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### **SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER 2008**

Dear Members,

For years we have been led to believe that these were not the type of stones here in Australia that would be considered good suiseki. The stones like those from Japan were hard, dense, dark and had a natural aged patina and were nowhere to be found here as the geological history was so different to other parts of the world.

A member of our bonsai club went on a trip to The Kimberley ranges in Western Australia and in her travels she collected some stones to bring home to show me. She travelled all through this area especially along the Carson River with a group of people who were mainly there as tourists but she was there on a 'mission' – to collect!

The Kimberleys are bordered by the Great Sand Desert and the pristine waters of the Indian Ocean. The only unfortunate part of this area is that it suffers from the climatic extremes of the wet, and hot and dry. Of course this is very beneficial in the shaping, etching and natural polishing of the stones in that area.

Although she is not a member of Suiseki Australia she is very interested in all things natural and is very interested in collecting for herself and the eagerness to show me and share with me what she has collected.

I was totally surprised at the denseness, colour and natural patina of her finds. The texture has a real 'soapy' feel to them that are reminiscent of stones that I have seen from overseas.

Not only did she collect stones in all different colours, but also found some incredible pieces of wood bleached by the hot dry sun and in the most unusual shapes that could be classed as sculptural.

Out of all the ones she bought back there were about four that deserved to have a daiza made for them, which I offered to do for her.

Whenever someone I know goes away on holidays I always ask them to bring me back a stone(s) from the area they are travelling to. I have received some beautiful stones over the years especially one that means so much to me is this mountain stone, about 200mm high, which was collected nonetheless from the Himalayas and was carried in his backpack for 3 months while on his trekking tour into Nepal. He alternated carrying this stone with his wife and it is such an appreciated stone in my collection.

What a great way to remember special holidays and trips away with objects found out in nature instead of all the tacky commercialized tacky souvenirs – try it, you may come away with a great treasure!

Happy Hunting,  
Brenda

### **THOUGHT OF THE MONTH**

There's a saying among prospectors:  
'Go out looking for one thing,  
and that's all you'll ever find.'

-Robert Flaherty

George and Johns 'Timely Timber & Tool Tips'

September 2008

Hello 'Rock Hounds'

Dragged myself from the sickbed on Sunday last and went to the annual Illawarra Bonsai Club show. An excellent presentation of natives and exotics (I'm talking 'Stones' here) was on display, the bonsai weren't bad either. It's good to see bonsai clubs actively promoting Suiseki / Viewing Stones. Keep up the good work guys.

This month another Timber Talk series '**Woods ain't Woods**' (Sol)

I had an interesting discussion with a mate of mine about the difference between hardwoods and softwoods. His argument was that if the actual timber is soft or light it should be called softwood and similarly, if wood is hard / heavy it should be a hardwood. His example was *Ochroma pyramidale* otherwise known as Balsa (*balsa is Spanish for raft; how appropriate!*) This is probably the softest and lightest of timbers yet is classified as a hardwood.

In general, the terms 'Hardwood / Softwood' have nothing to do with the actual properties of the timber but refer to the class of tree that it comes from. Hardwoods are broad leafed trees (*angiosperms*), deciduous or evergreen and softwoods are coniferous trees (*gymnosperms*) such as pines etc. There are some exceptions with the broad leafed Ginkgo being a conifer and the Casuarinas or She-oak, while looking like a conifer is actually a Hardwood species although definitely not from the oak family. All very confusing eh! If you want to give your local timber supplier some agro, ask if he can supply some hard softwood floor boards, with luck you could end up with Cypress Pine (*Callitrus galaucophylla*) not a pine but a conifer nevertheless.

Common names for plants and animals can be confusing and the same applies to timber species. Some of our native timbers with confusing names are;

White and Red Mahogany: Eucalyptus species

Tasmanian Oak: Eucalyptus species (we don't have any native oak species)

Ash - Plantation / Mountain / Silver / Alpine: Eucalyptus sp. (not related to the Fraxinus species)

Huon and Celery Top Pine: Conifers, but not from the Pinus family.

Red Cedar: Australian (not a conifer); American (Juniper family)

As you can see, identifying timbers by common names can be a bit hit & miss. Our native timbers were probably named by the original settlers because they had some characteristics of timbers that were familiar from their homelands. If you are buying timber from a specialty dealer, try to get the botanical name for future identification.

Enough of the botany lesson, so long till next time,

G&J

## **THE MAKINGS OF A SUISEKI**

Reprinted from the Bonsai Society of the Central Coast newsletter, August 1998

A suiseki is more than a piece of stone displayed in a tray or on a timber base. The stone by itself should depict an image of what you are imagining or trying to portray. For a stone to be classified as e.g. a mountain shape suiseki, it should resemble a mountain. The same also goes for the other categories as well.

A suiseki has six sides to it, front, back, left, right, top and bottom with the bottom being the only side that can be altered or cut flat. This is so a daiza (timber base) can be made to fit more easily or so the stone can sit flat in a suiban tray. The back of the stone should be as interesting as the other sides and should not be flat or broken off from a larger stone.

The stone should have no faults, i.e. cracks or breaks. Any breaks that have occurred on the stone over the years should have been worn smooth, if not; the breaks are termed as 'fresh' and are regarded as a fault. Cracks are deemed as fault-lines i.e. weak points on a stone, similar to earthquake fault-lines that run through many points on this planet. A famous fault-line is the San Andreas Fault that runs through the West Coast of America.

A stone should be of hard material, usually 5 or over on the Mohs hardness scale. Materials like jasper, basalt and serpentine are used with success. Stone that is softer, e.g. sandstone, mudstone, shale and granite are usually not used in the traditional Japanese sense. This is because they break easily and can alter in shape over a period of time due to their softness, and it is impossible to develop a 'patina'. Harder stones resist weathering and erosion and that is what gives them a good shape and texture. They usually have fewer cracks and less structural weaknesses compared to the softer stones.

The size of a suiseki can vary considerably from a stone a few centimeters up to a large stone 70 – 80cm. There is no rule in general but usually anything heavier than what one person can carry is not desired.

A small stone should possess as much character as a larger stone, thus making it hard to find excellent small suiseki. This is similar in bonsai, very few small trees can successfully compete against a good large tree. An average size suiseki measures around 30 – 40cm. There are four classifications for size.

The classic colours of suiseki range from dark greys to black. Some dark reds are also used. Although these are the optimum colours, they are also very hard to find outside of Japan, especially in Australia. The rules on colour and hardness are designed specifically by the Japanese for the Japanese conditions. The majority of stone in Japan is dark, hard volcanic material. Here in Australia we do have this material but are limited in places to find it. In general, our stone is softer and is made up of many colours, ranging from red, brown, orange, yellow and grey. This should not restrict how we can use or what we can do with it.

### **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 7.30 p.m. 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](mailto:brendap7@bigpond.com) or you can telephone me at (H) 02 9547 2157, (W) 02 9522 9399 or on (Mob) 0412 384 834.**

**THE LAMENT OF THE NEWSLETTER EDITOR**

By Frank Bryant, Eumundi, Queensland July 2007

Do you like your Newsletter?  
We really hope you do,  
We'd like to make it better  
But we need some help from you.  
If you have a little anecdote,  
Something that happened to you,  
Even perhaps a poem you wrote,  
That would be something new.  
Or perhaps you found an article  
While surfing on the net;  
Be it serious or farcical,  
No censorship as yet.  
Please put on your thinking caps  
And see what you can find,  
'Cause filling all the page gaps  
Really is a bind!!!

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**NEXT MEETING**

Our next meeting will be on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> September, 2008 at 7.30 p.m.

The theme for the night will be Human Shaped Stones. Bring along what you can and anything else that may be of interest.

Looking forward to seeing you all then,

Brenda

**OOPS!!!**



