



NORTH AMERICAN OHARA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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SUMMER EDITION

JUNE
2023

Welcome to the Summer Edition of the newsletter. As the sunshine and warmth arrives, so does the color in our gardens, like splashes of paint on a canvas.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



GREETINGS FROM RUSS...



Dear NAOTA Members,

I hope you're all enjoying the summer! Have you been experimenting with arrangements using materials from your own gardens? Ah, the eternal struggle of deciding whether to pick those beautiful flowers for an arrangement or leave them be in the garden to enjoy their natural beauty. Perhaps it all depends on the size of your garden. Over the years, I've expanded my gardens, and now I have an abundance of materials to pick for arrangements while still leaving some to flourish in their natural habitat.

Now, as you all know, the Masters Conference in Japan is just around the corner. It's hard to believe that it has already been six years since I last attended the conference in Japan. How time flies! Coincidentally, I'll be going a little early this time to soak in the wonders of Kyoto before heading to Tokyo for the conference. I can't wait to immerse myself in Japanese culture and take some inspiring classes. I truly hope to meet many of our esteemed members there!

In other exciting news, we will soon be sending information about a new video lesson from Headquarters made for us. We requested this a while back, and the Headmaster and the team have been diligently working on it, adding the final touches. The video will cover three types of Heika arrangements, along with some useful pointers on how to present arrangements from behind during demonstrations. Once it is available, we'll make sure to pass it on to all our members. I sincerely hope you find the lessons and the subject matter enjoyable. By the way, do you have any ideas or requests for the next video lesson? We'll be submitting another request soon, and your feedback on topics of interest would be greatly appreciated.

Let's not forget about the upcoming Boston conference, which is just around the corner from October 15th through the 18th! I want to express my heartfelt appreciation to all of you who are supporting this event. I'm looking forward to seeing Oyamada Sensei again in person. We met for the first time in LA at the NAOTA conference there. Then she was assistant to Yokohigashi Sensei and now she will be instructing us. I'm looking forward to learning from her and expanding our treasured list of instructors.

For Boston there are amazing individuals who have worked hard behind the scenes in the planning but also your attendance is what makes the event possible—trust me when I say that your effort and support do not go unnoticed. The location for the conference—AC Hotel Marriott Boston Downtown (225 Albany St.) is simply amazing! This time, we'll be right in the heart of Boston, providing easy access to countless attractions. We haven't exclusively tied the hotel lodging to the conference, so you have more freedom to stay at your favorite hotel in the area. Also, the hotel is accessible through two train stations within a 10-minute walk. We're still finalizing many of the details, but I can't contain my excitement about the arrangements we'll be working on. There are still spots available, so if you would like to attend, please complete your registration form and send it to our treasurer Beth. It's still not too late!

Lastly, I want to update you on the progress of planning for the San Diego Conference in October 2024. Everything is falling into place quite nicely. The most crucial step, apart from securing Headmaster and Hirota Sensei as the instructor and assistant, was finding the perfect venue. I must say that Jackie and the Deputy Chairs are doing an exceptional job in making all the necessary arrangements. More details will follow soon, so stay tuned!

Wishing you all the best,
Russell Bowers

THE TRADITIONAL METHOD

MULTI-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).

The example is the basic form of the Multi-Variety Arrangement in early summer in the *Shakei Moribana* (Landscape Arrangement) in the *Yoshiki-hon-i* (Traditional Method). When the techniques of this arrangement are mastered, one should become able to create works in the *Shakei Moribana* in the *Shizen-hon-i* (Realistic Method) easily. Thus, building a firm foundation for that stage, it is essential to learn this Multi-Variety Arrangement following the prescribed method correctly.

The Multi-Variety Arrangement in summer depicts a scene in mountain valleys, using *Vaccinium oldhamii*. The basic arranging method is explained in the section on the Three-Variety Arrangement of *Vaccinium* in summer.

This being the *Kin-kei* (Near-View Depiction), *Vaccinium* is treated differently from that in the *Chu-kei* (Middle-View Depiction). It is composed in the *Chokuritsu-kei* (Upright Style). First, construct the basic framework with the *Vaccinium* branches which are much shorter than usual and are placed without any gaps among the *Shu-shi*, the *Fuku-shi*, the *Chukan-shi*, and the *Kyaku-shi*. Although they are short, make sure to create a variety in height among them. The *Vaccinium*, arranged in this way, helps establishing an atmosphere in a mountain valley of summer where miscellaneous small trees grow luxuriantly. In a sense, it is a kind of stage setting for a Play; and if it is done



poorly, the flowers added next will not be shown at their best in the composition. Thus, a good groundwork with *Vaccinium* is a key to the successful creation of the Multi-Variety Arrangement.

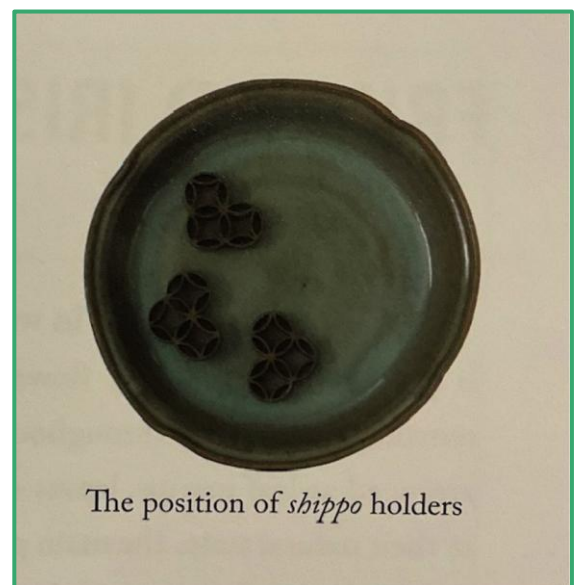
Once the basic framework is established with *Vaccinium*, Japanese lily is placed in the actual positions of the *Shu-shi* and the *Fuku-shi*. Since Japanese lily has a large flower with its leaves also being large and long, it should be used a little longer than the standard length; otherwise, it will appear unnatural in the composition. By placing Japanese lily tall, the atmosphere of a mountain valley where the lily grows is better depicted, and the insertion of bellflowers and dianthus will become easier.

After the *Shu-shi* and *Fuku-shi* lilies are in place, three stems of Solomon's seal are arranged as the *Chukan-shi* with one stem placed at the foot of the *Shu-shi* lily; another placed slanting at the *Fuku-shi* lily; and another placed low near the *Kyaku-shi* *Vaccinium*.

A tall bellflower is placed beside the *Shu-shi* lily. It leans a little backward so that depth is created in the composition. If it leans forward, it will overlap with other flowers inserted in the space covered with *Vaccinium* in front of the *Shu-shi*; consequently, the area will become unsightly. As the actual *Kyaku-shi*, a bellflower is placed long and slanting forward and to the right with another bellflower placed at its base as the *Chukan-shi*.

Lastly, three to five dianthus flowers are arranged in the appropriate positions and lower than the Solomon's seal as the *Chukan-shi*. In the finished work, the actual structure of the floral style is formed by Japanese lily as the *Shu-shi* and the *Fuku-shi*; Solomon's seal, Chinese bellflower, and dianthus as the *Chukan-shi*; and Chinese bellflower as the *Kyaku-shi*.

As the name implies, the Multi-Variety Arrangement is a work composed of five or more different materials. Because of the large number of materials, it is necessary to pay meticulous attention to detail and to treat each material in a precise, technically assured way in order to avoid a disorderly appearance.



In the Multi-Variety Arrangement in summer, four kinds of *kusa-mono* (grass and flower materials) are used as shown in this example: i.e. Japanese lily, Solomon's seal, Chinese bellflower, and dianthus. In the *Yoshiki-hon-i*, as in the *Shizen-hon-i* (Realistic Method), these materials are treated based on their natural growth patterns. Of the four, Japanese lily is the tallest. Solomon's seal grows in clusters in nature, but since it has many leaves, each stem is placed apart from the other in the composition. Dianthus is also placed apart in two or three positions with its flowers spreading out to the front and rear. Accurately rendering the subtle differences of the natural growth patterns among these materials is the basic approach in the *Shakei Moribana* in the *Yoshiki-hon-i*. The use of too many flowers, however beautiful they may be, would spoil the impression of wild flowers growing in a natural setting. Stems of dianthus or Chinese bellflowers with many blossoms and buds are trimmed appropriately to give a graceful appearance.

MEET THE SUB GRAND MASTER

FROM THE DESK OF...

GRACE SEKIMITSU

My earliest memory of ikebana is going to my mother's lesson in Yokohama, Japan, where I grew up. I must have been four or five at the time, but I vividly recall the blue tall vase that she used for her arrangement. I started studying Ohara School ikebana as a university student in Honolulu under Rev. and Mrs. Chinen. My first arrangement was "A" using jasmine and red rose in the black semi-circular Ohara suiban, which I still use. In subsequent years, my husband's work took us to Chicago, London, Hong Kong and Tokyo. I had the privilege of studying under wonderful teachers in each city: Grandmaster Kazuko Ernst in Chicago; Mrs. Hisako Bourlet in London; Ms. Anzai, Mrs. Fukuchi and Mrs. Fukuda at the International Department classes at Tokyo HQ. In London, I submitted an arrangement to the Chelsea Flower Show together with several England Chapter members. I continued under Grandmaster Edith Tanaka after relocating to Hawaii in 2015.



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

Pressed for choice, I would say Landscape Moribana, both the Traditional and Realistic Methods, which teaches me about the four seasons, the growth environment of materials, methodology and philosophy. I like the Traditional Method for its rigor, while the Realistic Method allows for more freedom of expression and can be adapted to any environment in which we live.

What is one of your favorite floral materials and why?

There are so many beautiful ikebana materials that it's difficult to narrow it down to one. I admire lotus for its purity and symbolism of past, present, and future. I also like all types of iris. I am especially fond of rabbit-ear iris and the ways in which it is arranged in different Ohara School expressions. I hope I'll have more opportunities in the future to study these materials in depth.

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

I do try to grow ikebana materials, but with varying luck. Generally speaking, it's the "survival of the fittest" in my garden. The plants that thrive inevitably tend to be tropicals like heliconia, ginger, and palm. I am fortunate to have generous friends and neighbors who share their homegrown materials with me.

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

I'm repeating what has been said previously in this column, but practice and preparation are the keys to a successful demonstration. Know your audience, and come prepared with a few stories to tell should there be an awkward silence or two. Keep explanations simple. A little humor goes a long way, especially if things go a bit awry. I also keep a checklist of supplies I will need.

I try to observe as many demonstrations as possible, including online ones, to see how the demonstrator explains and connects with the audience. Accept any opportunity you may have to assist at demonstrations. Also, don't wait until you're asked to be a demonstrator. For example, you can practice arranging from behind when you create an arrangement at home.

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

Finding seasonal materials and coming up with interesting, varied material combinations are constant challenges here in the tropics. This has especially been the case post-pandemic.

The ikebana journey is a long one. Keizoku wa chikara nari. Very loosely translated, this means continuous effort is a key to achieving one's goals. Techniques are important but ikebana also has to come from the heart. I try my best to convey these sentiments to my students.

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

My most memorable ikebana moments are when I've had the great honor to translate for Headmaster and Professors at demonstrations and workshops. It has been a privilege to assist with communications, and a wonderful learning experience, too. In retrospect, the weekly lessons taught in English that I attended from 2000-2014 at the International Department prepared me for this role in ways that I did not know at the time. Another invaluable part of my ikebana journey is the many friendships formed through shared passion for ikebana, some that go back to my earliest ikebana days in Hawaii.

LET'S GET DIGGING



DIANTHUS

WRITTEN BY CAROL LEGROS

In this issue of *Let's Get Digging*, we are going to look at another low maintenance perennial that is easy to grow and keep in your garden Dianthus.

This petite, bright, and intensely fragrant perennial, often referred to as “Pinks”, tolerates heat very well, and the flowers are long lasting. In fact, once they bloom, I sit down and carefully snip the dead heads off, and wait for the next “show” of flowers to arrive. The more you snip off the dead flower heads, the stronger the show.

Pinks are easy to grow and a great choice for containers, pathways, or rock gardens. Mine are planted in a well-drained south-west facing garden bed, near a walkway so that the fragrance and colour can be enjoyed when passing by. This perennial, if happy in your garden, will spread easily year to year and provide a wonderful show all summer and into the autumn. The root system is fairly shallow, and it spreads by shooting new roots just below the surface. Don't let the name “Pinks” fool you – they come in a variety of bright colours including hot pink, apricot, fuchsia, red, and white.

Many Pinks come in a single flower (one layer of petals), while others are a semi-double or fully double flower. The layers of petals are somewhat dainty or delicate if the petals have fringed edges. The foliage is typically a grey silver colour and provides a nice back drop to the bright Dianthus colors.

These flowers are not only wonderful for Ikebana but the butterflies and bees love them as well. Dianthus may be toxic to dogs so keep your furry family members away from them. Once autumn arrives, I just cut down the stems and give it some extra mulch for protection during winter. Give it a try in your garden... you won't be disappointed.



CAROLYN'S CONTAINER CORNER



RENYOUKOU

WRITTEN BY CAROLYN ALTER

My second column of this year continues the bunjin theme. For summer I have chosen the vase called *Renyoukou*. *Renyoukou* is an elegant, beautiful light blue lavender colored vase with a wavy rim, straight neck, rounded middle and flared foot. And just like *Hibineiyu* from column #5, it also has a fitted *tanza* for an elevated stand.

Renyoukou or *renyokuchi* (蓮葉口) in Japanese means 'lotus leaf rim' or 'lotus leaf mouth'. As you can see from the photos below, the rim's shape is wavy and very similar to the shape of lotus leaves.

Renyoukou has a *Kinyo* (均窯) glaze which refers to a type of pottery or ceramic ware originally from the Jun kiln, which is one of the kilns from the northern Song China period. *Kinyo* glazes can vary in color from purples to blues and greens. This special color of *Renyoukou* imparts a cooling feeling in the summer. Can you feel the water flowing below the lotus leaf?



A wide variety of flower materials look nice in this vase. Materials that have a rounded edge or curved line are well suited to this container given its undulating rim and body shape. They of course include leaves like lotus, but also monstera, banana and palms are effective and acceptable bunjin materials. Green leaves in summer show exuberant strength and provide shade and the movement of the breeze through the airy leaves conveys coolness.

The Chinese view of lotus, *Nelumbo nucifera*, is that it is a symbol of the buddha and of purity. Since the flower rises from the unpure muddy pond and blooms perfectly it serves as a model to live an enlightened life of integrity in an earthly world. Seasonally the lotus represents summer since it blooms from June until August. Adding a drop of water to the surface of the lotus leaf feels refreshing.

Many flowers also are fabulous in *renyoukou* and give a graceful presence. Some examples in late spring and early summer include irises, peonies and lilies. All elegant regal materials in their own right but also materials that have a Chinese symbolic meaning.

The primary irises grown in China are *Iris japonica* and *Iris tectorum*. *Iris japonica*, *shaga* in Japanese or fringed iris has zig zagged stems and flowers that resemble orchids. Their fan of glossy evergreen curved leaves harmonize well in this vase. It is a native to China no matter what the species name suggests. And *Iris tectorum*, aka roof iris, has wide curvy leaves. These white and purple irises are nice color compliments to this pale blue lavender vessel. Their Chinese symbolism is courage and nobility.





Peonies, whether tree or herbaceous, with their lush round shape echo the rim and body and their colors from pinks to reds and yellows harmonize and contrast with the vase's color. Add an old twisted wood branch from the tree peony with the flowers and you have a single variety *bunjin*. Symbolism of the peony in *bunjin* is wealth and honor.

Lilies connote summer and their name in Chinese means "adds up to 100". This is due to the lily bulb's

many multiple layers. When they are used in a *bunjin* arrangement, they can multiply the symbolic meaning "100-fold". This orange star lily with partially recurved petals offers a striking contrast to the vase's bluish color and the petals harmonize with its shape.

Kinryo ware like *renyoukou* has been valued as ware for the nobility. I feel grateful and privileged to use this vase. Will using it with noble flowers like those above make me noble? That is doubtful, however perhaps it has added a bit of grace. Whether used for *bunjin ikebana*, or just displayed by itself, *renyoukou* is a tasteful art piece, however you decide to display it.



Renyoukou is available from the Ohara School in Japan at <https://www.hanamore.net/category/select/cid/6/pid/190>

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The Garden Plants of China by Peter Valder Timber Press ©1999

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ANNOUNCEMENTS



UPCOMING CHAPTER EVENTS

As part of their 50th Anniversary Celebration, **Chicago Chapter** is hosting a workshop and demonstration led by a professor from Japan, in Chicago, Illinois on April 26 through April 28, 2024.

In collaboration with the Chicago Chapter, **Southeastern US Ohara Chapter** is hosting a six-lesson seminar in Charlotte, North Carolina on May 02, 03, and 04, 2024 as part of their 50th Anniversary Celebration.

For full details on the above two events, please visit the NAOTA website at:
ikebana-naota.org/chapter-events



HOW DO WE REACH YOU?

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** so that you may continue to receive correspondence from NAOTA without disruption.