



NORTH AMERICAN OHARA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER INSIDE THIS ISSUE

page 02
President's Message

page 04
NAOTA 2024 Conference

page 07
The Traditional Method

page 09
A Chat With Headmaster

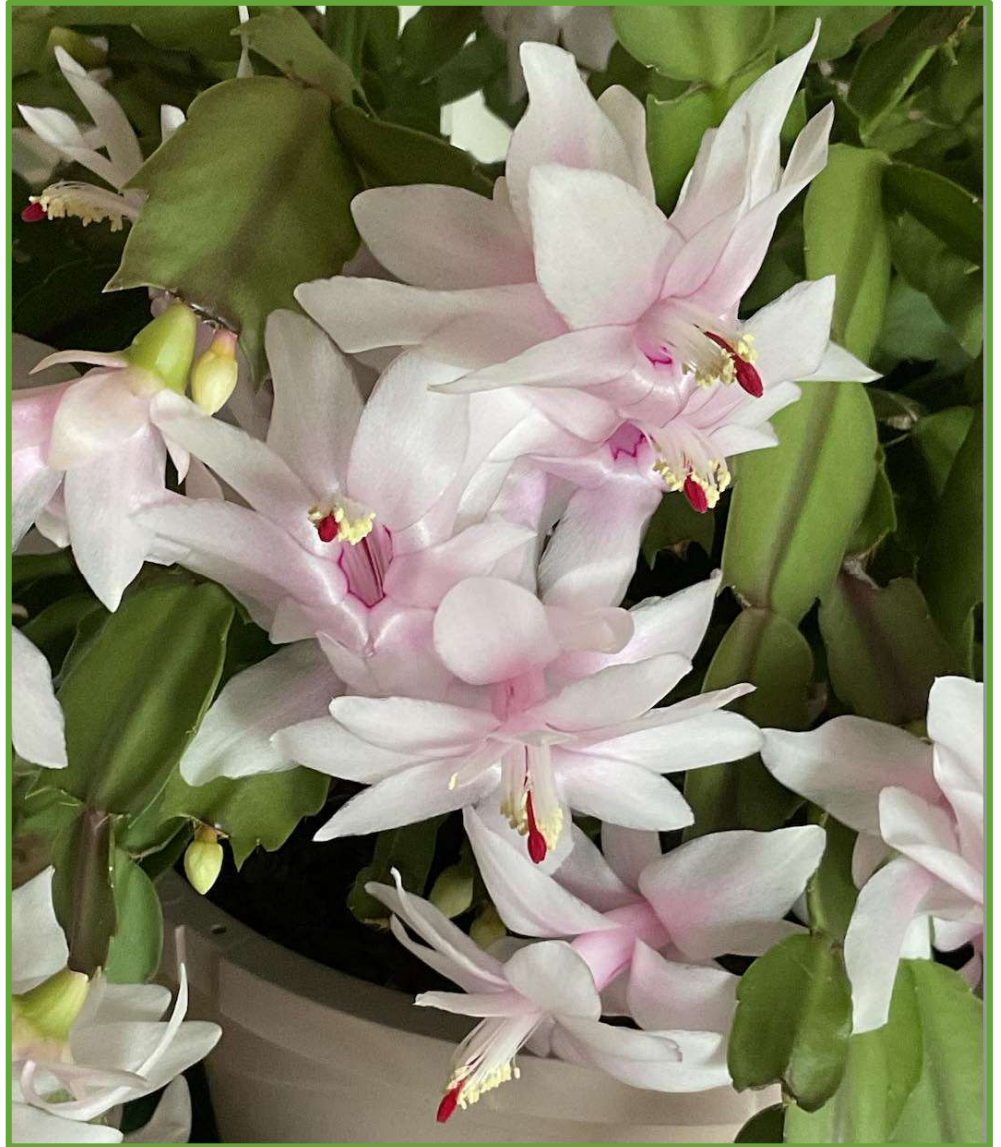
page 11
Let's Get Digging

page 12
Carolyn's Column

page 16
New Study Group

page 18
Consul General Commendation

page 19
Announcements



DEC
2024

WINTER EDITION

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



GREETINGS FROM RUSS...

Dear NAOTA Members,

As we prepare for winter's serene embrace, we are reminded of the profound beauty found in nature's quietude, a sentiment so central to our practice of ikebana. The bare branches, the soft light, and the muted tones of the season invite us to reflect and find harmony within ourselves and our art. It is a time to cherish the bonds that connect us and to prepare for the blossoming seasons ahead.

Looking back, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who made our recent conference in San Diego a resounding success. The presence of Headmaster and Hirota Sensei elevated the event to extraordinary heights, and we are deeply honored by their teaching and guidance. To our incredible volunteers, your dedication and meticulous efforts ensured that everything flowed seamlessly—from the stunning arrangements to the warm hospitality. The conference attendees applaud your hard work and passion.

As we turn our gaze forward, I am thrilled about next year's conference taking place in Portland, Oregon. This event carries special significance as it was originally planned but postponed due to the challenges of the pandemic. We are overjoyed to see it come to fruition, and I extend my deepest gratitude to Carolyn Alter for her leadership in chairing this much-anticipated gathering. We are equally excited to welcome Professor Yokohigashi, whose expertise and vision will surely invigorate us all.

May the quiet beauty of winter inspire your ikebana creations and nurture your spirit. Thank you for your continued support, dedication, and love for this timeless art form. I look forward to seeing you in Portland as we come together once again to celebrate and grow in our shared passion.

Warm regards,
Russell Bowers

NAOTA CONFERENCE 2024

HOSTED BY THE SAN DIEGO SAKURA & LA JOLLA CHAPTERS

The San Diego Sakura Chapter and the La Jolla Chapter jointly hosted the 21st NAOTA conference from October 21st to October 24th at the San Diego Marriott La Jolla in San Diego, California. Headmaster Hiroki Ohara was assisted by Associate Professor Satoshi Hirota, conducting 3 full days of workshops for NAOTA conference attendees. The week started off with Headmaster's demonstration of 6 beautiful large arrangements, including *Color Scheme Moribana*, *Bunjin-cho*, *Radial Form*, *Heika*, *Landscape*, and *Rimpa-cho*.

The NAOTA website has posted many of the photos from Headmaster'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.



Color Scheme Moribana (oval Udei suiban)

- *Leucadendron*
- *Ginger leaves*
- *Geranium*
- *Chrysanthemum (orange)*
- *Ornamental kale*
- *Millet*
- *Spray mum (pink)*
- *Chrysanthemum (pink)*

Bunjin-cho (Jingdezhen tall vase)

- *Pomegranate branches*
- *Ornamental kale*
- *Hydrangea (red antique)*
- *Phalaenopsis with roots*
- *Grape wood*

Radial Form (glass compote)

- *Cycad*
- *Bromeliad seed pod*
- *Aloe (2 types)*
- *Pothos*
- *Oncidium*
- *Dahlia*
- *Astilbe (2 colors)*
- *Ivy wood (painted white)*



Heika (buckwheat colored tall vase)

- *Eucalyptus with seed pods*
- *Buddha's hand citron*
- *Neoregalia*
- *Dendrobium*

Rimpa-Cho (2 fan-shaped suiban)

- *Amaranthus*
- *Dahlia*
- *Chrysanthemum (2 colors) thin stalk*
- *Spray mum (yellow)*
- *Montecasino aster (purple)*
- *Begonia leaves*
- *Cotinus*
- *Callicarpa (beautyberry)*



Landscape Moribana (celadon oval vase)

- *Conifer*
- *Cotoneaster*
- *Boxwood*
- *"Moss"*
- *Ice plant*
- *Leonotis (aka lion's tail, lion's ear)*
- *Black aeonium*
- *Driftwood*



The 21st NAOTA conference would not be possible without the organization and leadership of Chairperson Jackie Zhang and Co-chairs Tracy Guo, Tina Wei and Naomi Goking, and the hard work by all the conference volunteers. As you all know, it takes an army of volunteers to make a conference successful.

The Volunteers for Headmaster’s Demonstration



Left to Right: Tracy Guo, Kiki Zhong, Hiroki Ohara (Headmaster), Satoshi Hirota (Associate Professor of C.O.P.), Naomi Goking, Jackie Zhang, Chao-feng Zheng, Tina Wei, Gerry Goking, Susan Redman, April LoVecchio, Cruzina Fernandes.

San Diego Consul General of Japan



Left to Right: Mami Sone, Kenko Sone (Consul General), Hiroki Ohara (Headmaster), Kate Leonard (Honorary Consul of Japan in San Diego), Richard Forsyth

NAOTA Board + Past Presidents

Left to Right: Saskia Eller, Satoshi Hirota, Beth Bowers-Klaine, Hiroki Ohara (Headmaster) Carol Legros, Alice Buch, Carolyn Alter, Grace Sekimitsu, Ingrid Luders, Russ Bowers, Jackie Zhang



The 3-day conference was action packed with informative lessons and beautiful materials. Headmaster and Hirota Sensei demonstrated the arrangements while conveying details on each arrangement along with tips on working with some of the challenging materials. Below are a handful of photos from those lessons. Be sure to check out the NAOTA website for many more.



2024 NAOTA Conference Participants



THE TRADITIONAL METHOD

FASCIATED WILLOW

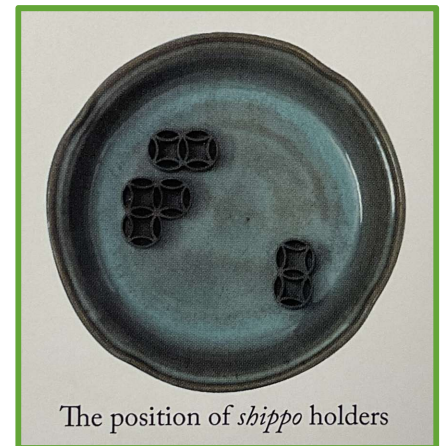
-- CHU-KEI (MIDDLE VIEW)

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).

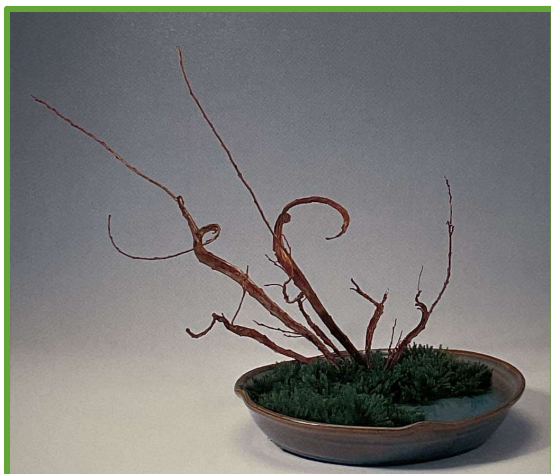
Willows are often selected for winter arrangements. Among them, fascinated willow is used in the *Chu-kei* (Middle-View Depiction) since it is easy for the beginner to understand and learn the basic form of the *Chu-kei* with this material.

Applying the same method as fruit-bearing quince in autumn, fascinated willow is arranged in either the *Chokuritsu-kei* (Upright Style) or the *Keisha-kei* (Slanting Style). In either case, the branches are gathered at their base to appear to be one clump.

The example is composed in the *Keisha-kei*. Instead of using only the fascinated part of a branch long enough for the tall *Chukan-shi*, a thin side branch protruding from the fascinated main branch is utilized to make it tall with ease and elegance.



The position of *shippo* holders



Side view

One correctly-grouped narcissus is placed as the *Chukan-shi* beside the group of fascinated willow. This *Chukan-shi* narcissus is not so tall, since its height is determined in proportion to the main branch material as the *Chu-kei*. The narcissi for the *Kyaku-shi* and its *Chukan-shi* in this *Chu-kei* cannot be as tall as the ones in the *Kin-kei*, either. Club moss is laid out as wide as possible for a winter scene.



A CHAT WITH HEADMASTER



FROM THE DESK OF ...

HIROKI OHARA

What is your earliest memory of Ikebana ?

My oldest memory is from when I was in elementary school, in the third grade. I began taking photos of my arrangements and creating an archive. While Mr. Kudo didn't formally teach me, he encouraged me to explore on my own. Mr. Kudo would choose containers, and I would choose a combination of materials. He would correct my arrangements - making a small twist or turn of a material - which seemed to completely change the arrangement somehow. At this point, I felt and realized how interesting Ikebana may be.



Outside of Ikebana what do you enjoy doing?

I like hiking, especially in high mountains above 2000 meters. These environments are barren, mostly rocks and moss, but it's precisely there that I feel the smallness of nature's details so strongly. It's a simple experience - just walking, yet it's refreshing and grounding.

Balancing family and work can be challenging. How do you find balance?

It's definitely a balance I'm learning to manage, especially since becoming a father. It is a challenge for everyone, to strike a balance between job and family life. I try not to bring my work home with me. Ikebana is a way of life for me, so I try to integrate it without it taking over family time.

What does a typical day in your life look like when you are not involved in official duties?

As you know I travel for my job, so when I'm home, my daughter and I spend a lot of time together. I even walk her to kindergarten.

What do you feel is one of the biggest challenges facing Ikebana today?

One challenge is the availability of materials in Japan. Environmental changes are affecting our access to certain plants, so we're working with growers and sellers to find alternatives. It's important for us to be adaptable. Nature teaches us that survival requires flexibility, and in Japan, natural disasters such as earthquakes or floods remind us of this need. I think adapting to the environment is an important lesson for all of us.

The earth is a starship, and we are just passengers on this starship. We need to have a good relationship with each other and the starship, in order to continue living.

What advice would you give to someone new to Ikebana?

If you love Ikebana, you will naturally be drawn to materials and nature. Take time to observe and learn from them, and let yourself be inspired by what's around you. Gardening, touching the soil, and handling materials—these are simple yet powerful ways to connect with nature.

LET'S GET DIGGING

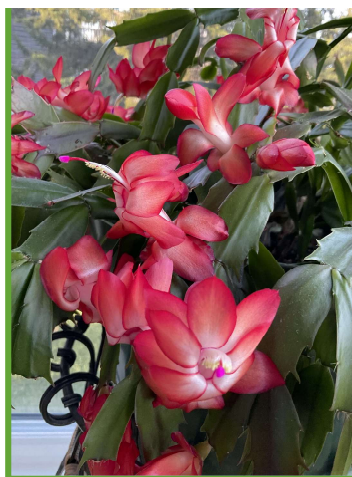


SCHLUMBERGERA

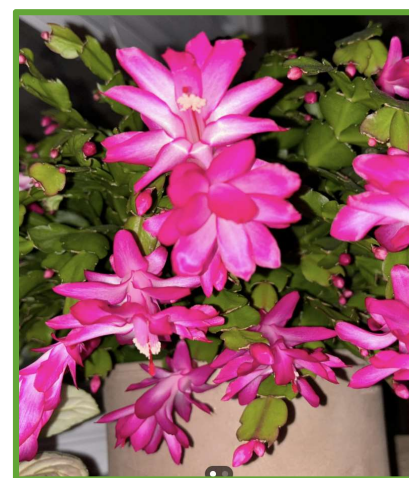
WRITTEN BY CAROL LEGROS

In this issue of *Let's Get Digging*, we explore a beautiful flowering plant commonly referred to as Christmas Cactus. Since it's a plant that is native to Brazil, for many of us in North America this is an easy-to-care-for house plant. Those of us living in the far south where temperatures are warm all year, you might be lucky enough to have this beauty growing outside all year round. These cacti aren't typical as they don't prefer arid desert climates. Quite the opposite, they prefer humid and warm environments.

The most common color that most of us have seen is red especially around the Christmas season. But these gorgeous cacti come in a variety of colors including pink, white, orange and apparently purple. I've managed to grow 3 different colors over the years and the oldest one I have has lived for decades! Although they are coined Christmas Cactus, mine blooms at least twice yearly, just before Christmas and then again in spring time.



Propagation of this plant is very easy. Just snap off a piece at a joint (between 2 leaf segments) and then either place the cut end in a small amount of water and wait for the roots to appear before planting, or plant directly in moist soil. They love to be in bright rooms with indirect light, but truth be told, my oldest one enjoys direct sun in the autumn and spring time.



Although this isn't a plant we would typically use for Ikebana, it is a lovely addition to our homes at this time of year with its bright color and easy nature. Wishing you all a Merry Christmas, from my garden and home, to yours.



For my last column of 2024, I will move away from the hard physical tools we use while arranging (*hasami, kenzan and shippou*) to discuss the broad range of methods, techniques and items that we use to preserve our floral materials. This is also known as “conditioning.” So why do we do this?

It is due to Buddhism's influence on *ikebana*. One Buddhist tenet is to revere and preserve life. If you are going to take a flower's life, then one needs to try to extend that life for as long as possible. In the Ohara school we use tall vases and wide suiban which hold lots of water and have plenty of space for the plants which alone may lengthen their life.

Three main methods to preserve materials:

1. **Cleanliness** - After getting your materials home, prioritize immediately removing them from their packaging. Please don't let them sit in plastic for two days! This lets them breathe and gives them room to open up their flowers and leaves after being crowded in the flower wrap. Next let's do the step I call “inspection.” Examine the materials closely from the top downward and remove any broken stems, decaying or broken leaves, etc. This is called “grooming” and avoids decaying material infecting healthy areas. Always start with a clean container too.
2. **Water Quality** - The next and most universal method used to preserve materials is by cutting their stems under the water. In Japanese this is called *mizugiri*, which translates to “water cut.” Using filtered or distilled water is best by decreasing or eliminating the minerals that can block the xylem, or stem's water uptake channels. Avoid leaves in the water that may block water uptake or cause growth of bacteria or fungus. Also change the water often.
3. **Floral Food** - The last main method is Floral preservative powder - so what is in those packets of white powder? Flowers need and crave food just like we do. The Chrysal of Holland or Floralife of Oasis packets include three main ingredients:
 - Sugar for food

- Biocide to kill bacteria, fungi, etc
- Acidifier to lower the pH

Roses are a prime example for employing the methods above and a material we use frequently. Roses are finicky but really thrive when conditioned properly. They do not like dirty buckets, dirty water or to be stored with other materials that might block their water absorption. Make sure to groom them, perform *mizugiri* and place in 6-8 inches of clean water with floral food so that they will bloom beautifully for you.

Special Preservation Techniques are also known as *mizu-age*, or “water raising” techniques. These are not all inclusive but are some common useful methods we use.

1. **Mizugiri** - to prevent air lock of the stem’s water uptake channels (ex: for most all materials, except dried). *Method - cut stem ends under water.*
2. **Shaving/Criss Cross Cut** - to increase the surface area for water uptake.
 - a. **Shaving** - *Method - open hasami and use one side of blade to shave off an inch or so of bark from bottoms of branches with green leaves (Ex: lilac, maple).*
 - b. **Criss Cross Cut** - *Method - split hard woody stems into two or four pieces (Ex: pine, quince).*
3. **Boiling** - causes expansion of the stem and expels air from the channels. You may see some bubbles exit. It also sterilizes the end and helps water uptake for mucous or milky producing materials and newly leafing or budding materials (Ex: amaranth, bell flower, cockscomb, cosmos, dahlia, daisies, delphinium, euphorbias, fennel, hollyhock, hyacinth, *Macleya cordata*, monk’s hood, palm, patrinia, peony, poinsettia, rose, sunflower, tree mallow). *Method - submerge one inch of stem in boiling water for 10 seconds up to 5 minutes depending on the hardness of the stem, then plunge into cold deep water for a few hours.*
4. **Burning** - carbonizes the stem end, kills bacteria and seals the ends for milky producing materials, shrubs and trees (Ex: bellflower, cockscomb, dahlia, deutzia, euphorbias, geranium, hollyhock, hydrangea, mallotus, narcissus, orchids, peonies, poinsettia, poppy, rose, thistle, winter mum). *Method - hold bottom of stem in a candle flame until charred. Carbon absorbs water so there is no need to cut off.*
5. **Deep Water Soak** - hydrostatic pressure on the stem increases with water depth and pushes water further into the stem (Ex: hydrangeas, ranunculus, roses, sunflowers).

DO NOT USE with calla, daffodils, gerbera, tulips or other hollow or soft stemmed materials as they will split and curl. *Method - place stems in deep water covering at least 1/3 of the stem's length up to flower neck.*

6. **Spraying Leaves** - hydrates leaves decreasing respiration and prevents water loss. For small stemmed materials or those with many leaves (Ex: violets and primrose as they don't absorb water through their stems well, chrysanthemums). *Method - spray water mist on leaves tops and undersides. See sprayer tool in picture below. Or any spray bottle will work too.*
7. **Submerging** - decreases respiration and helps absorb water. (Ex: wilting ferns, hydrangeas). *Method - push entire plant or flower under the water in a bucket and leave about 45 minutes or longer.*
8. **Chemical Substances** - generally stimulate water absorption.

Alcohol (sake) - neutralizes plant fluids, cleans the cut end and has a bit of sugar. (Ex: allium, aster, astilbe, baby's breath, burnet, crab apple, crocus, dandelion, gerbera, hyacinth, lilac, loosestrife, maple, narcissus, petunia, sanguisorba, snowball, throat wort, tree peony, wisteria) *Method - soak for 30 seconds to 5 min., then place into deep water.*

Alum - decreases the pH of water increasing acidity (Ex: grape, hellebore, hydrangea, ivy, kerria, peony, silk tree, smoke tree, sunflower). *Method - pound into fibrous stemmed materials.*

Peppermint oil/extract - disinfects the cut, and increases water uptake (Ex: acacia, aster, bell flower, burnet, canna, clematis, dahlia, deutzia, gerbera, morning glory, plum, poppy, quince, spirea). *Method - dip for a couple seconds in peppermint extract.*

Salt - increases water absorption especially for slimy materials and late summer and fall materials (Ex: amaranthus, bell flower, cockscomb, dahlia, hyacinths, *Macleya cordata*, sunflower, thistle, wild flowers). *Method - rub or pound in salt to the cut end for a few seconds.*

Vinegar - sterilizes and prevents drying out of leaves. (Ex: acacia, bamboo and bamboo grasses, caladium, grasses like Japanese pampas, millet, reed grass, rice plant, *Themeda japonica*). *Method - dip stem in vinegar to soak for 10 -15 minutes.*

9. **Water pump** - forces water into the stems of fleshy, hollow materials (Ex: amaryllis, calla flowers and leaves, lotus, pond lily, trillium, water lily). *Method* - use a pump, draw up water and insert the bell end into the stem, then push the handle to inject water into the stem. See pump/sprayer dual purpose tool in the photo below.



Understanding the purpose of these preservation techniques helps you problem solve when issues arise. Overall I want to emphasize being “gentle” with your materials. The more TLC you show your materials the more gently they will treat you in return. Materials do not like being handled roughly, being out of water very long, nor sitting in a hot car in the sun. Cool (above freezing) and dark (wrap with newspaper) environments help hold materials, except tropicals which don’t like being cold. High humidity helps decrease respiration. Keeping materials in a water bucket at your feet when arranging is better than resting them flat on a table where the stems can get air bubbles blocking their water uptake channels.

Following these basic conditioning steps can be the difference between a wilted arrangement and one lasting well for a weekend show or happy at home for days.

Bibliography

Japanese Ikebana for Every Season by Rie Imai and Yuji Ueno ©2013

Ikebana for Everybody by Hiroki Ohara ©The Ohara School 2015, 2002, 1988
Preservation of Materials Chapters

The Art of Arranging Flowers A Complete Guide to Japanese Ikebana by Shozo Sato

Japanese Floral Art by Rachel Carr ©1961

Masters Book of Ikebana Background and Principles of Japanese Flower Arranging by Donald Richie and Meredith Weatherby ©1966

NEW STUDY GROUP

CENTRAL OHIO SHIBUI STUDY GROUP

WRITTEN BY JOE ROTELLA

We're thrilled to announce the formation of a new study group in North America!



On November 1, 2024, the *Central Ohio Shibui Study Group* was officially recognized by the Ohara School of Ikebana. Founded by NAOTA member Joe Rotella, the group's name, "Shibui," reflects the Japanese aesthetic of simple, subtle, and unobtrusive beauty—a guiding principle in both our work and mission.

The art of Ikebana has experienced a remarkable revival in Central Ohio this year, thanks to support from the IWAYA Innovation Challenge Grant. Here are a few highlights from our journey:

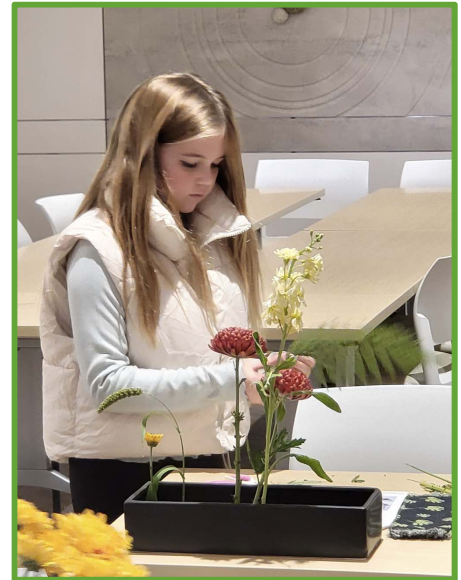
- **Diverse Participation:** Since January, we've welcomed over 70 unique participants to our twice-monthly classes, ranging in age from 9 to 96.
- **Newcomers to Ikebana:** 87% of our students are new to this art form and are enthusiastically embracing the principles and techniques of the Ohara School.
- **Growing Community:** Our Saturday classes average 15 attendees, and midweek sessions have around 6, fostering a close-knit learning environment.
- **Certificate Progress:** Many students are diligently working toward their first Ohara Certificate, requiring 8 lessons.

One of the year's highlights was a visit from Kamo-Sensei, an Associate Professor from the Ohara School in Japan, who led an all-day workshop and a sold-out evening demonstration in August, attended by 109 guests. This event energized our students, inspiring them to prepare for a 2025 student exhibition.



Our group has also forged key partnerships that expand Ikebana's impact in Central Ohio:

- **Asian American Community Services (AACS):** Offering survivors of abuse a safe, healing space through the creative process of flower arranging.
- **Columbus Museum of Art:** Supporting our classes with door prizes, including museum tickets.
- **Japan Marketplace:** Providing a welcoming space through the Yokoso Center, embodying the spirit of Japanese culture.



To learn more about our activities, visit our website at www.OharaIkebanaColumbus.com, where we post 2–3 articles each month about Ohara, Ikebana, and Japanese culture. You can also join our email list to receive updates.

Follow us on Facebook (facebook.com/centralohiooharaikebana) and Instagram (@central_ohio_ikebana)—your support is greatly appreciated as we continue to grow!

CONSUL GENERAL COMMENDATION

TORONTO CHAPTER COMMENDATION

WRITTEN BY CAROL LEGROS

November 26 this year was not a typical Tuesday for those in the Toronto Ikebana community. The Consul-General of Japan in Toronto, Matsunaga Takeshi, and his wife Matsunaga Miho invited members of the Ohara, Ikenobo and Sogetsu schools to a special event held at their home to recognize the decades of contributions of these Ikebana chapters and Ikebana International chapter in supporting and promoting Ikebana and the Japanese culture.

Special commendations were presented to each of the Chapter Presidents. The evening was filled with warm conversations amongst the hosts and Ikebana friends, tasty Japanese food, and memories that will last a lifetime. Below are a few photos from the evening, including the presentation of the Toronto Ohara Chapter commendation to President Mitzi Yau, and group photos with some of the chapter attendees.

Translation of the commendation:

“Since it was established in 1974, your organization, through its proactive initiatives to expand the circle of ikebana enthusiasts, has made remarkable contributions toward mutual understanding and friendship between Japan and the Province of Ontario. I hereby extend this commendation with my deepest respect.

The 26th day, the 11th month (November), the Sixth year of Reiwa (2024).”



Left to Right:

Trish Chan, Karen Lo, Midori Chikira, Carol Legros
Consul-General Matsunaga Takeshi, Mitzi Yau
Sherry Xie, Cecilia Li, Danny Zeng



ANNOUNCEMENTS



EXHIBITIONS IN JAPAN

NOVEMBER SOKA MAGAZINE

The Ohara School celebrates its 130th Anniversary in 2025. If your travels take you to Japan in 2025, you might consider going to one of the many exhibitions that are planned for the year.

Please be sure to contact Headquarters at mktg@ohararyu.or.jp ahead of time to confirm dates and venue.

DATE	LOCATION	EVENT	VENUE
2025			
Feb. 23 - 24	Takamatsu, Kagawa Prefecture, Shikoku	Takamatsu Chapter 65 th Anniversary Exhibition	Takamatsu Castle Tamamo Park
June 21 - 22	Koriyama, Fukushima Prefecture	Koriyama Chapter Exhibition	Kenshin Koriyama Bunka Center
Oct. 2 - 7	Tokyo	Tokyo Chapter Exhibition	Shinjuku Takashimaya
Oct. 9 - 14	Osaka	Osaka Chapter 115 th Anniversary Exhibition	Osaka Takashimaya
Oct. 12 - 13	Morioka, Iwate Prefecture	Morioka Chapter 80 th Anniversary Exhibition	Iwate Kyoiku Kaikan
Oct. 25 - 26	Hiroshima	Hiroshima Chapter 70 th Anniversary Exhibition	NTT Credo Hall

DATE	LOCATION	EVENT	VENUE
2026			
March 3	Matsue, Shimane Prefecture	Matsue Chapter 90 th Anniversary Exhibition	Kunibiki Messe Hall



UPCOMING EVENTS – 22ND NAOTA CONFERENCE

The Ohara School of Ikebana Oregon Chapter will be hosting the 22nd NAOTA Conference and Professor Hirokazu Yokohigashi from Japan with Grand Master Ingrid Luders assisting him on September 8 to 12, 2025 in Portland. We will be following NAOTA’s traditional format. Reception and registration will be held on Monday evening, with Workshops running from Tuesday through Thursday. Professor’s demonstration will be held on Friday with a Sayonara Banquet that evening. So please save that week on your calendars and plan to travel to Portland in 2025!

For further details, please refer to the NAOTA website, or contact Carolyn Alter directly at: bcalter@mac.com



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 2026 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.



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