



NORTH AMERICAN OHARA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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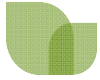


DEC
2023

WINTER EDITION

Welcome to the December edition of the newsletter. As the temperatures drop, we are reminded that winter is soon upon us. Merry Christmas to you and your loved ones.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



GREETINGS FROM RUSS...



Dear NAOTA Members,

I trust this message finds you well and filled with anticipation for the upcoming season. As we approach the holidays, I extend my warmest wishes to you and your loved ones.

Our recent NAOTA Boston event was a resounding success, thanks in no small part to the invaluable guidance of Oyamada Sensei and the generous assistance of Jackie Zhang. The dedication of the Boston Study Group, supported by numerous conference volunteers, made the entire experience something we can all take pride in.

Feedback from attendees has been overwhelmingly positive, and I appreciate the flexibility shown in adapting the conference format. While the elimination of the formal reception and sayonara dinner garnered favorable responses, some members expressed a desire for a social component. Rest assured, we are taking this into consideration for future events.

Looking ahead to the new year, I'm excited to share that preparations for the San Diego conference (October 20 – 24) are well underway. Keep an eye on your emails for registration details in late spring.

In our commitment to providing valuable instruction, we plan to release a video featuring Pine materials in the late spring. Special thanks to Grace Sekimitsu for her efforts in coordinating these details with Headquarters.

As we continue to evolve, I'm pleased to announce that the 2025 NAOTA Minor Conference will be tentatively hosted in Oregon in the fall. More details will follow, and we're actively seeking a chapter to host the subsequent Major Conference in 2026.

Thank you for your ongoing support, and I look forward to our collective journey in the coming year.

Warm regards,
Russell Bowers

NAOTA CONFERENCE 2023

HOSTED BY THE BOSTON STUDY GROUP

The Boston Study Group hosted the 20th NAOTA conference from October 17th to October 20th at the AC Marriott Hotel in Boston, Massachusetts. Associate Professor Hozuki Oyamada assisted by 1st Term Master Jackie Zhang conducted 3 full days of workshops for NAOTA conference attendees, and rounded out the week with a demonstration of 3 beautiful large arrangements.

The NAOTA website has posted many of the photos from Oyamada Sensei's demonstration as well as the 3 days of workshops and can be found at: www.ikebana-naota.org. Follow the links on the site for the Gallery of photos.

On Wednesday evening, Oyamada Sensei created three beautiful arrangements for her demonstration which included: a Rimpa, a Bunjin, and a Landscape.



The 20th annual conference would not be possible without the hard work of the Boston Study Group alongside the NAOTA Board and volunteers. Special thanks go to the Boston Study Group organizers: Russ Bowers, Jonette Nagai, David Wilsey, Paul Verkan, Christine Yueh, Lily Nguyen, Kit Chan, and Cheryl Frey, as well as their extended network of friends and family, including Vlad, Bruce, Maureen, Valerie, Stephen, Isabel and Holly. In the spirit of friendship through flowers, even some of the conference participants volunteered their time before and after the workshops, including Carolyn Alter, Carol Legros, Linda Nishioka, Ellen Weston, Marjorie DaVanzo, Irene Nakamoto, E-Ling Lou, Zara Raneses, Joe Rotella, Ellina Sorokina, Bette Uyeda, Yuko Inoue-Darcy, Jackie Zhang, Susan Hirate, and Jane Aquino.

Boston Study Group with a few Volunteers, from left to right: Carolyn Alter, Assistant Professor Oyamada, Christine Yueh, Russ Bowers, Paul Verkan, ??, Carol Legros, Jonette Nagai, David Wilsey



From left to right : Alice Buch (NAOTA VP East Coast), Beth Bowers-Klaine (NAOTA Treasurer), Jackie Zhang (Assistant to Professor Oyamada), Assistant Professor Oyamada, Russell Bowers (NAOTA President), and Susan Hirate (NAOTA Secretary)

THE TRADITIONAL METHOD

NARCISSUS

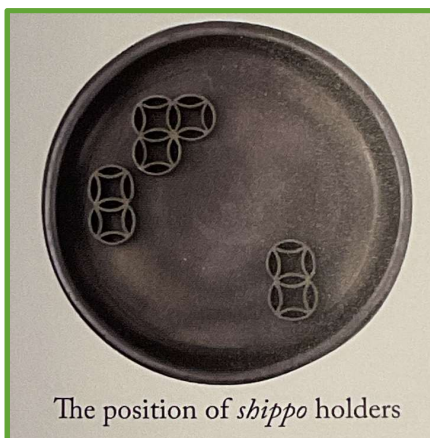
-- KIN-KEI (NEAR VIEW)

The 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 classical ikebana, Japanese narcissus has long been arranged in artificially-assembled leaf groups. In one-variety works in *rikka* and *seika* styles, for example, a very high degree of technical skill has been employed to create curved leaves and display its delicate beauty. In the Ohara School, this classical tradition is adopted in *Moribana* arrangements governed by strict rules. Thus, to study the arranging method of narcissus is in itself to acquire an understanding of the originality of ikebana as it is linked to the classical form of the art.



In the *Shakei Moribana* (Landscape Arrangement) in the *Yoshiki-hon-i* (Traditional method), narcissus is arranged only in artificially-assembled leaf groups, but never in natural leaf groups.



The position of *shippo* holders

The traditional expression of Japanese narcissus is summarized as 'four leaves, six flowers' – each narcissus group has always four leaves and a stem of six flowers (sometime fewer) that bloom in succession. Thus, in the *Yoshiki-hon-i*, assembling a narcissus group is prescribed to use four leaves and one flower stem, whether few or many narcissus groups are used, or whether they are short or tall.

The assembling method of narcissus leaf groups:

Natural leaf groups are not used as they are, but are taken apart, including the flower stem and sheath, the white tube-like part at the base, and then reassembled all together.

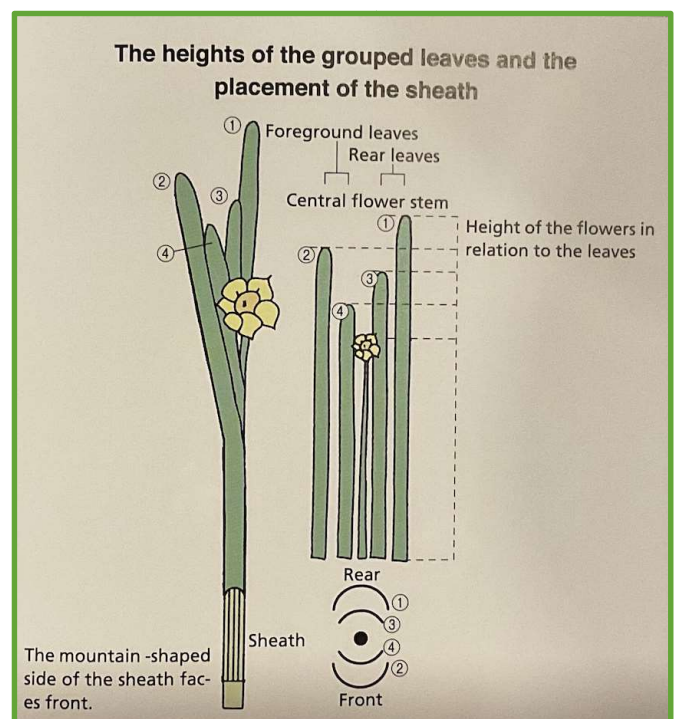
First, press the sheath area by hand, and rub it gently. When the area becomes slightly softened, pull out the flower stem carefully. Once the flower is removed, the leaves become loose, and the sheath can be pulled down easily, separating from the leaves. If the sheath is pulled down before removing the flower, both the sheath and leaves will be easily damaged.

The disassembled narcissus consists of two pairs of leaves, a left pair and a right pair, one flower stem and one sheath. Take care to keep the paired leaves together because the leaves in each pair have similar curves and other peculiarities of shape. If the pairs are separated into individual leaves and mixed up, the leaf group cannot be reassembled skillfully.

Before reassembling, smooth out the warps in the leaves of each pair so that their surfaces fit together perfectly. Hold the two leaves together, and after sliding the inner leaf down to adjust the height of the leaf tips, rub the inner surface of the leaves with the ball of the thumb in one light stroke from top to bottom. Be careful not to apply too much pressure when rubbing the leaves since they may become limp and unattractive.

The diagram shows the reassembled leaf group. Of four leaves with the flower in their center, the leaf in the far back (①) is the tallest; the leaf in the front (②) is the next tallest followed by the leaf (③); and the leaf right behind the front leaf (④) is the shortest.

The manner of differentiating heights among the four leaves and the assembling order of them are the same in any position whether it is the *Shu-shi* (Subject), *Fuku-shi* (Secondary), *Chukan-shi* (Filler), or *Kyaku-shi* (Object). The relative heights of the



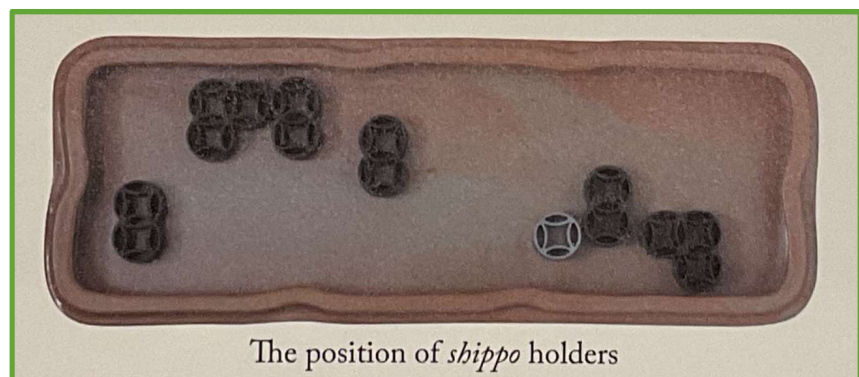
different leaves within each leaf group depend on the height of the group.

That is, in leaf groups such as the *Shu-shi* and *Fuku-shi*, which are arranged tall, there is a greater variation in height between individual leaves than there is in groups such as the *Chukan-shi* and *Kyaku-shi*, which are arranged low.

After the leaves have been straightened and their order and height have been determined, the sheath is replaced. As shown in the diagram, the mountain-shaped side of the sheath faces forward.

Finally, the flower stem is inserted in the center of the reassembled four-leaf group. This can be done smoothly by first cutting the base of the stem diagonally so that it comes to a narrow point. The flower stem is lower than the lowest leaf of the group in order to clearly display the skillfully reassembled leaf group. Stems with open flowers are used in tall leaf groups, while those with only buds are used low among the leaves in short groups. Since too many flowers would give a cluttered impression, nip off two or three blooms as appropriate.

There are various kinds of narcissus, including daffodil and *Narcissus jonquilla*, but as a rule, only the Japanese variety that blooms in winter may be used in the *Yoshiki-hon-i*.



In whatever position narcissus is arranged, whether as the *Shu-shi*, *Fuku-shi*, *Chukan-shi*, or *Kyaku-shi*, it must be placed in an upright posture.

The sheath, which is so painstakingly replaced at the base of each group, should never be buried in the layer of club moss. If this beautiful white sheath is not visible, it will spoil the stylized elegance of the leaf groups. The upper half of the sheath is always visible above the club moss. Make sure beforehand to take into account the height of the moss when replacing the sheath.

The leaf tips can display a left-right movement, and all four of them can face forward. But, they cannot be forcibly twisted to give them a sense of depth. In any case, the assembled leaf groups below the point at which the flower stems

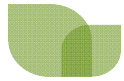
emerge must be placed with their outer, mountain-shaped sides facing straight forward.

Two examples are shown in this section; one with five leaf groups, and the other with nine leaf groups. In both examples, narcissus flowers and buds are used in a good balance to avoid a monotonous appearance. The *Shu-shi* and *Fuku-shi* are arranged with an adequate sense of depth. The *Chukan-shi* groups are not placed in a scattered fashion but placed near the principal groups as they fit. In the five-leaf example, small chrysanthemum is placed as the accompanying material. Since this is in the *Kin-kei* (Near-View Depiction), small chrysanthemum may be placed as it is without any reduction in scale. However, when it is placed side by side with narcissus, it should not detract from the beauty of the elegantly standing narcissus. Thus, selecting small chrysanthemum with compact, well-formed stems and leaves is important.

In the example of nine narcissus groups, Japanese ardisia is used as the accompanying material. Its red berries contrast beautifully to the white narcissus flowers. Japanese ardisia does not grow upright like small chrysanthemum; thus, the basic treatment of ardisia in the *Kin-kei* is the same as that in *En-kei*.



OPEN AIR OHARA



OUTDOOR INSTALLATIONS

WRITTEN BY CAROL LEGROS

A sunshine filled September day provided a wonderful backdrop for carrying out an Ohara outdoor series of installations. The scale is grand, the creations bound only by the imagination of the creators and the physical site on which each installation rests.

At the periphery of the site are fields of 2 meters high grasses, dotted with wild native purple and white asters, while the shoreline of the lake was abundant with bright yellow solidago. A feast for the eyes, and fodder for the creative juices. Piled high nearby are countless pieces of old weathered tree trunks and driftwood. Perfect materials for the framework (bones) of our outdoor installations.



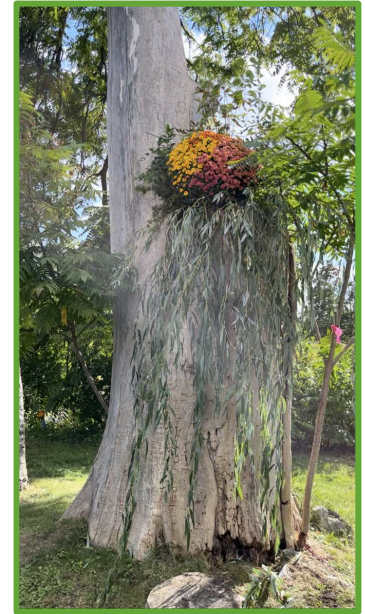
You see, there are no “containers” in the traditional sense of Ohara arrangements as we know them. The scale is much, much, larger and we have to improvise. In fact, one installation used hollowed tree stumps as “containers”. (see photo on left).

Ohara practitioners gathered for a fun and interesting challenge. We brought all the usual equipment we use when creating Ohara arrangements because it is part of our usual toolkit. But on this day, most of our usual tools were not suitable for handling the large size materials we were planning to use.

So, that day we had to include a few additional items such as ladders, spools of wire, clear plastic containers of all sizes (from small water bottles to large jugs), and telescoping loppers, just to mention a few.



The on-site wild natural materials were fabulous so we used them, of course, but we also picked in advance a variety of large branch materials and greens such as willow, juniper, and spruce. And to provide extra pops of color, we purchased and brought a beautiful variety of bright autumn flowering materials such as chrysanthemums, asters and sunflowers. To say that our cars and trucks were “full” is an understatement. Passers-by certainly raised an eyebrow as we unloaded our vehicles.



Check out this link [<https://www.ohara-toronto-chapter.ca/gallery.php>] for photos not only of the final creations but also some of the work in progress, as well as surrounding views which provided the back drops for our creations. .



Rear row (left to right):

Luk Hawi, Yoshie Ma, Sumana Vinod, Karen Lo, Carol Legros, Tina Hsueh, Sherry Xie, Cecilia Spencer, Ming Li Wu, our host Christina Yan

Front row (left to right):

Wonder Chan, Rita Lam, Mary Hsueh, Jeannette Cheng, Mitzi Yau

LET'S GET DIGGING



HOLLY

WRITTEN BY CAROL LEGROS

In this issue of *Let's Get Digging*, we explore a beautiful flowering shrub called Ilex, commonly referred to as Holly.

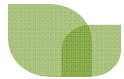
Ilex comes in a variety of sizes, anywhere from petite shrubs only a few feet tall, which are the most common, to trees that rise as high as 15 meters. Most of them have distinctive glossy green leaves that feature either spiny teeth or serrated edges. Almost all holly species are [dioecious](#), meaning that you will need to plant both [male and female](#) for cross pollination if you desire fruit. The two species most often used for holiday decorations are the American holly (*Ilex opaca*) and the English holly (*Ilex aquifolium*). These days, however, there are also varieties that do not require a pair of shrubs for cross-pollination. I picked up one of these varieties earlier this year, and was pleased that the berries began to grow in the summer time and turned a brilliant shade of red by early autumn. Such a cheerful sight to see in the garden these days when we have more grey wet days than sunny ones.

Holly prefers to grow in full sun, but will tolerate a part shade spot in your yard. Just be sure to make sure that the soil is well drained and slightly acidic. I encourage you to put a good layer of mulch down over the soil to keep the weeds down and the soil moisture in. As it grows, keep an eye on the branches as some of them can stretch and reach more quickly than others, giving the bush a “leggy” look. When this starts to happen, give it a prune to keep it more compact and encourage new branches to grow and fill it in.



Most of the holly I've seen has red berries, but apparently, it comes in a range of colors including white, yellow, black, and pink. Who knew? Maybe it's time to plant a yellow or white one. Give it a try in your yard... you won't be disappointed with this beautiful low maintenance shrub.

CAROLYN'S CONTAINER CORNER



ASUKA

WRITTEN BY CAROLYN ALTER

As the end of year holidays approach we are all dreaming of the winter materials and the new year to follow which includes evergreens, and red and white Christmas and Japanese New Year's celebratory colors. So with that and snow in mind, I chose a white vase for this column. Next year I will continue to write a column but we are lining up some different topics, and this may be the final column I write on containers.

I discussed several *Bunjin* vases earlier this year, but for this last column of 2023 I would like to go back and cover a container called *Asuka*. *Asuka* first became available for sale in 1999. It was developed by the Ohara School of Research. Since *Asuka* is written in *hiragana* instead of *kanji*, it is difficult to translate its meaning. After inquiring at headquarters and from a couple of senior instructors, I haven't found anyone yet that seems to know the history of why this vase is called *Asuka*.

Asuka has a unique form, featuring an elegant white glaze, fluted top, wide center and a sturdy, tiered base with a distinct line where the base attaches to the body. This design might be inspired by historical styles, perhaps even drawing on elements from the *Asuka* period (538-710 CE) in Japan. This period is known for its significant cultural contributions, including introducing Buddhism to Japan and in ceramics. Interestingly, *Asuka* can even be a boy's or a girl's name in Japan.

Of course this vase has a contemporary design, likely created to honor traditional aesthetics but with an innovative spirit. Perhaps it was simply named symbolically rather than being a direct reproduction of *Asuka* period ceramics. However after much online searching, I was not able to find any historical ceramics with this shape.



Asuka was originally used for *Heika* Elementary forms A, B, C and D. Those are now known as *Hana Isho* Rising and Inclining forms after curriculum updates years ago. I am sure some of you remember the old terminology as Elementary form A was indeed my very first

class. It was also used in *Yoso Oi*, also known as Combined form where it was set in the middle of *Madoka*. This form was dropped from the curriculum some years ago. This is a quite versatile vase in that it works well for Heika styles also. And one of my favorite uses for *Asuka* is Radial form. I actually brought this vase on a cross country flight back and forth in my carry on to make a Radial arrangement in it for my mother's 90th birthday celebration. Crazy, huh?

To use it for *Heika Upright* the base should be used flat side forward so that the subject may rest on one of the four protruding upward rim tabs and the object can come straight forward and down in the front V slot. For Radial form the same alignment just mentioned is perfect for the subject and secondary to drop into the V slots out to the left and right sides and the object to protrude from the front V slot.

For *Heika Slanting* we use the base with one corner pointing forward as in the first picture. The magic of this is so the V slot is at a 45 degree angle to the left or the right for the subject. Then the back slot on the same side can hold the secondary securely. The same ideas for material placement are used for basic *Hana Isha* Rising and Inclining too.



Please also pay careful attention to the height of the rim tabs and V slots when orienting the vase prior to making your arrangement. There are slight variations in height of these prominences and slots as can be seen in the photos below by whether the ruler is level or angled. Please find the optimum position depending on the style and the materials you are arranging.



Materials that work well in this vase, considering its form and volume, include branches and flowers that have curvy stems and edges that arch. The vase's solid base and volume make it ideal for holding a bit heavier and thicker branches too.

Branches such as dark green pine and blue green juniper and cypress, brown curly and fasciated willow and those that hang down such as Chinese trumpet creeper vine, wisteria, jasmine and multiflora rose are all nice in *Asuka*. For flowers the leaves and lines of freesia, irises and oriental lilies harmonize well in *Asuka*. Elegant flowers like orchids, calla and anthuriums look beautiful in it too. Grass blades bending gracefully are lovely here too.

Have fun this winter studying this versatile vase. And if you know anything about *Asuka*'s name, please drop me a line. I'd love to hear about it. *Asuka* is available from the Ohara School at the following link : <https://www.hanamore.net/category/select/cid/14/pid/175>

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TRAVELLING TEACHERS

JOSE SALCEDO IN TORONTO

WRITTEN BY CAROL LEGROS

Jose travelled to Toronto, Ontario at the end of October this year, to carry out a demonstration on October 22 at the autumn Ikebana International show hosted by the Toronto Ohara chapter.

Such a warm and engaging demonstrator, he dazzled the audience with 6 gorgeous arrangements, explaining that he liked to start off his demonstrations with what he referred to as an “amuse bouche” ...One Row form. Just as with a good dining experience, Jose followed the “amuse bouche” with an “appetizer” ...Basket arrangement. And so it continued, each arrangement more colorful or extravagant than the previous one. Jose skillfully brought his creations to fruition all the while taking us on a journey with him as he explained why he chose specific materials, or regaling us with stories of his weekly trips to the flower wholesalers in the dark early morning hours after which he headed to work. Jose’s last arrangement was an absolutely stunning landscape piece with an enormous piece of driftwood as the focal point.... the “pièce de resistance”. Below are a few photos of his creations.



A couple of days before the show, Jose was kind enough to carry out an afternoon Ohara workshop for 13 participants (split into three groups) by challenging them with a multiple materials Moribana using shippo.



The workshop moribana arrangements, as demonstrated by Jose, are shown below. The first used Bells of Ireland, Roses, and Song of India, while the second arrangement included a variety of Chrysanthemums (Daisy, Pincushion, Spider, Cremon), and Celosia Coxcomb. The third arrangement used Birds of Paradise, Protea Pin Cushion, Solidago, and Pandanus leaves.



ANNOUNCEMENTS



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.

In January 2024 it will be time to renew our membership dues for the next two years. Saskia, Directory Chair, and Beth, Treasurer, cooperate on reaching you with a personal email. Please allow their mail to reach you or check your spam mailbox. The new NAOTA Directory is scheduled to be printed in March 2024 with your updated information.



SUBMIT MATERIAL FOR THE NEWSLETTER

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. 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