The next meeting of the Houston Bonsai Society will be at the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion in Hermann Park, 1500 Hermann Park Drive, Houston, TX 77004. Refreshments at 7 PM, meeting starts at 7:30 PM.

**Wednesday, August 3rd, HBS monthly meeting Suiseki, the Japanese art of viewing stone appreciation with Dr. Hoe Chuah.** Formed through time by wind and water, stones in all sizes and shapes symbolize timeless natural beauty, stability, longevity and even immortality. Bring some suiseki stones for Dr. Hoe to discuss.

**Upcoming Events**

- **Saturday, August 6th**, Basic Wiring Class at Timeless Trees, 9AM –12. $25 includes all material and aluminum wire. Students will watch video, practice wiring on “Practice Trees” and then on real trees.

- **Saturday, August 13th**, HBS Saturday Study Group at Quality Feed & Garden in the Heights. 9 AM – 12 Noon. Free, refreshments provided.

- **Saturday, August 20th**, Junipers 102 with Ken Credeur at Timeless Trees, 9:00 AM until we finish. We will continue working on the Staked Green Mound junipers potted in March. $20 per person includes wire, hand-outs. 2nd session of our juniper workshop: A. Summer cleaning and preparing tree for wiring, B. Thinning, C. Wiring in the tree.

- **Wednesday, September 7th**, Houston Bonsai Society monthly meeting.

- **Saturday, September 10th**, HBS Saturday Study Group, 9 AM – 12 Noon, at Maas Nursery, Seabrook. Free, refreshments provided.

- **September 10-11th**: 5th US National Bonsai Exhibition at Rochester, NY, hosted by Bill Valavanis and International Bonsai. The Houston area has 4 trees accepted into the exhibit, and several of us are headed that way. [http://www.usnationalbonsai.com/](http://www.usnationalbonsai.com/)


- **Saturday, September 17th**: Shohin Society of Texas meeting: How to set-up display, in preparation for the LSBF 2016 convention in Corpus Christi & the 2017 schedule.


**August Bonsai Care**

What should you think of when the temp is in the triple digits? It’s about time to get your winter quarters ready! Starting preparations in September will allow you time to get things done right. You won’t have to depend on make shift arrangements at the last minute.

However now during August, the temperature will make your present job harder. The prime effort is keeping the roots cooler and prevent them from drying out. The main culprit is the late afternoon sun. It sneaks in at the hottest part of the day when there is no humidity in the air to buffer some of the heat. At a low angle, it is sneaky enough to get under any foliage or awning.

Normally you will need to watch for changing water needs. Porous soil dries faster than the ones that are dense with high organic content. Wind dries the bonsai out, by taking moisture directly from both the soil and the foliage. Heat from the high temps or from the sun heats the pots and evaporates the water.

Shade should be provided for many bonsai. Trident maples, most elms, oaks, junipers and pines do well with 30% to 40% shade cloth. Thin-leaf trees that are understory species like Japanese maples and azaleas can use 50% cloth. 60% shade screens and higher can block the extreme heat of late afternoon sun from the western exposure. Local sources like Home Depot, Lowe’s sell shade screen with percentage too high for plant protection. I order my shade cloth from the Internet, cheaper that way too.

Chopped long fiber sphagnum moss can be used on the soil to help retain moisture. New Zealand moss is the highest quality, South American is almost as good, but North American kind usually is poor quality with lots of debris and breaks down fast. Again, order from the Internet. My Lowes had Miracle-Gro brand which is Chilean and also Mosser-Lee American from Wisconsin. Old cloth, shop towels, or such may be substituted or used to hold the moss if you live in a windy location.

Fertilizer should be used sparingly during August. Organic fertilizer cakes are the safest to use, however they should not have any ‘hot’ ingredient like rabbit or chicken droppings. After Labor Day, switch to a winterizing type of fertilizer that is high in the third number - potassium. For tropica, however, keep your regular schedule going. Just make sure the soil is cool enough so that the chemicals do not burn the roots.

This is a good time to remember to water twice. Dry soil particles, especially clay and organic particles tend to resist absorbing water. This is due to the surface tension of the water. Wait a few minutes after the first watering for the dry soil particles to absorb some of the water on their surface. Then the second watering gets the whole particle wet. During this period, consider foliage spraying. The humidity is usually very low in the afternoon and many junipers close the stoma during the day and open at night to absorb the dew. The foliage spray cools the plant and the environment so it can recover a bit overnight. Deciduous bonsai may be pruned, wired, or styled during this period. Any trees wired in the spring (or earlier) should be carefully checked. If the wire is snug, it should be removed and the tree rewired.

Tropicals are in their glory as long as you keep their roots reasonably cool. Defoliate, wire, and prune to your hearts content. Repotting should have been done earlier.
Summer flowering plants should be fertilized carefully so as to not burn the roots. Remove any seed or fruit that may form, they rob the plant of needed energy. Crepe myrtles need to be deadheaded. Cut them back so the new shoots that form will not be too long. New growth will bear flowers each time. If you prune back the American wisteria (wisteria frutescens), it too would re-bloom each time.

Do not prune azaleas any more this year, if you want flowers next spring. Buds have been set by now. If you are still developing your azaleas, go ahead and prune. Some varieties will set a few buds anyway. In general, when pruning, look for the cluster of twigs at the site of last spring’s bloom. Cut out all but two twigs, usually the ones growing horizontally. Be sure to reduce strong growing shoots down to a couple of leaves.

The combination of heat and dry conditions are optimum for the growth of the spider mites. Scale will be extremely dangerous sucking the sap from the plant. Cedar elm is subject to a very small white scale that is hard to see. Controls for these will generally take care of any other insects. Be sure you read and follow the manufacturer’s directions for any control you use.

Organic controls have no residual action and need to be used on a regular basis. If used regularly, the spray would get scale when it is in the reproductive stage outside of the shell. The only way to get scale under the shell is with a systemic poison. For example, Bayer systemic granules are applied to the surface of the soil, watered in, absorbed by the roots and transported by the sap throughout the plant. The bug gets it when he sucks the sap or eats the leaf.

My organic control is one tablespoon of each of liquid seaweed, fish emulsion, 5% apple cider vinegar, and molasses, in one gallon of water. Spray with fine mist sprayer covering top and bottom surface of leaves and into crevices in the bark.

Extreme dry conditions will keep fungal problems in check but watch out if we happen to get a few days of rain. Warm and wet mean an eruption of leaf spot and mildew. Control them with the 1% hydrogen peroxide spray. I like that because it does not leave a white residue like the baking soda or potassium peroxide.

Registration for the LSBF 2016 Convention - Bonsai Living Art, is open online already. This year’s event is hosted by the Corpus Christi Society at the Emerald Beach Hotel, 1102 S. Shoreline Blvd., Corpus Christi, TX 78401 from October 13 to 16. For more information or to sign up early, please go to: http://www.lonestarbonsai.org/2016-texas-state-convention/

John Miller

John Miller, who writes a monthly column for the Bonsai Society of Dallas and Fort Worth Bonsai Society, has agreed to share his column with us. We need to make adjustments for our warmer and damper climate, with earlier springs, longer summers, late fall and erratic winters.
President’s Letter

It has been raining the last 3 days. What a wonderful relief from the stifling July heat. We have gotten 5 ½ inches, and I think the open cracks in the ground have almost closed up. Hopefully more is on the way in August.

Our Bonsai and BBQ was a tremendous success, with 79 attending. (if I counted correctly) We even had several visitors, three from Louisiana, one from Puerto Rico, and several new people joining that evening. The videos were informative, and we enjoyed working on trees together.

We have several world class events coming up. The August meeting will have Dr. Hoe Chuah presenting a program on “Suiseki” or Japanese Viewing stones. Suiseki is the Japanese art of stone appreciation, which values aspects like stability, longevity and immortality. Formed through time by wind and water, stones can take several sizes and shapes, reminding us of natural objects. If you would like to bring some stones you have we can discuss them.

The Bonsai U.S. National Bonsai Exhibition will be held in Rochester, New York, September 10-11th. Originally started by Mr. Bill Valavanis, it is a wonderful judged competition, featuring trees from all over the US. This is the Fifth Year it is to be held, and we have 4 entries from Houston that have been accepted. Considering that they only accept the best 200, we are honored to have representative trees from Houston competing, and several members of our club attending. For more details, visit: http://www.usnationalbonsai.com/

We have a special visiting Artist for our meeting in October. Mr. David Nguy, is the owner of Jidai Bonsai in Chino, California (which is both a world class school and nursery). He will do a lecture demo on a tremendous California Juniper, which will be raffled off later that evening. David is a regular artist at Golden State Bonsai events, and several of us have attended some of his demos. We are also planning to have some workshops with him, while he is in town. http://bonsaijidai.com/

The LSBF and Corpus Christi Bonsai Club are hosting our Annual State Convention in October 12-14th, at the Emerald Beach Hotel along the beach. It is always great fun, and will have many of our members attend. As usual they will have workshops, Lecture –demos, vendors, raffles, an auction, and the first ever Texas Talent Contest (which of course Houston should win) for more details visit their website at http://corpuschristibonsaiclub.org/CONVENTION_2016.php

Hope to see you at the meeting, August 3rd!

Have a great day,

Hurley
THE ART OF VIEWING STONES

No doubt Suiseki, as it is known to most aficionados in North and South Americas, and in Europe too, has acquired its name in Japan. However, in Asia, this art form has many other names. In China, viewing stones are called Gong Shi (beautiful stones), in Korea - Suseok, in Indonesia - Suisek, and in Viet Nam - đá cảnh nghệ thuật (artistic rocks for contemplation). Those who subscribe to important role of Feng Shui (the art and science of placement) in our universe call them Feng Shui stones.

In many world cultures, stones are believed to have spiritual meanings and given sacred reverence. As we have learned… *A rose by any other name is still a rose*, suiseki by any other name still look intriguing, mysterious and mystical, but always extra-ordinary and awe-some. They often have a long association to the art of Bonsai (Penjing). In fact, over a decade ago, most bonsai magazines added Suiseki to their headers, to officially feature Suiseki as bonsai companions, along with accent plants or figurines.

Suiseki are mostly stones, yet some are fossils or petrified wood. Similar to bonsai in sizes, some are big, some small. Once in Taipei, I had the honor to hold a mountain range in the palm of my hand. Up close, in miniature, that mountain is no less majestic than the magnificent Himalaya range in bird’s eye view. Most stones have been naturally carved into visually pleasing natural shapes, but every now and then, I stumbled on the hilariously unusual shapes.

Serious bonsai lovers often collect Suiseki that suggest mountains, islands and waterfalls, a bit austere or barren like the surface of the Moon or Mars, much in line with the Japanese wabi sabi concept. Chinese collectors on the other hand prefer diverse shapes and whimsy forms, with a vast range of colors, especially those that evoke human body parts and animals, with much more varied minerals, often found in all sorts of terrains of an immense land. The modern and fun seeking collectors are more attracted to rocks suggestive of human silhouettes, animals in action, or even abstract shapes, laced with a great sense of humor. The rest of the rock lovers just look for gem-like stones, more prized for their textures, with layers or colors.

Although most judges and critics have a tendency to attribute more values to uncut stones, a lot of those displayed in museums and exhibits around the world
often look too good (to be true) to be \textit{au naturel} works of arts. Like Tanuki (Phoenix grafts) on the bonsai side, some masters of the art have become extremely skillful magicians in hiding their touch. A great numbers of power tools within everyone’s reach can easily enhance the appearance of collected trees and stones with little effort.

These great objects of beauty, whether used as stand-alone decorations, or as focal points for gazing into meditation, or companions to bonsai, are mostly collected in the wild, from beaches, streams, deserts and mountains. On a CEO’s desk, they may be portals for the stressed out executive to transport him or herself to faraway lands within seconds. Fuji like mountains can transport me (or my mind) in a blink of an eye from the extreme heat and humidity of Houston to cooler climate, like the sea shores of Japan in the Spring. They are also sophisticated tools for inner reflection that stir in the viewers an appreciation for the soft power of the universe. \textit{Soft power? What’s that?} you ask.

Most of us are familiar with the two forces that govern our universe: The \textit{Yin} and \textit{Yang} energies. They affect everyone and everything, whether we are aware of them or not. \textit{Yin} represents the Moon, dark, cold, slow, soft and fluid, like water. \textit{Yang} represents the opposite, the Sun, bright, hot, hard, fast and aggressive, like mountains or stones (in the bonsai context). In an avalanche or earthquake, hard rocks may tumble down slopes, crashing trees, homes, and cities on their path at high speed. Yet in streams and lakes, water over time can quietly and softly wear out all the rocks’ hard edges. That’s how broken glass on Glass Beach in MacKerricher State Park, California, became jelly beans like gems that glow in rainbow colors in sunlight. That’s the soft but relentless power of water at work in tight partnership with timeless ebb and flow of life.

Most rocks remind us of mountain ranges, lakes and natural wonders. Stones with deep colors, well worn out with rounded curves, usually symbolize the timelessness of Nature. Their suggestive shapes and forms enjoy a universal appeal as works of art. For a few admirers, their beauty evokes memories of their faraway mother land, revives emotional connections to childhood bliss or materializes their fantasy of traveling to the spiritual realm. For \textit{Zen} followers, \textit{Suiseki} are also called \textit{Scholars’ Stones} because a lot of teachers and scholars used them to gaze on for meditation. They went on to a mystical experience, which later inspired the religious or philosophic principles of \textit{Taoism}.

Most stones are appreciated for their surfaces that suggest great age, shapes that pay homage to the grandeur of nature, even overlapping planes, hollows or perforations formed by harmonious patterns. The highly sought stones in China are black Lingbishi and slate gray Yingshi.
When and where did the Art of Viewing Stones originate?
Most of us learned that for thousands of years, the Japanese have enjoyed bonsai and the first to promote that art form and Suiseki to the West. The Japanese Empress of the first century A.D. received the first Penjing and Gongshi from the Chinese imperial court. Magically shaped with holes, hollows and highly eroded surfaces, they completely captivated the interest of the Japanese aristocracy. Suggestive rather than defined, these stones became means to spiritual refinement, inner awareness, and enlightenment taught by Zen monks to the aristocracy, which later trickled down to the merchants’ class, then the general population. From afar, one would recognize that Suiseki closely followed the popularity of the Art of Bonsai throughout the world history.

In China, even before Christ, rocks were introduced as decorations for royal courtyards and gardens. Just like bonsai, evolving from the appreciation of larger garden rocks, miniature replicas of those stones (later named Scholars’ Stones) were used to decorate smaller city gardens and temples. Eventually they made their way indoors as status symbols, for contemplation and meditation.

The Koreans claimed that the appreciation of stones collected from their mountains, rivers and lakes their appreciation was enjoyed by the mass even before the Chinese, but became even more popular after the introduction of Taoism by the Chinese preachers, who also were the ones who brought them bonsai.

Unlike the Japanese stones that are sometimes cut or altered, Koreans do not allow any alteration to their Suseok, out of the utmost respect of the stones’ original shapes. Rather than flattening out their bottom to accommodate a flat dai and daiza, Suseok are displayed in suiban trays filled with sand, or deep carved wood display stands. The purpose is to stabilize them but still keep all of the stones.

The garden rock displays, in the gardens or courtyards, represent paradise (in Chinese - Penglai or in Vietnamese - Bồ Ng Lai). This heaven was the residence of the Jade Emperor, accessible only by the Immortals and fairies, but not to mere humans. Much of Chinese and Vietnamese poetry in those days wrote about the lucky few adventurous men who mesmerized by beautiful fairies and charmed to follow them into such mystical place of wonder. For thousands of years, that was the fantasy of most Asian men, young and old alike.
In the past decade, since the Internet became accessible to suppressed art lovers of Viet Nam, the art of **cây cảnh** (bonsai) and **đá cảnh** (viewing stones) has flourished across the country and across all social strata. Every individual has access to some of the trees or rocks. Even those living on boat houses own bonsai and stones. Besides the granite and marble mountains in the North of Viet Nam, there are so many gem quality stones in the central region, like jade, jasper, amethyst, malachite and other multi-colored stones. Vietnamese artists have a tendency to cut, shape, carve and embellish the stones in hope of commanding jewelry prices. It’s not uncommon to find colored stones engraved with calligraphy. Apparently there is very little attempt in hiding the hands of man, in this proud culture.

The beauty of the rock in many hues of gold and Silvery greys inspired the poet who composed a poem in his beautiful calligraphy.

The one school closest to us in time and geography would be the Americans. Among those who have studied and collected viewing stones in the US, are Melba Tucker who published *Suiseki & Viewing Stones: An American Perspective*.

Like many American bonsai students, such as Ryan Neil, Michael Hagedorn, Boon Manakitivipart, Kathy Shaner, Peter Tea, Bjorn Bjorholm and many more, who devoted many years of their life as apprentices to the top bonsai masters in Japan but return to the US to develop the New American Bonsai school, Mrs. Tucker has also learned so much about imported stones but decided to collect from her backyard, in America. She discovered marvelous treasures in Mojave desert, and in California rivers, lakes and mountains. She realized that her American stones do not fit in any of the Chinese or Japanese classifications. Being different makes her American stones no less valuable or interesting than the imported ones. So she developed her own and unique way to view and appreciate those stones, from her own American perspective.

So far, from my limited research, only the Japanese and Chinese have sorted viewing stones. Most classifications are by shape, color, textures, surface pattern and place of origin. The most classical Japanese concepts are recorded in a book *The Japanese Art of Stone Appreciation* by Vincent R. Covello and Yuji Yoshimura. The lists are extremely long and simply cannot be printed here. They can be easily found on the Internet if one wishes to do more research. Perhaps the Koreans have done so as well but such publications have not reached the Internet, in English for the whole world to share. For details on the Chinese concepts, we wait for Dr Hoe Chua.

In 2013, I had the good fortune of listening to a very knowledgeable Suiseki enthusiast during his Stone Critique at the LSBF Convention in New Braunfels. Peter Aradi (of San Antonio) took a long time to explain the aesthetics of natural stones as well as the artistry of the artists who carved the most creative and complimentary dai, daiza and stands.

The highlight of my first class on stone appreciation was Dr. Hoe who stood by my side, translating the Chinese calligraphy written on the crates that served as display stands. He shared with us the names, origins and histories of some of the most spectacular stones in the exhibit. They were his.

I cannot wait to listen to Dr. Hoe talk again about stones, most of all, to view his incredibly beautiful collection and photographs of the beautiful stones from around the world that he had taken. Make plans to attend this exciting *Viewing Stones* lecture, offered for the first time to HBS, in more than a decade. If you happen to own a few interesting suiseki, please bring them in and share with the club.

Shawn Nguyen

*Note: Most photos of stones here came from Pinterest, a Vietnamese blog (Co Hoa Mai), a Chinese blog and the rest from ebay.com, aliexpress.com and Alibaba.com.*
Calendar of Events

2016

AUG 3  HBS meeting: Suiseki with Dr. Hoe Chuah

AUG 6  Basic Wiring Class at Timeless Trees, 9AM – 12 Noon, $25 includes all material and instructions.

AUG 6-8  Robert Steven at Wigert’s Nursery - 4 workshops with plant material included, and one all day BYOB workshop.

AUG 13  HBS Saturday Study Group, 9 AM - 12 Noon, at Quality Feed & Garden in the Heights. Free, refreshments provided.

AUG 20  Junipers 102 with Ken Credeur at Timeless Trees, 9:00 AM until we finish. We will continue working on the Staked Green Mound junipers we potted in March. $20 per person includes wire, hand-outs, etc. 2nd session of our juniper workshop: A. Summer cleaning and preparing tree for wiring, B. Thinning, C. Wiring in the tree.

SEP 7  Houston Bonsai Society monthly meeting.

SEP 10-11 5th US National Bonsai Exhibition at Rochester, NY. For more info, check out their website or contact William Valavanis, wmv@internationalbonsai.com, or 585-334-2595.

SEP 10  HBS Saturday Study Group, 9 AM - 12 Noon, at Maas Nursery, Seabrook. Free, refreshments provided.


SEP 17  Shohin Society of Texas - Set up display in preparation for the October LSBF convention and select subjects for the 2017 exhibit.

OCT 5  HBS meeting, David Nguy's Lecture/Demo on a terrific California Juniper. David and his wife June, own and run Jidai Bonsai School and a bonsai store providing trees and supplies in Chino California, just outside L.A. For many years, David has been a sensei of the Golden State Bonsai Federation (GSBF). Several HBS members attended his trainings in CA. His specialties are Junipers and Pines. The demo tree will be raffled at the end of the meeting. http://bonsaijidai.com/

OCT 8  Bring your own tree workshop with David Nguy at Timeless Trees - morning session 9AM -12 Noon, afternoon Session 1 PM - 4 PM - $40 for each session or $75 for both.


NOV 12  HBS “Day of Bonsai” at the Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Garden, with judged exhibit of great trees, study groups, workshops and vendors. 9AM – 3PM. Free to the public.

Check out timeless-trees.com for weekly classes with very knowledgeable artists and masters. Stop by the nursery on Friday and Saturday to browse the largest pre-bonsai and bonsai selection, pots, tools, supplies, soils and books. Make sure you get on Timeless Trees’ mailing list.

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Quality Feed & Garden and Ken stand ready to help you with bonsai selection, bonsai care, pots and supplies. He will also personally have free classes for HBS every 3-month to help you start with your first bonsai. Check the Calendar of Events for dates. Ask for 10% HBS discount.

Come stock up on bonsai soils, pesticides, fungicides, fertilizers and other supplies. The plant doctor is always on duty, so bring your unhappy bonsai for a free thorough check up. Don’t forget to ask for a 10% HBS discount.
Come enjoy the most dizzying bouquet of colors and fragrances. There is so much to take home from the large selection of herbs and spices, rare tropical plants and fruit trees, exotic orchids and pond aquatic plants, and native or imported bonsai.

Visit artist Andrew Sankowski at the Mossrock Studio & Fine Art Gallery for the finest gifts and most uniquely beautiful bonsai pots in every shape, form and color. Personalized pots or gifts can be commissioned year round.

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