



The Bent Twig

Dedicated to the learning, enjoying and promoting of bonsai

Convention Suiseki Trip

By Carolyn Van Hoecke

The suiseki field trip of the Golden State Bonsai Federation Convention provided an opportunity for a fall collecting expedition for the several club members who attended this fun event on October 27-28. Everyone met at the Super 8 motel in Willits for a caravan towards Covelo about 40 miles north where there are suitable collecting sites and safe access to the Eel River.

The inclement weather held off long enough for almost one complete day of searching along two locations at the rock-strewn riverbed. Because the area is located at the convergence of several different fault zones, the mineral content of the rocks includes pattern stones of many colors. Also, because of the geology and the rapid current of the water, the river bends in that area have developed deep gravel pits composed of millions of stones ranging from pea size to car size. Millions more are larger than a fist but smaller than a breadbox. The larger rocks tend to drop near the fast running river current, while the smaller stones are thrown out to the edges of the wash. Many participants wanted pocket-sized stones so were appreciative of the automatic sorting function. It's hard to understand how rocks piled next to each other could be so completely different. There are big and little, hard and soft, colored and plain, worn and freshly broken—all jumbled and tumbled together. At the time we were there, the river was at its lowest running directly against the cliff on the serpentine

bedrock so there was a large area of dry river wash to inspect and plenty of space for people to fan out and find the strata that appealed to them.



About 40 people participated. Everyone managed to find something. One of the best finds was about 2 x 4 inches grey and white with a picture of an old Japanese sage leaning on a cane on one upright side and a snow capped mountain sideways on the other. The owner will probably make two daiza to display the two distinct aspects of this wonderful stone. Two of the best larger stones were found by a 40-year collecting veteran and a first-time collector.

By the middle of the first afternoon, the hard rain had started. Everyone headed back for the sumptuous Chinese banquet that included a special dish for the tour guides of sushi made with fresh water eel in honor of the Eel River occasion. A slide show presentation showing special stones from around the world was enjoyed by everyone.

American Bonsai Association Sacramento



Because of the heavy rain, the second day of collecting was cancelled and a suiseki demonstration workshop presented instead. This turned out to be a real highlight. Participants brought their favorite stones from the day before to set up on the demonstration apparatus. Then, the experts adjusted the angles with sandbags, and blocked areas using the special boxes and various staves. They discussed alternative ways to prepare the stone. In many cases, there were several possibilities that were a revelation to the crowd. One view would be selected which was deemed adequate and complete and then some manipulations would reveal yet another that really got loud “ooohs and aaaahs.”

Many of us had never seen this type of stone demonstration before and definitely want to learn more from these Japan trained experts about how to do it. The whole point of the demo was that it often takes weeks or months for the proper display of a stone to reveal itself. It was particularly impressive to see an obvious view requiring a cut to the stone, and then to see an even more beautiful presentation develop out of the natural stone with no cuts. In most cases the advice was “don’t be in a big hurry just to cut something.” There was also lots of advice on developing surface patina and making presentation daiza and suiban.

The group leaders of this adventure were from our three local bay area suiseki clubs. We were all eager to go on more collecting trips with these folks and were invited to join them. More information will be in forthcoming newsletters.

Annual Holiday Party on Friday, December 17th

The American Bonsai Association of Sacramento and the Satsuki Aikokai will jointly host the annual Holiday Buffet at the Shepard Garden and Arts Center on Friday December 17th with social hour starting at 5:30 p.m.

This social occasion will be your opportunity to visit with old friends and meet new people interested in bonsai while you sample everyone’s favorite holiday recipes. Members, spouses, visiting family and friends are invited. Each attendee will receive one free door prize ticket.

The clubs will provide the ham, turkey, sodas, wine and beer. There will be a signup sheet at the November meeting for appetizers, salads, side dishes, and desserts. Members should bring a potluck dish with serving spoon intended to serve as many people as they will be bringing and the plates, glasses, napkins and silverware that their guests will need. If you haven’t decided what to bring, sign up anyway so we can get a general idea of how many people plan to attend. If you plan to attend the party but can’t make the November meeting, email Amanda Atkinson at amanda_atkinson@yahoo.com

As in prior years, the program will include a voluntary gift exchange. If you wish to participate in the package swap, bring a wrapped bonsai related gift with a value around \$15. Each person who brings a gift will receive one.

Also returning this year is the decorated for Christmas bonsai contest. Let’s see what creativity can be unleashed. There will also be a discussion and signup at the November meeting so we can be sure to allocate enough table space for entries.

Annual Club Auction

Total sales for the annual auction were \$3642 of which the club made \$429. We are down about \$1500 overall from last year, but member trees in great shape were sold for good prices so think about participating next year!

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November Meeting

Peter Tea will be here for the last time before starting an apprenticeship in Japan. He will discuss fall pine care and demonstrate on a black pine that will be raffled. Please bring pines for a round robin of help from Peter – the more trees the better the program will be!

Beginner/Novice Workshop

Roger Steel will present a beginner/novice workshop at his home on January 29th. The material will be black pine and the club will provide the material and instruction. Cost will be \$25, so sign up at the November meeting as there are only five openings.

Island Planting Workshop

Several people expressed interest in learning to make larger island stone plantings such as those shown with Hinoki Cypress and Ezo Spruce at the Capitol City Show. We can make arrangements with Mr. Maruyama to lead a workshop if we get at least three more people. You can either bring your own planting stones and materials if you have them or purchase from him. The date(s) will be determined later. If you are interested in an island workshop, contact Carolyn Van Hoecke (530) 666-6972 vanhoeckec@gmail.com

December Tree Care

December care tips include the following:

- Water cautiously (water requirements are decreasing as growth slows) but don't let plants dry out. **Do not rely totally on rain to water your trees.**
- Water if a frost is expected because it will protect the roots.
- Apply dormant spray (after trees are dormant) but be careful to avoid soaking the soil.
- Take moss away from the trunk because it will eat into the bark in the winter.
- Remove old wire that is cutting into branches.
- Trim back twigs to refine structure on deciduous trees.

- Clean up pots, remove weeds and generally get ready for the spring.
- Prepare soil ingredients and mix soils for the spring potting season.

Meeting Refreshment Schedule

Please remember to bring refreshments for the club meetings on the dates you volunteered.

- November – Carlotta Gutierrez. Need one more volunteer.
- December – Christmas Party
- January – Carolyn Van Hoecke and Ann Hultgren
- February – Mark Mendenhall
- March – Marilyn Irvine, Bill Burns and Pam Gallegos
- April – Ann Hultgren
- May – Bob Michael and Ann Harris
- June – Elaine Fulford and Myrt Rust

• ABAS Calendar of Club Events:

- **November 23rd - Club Meeting will feature Peter Tea discussing fall Black Pine work.**
- **December 17th – Holiday Party with Satsuki Aikokai**
- **January 29th – Black Pine Workshop at Roger Steel's home.**

Calendar of General Bonsai Events:

- **December 4th – Fresno Bonsai: Fourth Annual Bonsai Yard Sale. Plants, pots and stones – for more information call Ray Thieme at 559-439-3420 or 559-352-8069.**
- **January 15th and 16th – Bay Island Bonsai Annual Show at the Hall of Commerce, Alameda County Fairgrounds, 4501 Pleasanton Ave. Admission \$5.00. Auction: Saturday, 1:00 p.m.**
- **February 26th and 27th – Mammoth Fundraiser for GSBF Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt at the Lakeside Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Ave., Oakland**

American Bonsai Association Sacramento

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