australian Plants as Bonsai

Just a reminder. The 7th Exhibition will be held, but rather than being held during November, as in the past, it is scheduled for 10 March next year. This was mentioned in the last newsletter, but I'm just reminding you so that you don't forget.

The change has primarily to do with reducing the very large workload on bonsai volunteering in the ACT during spring. An autumn show time should produce some different species on display and for Canberra growers at least, their plants will have luxuriant summer growth, rather than the tattered looks that come from the cold and frosts of winter. [Editor]

Call for your mosses!

By Roger Hnatiuk

As part of our work with Australian native species as bonsai, I'd like to find out about and report on what mosses (and lichens) people are growing with their trees.

As it is the season for mosses to be coming into spore production, with those lovely coloured capsules on tall wiry stems, this is also the season when specimens can be best collected.

Would members from across the country be so kind and helpful as to collect a specimen (see following notes), dry it and send it to me? I think I have a way of getting them identified. It will be most

interesting to see what people are growing and how it changes across the country. One bryologist (someone who studies mosses) has suggested that there would probably only be half a dozen or so different kinds.

To collect a moss specimen useful for identification, you need to collect a 'bunch' of stems. A 'tablespoon' full of the moss will give you a good idea of the amount that is useful and collecting it won't disturb your bonsai too much either. Twice that would be good if you have a larger patch. If that would be too much to take, you could send in less and we could probably do something useful still. I don't want to destroy your moss cover but get a balance between what you can afford and what will still be useful.

Take the specimen right down to soil level. Put the specimen in a small paper packet. This can be a small envelope, or a sheet of paper folded into a packet so that the specimen doesn't slip out. Put the packet in a warm dry place (not an oven!) for a day or so to dry. Write a label, either on the packet or on a piece of paper that goes into the packet. Please be sure that it is legible. Record your name, the city where you live, your postcode (helps sort out climatic differences in some of our large metropolitan areas), the date, and any notes you think might be of interest. If you know where you got the moss originally, that would be good to report (for example: collected locally in cracks in sidewalks, or from a friend or from the bush near the coast etc). Note the name of the bonsai you collected it from.

Please collect a specimen of each kind of moss that you have. If they have capsules, so much the better, but sterile material would be welcome too. See if your friends have mosses different from yours and ask if they would contribute a specimen too. For this project, you can collect from any species of bonsai you are growing, native or exotic, but please note which one on the label.

Put your dry specimens into a larger envelope and post to me (PO Box 450, Jamison Post Office, Macquarie ACT 2614).

I don't think this has ever been done before, so the results should be very interesting indeed. Maybe you could put this request in your local bonsai club newsletter too as that would cast the collecting net wider and thus produce better results.

Many thanks for your help.



Australian Plants as Bonsai

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 \$13 (Aus.\$17 overseas) or postal money order to: 'Australian Plants as Bonsai', PO Box 450, Jamison Post Office, Macquarie ACT 2614, Australia. Direct credit transfers can be made to Community CPS, **BSB 805-022, account no. 03276718; account name: ASGAP.**

The Study Group Leader is Roger Hnatiuk. Contact him at the above postal address or at

Email: rjhnatiuk@yahoo.com.au