

The Australian Journey

An exhibition of Australian bonsai

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Presented by
Canberra Bonsai Society Inc



In partnership with
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Preface

Miniature trees and landscapes: the Chinese call it penjing, the Japanese call it bonsai. *The Australian Journey* in this wonderful art form draws on the rich traditions of both China, where it began over 2000 years ago, and Japan from around the 13th century, from where the west largely discovered it. It has evolved in Australia however with an eye to our own environment; our own unique landscapes and species, resulting in different or innovative miniature trees and landscapes and extending traditional understandings of the art form.

Bonsai in Australia largely began in the mid-20th century with the use of exotic trees and designs as seen in Japan, although there is earlier evidence of bonsai in Australia from around the turn of the century. There was however still little or no contact with Japan or other parts of Asia, so very few people knew and understood the underlying philosophy of bonsai.

Some adventurous Australian bonsai artists began incorporating native trees into their bonsai collections and began to introduce a western interpretation of bonsai styling and design techniques. They had mixed success as the Australian plants usually have different horticultural characteristics to exotic species and there was little information to guide their cultivation as bonsai.

Gradually the art of bonsai matured and spread in Australia through a greater exchange of information between artists from within Australia and around the world. More species of Australian plants were tried – extending the understanding, success rate and popularity of their use. During this period attention to detail and refinement of trees also increased and by the end of the 20th century a significant number of Australian artists were producing exotic and native bonsai of very high standard. In the last 5 to 10 years, interest has grown in shaping Australian trees to reflect the way they grow in the wild. Australian landscapes are quite diverse – from desert to rainforest – and they offer the potential for designs not generally seen in either the bonsai or penjing traditions.

This exhibition depicts many of the elements of *The Australian Journey* in bonsai. Look in particular for the interaction and balance of traditional bonsai with those influenced by the Australian environment.

1. River red gum

Eucalyptus camaldulensis

Tree age: c1989. Year 1st trained/styled: 1989

I see this as a tree for all seasons – although it looks its best in spring and summer. It is a very tolerant tree for bonsai culture, very hardy and forgiving. The three main areas to focus on in developing this bonsai are: keeping the leaves as small as possible; preserving its bark platelets from being damaged when handling it; and styling it to appear as a River red gum looks in its natural habitat on the flood plains of the Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers.

2. Coast banksia

Banksia integrifolia var compar

Tree age: 1980. Year 1st trained/styled: 1993

The main challenge with *Banksia integrifolia* (including this less common variety) is to reduce the leaf size. By fertilising well and frequently trimming for ramification, the tree eventually produces mostly the juvenile form of the leaves that are dramatically smaller. This tree has had numerous style changes over the years, including experimental changes. The main and most enduring feature of this tree, along with its wonderful bark, is the heavy, low, right hand branch that I will never remove or lighten.

3. Golden Himalayan cedar

Cedrus deodara aurea,

Tree age: 1965. Year 1st trained/styled: 1975

This Golden Cedar has been in my collection since I was 17, longer than any of my other trees. When purchased, it had been almost blown out of its pot with half the roots sticking up in the air, and dead. The dead roots eventually broke off and a small swelling formed on the top of the base. It was always going to end up in a cascading fashion and the current shape is the product of many style changes over 39 years. It seems to have finally found a style I am happy with and a pot that complements it in all ways.

4. Desert ash

Fraxinus angustifolia var angustifolia

Tree age: 1999. Year 1st trained/styled: 2008

I grew this tree from seed I collected at the 1999 Adelaide AABC convention. I grew a fat trunk with the use of lots of sacrifice branches. They were gradually removed and serious styling began in 2008. The tree has a compound leaf and the biggest challenge is to reduce the leaf size by constant trimming, pinching, defoliation and lots of wiring in its first few years of intensive training. It will eventually look its best in winter, when its ramification has increased – and I find the ideal pot.

5. Coastal tea-tree

Leptospermum laevigatum

Tree age: 1991. Year 1st trained/styled: 1998

After growing for a few years in larger and larger plastic pots, I eventually pruned this tree hard and have since placed it into various bonsai pots. I have done all of its shaping by clip and grow; no wiring at all. I love it for its rough and flaky bark, the muscling on the trunk and its small and colourful leaf (especially the new growth that is red tinged). The style has evolved naturally without any master plan; I just worked with the tree as it grew.

6. Swamp cypress

Taxodium distichum

Tree age: 1970. Year 1st trained/styled: 1978

This tree had been ground grown for a few years and dug up before I purchased it. I chopped it down in height to increase taper – and to get it into my car. The tree was designed from one side but was later reversed when the trunk was carved to remove the last vestiges of scarring where the trunk had been previously shortened. Although the tree was carved almost 30 years ago it has never shown any tendency to rot unlike some Swamp cypress you will see in the more tropical parts of Australia.

7. Chinese elm

Ulmus parvifolia

Tree age: 1994. Year 1st trained/styled: 1994

This tree was grown from a root cutting by the late Hong Lin of Melbourne and has been styled by the clip-and-grow method; he rarely used wire on any of his trees. He also set himself an extra challenge of having the tree look as good from its 'back' as well as its 'front'. Since purchasing the tree I have done no more than water, fertilise and trim the excess growth; and I do not intend to change the tree in any substantial way as I feel it is close to perfection as it is.

8. Corky bark elm

Ulmus parvifolia suber

Tree age: 1975. Year 1st trained/styled: 1978

This tree was grown from a cutting and when about 3 years old was cut back to a single side branch which produced the lowest curve on the trunk. The style has gradually emerged over the years but had a major cut back and restyle about 3 years ago. The Corky bark elm has always been one of my favourite trees over the years as it produces the corky bark at an early age and is a vigorous and healthy tree that is easy to style. I am now encouraging the tree to grow in a more natural deciduous style.

9. Dwarf Japanese garden juniper

Juniperus procumbens 'Nana'

Tree age: c1982. Year 1st trained/styled: 2002

This tree was given to me by another Canberra bonsai artist to replace a similar tree that had been stolen. It was grown from nursery stock and had some styling done by the original owner. Since owning it I have totally restyled it. Junipers are a favourite of mine. I enjoy how quickly they respond to bonsai styling techniques. This tree has a number of 'jins' (dead branches) and a 'shari' on the trunk. Deadwood such as this is often a feature on conifer bonsai as it does occur in nature and helps create the impression of age.

10. Blaauw's juniper

Juniperus x-media blaauw

Tree age: c1983. Year 1st trained/styled: 1995

This triple trunk tree was first styled at a workshop with Japanese-American bonsai master Roy Nagatoshi at the Bonsai Clubs International Convention held in Sydney in 1995. Initial styling involved intensive wiring of all branches. The jins and shari (deadwood) on the right trunk are a feature often used on juniper bonsai. I potted the tree into the 'Mirkwood Forest' pot in 2005.

11. Jack pine

Pinus banksiana

Tree age: 1985. Year 1st trained/styled: 1994

This tree was a self-seeded specimen collected in 1991 from one of the many arboreta in the Brindabella ranges near Canberra. Sadly most of these arboreta were burnt out during the bush fires of 2003. First styled in 1994 this is one of my favourite trees. The species buds back readily and the needles can be reduced dramatically. I use techniques generally used on other two needle pine species, but modified to suit the Jack Pine growth habit.

12. Kingsville boxwood

Buxus microphylla x. compacta var. Kingsville

Tree age: 1991. Year 1st trained/styled: 1996

Kingsville Box is a 'sport' of *Buxus microphylla* and takes its name from the nursery where it was discovered in Maryland USA in 1912. However, it was not released to the public until 1937. Its small leaves make it ideal for use in bonsai and in particularly 'shohin' size bonsai. I purchased this tree as nursery stock in 1992 and styled it as in the classic broom style bonsai, since 1996. Although slow growing, the species has a strong root system and requires regular re-potting and root pruning.

13. Japanese black pine

Pinus thunbergii

Tree age: c1980. Year 1st trained/styled: 1991

The Japanese Black Pine is regarded as iconic bonsai material. This tree was originally styled at a workshop with American bonsai artist Jim Barrett but the current style has become quite different to that suggested by Jim. It was purchased as mature nursery stock from the Weston Creek club show in 1991, and was much taller, being reduced to its current height at first styling. In 2001, I performed some heavy bending of the top of the trunk to change the direction of the apex. The tree was totally wired last year in preparation for this show.

14. Shimpaku juniper

Juniperus chinensis 'Shimpaku'

Tree age: 1998. Year 1st trained/styled: 2005

The tree reflects Mr Masahiro Kimura's design of a family: father and son (two larger trunks), the mother at the back of the setting, and two trunks as the smaller siblings. It was first styled at a workshop with Mr Kimura during the AABC bonsai convention in August 2005. The tree retains his design but has undergone continuing development. Future work will focus on development of the foliage pads.

15. Rosemary

Rosmarinus officinalis

Tree age: 1982. Year 1st trained/styled: 1997

This tree was part of the Shirley McLachlan estate in 1997. The movement of the trunk gives the tree its underlying beauty and the present design enables the observer a diversity of views, with each different from the last. It is a gentle tree and its aroma on a summer evening takes one to the enchanting Mediterranean. It is also a practical tree, as I use the foliage in cooking.

16. Coast- banksia

Banksia integrifolia

Tree age: late 1990s. Year 1st trained/styled: late 1990s

I bought this tree from Grant Bowie who had first shaped it in a demonstration. Grant already had a similar bonsai of this species which had developed a strong fat base but had small leaves compared with the normal *B. integrifolia*. The shape of the tree has evolved as it matured, however I like the fat base and the small leaves which are maintained by constant trimming during the growing season. This tree loves water and needs to be re-potted at least every 2 years due to vigorous root growth. While the basic shape of the tree is influenced by traditional approaches to styling bonsai, I have also tried to develop a more natural appearance for this banksia.

17. Shimpaku juniper

Juniperus chinensis 'Shimpaku'

Tree age: 1976. Year 1st trained/styled: 1976

This tree was partially styled when purchased and I have continued to develop its cascading form, refining and developing the foliage pads as the tree matures. This tree has been used as a hire tree for the last 10 years and has been very popular with hirers and their customers. It was displayed at the Japanese Embassy in December 2012 for the Emperor's birthday celebrations.

18. Privet

Ligustrum sp.

Tree age: c1873. Year 1st trained/styled: 1973

Purchased approximately 6 years ago, this tree has been a bonsai for 40 years. The tree itself may be 140 years old based on its known history as a former hedge plant at a historic homestead on the Central Coast. It was entered in a general photographic competition a few years ago and was runner up in 4500 entries. The gnarly appearance contributes to the aged appearance of the tree.

19. Azalea 'Sao-to-me'

Rhododendron sp.

Tree age: 2001. Year 1st trained/styled: 2001

This non-flowering azalea is appreciated for its fine bark texture and small leaves which colour beautifully in the cold weather. It was created by Lee Wright from a single plant with many thin shoots. I plaited some shoots together to make the thicker trunk. The others shoots were plaited together with the intention of removing them once they had helped to thicken the main trunk, however as the tree developed I liked the second trunk and retained it. This tree did well when entered in the Royal Easter Show and the Castle Hill Show. Since purchasing the tree in 2010 I have maintained the original shape which has very pleasing movement and strong visual impact for a small tree.

20. Golden Chinese juniper

Juniperus chinensis aurea

Tree age: c1988. Year 1st trained/styled: 1997

This juniper was initially a garden shrub with 5 trunks, 2 of which I removed. The remaining trunks have been drastically cut back and/or carved. Because both the primary and secondary trunks had branching that tended to grow mainly in one direction I tilted the tree to the left and pruned selectively to gradually develop its present windswept style.

21. Shimpaku juniper

Juniperus chinensis 'Shimpaku'

Tree age: 1986. Year 1st trained/styled: 1991

When purchased from a club sales table in 1991 the tree had three trunks. I considered one trunk to be a little high and removed it but retained a small jin as part of the tree's story. The remaining main trunk presented a challenge: it leant towards the small trunk on the left and I wired many times. To achieve the beautiful balance of the current design, and to allow the main trunk to be positioned more vertically, the first branch on the right hand side was removed, retaining enough to create another jin.

22. Shimpaku juniper

Juniperus chinensis 'Shimpaku'

Tree age: 2000. Year 1st trained/styled: 2008

23. Prostrate Nepal juniper

Juniperus squamata prostrata

Tree age: 2004. Year 1st trained/styled: 2008

24. Prostrate Nepal juniper

Juniperus squamata prostrata

Tree age: 2004. Year 1st trained/styled: 2008

Each of these small bonsai (shohin) was created from larger nursery stock that was cut back to the first branch. This branch was trained up to create a new trunk and its tiny shoots were developed into the current branches. Often shohin bonsai have only two or three branches to create the impression of a larger tree canopy, however I have tried to develop truly miniature trees, with branches and spaces between the branches all miniaturised in scale. I enjoy the challenges of working at this scale, however to develop and maintain the fine structures requires attention to detail and meticulous trimming during the growing season.

25. Common hawthorn

Crataegus monogyna

Tree age: 1985. Year 1st trained/styled: 1986

I obtained this hawthorn from a dig at what is now the site of the National Arboretum Canberra. It produced abundant new growth from the beginning but did not flower for the first 5 years. From 1998 flowering became more intense but it did not produce much fruit (haws). In 2012, however, the plant was covered in flowers and the large amount of fruit both pleased and surprised me. The tree buds back quite readily and the bark now has a lovely aged look.

26. Dwarf Japanese garden juniper

Juniperus procumbens 'Nana'

Tree age: 1991. Year 1st trained/styled: 1994

In 1994, I wired this tree's pencil-size stem to a bamboo stake giving it a twist around the bottom and planted it in my backyard. It grew quite vigorously and by 2000 was hampering the rotary clothes hoist. It had to be dug up. After growing in a series of pots until 2009 it was transplanted into its present Chinese bonsai pot. During the later period of training, I modified the apex into a much more adventurous shape. The plant resembles a large bird in flight, thus its name 'The Jade Phoenix'.

27. Firethorn

Pyracantha sp.

Tree age: 1995. Year 1st trained/styled: 2000

This pyracantha is one of several exhibits that were dug from the site of the National Arboretum Canberra. It was collected in 2000. It was growing as clump and appeared to be around 5 years old. In spring, new shoots sprouted all over the clump and styling was a matter of choosing which to reject and to wire up the remainder. I went with the clump style as the plant itself suggested, but decided to use an informal rather than a strictly traditional approach to the styling of the plant.

28. Deodar cedar

Cedrus deodara

Tree age: unknown. Year 1st trained/styled: 1982

When I acquired this plant in 1982, it had been badly neglected. It was old and gnarled and I was forced to break away the container to begin the long training process. It took 7 years for the tree to break its root bound mass with new feeder roots. Evidence of this root mass outline can still be seen around the base of the trunk. I have trained the tree as 'looking over water' style – other bonsai artists might call this a form of cascade-- with a pleasing trunk line which will eventually be exposed to show its full beauty.

29. Port Jackson fig

Ficus rubiginosa

Tree age: unknown. Year 1st trained/styled: 1989

I removed this tree from a feeder stream of Cabbage Tree Creek at the foot of Clyde Mountain, NSW with the help of a chainsaw. It had been split in two-by the force of flood action. The base was replanted in creek sand in a backwater of the creek and I collected 1 year later, and it was replanted in a box of pure creek sand. Since that time all visible branches have been developed from the split trunk base. I have consciously trained it to achieve the natural appearance of the Port Jackson figs growing in the vicinity.

30. Bosnian pine

Pinus heldreichii

Tree age: unknown. Year 1st trained/styled: 1985

I found this tree, which is in fact two trees fused together, near the base of two large mature *Pinus heldreichii* specimens growing in the Uriarra *Pinus radiata* forest in the ACT. How it got there is a mystery. The forest was destroyed in the 2003 Canberra bush fires. I donated this tree to the AABC and underwent its initial styling at the AABC convention in Canberra in 1991-and was raffled off. The tree itself told the design. It was found difficult to style and it was returned to me some years back by the winner for further development.

31. Japanese black pine

Pinus thunbergii

Tree age: 1974. Year 1st trained/styled: 1982

This tree was grown in the ground until 1980 when it was lifted and planted in a training box. While this tree exhibits the 'old lived' and rugged characteristics of Japanese black pines in the wild, the trunk base development could be improved. The trunk has a somewhat difficult 'goose-neck' in it that has necessitated the development of other features to shift the viewer's eye. A very pleasing feature of the tree is that it is now showing the 'turtle shell' bark that only comes with age.

32. Korean fir

Abies koreana

Tree age: 1982. Year 1st trained/styled: 1982

Abies koreana is native to the higher mountains of South Korea, growing in temperate rain forests with high rainfall and cool, humid summers, and heavy winter snowfall. When I bought this tree from a local garden centre, it was broom shaped and this influenced the current style. Some of the trunks were removed to thin out the crown and allow room for good foliage development. The Korean fir needs a regular trimming regime since it does not grow back on bare wood. It needs to be kept moist, especially in our hot dry summers.

33. Dwarf hinoki cypress

Chamaecyparis obtusa 'Nana'

Tree age: 1981. Year 1st trained/styled: 1981

I was attracted to the fan-like foliage of this tree. The fans have reduced in size with age and repeated finger-pinching, done to keep the tree in shape. The tree prefers some shade during Canberra's summer months and shelter from strong wind. The soil needs to be kept moist but must also be well-drained. Although bought in Canberra, the tree was grown on in the ground in Sydney for 2 years to speed up its naturally slow growth. The normal form of this tree is rarely seen in gardens, however there are a number of attractive cultivars suitable for smaller gardens.

34. Seiju elm

Ulmus parvifolia 'Seiju'

Tree age: 1982. Year 1st trained/styled: 1999

I was attracted to this tree by the corky bark. After its purchase from a bonsai nursery, I planted it at an angle and trained one branch up to make a new leader. The base of the tree has thickened well and I am continuing to develop the crown.

35. English elm

Ulmus procera

Tree age: 1980. Year 1st trained/styled: 1980

I bought this tree from the late Joe Micallef in about 1998. Joe Micallef was one of the early Australian bonsai artists and a key figure in the early bonsai community in Canberra. Joe was very innovative and liked to experiment with different styles and techniques. I was attracted to the unusual shape, in particular the exposed roots. I have largely maintained the original shape but allowed it to grow taller. English elm is an easy tree to care for and maintain as a bonsai.

36. Heath banksia

Banksia ericifolia

Tree age: unknown. Year 1st trained/styled: 2005

The original owner had been experimenting with this plant for some years but was not happy with its progress: it had been developed as a standardised pot plant 1.7 metres tall. I saw its potential, however, and was attracted by its unusual trunk. My first step in styling was to reduce its size to a lower branch 250mm from the base. This branch appears, fortuitously, to have developed due to neglect. The other branches you see today developed from this cut and the tree developed its shape in a relatively short period.

37. Old man banksia

Banksia serrata

Tree age: unknown. Year 1st trained/styled: unknown

I purchased this tree in 2004, already in a bonsai pot and partly styled. The original owner liked to collect *Banksia serrata* always choosing trees with feeder roots close the trunk. This is the reason for the bulbous trunk on this exhibit. I was attracted by its trunk and am still inspired by the thought of how long it had survived in such hard conditions. The bark on the trunk tells a story of survival and age: an appearance that is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve in a banksia cultured in a pot.

38. Blueberry ash

Eleocarpus reticulatus

Tree age: 2001. Year 1st trained/styled: 2005

My father and I were delighted when I dug this 4 metre tall tree from the family vegetable patch at Bermagui in 2004: one because his vegetable patch had been saved; and the other because he had acquired a plant with splendid bonsai potential. I like the powerful trunk on this tree and the bronze colour of the young new growth which contrasts with the older green leaves. The tree was significantly affected by the harsh Canberra frosts during its first 2 years and it is now kept inside during winter.

39. Narrow-leaved black peppermint gum

Eucalyptus nicholii

Tree age: 2001. Year 1st trained/styled: 2007

My inspiration for this uniquely Australian setting was the combination of rocks and trees on the Jindabyne side of Cooma. The design has changed several times since the first potting in 2007 and I am still struggling with the right balance of rocks. The primary tree was grown in the ground for 2 years to increase its size. Two other trees are left-overs from a previous attempt to create a eucalypt grove – an attempt I considered to be a failure.

40. Port Jackson fig

Ficus rubiginosa

Tree age: 2001. Year 1st trained/styled: 2001

This tree is a survivor: the only survivor of an unseasonal frost in 2003 that killed all of my larger *Ficus rubiginosa* trees. Even this tree had lost its main leader due to the frost and new branching had to be developed from the new shoots. Since its purchase in 2000 as a starter this tree has been consciously trained as a shohin. I like the character of the trunk. Particular challenges with training this species as a shohin have been in the reduction of the leaf size and in keeping the trunk in a small pot.

41. Monterey pine

Pinus radiata

Tree age: unknown. Year 1st trained/styled: 1997

I dug this tree from the Tuggeranong pine plantation in the south of Canberra in 1997. The tree had self-seeded and was growing under a log. I was attracted to it because of the movement of the trunk which is still a feature as it develops the gnarly bark of a mature tree. From day one its design was to be a cascade and initially was a full cascade; now a more compact semi cascade style. This compact growth has taken many years to develop and I draws viewers' attention to this characteristic.

42. English oak

Quercus robur

Tree age: unknown. Year 1st trained/styled: 2001

The parent trees of this exhibit exist today, adjacent to the Canberra Olympic Pool in Canberra, offering a unique opportunity to compare a mature tree with its bonsai progeny. I purchased the tree from a club sales table in 2000. To reduce the leaf size, I partially defoliated the tree twice a year, in early November and early January for many seasons. Interestingly, the tree now produces smaller leaves every season. This is a special point of interest because this variety of oak normally has leaves 3 times the size seen in this bonsai. I like its powerful trunk and bark.

43. Black cypress pine

Callitris endlicheri

Tree age: 1987. Year 1st trained/styled: 1987

Along the western slopes of the Great Dividing Range, rich, dark green spires of *Callitris* dominate the land in small patches. The soils are shallow and dry. Life for trees is hard. Although the eye reaches up to the rich greens, it always returns to the strength of the muscled bark: firm, protecting, rich in textures and colours. These days, elders of these black cypresses are not common. Land clearing for crops and grazing have removed most. But in narrow sheltered gorges, not suited to other uses by people, old, *ent-like* stands can be seen.

44. Small-leaved Kunzea

Kunzea parvifolia

Tree age: 1997. Year 1st trained/styled: 2002

At home in shallow, ephemeral swamps, or other shallow, often heavy soils, these small myrtaceous shrubs are almost invisible for much of the year with their wispy branches and minute leaves scattered along purplish branchlets. Come spring and gaudy magenta spheres are strung along those wispy canes! Sometimes, one of these natural miniatures grows out of cracks in rocky ground beside the small swamps. Things are drier here and branching is tighter and less wispy, but no less beautiful. My mind still enjoys following the twists and turns of trunk and limb that dissipate into wiry grey-greens, waiting for the next explosion of purplish-pink.

45. Bracelet honey myrtle

Melaleuca armillaris 'Green Globe'

Tree age: 1985. Year 1st trained/styled: 1990.

Habitat: coastal cliffs and sides of rivers, often dense canopies...impenetrable...

*I first knew your spiralling trunks where you lined city streets,
with trunks in circles of lazy J-curves.
Now, gazing into your green, or is it yellow-green, canopy,
that caps long, twiggy branches,
I imagine waves crashing on craggy cliffs,
while soft sea-breezes cool my skin.*

46. Prickly paperbark

Melaleuca styphelioides

Tree age: 2001-2. Year 1st trained/styled: 2003

Along the banks of small, intermittent streams that feed into the Hawkesbury River, New South Wales, are small groves of trees with white, peeling, spongy papery bark that provides protection from the periodic fires that leave traces in black streaks on the white. Their fine, stiff needles can readily pierce the skin and make sitting under these trees not overly attractive! These small forest patches are thrilling to see in early morning or early evening when the sun imparts soft, yellow-ochre hues to the towering trunks and rather rigid branches. In my mind's eye, I can safely wonder through this miniature forest grove, admiring the oldest trees and their younger companions.

47. Heath myrtle

Sannantha pluriflora

Tree age: 1986. Year 1st trained/styled: 1986

Drought ravages large swathes of the Australian landscape, shaping all the life that comes there. Our trees and shrubs often show the signs of droughts past. No room for 'lightning strikes' or snow torn branches here. Rather, tell-tale dead branches reach for the sky. But below the dead crags life springs anew - rich, verdant, affirming of its tenacity. Contemplating this tiny *Sannantha* reminds me of the droughts past, and of the near disasters that my own mis-management can cause to beautiful plants.

48. Harland's Box

Buxus harlandii

Tree age: 2006. Year 1st trained/styled: 2010

The textured yellowish bark and small leaves of *Buxus harlandii* remind me of many Australian native plants – perhaps that is why I find them so attractive. This plant was bought at the 2009 AABC convention in Brisbane as I liked its curved base and ready shohin potential. It is easy to work with, responding well to pruning and trimming and sets easily after wiring.

49. Grevillea 'Pink Lady'

Grevillea juniperina 'Pink Lady'

Tree age: 2002. Year 1st trained/styled: 2002

A hybrid with *Grevillea juniperina* as one parent, 'Pink Lady' grows to about 30cm high with a spread of up to 2m. It produces abundant pale pink flowers throughout spring and this little bonsai is visited by honeyeaters and silver eyes during this period. In its early bonsai history it lost a branch for no apparent reason but now appears quite hardy in pot culture. It does not appear to shoot back on the older wood and must be kept trimmed to retain the desired shape.

50. Burgan

Kunzea ericoides

Tree age: 2005. Year 1st trained/styled: 2006

These two trees emerged as 'weeds' in another pot. Their trunks wired into exaggerated shapes but their early styling was done with no particular plan for their futures. The squat, square pot inspired the final design of the smaller tree, keeping its head down in a rocky windswept landscape. When reducing the size of the taller tree about 2 years ago, I was delighted by the little tree that emerged. Its appearance has continued to improve with a trimming regime aimed to enhance the illusion of age.

51. Paperbark

Melaleuca linariifolia 'Claret tops'

Tree age: 2003. Year 1st trained/styled: 2005

The bark texture and lovely red colour of the new growth make 'Claret Tops' an attractive plant for bonsai. This tree was continually cut back in the early years of development to stimulate finer branching and is now thinned regularly to maintain a balance between leafiness and twiggyiness. It has had some wiring, but the main training has involved removing unwanted growth.

52. Prickly paperbark

Melaleuca styphelioides

Tree age: 1980. Year 1st trained/styled: 1981

Melaleuca styphelioides is a popular bonsai specimen for its attractive bark, small leaves and readiness to shoot back on old wood. As one of my first attempts at creating a bonsai, it has had all its branches removed and regrown twice in its very early days. I have developed movement in the top section of the trunk and the branches to add interest and offset the straightness of the lower trunk. Until a few years ago, the foliage was cut back to encourage density of twigs. Thinning has now opened up the branches to reveal more of the finer structure.

53. Firethorn

Pyracantha sp.

Tree age: 1984. Year 1st trained/styled: 1984

Pulled from the garden as a small seedling, this tree was spared from the compost bin thanks to the interesting shape of its tiny trunk. It was potted immediately and has always been kept in a small pot and shaped by the 'clip and grow' technique.

54. Japanese maple

Acer palmatum

Tree age: 1983. Year 1st trained/styled: 1985

My aim with this grove was to create a setting of as might be found in a mature forest setting. The group showcases the delicacy that the Japanese maples offer all year round: in spring and summer it has soft green foliage; from around April it develops lovely Autumn colours; and it looks pleasing in winter with bare branches and an uninterrupted view of its tall elegant trunks. Watering is a challenge: it runs off the beautiful granite slab the trees are growing on.

55. Scots pine or Western Yellow Pine

Pinus sylvestris or *Pinus ponderosa*

Tree age: 1984. Year 1st trained/styled: 1987

I have conflicting advice as to whether this tree is a *Pinus ponderosa* or a *Pinus sylvestris*. It was collected from a pine forest that was destroyed in the 2003 Canberra bushfires, so its origins cannot be further explored. The tree has been redesigned several times. It always had lovely nebari and a strong trunk line with good branches, although it is a very spiky tree with stiff and prickly needles that make it hard to do fine wiring. The foliage pads have developed well despite this challenge. The bark on the trunk is attractive and now showing some good age.

56. Unidentified Yamadori Pine

Pinus sp.

Tree age: 1966. Year 1st trained/styled: 1993

The pine plantation in the Brindabella ranges west of Canberra, from which I dug this tree in 1991, no longer exists and identifying the species of this tree is difficult. The design is based on an elegant, slightly oriental spreading pine as might be found in China. I particularly like the age evident in the trunk as a result of the lichen and rough bark. While this gives the tree great character, I intend to develop more vigour in it and then rewire it to lower the height and create a more spreading canopy.

57. Burgan

Kunzea ericoides

Tree age: unknown (as yamadori). Year 1st trained/styled: 2008

I collected this tree from the Murrumbidgee River in 2007 where it was regularly washed and broken by flooding. It was growing horizontally with the trunk leaning down the stream. It is a natural windswept although waterswept is more accurate. The trunk has great age and movement which draws the eye to the foliage pads. I am particularly drawn to the movement of the trunk and the delicate white flowers it produces in spring that contrast with the dead wood. It is a very rewarding tree to work on and always bounces back, even when treated 'quite roughly'.

58. Burgan

Kunzea ericoides

Tree age: unknown (as yamadori). Year 1st trained/styled: 1985

I collected this tree from the Murrumbidgee River in 1984 where it was regularly washed and broken by flooding. It was growing horizontally with the trunk leaning down the stream where some protection was offered by a boulder. The long trunk has changed very little over the 30 years since I collected the tree leading me to think it may be several hundred years old. I am particularly drawn to this tree because of its age, the beautiful movement of the trunk and the delicate white flowers it produces in spring that contrast with the dead wood.

59. Japonica (*primary tree*)

Chaenomeles japonica

Tree age: c1995. Year 1st trained/styled: c1995

English elm (*secondary trees*)

Ulmus procera

Tree age: c2003. Year 1st trained/styled: c2005

The Japonica was neglected nursery stock, grown and cut back for at least 10 years. It has been in a bonsai pot for 2 years. The elms were thin clumps of suckers pulled from the ground behind a motel in Canberra during a morning walk. These too were grown and cut back for some years. The smaller trees are too large to be accent plants, but they all somehow harmonise, with their grey trunks and similar gnarliness.

60. River bottlebrush

Callistemon sieberi

Tree age: 1990. Year 1st trained/styled: 1995

Inspired by callistemons growing on rocky outcrops in the Ovens river, I obtained a tubestock seedling from the local landcare nursery and arranged the roots over a suitable rock. It was allowed to grow on in larger pots and polystyrene grow boxes to establish the basic root, rock/ trunk structure. Basic shaping began about 1995. This tree is my attempt to show the hardships of life in the mountain rivers: roots hug the rock searching for footholds and pockets of nutrient; branches are forced downstream and deadwood is created on the upstream side of the trunk by regular floods.

61. Prostrate juniper

Juniperus squamata prostrata

Tree age: 1999. Year 1st trained/styled: 2001

I purchased this tree as nursery stock in 1999 in Brisbane. It was grown on for 2 years and then transplanted into a polystyrene box when styling as a raft began. It was grown in the box for a further 7 years, gradually reaching the present style with re-potting being carried out approximately every 2 years. It was first placed in the bonsai pot in 2008. In 2010, the tree was brought to Canberra and allowed to acclimatise. Since then only routine maintenance has been carried out.

62. Burgan

Kunzea ericoides

Tree age: c1995. Year 1st trained/styled: 2006.

I was offered his tree to do a demonstration at the Australian Native Bonsai Show in Canberra in 2006. After initial design it has been developed in the clip-and-grow method. Over the 6 years I have had the tree it has only twice produced a small cluster of flowers. The tree has proved fairly hardy and back-buds readily. The tree has at the moment distinct foliage pads but in the future I am tempted to develop a single, layered canopy to bring it back more in line with what one would see in nature.

63. Viewing stones

The art of stone appreciation involves the display of stones collected from nature. The Chinese have collected and admired stones for thousands of years (since 206BC), the Koreans possibly from the same time period and the Japanese from around 593AD. Westerners developed an interest from early Japanese migration to the USA with their bonsai. Today many countries in Europe, the Americas and the Asia – Pacific region enjoy the art of stone appreciation which has many names including *Scholars' Rocks* or *Gongshi* (China), *Suiseki* (Japan) and *Suseok* (Korea).

Reserve trees (may not be on display)

64. Mugo pine

Pinus mugo

Tree age: 1951. Year 1st trained/styled: probably 1960s.

When I purchased this tree it was a very tall and “traditionally” styled pine which had great potential and lovely old bark but I felt the very formal upright styling of the tree did not match the exciting low curve of the trunk. About 60% of the tree was removed and styled 1 year and then about 2 years later the tree was further reduced to the size and style it is now. The tree was styled from just one of the original branches.

65. Chinese elm

Ulmus parvifolia

Tree age: 1994. Year 1st trained/styled: 1994.

This tree was grown by the late Hong Lin of Melbourne. Its origins from a root cutting are very evident in the unusual trunk formation. I love the way the tree has been styled with a flatish apex. The use of hanging branches is another appealing feature. The tree looks equally good from the front or the back: as intended by the artist. Since purchasing this tree the only change I have made was to “slip pot” it into a slightly larger pot. Although I do fertilise a bit more than the original artist; which is evident from the lovely healthy green colour of the leaves throughout the year; the tree continues to produce very small leaves.