



## July Program

Last March, **Larry** and **Nina** went to Japan for a week to study *Keido* with **Uhaku Sudo**. The small class included **David De Groot**, curator of the Weyerhaeuser Collection, and **Hideko Metaxas** who also was our translator. Although the focus was on *tokonoma* display, many of the principles can be applied to *sekikazari* or table top display. The July 25 program will emphasize what the **Ragles** learned about the display of viewing stones and suiseki in a show environment such as ours.



## Stone of the Month

As suggested by this month's *Guy Jim* we will showcase pattern stones (*monyō-seki*). **Covello & Yoshimura** write that these are distinguished by "the striking surface pattern formed by the stone's textures, colors, lines, imbedded minerals, and other features." Patterns closely associated with nature are preferred. Favorite plant subjects are: flower, fruit, leaf and grass. Celestial scenes include moon, sun and stars. Weather patterns are rain, snow and lightning. Finally, abstract patterns such as tiger-stripe, tangled-net, pit-marked and snake are listed. For a pattern stone to also be a suiseki, it must be natural and have a landscape shape.



## SUISEKI BEFORE AISEKI KAI

### Part 3

by Ray Yeager

In 1971, during a bonsai class **Cliff Johnson** and **Bob Watson** were attending, they met **Jean Sharp**. In the conversation that followed they discovered that her husband, **Bob**, was a geologist at Cal Tech. With an obvious opportunity at hand they asked if he could help them in their quest for certain types of ventifacted stones found in the Mojave Desert. He directed them to Lake Hill off Hwy 190, in Panamint Valley, west of Death Valley. This was an exceptional site where many fine desert stones were found over the years only to lose it to the Desert Protection Act in 1994.

It was over the four day Thanksgiving holiday in 1972 that **Cliff** and **Bob** first checked out the "Little Dunes" area just east of Highway 127 near Dumont Dunes and found a few good stones. By the last day they had extended their search east and north, where they hit the jack pot. This area, accessible at that time only by **Cliff's** dune buggy, became the prime desert stone source for the next few years.

Later, in an attempt to find a more accessible area that would accommodate passenger cars, they followed a dirt road that began west of Hwy 127, across from Dumont Dunes. They traveled on this reasonably good road about five miles up the hill and around to the right to an old talc mine near a few sand dunes. More success. During another trip to the area they eventually discovered an Indian Blanket stone deposit along the slopes north of the dirt road about four miles from the highway. This is where **Melba Tucker** found her famous "Geisha Girl", now in the National Collection and where **Chuck Kantzer** found so many wonderful dark brown patina mesa stones. This site in the Saddle Peak Hills area was used for the next fifteen or so years until the Desert Protection Act made this area a part of Death Valley National Park.

Soon **Bob** and **Cliff** were inviting others to go along on their excursions. This group was largely made up of those attending **Melba's** bonsai classes held at El Monte High School. Included were **Tony Thomas**, **Melba** and **Ned Tucker**, Dr. **Charles Wahl**, **Chuck Kantzer**, **Isabel Toledo**, **Dorothy** and **Gail Middelton**, and **Mary Christy**.

### June Meeting Notes

ANNOUNCEMENTS- There will be a Viewing Stone Exhibit, 9443 Telstar Avenue, El Monte, July 28th and 29th. 10 -5 each day. For contact information call **Freeman Wang** at 626-524-5021.

STONE OF THE MONTH - Stones from China:



Linda's stone came with a wooden *suiban*.



Linda Gill



Manny Martinez, nail stone



Phil Chang said his reminds him of his doggie, Yuki.



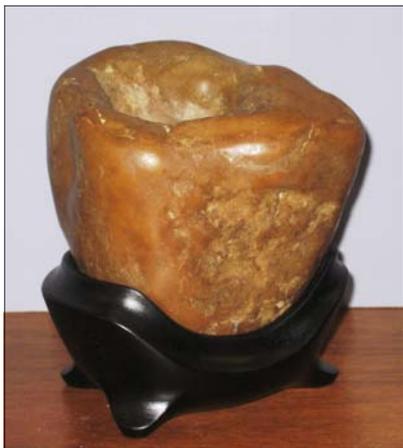
Jean Horton's from Lingbi



Nina's stone can be either a waterpool or a cave stone.



Jean Horton



Emma Janza found her Red River stone.



Phil's Lingbi stone



Al Nelson from China by way of Kauai

The 1 inch wide inner margins are designed for use with a 3 hole punch.





Larry found this one in the Sanjiang River



Nina's stone came with an ill fitting *daiza* but works nicely in a *suiban*.

### June Program Notes by Larry Ragle

It was standing room only for the June PowerPoint 200+ slide show of our amazing adventure to China last April. Among the 70 who filled the room, we were delighted to welcome a few new members, **Bruce & Kathy Carter** and **Judy Hsiao** as well as some old timers who rarely attend. It was our pleasure to welcome as guests **Yiva Hoover** whom we met in China and her husband, **Randy**, and **Judy Hueng**.

The trip, organized by **Cliff Johnson**, covered 16 days traveling between Beijing, Guilin, Nanning, Nanjing, Lingbi and Shanghai. 5 days in Guilin and surrounds included a 100 mile boat ride on the Li River through hundreds of karst formations, meeting the Guilin rock club members, buying rocks at local shops, hunting for rocks in 3 rivers, foot massages, seeing the rice terraces and buying souvenirs from the Miao minority along the river. We went south to Liuzhou and on day 7 we saw 3 huge stone markets and met **Yiva Hoover** and her brother. Our last day in the South was spent at a Nanning open air flea market. We bought more rocks. That afternoon we flew to Nanjing and the next day, visited a local museum and then bussed to Xuzhou to be near Lingbi. 2 full days were spent in the Lingbi area visiting the dozens of local shops but the most amazing event of the entire trip, I believe, was a visit to a remote village of homes and workshops dedicated exclusively to preparing rocks, many of them 12' to 15' tall. It appeared that the entire population came out to greet us or maybe just to study us. In any event, they were great hosts, inviting us into their homes and "factories" allowing us to experience for a brief moment how they live. In Shanghai we went to one small collection of stone shops but many were closed due to rain. We spent an afternoon at the Yuyuan Gardens, and visited the Shanghai Museum.



Cliff Johnson found his in the bushes at the Guilin Stone Museum!



Nina found this figure stone in the Sanjiang River.



Phil brought home this piece of petrified wood.

We are still waiting for our shipped stones from China. Perhaps we will have another China stone of the month when "our ship comes in".

[Ed note: Larry's slides were fantastic and with the help of a few of those members who were on our journey, we all relived our 'Aiseki Kai Rocks China Trip' .]

# *Introduction to the Hobby of Suiseki* (1968)

## written by Saburo Ei [Part 3]

By Thomas S. Elias & Hiromi Nakaoji

After presenting the main points for each of the three categories of viewing stones, **Ei** gives several specific examples for some of the well known stones. For example, he states that a hut stone is categorized as a landscape stone. For Sado Island red (jasper) stones, **Ei** held that even if a Sado Island stone is shaped like a mountain stone, it should be considered as a *biseki*. He also stated that some *biseki* may be landscape stones or *chinseki*.

*Kikuseki* or chrysanthemum stones are typically considered as *biseki* or *chinseiki*, but that natural *saba* stones can be considered as *suiseki*. That is, the more commonly encountered polished or partially polished chrysanthemum stones are *biseki* but that they can also be *chinseki* pattern stones. This is consistent with current opinion in Japan regarding chrysanthemum stones.

**Ei** writes that among each of the three types (*suiseki*, *chinseki* and *biseki*), there is a subdivision called *abstract stones*. For example, Chinese stones (*kiseki*) are abstract *chinseki*, and all art stones are, in a broad definition, abstract *biseki*. He lists the main points for abstract *suiseki*.

1. Form or shape of stone has some beauty.
2. Shape is more important than color.
3. Dense in quality and it feels contemporary.
4. No *suiban* used as a principle.
5. No tools (attached scenery) as a principle.
6. Contemporary feeling is more important than *Wabi* and *Sabi*.
7. The feeling of action and spread out.
8. No element of cultivation.
9. Natural stone.

**Ei** states that abstract *suiseki* does not present landscape or mountain or water stones since those are included in *suiseki* in a broad sense.

**Ei's** presented a list of features used for Chinese stones (*kiseki*)

1. Originated from China including Taiwan, for example, *Taihu* stones and *Lingbi* stones.)
2. Unique shape is appreciated more than texture and color.
3. Shape is abstract, but it is not categorized as *abstract suiseki*.
4. Age is more important than contemporary feeling.
5. It cannot be called *abstract suiseki* even if the stone is a mountain, water, landscape stone. (editor's note: only Japanese stones are *suiseki*) The beautiful color stone such as malachite is categorized as *biseki*.

The author also presents a short list of features used to define art craft items.

1. The stone is *biseki* but it is not for viewing.
2. The stone has some purpose of use.
3. The stone is not a chunk (e.g. A red stone can be made as an ashtray, but the stone is not for viewing.)

**Ei** describes *bonseki* as an arrangement that consists of several stones, and it is different from what we call viewing stones.

### Summary

It is clear from this work, that the author prefers a classification for viewing stones based upon physical characteristics rather than on a geographical based system. **Keiji Murata's** role as editor of this work and his close association with **Ei** gives a greater level of creditability to this work because of **Murata's** standing in both the bonsai and viewing stone communities in Japan. This work reflects the current thinking about stones in the 1960s in Japan. Most of the views held at that time still are in use today in Japan and other countries. **Ei** considered the term *suiseki* to be an exclusive domain for Japanese stones. This opinion was likely shared by many other Japanese. However, since then, the use of the term *suiseki* has become a more universally accepted word similar to the manner the term *bonsai* has been widely adopted.

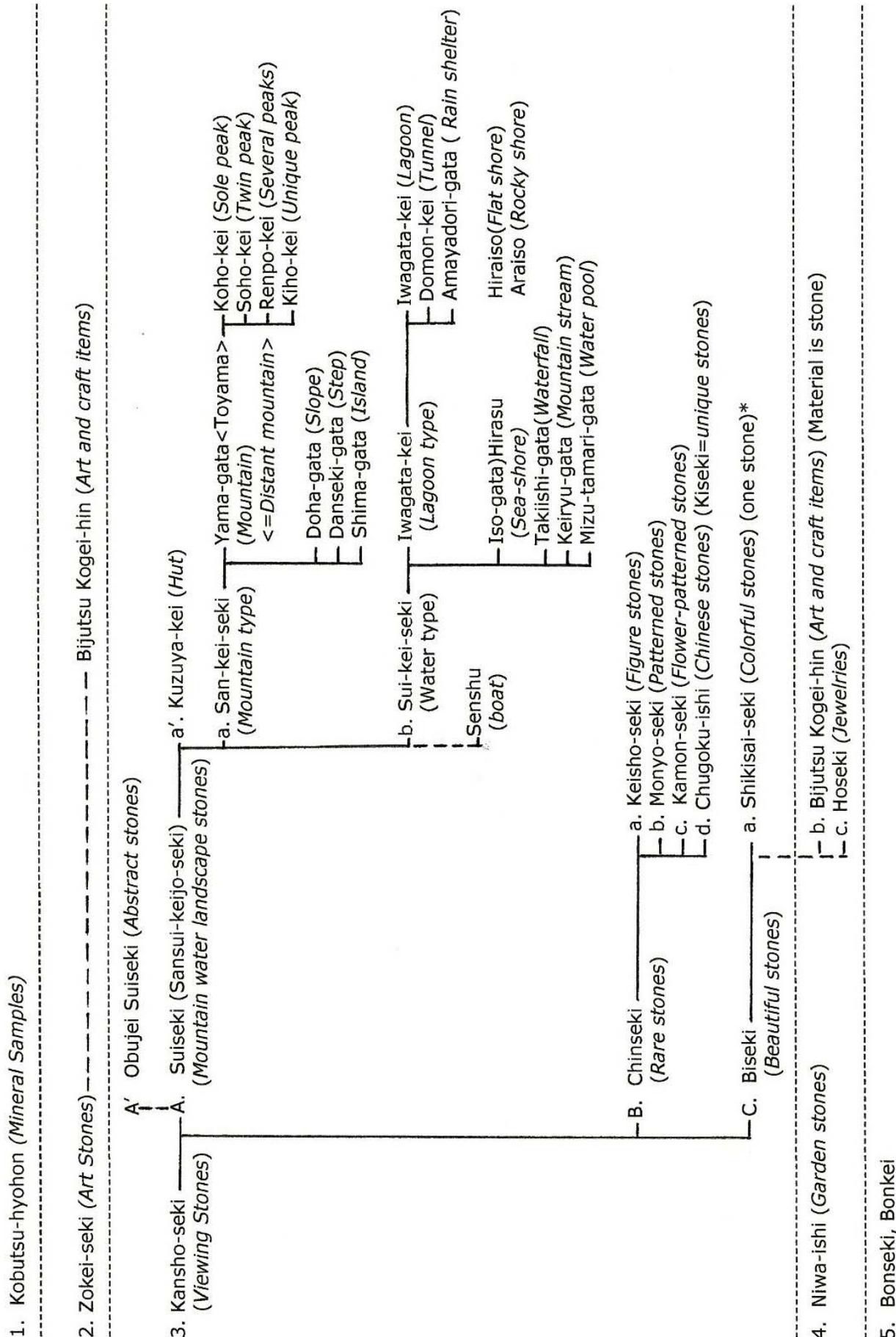
It is unclear why **Ei** included art and craft stones and jewelries under garden stone, *niwaishi*, and also under the broad category art stones. Also, in his text, **Ei** stated that the categories *suiseki*, *chinseki*, and *biseki* all could contain abstract stones, but he only included the term abstract stone with *suiseki* in his chart. **Ei** did state that he welcomed comments on his views relating to stones and on his classification chart. The chart wasn't intended to be a final reference guide but as a tool to help refine and define ways to understand and appreciate stones. The 1960s was a golden age in Japan for stone appreciation.

The chart translated into English appears on the opposite page.

For those of you who can read it, the chart in Japanese appears on page 7.

This concludes the series on Chapter 3 of the *Introduction to the Hobby of Suiseki* by Saburo Ei. Thank you **Tom Elias** and **Hiromi Nakaoji**.

Chart translated and reproduced from *Introduction to the Hobby of Suiseki* by Saburo Ei, page 86. English words in italics were not part of the published chart, but were added by Elias and Nakaoji to assist people in understanding Ei's chart.



1. Kobutsu-hyohon (*Mineral Samples*)

2. Zokei-seki (*Art Stones*) ———— Bijutsu Kogei-hin (*Art and craft items*)

3. Kansho-seki (*Viewing Stones*)

4. Niwa-ishi (*Garden stones*)

5. Bonseki, Bonkei

# Ask Guy Jim

Dear Guy Jim,

One of my favorite stones at the most recent California Aiseki Kai Exhibit (Huntington Library, 2006) was your stone with the image of lightning flashing over the sea. That stone presented a complete picture. Is a stone with only a single line that suggests a bolt of lightning acceptable? What about multiple lines or a series of jagged lines?

Flash, Santa Ana

Dear Flash,

The stone you refer to is one of my favorites as well (#1). Lightning-pattern stones are classified under



*tenko-seki* (weather-pattern stones) which in turn are found under *monyoshi* (embedded or picture-image stones). In **The Japanese Art of Stone Appreciation**, Covello & Yoshimura use the term *raiko-seki* which they translate as lightning-pattern-stone. However, the kanji for *raiko-seki* would be more accurately translated simply as

1. Storm at Sea

lightning stone as there is no kanji for ‘pattern’ present. [Adding to the confusion, dictionaries present several other Japanese terms or pronunciations for ‘lightning’ including *inazuma*, *denko* and *inabikari*].

Lightning is somewhat unique in that the basic image is simply represented by a single, somewhat



2. Thunderhead and Lightning Bolt

jagged or irregular light-colored line seen against a darker matrix. Images can run the gamut from realistic (#1) to abstract or subtle to somewhat silly (#2). Whether a single line, a grouping of several individual lines or a forked network of lines (#3), all would be considered picture-images. As long as your embedded line or lines suggest an image of lightning your stone would

qualify for being a *raiko-seki*.

A repeating pattern of irregular, jagged lines or an overall pattern of disassociated lightning-like lines, while not presenting a picture image in the sense of a ‘realistic’ scene or snapshot of a moment frozen in time, may still have characteristics with symbolic connotations of lightning. (As an example, picture some of the stylized designs found on Native American ceramics or weavings). These types might be better considered as abstract pattern stones. To date, we have found no way to determine what degree of naturalism versus pure abstraction is encompassed by the term *raiko-seki*. Until we learn more, perhaps, we should continue using *raiko-seki* on our labels, but within our

English identification distinguish between a lightning-image stone and a lightning-pattern stone. Another option might be to use *tenko-seki: raiko*.

While all the readily available suiseki books (in English) include the category of *raiko-seki*, none illustrate it with an example. Having checked a few thousand published images, we only found three possible lightning stones – including one of the same rock material as #4 – but none were clearly identified. The dearth of examples may be primarily a reflection of the general Japanese emphasis on true suiseki



3. Forked Lightning

(landscape stones) over pattern stones. One suspects that stones with lightning patterns occur with a reasonable frequency, and since the parameters of the category offer far more latitude than, for instance, waterfall stones, we would expect to see more examples. Are they too common and too obvious to be considered worth illustrating? Are they actually rare ... or just not sought-after?

The apparent lack of *raiko-seki* is even more perplexing when one considers that as a



4. Electric Storm

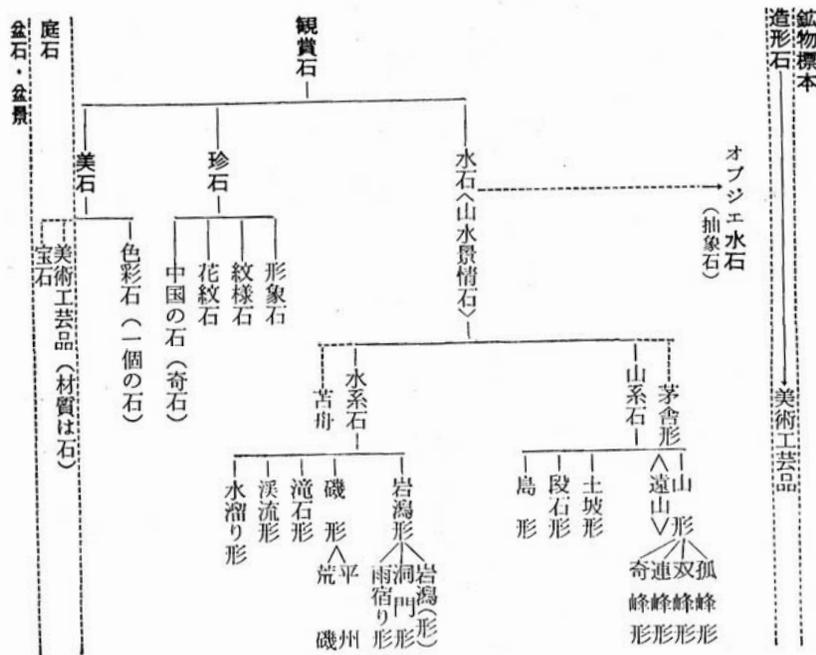
prominent element of weather rather than a feature of landscape, the subject of lightning, with all its attendant associations, would seem to be particularly well-suited for formal displays, especially with bonsai.

Guy Jim

The views expressed in this column are personal, perhaps irreverent, irrelevant or just plain wrong and do not reflect the consensual view of California Aiseki Kai. Send your viewing stone questions (or comments) for Guy Jim to [jimgreaves@roadrunner.com](mailto:jimgreaves@roadrunner.com) or 1018 Pacific Street, Unit D, Santa Monica, CA 90405 (310) 452-3680

**Hobby of Suiseki** continued from pg 4

Here is Ei's chart in Japanese:



**Correcting the correction:** [see June Issue, pg 7] Why would I ever question **John Naka's** memory?

“Suiseki WERE displayed at *Kokufu-ten* in the past exhibitions, but not now. They were very popular in the first shows, but now the emphasis is on releasing the beauty of each bonsai alone. I just checked and counted 24 suiseki included in the 181 bonsai displayed in the 39th *Kokufu-ten* exhibition held in 1965. So **John DID** see them for the first time then in Japan, as he said.” Thank you, **Bill Valavanis**.

**Coming Suiseki Event**

**San Francisco Suiseki Kai**, 26th Annual Exhibit, August 4-5, Union Bank Hospitality Room in Japan Center, Post St between Laguna and Fillmore Sts. San Francisco. 10-5. For more info: **Janet Roth** 510.530.1577 or email: janet@jtroth.com

**Refreshments**

Thank you **Bonnie & Charley Schwartz, Harry Hirao, May McNey, Joseph Gaytan, Howie Kawahara, Kiyo Yoneda and Jack & Sachiko Dennis** for June's yummy treats. We were very lucky to have the extra participation last month considering the full house!

For July, our calorie providers will be **Janet Shimazu, Barry & Sandy Josephson and Bruce McGinnis**.



**Before Aiseki Kai** continued from pg 1

In 1982 **Toy Sato** was president of the Palos Verdes Gem and Mineral Society and they hosted a National Convention of Gem and Mineral clubs at the Long Beach Convention Center. **Toy** borrowed about fifty stones from Japan along with another fifty or so stones from her own collection for a wonderful display. **Larry Ragle** also displayed a few bonsai. It would be only a few months later that California Aiseki Kai would hold their first meeting.

**Contact People**

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<b>Refreshments:</b> Lois Hutchinson	714.964.6973	whutch70@surfside.net
<b>Historian:</b> Ray Yeager	760.365.7897	ryeager890@aol.com
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<b>Newsletter:</b> Larry and Nina Ragle	949.497.5626	ragle@cox.net



**Newsletter Committee**

**July Contributing Editors:** Ray Yeager, Tom Elias, Jim Greaves and Larry Ragle  
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We hope you will participate. Please send any submissions to ragle@cox.net no more than 10 days following our monthly meeting. Thank you!

**Ragle  
P.O. Box 4975  
Laguna Beach CA 92652**

**ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED**



*Leaves no stone unturned*

*See us on the web*

**aiseikikai.com**



## Coming Events

### KO FU BONSAI KAI

Bonsai Exhibit at the Orange County Fair, July 13 - August 15, OC Fairgrounds, 88Fair Dr., Costa Mesa. Tues-Fri, noon to midnight. Sat-Sun, 10AM to midnight. Admission to Fair: adults \$8, seniors (60+) \$6, children (6-12) \$4 & kids (5 or less) free. For more information: call **Paul De Rose** 714.637.4592 or call **Bill Hutchinson** 714.964.6973

### REDWOOD EMPIRE BONSAI SOCIETY

24th Annual Bonsai Show, August 25-26, Santa Rosa Veterans Building, 1351 Maple Av., Santa Rosa. Sat 10-5, Sun 10-4. Demos 1:30 each day by **Kathy Shaner**. Door prizes and raffle. Large sales area. More info: **Bob Shimon** 707.884.4126 or email: shimon@mcn.org. See web page: rebsbonsai.org

### SAN DIEGO BONSAI CLUB

42nd Annual Fall Show, September 29-30, Balboa Park, Casa Del Prado, Rm 101. San Diego. 10-5. Demos 11 & 2 each day. Sales area. For more information: **Joan Berkwitz** 760.431.1014

### CONEJO VALLEY BONSAI SOCIETY

4th Annual Bonsai Exhibition, October 6 -7, Resource Center, Gardens of the World, 2001 Thousand Oaks Blvd, Thousand Oaks. 9 - 4. Demos in the Bandstand 11 (Sat) & 2 (Sun). For more information: **Nat Stein** 805.374.9668

### KOFU BONSAI KAI

Annual Bonsai Show, October 6 - 7, Fullerton Arboretum, 1900 Associated Rd, Fullerton. 10-4. Demos 10:30 & 1. Potluck reception Saturday evening 6:30-10 ending with a huge raffle. Free. For more information: **Paul De Rose** 714.637.4592

### GOLDEN STATE BONSAI FEDERATION



Convention XXX, "Bonsai Buccaneers" Oct 31-Nov 4, Crowne Plaza Anaheim Resort, 1202 Harbor Blvd, Anaheim/Garden Grove. **Kunio Kobayashi** from Japan along with **Warren Hill**,

**Kathy Shaner** and **Pedro Morales**. Collecting trip, vendors galore, workshops, exhibits including a suiseki display and raffle.

See the website: gsbfcvention2007.com

Registration forms will be available at the July meeting.



**CA Aiseki Kai** meets on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 7:30 pm at the Nakaoka Community Center located at 1700 162nd St, Gardena, CA. Second floor.