



## Newsletter No 32 June/July 2006

### Show and Tell!!!

At the beginning of each meeting, a volunteer brings along one of their bonsai to show and explain some of its history, or just to tell us why they like it. It usually takes 5 to 10 minutes, and is proving to be a very interesting segment each month.



Glenda explaining the ins and outs of her Juniper waterfall-cascade. During the recent trip to Japan, Glenda had selected and brought home a table and pot for this tree

### Our next meeting is our AGM – Wednesday 14 June

This will not take long as afterwards we are looking forward to hearing Ken Lamb talk about design features in Japanese-style gardens.

One month later, Wednesday – 9 July at 7:30pm in the Studio we will be enjoying a workshop on Flowering Plants as Bonsai. Bring along one of your favourite flowering bonsais that you would like to show off; some advice; or would like to discuss for ideas on design.

### President's Note

Dear Members,

I hope everyone is well in the winter season. We, that is thirteen of us, came back safely from Japan just one day before Easter. It seems to me everyone enjoyed everything, anywhere and friendship among ourselves and with the Japanese people.

I enjoyed the whole trip, Japan was beautiful, even the rain didn't seem to make a difference. While we were in Kyoto I met my daughter, Tanya who is currently living over there.

Together we visited the Golden Pavilion, which added to my fond memories of 2006.

We also visited My Saburo Kato, who sends his kind regards to all members.

Jacki Gracey has reported on our adventure later in this newsletter, so I hope you enjoy reading it.

Now back to local matters. As you can see above our 7<sup>th</sup> BSS AGM will be held in June. At this meeting we would like you to consider

the options of granting life memberships to our society. Now that we have been going for a few years it is perhaps time to recognise and honour those members who have made a significant contribution to club activities.

Our club constitution already provides for such positions. So the Committee would like to propose two suitable candidates for life membership. If you agree then the presentation of life membership will be conferred at the cocktail party to be held in conjunction this year's Exhibition.

Finally just to remind you that our 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Bonsai Exhibition is going to be in the fourth weekend in August. This year our exhibition has been selected as part of the Australia-Japan Year of Exchange 2006. We are privileged to

be recognised by the Japanese Government here in Australia as making a significant contribution to Bonsai activities.

Another feature of our exhibition will be AABC recognised demonstrator Arthur Robinson. Arthur is a very talented bonsai artist from Western Australia specialising in azaleas and flowering trees. He will be giving demonstrations on Saturday and Sunday afternoon.

I feel that our exhibition will be beautiful and artistic again this year

I hope that we will all enjoy working together.

Cheers

Megumi

## My Experience of Kimura's Magic – Part 3 with Megumi Bennett

### Demonstrations 3 and 6 – *Olea europaea*

#### A little about the Tree

*Olea europaea* or the common olive originated in the Eastern Mediterranean region. It has been continuously cultivated for thousands of years, this is longer than any other tree. In fact its botanical name literally means old evergreen. It can grow to about 9 meters and live for about 1,500 years becoming gnarled and thick with age.

There are two common olives or subspecies. The first is *Olea europaea spp europaea*. This tree is now common throughout Europe and has narrow grey-green leaves that are silvery underneath. The flowers are tiny and yellowish, the fruit up to 4 cm in length and black when ripe.

The second is *Olea europaea spp africana* that occurs naturally over a wide area from Africa to China. It is this sub-species that was originally brought to Australia with European settlement and is now growing wild in many areas. This tree has shiny deep green leaves on top and brownish underneath.

Both olives are hardy and can readily adapt to different conditions, particularly areas of low rainfall and good drainage. They can produce fruit prolifically, which is eaten and enjoyed by many birds that then spread the seed over a wide area. In some areas of southern Australia the tree is now becoming a problem and is considered a weed.

#### Olives as Bonsai

Mr Kimura has made many trips to Europe and he has observed that olives are popular for bonsai in both Italy and Spain. They are usually selected with enormously thick trunks that are then artistically carved to create an ancient gnarled look.

The olive as a bonsai is also being enjoyed here in Australia. With the spread of olives into many areas, it is becoming very popular activity for bonsai enthusiasts to collect them from the wild.

When training an olive as a bonsai the following points will be helpful:

prune back new growth to about 3 cm in length;  
re-pot when the weather is warm, October to May is the ideal time in Sydney  
use heavy wire on branches as the wood is very hard; and  
remove any new suckers growing from the roots as soon as they appear.

## Mr Kimura's Demonstrations

### 1 Selecting the Trees

Mr Kimura chose two olives to work on during the conference. The trees came from a small collection of 'yamadori' olives that I had been given as a gift over 25 years ago. All these trees were very old, with short thick gnarled trunks; perfect material to make into a great bonsai. So why had I not done something with them before you might ask? A good question and the answer is that I felt that they were too big a challenge.

I had already indicated to Mr Kimura that people were looking forward to seeing his curving techniques and when we were looking for suitable materials I remembered these old olives.

With anxious excitement I showed them to him, and to my delight he choose not one, but two trees. One was very old looking with a very thick ugly trunk, the other much younger looking.

Two! Wasn't this too many for a two-day conference I asked? Mr Kimura said, don't worry, they are both very different shapes, one is fact much younger, so both will require very different techniques and both will make very good bonsai.

Thus we selected two olives.

### 2 Saturday Afternoon

For the first olive demonstration, Mr. Kimura choose the younger tree, thought to be approximately 100 years old. First of all he tied back the branches with wire in preparation for carving. He started with his big grinder and

only worked on the top as you can see in the photo.



Mr. Kimura working the 'young olive' using his specially designed carving tools

As he worked on the tree Mr. Kimura chatted with the audience and asked how many were growing olives. Quite a number indicated that they were, Mr. Kimura seemed surprised to see so many.

The audience also indicated that they were surprised, to see how little carving was being done and that they had expected to see more extensive carving on the trunk itself. Mr. Kimura explained that the tree was still young and the trunk in good condition. The wood was still relatively soft and more carving would do permanent damage.



A true work of art

### 3 Sunday Afternoon

The second olive demonstration was first thing on Sunday morning. Mr. Kimura examined the tree closely, chatting as he always did to the

audience, indicating that this tree was perhaps about 150 years old.

The age indicated by the condition and look of the bark that was very gnarled and grey. In this condition olives often began to show natural shari (damage) on the trunk.

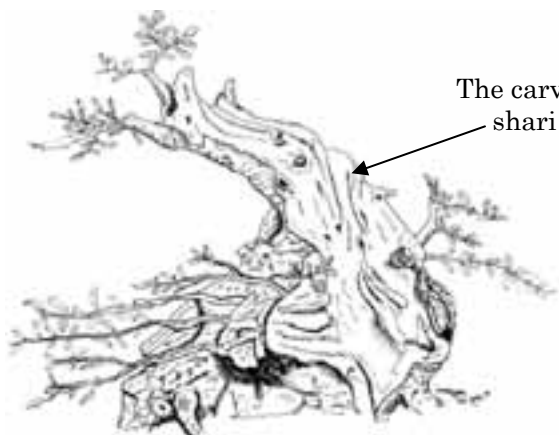
It was this natural condition of tree that Mr Kimura indicated he wanted to feature in the design of this tree as a bonsai. To do this he once again tied the branches back with wire, selected a large grinding blade and then gently but firmly started carving away the trunk from the top to the bottom.



Carving the old olive from top to bottom

He changed the blade several times during the operation. They became smaller and smaller as he very firmly and gently removed the unwanted areas and shaped the trunk. He was very gentle as it was impossible to see any sawdust in the air as he worked.

Mr. Kimura indicated that he never used sandpaper, as it took away the natural weathered appearance. After three or four years this trunk would look beautifully weathered. To increase the weathered look Mr. Kimura



The carved shari

indicated that you could apply lime sulphur straight away; it was not necessary to wait.

With a little wire on the branches and an expert twist here and there the tree was finished.

Would he re-pot it now? No as it was not the time of the year to re-pot olives in Australia.

But in selecting a pot for this tree he would look for one that:

had a rim as it would suit the thick trunk;

rectangular in shape for the strong masculine feel of the tree;

was deeper for balance; and

either glazed or unglazed, it didn't matter as this tree was not a conifer.

During the demonstration Mr. Kimura made the following points about carving:

always know the nature and character of the tree, i.e. whether the wood is soft or hard (for example, this olive has very hard wood that will not split vertically);

never carve green wood when the tree is actively growing - dead wood can be carved at any time;

only carve the trunk of a deciduous tree if there is already a fault;

never create a fault in a deciduous tree if the trunk is healthy, as this will reduce its value dramatically, Mr. Kimura added very diplomatically that if you love a tree with a fault then the value is yours; and

before you start carving, study the tree very carefully, looking for the natural faults and beautiful lines to emphasize.



The old battered olive trunk now carved into a beautiful curve

## Some Hi-lights of our Trip to Japan with Megumi san

Written by Jacki Gracey  
Photos from everyone

I found our journey through Japan to be a wonderful balance of Bonsai nurseries, beautiful Japanese gardens, fascinating tourist spots and interesting cultural experiences all made more enjoyable by Megumi's personal friendships and her knowledge of the language and culture of Japan.



The group talking to Mr. Iwasaki's in his garden

**MIYAJIMA** (Island of Shrines) – We visited this wonderful little island by ferry from Hiroshima. The entrance is dominated by a huge gate of crimson that stands in the sea and appears on many posters advertising tourism in Japan. It does not disappoint and on our visit it was low tide and many people were collecting cockles from the mud flats.



Taking in the sights amid the shrines and temples on Miyajima

We wandered among the beautiful shrines up the hills to the natural forests of cherry trees about to blossom and maples starting to burst their buds.

There were wonderful winding streets of little shops with almost no cars, lots of walking trails into the hills and charming ryokans. We did not want to leave!

**KYOTO** – Here we enjoyed a city steeped in the history of old Japan, filled with temples, gardens and wonderful shopping. It was cherry blossom festival time in the garden of Kinkakuji - the Golden Pavilion. Megumi was chatting to one of the gardeners about a particular tree and next thing we were all shepherded into a teahouse for a traditional Japanese Tea Ceremony.



Cherries blossom along the philosophers walk

**TAKAYAMA** – This very old town is set deep in the Hida Mountain area.

A very scenic drive through valleys, along icy rivers and up snow clad mountains led us to the tiny World Heritage village of Ogimachi and a fascinating overnight stay in a "Minshuku", a small family run inn with thatched roof, where we all slept very comfortably on tatami mats in beautifully screened rooms with views onto the snow clad village.

**TOKYO** – One of our days in Tokyo was spent visiting Showa Kinen Park, a very large park full of wonderful bulbs and flowers reminiscent of Floriade and also housing the Nippon National Bonsai Collection.

Here the cherries were in full blossom for as far as the eye could see and our group joined the hundreds of Japanese families and friends

enjoying their picnics for Sakura Festival. We sampled the local sake and noodles with relish.



Viewing the Nippon National Bonsai Collection

NIKKO – Here we visited another fascinating complex of temples set in a

beautiful mountain area of forests and lakes and natural hot springs.

Interspersed among these wonderful places were visits to WORLD RENOWNED JAPANESE GARDENS and BONSAI NURSERIES owned by Bonsai Masters and others highly respected in the Bonsai world. We were overwhelmed by the splendour of their trees and the warmth of their hospitality, Mr Iwasaki, Mr Shinkai, Mr Hiro Saito and Mr Kato to name a few. We all became very accustomed to green tea and little Japanese cakes and mourned the fact that we could not slip a bonsai or two into our luggage.

## Society News in Brief

### 1 Christen George Wins Gold



One of our younger members Christen George was recently awarded Junior Bonsai Champion at the Castle Hill Show earlier this year for his Chinese elm rock setting.

CONGRATULATIONS CHRISTEN

### 2 6th Annual Exhibition 26-27 August 2006

Preparation is well under way for our annual exhibition to be held again this year at Checkers Resort and Conference Centre. This year will be very special because as we will be helping Megumi celebrate 30 years in Australia as a professional bonsai artist. In her honour we will be displaying 30 of her trees in a special exhibition.

We have also been honoured by the Japanese Government here in Australia as our exhibition will be part of the cultural program celebrating the 2006 Japan-Australia Year of Exchange. To accommodate this, our exhibition will be opened a little earlier this year on the Friday afternoon. This will mean that we will commence the setting-up on the Thursday afternoon.

Another feature will be a special guest demonstrator Arthur Robinson from WA. Arthur specializes in Japanese azaleas and group plantings using deciduous trees. He will demonstrate at 1:30pm on both Saturday and Sunday.

As well as this, some of our talented club members will be conducting demonstrations at 10:30am on Saturday and Sunday.

It should be a full and interesting Exhibition again this year. We will need a much help as we can, so don't forget to put your name down on the rosters that will soon be appearing on our notice board.

## 1 Life Membership

Our Society has been going for a number of years now and a number of our members have been making an outstanding contribution to our activities for some time. It was proposed at our last Committee Meeting that these people should be rewarded for their contribution by making them Life Members of the Society.

If this proposal is accepted at the AGM later this month, then the Committee feels that an appropriate occasion to present these Life Memberships would be at the Cocktail Party associated with the opening of our 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Exhibition in August.



## 2 Better Homes Garden

Graham Ross from Channel 7 - Better Home and Gardens recently toured Japan. During this tour he visited Mr Saburo Kato's bonsai nursery and interviewed him. Megumi recently translated the interview and provided the voice over. This interview will be screened on this program sometime in July on a Friday Night at 7:30pm.

## 3 Bus trip

Our bus trip to Canberra has been confirmed for Sunday 8 October. The trip will include a visit to the Canberra Bonsai Society's Annual exhibition, lunch at the National Botanic Gardens and a visit to Floriade. This is all included for \$50 a ticket, which is really good value. The bus will leave Bonsai Art at 7:00am and return in the early evening about 8:00pm. A booking sheet will be included in the next newsletter.

## Calendar of Events

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|---|---|
|  Jun 14 AGM – Mr. Ken Lamb explaining Japanese style gardens           |  particular native species – Robert Murch  |
| Jul 1-2 Bonsai Federation of Australia Convention in Ballarat with Hirotooshi Saito   | September 22 –24 New Zealand 14 <sup>th</sup> National Conference hosted by Auckland Bonsai Society Inc. Full details on <a href="http://www.bonsainz.com">www.bonsainz.com</a>   |
| Jul 1-3 School of Bonsai Ideas Summit 2006. Contact Ian White on 0418 571 105 or visit <a href="http://www.schoolofbonsai.com">www.schoolofbonsai.com</a> |  Oct 8 BSS Bus tour to Canberra Bonsai Exhibition and Australian National Botanic Gardens – For more details see “Society News in Brief” |
|  Jul 12 Workshop - Flowering trees                                     | Oct 11 Quest Speaker, Roger Hnatiuk on native plants as bonsai. Roger is the group leader of the Growing Australian Plants as Bonsai Study Group  |
| Jul 21–23 Illawarra Bonsai Society Weekend Workshop, Banksia Complex, The Tops Conference Centre, Bendena Gardens Road, Stanwell Tops                     |  Nov 8 Workshop – Native trees   |
|  Aug 9 Workshop – How to prepare bonsai for exhibition                 | Nov 8 Workshop – Native trees   |
|  Aug 25-27, BSS exhibition at Checkers,                                |  Dec 2 Saturday – BSS Christmas Party  |
| Sep 13 Demonstration on orchids, in   |    |

## Seasonal Notes With Alex

### Winter

It is that time of year again. Hasn't time just flown by. By now I hope you've completed all your re-potting, but if things have got away from you don't whatever you do re-pot your banksias and figs. They are much better left alone now until spring.

Your deciduous trees should have shed their leaves, and if you look carefully you will find that your flowering plants will be starting to form their flower buds for the coming spring.

If you have your trees on wooden benches now would be a good time to give them a good scrub down to get rid of all that mould, mildew and cobwebs that has been accumulating over the past year.

#### 4 Watering

Even when your trees have dropped their leaves, they are still alive. The trees are just dormant and still require water when the surface soil is dry. **DO NOT** allow your bonsai to dry out in winter. I have read more people kill bonsai during winter than at any other time during the year.

However, there is the other extreme of giving trees too much water. So how much is enough at this time of the year?

It used to drive me crazy when I first went to work in Japan about how much water I was meant to give these trees during winter. I guess I was a little nervous as some of these trees were worth \$100,000 plus.

After the second year I thought I had pretty much worked it out; that if the soil was dry, then water the tree, if I wasn't sure I would water it anyway. When I did water I still saturated the trees just to make sure.

I also noticed that conifers/pine trees tended to need water every two or three days at this time of the year, so I watered them accordingly. I was only pulled up a couple of times and told that I was giving the trees too much water.

Even so I have brought this practice home with me to Australia and it seems to work well here. To date I haven't lost a tree because it dried out during the winter period. So here's hoping

#### 5 Fertilizing

Fertilizing your bonsai tends to stop during winter as the plants have slowed right down or are in fact dormant. You can still use Seasol as it is not a fertilizer but a stimulant particularly for the roots. Use 10ml (one capful) to 9 litres of water at this time of the year.

Start fertilizing again when your trees start to reawaken in spring in late August or September.

REMEMBER ALWAYS WATER your trees first BEFORE USING FERTILISER.

NEVER use any chemical agent on dry soil as you run the risk of burning the delicate feeding roots.

#### 1 Lime Sulphur

##### (a) Prevention

Spraying our trees with lime sulphur is something that we do once a month in June, July and August or at the very least once during winter.

Lime sulphur is essentially an insecticide and fungicide, which can be used in the winter when the tree is dormant to help protect the tree for the rest year from disease. Do not apply after bud burst, i.e. when the tree is beginning to flower or to produce new leaves in the spring. Apply basically to any type of tree including figs, azaleas, conifers and deciduous.

Apply on a sunny morning with no wind. Always wear gloves and a mask when working with lime sulphur. For bonsai trees use a solution with 1:30 ratio of lime sulphur to water.

Before you spray cover the pot and soil with a thick layer of newspaper to avoid staining and to protect the soil from receiving excessive lime sulphur. Apply to the underside of the leaves, the branches and trunk. Only remove the newspaper when all dripping has stopped and then water the soil area again to flush out any residue.

As soon as you have finished clean your sprayer with water mixed with a small amount of vinegar. Spray out this mixture onto your lawn or path to stop the lime sulphur from crystallizing in the nozzle. Wash your hands thoroughly when you have finished.

### (b) Preservative

Another way we use lime sulphur is to protect and preserve jins and sabamiki (the white bits you see on the trunks of old trees). Before you apply the lime sulphur, clean the area to be treated using fine sandpaper to remove any discoloration caused by natural weathering and decay. When the area is clean paint on the lime sulphur at full strength.

This will leave the wood bleached white and protected from rot and discoloration. Apply annually to the area in winter. This process is mainly used on pines, junipers and other hardwood species like Prunus.

## 6 Pruning

Pruning in winter is only suitable for northern hemisphere trees. DON'T prune your natives or tropical trees at this time.

It is an ideal time to remove your unwanted and long overgrown branches

Unwanted branches are:

those growing back towards the interior of the tree;

thick and heavy branches growing halfway up the tree; or

found in areas on the tree where the growth has become too dense and is visually dominating.

The key to a good-looking bonsai is to have balanced growth all over the tree and where branches are complementing each other.

## 7 Wiring

Winter is the ideal time to wire and shape your pines and conifers. Any of the new growth that occurred during spring, summer and autumn has hardened and is now lying dormant. Stems are flexible and minimum damage is usually done when the trees are in this state.

However, it is not the same for flowering and deciduous trees. These trees are also dormant but the sap is no longer moving freely, so the branches are stiff and brittle, even to touch. Bending these branches at this time may cause them to snap. More than that, it can damage the emerging buds ready to grow during spring. So avoid wiring trees such as azaleas, crepe myrtles, camellias, prunus and maple species. Wait until after these trees have flowered, have new leaves and their new branches have hardened off before wiring to shape.



### Bonsai Art Pty Ltd Notice Board

Ask Megumi,  
Brian or Alex for  
enrolment forms

#### Black and Red Pine Workshops

Winter Sun 9 Jul	Spring Sat 28 Oct	Summer Sun 3 Dec
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#### Class Times:

Morning 9:30 – 11:30	Afternoon 1:00 – 3:00
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Cost \$40 per session payable when you book

#### Bonsai Workshops for Beginners Sunday 4 June

#### Class Times:

Morning (Class A) 9:30 – 11:30	Afternoon (Class B) 1:00 – 3:00
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Tuition Fees: \$33 (does not include bonsai materials)

Class Size: 8 – 10 people (tea and coffee provided)