



## The May Program

The May 24th program will review the subject of *doha-ishi* and *dan-seki*. **Jim Greaves** will provide some historical perspective on these often confusing classifications and present his interpretation while presenting numerous examples of both basic types and the vast continuum of forms between them – it will not be a night of absolutes! **Jim** will explore the distinguishing differences between *dan-seki* and *doha-ishi* and devote particular attention to the question: ‘What is a slope stone?’ There will be much material to cover so it is suggested that you read and carefully consider this month’s related *GuyJim* letter, dealing primarily with the classification of *doha-ishi*. The June *GuyJim* will answer a related question about *dan-seki*. Both subjects will be discussed in this May program.



**ALERT:** There are 5 Wednesdays in May. Come on the 24th and join us. Come on the 31st and sit alone, bored and hungry.

## Stone of the Month

**Linda Gill** suggested not only this month’s stone, but the program and the theme of this newsletter! After you read *GuyJim* take a good look at your collection and see if you can bring a slope stone! This may be a challenge. Let’s see what shows up.



Is this a slope stone?

Is this?



Or this?



## Buried in a Landslide of Yugen Part 3

*Yugen* in Japanese art implies mysterious skills that can be felt but not put into words.  
*The Many Mysteries of Suiseki. Why Aiseki Kai?*

### Hard to find this kind!

As **Harry Hirao’s** collection of large green stones grew, so did my interest in stones. However, when asked where someone (like me) might find these kind of stones his answer was always the same, “By your mama’s place”. No kidding? That will be easy. My parents lived in Northern California on the Russian River. “Wow, big green rocks right in their back yard!” So every summer I would spend most of my vacation time looking for that kind of stone along the Russian River – to no avail. Each year I would expand my search further north of my “mama’s place”, checking out other rivers and creeks and streams along the way. No green rocks.

By the summer of 1977 I had expanded my search miles north of my mama’s place, to the Eel River. After about three “stop and search” failures, I found a spot on a cliff where, at least, 200 feet below, one could view a vast expanse of stones. Even at that distance some of the stones looked inviting. A path down the embankment leading to the river showed signs of recent use. As soon as I was on level ground I saw a piece of plywood covered deep with sand. Perched in the middle of the sand was a large green stone. It looked lonely, left behind, rejected by the master. But to me it was a sign of beauty, a sign of discovery. I had found **Harry’s** secret treasure.

1977 was a seminal year for Aiseki Kai. I had the opportunity to visit the National Arboretum, in Washington, D.C. The attraction was 50 bonsai and 5 viewing stones, a gift from the people of Japan to the people of the United States in celebration of our 1976 Bicentennial. Although the collection was the lure, I found the prize in the reference library, information on viewing stones, a reference to an article written by **Toy Sato**. The reference indicated that **Sato** lived in Los Angeles, just north of Orange County. This was a major break. **Toy Sato** and her husband **Yuzy** would be inspirational in forming Aiseki Kai.

Next month: If you want to learn, teach.

Larry Ragle

### April Meeting Notes

by Linda Gill

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS

Aiseki Kai has been invited to display stones at the National Arboretum in Washington, DC. The arboretum celebrates a different state in June of each year and this year it is California. **Dr. Elias** thought it would be nice if viewing stones from California were on display. We agree. **Larry** would like us to send some representative specimens. The stones must be in a *daiza* and have been found in California. The stones will be inside so they will be secure. The display dates are June 10-25.

#### CALL FOR BOARD OF TRUSTEES NOMINEES

Golden State Bonsai Federation is asking for nominees willing to serve on the Board of Trustees. Aiseki Kai is in District D. Contact **Larry** or **Bill Hutchinson** if you are interested.

#### NEW! GET YOUR NEWSLETTER ON THE INTERNET

**Nina** informed us that the newsletter is now available on line if you would prefer to receive it that way. Just send her an email. She will then send you an email every month when the newsletter is on our web site. It can be downloaded and printed if you want a hard copy and you will receive it before the folks who get snail mail. Since the newsletter costs more to print than the dues bring in, getting it by email is a savings for the club. You can change your mind anytime by just sending a note to **Nina**. There is no reduction in the dues.

#### APRIL STONE OF THE MONTH - Waterfall stones

**Larry** showed his \$20 stone from Japan and several others. **Manny Martinez's** stone came from the Eel River. **Lois Hutchinson** bought her stone for less than **Larry's** and it came from Pennsylvania. She also had one from **Harry Hirao's** backyard (a great place to hunt, I've heard!). **Harry's** came from Japan and had a great stone plinth that he found in the Yuha.



Janet and her "Harry" stone.

**Richard Aguirre** brought a 'lava' fall and several others that he had to drive to Phelan to pick up in time for the meeting. **Janet Shimizu** got hers from **Harry's** table. **Barry &/or Sandy Josephson** found his/her stone in the Kern River and it reminded them of the 7 sisters.

**Jim Greaves** had a thread waterfall (*itodaki-ishi*) and a dry waterfall (*karedaki-ishi*). **Bruce McGinnis's** waterfall was displayed in the *tokonoma* at the Huntington show one year. **Linda Gill's** stones were from Garnet Hill and **Bonnie Schwartz** brought an avalanche stone because she's still looking for a waterfall.



Manny's Eel River stone



Jim's waterfall.



Bruce's waterfall.

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



## Ask Guy Jim

*Dear Guy Jim,*

*We have had many discussions of the classifications doha-ishi and dan-ishi, but I am still confused regarding the classification of 'slope' stone?*

*Linda, Sylmar, CA*

Dear Linda,

Plowing through my answer will not be a casual read for the faint of heart! Before I proceed into this minefield allow me to double down on my disclaimer and reemphasize that this will be my personal opinion (and as of this moment only)! Let me also save time by stating that the terms *doha-seki* and *doha-ishi* and *dan-seki* and *dan-ishi* are interchangeable so I am going to use my personal choices based solely on what I find to be the more euphonious sound: *doha-ishi* and *dan-seki*. To begin, I believe much of everyone's confusion emanates from several apparent inconsistencies and, in my opinion, errors in the treatment of *doha-ishi* and *dan-seki* by Covello and Yoshimura in **The Japanese Art of Stone Appreciation** (1984), the first significant information source on *suiseki* in English. Below I will provide my own interpretation on a stand-alone basis, but for clarity, if you have a copy available, I suggest you look up the following citations before continuing:

Under the explanation of *dan-seki* (p.37) the authors correctly describe the steps and terraces that other authors consistently consider to be the defining characteristic of 'step stones', but create confusion by identifying *dan-seki* with 'plateau stones' and emphasizing the term 'plateau' within the text. (It is interesting to note that they never use the term 'step stone'). Likewise, illustration #45 on p.57 is labeled as a plateau when it is clearly a stone with three level steps. The term *doha-ishi* (p.37) is found under the heading of 'slope stone' and the explanation provided is only vaguely related to the most commonly accepted form consisting of a flat plain and offset peak. Compounding the problem, the illustration labeled 'slope stone' (#47 on p.57) barely relates to their text and not at all to the common form. Subsequently the use of 'slope' as the primary term to define *doha* was repeated by Melba L. Tucker in **Suiseki & Viewing Stones – An American Perspective** (1996) and by Willi Benz in **The Art of Suiseki** (in English, 1996). In **Suiseki – the Japanese Art of Miniature Landscape Stones** (1997) Felix Rivera includes the term 'slope' but provides no

specific explanation. As discussed below, Ben Nanjo in **UnkonFu – The Soul of Stone** (2005) may have finally resolved the confusion.

The term 'slope stone' is always used in association with the term *doha-ishi*. Often it has been the primary 'translation', at other times only mentioned as an alternate definition – without any adequate explanation as to the exact form in the authors' mind. [There is often considerable confusion between a *doha-ishi* and a *dan-seki* (terrace stone or step stone), but space limitations necessitate that this separate question be addressed in the future]. In review, a *doha-ishi* is most often defined as a plateau stone, a bit less frequently as a plains stone (or mountain and plains stone) and as the slope stone in question; less often we see it termed a rolling hills stone. The most common form consists of a broad horizontal 'plain' with a rounded or pointed mountain offset at one end. The mountain is preferably a third or less of the length of the stone and the mountain and plain should be of unequal elevation. Multiple mountains are less common, but acceptable. There should be a sharp line of delineation between the plain and the base of the mountain.

The image of a mountain rising above a flat plateau seems to be near universally accepted as a *doha-ishi*. When we have a broad, flat horizontal surface as the dominant feature of the stone, referring to it as a 'plains'



*Doha – Plateau form*



or ‘mountain and plains’ stone seems logical. (Note that a true ‘plains’ stone would in fact be simply flat and there would be no way to understand it without the presence of the contrasting mountain.) References describing a *doha-ishi* as ‘rolling hills’ suggest a broad



Doha: mountain and plains form with broad, flat plain.

expanse, not necessarily a strictly flat horizontal, with many soft peaks surmounted by a larger mountain form. I have found that many published examples so labeled are difficult to differentiate from a mountain range with a dominant peak. The above definitions each emphasize phases in a continuum and all reflect the basic form of an off-set mountain and horizontal plane. Each can



Doha: Rolling hills form (with pronounced secondary hills; ideally the mountain could be a bit higher and more to the left end.

provide a useful working definition for us, but all may have a tenuous relationship with original Japanese intent!

**Slope Stone:** The use of ‘slope stone’ remains the most puzzling variant. The first English language reference to ‘a sloping stone’ that I have encountered is by Toshio Kawamoto who, without using any Japanese terminology, illustrates what would generally be accepted as a *doha-ishi* and identifies it as ‘a sloping stone’. (Saikei: **Living Landscapes in Miniature**, Kodansha International Ltd, Tokyo/Palo Alto, 1967, p.50-51). Arishige Matsuura states that a *doha* means “a gentle sloping hill” (*Japanese Suiseki, Proceedings of the International Scholarly Symposium on Bonsai*

and **Viewing Stones** 2005 p.193). Adherence to that literal definition may explain Covello and Yoshimura’s inclusion of plate #47 – the minimalist stone consists only of one continuous slope, but this usage seems to be an anomaly as I have not found the type elsewhere. Nanjo (p.22) considers the best literal definition of *doha* to be as follows: “‘*Doh*’ indicates a flat ground, and ‘*Ha*’ denotes mountains, hills, slopes, or inclines.” A Chinese friend gave the literal translation as ‘earth skin



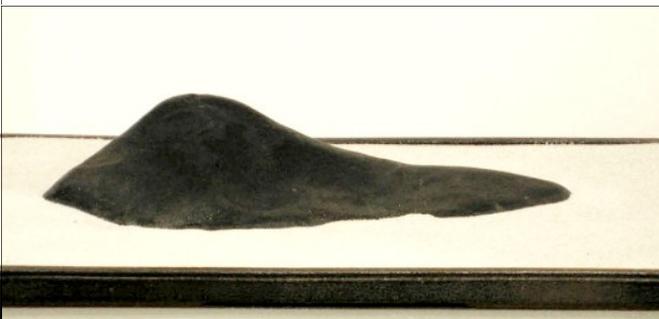
A sloping stone but not a *doha*. (This stone is similar to plate #47 ‘slope stone’ mentioned.

stone,’ then immediately said that this meant slope stone ... but, added that by ‘slope’ the Chinese are referring to the rolling foothills that serve as the transition from plain to mountain – there is no reference to the degree of angle of the horizontal plain that we tend to associate with the term ‘slope’. Nanjo implies a similar understanding with a referral to the sloped hill section of the stone in contrast to the flat plain section. On the assumption that these more literal translations are correct, other authors would seem to have, logically, but incorrectly, employed the use of slope stone while focusing on the degree of inclination of the nominally flat, horizontal portion of the stone, rather than the foot or sides of the mountain. (If we accept this as the key to the meaning of slope, it becomes readily apparent that concentration on the sloping angle of the sides of the mountain, itself, not the overall form of the stone, also crystallizes a major difference between a *doha-ishi* and *dan-seki* where the emphasis is on abrupt, sharply dropping vertical sides).

Forgoing concern over the absolute accuracy of translation, it actually does seem potentially useful to add the adjective ‘sloping’ to further describe the general form of a plain/offset mountain stone where the plateau, plains or rolling hills are not parallel to the visible sightline of the base of the stone, but instead gradually slope up, climbing towards the base of the primary mountain. In such a case, it would still be desirable, even necessary, to have a clear sense of



delineation between the sloping area and perceived base of the mountain. Without such delineation, one observes that this form becomes indistinguishable from mountains, particularly *toyama-ishi* (distant mountains) with gently sloping sides or expansive aprons. Benz's illustrated example of a *doha-ishi* that he labels as a slope stone is, in my opinion, more accurately described as a *toyama-ishi* (pp. 41,183); in fact, he, himself confirms this when he later uses the same drawing with the addition of a 'lake' as an example of 'mountain with lake' (p.183).



*Toyama-ishi* :distant mountain stone; not a *doha*. (This stone is similar to the form Benz describes as a *doha* -slope stone. )

Finally, let us return to Matsuura's literal definition of *doha* as a gentle sloping hill. (Unfortunately we cannot be sure if Mr. Matsuura's concern was addressed to the slope of the side of the mountain as was Nanjo's or to that of the horizontal plain, or both). As stated, it makes no mention of separate sections of mountain and plain; does such a variation actually exist within Japanese subcategories? I have personally found that minimalist stones similar to figure #47 mentioned above invite quiet contemplation. Some of these stones may indeed physically slope and, in essence, be nothing more than a slope. However, even when a summit is suggested, if there is no clear delineation between the rising slope and mountain, I think it best not to conflate these reductive forms with the *doha* classification. Perhaps the wisest approach would be to use an English description, such as 'gentle hill', avoiding any Japanese label – at least in print! ... Well Linda, I've tried!

Time for some *sake*,

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 GuyJim to jimgreaves@adelphia.net or 1018 Pacific Street, Unit D, Santa Monica, CA 90405 (310) 452-3680

## April Program Notes

by Linda Gill

Larry presented a slide show based a book from Japan. The book, **Suiseki - An Art Created by Nature**, features the Nyogakuan collection of Japanese stones. It is unusual because it talks about the mineral content of the stones and does so in Japanese and in English. It discusses the geological classifications of stones and their evolution and transformation.

There were beautiful color pictures of each stone accompanied by captions that included the river the stone came from, some pictures of the rivers and maps, the 'given name' of the stone - for example: *Nine Blessings from Heaven*, and some notes about the stones history, etc. The captions often did not include the *suiseki* classification of the stone.

It was interesting to note that the captions often included references to the finder's memories of a location that were evoked by the stone. These perceptions seemed to be more important than the adherence to type (near mountain, etc.). Again we are reminded that what one person sees in a stone will not be seen by everyone.

If you are interested in the book it is published by Mitsumura Printing Company. ISBN 4-899615-989-6 COO72. The cost is 18,000 yen and the telephone is 011-81-03-3492-1177; Fax 011-81-03-3495-2939. Be warned, Jim Greaves has been trying for 2 months to get the book; so far no luck! [Hint: go on the internet with someone who understands Japanese.]



Kamagawa River Stone, Kibune waterfall



Nine Blessings from Heaven

## DESERT STONES AND ICE AGES

by Ray Yeager

### PART 2: HOW THE ROCKS WE COLLECT ARE FORMED

As the climate changed to a drier environment after the last glacial maximum and the pluvial lakes disappeared, desert rivers slowly became active only during seasonal flooding. The wind now began to move the sand from the now dry lake beds and old flood plains into vast, moving sand dunes.

Exposed rocks are now disturbed only by an occasional flash flood, earthquake or human or animal intrusion. Larger rocks (8 to 10 inches or more), that are well anchored in the soil, could lie undisturbed, for a thousand years or more, all the while being eroded by wind and sand.

Sand is composed primarily of quartz and a great majority of rocks contain this extremely hard mineral. Being so hard (7 on the Moh's scale of hardness, 10 being the hardest) it is the last mineral to erode making it very plentiful through out the desert southwest. Sand found in rivers and along sea shores is visibly different from desert sand. River and beach sand is more angular and shiny from the tumbling action in water, whereas desert sand is more rounded and frosted or dull in appearance from the constant collision of individual grains.

The hardness of a rock is generally not very uniform so erosion is often differential which gives the stone the character we look for. The sedimentary rock we find is formed by the depositing of successive layers of



Indian Blanket Stone, Saddle Peak Hills, 4"

rock fragments, sand, mud, silt and the skeletal remains of tiny animals. Pressure from overlying rocks and various cementing processes can be repeated many times. Each layer may be of a different hardness and will erode at a different rate giving

the stone a myriad of shapes.

You would think that ventifaction would tend to round-off the edges of a rock. This is generally true but in the case where the rock contains thin layers of quartz in the matrix as the softer layers are eroded, it

exposes very thin and sometimes sharp layers of white quartz forming fins and pinnacles. If the quartz or similar appearing calcite (which is much softer) is thick enough, the erosion of the surrounding rock will reveal a snow capped peak or a delicate water fall.

Fine grained rock weathers slower than large grained rock. Indian Blanket Stone, a fine grained stone that has experienced some metamorphic change (partial melting) is found primarily in the Saddle Peak Hills west of Dumont Dunes. This type of stone can be found ventifacted into the most dramatic shapes. In exceptional cases, a low profile mesa desert view stone with a homogeneous brown color can be found.



Distant mountain, Panamint Valley, 3"

Black volcanic rock [see above] which is abundant in the Mojave and Yuha deserts can be found ventifacted into very nice *suseki* landscape stones. Normally volcanic rock contains air pocks formed by gas bubbles during the rocks forming process. But if the rock experiences some partial melting or if the rock was formed without trapped gas bubbles, a fine grained, wonderfully shaped black polished stone can be found.

Water can also play a roll in the erosion of a desert stone if it contains limestone or other water soluble minerals. Vertical erosion is a telltale sign. Carbonic acid derived from carbon dioxide found in rain water is usually the culprit. When rocks contain minerals, such as iron and/or manganese, oxidation (rusting) can result in wonderfully dark patinas.

In the early 1960's, **Bob Watson**, a founding member of California Aiseki Kai, was probably the first to hunt for stones in the Mojave Desert with *suseki* in mind and subsequently opened up for the rest of us the fascinating world of desert viewing stones.

**Ray** and **Shirley Yeager** produced our newsletter for 14 years from 1987 – 2001. **Ray** also designed our logo which was recently updated by **Cheryl Manning**. Thank you ! We rarely see **Ray** and **Shirley** at our meetings since they moved to Yucca Valley but they always join us when it is time for a rock hunt!

## Coming Suiseki Events

### CALIFORNIA SUISEKI SOCIETY

12th Annual Exhibition, "The Japanese Art of Stone Appreciation" June 17-18 Lakeside Park Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Ave. Oakland. 10-5. Sales. Info: **Toby Trezona** 925.833.9793 or email [ttsolar@earthlink.net](mailto:ttsolar@earthlink.net).

### SAN FRANCISCO SUISEKI KAI

25th Annual Exhibit, August 19-20 Sakura Room, Radisson Miyako Hotel, 1625 Post St. SF. 11-5.

### INTERNATIONAL STONE APPRECIATION SYMPOSIUM

September 28-October 1 Holiday Inn in Grantville, PA. **Seiji Morimae**, Director, Nippon *Suiseki* Association, will be the guest speaker from Japan. Aiseki Kai members will be on the program, among them, **Jim Greaves** will speak on West Coast *Suiseki*, **Hideko Metaxas** will speak on Ikebana, **Mas Nakajima** will speak on *Suiseki* Display and **Dr Tom Elias** will speak on the Mystery of Chrysanthemum Stones. For additional information, contact **Glenn Reusch** 540.672.5699.



When Mary & Peter Bloomer returned from their 3 week trip to China and Tibet, they discovered a guest had taken up residence among their stones. Who said birds nest in trees? You have to admire her daring.

## FOR SALE: JIBANS BY AL NELSON

During the May meeting **Al** will preview examples of *jibans* he has made. You can order them for your use in future shows or displays. Bring the dimensions of your *daiza* and /or *suiban* and he will make your *jiban* to the perfect size. It's a real deal and the price is right.

Last chance: **Kathy Boehme** will be selling *suiban* at the Santa Anita Show, May 27-29.

If you have some stone related item for sale, contact **Nina** with the information and, space available, it will be published.

## Refreshments



Thanks to **Janet Shimizu & Phil Chang** and **Barry & Sandy Josephson** and **Bruce McGinnis** who provided the April bounty.

May's refreshments will be provided by **Kiyo & Kaz Yoneda, Jim Greaves & Alice Arbaugh** and **Bill & Lois Hutchinson**. Thanks also to **Bill & Lois** who always set up our club buffet with coffee/tea service, cold water and sodas, plates, napkins and utensils.

Webmaster **Bill Hutchinson** reminds us that we have a new and improved website. It is redesigned, easy to navigate and easy to read. There is a gallery of member stones. Our current newsletter can be viewed as well as previous newsletters. Check it out. It's your site: [aisekikai.com](http://aisekikai.com)



This color newsletter was made possible due to the generosity of **Faye and Ralph Johnson**. Thank you!

## Contact People

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<b>Annual Exhibit:</b> Jim Greaves	310.452.3680	<a href="mailto:jimgreaves@adelphia.net">jimgreaves@adelphia.net</a>
<b>Exhibit Set Up:</b> Marge Blasingame	626.579.0420	<a href="mailto:blasmrjr@aol.com">blasmrjr@aol.com</a>
<b>Refreshments:</b> Lois Hutchinson	714.964.6973	<a href="mailto:whutch70@surfside.net">whutch70@surfside.net</a>
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<b>Newsletter:</b> Larry and Nina Ragle	949.497.5626	<a href="mailto:ragle@cox.net">ragle@cox.net</a>



## Newsletter Committee

**April Contributing Editors:** Linda Gill, Jim Greaves, Ray Yeager, Larry Ragle  
**Reproduction and Mailing:** Elizabeth Partch  
**Coordination/Design:** Nina Ragle

We hope you will participate. Please send any submissions to [ragle@cox.net](mailto:ragle@cox.net) no more than 10 days following our monthly meeting. Thank you!

**Ragle  
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**ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED**



*Leaves no stone unturned*

*See us on the web*

**aiseikikai.com**



## Coming Events

### **BONSAI CLUB OF SANTA BARBARA**

Annual Show, May 20-21, Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, 1212 Mission Canyon Rd. Sat 11-4, Sun 9-4. Demos at 1:00.

### **SANTA ANITA BONSAI SOCIETY**

Annual Bonsai Exhibition, May 27-29, Ayers Hall, Los Angeles County Arboretum, 301 N Baldwin Ave. Arcadia. 9-4:30. Our own **Kathy Boehme** will be selling *suiban*. This is a wonderful opportunity. Don't miss it!

### **ORANGE COUNTY BONSAI SOCIETY**

43rd Annual Exhibition, June 10-11, OC Buddhist Church, 909 S. Dale St. Anaheim. 11-4. Demos at 1:00.

### **DESCANSO BONSAI SOCIETY**

36th Annual Bonsai Exhibition, June 16-18, Van de Kamp Hall, Descanso Gardens, 1418 Descanso Dr, La Canada Flintridge. 9-4:30. Plant sale. Demos 11 & 1:30 each day. Reception June 17 at 6:30 in Van de Kamp Hall. See [descanso-bonsai.com](http://descanso-bonsai.com)

### **KOFU BONSAI KAI**

Bonsai Exhibit, July 7-30, Orange County Fair at the Fairgrounds, Fairview and Arlington, Costa Mesa. Noon -10 PM each day except Mondays. Free bus service to and from all outer parking lots. Info: **Manny Martinez**, 949.770.9633 or [manny22816@aol.com](mailto:manny22816@aol.com)

### **REDWOOD EMPIRE BONSAI SOCIETY**

The 23rd Annual Bonsai Show, August 26-27, Santa Rosa Veterans Building, 1351 Maple Ave. Santa Rosa. Sat 10-5. Sun 10-4. Sales. Demos at 1:30 each day. **Yasuo Mitsuya**. Info: **Bob Shimon** 707.884.4126 or [shimon@mcn.org](mailto:shimon@mcn.org). See [rebsbonsai.org](http://rebsbonsai.org)

### **SAN DIEGO BONSAI CLUB**

41st Annual Show, Sept 30-Oct 1, Balboa Park, Casa Del Prado, Rm 101. 10-5. Demos 11 & 2 each day. Info: **Joan Berkwitz** 760.431.1014

### **GOLDEN STATE BONSAI FEDERATION**

Convention XXIX "Bonsai by the River" Nov 2-5, Double Tree Hotel, 2001 Point West Way, Sacramento. **Masahiko Kimura**, **Kathy Shaner**, **Lindsay Shiba**.

**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.