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JULY NEWSLETTER 2007

Dear Members,

One of the most fascinating and mysterious stones that I love is the chrysanthemum stone. It is a stone that comes in many colours with striking crystals forming a flower shape very reminiscent to a chrysanthemum, hence it's name. For years I have been trying to get as much information about them – how they were formed, where do you find them and try to allay the jibes of the non believers saying that they are imposters.

I have read many articles and asked lots of people and there doesn't seem to be a clear cut and simple explanation as to how they were formed, their composition and why they seem to be so mysterious. One thing I do know is that they were formed about 20 million years ago. Therein lies another confusion – other articles I have read say they were formed in the Permian era approximately 250 million years ago!

One article I found in an old bonsai newsletter from 1976, states that in 1937 a Japanese doctor purchased some land on a mountain and shortly afterwards a flood occurred and washed most of the topsoil away. It was after the waters receded that these 'flower stones' were exposed. These were then seen to be revered and honoured as meditation stones. The flower patterns were supposed to be created by calcite embedded in the schalstein. In 1941 these stones were designated to be the national natural treasure of Japan. To this day the chrysanthemum flower is the imperial emblem of Japanese royalty.

Details from another article state that these stones occur naturally in the Hunan region of China and most of the specimens are collected from river beds. Their composition are that the 'flowers' are embedded in a grey limestone with minerals like celestite and calcite making up the 'petal' and chert forming the 'stamen'. Within these stones are traces of elements such as selenium, strontium, gold, silver and bismuth.

I then quizzed my son, who is a geologist, to see if he could shed more light onto the subject for me and this is what he wrote back to me with.....

“Andalusite (aluminium silicate) is commonly found in rocks in contact with igneous intrusions (contact aureoles) and as such is a metamorphic mineral (grows with increasing temperature and or pressure). It is classed as a low-grade metamorphic mineral meaning it is only stable in moderate temperatures and low pressures, forming in a low pressure environment would allow it to form 'flower' shapes by relatively easily “pushing” the matrix rock aside and allowing crystals to grow outwards”.

WOW! Did you get all of that??

Chrysanthemum stones are traditionally classed as biseki or 'beautiful stones' as they are not a suggestive shape that we find in nature e.g. a mountain or cave stone. They are getting harder to obtain in the wild because of the collecting laws.

Now you can see why I am confused. There are so many variables and theories which perhaps add to the mystery surrounding them. I do have 2 pretty good specimens, one I purchased, one my son gave me and one is a 'suspect intruder'. It still doesn't alter the fact that I still love them, regardless. Do you have one in your collection? Maybe you can contact us and let all of us know your theories and thoughts on this fascinating subject.

Till next time,
Happy hunting.....Brenda

THOUGHT OF THE MONTH

'Nature reveals its wonders only to the one who keeps bonsai
and suiseki in his heart.'

- Old Chinese Proverb

George and Johns 'Timely Timber & Tool Tips'

July 2007,

Hello 'Rock hounds'

Did anyone brave the wet weather to visit the Sydney Timber & Tool show? Not as many small exhibitors this time, maybe getting too expensive for them. After braving the elements and masses of school kids I wasn't able to get the special Tungsten burrs that I'd hoped would be there, guess I'll have to take pot luck and order them sight unseen.

I was able to buy some very nice pieces of dressed rosewood which I hope to turn into a Suiseki display stand.

This month we'll bring you the final part in finishing your Daizas, 'Putting on the Gloss' aka 'Gilding the Lily'.

1. There are many different products available to finish your woodwork and what you use will depend a lot on the finish that you require.

The most common method is to apply a coat of clear varnish i.e. Estapol or similar. These clear finishes are available in Gloss, Semi gloss and Matt (flat) finish. *Tip; gloss finish will reflect lights and this may distract from viewing your stone.* Usually applied from the can with a brush, they are also available in a spray can. You will need to apply at least two coats and possibly more if you want a deep finish.

Remember to sand lightly between coats to give the surface a 'key' for the next coat. Applying a coat of 'Sanding Sealer' (Wattyl has a good one) is a good first step. This acts as a clear undercoat and will fill and raise the timber grain. After this has dried, the work needs to be sanded and is ready for your choice of finish coat.

2. Use a clean brush and try to work in a dust free area; nothing's worse than coming back to your work and finding little bits of dust or insects and other rubbish that's settled on the paint work. If you are leaving overnight drying between coats you will need to stand your brush in some solvent (usually turps, but check the directions on the can). If it's quick drying and only a few hours between coats, you can

wrap your brush in cling film and this will stop the brush from hardening and save messing about with the solvent.

3. Another good method of finishing is to apply wax or oil of some type. This will give a very soft lustre to the work and will also help to stop the timber from drying out. It needs a bit more time and effort but the results can be worthwhile. Use fine wet and dry paper from 400 to 1200 grit, or more if you want a glossier finish. After you have sanded you can apply the oil or wax. Bees wax and Tung oil products are good. We've used 'Organoil' clear finishing oil with very good results.

If using wax, rub a small amount on the wood with a soft clean cloth, remove any excess wax and leave stand for 30 – 60 minutes. Polish with a soft lint free cloth until you have the desired finish. If using oil apply with a brush to saturation point (oil is no longer being absorb by the timber) Leave for 30 minutes or so and then wipe off any excess oil

(Do not allow excess oil to dry out). Leave the work for 24 hours and then buff with a soft lint free cloth. There are more advanced methods of finishing with oil and we'll cover some of these in later newsletters.

Next month we'll bring you 'Keeping It Clean'; maintaining your equipment. Hope to see a good roll up at our July 7th workshop.

So long till next time,

G&J

THE NEXT TWO ARTICLES WERE KINDLY OFFERED TO US AND FOR THESE I AM TRULY GRATEFUL – ENJOY!

TRIP TO THE RED CENTRE

By Geoff Vanner (Melbourne)

Trips to Alice Springs and the Centre inspired me to try putting together something representative and Kata Tjuta (the Olgas) is definitely inspiring.

I was fascinated to find that Uluru (Ayres Rock) and Kata Tjuta are very different even though they are only 20 kms apart. Uluru is composed of just coarse sand whereas Kata Tjuta is made up of fist-sized stones, bigger rocks and small boulders – all welded together by heat and pressure.

Millions of years ago, erosion debris from mountains was washed into an inland sea that existed then; the larger stones being deposited first and the finer particles being washed further on. The sediments were later lifted up, folded and then eroded.

A very interesting book for rock hounds is "Australia, Land Beyond Time" by Reg Morrison – try your local library. It tells the story of the creation of our continent from the first rocks which were formed in Western Australia and are possibly the oldest rocks in the world – it has diagrams to illustrate how Kata Tjuta and Uluru were formed.

On our second visit my wife and I spent some time selecting various sized stones at Kata Tjuta from the great number that had fallen from the almost vertical sides onto the flattish shelf of rock at the bottom and had been broken by the fall as it was necessary for them to have flat bottoms; they were originally water worn and rounded. The broken faces showed that they are actually fine grey rock (very hard) with a coating of red.

We had taken our Patrol by Ghan from Adelaide but drove back so as to have space for rocks and red sand. I recommend a spade, sieves, dust pan and brush plus plastic bags and empty cartons!

At home I found a suitable shallow unglazed red pot and cut a piece of cement sheet to size then arranged 8 of the rocks, gluing them in place with liquid nails – the highest rock is sitting on a small piece of wood to give it the right height. I store the sand in lidded containers and at an exhibition I put a suitable amount around the rocks and use a paint brush to level it. It is probably closer to penjing than suiseki and would no doubt horrify the purists.

If you haven't been to the Centre – GO, and if possible visit Gosse Bluff – the remains of a comet crater that was originally 22 kms across. Some interesting rocks can be found in the middle – read about it in Morrison's book which was published here in 2002 by Reed New Holland.

TIMBER FINISHES

- By Gail Tooth (Wagga Wagga Bonsai Club)

There are various methods for finishing off your woodwork. This is my preferred method.

SANDING:

Materials – White carborundum or filler paper. Garnet paper can also be used but I find the white better.

DON'T USE GLASS PAPER.

Cork hand block.

Steel wool 00 grade could be useful if you have very small areas to be worked.

If possible, Makita or Ryobi palm or quarter sander – not a belt sander.

Grades of sandpaper – 150 coarse, 180 medium and 240 fine.

Method - Start with the coarse grade, seeing you are working on tooled timber. Sand the flat surfaces using the sander or the cork block. Sand carefully on rounded or curved surfaces using the paper only. The steel wool could be useful for difficult areas. Be careful not to sand too close to the edges as this removes extra layers of wood. Always sand in the direction of the wood's grain. Once the dust settles move onto the next grade and finish with the fine grade. The surface should end up feeling very smooth like glass.

STAINING:

Materials - Tin of stain, clean brush, and old cotton cloths such as old singlets or t-shirts.

Method - First make sure you have removed all the dust. Don't wash the timber. I have used a very slightly damp cloth.

Brush the stain on the wood. Remove immediately and thoroughly by wiping in the direction of the grain with a clean cloth. Allow 24 hours for the stain to dry before finishing.

If you don't think the colour is dark enough, a second coat of that colour will not make it darker. You will need to change your colour. You may do this by mixing stains, drop the darker stain into the lighter stain in very small amounts or you may change the colour. If you don't like the colour you have to strip the stain and fine sand it again. It is best to not make that mistake.

FINISHING:

My preferred finish is Danish Oil and beeswax.

Danish Oil – Provide adequate ventilation. Apply with a clean brush; allow a few minutes to soak in, then wipe off with a clean cloth. If the oil is sticky when you wipe it off it has been left on too long or the oil is old. It then needs to be thinned with turpentine. Allow coat to dry before applying the next coat – at least 40 minutes. Leave then for 24 hours to set. Then reapply oil as before until you achieve the desired finish. I usually give 4 – 6 coats. I find that is enough because I use the Beeswax. If you don't wish to use the beeswax then it could take more coats for a nice finish.

Beeswax - Best done on a sunny day. Apply beeswax with a very fine steel wool 000/0000 grades. 0000 grade is difficult to find. Using a light, slow, circular motion massage the wax into the wood. Wipe off the wax as you go before the wax hardens. Using a clean soft cloth rub in direction of the grain. Apply 2 – 3 coats then buff with another soft cloth or a lambs wool buffer on a drill. The buffer is much, much easier if you have access to one.

I hope some of you enjoy this method. When doing old furniture you don't always go down to the 150 grade paper – 180 could be enough especially if there was too much old finishing to strip off and the timber is in good condition. I wouldn't go lower than 180 when sanding veneer.

Ed. Gail restores old furniture so hope this article has given you a few tips on how to finish off the daizas for your stones.

WHERE AND WHEN

Our meetings are held at the Don Moore Community Centre, North Rocks Road, North Rocks. N.S.W. on the third Monday of every month except at school holiday time to start by 7.30 p.m. sharp.

You can contact me at brendap7@bigpond.com if you require any further information. Alternatively you can contact me on my Mobile 0412 384 834 or at (W) 02 9522 9399.

NEXT MEETING – 18th July, 2007

Following my article on chrysanthemum stones, our next meeting will be dedicated to these stones known as Biseki or Beautiful Stones. Barry Reeve will be coming along to give us an informative talk and give us a show-and-tell of some of his specimens. Barry has for many years collected and fashioned his 'finds' into jewellery but then five years ago he caught the bonsai bug after his son Steve introduced him to the art and in the interim he found out about suiseki. Thankfully he is hooked like the rest of us and he will be divulging all of his tales and secrets at this meeting. To those members who will be attending please bring along any examples of these stones to add to the display. Biseki are stones that have been polished, altered, carved and that normally do not depict anything in nature but are simply beautiful to look at. Mineral specimens can also be included in this category. See what you can bring along to show us.

Looking forward to seeing you there.

(For a comment from Barry please see overleaf)

Forty years ago when television, computers and petrol prices were not guiding our lives, I would go fossicking on a regular basis with a lapidary club or just family and friends. We would go to places like Shooters Hill (south of Oberon, N.S.W.) for sapphires and zircons, Kitchener for fossils, Merriwa for agate and petrified wood and up along the New England Range to the Queensland border for sapphire, topaz, quartz crystals, phraze and rhodonite. It was all there for a little work with a pick and spade. Then most of the good spots had leases taken out on them and the 'cream' was scooped up using machinery. Fossickers went onto farms without permission, left holes for live stock to fall into etc. So today it is very hard to find good material without a lot of work. Today it is far easier to sit in front of a computer and buy world-wide on places like eBay. As a suiseki fossicker today we must remember that the stones we pick up today are only there because they have no value.

Cheers Barry
