



## October Program

This will be our last chance to talk about our fast approaching show at the Huntington so please come! This is important. There are lots of details to discuss.

We will also have an opportunity to hear from **Jack Dennis** about our plans for our November 15-16 Yuha trip. If you are planning to go to the Yuha with us, please attend this meeting. [See pg 7.]



October is another one of those months that wants to “trick” us.... There are 5 Wednesdays. Don’t show up on the 29th or you will be alone and feeling silly. See you on the 22nd.

## Stone of the Month

As you all have no doubt noticed, we are living in trying times. With that in mind, let’s bring in stones that offer a safe haven. Stones that come to mind might be shelter stones, cave stones and island stones or coastal stones with a safe harbor (or inlet).



This coastal stone with an inlet is from the book “An Art Created by Nature, The Nyogakuan Collection of Viewing Stones”, Japan 2005.

**Note of Importance:** We have agreed to give in to the pressure and raise our dues to \$10 a year beginning in 2009. We certainly hope this will not prove a deal breaker to any of our fine membership and that you will continue to feel that you get a big bang for your buck! Thank you for your support.

## Preparing for Suiban Display

Last month I ended this column explaining that Aiseki Kai learns from Japan - we don’t re-invent the art form to suit our needs. However, it is true that stone appreciation is evolving in Japan. One specific area, *suiban* display, is dramatically different from early publications. Most of us mimicked the published photos (I did) that were featured in books early on or what I saw other people doing. I showed all styles of stones in *suiban*. It was convenient or, more likely, I didn’t have *daiza* for the stone. We used sand with raked grooves to represent waves around an island stone and a wide variety of chunky sand, even colorful sand or no sand, just water.

In 1987, **Uhaku Sudo** introduced us to *Keido* display at the Anaheim GSBF Convention X. He demonstrated all the techniques of preparing a display, including washing the sand and positioning the stone in the *suiban*. We learned that *suiseki*, landscape scenes, are the only style of stones shown in *suiban* with one exception, boat stones- assuming the boat is in the shape of an ancient craft. In *Keido* display, boats, huts and human figures, if they suggest bygone times, can be used as a primary piece but huts and humans are displayed only in *daiza*.

Looking at the *Nippon Suiseki Association’s* booklet and the most recent Japan *Aiseki* magazine, I noticed that most photos reflect the method of *suiban* display that **Sudo** taught is every bit as popular outside the circle of *Keido* practitioners.



A display begins with the selection of a *suiseki* and a *suiban* to fit. Ideally, the *suiban* is twice as long as the stone and deep enough to conceal most of the bottom. Ideally, the stone selected has undergone *yoseki*.

continued on pg 3

September ...

Your editor had a Cool Hand Luke moment: a failure to communicate ~ thus we have neither meeting notes nor program notes for September. **Linda** tells us that the meeting was very good and well attended. Thank you, **Bill**, for handling the director role in our absence. [Italy was absolutely fantastic.] Please accept my apologies and enjoy a few of the pictures from **Ann Horton**'s most popular presentation on mini viewing stones:



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





**Preparing for Suiban Display** from pg 1

*Yoseki*, “bringing up the stone”, is a method of aging and enhancing the patina of many types of stones. Most people assume you are joking when you describe the process, watering your stones on a regular basis. It’s not a joke. The technique is described in detail on the web site of the Nippon Suiseki Association. Their method suggests a 5 to 10 year process of daily watering to age the stone. I have been told that no matter how perfect a stone may be, as you found it, it is not a *suiseki* until it is “antiqued” by this process. The usual response from an astonished audience is, “You’re nuts. The rock was in the river water for thousands, maybe millions of years. What good will it do to water it now?” *Yoseki* has, indeed, enhanced the patina of many of the stones in our collection.

My first realization of this effect was by accident. In the early 1990’s I left a Russian River stone, jasper, on my bonsai bench intending to use it for a maple root-over-root planting. I rejected the plan when it was apparent that the stone was too dominate and too heavy. Until I moved it to take this photo it remained where I had left it. The colors are distinct. The patina is soft and the colors are brilliant wet or dry.

This stone, found in China, has been watered only 18 months and the changes are dramatic. By aging the



When I found this stone it was a creamy mustard yellow but now it is a rich brown with yellow highlights. It has taken on a deep sheen that is very attractive.

stone in this manner it prepares it for another popular practice, spraying the stone and observing the varied changes as the stone dries. We have learned it is best not to “treat” a stone shown in a *suiban* for this reason. The oil repels the water. Many of our experienced members spray their stone/*suiban* displays during our shows. We all should do it using distilled water (bottled water for steam irons). However, do not spray stones in *daiza* or spray someone else’s display unless they request it.



It’s easy to remember to water your stones if you grow bonsai. I group stones around my bonsai benches where they are watered at least as often as I water my bonsai.



If you only have a few stones you could dip them in a bucket of water. When I first introduced the idea of *yoseki* at one of our meetings a few years ago, **Jack Dennis** had a great idea. Fill a bucket with distilled water and dip stones in it repeatedly. On a hot day one could dip a stone multiple times. Dip-dry-dip-dry....10 dips a day and the “ten year” period is over in a year or so.

The tap water in Southern California is a problem since it is treated with calcium carbonate (hard water). If your stone has any indentations, take care to tilt it so that no water puddles. If you allow puddles, white stains will accumulate and most likely distract from the beauty of the stone.



Soaking a stone in water overnight prior to *suiban* display will also enhance its appearance.

Please note: Stones found in the desert do not seem to respond well to this process.

Next month: preparing the sand.

Larry Ragle

# Ask Guy Jim

Dear GuyJim,

*You will be packing your show in Washington, DC, for the return trip at about the time our October issue goes to press, will you be able to provide a column?*

Nina

Dear Nina (the Needy Nag)

One often hears aficionados of suiseki and viewing stones whispering in hushed terms about Zen and the soulful spirit of stone appreciation – the Chinese even use the term ‘spirit stone’. Well, this month I present a few spirits of a different nature. If you were a regular visitor to the annual show we used to do at the Descanso Gardens’ Japanese Festival you may recognize many of the images you encounter here as the same ones we exhibited the year the show fell on Halloween weekend and **Don Kruger** and I mounted a display of spooky images for the occasion.

We usually identify these stones with the Japanese term, *obake*, for spirit or ghost. The term *yurei* is often encountered and commonly refers to a female ghost. (It seems mistreated women seeking retribution are a favorite theme. One has only to think of **Kathy Bates** or **Glenn Close** to realize that this is ‘seriously’ scary stuff!) Unlike the nebulous, semi-transparent Western variety, most Japanese ghosts are really something to be feared. They are macabre, grotesque and at the same time, often portrayed in over-the-top illustrations that become more humorous than frightening. There are other supernatural forms that are peculiar to the Japanese, especially the *tengu* (mountain demons) and *kappa* (water creatures), and *oni* (devils or demons). The latter are most in keeping with my Halloween theme as they are usually depicted in a distorted monkey- human-like form with two devil-like horns, three-clawed feet and a tail. *Oni* are known to be both cruel and lecherous... and also fairly stupid! They are often seen in groups tormenting ‘man’ in the same manner as the devil’s assistants in a **Hieronymus Bosch** depiction of hell!

Japanese folklore presents an endless supply of stories with ghosts and supernatural demons that might serve as ‘poetic’ references for a suggestive stone. For instance, ‘The Greedy Hag’ refers to a **Tsukioka Yoshitoshi** image of the popular story of an avaricious wife who gets her come-uppance (see Tongue-cut sparrow story, inset on next page). On the other hand, we have the Casper-like spook my son, now 39, and I happily picked up on a beach when he was 9 years old ... Ask me whether or not that stone has a meaningful spirit!

To legitimize this presentation, let me admonish you to remember that the picture or embedded-image stones are *monyō-ishi* while the friendly spook and ‘Hag’ are actually object stones, *keishō-seki*, even if you may not quite bring yourself to call them *sugata-ishi*!



Obake – Feather River. This fellow has a tail as if rising from smoke.

Whether this is a wispy obake or possibly an oni is uncertain! Mokelumne River



Obake – Thomes Creek

Obake – Eel River



Spook – Coastal California



### The Tongue-Cut Sparrow

There are numerous variations of this story, but the general gist is as follows: A woodcutter befriended a sparrow and kept it at home. One day when the woodcutter was not at home, the sparrow ate some starch the woodcutter's wife was preparing. She was so angry that she cut out the sparrow's tongue and sent him away. Upon hearing what she had done, the woodcutter set off and eventually found the sparrow who accepted his apology. Having passed a pleasant evening feasting together, the sparrow offered him a choice between a large and small basket with the admonition that it not be opened until he returned home. The woodcutter said the small basket would suit him fine, took it home, and opened it to find a treasure of fine silk cloth and coins. His wife was angry that he had not chosen the larger basket. She then went to see the sparrow and given the same choice, grabbed the larger basket. She struggles to haul it back home, where, upon opening it she is overcome by all sorts of demons.



The Greedy Hag woodcut by Yoshitoshi



"The Greedy Hag" – Thomes Creek



Greedy Hag, detail ...



Halloween Tokonoma

Happy Halloween,

GuyJim

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@roadrunner.com](mailto:jimgreaves@roadrunner.com) or 1018 Pacific Street, Unit D, Santa Monica, CA 90405 (310) 452-3680

3 bonus stones for Halloween:



Spider – Klamath River



Bat – Vancouver Island, BC



Vampire bat – Feather River

## The Making of a Japanese Dry Landscape Garden

by Ray Yeager

A few years ago I was asked to participate in the “Sky’s The Limit” project. When finished, this is will be an Astronomical Observatory and Nature Center located in 29 Palms near the entrance to Joshua Tree National Park. I had been asked to participate in the design of the observatory but I also volunteered to be responsible for the landscaping of the ten acre site that included establishing a nature trail that meanders through four acres of undisturbed desert.

Almost immediately I thought this would be my chance to build a large Japanese dry landscape garden (*karesansui*). I first became aware of this unique garden design from a photo in the book *The Way of Zen*, written by **Allen Watts** back in the late 1950’s. Years later I visited the Huntington and saw the Japanese dry landscape garden designed by **Bob Watson**, a founding member of California Aiseki Kai.

Chinese gardens can be traced back two millennia. These “Paradise Gardens” as they are often called included a pond surrounded by plants, rocks and commonly contained islands where the “Immortals” reside. This concept came from ancient Daoist teachings. The Huntington Library and Botanical Gardens has recently opened an excellent example.

The first mention of a Japanese garden was during the Asuka period (538-645). These gardens were similar to Chinese gardens of the time. Buddhism arrived in Japan in the sixth century and when relations were severed with China, beginning in the 9th century, the culture and art that China had brought to Japan now had time to mature into Japan’s own. The islands in a Japanese garden now represented the idea of Amida’s Western Paradise.

The term “*karesansui*” first appeared in the *Sakuteiki*, an 11<sup>th</sup> century garden manual and defined *karesansui* “a place without a pond or a stream, where one arranges rocks.” The earliest example of this style of garden can be found at *Saihoji* in Kyoto. It was built between 1339 and 1344 by a Zen monk named **Muso Soseki**, considered the father of the Zen garden, who was at that time considered one of the finest garden makers in Japan. Actually **Muso** was conscripted to restore the garden that had fallen into disrepair.

The garden included a pond, rocks and plants but a new feature was added. He built a path around the garden, the first of its kind. He also built a second garden above the original. **Muso** placed large rocks that appear to be the bed of a dry stream bed cascading down a slope into an open wooded area. This is the oldest known garden where rocks were used without water being included in the design. The rocks were moved from a nearby cemetery and were arranged in such a way as to appear natural.

A more familiar design of a *karesansui* and the most famous is found at Ryoanji in Kyoto. Built about 1600, fifteen stones (I feel a more elegant term than rocks) are situated in a raked field of light gray gravel.



The gravel [above] represents water and rake tracings around the stones indicate islands. The meanings of this and other *karesansui* gardens reflect Zen Buddhism thought such as austerity, oneness with nature and the feeling of mystery (*yugen*).

An interesting aspect of the garden at Ryoanji and most other early Zen gardens is that the builders are unknown. The class system during these times was extreme. Common laborers that would have been used for such tasks were the lowest of the low in the social structure to the point that they were never referred to by name. It is likely that a Zen monk at Ryoanji designed the garden but it also could have been a laborer that had experience in such gardens and was given the task to design and build the garden.

**Ray and Shirley Yeager** live in Yucca Valley ... we think as a respite from producing the Aiseki Kai newsletter from 1987—2001. This is the first of a three part series.

## Collecting Excursion to the Yuha

by Jack Dennis

I recommended in my presentation in July that it was probably wise to schedule a trip as early in this coming desert season as possible. This recommendation was made in view of the impending impact that the solar power generation plant and requisite transmission lines that are planned for installation in the Yuha basin where we collect stones may have on the rock field. It is conceivable that some part of the field will be greatly reduced in area as the access is selectively restricted.

The trip is set for **November 15-16, 2008**. It is currently planned to use the same procedure for accessing the desert as we used last spring so all the route, trail management, facility and accommodation information included in the February 2008\* issue of newsletter is still valid. I commend it to you.

**Sachiko** and I will visit the El Centro BLM office to find out, if possible, the exact footprint of the power plant on the desert floor, obtain a copy of any new rules that may have been put in effect and if we can we will find out the schedule of the power plant installation events. We will make this information available at the October meeting and will change the route plan accordingly.

**Sachiko** and I have decided that this will be our last trip as your Yuha trail leader. The reason is that field collecting, a sport that we love, has become too much work which is less fun than it once was and fun has become a lot more work so we are putting our old truck in mothballs to be relegated to the menial task of hauling manure for our garden. We may decide to fall in behind your caravan to the Yuha as you pass through Alpine but likely as not our field collecting days are over. Adios for now Amigos.

\*The February newsletter is available on our website.

1923 – 2008



**Kaz Yoneda** passed away on September 20th.

His Imperial Highness, **Prince Katsura**, awarded **Kaz** the Green and White Medal in 2006 for his contributions promoting and teaching the art of bonsai and design of gardens. This is the highest honor awarded by the Agricultural Society of Japan to a non-citizen. This award was established in 1881.

**Kaz** was a founding member of Aiseki Kai and a regular exhibitor at our annual show. We will all miss his ready smile and gentleness. Our sympathies to **Kiyo** and the **Yoneda** family.

## Refreshments

Thank you **Ann Horton, Joseph Gaytan, Lee Roberts** and **Kyra Haussler** for the September goodies.

October's treats will be hosted by **Janet Shimizu & Phil Chang, Tony Peredo** and **Tom & Apinya Culton**.



**California 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. We do not meet in Nov-Dec.

## Contact People

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## Newsletter Committee

**October Contributors:** Jim Greaves, Jack Dennis, Ray Yeager and Larry Ragle.  
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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!



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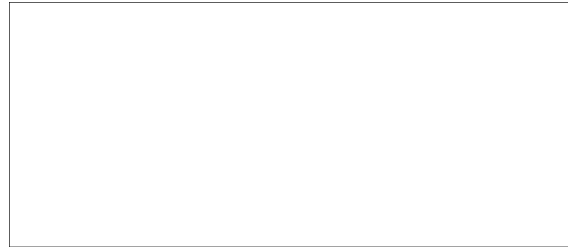
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*Leaves no stone unturned*

*See us on the web*

**aiseikikai.com**



## Coming Events

### DAI ICHI BONSAI

Annual Auction, Oct 17. Nakaoka Community Center, Gardena. Doors open at 6PM, auction starts at 7PM. Items include bonsai, *dai*, accent plants and more. Our very own **Joe James**, auctioneer. The public is welcome. For more information, call 310.545.5954

### KOFU BONSAI KAI

30th Annual Bonsai Show, October 18-19. Fullerton Arboretum, 1900 Associated Road, Fullerton. Sat (10 - 4:30) Sun (10 - 4). Demos both days, 1:30. Sales. Free admission. Reception and raffle on Saturday 6:30-9:30. For more info: call **Bill Hutchinson** 714.964.6973 or email him at whutch70@dslextreme.com

### YAMATO BONSAI KAI

37th Annual Bonsai Exhibition, October 18-19. Centennial Hall, 22292 Foothill Blvd at City Center Drive, Hayward. Sat (10-5) Sun (10-4) Demos both days, 1:30, by Johnny Uchida. Admission \$5 (includes a raffle ticket). Sales, door prizes.

### CAPITOL CITY BONSAI ASSOCIATION

9th Annual Show, October 25-26, 3330 McKinley Blvd, McKinley Park, Sacramento Garden and Arts Center. Sat (10-5) Sun (10-4). Demos both days 1:00. Sales, raffle. Info: call **Gary Judd** 916.630.1340

### GOLDEN STATE BONSAI FEDERATION

Convention XXXI, October 30-November 2. Modesto, Doubletree Hotel, 1150 Ninth St. **Boon Manakitivipart**, **Martin Schmalenberg** and **Tak Shimazu**. Exhibit, demos, workshops, bazaar, field trips, critiques, raffles, auctions.

### CONTEMPT MANDALA AN INSTALLATION / PUBLICATION BY RICHARD TURNER

**November 1 – December 21, 2008**

**Grand Central Art Center**

**125 N. Broadway in Santa Ana, CA**

Opening: Nov 1, 6-8PM Hours: Tue-Sun 11-4; Fri-Sat 11-7

For more information: email Richard at [turner@chapman.edu](mailto:turner@chapman.edu)

### BONSAI-A-THON XIII

GSBF Collection at the Huntington Fundraiser, Feb 28 - March 1, 2009, Huntington Botanical Center, 1151 Oxford Rd., San Marino. 7:30-4:30 This is a fundraiser so bring donations!

Please continue to support the Southern California Bonsai and Viewing Stone Collection. Contact **Marge Blasingame** for information: call 626.579.0420 or email her at: [blasmrjr@aol.com](mailto:blasmrjr@aol.com)