



# NORTH AMERICAN OHARA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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JUN  
2022

## SUMMER EDITION

Welcome to the Summer edition of the newsletter. As the days are growing longer and slowly warmer, splashes of color dot the landscape and scents abound from the spring flowers – what a feast for the senses.

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



GREETINGS FROM RUSS...



Dear NAOTA Members,

Here in Boston, we are enjoying a lovely spring. Just a few weeks ago, I was still feeling the winter chills but as my tree peony started to bloom, I knew it wouldn't be long before I could start enjoying the warmer weather and gardening. All of those glorious seasonal materials will make their way into my ikebana arrangements.

Exciting things are happening! Can you believe the Toronto conference is less than 4 months away? I can tell you it is going to be a fantastic event and such a welcomed change to interact in person with Head Master and Nishi Sensei. A special thanks to the NAOTA board of directors for all the effort being made to ensure success at this conference. Even more so, I would like to thank the local chapter in Toronto. They are the corner stone to this event and I couldn't be more proud of the work they have done and what we have to look forward to.

I would like to put a couple of thoughts out there for you. One, if you have not submitted a registration for the Toronto conference, I sincerely hope you will. Demand is high but we will be managing the wait list actively. As soon as a cancellation happens, we will reach out to those of you on the waiting list to ensure you have an opportunity to attend.

Secondly, as I mentioned in the last President's message, we are in need of identifying host chapters or study groups that are willing to host future conferences. I know the task is not easy and it requires great consideration, commitment and local support to execute, but it's the very reason why we exist – to offer direct instruction from Japan. It's only with your support and sacrifice that we can offer this to our membership. So, please consider this and know that in addition to any groups letting me know if they are interested, we will be reaching out to some of you as well to see if you can support us.

Wishing you the best,

Russell Bowers  
*(Massachusetts Chapter)*



## NUMBER OF FLOWER MATERIALS USED IN IKEBANA ARRANGEMENT

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Traditionally in Ikebana it has been customary to use an odd number of flower materials, with the exception of two types. This is based on Chinese yin-yang philosophy, which regards odd numbers as yang numbers and even numbers as unlucky hidden numbers. In particular, the Japanese pronunciation of the number “four” is the same as the word “death”, so it is usually avoided as an unlucky number.

However, it is not reasonable to use more flowers than necessary to avoid even numbers. The first priority should be to create the optimum number of flowers with a good balance between all the materials.

When the Hana-isho was established, the number of combinations was discussed and it was decided that four types were acceptable. From now on, the principle should be to combine the most suitable types of flowers, without avoiding even numbers, including four types of flowers.

Please understand that, without such restrictions, the number of combinations and the number of creative options increases. This is a common principle for all types of Moribana, with the exception of the Shakei Moribana Yoshiki-honi.



## CERTIFICATES POSTAGE

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According to the rise of the postages of Japan Post, we revised our postages for certificates and plaques. These new postages will be applied to the certificate/plaque applications which we actually receive on and after June 1st, 2022. The certificates and plaques will be shipped by EMS.

With this postage raise, the tentative extra charge for EMS shipping imposed by Japan Post to the USA will no longer be necessary from June, 2021. *Please see separate PDF document for Postage Rates.*

# THE TRADITIONAL METHOD



## THREE-VARIETY ARRANGEMENT FOR SUMMER

-- *KIN-KEI* (NEAR VIEW)

*This Traditional Method discussion below is republished from the book entitled “The Traditional Ikebana of the Ohara School” by Houn Ohara. English Translation 2019, with permission from The Ohara School of Ikebana Headquarters. Note that this arrangement is a Landscape moribana (Shakei).*

In the *Shakei Moribana* (Landscape Arrangement) in the *Yoshiki-hon-i* (Traditional Method) depicting an early summer scene in the mountains, there is a unique method, called the Multi-Variety Arrangement for summer, which uses *Vaccinium oldhamii* as the groundcover instead of using club moss and mountain fern. The Three-Variety Arrangement for summer is studied as a preparatory step before advancing to the more complex Multi-Variety Arrangement.

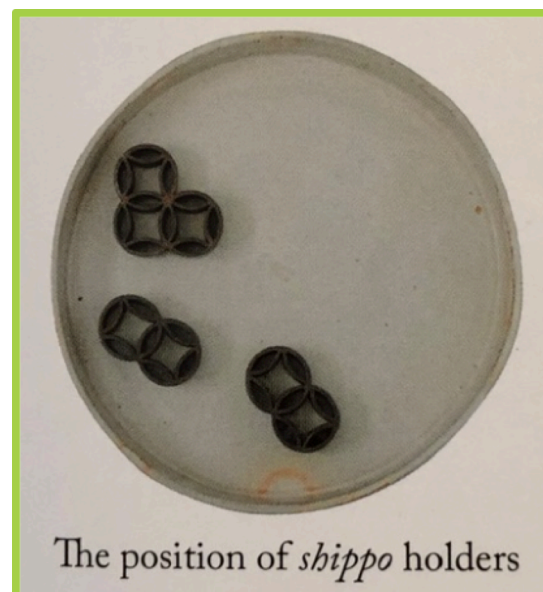


In the Multi-Variety Arrangement, where as many as five or seven different materials must be skillfully arranged, a considerable degree of technical ability is required. Studying the Three-Variety Arrangement provides both a good grasp of the basic methods applied in the Multi-Variety Arrangement as well as practice in the use of *Vaccinium* as the groundcover, which is different from the use of club moss and mountain fern. Among various branch materials, *Vaccinium* is particularly a suitable substitute for groundcover, because it has small, compact leaves that grow in finely-detailed patterns.

The *Chu-kei* (Middle-View Depiction) of *Vaccinium* is discussed in detail in the previous section. There, it is used as the main material, and is arranged in the *Chokuritsu-kei* as well as the *Keisha-kei*, depicting lush growth in mountain valleys in summer. In the Three-Variety Arrangement in summer, *Vaccinium* is used for the *Kin-Kei* (Near-View Depiction).

Although it is the main materials as in the *Chu-kei*, the roles of the principal stems are played by the accompanying flowers; thus in this regard, the *Kin-kei* of *Vaccinium* differs from its *Chu-kei*. In the *Kin-kei*, Near-View Depiction, moreover, *Vaccinium* is always arranged in the *Chokuritsu-kei* with the branches, which are considerably shorter than usual, as the *Shu-shi* (Subject), the *Fuku-shi* (Secondary) and the *Chukan-shi* (Fillers). In this way, the basic framework of the Three-Variety Arrangement for summer is constructed with *Vaccinium* branches before arranging the flowers that become the actual principal stems in the work. Although they are treated short, they should still be in varied heights among themselves.

Since this is in the *Kin-kei*, star lilies and Chinese bellflowers are used in their actual lengths without reduction. The star lilies are placed tall in the standard positions of the *Shu-shi* and the *Fuku-shi*, both emerging from and blooming in the midst of the surrounding shrubs. Chinese bellflowers are placed as the *Kyaku-shi* (Object) and the *Chukan-shi*.



# MEET THE SUB GRAND MASTER



FROM THE DESK OF... SATSUKI PALTER

I grew up in Kobe where the Ohara Moribana Center was located. There were many Ohara Ikebana teachers and practitioners there. When I was around 3 years old, some of the employees in my father's company took ikebana classes after work and I watched them. I played with the leftover ikebana materials and put them in a kenzan in a small vase. Many of my aunts were also learning Ohara ikebana. I loved to be with them in class and enjoyed listening to the explanations. I still remember a class where the teacher was wearing a kimono while doing a landscape arrangement. I



couldn't imagine I would become an ikebana teacher. When I moved to the United States, I told my teacher in Kobe I was moving, and she said that I should visit Shohara-sensei. Los Angeles is a huge city, but Shohara-sensei's place was close to where I was living. She taught me a lot and encouraged me to become teacher. So here I am.

***Do you have a favorite arrangement style? If so, which one, and why?***

I like all Ohara ikebana styles. I recently realized how wonderful and clever Moribana is. When you keep in mind the Moribana structure guidelines, your Moribana arrangement will be nice with any materials. But you have to choose the material combination carefully. Shohara-sensei always says that you can tell the skill of an ikebana teacher by how they choose the material combinations. I agree completely.

***As most Ikebana practitioners love floral materials, do you also enjoy gardening as a hobby?***

I enjoy growing plants. They're my therapy. Plants take care of me as much as I take care of them. They are my children. I grow some for ikebana, some for my own joy, and a few for the dinner table. Plants are really clever and know how to survive.

When there is less water, they make more seeds. To find water, they stretch their roots into the yard of the neighbor who overwaters her lawn. They sense the changing season by the length of night. They can tell 5 minutes difference.

***What is one of your favorite floral materials and why ?***

I love one of my Bird-of-Paradise plants that has really long stem flowers. I have 3 types, a 2-headed one, a small one, and special tall beautiful one. When I want to make a large ikebana, I need materials that are tall and elegant with strong color. My bird-of-paradise always shows its dignified posture. There are tons of bird-of-paradise all over Los Angeles and people don't pay attention to them. But they are really magnificent for ikebana when you use them well.

***Do you have any tips for demonstrators, to ensure a smooth and successful demo?***

Be well prepared, then relax and smile. When you need to get the audience's attention, take a "pause". We call this "Ma" in Japanese -- space. For demonstrations to people who don't know ikebana, I've found it's better to make a simple, easy to understand arrangement to emphasize the fundamental nature. It's also much easier to do without stress than a big, complicated arrangement. Don't challenge yourself to make one you are not good at.

Before you decide what kind of ikebana style and size to make, you should check these points: What kind of audience is it? What is the location (inside or outside, stage or table, how much space, what is the color of the background, where is the audience watching from)? How much time will you have? These are main factors. Then you can decide what to make.

***What is one of the most challenging aspects of teaching ikebana to students ?***

Every branch is different. Every flower is different. Nothing is the same. People are the same way. So you shouldn't be a robot.

***What is one of your most memorable ikebana moments and why ?***

My first demonstration was at the LA Chapter's New Year's luncheon 25 years ago. It was really difficult. I had to speak in English, arrange from the back, and do a traditional landscape arrangement where you have to follow the rules exactly. And I had to do this in front of all the other teachers. But I'm thankful for Shohara-sensei who gave me the chance to do the demo there.

# LET'S GET DIGGING



## BALLOON FLOWER (PLATYCODON)

WRITTEN BY CAROL LEGROS

In this issue of *Let's Get Digging*, the featured perennial is one that many of us have used in our arrangements at one time or another...the Balloon flower, also known as Chinese or Japanese Bellflower, and in Japanese it is Kikyo.

These beautiful perennials are very easy to care for and put on a good show in the garden. They come in purple, white and blush pink colors, and typically reach about 3 feet in height. The flowers are spread out along the stalk of the plant with a new "balloon" every few inches with most of the balloons on the top 1/2 or 2/3 of the stalk.

While they are definitely low maintenance and require little care, I find that if you deadhead the spent blooms, they will keep blooming into the autumn days.



These lovely flowers are tolerant of frost and winters (Zone 3 to 8), and prefer either full sun or part shade. In my garden the purple color has full hot sun for most of the day while the white and blush pink colors are in a part-shade location that protects them from the hot afternoon sun. So while they grow easily in my hardiness zone 5, don't forget to check your zone for specific growing instructions as this plant apparently does not like extreme heat.

Keep them well watered, as they prefer a moist damp soil, but they don't like "wet feet" so make sure there is sufficient drainage/runoff in their garden bed location. The addition of mulch on top of the soil will help to keep the moisture in, the weeds down, and protect/insulate during the cold winter months.

At the end of the season, I typically leave the stalks as they are as I prefer to cut them down in the spring time instead. These beauties will spread/multiply on their own so if you have a corner or space that needs filling, balloon flower is a good option.



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# CAROLYN'S CONTAINER CORNER



ORIBE

WRITTEN BY CAROLYN ALTER

For the summer edition, I would like to discuss *Oribe* ware. My *sensei*, Kitty Akre, and a classmate both owned some fan shaped *Oribe* ceramic containers. I was allowed to use them at class, borrow them for shows and have loved their aesthetic from the first moment that I set eyes upon them. So when they both retired, I was delighted to be given three of these beautiful containers, circa 1980's. They are quite treasured by me and enjoyed by my students also.



*Oribe* ware is just one style of Japanese stoneware pottery among several types of ceramics that come from the *Mino* area of *Gifu* prefecture in central Japan. The characteristics that define *Oribe* include a whitish background set off by a poured on shiny green glaze derived from copper sulfate. It has hand drawn patterns inspired by nature themes such as plants and flowers or geometric shapes applied using a brownish iron-glaze.





Another attribute the artists of *Oribe* are known for is forming multiple shapes of these vessels by moulding clay instead of throwing them on a potter's wheel. The shapes of *Oribe* containers are quite variable including rounds, fans, ovals, triangles, etc. Some also incorporate textural elements.

Cultural reference - It is said the name comes from a famous tea master, *Furuta Oribe*, who influenced their designs in the 16th century. As tea ceremony became widely popular, more and more ceramics were necessary. These ceramics are used in many ways including to serve *wagashi*, or tea sweets. The sweet is eaten before drinking tea to prepare one's stomach for the bitter *matcha*, or powdered green tea, during the tea ceremony.



I especially enjoy using the fan shaped containers in *Rimpa-cho* arrangements, originally developed by our 3rd headmaster, Houn. They can be linked by their curves in a serpentine chain by alternating them concave to convex and back to concave. They can also be set in a method called, *senmen chirashi*, scattered fans, by placing two next to each other and one more facing backwards and overlapping the others.

Materials with an arching curved line such as the leaves of *shaga*, fringed iris, and *susuki obana*, the flowers of miscanthus grass, harmonize well in them. Red Nomura and green maple leaves are also beautiful in *Oribe*. When using pink or red flowers, please think about placing them in the portion of the container with the green glaze. The green will compliment the flowers and show their beauty fully. Since they also have a rustic feel, I find yellow and brown sunflowers attractive with them. Any of the classical Japanese materials look great in *Oribe* ware.

On my last trip to Japan for a certificate ceremony, I stayed with friends for several

days in *Yokkaichi* which isn't far from *Gifu* prefecture. So when on one Sunday, my girlfriend's husband's one day off each week, he announced he was taking us to the *Kiso kaido*, we were all thrilled. The *Kiso kaido* is a legendary road inland along the *Kiso* river valley, one of several routes that the war lords and samurai traveled upon to Edo. Many post towns along it now have been restored to emulate the ancient times. It was amazing to feel transported back centuries in time to old Japan in the post town of *Tsumago*.

Then on the way back we stopped in *Toki* to shop for *Oribe* ware. The photo of the tea bowl on page 10 shows the one I picked up on the trip. *Toki* is named for a war lord who gave protection to the potters making *Mino* ware.

If you are ever so lucky to travel to central Japan, I highly recommend a stop in *Toki* and *Tajimi*, the capital cities of *Oribe* and other *Mino* wares. What a special experience that was. So very grateful!

For more information about *Oribe* please go to :  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oribe\\_ware](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oribe_ware)

Please see *Kikyo* #304 Dec 2013 for multiple ways to place the various container shapes for *Rimpa-cho* arrangements.

Many shapes of modern *Oribe* ware may be found and purchased on the school's website in the *HanaMore* online catalog.

# ANNOUNCEMENTS



## OFFICIAL OHARA SCHOOL LOGOS

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In 2020, we received a selection of official Ohara School logos from Headquarters for our use. Please contact Russ at [russell.bowers@bostonikebana.com](mailto:russell.bowers@bostonikebana.com) who will be happy to send them to you.



## HOW DO WE REACH YOU?

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We collect your contact information whenever you renew your membership, so that we may contact you throughout the year, whether by email or postal mail, with news or information on the NAOTA organization, as well as regular newsletters.

If you have recently moved, or had reason to change your email address or phone number, please do not wait until renewal time to let us know there is a change. At any time throughout the year, **send your updated contact information to Saskia Eller at: [saskiaeller@outlook.com](mailto:saskiaeller@outlook.com)** so that you may continue to receive correspondence from NAOTA without disruption.



## SUBMIT MATERIAL FOR THE NEWSLETTER

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If you have any articles or information you would like to share with all the NAOTA members, please submit to the newsletter editor Carol Legros at [carol\\_legros@hotmail.com](mailto:carol_legros@hotmail.com). Please respect the deadlines for submission, if you want to be sure that the material is published in the upcoming newsletter. If you miss the deadline, it will be held and put in the following newsletter.

<u>Newsletter</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
March	Feb 1
June	May 1
September	August 1
December	November 1