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MAY NEWSLETTER 2007

Dear Members,

Last month I spoke to you about the collecting, cleaning and preparing of stones, so this time I thought it would be appropriate to go into some detail on the displaying of suiseki, especially with our impending display at the A.A.B.C. Seminar in Melbourne. I have listed them as sometimes it is easier to remember them this way.

DECISIONS ON HOW TO DISPLAY STONES

DAIZA (WINTER DISPLAY)

- Every stone has its own shape and a daiza (a carved wooden base) is made specifically for that stone.
- Daizas are always made of wood, usually hardwoods and dark in colour is the most preferred. The daiza is not to dominate the stone but to be in harmony in size and in colour with it.
- The daiza creates stability for the stone and strongly reinforces the display value of a suiseki.

SUIBAN (SUMMER DISPLAY)

- A suiban is a watertight container, glazed or unglazed, that must be able to hold water.
- Either sand or water can be used in a suiban to display a stone.
- If you have a rugged stone, a rugged suiban is used. In the event of a delicate stone a delicate suiban is used.

DOBAN

- These are suibans mainly made of bronze, and sometimes of brass or copper.
- These must be aged so the natural oxidation of the metal is evident.
- When doban develop a light green colour (copper carbonate), this is then rubbed with beeswax and a soft cloth and rubbed vigorously to bring out a noble and mature colour. This is done now and then to keep up the patina.
- Dobans are used mainly for very old and antiques stones or noble stones.

STANDS

- To display a stone correctly is to elevate the stone from its surroundings to give it nobility.
- Tables and stands must not be too ornate. Always leave between 5-10 cms. Longer than the suiban or daiza.

SLATS

- Thin wooden slats can be placed on a bench and a stone in its daiza can be placed upon it instead of using a table.

PILLOWS

- About 200 years ago the way stones were displayed were on pillows made of antique materials and filled with sieved fine sand.
- Black velvet material is the preferred option for the pillows to be made of today.

MATS

- Any mat that is made of a woven or bamboo material can be used to display stones on as long as they are in harmony again with the colour and type of stone.

BLACK JITTA BOARDS

- A plain piece of wood with straight sides painted black is what is used overseas especially at suiseki shows for every stone on display regardless of what type is being shown.

FREEFORM WOOD SLABS

- These slabs are sanded and polished to produce natural shapes on which to display informal stones.
- To display a robust stone, a thick and strong slab is used.
- To display a fine and elegant stone, a thin slab is selected.

MINI STANDS

- The same rules apply as for when displaying mini bonsai. The top of the stand is reserved for snow-covered mountain stones, rugged peak stones and the like. As you come down the 'mountain', stones like waterfall stones and shelter stones are displayed. To the bottom of the stand is reserved for water pool stones, waterfall stones etc and on the bottom is where hut stones, boat stones and very small subsidiary plants are displayed to denote the grassy plains. The direction is always directed towards the centre of the stand.

TOKONAMA

- In a tokonama or alcove, no more than 3 items must be displayed at any one time.
- A displayed suiseki must be in harmony with the other items displayed e.g. a scroll depicting a mountain scene, the suiseki being a mountain stone and a small soe of grasses to complete the picture. Then the decisions come whether what season it is to depict. If it is say winter, the scroll could have a snow covered mountain scene and the soe could be of small bulbs that would be normally flowering in winter.

PLACEMENT OF STONES

- Placement in suibans or on stands follows the same rules as those for bonsai. It is governed by the direction of the stone.

COLOURED SANDS

- Sands and gravels that are used in suibans should be a complimentary colour to the stone displayed. Proportion of the sand is important to give the proper scale to the stone.
- Different coloured sands can be obtained from aquarium shops, pet shops, nurseries, landscape suppliers and when out on digs visit your local ant's nest. Use caution when doing this as these ants can give you a nasty sting. These ants are very clever when they remove the sand from

their nests; it is always of the same colour and size already for you to scrape off with a trowel. All you have to do is to rinse off any woody bits and it is then ready to use.

SOES OR ORNAMENTS?

- The Chinese use ornaments to enhance and captivate the viewer to help his concept of what the display is to depict.
- These ornaments or figures are to be in scale with the stone.
- Japanese do not use too many figures – simplicity is their philosophy.

SOES

- These are to be as small as possible so as to not dominate the stone.
- The soe should only be about one third of the height of the stone.
- Usually small grasses and ground covers are used.

I hope I have given you some insight into the general rules that are involved in a formal display, but as in bonsai, the rules are there for guidance and there are times when a little poetic licence and flair is allowed. See how far your imagination can take you but still allow you to remain within the boundaries. If you have an interesting point to raise on this subject, please drop us a line.

Still on the subject of the seminar in Melbourne, I would like to see all Suiseki Australia members wearing our club badge to this event and this would enable us to stand united as a group. If you don't have one we will have them for you to purchase at this event.

I am looking forward to meeting our members from interstate and New Zealand at the seminar. See you all then,

Happy Hunting,
Brenda

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

‘A suiseki is a piece of art, and it requires the hands of a master to show its most noble features in a display.’ - Willi Benz

George and John's 'TIMELY TIMBER & TOOL TIPS'

Hello 'Rock hounds',

Sorry we weren't around last month but Brenda has done a sterling job in bringing you April TTTT's, take a bow.

This month we'll look at finishing your masterpiece.

PART ONE: Smoothing the Way

1. If possible, select a piece of timber that will complement the colour of your stone. This will save staining the piece and the end result will be more natural.
2. When placing your stone on the timber, have the front (viewing aspect) of the stone aligned with the end of the timber (along the grain). The daiza will look much better if the end grain is not visible.
3. After you have carved/shaped the daiza and the stone is ready to be mounted, you will need to sand the surface as smooth as possible; this can be done in a number of ways.

4. Hand Sanding: Use sand paper on a block for flat surfaces or rolled into a tube or wrapped around a pencil if you need to sand curves. Start with coarse grit to remove timber quickly and then use finer grits to get a smooth finish. Non clog papers such as Adalox or Drilube are recommended. These are a little more expensive but give a much better result. Paper comes in sheets or rolls that can be bought by the metre. Grades to use are 80 (coarse) to 280 (fairly fine). TIP: If you need very fine paper, try rubbing 2 pieces together.
5. Power Sanding: Rotary tools have a huge range of bits that can be used for detailing. Drum and flap sanders are the obvious choice but many of the shaped stone grinding/polishing tips can be used. Experiment with these on some off cuts of timber so that you get to know which bits will give you the desired finish.
6. Finishing: Final finishing can be done using very fine steel wool. This has the advantage of moulding itself to the shape of your daiza. Steel wool is available from woodworking shops and some hardware stores. Grades range from '0' fine to '0000' very fine. Do not use kitchen type scourers as these are too coarse and mark the timber. Other finishing tools are small files and diamond rasps which are available in various profiles.
7. After you have sanded, all dust and steel residue must be removed from the surface before applying any varnish etc. This can be done by using a soft bristle brush (old tooth brushes are handy) or an air compressor if you happen to have one lying about! You can blow the dust away but be careful not to inhale the dust, blowing through a drinking straw reduces the risk.

Next month we'll bring you Part Two – 'Gilding the Lily'.

So long till next time,

G&J

If anyone is interested, I have the name and contact details of a gentleman who lives near Batemans Bay, New South Wales, who is quite adept in making daizas, display stands and turntables for bonsais. His name is Jim Fairall and he can be contacted on (02) 4471 2010 or on his mobile 0415 549 044. I am sure if you have any questions in regards to having custom made daizas made for your stones Jim will be only too happy to advise and help you.

STONE HUNT

On Saturday the 5th May, we are embarking on a stone hunt down to the Bombo Quarry, Kiama in New South Wales. We are to meet at the McDonalds at Albion Park on the Princes Highway at 9 a.m. Bring along all the essentials e.g. lunch, drinks, backpacks to carry stones back to the car, camera, a hat, sensible walking shoes and a sense of adventure and camaraderie to share around. Hope to see a very enthusiastic group turn up for a great day – weather permitting.

NEXT MEETING – May 16th (7.30p.m.)

At this meeting we will be discussing landscape stones and the displaying of them. Please bring some examples along to show on the night and anything else that you think may be of interest to 'Show and Tell'.

Maybe it would be of interest to say bring along a coastal stone with its daiza and as an alternative a suiban – let's compare the display value of both.

See you then,

Brenda