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JULY NEWSLETTER 2008

Dear Members,

Winter has certainly set in with strong cold icy winds, low temperatures and not too much sun to mention.

The extreme cold not only affects us as humans, it also affects our bonsai trees and yes, stones, rocks and boulders also feel the gripes of the cold. In what way may you ask, well, a certain amount of moisture is always trapped well within stones and boulders, especially those large boulders where the day temperatures are fairly warm and during the night the thermometer plummets. This is very common in the deserts and arid regions all around the world. The daily fluctuations of temperatures play havoc within the structure of the rocks. At night in some places where it gets very cold the moisture content freezes and you know what happens when water freezes – it expands causing stress fractures within the boulder. As the fractures get larger they collect more moisture, and then at low temperatures freezes again causing larger cracks to appear eventually over time causing the rocks to disintegrate. Then by day the frozen moisture thaws and shrinks again. This can be seen by the huge amount of scree at the foot of buttes in the deserts of America and at the base of mountains certainly almost anywhere in the world. The continual freezing and thawing, rain wind and tree roots cause the rocks to break down and this is evident e.g. in the ‘onion skins’ from granite boulders a lot of us seek out to grow our bonsai on.

Over thousands and thousands of years it is this continual breakdown which is part of the decomposition process. For example, granite will eventually break down into clay and end up many kilometers from its original natural source due to the earth movement, rain and wind etc. On its journey the clay will continually break down, collecting different minerals and eventually becoming purer and finer. For hundreds of years the Pueblo Indians of South America would collect their clay locally to make their cooking pots and artifacts. As the years rolled by the source of their clay moved further and further away due to the earth movement and some of them have to travel up to 70-80 kilometers away to collect it now.

The relentless movement of the Earth’s surface plates that causes the landscapes to be uplifted and the mountains to be pushed skyward is call the study of Geomorphology.

Next time your arthritis plays up with the cold give a thought to our trees and rocks – they are suffering too!!

Happy Hunting,
Brenda

THOUGHT OF THE MONTH

‘The Earth recycles rocks by natural processes that, even as they are finishing in one place, are starting again elsewhere.’

- Anon

George and Johns ‘Timely Timber & Tool Tips’

July 2008

Hello ‘Rock Hounds’

Did anyone get to the Sydney Timber and Woodworking show last month? This year we, the Better Half and I, decided to spend more time looking through the craft pavilion and leave the sales side until last, curiosity and budget restraints had something to do with this decision.

It is just amazing what the human mind and talent can produce from a piece of timber. If you think that fine cabinet & furniture making is becoming a dying art, check out the timber projects that are produced by students from the various TAFE colleges, absolutely stunning work.

As usual I was on the lookout for that perfect piece (or two) of dressed or sliced timber for that special daiza. I managed to buy a really unusual slice of Australian Red Cedar. About 1600mm long and 100 – 250mm wide, it will make a special display shelf sometime in the future.

Another purchase was a piece of Huon Pine, my god this stuff is expensive!!!! I don’t have any particular project for it as yet but I’m sure that it will be put to good use when I find a suitable stone.

Huon Pine

Botanical Name; *Lagarostrobos franklinii*

Huon Pine is a softwood timber native to the west and south west region of Tasmania. It is a conifer of the Podocarp family, not strictly a pine, but Huon Pine rolls of the tongue better than Huon Podocarpus.

The timber is in very short supply now due to extensive logging and extremely slow regrowth. Stands of this timber are now protected from logging. Most timber that is available is either recycled or has been recovered from fallen trees in forests or water ways. The timber is one of the preferred species for boat building, furniture making, carvers & turners. It has natural oils that make it resistant to rotting and give it a distinct perfume.

Trees reach a height of 10 – 20meters with some specimens being recorded up to 30 meters. The colour of the timber is pale straw to golden yellow / light brown. The grain is generally fine and even and is easy to work with hand tools.

This should be a good timber for daiza making. I haven’t used any as yet but have milled a slice and found it very easy to work. The natural look is probably what you would want to retain so finishing would only require fine sanding and clear coating with oil, wax or polyurethane. If staining is needed, the timber may have to be washed with an organic solvent to remove the natural oils from the surface.

Some things to be aware of when using Huon Pine are;

* Due to its scarcity and expense, be careful to avoid damage when working the piece.

Supplies of Huon Pine are available from specialty timber merchants, but not council cleanups, unless you’re very, very lucky!!!

So long till next time,

G&J

One of our members from Western Australia, Nigel Atkinson has sent us a short story and photos on a stone collecting trip they had just recently with some good finds and looks like they all had a lot of fun as well. Please enjoy.

W.A. TANSEKI

Once again a group of fun-seeking members and friends set off on the annual rock hunt to the nether regions of our wonderful state. The area is about six hours drive to the north east of Perth. The purpose of the trek – to find some beautiful potential suiseki – was almost secondary to the idea of just relaxing with friends and camping out under the stars. After being bound to the metropolitan area for some time, it's great to get away for a break.

We earmarked three different sites to see if we could collect different stones from each. The first was an area close to an abandoned gold mine. Maybe we should have taken a metal detector with us? The site offered up fairly flat rocks with some coloured strata. Classifications to look for were Plateau stones (Dan-seki), Coastal stones (Iwagata-ishi) and some interesting Pattern stones (Mon-seki) on the face of the rocks. (See photos #1 - #3). You were only limited by what you could carry and how much room was available in the car.

Our next site was a little disappointing as we could not get to the exact area we were hoping to explore. The stones on the ground were a bit too sharp and not rounded and worn enough to warrant a good suiseki. However we compensated for our dismay by camping on the edge of a cliff over looking the vast countryside and having a good old nosh-up and drink around the fire that night. (Photo #4)

Our final site was a place we had visited before and were guaranteed rich pickings. The stones are on the small side but are scattered on the surface as far as the eye can see and just waiting to be picked up. Mountain stones (Yamagata-ishi), Object stones (Keisho-seki) etc. are all there to be found. We will save the rest of them for future trips. (Photo #5)

Of course these sites were on pastoral stations and we had to get permission to stay on the land and camp, leaving nothing and taking nothing but photos, fond memories and a few rocks. Because of the lack of fast flowing rivers in the area, the stones we collect are worn smooth and develop a nice patina by the action of wind, rain and sun over a few millions years. Geologists call it “desert varnish”. We have not as yet found out the geological names for our rocks but I hope to soon.

Now its time for cleaning the stones, sorting out the ‘keepers’ and attempting to make dais for the ones that require them. That's easier said than done. It should keep us busy till the next time we answer the call of the wild. (Photo #6)

Nigel Atkinson
V. President - Bonsai Society of WA



#1 - Site 1



#2 - Some stones from site 1. Note the colours and patterns.



#3 - Skull and a bird?



#4 - Day 2 campsite.



#5 - Stones from final site. Excellent natural patina.



#6 - Happy campers.

WHERE AND WHEN

Our monthly meetings are held on the third Wednesday of every month (except school holidays) at the Don Moore Community Centre, North Rocks Road, North Rocks, N.S.W. commencing at 7.30pm sharp. If you would like to contact me regarding any information on the meetings, daiza making workshops or offering articles to be included in the newsletter please do not hesitate to contact me directly at brendap7@bigpond.com or you can telephone me at (H) 02 9547 2157, (W) 02 0522 9399 or on (Mob) 0412 384 834.

If ever you are in Sydney and you need to purchase or see suiseki for sale please take a visit to the Bonsai Environment Nursery at 70 O'Connell Street, Vineyard. You can contact Kingston Wang on (02) 9627 6688 or (Fax) 02 9627 7927 or Email him at bonsaiw@optusnet.com.au and I am sure he would be more than helpful.

In fact, on visiting any bonsai nursery where they sell stones for using in saikei or penjing, take a look through the pile – you will never know what you can find!

NEXT MEETING

There will be NO meeting in July due to the school holidays.

There will be a daiza making workshop though on Saturday 19th July at Ray Nesci's Bonsai Nursery starting at 9am and concluding about 4 or 5pm. Bring along your stones, wood and tools and of course your lunch. Tea and coffee will be kindly supplied by Ray and Rose.

See you then,

Brenda



BE IN IT

Put your thinking caps on and think of a caption for this photograph.

Send in your thoughts and ideas and the winner will be announced in next month's newsletter.

The winner will receive a surprise gift!

