



NORTH AMERICAN OHARA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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JUN
2024

SUMMER EDITION

Welcome to the June edition of the newsletter. As the days grow longer and the sunshine stronger, our gardens begin to fill in with a bounty of fragrance and color. Enjoy the summer!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

GREETINGS FROM RUSS...



Dear NAOTA Members,

I hope you're enjoying the early days of summer. I've been fortunate to start using materials from my garden for my own arrangements and for my students. It's incredibly satisfying to see years of effort pay off. I'm also delighted by Carol's regular "Let's Get Digging" topic.

Although my oriental poppy didn't come up this year, my garden is doing well overall. I suspect they need more sun, so I'll be relocating them in the fall.

You're in for a real treat this edition with a fantastic article about the World Seminar from Ellen. It truly was a wonderful event. It's a unique experience to work with native Japanese materials that are hard to find in North America, and to be taught by Headmaster and other esteemed professors. Please mark your calendar for next April's World Conference in Osaka, Japan.

Carolyn's article on Shippo is both informative and a great resource for your students. During the world seminar, we practiced the Traditional Landscape Moribana, Far View, Upright Style, depicting a forest in the distance. Headmaster also demonstrated how to connect shippo using zip ties. I've always found this arrangement fascinating. This was an exclusive for Senmon instructors, another great reason to become one.

The San Diego conference is shaping up nicely. We have full registration and a waitlist, which I recommend joining so we can contact you if a slot opens. I'm grateful to the Sakura Chapter, La Jolla Chapter, and our Chair and Co-Chairs for their hard work. I'm looking forward to returning to San Diego and learning from Headmaster and Hirota Satoshi. It's sure to be an enriching experience.

Our friends in the Oregon Chapter are also busy planning their conference for next September 2025. We'll share more details as they become available. Now a request to you for considering your Chapters hosting a future conference. Please let us know if you are interested. These are challenging, but rewarding endeavors. I know you can do it too.

In the meantime, I hope your ikebana brings you and those around you much joy and happiness.

Warm regards,
Russell Bowers

THE TRADITIONAL METHOD



SMALL PINE

EN-KEI (FAR 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 two examples are composed to express the dignity of aged pine trees on the seashore by using the prescribed arranging method of small pine in the *En-kei* (Far-View Depiction).

Small pine occupies an important place in the *Yoshiki-hon-i* (Traditional Method) when it is used as the main material, because it is not only available throughout the year, but also can be arranged in any of the four seasons with a seasonal plant as the accompanying material. Unlike other materials used as the main material in the *Yoshiki-hon-i*, the branches of small pine are varied in their shape and appearance. Because of that, it can be difficult to deal with it; but for the same reason, it requires the arranger’s idea and skill, and makes it a more interesting material.

Small pine is arranged in the *En-kei*, *Chu-kei*, or *Kin-kei* (Far-View, Middle-View, or Near-View Depiction). For the *En-kei*, small pine with short needles and aged branches is selected for the appearance of a large, stately tree just like a bonsai pine tree. For the *Chu-kei*, small pine whose needles are somewhat longer and branches are not much aged, may be more appropriate. For the *Kin-kei*, small pine should be selected from a young tree with the fresh appearance of bark and shape of branches. Be sure that ‘young’ does not mean *waka-matsu* (*waka* is young; *matsu* is pine) which is used for New Year’s arrangements. Thus, the choice of small pine depends on the perspective of an arrangement. With the correct choice of pine branches from different growth stages and appearance, together with the correct arranging method, the work of small pine can be achieved satisfactorily.

It is unfortunate that in recent years, obtaining aged, stately looking small pine branches has become very difficult. So, if such branches are not available, it is better not to arrange it in the *En-kei*, but to try instead the *Chu-kei* or *Kin-kei*.

When small pine is arranged for *En-kei*, branches should be trimmed amply; otherwise, it will look a bushy tree being viewed nearby, but not like a large, aged tree being viewed from a distance. As the perspective of a floral style changes from the middle view to the near view, the branches become fuller with more side branches and needles. In any case, before arranging small pine, excessive needles must be thinned out and needles sparsely covering the branch between side branches must be stripped off. Of course, crisscross branches and poorly-shaped side branches must be removed. If the main branch happens to have a dead side branch, it will depend on the whole appearance of the branch as to remove or not to remove it.

Branches of small pine come in a great variety of shapes, with each having its own individual character, and may be arranged in either the *Chokuritsu-kei* (Upright Style), the *Keisha-kei* (Slanting Style), or the *Kansui-kei* (Water Reflecting Style) depending on the posture of the individual branches. In this section, two examples are shown: one in the *Chokuritsu-kei* and the other in *Kansui-kei*.

Small pine in the *En-kei* requires a radical trimming of branches in order to create dramatic variations. If this is not done, they will not take on the air of an aged pine tree, but will appear as pine in the near or middle view. Do not hesitate to remove intermediary branches in order to create the powerful and varied movement in the main lines.

Unlike other materials used for the *En-kei*, small pine can express a single aged pine tree as well as many pine trees lined up along the seashore in the distance. Although both represent far views where pine trees grow, the feeling of distance they evoke is quite different. In this sense, while pine is a uniquely interesting material, it also poses unique difficulties.



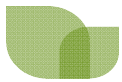
Small pine, dianthus, club moss. *Chokuritsu-kei*



Small pine, dianthus, club moss. *Kansui-kei*

Since the works depict summer scenes along a distant seashore, small, lovely summer flowers are appropriate as the accompanying materials; both works use dianthus as the *Chukan-shi* (Filler) beside the *Shu-shi* (Subject), and as the *Kyaku-shi* (Object) and its *Chukan-shi*. For the *En-kei*, choose the smallest possible flowers, and place them low in groups. Spread out a small amount of club moss around the base of the pine while a wide expanse of water is displayed. A basic principle in the *En-kei* of small pine in summer is to suggest a vast ocean beyond.

OHARA WORLD SEMINAR



FROM THE DESK OF....

ELLEN WESTON

It was with a stomach full of butterflies that I approached the Tokyo office of the Ohara-ryu, with a large suitcase in hand, to attend my very first World Seminar. I was nervous. Over the next three days, would I be able to meet the challenge of making arrangements under the auspices of the Headmaster, Hiroki Ohara, and the other Professors. Upon entering the lobby, I was met with a wall of history, highlighted by the busts of the previous headmasters. I was at once both humbled and suddenly full of a sense of belonging to the Ohara-ryu community.

This year's seminar combined the annual Senmon Seminar with the Chinese Seminar. As such, translators for English and Chinese were provided. The instructors for the seminar included:

- Fifth Headmaster: Hiroki OHARA
- Vice President of the Council of Ohara Professors: Koji KANAMORI
- Professor of the Council of Ohara Professors: Ami KUDO
- Professor of the Council of Ohara Professors: Akihiro NISHI
- Associate Professor of the Council of Ohara Professors: Hozuki OYAMADA

You might be wondering why I had a large suitcase with me. It was because I had decided to order many items and avoid the mailing fee and also receive a slight discount. This will be rethought if I attend future seminars. It was very heavy!

On day one, we finished registration, picked up the items we had purchased and had time to speak with the other participants. It was a lovely reunion for me, and a bit reassuring, to find in attendance several people I had previously met at the NAOTA Toronto and Boston seminars. We had a bento boxed lunch, which I would recommend purchasing should you attend, to save time. The Headmaster and Professors were introduced and a brief explanation for the program was given. Then the Headmaster stated the official announcement in Tokyo came that the cherries were in full bloom yesterday. Each and every Professor came up in succession and also mentioned how beautiful the cherry blossoms were, especially in Aoyama Cemetery. They highly encouraged us all to go see them if at all possible and how fortunate we were to catch them at this perfect time.



The seminar format divided participants into groups based on certificate level. This year there were 5 levels. The expression of the arrangement for each session was specific to the level. Usually, containers varied for each level as well as floral materials, which were conditioned beautifully. The Headmaster and Professors alternated teaching between the levels so that everyone had a chance to be instructed and critiqued by all the Professors and the Headmaster. In total, I had seven lessons and a very special lesson only for Senmon Instructors on the last day after the certificate award ceremony.

The several school rooms are quite large and easily could accommodate the 39 participants. I soon realized that the cabinets lining the walls were chock full of containers for our use. I was awestruck when they wheeled in several very large wooden boxes full of kenzan and shippo for the lessons. A very special container was added to a lesson for two of the levels. It was a tall bamboo basket with a liner, called an Openwork basket. The Ohara-ryu had found a craftsman who was able to make these baskets to the high standards of the school. This basket is intended to be ready for purchase in September's catalog. It is a beautiful addition to the Ohara-ryu containers and well suited for demonstrations and exhibits.

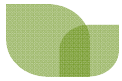


In addition to supporting Japanese crafts people, the Ohara-ryu has introduced “The Project to Preserve Ikebana Materials.” It is an effort to protect the distribution of favored ikebana material by actively using them. Due to a combination of aging producers, lack of successors, the difficulties of cultivation and distribution to the general public, the number of flower growers is decreasing. We were very lucky to be able to make arrangements using several materials which are even hard to find in Japan including - Roof iris, Thistle, Rabbit-ear iris, Bird's Nest fern and Mountain fern. By providing the materials used for traditional arrangements, we had a chance to feel and connect with the historic roots of the Ohara-ryu.

The final spectacular experience was a special lesson only for Senmon Instructors. We made a Shakei Moribana Yoshiki Hon-I En-kei (Far View) using golden cypress, cherry branches, boxwood, kinkoka azalea or asters, and ground pine. For someone like me, who only has tropical material available, this was such an inspiring sensory and learning experience.

I highly recommend attending the World Seminar. In 2025, it will be in Osaka, April 20-22, just a few days before the Ikebana International World Convention in Kyoto. Attending the seminar is an opportunity to keep up to date with changes in the curriculum, learn/improve upon techniques, be critiqued by the highest level of instructors at the Ohara-ryu, and connect with ikebana enthusiasts from around the world.

LET'S GET DIGGING



ORIENTAL POPPY

WRITTEN BY CAROL LEGROS

In this issue of *Let's Get Digging*, we are going to look at the Oriental Poppy, a wonderful easy-to-care-for plant that folks often mistaken for a weed. Yes, a weed. The leaves are so similar looking to some species of weeds that they often are pulled up by accident. The trick is to plant the poppy in only one or two particular spots in your gardens, and leave those spots alone in the spring time. No weeding!



These poppies are usually the first plant to appear in the spring. Poppies come in a variety of colors, the most popular one being red or an orange/red color, like the one on the cover of this newsletter. But local garden centers typically have a peach/apricot color, and a white color available. These Oriental Poppies are low maintenance plants that give such a beautiful show in the garden in late spring or early summer in Zone 4/5. The poppies on the front page of the newsletter are over 24" tall and have a flower head diameter of around 5" with leaves that are a delicate yet sturdy crinkled paper-like texture. The stalks are very sturdy and thick, and en masse they are eye catching.

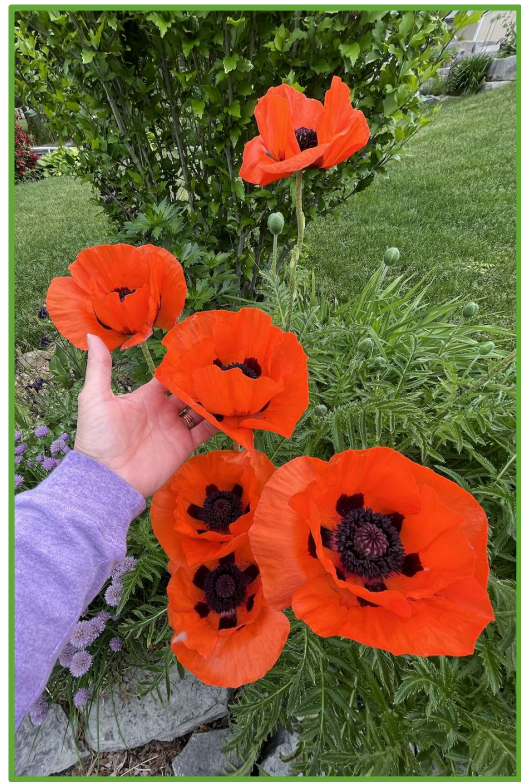
They prefer a full sun location in a moist well drained soil bed, and in Zone 4/5 they do well with a mulch layer on top of the soil. Once the poppy flower is done blooming and the petals fall, the seed pod that remains is such an interesting material in the garden, and of course wonderful to use in Ikebana arrangements as well. If you let the seed heads dry completely and pop, scattering the seed, you will have hundreds of poppy plants show up in your garden the following year.



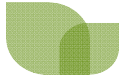
In terms of maintenance throughout the year, there is not much to do. By the time mid-summer rolls around and temperatures are beautifully warm, the leaves and stalks start to yellow and die off because these beauties prefer cool wet climates. This is the time to cut the stalk and leaves down to the ground and ensure that other nearby plants are able to use that empty space in the garden. Sometimes in the autumn with cooler wet conditions outside, the poppy plants start to grow leaves again which remain until the first frost hits. If you decide you want to transplant some of these poppies, be sure to dig deep and grab the entire tap root. Poppies hate to be transplanted so you need to catch the entire root.

There are a variety of other poppy plants such as the Himalayan, or the Iceland poppy, and these particular varieties are difficult to grow because their natural environment must be simulated as close as possible just to survive let alone bloom.

If you're never tried your hand at growing the Oriental Poppy, I urge you to give it a try. You won't be disappointed.



CAROLYN'S COLUMN



SHIPPOU 七宝

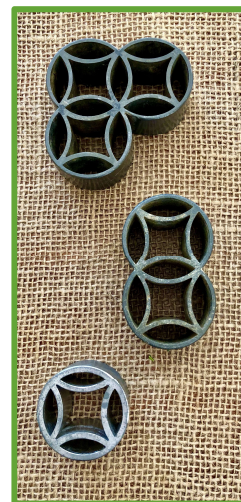
WRITTEN BY CAROLYN ALTER

Continuing with the ikebana tools theme in my 2024 columns, this summer brings us a discussion about *Shippou*. *Shippou* are a type of *hanadome* or flower stay. These are classical ringed metal holders of interlocking circles with large and small compartments. The history of when they were first used isn't really known but is believed to be sometime prior to the development and use of *kenzan*, which was in the early 20th century.

Shippou are made of a variety of materials which include alloys of lead and antimony or steel (shinier silver ones) depending on their age and manufacturer.

Various Types of Shippou

1. Sizes include Extra Large, Large, Medium, Small and Miniature. The Medium are the standard size we use the most.
2. Number of Holes - triple, double, single
3. Some have a top and bottom - if one side has thicker metal lines, place that side downward.
4. *Shippou/kenzan* combination - *kenzan* slides inside the *shippou* and are removable



5. Belts are to prevent slippage while arranging and to protect the container from scratches. Don't let the circular shapes fool you, they stretch and work well.

6. Extra heavy *shippou* - extra thick metal for more stability. This is the bottom view.



7. Two shapes - a. *Tokyo* and b. *Osaka*. The *Tokyo* shape looks like Mt. *Fuji* and flares out at the bottom and the lines are thicker on the bottom, while the *Osaka* shape is straight sided as seen at the left top and bottom, resp.



Usage of Shippou

In our curriculum, *shippou* are normally first introduced when we begin learning *Moribana* Water Reflecting style. Many times branches are used for this more informal style of *moribana*, so it is a natural time to introduce them.

Next all Traditional Method (TM) arrangements should be done using *shippou* (both Color Scheme and Landscape TM).

Continuing on we use them as needed in Landscapes and Rimpa to hold heavier branches.

Placement in Containers

Where and how to place the *shippou* depends on the style you are doing and the materials used. Rings may be vertical, horizontal, diagonal, in an upside down L, a regular L and arrow right or left (with triple holed ones). There are specific hole positions to utilize where the main materials are inserted. Fillers have more freedom depending on the materials and style. Often this helps get the spacing between the materials correct as well as the view perspective. Please refer to [Traditional Ikebana of the Ohara School](#) ©2019 for all the specifics.

Advantages of Shippou

1. To hold thicker or harder stemmed branches which can not be inserted in kenzan easily.
2. The open compartments allow for improved water uptake for the materials' stems without blocking the channels with spikes as kenzan do.
3. The footprint can be wider than kenzan, so if a material is tipping the kenzan over, using shippou can prevent that. There is also a very old tool called a *tako*. *Tako* in Japanese means octopus. Can you see the suction cup? My *sensei* handed me a small bag with half a dozen *tako* in it when she retired and said "Here you will need these". She failed to tell me what they were, but one day it came to me when my shippo was tipping over what they were for!
4. Some branches may break at the base when inserting in *kenzan* and *shippou* prevents that (i.e., azalea, beech).
5. Soft stemmed materials that tend to fall over in kenzan may hold better also (i.e., calla lily, hyacinth).



Various Stay Techniques

1. Angle cut at 45 degrees to match compartment corners - deep and lower contact stands material higher, high and shallow contact makes material slant more
2. Short pieces, aka props, placed vertically to help materials stand up
3. *Kusabi* or "wedge" technique, where a stem and a prop are placed 180 deg opposite each other

4. Cross piece in large hole to divide it in half, prop on top of cross piece or wedge below it
5. Thicker piece of stem inserted over thin stems
6. Bend stem's bottom upward in a V, try to keep its end below water. It won't drink water as well because of the kink though
7. Angle material on a prop - place prop to one side or other
8. Multiple props in the large holes
9. Iris leaves or other flat leaves - short piece of leaf bent in half (v shaped) acts like a spring in the small hole
10. Connect shippou together with wire or zip ties (pulled tightly) to increase stability



This listing is not all inclusive, but these are some of the more common *shippou* stay methods. Summer is a great time for using *shippou* in our Landscape TM styles. Let's try, shall we.

For a cultural connection, the two *kanji*, or characters, shown in the title translate to mean 七 seven 宝 treasures. These may vary depending on the Buddhist scripture consulted, but the Lotus Sutra considers the treasures to include gold, silver, lapis lazuli, seashell, agate, pearl and carnelian.

In Japanese, *shippou* also means *cloisonne* [klwazone] a French word 'cloison' meaning compartments. *Cloisonne* refers to metal object art pieces, such as jewelry and vases, that have compartments made of other metals soldered on to them and then those compartments are filled with gemstones or glass.



Just as the multiple compartments hold various treasures in *cloisonne*, the *shippou* hold our treasured flower materials.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

IN MEMORIAM

In the March newsletter, we announced the passing of our member Patricia Schneider, a member of the San Diego Sakura chapter. The below arrangements were created in her honor for her memorial service held on March 16th.



From Pat's NAOTA friends



From the San Diego Sakura Chapter of the Ohara School

Simple Rising Form arrangement with Pat's favorite flowers and container and colors at the I.I. San Diego Chapter's Spring Exhibition on March 16, 17, 2024



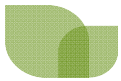


HOW DO WE REACH YOU?

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 |