



NORTH AMERICAN OHARA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER INSIDE THIS ISSUE

page 02
President's Message

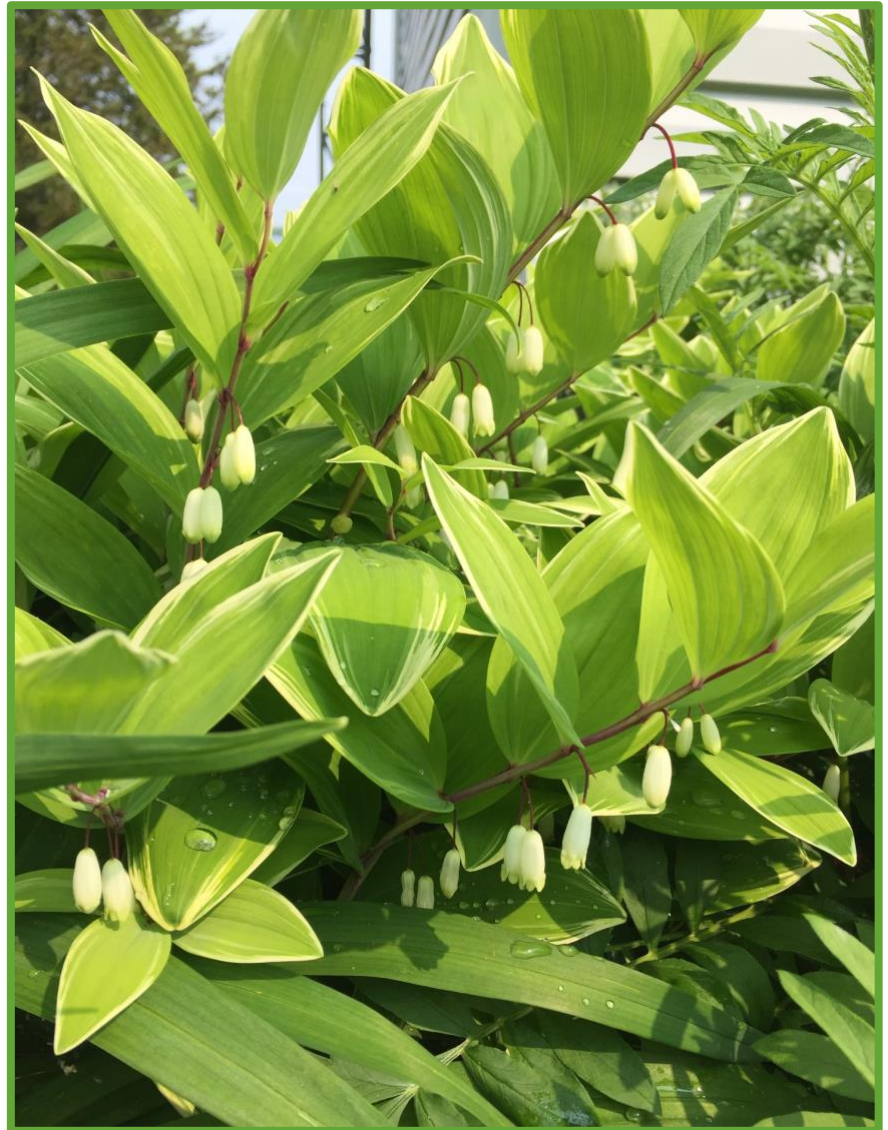
page 03
The Traditional Method

page 06
Meet the Sub Grand Master

page 08
Let's Get Digging

page 10
Carolyn's Container

page 14
Announcements



MAR
2024

SPRING EDITION

Welcome to the March edition of the newsletter. As the days get longer and sunnier, the snow melts, the air “smells” like Spring, and nature emerges from its hibernation. New beginnings are on the horizon. Happy Spring!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

GREETINGS FROM RUSS...



Dear NAOTA Members,

Spring's vibrant colors breathe new life into our surroundings, a refreshing reminder of the season's allure. In Boston, blossoms of crocus, snowdrops, and daffodils grace the landscape, urging us to embrace the outdoors and indulge in some much-needed spring cleaning.

As we anticipate the forthcoming abundance from our gardens for seasonal arrangements, I reflect on our past endeavors with optimism. The careful planning and experimentation we invest in our craft hold promise for fruitful outcomes in the future.

Gratitude is extended to all who participated in our recent membership drive. If you've yet to renew your membership, I encourage you to do so promptly to maintain access to our valuable resources, including our newsletter, exclusive member videos, and eligibility for our upcoming conference in San Diego.

Details for our San Diego conference will be dispatched around April 15th. Stay vigilant for updates, and upon receiving the registration notice, ensure prompt completion to secure your attendance. Registration slots will be allocated based on the postmark date.

Keep an eye out for the latest NAOTA Member video, featuring insights on Pine materials, coming soon to your inbox. Special thanks to Grace Sekimitsu for her invaluable contribution to coordinating this exclusive content.

March brings a change to our NAOTA Board of Directors. Susan Hirate, our dedicated Secretary, completes her tenure after two exceptional terms. Susan, your dedication is deeply appreciated, and you will be missed. Taking up the mantle is Carolyn Alter, who graciously accepts this responsibility. We thank Carolyn for her willingness to serve and eagerly anticipate her contributions to our organization. Join me in expressing gratitude to Susan for her invaluable service and welcoming Carolyn to her new role.

In closing, I extend my appreciation to Carol Legros (Editor), Carolyn Alter (Columnist), and our featured Sub Grand Master, Jose Salcedo, for their ongoing contributions to our newsletter. Your insights enrich our community and enhance our members' experience.

Warm regards,
Russell Bowers

THE TRADITIONAL METHOD



JAPANESE CYMBIDIUM

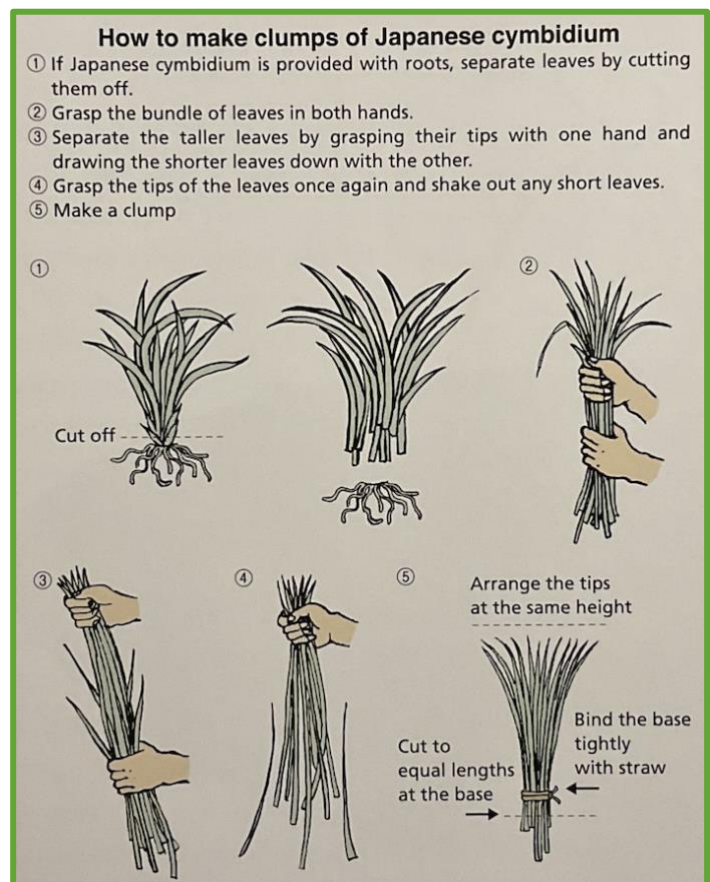
KIN-KEI (NEAR VIEW)

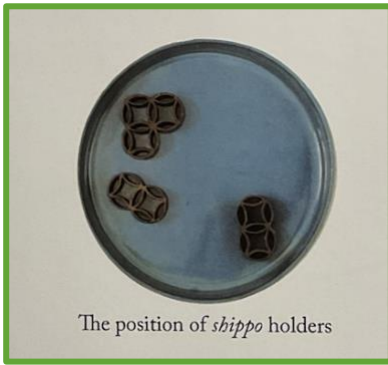
This Traditional Method discussion below is republished from the book entitled “The Traditional Ikebana of the Ohara School” by Houn Ohara. English Translation 2019, with permission from The Ohara School of Ikebana Headquarters. Note that this arrangement is a Landscape moribana (Shakei).

The most important consideration for Japanese cymbidium is the skillful sorting out of the leaves. It is usually provided not as a whole plant with roots, but as a bundle of only cut leaves with a seed-pod stem. Set aside the dry seed-pod stems and remove any leaves with damaged tips, straight sprouts, and broken leaves from the bundle. With the selected leaves, then, reassemble into a bundle in which the proper techniques are required as described as follows.

First, select the longest leaves and set them aside as one bunch.

Next, from the remaining leaves, shake out the short ones and set aside those of medium length as the second group. Put the two groups together at their tips and grasp the lower part. Manipulate the leaves in each group so that they spread out in a circular fashion, then bind them tightly at the base. Assembled in this way, the *Shu-shi* (Subject) group contains about 20 leaves; the shorter, *Fuku-shi* (Secondary) group contains about 15 leaves.

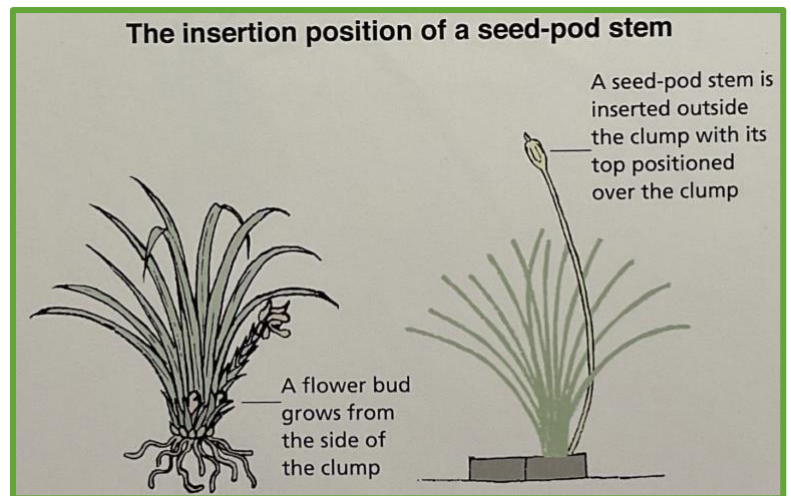




In the natural state, the flower, which eventually develops into a fruit, grows not from the center but from the outer edge of the leaves. Thus, the base of the seed stem is positioned at the outer edge of the leaf clumps in the *Shakei Moribana* in the *Yoshiki-hon-i*. In the *Shikisai Moribana* (Color Scheme Arrangement), however, the seed stem is placed in the center of the clump. This is a major difference between the two styles, although the treatment of leaves is the same.

Each example uses two clumps of Japanese cymbidium with one as the *Shu-shi* and the other as the *Fuku-shi*. The spreading leaves are one of the plant's most interesting characteristics, but crossing leaf tips produce an unsightly appearance; so the two clumps are arranged in separate holders placed slightly apart.

After the two clumps of leaves have been placed, two seed-pod stems are added with one positioned behind the *Shu-shi* clump and the other positioned in front of and outside the base of the *Fuku-shi* clump. Although the base of each seed-pod stems is positioned outside the clump, the top of the pod should appear over the clump; otherwise the leaves and seed pod will not appear as one clump.



After arranging the cymbidium, spread club moss, or mountain fern as the groundcover. Lastly, azalea, an accompanying material, is placed as the *Chukan-shi* (filler) beside the *Shu-shi*, and as the *Kyaku-shi* (Object) and its *Chukan-shi*.

Japanese cymbidium may also be arranged with its flower when in bloom.



Japanese cymbidium, kinkoka azalea, club moss
Chokuritsu-kei



Japanese cymbidium, kinkoka azalea, mountain fern
Chokuritsu-kei



Side view

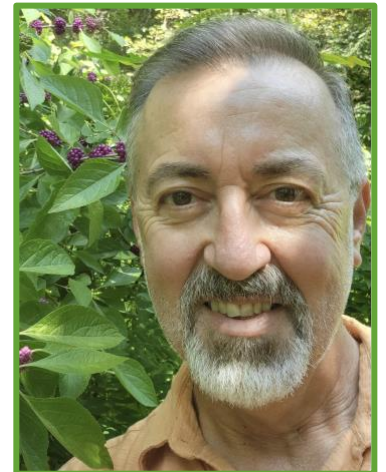
MEET THE SUB GRAND MASTER



FROM THE DESK OF...

JOSE SALCEDO

My interest in Ohara Ikebana began when, at an I.I. exhibition, I viewed an Ohara landscape arrangement that had, among other things, a single Japanese maple leaf floating on the surface of the water. I was immediately transported to a Japanese garden I had visited in England a couple of years before. My first thought was, “I need to learn to do that... I need to learn to create something that takes people to a place they’ve been...” That was the start of my interest in Ohara.



I was 28 years old and later that year, I began studying with Reiko Kawamura. Reiko was an incredible Ohara arranger as well as teacher. The more I studied with her the more I wanted to learn. I volunteered to assist her and the other Ohara teachers with any demonstrations or exhibitions. She was always traveling to different chapters to give demonstrations and workshops. One year I asked if I could travel with her to assist her in giving a workshop to the Southeastern Ohara Chapter. I was allowed to go as her assistant which helped me learn how to give workshops. It was through helping Reiko and the other sensei’s that I learned how to organize and give demonstrations and workshops. I learned not only the technical aspects, like how to preserve various materials, but I also learned their philosophy of Ohara ikebana. I have said for many years that it was the beauty of the flowers that first attracted me to ikebana, but it is the philosophy that feeds my passion. That is still true for me.

After several years of studying with Reiko, in 1997, she asked me to take over her Thursday evening class, which she held in her studio. Nervously, I accepted and began my first class. Eventually new students began taking my classes and they in turn brought their friends and it continues 26 years later. I feel very fortunate that through the years of teaching, I would talk with Reiko and seek her advice on how to best teach the key elements of an arrangement.

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

Realistic landscape... of all the styles, it is the most meditative for me: when I start creating a realistic landscape, the rest of the world disappears. I have a sense of calm when I'm making a landscape arrangement.

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

I do like gardening, although my approach to garden design is procrastination. If you leave a potted plant in a spot long enough, it will eventually root itself in the ground. I have an "ikebana garden", which means a lot of stuff planted all over the place, nothing trimmed until to be used in a demonstration/exhibition/class.

What is one of your favorite floral materials and why?

Japanese Flowering Quince. I think the flower itself is one of the most beautiful flowers that exist. I love the contrast of the sharp branches/thorns with the delicate flower. I also like how you can crack branches and they still hold their shape.

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

Be organized and if possible, try to create your arrangements on stage. I think most people want to see the demonstrator create the arrangement, watching how they trim branches or cut long stems. So, if possible do not have everything pre-cut so on stage you are just reassembling the arrangement.

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

Different students learn differently. Not all students learn in the same way. I try to change how I teach depending on the student I am teaching: some are visual learners, so I can show them, while for others I need to draw them a diagram and give them specific angles and lengths, while others I need to guide them through several times before they understand.

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

First time I created a large-scale realistic landscape arrangement for our Ohara Chapter's exhibition. The day before the exhibition setup, I was unexpectedly offered a 7ft, 4" diameter branch of Japanese maple that a friend had cut from her tree. I gathered other materials from my yard and created the arrangement, a scene in the woods, by the edge of a stream. That was the first large arrangement that I created by myself.

LET'S GET DIGGING

PEONY

WRITTEN BY CAROL LEGROS

In this issue of *Let's Get Digging*, we are going to look at the graceful Peony.



Peonies are known for their large showy flowers in a variety of colors including white, various shades of pink or fuchsia, yellow, apricot, and coral. The majority of them are native to Europe and Asia, with only a few native to North America. They typically grow to around 1 meter (3 feet) in height and bloom in late spring or early summer.

These tubers, if they like their spot in the garden, take little care. As long as they have fertile rich soil with good drainage and ample sunshine and water, they thrive. I used to have peonies in the south-west part of my garden against the wall of my home.

I always had a beautiful show of blooms by the first week of June, and did not lose any due to our Canadian winter temperatures. A bit of afternoon dappled shade protected them against any earlier-than-usual hot temperatures or scorching sun. And planting them against the wall of my home gave some much needed protection from winds both in early summer and in winter. These days I have some newer ones (*coral color photo at the top*) planted in the middle of my yard (full sun) with no protection from winds or a hot sun, and they are doing fine.

In the spring when the buds start to appear, you may notice ants climbing over the round buds. This is Mother Nature at work, according to folklore. They have a symbiotic relationship. The ants appear to help the peony buds to open properly, as well as to guard against other pests from infesting the peony. Not sure how much of this is fiction, but I always leave them alone and have had beautiful flowers (*fuchsia color photo at right*). Just know that if you pick some peonies to bring indoors you may have a hitch hiker (ant) on board so be sure to give



them a shake outside before you bring them in.

When the peonies have some good size stalks and flower buds are forming, you may find it helpful to put some supports around them. Either tomato cages will do, or if you prefer, pound a few stakes around the plant and string ropes or wires around the stakes to provide a make-shift cage. The cage will give the plant ample support when the buds are open in full flower as spring rains will cause the heads to bow with the added weight and bend the stalk possibly even snapping it. Severe winds will have a similar effect as the heavy rains.

Most peonies have multiple buds growing on a single stalk. As the blooms die off, do cut the spent heads off as this will ensure the remaining buds that are opening have sufficient food to ensure a good size bloom. Without dead heading, the remaining buds will certainly produce beautiful flowers but they may be somewhat smaller flowers.



Once all the flowers are done and the plant has been dead headed, leave the foliage as it is so that it can redirect its energy towards the leaves and roots, gathering strength in the summer time to prepare it for blooming the following year. Some gardeners cut their plants down to the ground right after the blooms are done, but I keep the leaves until autumn time when I cut them down completely. Autumn is the time to ensure there is sufficient mulch or ground cover over the peonies particularly in those zones which experience cold winters. Give them a try in your garden. Peonies do not disappoint!





With the beginning of 2024, I would like to shift focus from writing about containers to covering another category of things needed for arranging *ikebana*, the tools we use. Therefore some of you may have noticed the word container has been dropped from the column's name. So in the spring issue, I would like to look at *hasami*, or traditional Japanese flower scissors. Every time we make *ikebana* we begin with *hasami*. Perhaps even when collecting materials outside from our gardens we reach for our *hasami*. But how many of us are taking these amazing tools for granted? I hope to bring a new appreciation of these extensions of our hands to those of you that haven't given much thought to this tool.

The craftsmanship involved in making *hasami* is highly valued, with some artisans forging them in a manner similar to traditional Japanese swords, or *katana*. As the *katana* could take the human's life, the *hasami* takes the flower's life. So we must treat these tools with as much respect and care that we treat our flowers with.

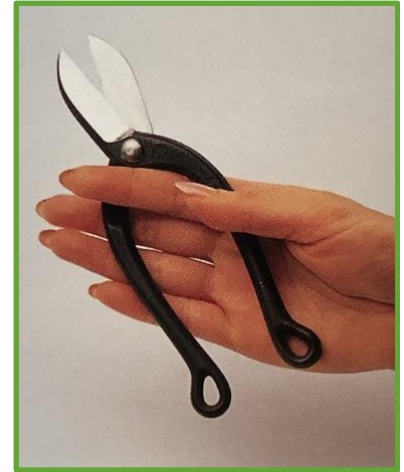
Hasami come in two main forms, the *Ikenobo* type and the *Koryu* type. The *Ikenobo hasami* have a small tight loop on the end of the handle also known as a *warabite* handle. Cultural note- *Warabi* is a type of bracken fern in Japan and *te* means hand. So the handle signifies an furred fern head. This elegant shape is not only aesthetically pleasing but also ergonomically designed to fit comfortably in the hand, allowing for extended use without discomfort.



The *Koryu hasami* have a looped butterfly handle. *Ko* meaning old and *ryu* meaning school. These old traditional scissors are thought to have originated alongside *bonsai* practice as the loop shaped handles are comfortable to use for long periods when pruning trees without tiring.

These require less energy to hold and some of my students with arthritis and or smaller hands prefer them. Often the blades for *bonsai* will be longer and thinner for intricate work in the tiny trees. If the blade looks similar to that of the *Ikenobo hasami*, but it has looped handles, then it is meant for ikebana.

To use them there are two primary methods to hold them. In the [Ikebana for Everybody](#) textbook ©2002 they show holding the upper handle between the thumb and index finger and using the other fingers to close the lower handle. This allows more fine control when cutting thinner materials and helps avoid pinching your palm between the handles. It may also prevent you from dropping them.



The alternate method is to hold the upper handle between your thumb and palm and hold the lower handle with the remaining four fingers. When you open your fingers, the blade opens with the weight of the handle. This allows for more strength when cutting thicker branches. This was the method I was originally taught and it was described to me by my sensei as holding them like you would a sword! And yes, I did pinch my palm several times in that first year. I am not exactly sure when I switched over to the first method as it has been some time now.

One day I just noticed more closely how I was handling them. I find I use the first method now the majority of the time and the latter still for heavier duty cuts.

Hasami are manufactured from various metals. The most common metals used include carbon steel, stainless steel, and various alloys which are a combination of different metals. The various type's individual properties and composition affect the functionality and longevity of the scissors.

- **Carbon Steel:** Many high quality *hasami* are made from carbon steel because it can be sharpened to a very fine edge and maintains its sharpness well. Carbon steel is preferred for its precision cutting capabilities, which is essential for making clean cuts that promote the health and longevity of the flowers by avoiding crushing their stems. However, carbon steel is prone to rust if not properly cared for.

- **Stainless Steel:** Stainless steel is another popular choice for *hasami*, especially for those who prefer low maintenance tools. While it may not hold a sharp edge as well as carbon steel, stainless steel is resistant to rust and corrosion, making it more suitable for use in environments with high moisture or for those who may not commit to the regular maintenance required for carbon steel.
- **Laminated Steel:** Some high-end *hasami* use laminated steel, where a layer of hard carbon steel is sandwiched between layers of softer stainless steel. This combines the best of both worlds: the hard carbon steel core provides a sharp cutting edge, while the stainless steel layers add strength, flexibility, and rust resistance.

The classic size is 6 1/2 inches or 165 mm long which includes a 2 inch blade and a weight of 150 mg. Some *hasami* come in shorter and lighter versions as well.

Choosing which *hasami* to use is a personal preference. I personally have used the *Ikenobo* type carbon steel the most as that is what my sensei used and recommended. After getting used to them and using them for decades, I couldn't see ever using anything else. They even gradually molded to the shape of my hand to the point when I picked up a student's pair without looking I could tell which were mine. I tried the Flower Club scissors a couple times but because the blades were metal and the handles resin they always felt unbalanced in my hand. But many of the Ohara Professors use and like these. Last year after my *warabite* handle broke I bought a pair of *Ikenobo* stainless steel *hasami* and have loved them for their smooth softness in the hand, their cutting strength and easy care. And for any left handed arrangers, they do also make left handed *hasami*.



Caring for your *hasami* doesn't take that long. First and foremost is to always dry them thoroughly after using. If you put them away wet, most will rust and the smooth opening and closing of the blades will elude you. Secondly after working with certain materials that have pitch or gum, like pines or eucalyptus, resp. they will require more special cleaning. You need to remove the sticky residue first by rubbing some oil into the blade and then wash with soap and warm water. Next, if the shine of your blades has disappeared or you have build up on the blade, you can use a *sabitoru* to clean

them and bring back the shine. *Sabi* means rust and *toru* means to take. So a sabitoru is a rust eraser. The gray rubbery device is used wet and then rubbed back and forth with the direction of the metal grains within the blade.

Lastly after cleaning and restoring the shine, to keep the hinge happy, place one drop of oil on each side and open and close the blades repetitively to work it in. Historically camellia oil has been used for this purpose, but any light weight oil may work. Camellia oil is a traditional Japanese application for cleaning and protecting hasami, knives and garden tools. Pressed from the seeds of *Camellia oleifera*, the oil protects natural steel from rust with a deep, non-oily, odorless finish.

And then only on occasion will you need to have them sharpened. I sharpen my own several times a year with a whetstone.

For those of you that want to learn more about hasami, I have an exercise for you to try. Please carry your hasami in your hand with you as much as possible for at least several days or for up to a week. Please do not forget and leave them somewhere. Pay attention and see what happens. Then please email to me at bcalter@mac.com about your experience.

I would love to hear your hasami stories.



Bibliography

- <https://wazakurajapan.com/products/wazakura-ikenobo-classic-ikebana-floral-scissors>
- Images from Ikebana For Everybody Ohara School ©2002 p. 160 photograph

ANNOUNCEMENTS



IN MEMORIAM

It is with heavy heart that we announce that Patricia Schneider, a member of the San Diego Sakura chapter and a long-term NAOTA member, passed away on January 9, 2024. Patricia served as Treasurer on the NAOTA Board for several years.

If NAOTA members would like to send a condolence card to her family, please send to Patricia's contact information as shown below:

Mailing address: 5802 Haber St, San Diego CA 92122-3136

Email address: pschneider2@san.rr.com



NAOTA EDUCATION FUND

Thanks go out to JoAnne Hyde and The Ohara School of Ikebana - Arizona Chapter for a generous donation to the NAOTA Education Fund. Thanks go out to Saskia Eller for donating the cost of packaging and shipping of containers to the Boston conference.



UPCOMING CHAPTER EVENTS

The Toronto Chapter will celebrate its 50th anniversary this year with Assistant Professor Ms. Hozuki Oyamada from Japan. The Annual Spring show will be held on the weekend of June 08/09, 2024 with a demonstration by Oyamada Sensei on Sunday June 09, 2024. Mark your calendars and join us for the celebration. We look forward to seeing you there.



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.

If you are having trouble receiving emails from Saskia, please check your “spam” or “junk” email folders as it is possible your email service provider may have blocked it for some reason. If you find it in your spam or junk folder, please move it to your Inbox.



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