



Long Island Bonsai Society

Monday, February 14, 2011 – Valentine's Night Party – 7:30 pm

Rocks – Making Basis for Them – Tom Marinace – 8 pm

The Classroom – Main Greenhouse - Planting Fields Arboretum

Wear your name tag, and when you buy a raffle ticket you will receive one more free!

*Long Island Bonsai Society
38 Elm Street
Lynbrook, NY 11563*



Daizias - the bases upon which you place your Suiseki (stone)

January has drawn to a close, and the days are starting to lengthen, but winter still has Long Island in its grip. Our trees are hopefully snug under their snowy blankets. Our turnout for January's meeting was small with some of our members flying off to hopefully warm and sunny Florida for the winter, but those who came out on a cold night were treated once again to a wonderful program by Vin Russo as he transformed a rather busy Japanese Yew into a beautiful semi-cascade.



Vin spoke of the virtues of a Japanese Yew comparing *Cuspidata* to the *Taxus* variety. They bud back easily with plenty of buds, which provides many options when styling. The foliage is finer than that of English or *Bacata* – *Cuspidata*'s foliage grows in a spiral. It is a vigorous grower, but once you get its basic shape it is fairly easy to maintain the shape. The variety roots easily and is hardy, and requires the same basic care garden variety yew does, and they like lots of fertilizer – not easy to find. Vin removed excess branching leaving just three large ones, with ultimately one of those being eliminated during the styling. Vin removed excess foliage, making wiring easier.



Copper wire is Vin's choice on conifers, and aluminum on deciduous material. He stated that aluminum wire is thicker, and tends not to cut into bark as easily as thinner copper wire does (copper wire has more holding power than aluminum wire of the same thickness). By bending a hook on the end of the wire, it allows it to be anchored to the trunk, or an adjacent large branch means less wiring. Plant in a coarse, well draining soil, using haydite or turface as the main component. This variety of yew is happy growing in the shade.



Vin provided some general comments that pertain to bonsai in general. In Japan it is considered acceptable to show trees with wire, if properly done; points are deducted for poor or overly visible wiring. A tree with

a rounded crown depicts a young tree, where a flat top is indicative of an older tree. If the material you are working with has an apical (top) growth habit, trying to make it a cascade is contrary to what the tree wants and needs to do – you need to listen to the tree.

Below is the styled tree which has less foliage and branching than in the previous photo proving less is truly more.



Francine Stopfer was the lucky raffle winner (you have to be in it to win it as the saying staying goes.)



Fran and Jim mentioned a black pine Vin had on display this fall at a show held at Suburban Gardens. As you can see it took a blue ribbon for Best in Show at that event.

Our holiday auctions provided \$610 to club. Our thanks to all who attended, donated, and purchased. We appreciated your generosity.

On a very sad note is the passing of one of the founding members of the Long Island Bonsai Society, Seymour Walzer, on January 16th. Our deepest condolences to his wife Arline, their children and grandchildren.

Our meeting falls on Valentine's Day, and we will have a Valentine's Night Party at 7:30 pm. A special dessert will be provided, and those bringing a Sweetie or Significant Other will be given a gift, plus a free raffle ticket for a Tom Marinace original Demo starts at 8 pm.



At our Board Meeting it was decided to look into ordering shirts with our club logo and club name. The shirts could be personalized, eliminating the need for name tags at meetings and club events. Please let Carol Kazdan, our shirt chairperson, (bckazdan@optonline.net) know whether or not you would be interested in purchasing a club shirt. Once she knows of our interest she will present details. Stay tuned... Francine

Special thanks to Planting Fields Arboretum on becoming a Supporting Member of the Long Island Bonsai Society.

February's Program...

Our program this month will be on **daiza** making, presented by our very own woodworker extraordinaire, Tom Marinace). Much to my disappointment I missed the meeting Tom did several years back, and have been eagerly hoping to have him do this program again for

us...Just in case doing only bonsai doesn't take up enough of your time, you may wish to add Suiseki to the list, and to do justice to your stone - stones, no one has just one of any hobby item - when on display, you should place it into its own daiza, suiban, or doban, and of course it needs a shoku, and a kiri bako.

We can thank John Naka and Yuji Yoshimura for helping create an interest in suiseki here in the Western world. Often the term viewing stone is used here rather than suiseki, but throughout the world stones have played a part in the life and development of man, sometimes strictly utilitarian, but often decorative, or religious. The book, The Japanese Art of Stone Appreciation by Yuji Yoshimura and Vincent T. Covello is considered by many to be the definitive English language work on stones.

Stone's stability and enduring qualities evoke the spirit of longevity and immortality, and the vision that they portray to the viewer, whether it be a near or distant mountain, a waterfall, an animal, or human form can be both mystical and spiritual. What a viewer sees in a stone, or perhaps a better choice of wording is what the stone reveals to the viewer, is subjective and unique to the viewer.

The picture below is ten views of the same stone, and illustrates how you can discover



the beauty of a stone, or its soul

based on the angle from which you are viewing it.

As in bonsai, there is an aesthetic quality that should be present in the stone such as **Suggestiveness** – suggesting the natural object's essence, awakening the imagination, inviting you to complete the picture

Simplistic - the Zen less is more concept

Subdued coloration – the most prized colors are black, brown, green, blue and red

Balance – between features – tall/short, large/small; vertical/horizontal, concave/convex; soft/hard, smooth/rough, still/moving

Wabi – the subjective feeling the object evokes - unassuming, solitary, calm, quiet, sad, lonely, desolate

Sabi – ancient, mature, serene, mellow

Shibui – quiet, restrained, understated, sedate, elegant

Yugen – dark, mysterious, uncertain

The aesthetics are the small details; variation in texture, slight color shading – these are the things that distinguish an ordinary stone from a fine viewing stone.

You may have a stone that speaks only to you, it may not have any of the so called aesthetics that a fine suiseki is suppose to possess, but if you enjoy looking at it, and it evoke the spirituality of nature in you, then who cares – love it, and display it with pride.



A **kiri bako** is used to store a **suiseki** and its **daiza**. Traditionally

made of Paulownia wood due to its lightness and ability to protect against moisture. The stone's history is often recorded on the inside or top of the lid.



A **suiban** is a very shallow, oval or round tray, but can be square or rectangle, containing either water, or fine sand used to display your viewing stone



A **doban** is the same shape as a **suiban**, but made of copper or bronze rather than ceramic.



A **shoku** is the table on which a **suiseki** is displayed – very much like the tables we display **bonsai** on, but generally are low to the table surface, not a cascade type stand, and it should be sized in proportion to the **suiseki** on display. However if a stone is part of a **shohin** display, a tiered shelf is often used, and the stone would be in a **daiza** placed at whatever level best suites the arrangement.

While you can display **suiseki** in combination with a **bonsai**, one needs to be the dominant feature – either stone, or tree.

Both the stone and the tree need to be in harmony; each should enhance the aesthetics of the other; the size of each should complement the other. When used in a harmonious combination, the stone gains life, and the tree strength.

The stone can be the companion to the tree in a **tokanoma** display. or the stone can be the main feature in a **tokanoma**, and perhaps a scroll or companion plant would be used to complete the display.

Several small stones can be displayed together on a tiered shelf, and generally you should try to place the main stone or best stone at the highest level.



Part of the enjoyment of having viewing stones is the collecting or finding the potential masterpiece. Most of us have probably picked up a stone or rock, looked at it and tossed it back on the ground, but then we have all probably kept at least one, perhaps when we were just a child, or the last time we were out and about. The perfect stone could be anywhere, but like all things, some places offer more potential than others such as

- where there is erosion
- very high winds
- continuously blowing sand
- deep ravines
- mid-sections of fast-moving mountain creeks

- river banks and in the water
- In powerful torrents of water

If you are lucky enough to travel outside our immediate location,

- California's Mojave Desert yields fine **object** and **distant** mountain stones
- **flower-pattern** stones found along the British Columbia coastline
- **waterfall, water pool, island, object stones** and **thatched-hut** found in Canada and the Northeast US
- Rivers and creeks of the Appalachians, Rockies, Sierras, and Cascades have yielded mountain stones

Generally, stones found up river, are quite jagged, and sharp, those down river, are often too flat or rounded, making neither ideal for **suiseki** – mid way is best.

That being said, I remember a beautiful stone brought in by Tom Marinace recently that he found near the Delaware Water Gap. Long Island's north shore has some interesting offerings as well. You never know where you will find the one perfect stone.

If you go collecting, best to bring someone along, and use caution. Rocky, stony hillsides, are slippery underfoot, be aware of the possibility of poison ivy, and snakes both like the same habitat that we would find most appealing to search for the perfect stone.

Well now you have a stone(s) that you know will be perfect, how do you get them to the state of perfection.

Cleaning the stone

- Use a strong water jet or power washer

- put in plastic container filled with water adding several drops of soap and mix
- soak for 5 - 20 minutes
- examine stone
- clean using a stiff brush
- heavier soil, soak for several days
- use steel, brass or needle brushes for heavy dirt - test first for damage
- re-wash stone after brushing
- Use a rotary wire brushes for heavier soil
- *Be sure to test on non-visible area to determine whether the process will damage the stone – some are quite soft.*

Safety protection

To avoid injury from thrown loose pieces:

- wear goggles
- wear leather work gloves
- Keep bystanders away
- clean stones outdoors
- wear mask to prevent inhaling dust and small fragments
- good ventilation if indoors

Hard as this is to believe, a stone can contain a great deal of water. Stones should be dried carefully to avoid splitting. Drying is a simple procedure with two basic choices, one slow, and one quick -

- dry in sunshine on absorbent cloth; turn periodically for several days
- dry with hairdryer; repeat as moisture continues to seep from stone or dry in 250 degree oven; do in steps to avoid splitting stone

To Cut or not to cut that is the question...

Some feel a stone should be left in its natural shape, and others feel if cutting enhances the stone, then that is what you do. *One member whom shall re-*

main nameless told us that he would grind his stones flat by rubbing them on the sidewalk. I prefer cutting them with a diamond blade, but there are several ways to do it – all with the potential of bodily harm, from scrapped knuckles to dismemberment – so use the utmost care, or contact a stone yard, and pay to have them cut your stone.

A classic Suiseki characteristically has a beautiful patina, and the silky glow adds to its value. There are several widely accepted methods of bringing out this quality in a stone.

Developing patina

Hand Rubbing your stone every day for 30 - 50 years. Although lengthy, this method is a simple, traditional practice among suiseki collectors. (I think my life time is about 30 years short for that method)

Using Oils: glycerin, olive oil, baby (mineral) oil

Stones that have a smooth surface respond best to oil treatment. Your stone will have a beautiful patina after the guaranteed method outlined below. (not guaranteed by me...)

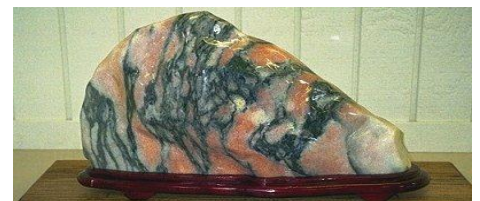
- Rub the dry stone with one of the oils above, covering splits and cracks.
- Leave in the sun for three months, away from moisture from rain or dew.
- Rub the stone with oil again after 3 months. Polish it vigorously using a toothbrush, shoe brush, etc.
- Then carefully wipe the stone with a clean cloth

- Then rub stone with human body oil from your forehead and hands.
- Repeat the last three steps every month for a year.

(there are no shortcuts in suiseki or bonsai)

There are other methods for cleaning and developing the patina, but like all things bonsai, everyone has their own idea of what is the best way to do it.

Now with your new found knowledge of how to collect, clean and polish your suiseki, if you come to our meeting Tom will show how to make a daiza to fit that special stone. But don't be put off by the steps involved, if you want to plop a neat looking stone on your bench along with your bonsai, or anywhere else, don't let the rules stop you. It is better to enjoy your hobbies, than to be frustrated and hampered by all the rules.



Rafael Monje Garcia