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APRIL NEWSLETTER 2007

Dear Members,

This month I would like to discuss what to do with stones when you find them, the cleaning process and any other follow up treatment.

On the stone collecting trips we have had as a club we have been to areas where stones have been covered with clay, found in silted up river beds and streams and on the banks of rivers bathing in hot coarse dry river sands.

Now, what to do when you get home and evaluate your 'treasures'. Do the stones look as exciting now as when you first found them? Sometimes 'yes' and sometimes 'no'. The stones that come up with a 'no' get left in a pile to maybe use later in bonsai, for saikeis or to use for root-over-rock applications.

If the stones you found are covered in heavy clay, the best way to clean them is to soak them in a bucket of water for a few days. When the clay has disintegrated sufficiently, it would be the time to use a soft brush to clean out the crevices and being careful not to damage delicate surface areas. After this maybe a small wooden skewer to probe into holes to remove small stones and the dead roots of vegetation that invaded this space. The stone would have to be free of all of this to be displayed properly.

For me, if there was this much clay and dried roots in the crevices, I would then leave this stone out in the elements for 12 months or so to bleach the clay stains and let the impurities be extruded from the surface of the stone. Believe it or not, but stones continually go through chemical changes all through their existence due to moisture, sunlight and temperature changes. Impurities are continually being 'squeezed' to the surface of a stone.

A perfect example and from personal experience, I purchased a stone and daiza from a dealer a few years ago here in Sydney, I loved the stone, a petrified mud stone from China, but the daiza was a bit 'iffy'. I then looked at the stone carefully and found it had 2 very sharp but small bits that could be quite dangerous and could easily cut a finger. I used a Dremel to soften these two sharp points and then because the areas were affected by this it had caused a slight discolouration on the deep grey surface colour I decided to leave it out in the elements, minus the daiza of course, for about 18 months or so. A few weeks ago, I inspected the stone and the colour is now uniform and looks as if no human intervention has taken place.

The daiza was treated with a flap sander to remove the crackled paint and I refined the whole surface both the top and the underneath to make it look a bit more professional looking. I put the stone on the daiza and surprise, surprise it didn't fit, the stone seemed so much larger than before or was I imagining it? Did the daiza wood shrink or did the stone enlarge? The latter was definitely the culprit as I had left the stone outside for all that time it had absorbed moisture. It was on concrete and the warmth had expanded it

slightly. This is a prime example of what happens out in the Australian deserts, very hot days and cold night temperatures cause stones to crack just like the granite boulders that have 'onion skins' coming off of them in layers. Whatever moisture the boulders retain during the day it is then subjected to very cold night temperatures that freezes this moisture causing the stress cracks to appear.

My stone was then dried and placed in the laundry out of the weather. The treatment I then gave the surface will no doubt bring a smile to your face – I used a few drops of Morning Fresh Triple Concentrated dishwashing detergent and rubbed it in all over the surface. It is left on and our experience at the club will attest that this treatment lasts much longer than baby oil. Of course this treatment is only beneficial on smooth stones with a dense texture. I know a few of you will frown on this as for many years we have been told that a natural patina is only gained over many years. I don't know about you but I can't wait that long! I can happily now say that it has dried out completely and fits perfectly in its newly vamped-up daiza.

I was very surprised that such a noticeable change had occurred in my stone. Also it would depend on what type of stone it is whether the mass is dense or porous, none the less, how fascinating a tale every stone can tell!

Happy Hunting,
Brenda

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

'For a suiseki, it has nothing to do with the age of the stone, but with the ancientness of its care, this stipulation, being one of the principal requisites for a good suiseki'.

- Mr. Arishige Matsuura

GEORGE AND JOHN'S 'TIMELY TIMBER AND TOOL TIPS'

Because George and John are having time out over Easter, I am taking the liberty of giving you this month's tips.

1. In the back of my car I always keep a few essentials just in case I come across a stoney outcrop and they include – a fold up camping spade, a small geologist's pick, plastic bags, a small traveller's fold up trolley, scraps of bubble wrap to protect the stones and an empty container for collecting coloured sands. You just never know when you come across some treasures.
2. When you are out collecting stones, never leave holes unfilled and try to always return an unwanted stone to its original place because maybe some small animal or insect only knows that place as its home. We do show respect and consideration for Mother Nature and for the environment.
3. From a girl's point of view, when you are just starting out making your own daizas, I would recommend western red cedar, firstly, because of its rich colour and fine texture, and secondly for its ease of working with, especially if you are starting out by using sharp carving chisels. The wood then sands back beautifully and most times only need a couple of coats of satin varnish.
4. When you graduate to a Dremel and the like, take it slow and steady and with lots of practice you will learn like the girls in Sydney who have become quite proficient. If you are unsure get guidance from someone who is a family friend or handyman who dabbles in woodworking and understands the medium. Often you can attend woodworking or working with wood shows or join a carving class just to learn how to handle the tools. Go to the School of Bonsai website at www.schoolofbonsai.com click on the suiseki link and see the wonderful pictures and steps to create a daiza courtesy of our very own George Reissis.
5. Get a small kit together of different grades of sandpaper, a tin or two of stains and/or coloured varnishes, a couple of small paintbrushes and a small bottle of Mineral Turps to clean the

brushes. Keep some old clean jam jars handy to use the turps to clean the brushes in, then you can place the lid on and dispose of in the rubbish bin, not down the sink. Again the environment is sacred.

Regards Brenda

P.S. Hope I have done justice to this section – can't wait for the boys to get back.

A.A.B.C. SEMINAR – MAY 2007

For those of you who are contemplating on showing a stone or two at the seminar in Melbourne, I would like to hear from you.

We have been allotted 4 trestle tables and I need to know how many stones are going to be there and the size of them. I also need to know of the size of the slab or wood or bonsai stands you intend using. The reason for this is to establish the layout that we need to implement in displaying these stones. I would like to see some stones put on bonsai stands and some on flat shaped slabs of wood just to change the height of the display, as we only have a flat surface to work with.

You can contact me at brendap7@bigpond.com at home in Sydney (02) 9547 2157 after 6 p.m., at work in Sydney (02) 9522 9399 or my mobile on 0412 384 834.

This will be our first formal display, so we would like it to be as professional as possible. Please contact me.

Brenda

SUISEKI BADGE

If you would like a Suiseki badge, it can be yours for just \$7.00 (which includes postage). Post your cheque or money order to the above postal address and don't forget to include your return name and address.

All meetings commence at 7.30p.m. (sharp) at-

The Don Moore Community Centre,
Cnr North Rocks Road and Parnell Street,
NORTH ROCKS. N.S.W.

If you know someone who would like to join Suiseki Australia, you can go to the website www.schoolofbonsai.com and go to the suiseki link and the enrolment form can be downloaded and sent to P.O. Box 4510, North Rocks, N.S.W. 2151. Alternatively, you can contact me at brendap7@bigpond.com or by phone (H) (02) 9547 2157 or MOB 0412 384 834.

INVITATION

I am again asking for contributions of articles for this newsletter.

Do you have an interesting or funny experience that you would like to share with us on anything suiseki? Your experience at making daizas or what is your favourite and most sentimental stone that you own – whether you purchased it or found it?

Maybe you would like to talk about the formation of stones and how they evolved?

Drop me a line or email me and I will happily type it up for you. We would all like to know your experiences. Hope to hear from you soon. Brenda

NEXT MEETING

There will be NO club meeting in April because of school holidays and Easter. Instead our first daiza making workshop for this year will be on the 21st April, at Ray Nesci's Bonsai Nursery, 26 Sagars Road, Dural starting at 9 a.m. and culminating at about 4.30 p.m. Bring your lunch and something for morning and afternoon tea to share. Ray will kindly supply the tea and coffee, and of course bring your stones and tools along for good measure!

See you all then.

P.S. I would like to thank Barry Reeve for his article on Picture Stones that I think you will find quite interesting. Barry belongs to the Central Coast Bonsai Society.
