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SUISEKI NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2024

Dear Members,

The next suiseki workshop is on the 21st of September at Ray's nursery. Hope to see a lot of you there so we can prepare for our display at The School of Bonsai's Show on the 19th and 20th October, 2024.

The display theme will be on food stones.

We are now in Spring and thankfully all the horrible weather we had in Autumn and Winter will be behind us, and we can get out in nature and maybe find that elusive beautiful stone?

Speaking of finding stones, recently I went to a bonsai show at the weekend, and on inspecting the sales table (as one would do), there was a beautiful stone on sale for only \$5! I picked it up and thought – 'ooh! I like that'. It was very dense and heavy with some dark brown colour intrusions on it. On cleaning the stone this morning, (the previous owner was going to grow small trees on it), I was amazed at how lovely I thought the stone was. It must have been found on or near a beach as there were shell imprints on it but not overtaking the actual stone. When I have made a daiza for it, I will print a photo of it in a future newsletter. On speaking with the organizer of the show, he told me that it once belonged to a very prominent bonsai teacher here in Sydney in Elizabeth Simeonoff in the early days, so to me that became more special. Unfortunately, Elizabeth is no longer with us but every time I look at that stone, I will remember her as in the early days of bonsai, Elizabeth was a prominent teacher of bonsai and suiseki.

I think when we collect stones, it is very special when we know who, when and where the stone was collected. In the very early days here in Sydney, Australia in general, suiseki was only practiced by the very few who could travel overseas to see these marvels of nature. Remember, I am talking before the internet, mobile phones and computer websites.....wow! that's giving my age away!!!!!! Now we are privy to see what is happening all over the world and the stones that other countries can find. For example, Italy has the magnificent Ligurian stones, Japan has the Chrysanthemum stones, America also has unique stones, China and the other Asian countries also have their unique stones. I think now, we in Australia have become more experienced in finding beautiful unique stones.

For example, here is a short article written back in 1984 by Niki McCarthy on Australian Rock

'We have some of the most beautiful rock in the world; we can use it to create mini-landscapes, rock settings or simply use them for viewing stones. Rock varies in colour and texture from different parts of Australia. Bush rock (from the Blue Mountains) is beautiful with steel grey and bluish colours that complement our various favourite bonsai trees. Try bush rock with Azaleas, Figs, Junipers or Cedars, just for starters – they look fantastic.

Rocks from South Australia (the type used in aquariums), craggy and rusty orange colour is equally fascinating. The beauty of these rocks is that they have holes and patterns like Swiss Cheese; some of the patterns form natural 'mini' lakes, some have the surface of a desert, or a moon-like surface. This can be a wonderful influence on the theme of your bonsai or used alone in a suiseki display. Don't follow the crowd, be individual and think how nature thinks; no two trees are the same, just as no two natural settings or suiseki displays are the same. Rocks can create a desert, lake or a craggy ocean cliff – just use your imagination and create a fantasy.'

Following is an article written by Richard Roberts back in 1980.

'Rocks, like stands, Tokonoma, scroll pictures, beautiful pots and soe, belong in that area of Bonsai where one begins to realise the visual alchemy of a dramatic presentation of nature in miniature. Capturing something of the great panorama of mountain, tree, sky and sea, crystallised in our favourite room.

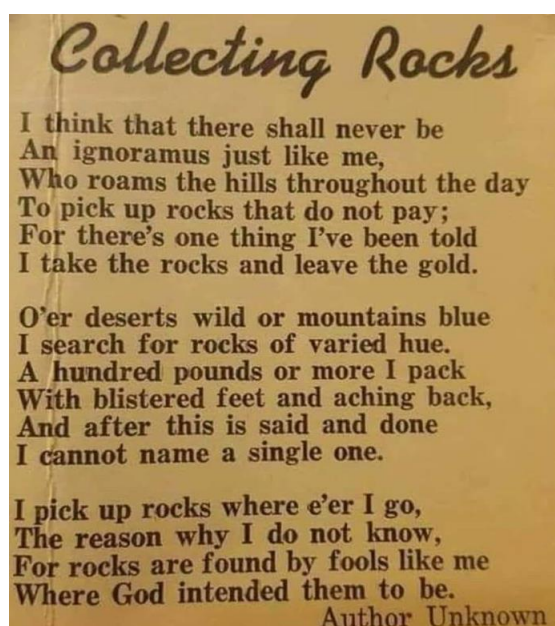
A viewing stone which conjures up a distant mountain range, beautifully presented on its own specially carved stand and fitting its unique shapes exactly, opens a whole new interest. It recalls the memory of where you found and appreciated such a treasure, the friend you conned into carving the beautiful stand (if that's not your own bag), or the time you bought such a stone from a dealer in Hong Kong, Yokahama or Alice Springs. Sometimes our friends cannot participate to the extent of our own interest in bonsai, but they can often identify with an allied interest, such as this.

A collection of viewing stones so set up, is a beautiful addition to a room, doesn't need watering and doesn't need to take up much much space.

When you bring a bonsai into the house, select a viewing stone and arrange it nearby with the bonsai on its stand, instead of a soe (accompanying plant) and see how effective it is. You don't have to have a Tokonoma (special exhibition area in a Japanese House) but keep it simple – only 2 or 3 elements in this exercise – a case of 'more' is not 'better'.

Now, looking back at all these articles written in the very early days for us here, we can respect their experiences when suiseki was in its infancy. I think now we have all learnt so much in recent years and it goes to thank all those experienced people all over the world who have shared their expertise and knowledge on newsletter publications, internet articles and utube features.....so thanks to everyone who have made this collecting hobby such a joy and learning experience for all of us here 'DOWNUNDER'!!!

Happy Hunting,
Brend



JUST ONE MORE LITTLE ROCK FOR MY COLLECTION



NO!! These are not the type of rocks for collecting!!!!!!

The following article was given permission to be reprinted here by the Californian Aiseki Kai, so thank you to Nina.

STONES AND TRADITION

Generally speaking, stones and rocks have a very strong influence on our sentiments towards natural beauty. Rocks of various shapes lie everywhere on the earth and are found alongside trees, grasses and waters. They make a scenery more effective by giving a finishing touch or integrating beauty of a landscape by combining the individual character of their shapes and colours.

It is beyond our imagination how nature has been transforming its aspect from time immortal, long before the birth of mankind, although the processes of change and the periods have been made clear from the scientific point of view.

What a long history is hidden in a single suiseki, only large enough to be held in the hands? They may be the same as other worthless stones, but when we find Suiseki which may be said to be a symbol of nature created by nature among numerous stones, and appreciate them, we may imagine the tales told by the stone weathering the storms and snow for long years and become attuned to such poems of nature. In our present society, where man destroys nature, and men oppress each other, we can feel the supreme joy of living where we sit downface to face the stones quietly.

For man living in the Stone Age, stone were their first utensils necessary for daily life and were the first implements invented by them. Henceforth, the close relationship between mankind and stone, in which are still hidden mysteries of ancient Japanese has continued constantly resulting in foundation stones, groups of stone statues, stone Buddhist images of Shumisen, the stone stages etc. of the old temples and shrines which may be called stone culture, in which are still hidden mysteries of ancient Japanese history and at the same time they may also be the keys to solve them. Moreover, our ancestors learned the art of gardening from China, introduced the natural arrangement of stones in gardening by natural stones, and then discovered beauty of reconstruction of nature by natural materials. At that time, they already must have begun to recognize and enjoy the joy of stones themselves.

Upon this groundwork, there arose the Tea Ceremony in the Muromachi Era and Suiboku painting appeared under the influence of the Chinese paintings of the Sung and Yuan Periods. They were greatly interested in ornaments and decorations of the Shoin (Study), and Hiroma (reception hall) of Sukiya type houses used paintings and calligraphy together with pottery and porcelain Imported from China. They used Chinese stones also to enhance their taste for landscape paintings. It was in this period that the appreciation of a stone was firmly established. Among those stones, those resembling the most

landscape painting (Sansui-ga) were put in the tokonoma, and people enjoyed the stones with Waka (Japanese short poem) placed beside them. Such elegant accomplishments were pursued also in the last years of the Edo Era. The literati and artists like Rai Sanyo, appreciated landscape stones and had meetings to describe them in verse and to recite it. In the appreciation of Suiseki at the present time, we owe much to such traditions.

ESSENTIAL QUALITIES OF SUISEKI

In Suiseki, a stone molded by nature, represents a scene in nature itself, and fosters unlimited imaginative power among lovers of Nature and draws out the essence of natural beauty to show it to them. It is natural to appreciate Suiseki itself, and also it is necessary to have a thorough knowledge of the scene commonly represented or familiar in the Suiseki world. Although there is a wide variety in the beauty of natural scenery, if we cultivate a discriminating eye to discover places appealing deeply to us in mountains, rocks etc. having artistic beauty in their shapes the more our interest and discerning eye in Suiseki are deepened. Only the most natural and simple appearance is the ideal in Suiseki, and it is the basic rule of appreciation in customary practice.

As Suiseki transfers natural scenery to formative shapes, they must win the satisfaction of all. Appreciation of such forms is stringent and not easy, but one can find its own pleasure freely in nature represented by Suiseki. If there are some defects in the quality, shape, colour tone etc. of the stones, it does not matter so long as the stones have appealing quality. However, stones whose natural forms have been destroyed by artificial grinding are of different nature from Suiseki.

- Onuki Chuzo

Some photos from our last meeting and workshop day at Ray's and the theme was on abstract stones



Left: George's stone from Northern New South Wales

Right: My stone from China



Above left: Another one of my stones



Above right: Ray's abstract 'figure'



Above Left: Rolf's amazing stone and daiza



Above Right: Greg's fabulous stones sourced from the family's property in Oberon



Above: John's 3 stones all sourced from here



Above: An excellent abstract stone from our member in Wollongong

SEE YOU ALL ON THE 21ST SEPTEMBER AT THE WORKSHOP AT RAY'S

