



**ILLAWARRA
BONSAI
SOCIETY
INC**

NEWSLETTER
2020, No.3
APRIL

NEXT MEETING 7.30PM MONDAY 20 APRIL 2020
(NO MEETING)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dear Members,

A reminder to all members that all monthly club meetings and Sunday workshops have been cancelled until further notice, due to the current situation. (Please read the 'Important Message' to our members at the end of this newsletter).

On the 24th November, 1992, Queen Elizabeth II referred to that year for her as an "annus horribilis", which is a Latin phrase for a horrible year, and that is exactly how I would describe the events that have happened so far this year. Firstly, we had a severe drought coupled with strict water restrictions, followed by extreme heat which then turned to terrible and devastating bush fires, then came copious amounts of rain and NOW that terrible virus that has spread worldwide.

It has been a travesty to say the least but together we will come out of all this doom and gloom – hopefully?? All of this that has never happened before has been so tragic and it has been a shock to all of us that we have ever witnessed in our lifetime. Reality has hit us hard-----

-----but somehow, we are in a happier situation than some where we have this wonderful hobby that is home-based to keep our spirits up, whereas there are some people that need outside interests to keep them occupied and stimulated and being at home is only a chore for them. Just think how lovely our trees are going to be when this pandemic is hopefully over or controlled?

I will keep you up to date each month on what to do for your trees, so keep an eye on the "Handy Hints" to help you, but if you have a particular problem you can email me on brendap7@bigpond.com or on the info@illawarrabonsaisociety.org email address. Alternatively, you can phone me on my mobile on 0412 384 834. I will do my best to help you out with whatever problem you have and most importantly so we all don't lose momentum or interest with our trees.

Also in each newsletter I will be adding some interesting articles from our archives during our 50 years as a club and this will be called '**Way back when....**'. It is important that you know the amazing history of our club and I can say I am very proud to have been associated with Illawarra for a large part of it, (now that is giving my age away!!!!) Unfortunately, I am going to re-type all these articles as computers were not as popular in the very early days but this is a task that will be very important for you as members to know where we as a club came from and that you belong to.

I will also try to keep to our original planned program for the rest of the year so each month there will be an article and photos of the particular subject that was planned for that month, so you **lucky** people the first article this month will be on my other favourite subject of Suiseki. Please read it as it will be more interesting than you ever thought possible.....trust me!!!

So please enjoy the read – stay safe, keep well and enjoy your trees!!

Till next time,
Brenda

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Meetings:

7.30pm third Monday night each
month, except January & December
at Gynea Community Centre,
Gynea Bay Road, Gynea, NSW



FINAL THOUGHT

'Nature reveals its wonders only to the one who keeps bonsai and suiseki in his heart'.

- Old Chinese Proverb

HANDY HINTS

- With the recent rains a lot of nutrients have leached out of the pots, so feeding all trees is very important to build them up in readiness for their winter sleep. Remember to use the specific food for the particular tree e.g. liquid potassium for fruiting and flowering trees that will 'shine' in spring. With all fertilizers that you may be using it is important to read the instructions on the container as to the amounts to use. Use a low nitrogen fertilizer on trees like pines so to not get long needles in the spring growth. When in doubt, halve the quantity and at least in that way they will get something to take them through winter.
- Remove any weeds especially near the trunks as this can cause the bark to soften and die and may cause the demise of the tree. Moss is also a culprit so use a dry toothbrush or similar to remove it. Take care with furrowed bark on older trees. Excessive weeds can also cause the potting medium not to dry out properly and this can also cause root-rot.
- Keep trimming the foliage – particularly on Chinese elms as they are going ballistic after the rain and then warm conditions during the days. I would have to say I have done this to my elms probably about 10 times since early spring but the ramification that has been produced is absolutely fabulous. The weather conditions have been excellent for this and other trees and have responded as well e.g. serissas, non-flowering azaleas (Sao-to-me), clerodendrons, cotoneasters, pyracanthas, Australian native trees, privets. Figs have loved this weather and I have pruned back each branch removing 2 to 3 leaves about 3 times as well. I rang Noel the other day to see how he was going (all well and good) and he told me to tell you all that figs have enjoyed the weather of late and he advised me to tell you to remove any large leaves and only trim back anyway wayward growth that protrudes the canopy.
- With all the dampness that is around at the moment, make sure any fallen leaves that are becoming 'mushy' should be removed to stop insects from harbouring in them and having a feed. On cleaning my benches recently, I found lots and lots of millipedes, ants, slaters, spiders etc. under pots and on the benches. This will inhibit the proper drainage of the pots. Remember to use rubber gloves in case there are some 'nasties' under them.
- With the sun starting to move its position in the sky, try to move and keep the trees in as much sun as possible except for the delicate ones.
- Apart from what has already been said there is not too much more to do but to feed and trim and some repotting of trees like – privet, non-flowering azaleas, black pines (with particular care to be taken with after-care) as with all trees, Australian native trees (also good after-care, obviously no figs at this time and definitely no deciduous trees until they lose their leaves in about July-August.

TREE COMPETITION –MONTH MARCH

Large	1 st	James Shamoon	Callistemon
	2 nd	-	
	3 rd	-	
Medium	1 st	David Willoughby	Melaleuca
	2 nd	Tony English	Callistemon
	3 rd	Julie Smith	Serissa
Shohin	1 st	Mark Patterson	Shimpaku Juniper
	2 nd	Julie Smith	Boston Ivy
	3 rd	Ben Thomas	Nerifolia Fig
Mame	1 st	Richard Langton	Bouganvillea
	2 nd	David Willoughby	Port Jackson Fig
	3 rd	Leesha Cook	Privet
Novice	1 st	Jenny Semenecc	Pyracantha
	2 nd	-	
	3 rd	-	

Club Meetings	
20 April 2020	No Meeting
18 May 2020	No Meeting
15 June 2020	Demonstration Pines and Junipers and marketplace
20 July 2020	Workshop, and mini demonstration on Root over Rock
17 August 2020	Workshop, and demonstration on Landscapes by Khan Linh and marketplace
21 September 2020	Workshop, and mini demonstration on Rafts and wiring.
19 October 2020	Workshop, and mini demonstration on Pot making, and marketplace
16 November 2020	Workshop, and demonstration by Ray and Clinton Nesci
14 December 2020	AGM and Christmas Party.
Club Events	
15-18 th May 2020 'Golden Celebration' 33 rd AABC National Convention	Convention has been cancelled.
21st-23rd August 2020	The 21st annual Weekend Workshops at the Tops Conference Centre, Stanwell Tops

Other Events*	
12 th -13 th September 2020	Central Coast Bonsai Club Annual Show
17 th -18 th October 2020	Wauchope Bonsai Show LUSC Laurieton

'Way back when.....'

Back in the early 80's when I joined the club, Elaine Chee was the President and Barrington Chee was Elaine's very proficient and knowledgeable off-sider and husband. I spoke to Barrington the other day and caught up with a lot of interesting and reminiscing facts to share and pass on to you. It is the Elaine Chee Perpetual Trophy that we give out every year to the person with the most successful tree display in our yearly tree competition. Back then a member – Geoff Speed – designed our club badge and it is that design that we have kept and still use today. In those days only 100 were made and they were numbered and Elaine still has hers which is #1. Both Elaine and Barrington were made life members – Elaine was given the honour on the 8th August, 1980 nominated by Noel Summerell and John Cross. Barrington was honoured also on 20th March, 1989 nominated by Geoff Henderson and Jan Briggs.

There is a fabulous and fun article in the 'Bonsai Downunder' magazine of 1986 that was written by Barrington and it was this phone call I made to him to ask his permission to re-print (type!) it. He was delighted to say the least and I can say you will thoroughly enjoy as I did after reading it again after all these years.

An interview with a Japanese Black Pine By Barrington Chee

I am a Japanese Black Pine or, as some formal people prefer to call me, *Pinus thunbergia* and this is my autobiography. My ancestors came from Japan where they are revered for their strength and beauty but I am a born-and-bred, true blue, dinky-di Aussie. I was born in 1968 as a cute little seed. I came from a family of 83 brothers and sisters and we took between 13 and 41 days to be born. Our incubators were seed trays filled with a clean and moist, but not wet, mixture of washed river sand and peat moss. It's just as well my owner kept a record and took photos of my earliest years because I was too young to remember most of these details.

When I was one-year-old I was taken out of my incubator and planted into a small, but very swish, terra cotta pot. Now that's what I call being upwardly mobile. A place of my very own at 12 months. I must say I was very glad about having a place of my own because at about that time my feet (or, as you humans prefer to call them, "roots") began to grow quickly and I started to feel a little claustrophobic with so many of my family in such a small incubator. The fresh soil and additional space allowed me to grow at a much faster rate than if I were left in my first incubator. I can remember thinking that if my owner is prepared to go to all that trouble of giving me a new place to live, then the least I could do was to look my best. It really wasn't difficult because my feet were firmly embedded in a lovely soil mix which drained well whenever it got wet. If there's one thing I can't stand, it's having wet feet. Not only am I likely to get all sorts of diseases – just like you humans are prone to tinea – but my house starts to get "on the nose" and this I really can't abide.

I stayed in this "cubby" for 2 years when it must have become obvious to my owner that I had outgrown my residence. I was given another new place to live but this time I moved into an absolute mansion – a 25" wood pot which, once again, was filled with the sandy soil mix I like so much. As much as I hate to admit it, I was the flora equivalent of the ugly duckling. I was a tall child for 3 but I had grown distressingly thin, just as though I had anorexia. The one consolation was my handsome hair. It was a vibrant dark apple green colour. Some of my family members who spent too much time in the shade found their hair turning really dark and lank but I was given plenty of sun and healthy things to eat so I had all the necessary ingredients for my attractive hirsuteness. My owner kept telling me that if I wanted to look a handsome bonsai, I would have to develop a better physique which, for bonsai, means narrow, sloping shoulders and a big pot belly. It's about the complete reverse of the shape you male humans try to maintain.

At the time I was moved into my mansion, my owner cut my toe nails. Some silly people think that this is cruel but they probably forget how good they feel when they have had their toe nails cut. There seems to be a lot more room in your shoes. Well it's the same for us bonsai except we refer to "shoes" as "houses" or "pots". You see, with shorter nails, I can grow twice as many toes and, seeing as how I eat through my feet, this means that I can eat a lot more. With all this additional food I was taking in, I started to grow longer arms and lots more healthy hair. Twice a year, in spring and autumn, my owner used to give me a manicure and haircut. I can tell, I really looked a toff after all that attention. I started to grow more and more compact limbs – many more than I would really need if I wanted to look good when I got older. You can see how I looked from these snaps from the family album.

My big break came in 1975 when I was given the treatment by the Japanese-American guru of style, John Naka. How lucky can a young tree be? I mean, an hour or two with Mr. Naka is like 12 months grooming at the Eileen Ford Agency. A style was determined for me which best suited my personality and my owner started to perform the delicate surgery to get rid of my superfluous limbs. My owner used only the best instruments – convex side-cutters which leave a neat scar that, in time, heals over completely and invisibly. Then under the direction of the Master, my owner wired my limbs and bent them into an attractive shape. The same silly people who think that cutting toe nails is cruel would probably think that wiring a tree is also cruel. I admit that there is a little amount of temporary discomfort

(which really isn't too bad if your owner is careful and just moves your limbs to the desired placement without pushing them all around the place), but it's all well worth it when one thinks of the beautiful bonsai one will become with this training. It's something like putting braces on your human kids' teeth. They may kick and scream a bit at first but they do end up with a set of beautiful straight teeth – and they think it's all worthwhile. And, honestly, it is only for one's own good that all this styling takes place. If I didn't have my lower branches reduced to one, the additional branches would eventually wither and die. You can see from the photo that, even after my first styling, I have already begun to look a lot more handsome. What really added to my new, glamorous appearance was the bonsai pot I was planted into. My toe nails were carefully cut and I was tied securely into my new home. Being tied into my pot stopped my rocking around in the wind and helped me to grow new "feeder" toe nails. Three months after I settled into my new house – which was not as grandiose or palatial as my old mansion but which had a distinctive style and refinement – my owner started to give me regular feedings of Superphosphate as well as some Nutricote twice a year. This kept me in the best of health and my appearance reflected my inner well-being.

Two years later in 1977, I was lucky enough to be taken back to John Naka when he visited Australia for the second time. This time he did a bit more fine tuning to my style. He cut out a few heavy limbs and repositioned some of my smaller limbs. But the most important cut he made – and now that I am a bit more mature I can understand the reasoning behind the move – was to cut out the heavier branches near my apex. I must admit I was getting a bit swelled-headed but this is what happens when you're handsome and virile with a fancy place to live. One is prone to reach for the sun and stars, but fortunately, a very clever person with a view to my future, realized that if I wanted to keep my lower limbs strong and healthy, I had to keep my upper branches trimmed back to let the sun through. It is especially important for us Black pines to have strong lower limbs. You can see from my latest photo that I have a very strong first branch and this is because I have always had my swelled-head trimmed down to size. Again, in 1979, I was treated to another going over by John Naka when he came out for the third time. Whereas I owe my style to John Naka, I owe my good constitution and general health to my owner. I get fed regularly and I can honestly say I have never had a sick day in my life. Never have I had any diseases nor problems with insects or pests, not even mealy bug.

You may think, judging by my appearance, that I am a mature, sophisticated pine but in actual fact I am just a pre-pubescent young thing who has had plenty of good breaks. I would not have this suave, manicured appearance if it weren't for all the hard work that is put in by my owner to keep me looking my best. Just as some humans tend to develop dignity, poise and character with the passing of the years, we Black pines do likewise. Of course, these qualities can only develop to their full potential commensurate with how you treat yourself or are treated. You can't not eat regularly and pay some attention to your appearance and still expect to look good when you're older. Not that I'm advocating narcissism – rather, just plain old common sense care. me. Don't you think I'm a lucky little tree?



A copy of the pine in question from the Bonsai Downunder magazine of 1986

Ed. A wonderful email received from one of our members that comes from the heart in these terrible times. It is members like Jenny that make our and any club all worthwhile in the effort that is put in by the committee. Thank you Jenny for your very kind thoughts and support.

Dear Brenda,

There is no doubt all of our lives have changed dramatically and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

I cannot begin to express my deepest gratitude for all you do for the bonsai community in Australia. How you manage to constantly travel from State to State, city to city, work, run a home and preside over Illawarra Bonsai Society, and energetically greet us every Sunday morning to impart so passionately your knowledge, skills, experiences and stories in a fun atmosphere, is truly to be commended.

With our lives changing daily it started to become more evident that the cancellation of the Convention and our 50th anniversary was on the cards. You were foremost in my thoughts as I pondered your feeling of total devastation. My knowledge of bonsai is still in early days and I can't begin to imagine the effort you have put into the preparations for these celebrations. Having witnessed our sensational show at Gynea and the stimulating and fun weekend at The Tops, I do have some insight into what the last three years of your life has been like.

It takes a village to make occasions like these happen and that goes without saying that my full gratitude also goes out to the committee for all they have done and continue to do. I sincerely wish you all good health over the coming period.

We will miss our friends in the club but we can only hope to stay strong, keep well and find joy in this world, and our trees will be a big part of that process.

Love and best wishes,
Jenny

SUISEKI By Brenda Parker

I often get asked "what is Suiseki"? Well, it is the appreciation of Nature in miniature in stones. We choose them for their dark, rich and subtle colours, and also for their hardness and solidity. Of course the most important factor is that the stone has to represent something in nature like a mountain, an island, a human, an animal etc. The word 'Suiseki' literally translated is sui=water and seki=stone, thus water stone. It is over many eons of time that water plays a bit part in honing a stone into special shapes and giving them a rich natural patina.

We try to find stones that are near perfect as no altering of the shape should be done and yes they do exist and in our suiseki club we have lots of wonderful examples that we as members have collected since 1997 when we first started.

When we finally find a good stone we have all learnt to carve a "daiza" or wooden base to display it on just as we find the right pot for our trees or a frame for a painting. The same rules apply. Stones can also be placed in a sand or water-filled suiban (a tray with no holes). We display them on a daiza in the winter time and in a water-filled suiban in the summer. This gives us an appreciation on what season it is.

Also the rules for suiseki is much the same as for bonsai as they are a related art-form. There has to be a 'front', a 'back', a direction etc. etc.

This art-form started quite a few centuries ago with a strong influence from the scribes and scholars in China, then it continued onto Korea and then Japan. Now in Australia we, as a club, have found some great specimens which are now being recognized overseas with our contact with other suiseki clubs in Europe and USA.

By the way, we do not call them 'rocks' and as soon as they get a 'personality' they are call 'stones'. Rocks are what you stub your foot on in a car park!!! When you read the following excerpt from an article you will realize just how marvellous and wondrous these treasures are and when next you do stub your toe, you will actually appreciate how it got there!

I am adding part of an article I wrote back in 2001 for our suiseki club magazine with an insight of where stones come from to help the uninitiated.....

'I thought I would like to offer an article for our newsletter, not on the styles of stones or the way we display them, but the step before this all happens, on how the stones on this planet first came about – they didn't just appear. Mother Nature has played a huge part at shaping and colouring the stones that are around today and this has taken (and still happens) over millions of years to create.

- FACT -** The age of the earth is approximately 4,600 million years old.
- FACT -** Limestone is a special sedimentary rock, and so is coal. They are fossils of coral reefs and swamp vegetation.
- FACT -** When granites weather the silica breaks down to sand, and the mica into tiny shiny flakes, then with the feldspars becomes clay.
- FACT -** Most of the rock-making materials in the earth's crust occur in sands.
- FACT -** Metamorphic rocks are rocks changed by heat and pressure. These changes produce new minerals, new textures and new structures.
- FACT -** Metamorphosis changes sandstone to quartzite, limestone to marble, shale to slate, schist to gneiss, and granite to gneiss.
- FACT -** Some of the oldest surface rocks in the world are gneissic granites in Western Australia and Canada.
- FACT -** Metamorphic rocks and igneous intrusions make up about 85% of the continental crust to a depth of at least 20 kilometers.
- FACT -** The whole process, from metamorphosis within the roots of a mountain range to the time when the rock reaches the surface may take several hundred million years. They are always evolving.

FACT- *Rocks from every geological period are represented in the area of Tasmania, the oldest rocks being formed 1100 million years ago.'*

My son is a geologist and when we have conversations about stones we both have that passion for them. He is into oil and gas exploration here in Australia and he is even teaching my two grandsons all about stones and whenever they go on holidays the boys always try to look for something special for their 'nan'.....gnaw!!



Above left: My green Iguana found as is found at Sofala many years ago when we went on a stone collecting trip for the weekend. This stone is as I found it, much to my delight.

Above right: My 'hamburger always gets a stir when I display this one!!



Above left: When my son worked in Libya for Shell Petroleum, he would go out into the Sahara Desert on his days off and he found these two petrified shells. The Sahara was a huge ocean many, many millions of years ago.

Above right: This is my 'escarpment' stone I found at the head of the Shoalhaven River, Nowra. Many millions of years ago there were several volcanoes in that area and it was a great collecting site. I have been told by suiseki experts to never, ever sell this stone for its impeccable shape, patina and denseness. The daiza was made by me.

A VERY IMPORTANT NOTICE TO OUR MEMBERS

As you are all aware all club meetings and Sunday morning workshops are all cancelled until further notice. From the information received to date it could be as late as September.

We as a committee are keeping a close eye on recommended and safe government guidelines and local council policies in regards to public gatherings in order to keep our members safe in this adversity that we are all in.

All community halls have been closed by councils to avert any problems with social gatherings and we will then inform you all when conditions are safe to return to as normal as possible.

When we do return we will be implementing safety precautions e.g. supplying hand sanitizer on entry and on leaving the club hall, the wearing of gloves and keeping a safe distance between members. Of course these will be mandatory in reference to strict government guidelines if that is the information that we receive closer to resuming our meetings.

We will keep you informed via email and by mail for those of you who receive the newsletter in that way, so please keep reading and be well informed. We are endeavouring to do our best for your well-being and safety.

For now, keep well, stay safe and just think how great it will be when we are hopefully all back to normal! Have fun working on your trees!

CONVENTION REFUNDS

A reminder to members who registered for our convention, that refunds are now available. Please email our Treasurer, Brent Mallam on bmallam@bigpond.net.au if you haven't already done so and complete the form by following the link below.

<http://www.illawarrabonsaisociety.org/registration-form.html>

THE FAMILY TREE

Though the leaves of the tree must fall
and the flowers must wither and fade;
The trunk should grow stronger and tall
as the branches spread so wide.

We are all part of the tree
while we live, we impart to the trunk
the knowledge and wisdom we see
In our time, from the branch, up above.

So look far and wide, while you live
to give of your best to the tree
if a flower or only a leaf.
You are one of a large family.

As the branches encircle this Earth
all as one, must become, in the end
with the purpose to be, both stronger in girth
straight and tall, without waver or bend.

Though the leaves of the tree must fall
and the flowers must wither and die;
The family tree of both you and me,
Depends upon you and I.

- John Westley, 1970