

## Preparing Your Bonsai for Display

Whether you show your trees at club meetings, or for more public displays or competitions we all need to do some preparation to our trees prior to putting them on display.

Starting from the bottom up:

**Stands:** Stands should be clean and free of any chips or scratches and as a general rule a stand should be about half the length longer than the pot and should harmonize with the tree, not detract from it.

As the use of Australian natives for Bonsai has become more popular it is often the case that a more rustic looking stand could be a better match for the tree.

**Pots:** The presentation of the pot is just as important as the tree, so taking that you have your tree displayed in a pot that complement each other, well it is now just a clean-up.

Warm water with a little dish washing liquid and a soft kitchen scourer will remove just about anything that may have built up on your pot over time. If you are having trouble removing a stain, use steel wool or the edge of a scraper being very careful not to permanently damage the pot. Also soaking the pot in a mixture of a small amount of bleach and water and leave until you are happy with the result. Rinse thoroughly and dry in the sun.

If your pot is unglazed, a very fine coating of either baby oil or olive oil will give it a new lustre. Apply it lightly over the viewing surface then buff away any extra with a soft cloth.

**Soil Surface:** It goes without saying that all weeds need to be removed. I am sure that none of us have any weeds in our bonsai pot anyways!!!!!!!

Next we need to dress the soil surface – if you don't have moss growing on your tree surface already, a balanced amount of moss to areas that you would expect to find moss growing i.e. around the base of the tree and under low growing branches. If you do this 6 to 8 weeks prior to the show, the moss will start to look quite natural by show time. Keep the moss moist at all times.

Small pebbles are also used to dress the soil and are placed in areas that are not covered by the moss. These pebbles should blend well with the presentation of the tree. Brightly coloured pebbles that you might find in an aquarium shop should be avoided at all times.

**The Tree:** Starting at the trunk, remove any moss growing on the trunk with an old toothbrush, rubbing lightly trying to avoid damaging any nice bark that the tree might have. If the tree is a juniper, you can remove any old bark with the use of a brass wire brush to expose the lovely red trunk which will show up better with a light coating of olive oil.

Any fine branches that may not be in the best position can be wired into place. I use fine copper wire that has been left outside to anodise so that it blends well with the tree. Wire is allowed on your trees during display, **but** only on the branches which are hidden by foliage and not on the trunk. However, if you can avoid wire on your tree during display the better your tree will look.

All foliage should be in top condition and have no signs of burn or pest attacks. Large leaves can be removed prior to the show but not to the detriment of the balance of the tree. Flowers and fruit should also be in top condition, remove any that may be less than perfect.

If showing pines all old, discoloured or dead needles should be removed. Needles that are growing away from the outline of the tree can also be removed or trimmed.

If the display is in winter, you can show your tree in its naked form. A well ramified tree is just as attractive as a tree in full foliage.

**Show Day:** A few things to take with you when you are going to set up your tree – an old cloth, trimming scissors, a small container of dressing stones to replace any that may have fallen off in transit and some wire, just in case.