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SUISEKI NEWSLETTER MARCH 2022

Dear Members,

We are now into autumn and this year we didn't have a summer at all thanks to La Nino and the horrendous amounts of rain we have had that was dumped on our eastern coast in the past couple of months. Widespread flooding, thunderstorms, hail, you name it we have had it. The saddest thing is, it is not over yet and there are so many people who have lost everything. It has been tragic, combined as well with Covid, we have all missed our glorious summer so people could get out and about.

Anyway, enough doom and gloom! We had our first daiza workshop last month which was well represented (on an unusually somewhat drier day) and it was great to see everyone again. I think we miss the camaraderie that we all share with our stones and coming face to face after months of isolation was so exciting with lots of stories told around the lunch table.

Tom Elias in America has done an excellent job in producing stone seminars via Zoom on different topics during our lockdown which has kept us all pinned to our computers. It is so wonderful to get all this information spread around so we can all learn more about our stones. I take my hat off to him for going to so much trouble in organizing all this information for the stone lovers around the world. There is another one coming on March 25th and 26th, so when I get all the information I will certainly let you all know.

Before all of the rain in late spring, I was cleaning out my garden and I came across some stones that were partially buried that I collected years ago. The covering of leaves and moss that composted every year hid them from view and it was so much fun to rediscover them again. I gave them a bit of a clean and placed them on the cement path in full sun and then when all the rain started (thanks to La Nino), they were then 'bombarde'd' with all the heavy falls and they have come up a treat. A lesson learnt there, that leaving stones out in the elements helps to 'purify' the surface to get rid of all the soil, moss stains and grit that accumulates in all the crevices. So now I have a couple more stones to make daizas for!! If you have stones that were put in the too hard basket, place them on timber shelves, on concrete paths etc. (but not on the soil), so they get all of that constant rain to 'purify' the surface.

I am sending out a plea to our members. If you have an article or photos you would like to share with the rest of us, please do not hesitate to contact me so I can put them in the newsletter so we can share with other members what we have here in our own country. Please contact me on my email brendap7@bigpond.com

So for now, stay safe and dry and hope to see you all at our next daiza workshop on the 12th March at Ray's starting at the usual time of 9am.

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

DISPLAYING SUISEKI IN A SUIBAN

Unfortunately in our country it is very hard to source good suibans (flat trays with no holes) to display our stones in. If you are lucky enough to travel overseas they may be found sometimes at bonsai nurseries or shops selling pots but even now they are still too hard to source. I think that they are hard to make and fire successfully (as I found out when learning pottery for 15 years) and the breakages that occur when returning to your home is quite high.

Very early on when I was collecting stones I was lucky enough to gain a few from people selling their collections of bonsai paraphernalia when they retired and I treasure them. I was also lucky enough that very early on when some bonsai friends would travel to Japan they too would bring back very shallow bonsai trays (with holes) and they were given to me when they gave up bonsai and suiseki. So when I have put stones on display I would cover the holes with tape, fill them with the sand and I was the only person who would know. They were beautifully made, very shallow and they did the trick!! Sometimes you have to make do, and I know that doesn't sound very 'suiseki-like' but we wanted to put on the best stone display to get them out there for people visiting shows to see. Of course we all know better now but very early on we flew blind, so to speak!!

A suiban should be approximately twice the size of the suiseki. It should be very shallow, not have a very glossy glaze and the colour should complement the colour of the stone being displayed. They can be oval or rectangular in shape and this would depend on the stone you are displaying.

Sand placed in the suiban should be fine grained, a neutral colour with no impurities in it and the surface should be flat so that when the stone is placed on, the stone stands out. The surface of the sand must be about ¼ of an inch below the rim of the suiban. A little flat trowel used specifically for this purpose can be purchased from bonsai nurseries. With different coloured stones try to match or complement the stone with the appropriate colour of the sand. Over many years I have collected many different coloured fine sands from scraping the top of bull ant's nests. At each nest there were different coloured sands brought up by the insects depending on which area they are in. I sieved them to remove any vegetable matter and placed them in containers. So now I have an endless supply of any colour. White sand should be avoided.

Depending on the shape of the stone, direction of the stone is important when placing in a suiban. If the stone is very symmetrical visually, it would be placed in the centre. When the stone has 'direction' then you would have to move it to the left or right in the tray. Remember to get the harmony between the suiban, the stone and the sand for a well displayed stone. The suiban can then be put on a flattish bonsai stand to elevate it further.

What is a doban?? A doban is a suiban made of bronze and these are usually reserved for very antique or very special stones.



A mountain stone in a bronze doban

In last month's newsletter Igor showed us his daiza that he made for his turtle stone, so then it encouraged our member in Canberra to send us a photo of his frog stone. Thanks for sharing!!



BALL'S PYRAMID



On the left is my latest project – a stone from Tasmania and I thought it was very reminiscent of Ball's Pyramid in the photo on the right.

Ball's Pyramid is a remnant of a shield volcano close to Lord Howe Island off the Australian East Coast. It is 562 metres high, 1,100 metres long and 300 metres across. It is the tallest volcanic stack in the world and is 7 million years old.

In 2001 a team of entomologists went there to see if they could find a population of the Lord Howe Island stick insect. It was considered extinct but as luck would have it this insect was found there and it only feeds on one particular species of shrub. They found 24 of these huge insects and brought them back to Australia in the hope of breeding them to keep the species going for future generations.



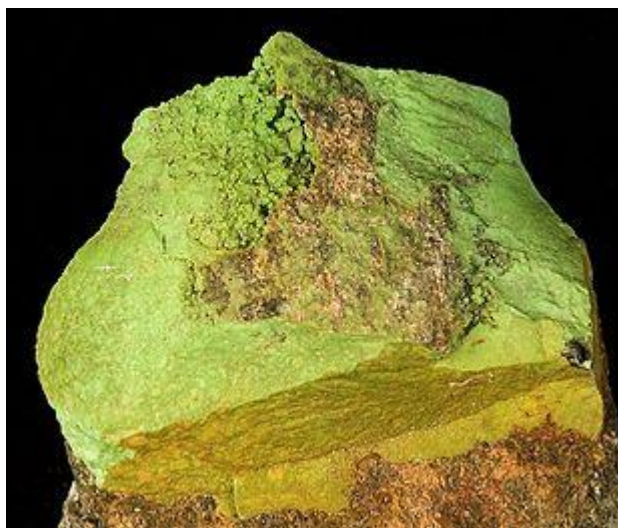
Our member in Tasmania helped out a friend who wanted a stone garden for display in her garden. What a great way to use up obsolete stones!!!!!! Great idea.

GASPEITE

Gaspeite is an extremely rare nickel carbonate rich member of the calcite group. The mineral was named after the Gaspé Peninsula, Quebec, Canada where it was first discovered.

In Australia, the mineral is also known as "Alura". It is also used by the Aboriginal Tribes to gain visions and to provide success to endeavours. It has been used by this culture in diagnostic healing. It is found at Kambalda and the townsite of Widgiemooltha, both south of Kalgoorlie, Western Australia.

The beautiful lime green colour of this mineral is preferred to produce cabochons, beads and tumbled stones, and also for carving ornamental objects and animal figurines.



See you all on the 12th March for our next daiza workshop.