

RED DRAGON BONSAI NEWS

Welcome to the May newsletter.

Well its that time of year when everything starts to slow down. This is a good reflection in lifes character, everything needs a rest at some time! Let your trees enjoy some well earned rest. Dormancy is a time for your tree to get energized for the coming spring. Fertilising at this time of the year is highly recommended before the really cold weather sets in as your tree will be storing all these essential goodies so it can burst into bloom, leaf etc in Spring. Your tree can be weakened by not doing this as it will bud and bloom regardless, but if it is under nourished, it will suffer. This wont be gained back usually until the following year

LIME SULPHUR

Winter is an important time to keep your trees in their best condition for the coming spring.

It is wise to spray your entire collection with a diluted amount of lime sulphur over the winter months.

Lime sulphur is a fungicide and pesticide which is fairly low in toxicity. It will keep at bay such things as sooty mould, some other funguses, and some of your minor pests.

Spray once a month for 3 months starting in say May.

The other effect it has is a lot of the little nasties that have laid eggs will be greeted (if not killed earlier) by a pesticide. Otherwise you can find you get of to a bad start in spring with all the little nasties hatching and looking for breakfast, at your place!!

Lime sulphur is available from Bunnings.

I recommend using probably a slightly lower dose than is suggested on the label. Probably 15ml's a litre will get the job done. Remember that it is a "salt" (sulphur) and will burn your tree if it is to hot. Make sure you apply it in the late afternoon, or early morning to avoid the heat of the day. It is a good idea to spray your benches as well, this will inhibit mould also.

Remember that keeping things clean will lessen the chance of insects and disease.

The other use for lime sulphur is bleaching dead branches to create that old look as well as preserving the timber. When this is done it is used neat (undiluted) this is called "jinning".



We got some really nice stock in recently (Sam sitting in the middle of some of the pines)

We got in quite a lot of black pines, the unique thing about these is that they are all grafted stock. They have a *pinus thunbergii* root stock, with another type of black pine (*yatsubusa*) grafted onto the base. The reason for this is that the *thunbergii* is very vigorous, whilst the *yatsubusa* has a very small needle. These make excellent minis (shohin) bonsai. You can even see in the picture how small the leaves are and they haven't even been worked yet to reduce the needles. These are great value at only \$59 each!

Also we have some nice big (and I mean big) pyracanthas, also known as firethorn. These are the variety 'ruby mound' which have the red berries. These make stunning bonsai, as they have a really pretty flower which are abundant, and each one turns into a berrie. They suit all sorts of styles, and are a very hardy tree.

We also got some large junipers (1 to 1.5 mtrs tall) both *squamata pingii*, and *procumbens nana* (*nana* means small).

I have done a couple with Sam (with major reduction in height) and they have turned out extremely nice, give them a few years and they will be spectacular! (See pictures below)

Advanced stock such as these junipers and pyracanthas are becoming just about impossible to get. Remember they are 18+ years old, and the growing has not been continued hence lack of stock. Many people are unwilling any longer to put all the years in for a minimal return. Prices will reflect this, as its not like an item that can just be replaced by building or making something like a table.



Opening hours Monday to Saturday 9.00 – 4.00

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MONTH YEAR

VOLUME # ISSUE #

Black pines

Black pines are becoming increasingly hard to get as they are no longer able to be imported into Australia because of our strict quarantine laws. This means all stock has to be grown in Australia from seed! So the price of mature trees are beginning to reflect this.

Black pine are considered the 'king of bonsai', but many people are to frightened to try them. These smaller trees are probably the way to go to get started. A tree doesn't have to be huge to look good. I have a beautiful little pine of my own, only about 25cm tall.

Pines need to be just taken a little bit slower, not rushed as you would with a fig. Potting is also a little different with this taking place in April, or September. Also the mix needs to be just right because pines love water, but don't like to be wet!! (This does your head in a bit!) We are now using and selling diatomite in our mix and it is having great results. Be careful what you read about pines always remembering where the book was written, ie: hemisphere, and climate. For those of you who are reading this in qld, it can be very different as pines hardly have a dormant period (which is the best time for heavy pruning) If you are working on an old pine, get it healthy and take your time!

Major bending.

Here are some pics of what we did to a couple of upright junipers (about 1.2 mtrs tall) To bend trunks of this size takes some doing! The first thing we do is to split the trunk in half, using branch splitters, and even a jig saw! (I love my power tools!) The cut is then sealed with wound paste to accelerate healing whilst its setting in position, which will also help to hold this position as the cambium heals over and forms a new bond.

We run heavy wire (usually 6mm up both sides of the trunk opposite the cuts.

We then wrap the trees with bicycle tubes fairly tightly to both protect the tree from wiring, and to stop the tree from snapping.

We then wire the tree, in this case 2 strands of 5mm wire and also use turnbuckles to really get some leverage. You can actually hear the tree cracking, so we slow down wait a little while and then proceed. This is done working our way up the tree on each bend. It is a long slow process (about a day for the 2 of us) but well worth while. The tree is then wired to create the future branching that you want and even repot to the desired shape.

So you can see the journey of the 2 trees, from informal upright to a tree that looks like its growing on the side of a cliff and another very short and compact.

Anyway, that's all for now, remember, enjoy your bonsai!!

Chris



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