



# OYAMA BONSAI KAI

Club Newsletter - August 2011

## President's Report

The months are flying by and potting season is here again. The end of our summer in winter seems to have arrived abruptly. I'm sure the trees that have all started shooting prematurely will get a nasty shock.

The website is starting to get populated. If you have any articles to post, then please contact Len for editing and Andrew dPL for formatting etc. You can have your own gallery on the site as well, so send through some images to Andrew.

On the 23rd July we had our second dig of the year. It wasn't as well attended as the May one but again, great trees came out. Andrew dPL was there so late that he got pictures of the sun setting. There are some photos on the website.

Thanks to Peter, Thys, Carl, Freddie and Len for a very interesting demo on "marginal stock" at the last meeting.

The next meeting is on the 10th August. The main talk has been changed from a phoenix graft presented by yours truly to a talk on soils by Freddie. I'm sure it will be as good as Freddie's usual standard and the timing is great so we can all get our mixes ready or improved.

The September meeting will be on Saikei and there will be a talk followed by a workshop. If you have any rocks or plants that you would like to use at the meeting please contact me so I can start getting material organised.

We will be starting to put the 2012 programme together soon. Please e-mail me any suggestions on topics, format of meetings etc.

See you all on 10th August.

Phil



Dead tree at The Grand Canyon - Arizona, USA  
Photo by Andrew de Pomeroy-Legg

## Len's What to do Monthly

Everyone tells me their Celtis are moving but mine have not a glimmer of bud swell. What is interesting though is the difference in when the Celtis actually starts to grow.

In 2007 I wrote new leaves have appeared on my Celtis, on the 12<sup>th</sup> July. Leaves started on the same tree on the 6/7<sup>th</sup> July 2008. Now this year it is practically August and no leaves in spite of the mild weather. We are prone to gales at this time of year and it is advisable to secure Bonsai that could be blown of stands. Pots are expensive enough but imagine broken branches and Bonsai ruined just because you did not tie that tree down! This year we have had a very mild early July almost summer with a cold snap at the end of July, let's just pray we get more rain.

The only sign of life I have is my Elms are showing signs of warming up and my Olives are pushing growth. Well Elms moving means potting season is here and I have already potted Swamps and Olives. I am looking forward to another year of improving my Bonsai, trying new techniques and generally being excited about this wonderful hobby of ours. If you do not plan your spring it is very likely that you will have problems and a difficult time in achieving all your goals. If you are not prepared in the coming few weeks you could be running around like a blue - ---- fly when those new green leaves appear on

your trees. One of the aspects of that preparation is winter pruning. I consider this task one of the most important aspects of the year as it sets up your deciduous trees for the year. It must be done BEFORE any new growth is on your tree preferably July beginning August. Do not do it too early as the trees can be still in the dying back phase and you may have to repeat what already has been done. It must though be done before bud break so it is a delicate balance. Winter pruning has a double benefit, firstly and most important it assists you in the design process. Whilst the tree is bare the grower can see faults easily and take steps to correct any faults noticed. Amongst these faults would be unbalanced branch mass, crossing branches, branches that need wiring can be wired easily, (take care not to damage any obvious buds) all these points can be corrected a lot easier without leaves. Secondly the removal of unnecessary branches re-directs energy to other parts of the tree, an obvious advantage. Do not remove larger branches at this time as branches store energy and the tree needs all the energy it can get at this time.

Once winter pruning is finished I look at my trees and take notes as to changes that can be made during the re-potting process. Amongst the changes I consider are, changing the front of the tree, Pot change, a change to the angle of the trunk, be it sideways or front to back, any deadwood that's needs to be created, it's amazing how a small change can make a huge difference to their Bonsai. In fact keeping records of what you do to your trees is a really good idea that I wish I had done when I started growing bonsai.



Note that the first branch is sloping up and the apex upward.



After potting, changed trunk angle and apex now flat, marked improvement. Also pot is not so gaudy.

I then normally move my trees around so that they are in order of potting this is normally Swamps, Celtis, Elms, Maples, Olea if they are showing signs of strong growth.

The next part of the planning is organizing your Growing Medium, this for me for me one of the most enjoyable aspects of growing Bonsai. The removing from the pot and giving the tree a new beginning, the placing back in the original pot or a different pot and playing with the angles is a really enjoyable experience. If you have been growing Bonsai for even a short amount of time you will no doubt have come across the fact that every Bonsai grower who makes their own growing medium has the definitive mix which they deem the best. Unfortunately the fact is that even if you put your tree in pure gravel or pure potting soil your tree would exist if watered and fed. It would not grow as well as if it were in my mix but exist it would. For a reasonable growing medium you need a coarse sharp sand or gravel between 1.5mm and 4mm which needs grading into different sizes. (you can't use a 4mm gravel for your Mames. I get my gravel from Montague Stone and Bark who have gravels and stone all in different sizes. Or you can break your back lugging sand up from the river when we have our Olive dig. I am getting too old for that. You also need good quality coarse compost

(which I got from Basil and Irene, club members), a good quality potting soil (I get from Potters Yard). Other additives I use are Milled Seaweed and Hoof and Horn. (Bone Meal takes to long to break down) Do you have a selection of Pots or containers? Do you have mesh to cover the drainage hole? (If not you could use your wife's nylon stockings but she would not be pleased?) You can buy fly screen from builders merchants but I find this hole size a little small for medium to large trees. Most of the Bonsai suppliers have a plastic mesh with a good hole size. Some of the regular readers of this article will think I am neurotic as I again broach the subject of drainage but it is vitally important that your tree drains. A blockage only happened to me once and it was shocking to see the root ball turn black and soggy from root rot. Don't let it happen to you. Keep checking when it rains.

Take care with water at this time; on the one hand trees with heavy foliage may not get enough water into the pot putting the roots under stress so you may have to supplement water by hand. On the other hand trees with an incorrect growing medium or blocked drainage holes (by snails or slugs) may be subject to water-logging, equally putting the roots under stress. To combat this in the short term you should put a brick under one end of the pot so that excess water will run out. Then make a note to correct your Growing Medium when you pot, remember if your growing medium is correct you will not get this problem.

Evergreens should still be fertilized with a weak solution of a low Nitrogen based fertilizer. Keep watch on your leaves as poor leaf colour can warn you of deficiencies.

If you are planning on designing any trees which means wiring the trees, place the trees in a sheltered spot so they do not come into contact with rain. Wiring a turgid tree is almost certain to invite broken branches as you try to get those bends just right. At a workshop in July we had a program when we designed someone else's tree and some kind souls had watered trees and you could hear the branches popping, so dry the trees out before wiring. It's just a matter of planning.

Enjoy your Bonsai and enjoy the coming spring.

Len

A Bonsai is not a trick, in that it does not spring instantly from the hand of a magician,  
but it is the fruit of technique,  
patience and knowledge.

## Comms Corner

Well, another issue of the Oyama Newsletter, and more changes!! The page background colour has been changed to be in line with the colours used on the new website. The new website is coming along. Things are going slower than I would like, but the progress albeit slow, is steady and I hope we will end up with a site that is something the club can be proud of. If you have any articles or ramblings you would like to see added, please get in touch with me either directly or via the club e-mail address:

oyamabonsai@gmail.com

We have the facility to add galleries to the site, so have a look at them, and if you'd like to, send me a few photos and captions and I'll load them on a gallery for you. If nothing else, it is quite fun to see photos of one's own trees on the web!

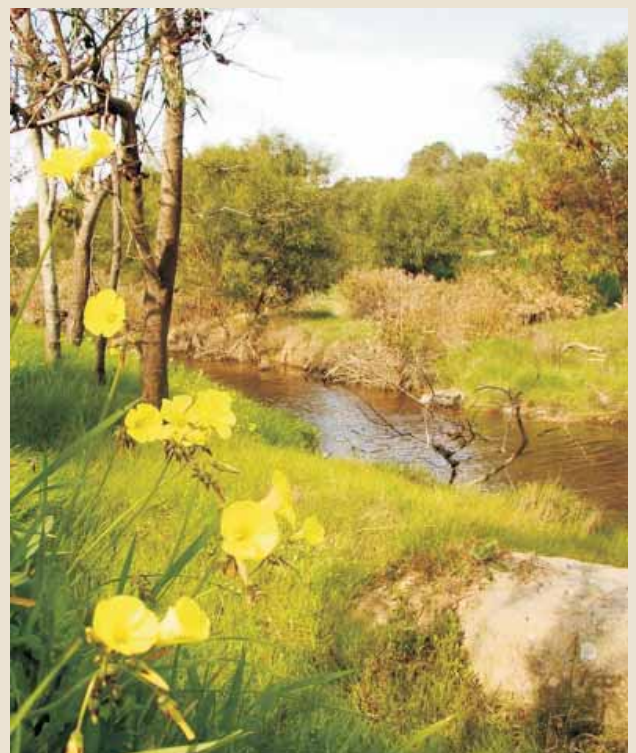
Please note that this will most likely be the last time that the newsletter is distributed via e-mail to club members. In future we will encourage you to download it from the website. I'll do my best to have it loaded by the first of every month.

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## Bonsai Ramblings

We are Ramblingless this month, so I thought I'd share a few photos taken by Cindy and I from the last dig. Enjoy!

Anyone want to drop me something for next month's ramblings?



## Club Calendar

### 10<sup>th</sup> August

President's Report    Geoff  
Design Options        Viky

Main Theme  
    Bonsai Soils  
    Freddie  
Beginner's Corner  
    Repotting

### Arbour Week

3rd to 11<sup>th</sup> September  
in the Company Gardens

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## *The Repotting Song*

*(Sung to the tune of Flanders & Swan's  
Hippopotamus Song)*

*Mud mud glorious mud  
Nothing quite like it for potting  
before bud  
Trees no longer fallow,  
Pots deep or shallow  
And there let's say hallo  
to glorious mud*