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### **APRIL NEWSLETTER 2011**

**THE LAST REMINDER** that any unpaid memberships that are not received in the next couple of weeks, then this will definitely be your last newsletter! If you would still like to receive the newsletter, please post your cheque/money order for \$15.00 to the above address and remember to put your name and address on it.

Dear Members,

For many years it has always been a taboo subject for suiseki – using petrified wood in a display was definitely not on! Some purists say it is not a true suiseki but I am in two minds about it and after researching the subject on it, I would confidently say, ‘yes’ I would use it for a suiseki display.

Over the years I have found some wonderful examples that have been very well water-worn and unless I told you, you would not know the difference – so why can’t we use them? As far as I am concerned they are a stone but it just went through another process to end up the way it did. Are we very sure about how all other stones evolved and what process they actually went through. Maybe if we really knew they would also probably be in the ‘no-use’ basket?

Many scientists have debated on just how long this process actually takes to turn wood into stone. Some say millions of years, others say only a few hundred years and now there is a new generation of scientists that can now say, after many experiments, that they can turn wood into stone just after a few days!

In January 2005, a press release announced that scientists have now succeeded in petrifying wood in a few days. This process involves soaking little blocks of wood from a timber yard in a silica solution for a few days until the wood thoroughly absorbs the rock-forming solution. Then the wood pieces were heated to 1400 degrees in an oxygen free atmosphere and then the wood turns to stone. Soaking the wood in a tungsten solution produces a tungsten carbide petrified wood.

The reason scientists experimented in making the petrified wood was for it to be used in commercial applications. The petrified pieces of wood are also porous, like the wood was before this process so that they can be used in area where they need to separate industrial chemicals, filtering pollutants, and for soaking up contamination.

In the Petrified Forest National Park in northern Arizona, it is said that these trees grew about 225 million years ago. These 'trees' are mostly formed of quartz and opal, two forms of silica. They were said to be buried in mud after being carried by a river, and then water carrying dissolved minerals filled the empty cells of the decaying wood with this matter until the structure becomes solid stone.

### Minerals that are found in petrified wood

Silica, in the form of silicon dioxide, commonly known as quartz is the most common of the replacement minerals. Often there are traces of other minerals that give petrified wood its unique colour. Iron oxide causes reds, browns, yellow and earthy tones. Copper and chrome oxide create greens/blues, silicates of aluminium produces whites, and manganese dioxide makes black.

An assemblage of petrified wood are called petrified forests and a lot of them around the world are managed by Federal or State Governments. The word 'petrified wood' comes from the Greek origin of '*petro*' meaning "rock" or "stone", literally meaning wood turning into stone.

Petrified wood has a Mohs hardness of 7, the same as for quartz crystal and to me with the hardness and colour – why can't they be used for suiseki displays?

Petrified forests are found all over the globe in just about every country in places like Argentina, Germany, Egypt, Greece, China, Belgium, USA, New Zealand, Australia and the list goes on and on.

So for my money, I would like to be an advocate for displaying good pieces of petrified wood in a suiseki display – how about you???

Happy Hunting,  
Brenda

### **THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH**

'The finest workers in stone are not copper or steel tools,  
but the gentle touches of air and water working at  
their leisure with a liberal allowance of time.'

- Henry David Thoreau

George and Johns 'Timely Timber & Tool Tips'

April 2011

Hello 'Rock hounds'

This month for the benefit of newer members and to refresh the memories of older (not aged) members we'll go over the points in selecting a suitable piece of timber for your daizas.

### **Sorting the Wood from the Trees:**

Definitions:

**Wood;** Something that comes from the 'Woodshed to the fireplace or something that may be removed from your ailing bonsai i.e. dead 'Wood'.

**Timber;** Wood that has been milled to dimension seasoned and can be obtained from a timber yard or other timber suppliers. This is the material that you will need to craft your daizas. You are going to spend a reasonable amount of time and effort to produce a daiza that's worthy of the stone it's going to hold so spend some time in selecting a good piece of timber to work with. Some of the points to watch for are;

1. Never use timber that is 'green' (unseasoned), your efforts will be wasted when your daiza begins to warp or crack. Some of the imported mass produced daizas have this problem. Also the sap / resin in green wood will quickly gum up your carving bits.
2. Try to avoid using timber that has a lot of knots e.g. some of the pines. This type of timber is difficult to work, can damage your carving bits and will give you poor results. Look for timber that is fairly straight grained.
3. Some of the softer timbers like Western Red Cedar or Pacific Maple are good to start out with, you will get a feel for working the timber and it will be easier to achieve a satisfactory result.
4. As your talents improve, try working on some harder, fine grained timber. This will require more effort but the end result can be satisfying, particularly if you're working on an intricate design.
5. Timber can be sourced from many locations including local timber yards, joinery shops (they sometimes have off-cut bins), building sites (ideal for hardwood flooring & decking off-cuts) and local council clean ups for old discarded furniture (be sure that the timber you collect is a solid piece and not a veneered piece of ply or particle board).
6. If you can't find a suitable piece of timber you can buy small pieces from specialty timber merchants such as Trend Timbers. Although some of these can be quite expensive, you generally only need a small piece so the cost is not prohibitive if it produces a good finished daiza.

As a bonus for not bringing you a 'Timely Tips' article last month, we'll do another in the Timber Talk series.

At our last workshop George brought in a piece of Jelutong, a timber that has great potential for daiza carving.

## **Jelutong**

**Botanical name: *Dyera costulata***

Jelutong (also called Bukit) is a tall hardwood tree that grows in Malaysia, Borneo and Sumatra. It grows rapidly and has many commercial timber uses, but it is equally well known for its by-product, latex. Trees grow to 60 m. or more with diameters of 1.5–1.8m.



The wood from Jelutong is very light in color, ranging from a creamy white to pale yellow and has a plain, straight grain and fine even texture. These qualities make it an ideal timber for carving work. Jelutong works equally well with hand or machine tools, although gum can pose problems on cutting surfaces. The timber is light in weight and reasonably soft and takes staining and finishing well.

Sawdust from Jelutong may cause allergic skin reactions in some people so care should be taken when working the timber.

The list of uses for Jelutong is fairly long. It is an excellent choice for sculpting and carving. It is also used to make architectural models, drawing boards, picture frames, wooden shoes (clogs), furniture parts, doorknobs, dowels and pencils.

Jelutong is rotary cut for corestock for flush doors, plywood and laminated boards. It is used to make toys, dowels, blackboards, brush handles, matchsticks and packing crates.

Jelutong is one of many trees tapped for latex that is used as a base for chewing gum. The latex is also used in paints and for sizing paper.

More on timber in future newsletters.

So long till next time,  
G&J

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**Photos of some of the picture stones on display at our last meeting.**



A beautiful specimen of Prehnite gathered from the old Prospect quarry west of Sydney



Could this be an underwater creature? A jelly fish maybe?



A chrysanthemum stone from Japan



Tiger –stripe stone



A friendly dinosaur



A Contemplating sitting man



Abstract stone

**NEXT MEETING**

There is **NO** meeting in April because of the school holidays.

There is a daiza workshop at Ray Nesci’s nursery this coming Saturday the 9<sup>th</sup> of April starting at 9am. Bring your lunch and all the necessary equipment.

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