SUISEKI AUSTRALIA

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AUGUST NEWSLETTER 2007

Dear members,

Great and famous Monoliths – these marvels of nature really make you feel quite insignificant and the power of their formation simply make you realize how minute we really are in the wide scope of things.

Some of the more famous in Australia include Uluru (Ayres Rock), Mt. Augustus, Bald Rock and The Nut. The largest surprisingly enough is not Uluru as the tourist bureaus like us to believe, but in fact it is Bald Rock which is situated on the New South Wales and Queensland border and is Australia's largest exposed granite surface.

Mt. Augustus in Western Australia is twice the size of Uluru. It sits on a bedrock of granite and is part of Mt. Augustus National Park. It is estimated that the rock of this mountain is 1000 million years old. It was formed from an uplift which raised an ancient seabed of a sandstone conglomerate and folded it into an inverted "V" shape. The granite rock which lies beneath Mt. Augustus is said to be 1650 million years old.

Uluru, or Ayres Rock as it was once named, was formed from 900 to 600 million years ago when much of central Australia was below sea level in what was called the "Amadeus Basin". Rivers dumped sand and gravels onto this sea floor until about 550 million years ago, when parts of the Amadeus Basin began to uplift. Uluru is made of these sands and gravels. Over a period of 100 million years the land mass containing the future Uluru collided with other continents – leading to folding, faulting and more uplift. This slow motion collision squeezed the sand and gravel sediments into rock – and also tipped them on their side through nearly 90 degrees. Geologically speaking not much has happened to change this area over the last 65 million years except for a bit more erosion of the exposed surfaces. A few locations (Uluru, Kata Tjuta and Mt. Connor) survived above the surrounding areas because they were made of harder rock that was 'cemented' together with quartz.

Uluru is not a giant isolated boulder partly-buried in the desert sand. In fact, it's part of a huge mostly underground rock formation that's 100-or-so kilometers wide and perhaps 5 kilometres thick. There are only three parts visible above the ground and they are Uluru, the magnificent domes of Kata Tjuta (Olgas) and the forgotten mountain, Mount Connor. The geologists, Sweet and Crick wrote that….

> "Uluru is not a giant boulder, as one popular view would have us believe. The huge vertical 'slab' of rock, of which Uluru is but the exposed tip, extends far below the surrounding plain….."

The Nut, situated at Stanley in the northwest of Tasmania is a daunting structure and is a great tourist attraction. It is 150 metres high and 2 kilometres around and its claim to fame is that it is a 13 million-year-old plug of a former volcano.

No doubt there are many more of these 'monoliths' all over the world and just researching them makes you think of the tremendous power that is below us on this planet. The force alone just to thrust and force these giants to the surface over millions of years is just phenomenal. How good would it be to compress the millions of years into just a few minutes to observe this immense change to the outer crust of the earth's surface……fascinating!!

I think of this process everytime I come across a rocky outcrop when out on my travels – to think they have been heated, squeezed, pushed and thrusted to the surface. It is an ongoing phenomenon. All of the stones we collect for suiseki have inadvertently all come from the same process but on a smaller scale.

I hope you can share my enthusiasm for this wonderful feat of nature?

Happy Hunting,
Brenda

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

'Observe always that everything is the result of change, and get used to thinking that there is nothing Nature loves so well as to change existing forms and to make new ones like them.'

- Marcus Aurelius (121 – 180 AD)

George and Johns '**T**imely **T**imber & **T**ool **T**ips' August 2007,

Hello 'Rock hounds'
To those members who made it to the 'Tops' weekend, give yourselves a round of applause for being so productive in spite of the fine but rather chilly weather.

This month we'll give you some tips about 'Keeping it Clean' i.e. care and maintenance of your woodworking equipment.

1. *Sharpen your hand tools as soon as they start to become blunt.* Any chisels or other cutting equipment will work more effectively if the edges are kept in good order. A sharp instrument will need less effort to use and will give you a cleaner cut. A dull edge on a tool means that you need to use more force and the risk of damage to your work, or injury to yourself is a lot greater. Once the edge is blunt, re-sharpen or replace the tool.
2. Try to keep the pointy ends of your tools protected when not in use. Tool pouches or plastic tubing over the ends protects the tool and saves you from being stabbed when raking around the bottom of your tool box.
3. After the day's work is done, remove all dust or other material from your tools and wipe them over with an oily cloth before storing them. This helps to keep any moving parts lubricated and also prevents rusting. Light machine oils are good; also some lanolin based products are available although these can leave a sticky residue. Water repellant products such as WD40 can be used to free up stiff parts but are not as good as oil for long term protection.

Next month we'll deal with maintenance and care of your power tools. Hope to see some of you at our August 18th workshop.
So long till next time,
G&J

STONE APPRECIATION (SUISEKI) by Jan Briggs

Suiseki (sui = water, seki = stone) is the study and enjoyment of naturally formed stones as objects of beauty. The art of suiseki involves the collection, preparation and appreciation of unaltered, naturally formed stones. These stones are found in mountain streams, on windblown deserts, along ocean beaches – anywhere that nature may have deposited or shaped them. They are chosen to represent part of a scene in nature - mountains, waterfalls, caves, or they may represent objects – men, animals, boats, huts, or they may just be uniquely patterned – Japanese chrysanthemum stones are probably the best known example of these.

As with bonsai, suiseki was first practiced by the Chinese during the Song Dynasty (960-1279), and are generally referred to as Chinese scholar stones. As trade and contact between China and Japan flourished in the middle ages, the Japanese adopted and adapted the art form to their own culture, and like bonsai, have set guidelines and refined the art.

Suiseki are often seen at bonsai shows, either to compliment a bonsai on show, or as a separate display in themselves.

CHINESE SCHOLAR ROCKS
Chinese appreciation of stones and rocks comes from their love of mountains and nature, coupled with their religious and philosophical beliefs. Over time the Chinese have created gardens that resembled the natural wonders they loved. Such gardens included the use of small trees and large rocks to represent mountains. Reflecting the Chinese taste, their stones are usually vertical, fantastically shaped, with deep folds and hollows, pass-through holes, highly eroded surfaces, and convoluted forms.

JAPANESE SUISEKI
The Japanese culture became familiar with the appreciation of miniature garden rocks from the Chinese. The first rocks they saw were abstract shapes with large and small holes perforating the stone. These were placed in ceramic or bronze containers and held upright with small pebbles. Because the Japanese embraced and adapted it to suit their own conditions, and to conform with their spiritual beliefs – Zen Buddhism – which places emphasis on austerity, subtlety and serenity, they admire stones stripped of all distracting elements, and what they deem unnecessary details – their stones must be dark in colour, hard and free of flaws. They have turned toward stones that are more horizontal, with simpler lines that usually depict various forms of mountains or mountain ranges.

KOREAN SUSEOK
The Koreans also became familiar with the appreciation of miniature garden stones from the Chinese. Their deep respect for all of nature has influenced their appreciation of stones.

WESTERN VIEWING STONES
In recent years appreciation for suiseki and Chinese scholar stones has spread far beyond Asia, and collectors are active in many countries, and exhibitions are held in cities throughout the world. In the western world the term "viewing stone" is being increasingly applied to the appreciation of natural stones as art. Japanese suiseki criteria formed the basis for defining good and bad characteristics of our stones – the so-called "rules". As interest in the aesthetics of viewing stones increases in the west, we are now looking at our stones and using the term "viewing stones" as an adjunct to more traditional "suiseki" criteria, as defined by the Japanese.

Whichever term we use, one of the key aspects of viewing stones is the **suggestability** of the stone. True suiseki, scholar's rocks, suseok or viewing stones should **"suggest"** something to the viewer, not be a precise miniature representation of the object.

WHAT MAKES A ROCK A SUISEKI OR A VIEWING STONE?

Using the strictest of rules as practised by purist suiseki organisations in Japan, a true suiseki must possess all the qualities listed below. It is important to be aware of the rules and definitions of viewing stones.

Size: small, 2 to 14 inches is best, should be able to be held in one hand.
Colour: black is preferred, but dark colours (brown, green, deep red) or a combination of dark colours are acceptable. White, if it appears in the appropriate place suggesting water, ice, snow is desirable, but an all white stone is not. Lighter colours would be acceptable for viewing stones.

Hardness: all viewing stones must be dense and hard and should not scratch easily.

Texture: smooth is best, but most textures, except chipped or recently cracked, are acceptable. Defects such as cracks or damaged areas must be healed by time.

Alterations: mild cleaning and hand rubbing a suiseki is acceptable, but no staining, grinding or cutting is allowed. It is not forbidden to "machine or work" a stone, but to do so lowers its value since an altered stone is not a suiseki.

Shape: all viewing stones can be classified into a style such as mountain view, waterfall or figure stone. Each style will have a best front and ideally a flat (or nearly flat) bottom.

CLASSIFICATION

When you find a suitable stone the next logical step is for you to classify it into one of many possible groups. Until you "show" the stone it is not critical for you to be technically correct in your terminology. If you enjoy the stone it makes no difference what you call it. But once you go public, like bonsai, it is important to label the stone as accurately as possible. Since the shape determines the style it is of great importance to be familiar with as many variations of style as possible.

Making the Classification: initially it is the suggestive power of a stone, and subsequently the strength of the owner's opinion, with or without peer approval, that places the stone in a classification. You make the call. If you see a mountain, it is a mountain view stone. But remember, keep an open mind. Look at it in different lights, full sunlight, a darkened room with light showing on it at varying angles. Turn it around, and upside down. You may see something new. The classification system as we know it today is truly Japanese; complex, incorporating their history, culture and religious beliefs. The written rules are traditionally inflexible, as in bonsai, yet are accommodating due to their scope.

The Japanese categorise viewing stones by their place of origin, for example, the river's name; their colour and their style. In Japan most stones are found in their rivers, hence their name suiseki (meaning water stone). Borrowing in part from the Japanese system, stones collected from outside of Japan are usually grouped by style alone, into one of the following categories. Each category has many different styles and each style has many subcategories.

Classification by Shape: The most commonly used classification system divides suiseki into two major sub-classifications: scenic landscape stones and object stones. Each sub-classification is subdivided into further categories.

SCENIC LANDSCAPE STONES

Mountain view stones:	▪ *Distant* ▪ *Near view*
Waterfall stones:	▪ *Thread waterfall* ▪ *Sheet waterfall* ▪ *Dry waterfall*
Mountain stream	
Plateau	
Island	
Slope	
Shore stones:	▪ *Reef* ▪ *Sandbar*
Waterpool stones	
Coastal rock	
Cave	
Shelter	
Tunnel	

OBJECT STONES

House	
Boat	
Bridge	
Animal	
Bird	
Insect	
Fish	
Scholar stone:	*(resembling the human form)*

Classification by Colour: Coloured stones are set apart from other suiseki by their deep, subdued colour. The stone is appreciated for its colour and for what the colour suggests, such as dawn, dusk, night, spring, summer, etc (eg black stones, red stones, blue stones, five colour stones).

Classification by Surface Pattern: Pattern stones are set apart from other suiseki by the striking surface patterns formed by the stone's textures, colours, lines, embedded minerals, and other features. The most common pattern stones are:

SURFACE PATTERN STONES

Plant:	▪ *Flower (chrysanthemum; plum blossom)* ▪ *Fruit* ▪ *Leaf* ▪ *Grass*
Celestial:	▪ *Moon* ▪ *Sun* ▪ *Star*
Weather:	▪ *Rain* ▪ *Snow* ▪ *Lightening*
Abstract:	▪ *Tiger stripe* ▪ *Tangled net*

- *Pit mark*
- *Snake*

Classification by Place of Origin: Nearly all Japanese collectors classify suiseki by their place of origin; the most significant being various rivers or mountain regions of Japan.

Reference

The Japanese Art of Stone Appreciation. Suiseki and Its Use with Bonsai, Vincent T Covello and Yuji Yoshimura

WHERE AND WHEN

Our meetings are held at the Don Moore Community Centre, North Rocks Road, North Rocks. N.S.W. on the third Wednesday 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.

The Illawarra Bonsai Society Inc., of which I am president of, will be conducting a bonsai and suiseki exhibition at a **new** venue this year at the Sylvania Heights Community & Youth Centre, Sylvania Heights Reserve, Box Road, Sylvania Heights. N.S.W. The show will be on Saturday and Sunday, 8 & 9 September, 2007 from 10.00 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day. Admission is $4 and for those of you who are in Sydney we would be very pleased to see you at our show. Come and join us!

DAIZA MAKING WORKSHOP

Our next workshop will be held on the 18th August, at our usual venue at Ray Nesci's Bonsai Nursery, Sagars Road, Kenthurst, N.S.W. Starting time will be 9 a.m. and goes until about 4 or 5 p.m. Bring your lunch, stones, wood and tools for another great day at creating 'masterpieces'. See you there!

NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting is on Wednesday 15th August at 7.30 p.m. The subject for this meeting night will be on object stones. These stones do not suggest anything in nature but could resemble objects from everyday life e.g. a boat, a hut, shoe etc. etc. See what you can find to bring along. See you all then.

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