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The Yarra Valley Bonsai Society Newsletter

Yarra Valley Bonsai Society

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The YVBS meets on the second Tuesday of each month at Chirnside Park Community Hub
33 Kimberley Drive
Chirnside Park
Meetings begin at 7:30pm .

Saturday Workshops are
Melway **37 F3**
1-4:00pm on the **Last** Saturday of the month, at the same venue as monthlies!

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Highlights from May & June 2025

The May Club meeting featured special guest presenter Ali Hassan Ali from the Waverley Bonsai Group, who gave a very informative demonstration on "Creation of Artificial Pots and Rocks" using foamed polystyrene.

Ali has a reputation for making interesting artificial stone settings for planting Bonsai. These have quite a few advantages: 1. You can get exactly the naturalistic pot you want for a particular setting. 2. You can have a stone planter without some of the weight disadvantages of natural materials. 3. There are some sustainability problems with some natural stone - so creating your own side-steps these problems neatly.

See the separate article later in this newsletter for Ali's methodology. We are sure that many members will be inspired to have a go!

In June, the Club hosted a visit from Kimberly Halter of the Bonsai Academy in Toowoomba, QLD. As well as running tutored Workshops and Private instruction sessions, Kimberly presented at our June Club Meeting on "Pines", specifically Japanese Black Pines.



Above - Ali from Waverley Bonsai Group demonstrating Artificial Pot Creation at the May meeting.

Kimberly explained that she was originally from Missouri, USA, but then moved progressively further southwards until she landed in Australia! Her Bonsai teachers included her father, many Bonsai professionals in USA and Australia, but primarily over 15 years with Bonsai Boon (Manakitivipart) who is Japanese-trained and currently based in San Francisco, USA. She has just returned from another visit with Boon.

Kimberly spoke very engagingly on how black pines grow and the required yearly work schedule for bonsai development and maintenance. She emphasized that the more that we follow the process, the better our trees will become. Printed material detailing the process were handed out to attending members, and a few additional copies are available in our venue cupboard for members who could not be present.

Kimberly explained that when starting from seed, the following schedule will apply:

Year 1—focus on the roots—cut the entire root system off the young seedling and plant as a cutting to initiate a radial root spread. Wire trunks early, exaggerate bends to get dramatic movement.

Year 2—Repot and adjust roots, feed.

Year 3—Chose a couple of possible fronts and possible branch-

Continued Page 2

Calendar Dates:

- **8th July (Tuesday) YVBS Monthly Meeting. 7:30pm. Chirnside Hub.**
- **26th July (Saturday) "Last Saturday of the Month" Workshop. 1:00pm. Chirnside Hub.**
- **26th & 27th July (Saturday & Sunday) Bonsai Northwest Exhibition. 10am to 4pm. Footscray.**
- **12th August (Tuesday) YVBS Monthly Meeting. 7:30pm. Chirnside Hub.**
- **30th August (Saturday) "Last Saturday of the Month" Workshop. 1:00pm. Chirnside Hub.**

See also the Events Calendar on our website: www.yarravalleybonsai.org.au

Highlights from September & October - Cont. From Page 1



es, thin whorls of growth

Year 4—Thin needles, feed.

Year 5—Start to style and balance growth.

Kimberly recommended consulting Bonsai Today magazines for great information on growing and developing black pines. Bonsai Today No. 20 for overall development, and Bonsai Today No. 17 for Repotting. Both issues are contained in our Club Library—see Ken G to borrow!

Kimberly spoke with passion about soil mixes, and this is covered in a separate article later in this newsletter.

Kimberly repots in end of winter / spring, her repotting schedule is general deciduous first, then black pines, then trident maples, and says that it is better to repot early rather than later!

Ali's Method for Creating Artificial Pots and Rocks

Materials Required:

Enamel Thinners - to dissolve polystyrene

Water in spray bottle - to stop the dissolving action of the thinners

Liquid Nails contact adhesive - to join pieces of polystyrene together

Wooden skewers - to hold pieces together and strengthen

Craft paint - to colour the polystyrene

BondCrete - sealant over the finished rock

Method

Cut the foamed polystyrene to form the layers of the desired design. Glue the layers together one at a time, fixing in place and reinforcing using the wooden skewers. Cut excess skewer length off with wire snips. Build up the approximate shape layer by layer. The LiquidNails adhesive takes 3-4 hours to dry. Plug the adhesive tube nozzle with a skewer when finished to preserve the remaining adhesive for future use.

Apply thinners a little at a time using a paint brush. Stop the dissolution of polystyrene at any time by spraying with water.

Attach anchoring wires by gluing to surface or by penetrating through the material. Reinforce the connection by gluing a section of plastic mesh over the wires.

Apply dark coloured paint to the entire finished surface - black or charcoal or dark brown is good. Apply lighter colours sparingly over the darker layer when dry, to emulate a natural rock appearance. Mix up the paint colours to achieve the desired result. Look at natural rock formations for inspiration. The bottom layer of paint covers the design completely, succeeding layers are mainly the highlights.

When the paint application is complete to your satisfaction, allow to dry completely and then coat with BondCrete using a brush.





Top - The artificial pot glued together but prior to application of thinners.

Bottom—A finished and painted pot.

For those interested, Ali's muck mix that he used in his finished planting is made from a 50:50 mixture of clay and Dynamic Lifter, with water to form a paste. Used to line the sides of flat slabs to retain potting mix, and in crevices on the outside of rocks so moss will grow.

Library Check-out!

YVBS has a comprehensive range of bonsai books and magazines in our library, all of which are available for borrowing without charge. Remember, the checkout period for books and other library material is one month. If you check out a book and are not able to make the next meeting, you can return the book at a workshop or even post it to the club PO Box.



Trade Table Cheque-out!

The trade table has been restocked with new tools, wire and other accessories. Don't forget the club's tool sharpening kit, available for use at meetings. Anything else you would like to see stocked? Just advise at the trade table or to any committee member.





Kimberly's Soil Mix

Reprinted with permission from the Bonsai Academy June 2025 Newsletter.

If you are new to bonsai, try to find Debco Potting Mix. BMS Mitre 10 in Toowoomba stock it as does the Springs Garden World. It is a well-draining potting mix with some stone. Add some scoria for additional drainage. As you get more experienced with bonsai, I would encourage you to move to a mix without compost and bark. This mix can hold too much water, especially in winter, and can lead to root rot.



Kimberly Mix: I use three types of lava rock to repot my trees.

Scoria is lava rock. In Australia we get it from either Victoria or Atherton Tablelands. It is also called Quincan in North Queensland. Scoria is a red or grey rock. Think Hawaii. Think Atherton Tablelands. Lush and green rainforests. Trees and plants grow in lava. You can use scoria alone to grow bonsai trees. It is heavy and holds a good amount of water. The rough surface can promote more feeder roots. If you can get only one type of lava rock, use scoria.



Pumice – think Mt. St. Helen volcano in Oregon or the islands of New Zealand. The forest grows in pumice. It is lighter in colour and weight. It holds less water. It is one of the best mediums for propagating and encouraging new roots. Some big nurseries grow cuttings in only pumice. Most successful bonsai collectors grow collected trees in pumice. The success rate is very high.



Akadama is volcanic clay (or mud). It is similar to Toowoomba red clay and again think how the rainforest grows on the Great Dividing Range. The advantage to importing Akadama from Japan instead of using Toowoomba red clay is that the Japanese red clay, Akadama, is fired. It will eventually break down in the bottom of the pot, but Toowoomba red clay will turn into a red brick in your pot pretty quickly. Akadama is fired into small balls of different sizes. It is sharp and porous. It holds a lot of water. It holds fertiliser longer than lava and pumice. Akadama provides the perfect balance between moisture retention and proper drainage. Akadama promotes more feeder roots.

Granite. You can also add a small amount of granite. Junipers and native trees in the Northern Hemisphere grow on granite outcrops and live in decomposed granite. Think of the native trees growing in Stanthorpe, QLD and on the border ranges.

Charcoal is a soil sweetener. It helps to rejuvenate the forest. Add 1 cup per 10 litres of mix.

Turface is too small and flat. It is used for trapping moisture in the grass field. In the pot it stays too wet. The flat shape compresses and does not allow water to flow between the particles. Using turface results in less roots and tends to lead to root rot.

Bark and Mulch are used for blocking weeds when you mulch your garden. Plants that grow well on bark are fern and orchids. Trees do not grow on bark. It will decompose and cause root rot.

Kimberly Mix



1 part scoria, 1 part pumice, 1 part Akadama, 1 cup of horticultural charcoal per 10 litres

All ingredients must be bone dry, screened and sized. The dust is discarded. Use larger pieces of pumice as a drainage layer.

For deciduous trees, use small size mix 2-4 mm and add an extra part of Akadama.

For conifers from the desert and high mountains (junipers and pines) use medium size mix (5 – 7 mm)

A thin layer of shredded New Zealand sphagnum moss should be placed on top of the new soil. The moss will keep the soil in place during watering.

Editor's Note

This is Kimberly's mix based on her experience and advice from Bonsai Boon. Certainly try it out, but be aware that this is not the mix used by many other bonsai professionals nor stocked by our Club.

Every bonsai practitioner has their own potting mix preferences, and there are no absolute right or wrong mixes to use. However, an overarching requirement is that the mix should be free-draining.

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2025 YVBS Sale Day



Our annual Sale Day was held in May and seemed to be the busiest ever. The lineup at the door prior to opening was the longest yet, and there was a steady stream of buyers appearing throughout the morning. All sellers seemed to be happy with their turnover—there were a lot less goods taken home at the end of the day than there were on arrival.

Hopefully members picked up a few special pieces to take home with them.

The next opportunity to sell or buy will be in association with our Annual Show in November.

Membership Renewals Due

Membership renewals are due on 1st July 2025 for the 2025/26 Club year. Fees remain the same at $30 for individuals and $40 for families. Payment can be made at any meeting by cash or card, or can be direct deposited into the Club account BSB 633 000, account no. 134 721 257 mentioning your name in the reference field.

Reminder notices to all members will be emailed out at the start of July.

We request that any members not intending to renew to please let us know via email at yarravalleybonsa@gmail.com, or by contacting Marlene J on 0418 147 871. This saves us a lot of work and you a lot of aggravation on follow-ups.

Kudos, Accolades and Thanks

- To Ali from Waverley Bonsai Group for his presentation in May, and for his donation of items for our raffle.
- To Kimberly Halter for joining us for workshops and presentation in June, and for her item donations for our raffles.
- To Elaine B for her kind donation of pots for our raffles.

AABC National Bonsai Convention 2025

The National Convention was held in Canberra in May and from all accounts was a great success. There were 210 delegates from 42 bonsai clubs present to hear and watch special guests Michael Hagedorn and Jennifer Price, both from USA.

Several YVBS members attended, including our President Patrick I who also managed to secure a workshop spot with Jennifer.

A video of the conference has been created by David Nasser from Bonsai Northwest, which can be viewed on https://youtu.be/Mm0pVRqZ64Q .

Congratulations to the Canberra Bonsai Society, in conjunction with the Association of Australian Bonsai Clubs, for staging a successful convention.

The 2026 National Convention will be hosted by the Bonsai Society of Southern Tasmania at the Wrest Pint Convention Centre in Hobart from 1st May to 4th May 2026. Headline guest artist will be Matt Reel from the Pacific Northwest of the USA, supported by local artists Jarryd Bailey, Hugh Grant and Sean Hartley who has just returned to Australia following 6 years studying in Japan. A highly recommended event for all members, especially those who have not attended a Convention previously.

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On The Display Table












A selection of trees on the Display Table at the May and June meetings.






Bonsai Calendar: July - August

Most species that are used for bonsai are hardy (able to withstand freezing) however, when grown in containers they do not have the ability to bury their roots deep into the ground, which insulates them from the cold. The Melbourne climate rarely reaches zero (freezing) or sub zero temperatures but protecting your trees from the winter elements may still be necessary. Be wary of extremely wet weather as having your trees saturated for extended amounts of time may lead to problems through rotting of the roots, which is invariably fatal!

Having the ability to inspect the detailed branch structure of your deciduous trees in winter provides an excellent opportunity to consider restyling your trees. Here are a few tips to get you through the winter.

- Monitor the weather and protect your bonsais from excess rain, wind and cold. Find the most protected area in your yard. Place them undercover if necessary.
- Remove any dead leaves from around your trees and display benches, as these can become a breeding ground for insect pests.
- Prune and thin out your conifers where necessary to set up their growth for the coming growing season.
- Keep your trees as well drained as possible. Place bricks or blocks of wood under your bonsais to ensure water is escaping the pot and air is circulating around and under your trees.
- Carefully inspect each tree and make any changes that will improve your bonsai. Remember the busy potting season is not far away so having your wiring and pruning complete before this time will take the pressure off.
- Avoid the temptation to repot too early. Wait until the buds start to swell before attempting this procedure.
- Prepare your potting medium and place in a dry area. Organize any other items needed for potting (root picks, mesh, scoops etc.)
- Consider what pot you will use for each of your trees. Place them next to the bonsais that they will be paired with.
- It is not necessary to fertilise your trees when they are in dormancy, however evergreens are still growing slowly and natives may not even slow down too much, depending on species and weather conditions. An occasional application of liquid fertilizer can benefit these trees.

It is difficult to predict the changing of the seasons. Trying to schedule with the use of a calendar may lead to problems. Watch your trees carefully and let them guide you.

Bonsai Sensation Nursery



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www.yarravalleybonsai.org.au

A group for all lovers of bonsai in the "far east" of Melbourne

Yarra Valley Bonsai Society
PO Box 345
Mount Evelyn, Victoria 3796
Australia

Looking Ahead to July & August 2025



- The July monthly meeting will be held on Tuesday 8th July at 7:30pm. This will feature a presentation and demonstration on "Root Work" by our own Jason B. Very topical for this time of year, don't miss it! Display table—"Winter Silhouette", or Member's Choice.
- The Last Saturday of the Month Workshop will be held on Saturday 26th July from 1pm to 4pm.
- The August monthly meeting will be held on Tuesday 12th August at 7:30pm, and will be a workshop night concentrating on styling and refinement for our upcoming Bonsai Show. Display Table—"Suiseki and Accent Plants", or Member's Choice.
- The Last Saturday of the Month Workshop will be on Saturday 30th August from 1pm to 4pm.

Anybody with an interest in Bonsai is welcome to drop in to any of our meetings or workshops to check out our activities and chat to our members. There is no cost or obligation—although naturally we hope that we can entice you to join us!

Other Events



- Bonsai Society of Victoria will stage a Carving Workshop with Scott Jackson in two sessions on Saturday 5th July, morning from 9:30 am to 12:30pm, and afternoon from 1:30pm to 4:30pm. Bookings are essential, tickets are $50 ea. East Kew Uniting Church, Kew East. YVBS members have been invited to participate. Book Here.
- Bonsai Northwest will stage their Bonsai Exhibition on Saturday and Sunday 26th and 27th July at the Footscray Community Arts Centre, 45 Moreland St, Footscray, from 10am to 4pm. Entry $5.

YVBS ONLINE:
Our Website can be found at www.yarravalleybonsai.org.au—check it out for the latest information on Club activities. Also, the Club is on Facebook and Instagram, and all members are invited to join up and participate in the information exchange. Note that all Tree Profiles included in previous newsletters are now located on the club website for perusal and downloading.

Member Benefits *Refer to the website for a list of discounts to members upon presentation of a current & valid YVBS Membership card. "Freebies" of donated items are also made available from time to time at monthly meetings.*

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