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### **APRIL NEWSLETTER 2010**

#### ***Have we received your membership renewal yet??***

If not, this will be your last newsletter. If you would like to continue receiving Suiseki news from here and from overseas, please send a cheque/money order to the above address with your name and address for \$15.

Where do you find stones?? I often get asked this question time and time again.

Many of us are maybe unable to travel too far and climb down embankments and creek beds to find that elusive stone. A lot of us are also unfortunate that we can't travel to go to places like China and Japan where there are hundreds of stone shops on nearly every corner. Nevertheless, I have a few tips that may help you to gain even a small collection together.

A bonsai colleague of mine came to me with a large styrene foam box and said that I would be very happy with its contents which he purchased. He opened it up and one by one he produced some incredible stones, and would you believe it, they came from an aquarium shop. He went there primarily to purchase a new fish tank and came home with these beautiful stones to use for bonsai. They were very dense, heavy and had lots of nooks and crannies everywhere. Mind you, this is a guy who is a definite closet stone collector as he always makes fun of the 'rock hounds' within the bonsai club. Funny about that!!

Another great place to source your 'treasure', is to go to lapidary shows. They always have a mullick heap where they discard the stones they can't use. Lapidarists always look for what is on the inside of the stone e.g. crystals, striations and gems etc, but we look for what is on the outside. Quite a few of our members have got some lovely stones from these shows and the sad thing is that this heap of throwaways gets taken to the tip after the shows as they are useless to them. So try and save some, you will be pleasantly surprised what you can find and most probably it will be for free.

Obviously, another source is to go to specialized bonsai nurseries as they most certainly have lots of stones to use for root or tree over rock for bonsai. If you have the time to fossick through the heap, turn them around and upside down to see what you can see in them and again use your imagination and you may be pleasantly surprised. They sometimes have very worn pieces of petrified wood which is quite acceptable for suiseki – very dense and a good colour.

Landscape supply yards are also a great source of stones especially those who specialize in Japanese or Eastern gardens. The stones they usually keep in stock are often imported from China and again we have quite a few stones sourced from these yards. Usually you buy them at a price by the kilo.

Later in this newsletter you will read about the very disappointing trip one of our members had out on a stone hunt with a group of bonsai enthusiasts. Maybe she should read these tips for getting stones but it probably won't be as exciting!!

There now, you don't have to feel that you are out of the loop, so to speak. If you do your research your stone collection are not as far away as you may think they are. Let us know of your successes and drop us a line.

Good Luck!  
Brenda

### **THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH**

*An amusing limerick sent to us by Frank Bryant from Eumundi, Queensland.*

**Brenda Parker – Suiseki Australia Newsletter Editor**

‘There once was a lady called Brenda,  
To the park for rocks they did senda,  
She found a stone like a mountain  
Just near the fountain,  
Now Brenda is glad they did senda!’

George and Johns ‘Timely Timber & Tool Tips’

April 2010

Hello ‘Rock Hounds’

We've been running our ‘Timely Tips’ segment for over 3 years now and as new members are joining the Suiseki club, we thought that it would be a good idea to rehash some of our tips so that newer members can catch up on some of our earlier tips.

This month we'll go back to the start and bring you part 1 of a basic list of equipment that you'll need to start creating your Daizas.

For those who are new or others who need a refresher, read on. (All others can skip to the bottom of the page for this month's hot tip).

1. *Pencils*: For marking the outline of your stone.

2. *Sharp blade*: Utility knife or better still, a scalpel type knife with various blade shapes. This is very good for cutting the penciled outline for a clean edge to work to, also ideal for keeping the above pencils sharp.

3: *Sandpaper and steel wool*: Various grades for smoothing the work prior to finishing. 4: *Carving Tools*: Traditionally, these would have been small woodworking / carving chisels and these tools are still very useful for removing material quickly. These are available in many different shapes e.g. flat, curved, angled etc. Good quality chisels will cost from \$25.00 to \$40.00 each.

The modern equivalent of the chisel is the Rotary Tool. We'll talk more about this in coming months.

5: *Chalk*: This is needed to mark the bottom of your stone if it is irregular in shape and not (god forbid) sawn flat. (*Since this article was printed, we have learned that if you haven't got a nice,*

*naturally flat bottom, a little bit of subtle work with the old diamond saw is acceptable. Ed).* By chalking the bottom of the stone and placing it your Daiza with slight pressure, you can more easily see where the high spots are.

6: *Grip Mat & Bench Hook:* These are ideal for holding the work in place while carving / sanding etc. Grip Mats available from supermarkets, hardware shops etc. Bench Hooks can be made from off cut timber pieces. (See March 2009 newsletter for details).

7: *Fret or Coping Saw:* If you don't have access to a scroll or band saw, you will need this saw to cut your Daiza from the piece of timber.

8: *Safety Equipment:* Don't forget the dust mask and glasses / goggles, earplugs and an apron are other worthwhile additions to the toolbox.

This month's tip is to go to the local Aldi market and grab one of these handy little gadgets.

It's a universal vice that can be attached to the edge of a table or workbench and is ideal for hold smaller pieces of timber firmly so that you can use two hands while carving.

These are very similar to a carver's vice, carvers needing both hands to hold the chisel and mallet.



Clamps to table up to 50 mm thick



Soft rubber jaws stops damage to work



Rotates through 360 x 45 degrees horizontally and 90 degrees vertically



A carving vice can cost over \$100, these babies can be had for \$15. Get down to Aldi and get yourself some vice.

So long till next time,  
G&J

## **THIS MONTH'S ROCK FEATURE: DOLERITE**

Dolerite is a dark gray to black silica-poor igneous rock. It is composed of medium-sized crystals of white feldspar and dark pyroxene and olivine that are just visible to the naked eye. They vary in size between those of fine-grained quickly cooled basalt and coarse-grained slowly cooled gabbro. Dolerite occurs as intrusive volcanic necks, dykes, and sills, or as thick lava flows, and is often associated with rifting continents. This rock takes a high polish and is used for bench and table tops, building facings and monuments.

## **BEWARE OF THE FERAL WILDLIFE WHEN OUT ROCK HUNTING**

(Jan Briggs)

5.00am Saturday rose to a magnificent sunrise. Picked up Margaret at 7.00am for the 2 ½ hour drive north to Coffs to join some of their members on a rock hunt for petrified wood in the hills outside Woolgoolga. The early morning drive was mostly through fog, but otherwise uneventful. We were supposed to meet Lynette at Moonee shopping centre, about 30 minutes north of Coffs. When we ended up at Woolgoolga I realised we had gone too far, so asked at a servo and was told to go back to the turnoff to Moonee Beach. The shopping centre was just at this turnoff but you couldn't see it from the highway as it was mostly hidden by trees (and hard to see when you're doing 110kph on the highway). Good start to our adventure! Met Lynette who had just arrived and we needed a comfort stop so she directed us to where the toilets were but when we tried to get into the shopping centre the doors were closed - we had the wrong entrance! Should have started the alarm bells ringing for what was to become an eventful day.

We drove up to Glenreagh in the hills outside Woolgoolga via Nana Glen (didn't see Russell Crowe out for his daily jog). It was a really pretty drive and reminded me very much of Jamberoo and the Kangaroo Valley as it was elevated and the gardens looked a little different from the coastal ones. We stopped in Nana Glen for directions as it was at an intersection and there was no signpost to Glenreagh. Arrived a short time later at the Golden Dog (pub) - were first to arrive, followed 15 minutes later by another 2 car loads, then the expedition leader.

We then set off in convoy of 5 cars. The tar road became a dirt road and then we started to head upwards into the hills instead of along a (maybe it was there, but never saw it) creek. The alarm bells were certainly ringing by now and I was thinking I'm glad our leader knows where she is taking us. After about half an hour driving past a couple of old farm houses littered with derelict cars, machinery and the usual farm junk, the road petered out in this isolated property - similar old farm house with the usual old junk. Our leader got out and approached the resident feral redneck hillbillies and stood in animated conversation with them for about 15 minutes, lots of gesticulation and waving of arms. The rest of us remained in our cars. At this stage it didn't look too unfriendly and all five cars were parked one behind the other on the single road with no hope of turning around, and I was the fourth car. Ian and Lynette both pulled into an area beside the farm sheds and tractors to clear the road for myself and the last car to turn around. I then pulled into this same area and was in the process of turning when the animated conversation suddenly became confrontational and abusive with extremely foul language and threats of violence being directed at us. As I was turning, my front left hand wheel went into a hole which was not visible as it was covered with grass. By this time the resident feral/hippie woman was at my window shouting threats of violence. Ian (our only male in the party, the rest being mainly little old ladies) was trying to placate her and get her to calm down, which she did for a few seconds whilst she helped Ian lift the front of my car out of the hole whilst I reversed out (as fast as I could). I had visions of having a shotgun aimed at me through the open window. As I backed around the

feral/hippie male was trying to back his truck out of the house paddock with the threats that if he saw us again he would run us off the road, so there would have been another incident if he hadn't stopped to let me go.

We all retreated as quickly as possible and when I came over a hill the first two cars had pulled up on the side of the road, but very close to the crest of the hill. I hopped out to tell them to move further down the road as it was a dangerous place to stop just as Lynette came flying over the hill and slammed the brakes on followed by Ian in a cloud of dust. I might add the ladies from the first two cars were already on the roadside verge enthusiastically raking through roadside rubble which they thought was petrified wood. Before we had a chance to move the cars the truck came roaring over the hill, but we just got the one finger salute instead of the threatened violence.

We moved on quickly down the road to where we could pull off with safety and were standing on the side of the road mulling over the eventful morning and what to do next - the consensus of opinions being that the feral rednecks must have been growing an illegal crop at their isolated farm to warrant such an angry, abusive tirade against 5 car loads of (mainly) little old ladies looking for rocks - we hardly looked like the undercover cops! Suddenly over the top of the hill came the ferals' neighbour who had been present at the farmhouse melee. He jumped out of his van and proceeded to abuse us for taking the rocks from the bush, which were the habitats of wild animals, he was going to put us in to National Parks and Wildlife (we weren't in a national park – but at this stage it wasn't wise to challenge his reasoning), he was going to take our rego numbers and report us to the Police, and challenged us if we had a permit, etc. Of course he was perfectly right in what he said (as we all know), but it was just his delivery that was scary. When deciding what to do next I suggested forget the stones, lunch at the pub was the best option, so a quick U turn and we headed back into town.

Over a typical pub lunch our expedition leader informed us that she used to live up there with the hillbillies 20 years ago and knew the fella who owned the farm we ended up at. She had made arrangements with another farm owner close by to search his property. However that person lives in Coffs and is only there weekends and wasn't at his farm that weekend.

Ian was feeling badly that Margaret and I had driven 2 ½ hours just to get to Coffs and for the day to turn into such a non-event (no rocks, but plenty of excitement), so we invited ourselves and Lynette back to his place to see his collection of magnificent pines and junipers. The pines were very old and grown by him from seed. It was worth the 5 hours travelling just to be able to enjoy his bonsai.

So the moral of this story is if you are going on a rock hunt, do your homework first, check with property owners and receive their permission to fossick and organise permits if necessary. If organising a group rock hunt check to see if there is anything worthwhile collecting at the site first. And most of all, if you are lucky to receive permission fill in any holes you create, leave the site tidy and don't abuse the privilege granted to you.

We might not have found any stones on this occasion, but we sure had an education in the feral wildlife that inhabits the hills outside Glenreagh.

### **NEXT MEETING**

There will be no meeting in April due to school holidays, but there will be a daiza workshop at Ray Nesci's Bonsai Nursery on the 24<sup>th</sup> April starting at 9 am. See you all there.