



NORTH AMERICAN OHARA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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MAR
2025

SPRING EDITION

Welcome to the March edition of the newsletter. As the snow and cold temperatures leave us, signs of spring are upon us – longer days, increasingly warmer temperatures, rains and the return of our feather friends from their southern homes.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

GREETINGS FROM RUSS...



Dear NAOTA Members,

With the arrival of spring, we are greeted by beautiful weather that will soon bless our gardens with an abundance of materials for our Ikebana arrangements. It is always inspiring to see nature awaken, providing us with fresh creativity and new opportunities to refine our art.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the upcoming Masters Seminar in April in Osaka, Japan. This event promises to be an enriching experience, and I am eager to share in the learning and camaraderie with fellow members.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to the San Diego Conference Chairs and volunteers for their outstanding efforts in organizing a successful conference with Headmaster and Hirota Sensei. Your dedication and hard work made this gathering a truly memorable experience for all who attended.

Looking ahead, please keep an eye on your email for the registration form for the Portland Conference, which should arrive by the end of the month. We are thrilled to have Yokohigashi Sensei joining us in Portland, as he was originally invited for a past event that was unfortunately canceled due to COVID. The Portland Chair and volunteers are diligently preparing an exceptional program, ensuring a meaningful and enriching experience for all participants.

Further into the future, we are excited to announce that the Cleveland Chapter has generously offered to host our next major conference with Headmaster in the spring of next year. Stay tuned for more details as we move closer to this much-anticipated event.

Thank you for your continued dedication to the art of Ikebana. Wishing you all a wonderful spring season filled with inspiration and beauty.

Warm regards,
Russell Bowers

THE TRADITIONAL METHOD



SPROUTING RASPBERRY

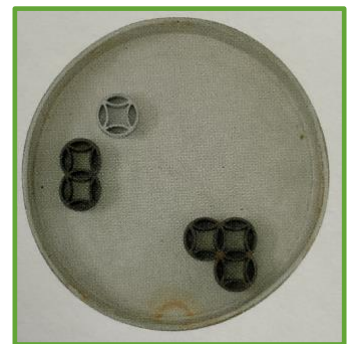
CHU-KEI (MIDDLE VIEW)

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).

Sprouting raspberry is used not when its fresh green leaves are fully expanded but when the leaf buds swell and small leaves begin to unfold. As with sprouting hydrangea, sprouting raspberry is arranged in the *Chu-kei* (Middle-View Depiction), which captures the form and growth characteristics of a shrub. However, unlike sprouting hydrangea, branches of sprouting raspberry are used somewhat longer than the standard lengths. Depending on the shape of the branches, raspberry may be arranged in either the *Chokuritsu-kei* (Upright Style) or the *Keisha-kei* (Slanting Style). In either case, follow the *hito-kabu-zashi* (one-clump method) correctly so as to avoid a loose appearance at the base.

The example uses rabbit-ear iris, which is the basic accompanying material. The approach to leaf grouping of iris is similar to that in the *En-kei* (Far-View Depiction) of cherry and corkscrew willow in the *ichi-boku-zashi* (one-tree method). However, since this is the *Chu-kei*, the basic framework should be established with raspberry branches using the *hito-kabu-zashi*. In the *En-kei*, rabbit-ear irises are used on an extremely reduced scale. In this middle view, both the leaf groups and the flowers are somewhat taller, and the unique characteristics of the iris are a little more emphasized.

The number of clumps of rabbit-ear iris, the position of the leaf groups, and the treatment of the flowers are exactly the same as in the *En-kei*. Thus, one iris clump, placed as the *Chukan-shi* (Filler) at the base of the sprouting raspberry, consists of a five-leaf group in front, a two-leaf frontal group behind it, and a flower, shorter than leaves, between the two leaf groups with its blossom facing forward. The *Kyaku-shi* (Object) and its *Chukan-shi* clumps are placed in a three-ring *shippo* holder.



The *Kyaku-shi* consists of a five-leaf group in front, two two-leaf reverse groups behind the five-leaf group, and a flower, shorter than the tallest leaves, with its blossom facing backward behind the five-leaf group. The small *Chukan-shi* clump beside the *Kyaku-shi* consists of a seed-leaf group in front and a two-leaf reverse group behind it.



As in the far view, the holder of the *Chukan-shi* iris clump beside the *Shu-shi* (Subject) is not covered with club moss. The only features that distinguish this middle view from the *En-kei* are the taller leaf grouping and a closer view of the water. Yet, it must be remembered that the height of the iris clump in the *Chu-kei* clearly differs from that in the *Kin-kei* (Near-View Depiction). Thus, in the *Chu-kei*, the iris clumps are placed within one-half the height of the *Shu-shi*; otherwise the work cannot be regarded as the *Chu-kei* of rabbit-ear iris.

MEET THE SUB GRAND MASTER



FROM THE DESK OF....

REKHA REDDY

Imbibing Ikebana was from when I was a baby as my mother Shamala was an avid practitioner of the art. She learnt Ohara Ikebana in the early sixties. In fact I have a photograph of when I was almost a year old, sitting with an Ikebana arrangement next to me. At that point my mother claimed I was more intent on pulling it apart and that I am, for the last few decades, compensating by putting arrangements together! I started practicing Ikebana as a teenager, making arrangements in college for various events and competitions. Formal training under a teacher was in the early eighties with Grandmaster Horyu Meena Anantnarayan.



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

Each style has its own beauty but I'm partial to Narabu, Hanamai and Bunjn.

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

Interest in gardening is usually an extension of the interest in Ikebana and I enjoy it whenever time permits.

What is one of your favourite floral materials and why?

The Dracaena Song of India is one of my favourite materials, though it is foliage not floral one. It has beautiful lines especially when it is free to take its path moving along to find sunlight. Even in the absence of flowers in the Ikebana, this material makes the arrangement look colourful. It is also hardy, stays fresh for long periods and most stems eventually take root so you have another plant ready to grow.

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

Being in touch with the local members for tips on plant materials available there and how well they take to staying fresh after being cut is very helpful. Audiences always like a new element in the Ikebana they are viewing, so adding a touch of some material from where you come from or an accessory or unusual vase from your city, state or country can add interest.

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

Sourcing natural growing garden material is a challenge nowadays especially in cities where concrete structures far outnumber green areas. Florist shops have limited varieties and practicing landscape arrangements or using traditional combinations is a tough job.

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

A demonstration for the I.I Kamakura Chapter in 2015 was a beautiful moment. It was nice that a chapter in Japan had sent the invite and mainly that it was in the Engaku-ji temple. A statue of Lord Buddha next to me, the zen and tranquil ambienceI felt blessed to have been able to work there. Another one was a demonstration for Washington DC Chapter #1, as it was my first major one in USA and the audience was very receptive and encouraging, especially Betty Taylor who was there in the front row.

I have enjoyed the beauty in Ohara arrangements over many decades, I hope to continue doing so and spreading the creativity in its styles and the interest in Ikebana.

LET'S GET DIGGING



GLADIOLA

WRITTEN BY CAROL LEGROS

In this issue of *Let's Get Digging*, we are going to look at one of the flowering summer bulbs... Gladiola. They are often called “sword lilies” because of their sword shaped leaves and their scientific name *Gladiolus* which comes from the Latin word “gladius” meaning sword. They are native to sub-Saharan Africa with many species thriving in South Africa.

Regardless of their name, they come in a rainbow of colors that span from white to yellow, orange, red, pink, purple, and even a pale green. So many vibrant colors to choose from, and some with multiple colors, like the one shown in the photo to the right.

Plant them in full sun locations, anywhere from 4” to 6” deep in well-drained soil with the bulb points facing up, at least 6” apart. I have planted mine in less-than-ideal soil and they still came up beautifully. However, in my garden area, there is a fair amount of wind, so be aware that you may need to stake them. I typically place a handful of stakes around a group of glads, and string twine from stake to stake, at a few different heights.



If your bulbs are happy, the flowers will be full and can be quite “top heavy”. They will need all the help they can get, otherwise, be prepared for significant leaning and possible “snapping” of the stems. Keep the soil reasonably moist throughout the growing season and give some plant food or fertilizer a couple of times. If you can, dead head the spent flowers, as it will encourage further blooming.

In most zones, these bulbs need to be pulled in autumn and packed in shredded paper in boxes, away from cold winter temperatures. When you lift them, be prepared to find more than you planted...if they had a good growing season, they may have multiplied. If your planting zone is 8 or higher, you might be able to leave them in the ground over winter. If you're not sure, check with your local garden center. Mine spend winter in my basement cold room.

These beauties take such little time and care from us, yet deliver a beautiful show of color in summer. Try planting them – I know you won't be disappointed.



For this year's columns I am leaving behind the flower stays and preservation of materials and plan to focus on a variety of seasonal floral materials.

Rachel Carr in her book, Japanese Floral Art Symbolism, Cult and Practice, presented the concept of the Japanese Floral Calendar (JFC) which is based on the traditional lunar calendar. In the lunar calendar plum marked the New Year and arrival of spring in early February. This JFC is simply assigning materials to a specific month of the year. In 1873 Japan adopted the Gregorian calendar which is solar based and thus the flower seasons no longer align perfectly with the JFC.

The easiest way to think about this concept is similar to foods. We tend to eat asparagus and strawberries in the spring, tomatoes and watermelons in the summer, apples and pears in the fall and greens and citrus in the winter. Of course nowadays you can have strawberries and tomatoes all year long, BUT do they taste as delicious out of season? I will argue they do not.

Just like foods have a season, so do flower materials. When we break down the year into months and learn to associate certain materials with a specific month, then we are appreciating the JFC. You can use a sunflower in February but it will feel out of place unless you are living in the southern hemisphere, doing a Free Expression arrangement or studying in the Sogetsu School. For the last century or so many flowers have been grown in green houses and other light and temperature-controlled environments. So how does one know which season a certain material belongs to? The JFC is a nice starting place. And using it can give your ikebana an extra special spirit.

So, for the months of February, March and April I would like to focus on the flowering trees of plum, peach/pear and cherry, respectively. I know when I first began doing ikebana, I had difficulty telling these materials apart and I know others do as well.

There are several main ways to tell these flowering trees apart:

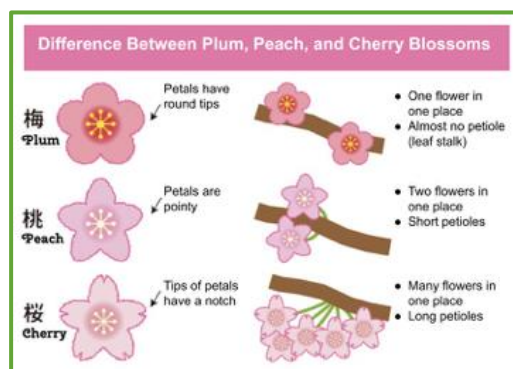
1. First is to look at the petal's shape which are all unique.
2. Second the color of the blossoms can give clues to help recognize them. But both plum and cherry can be white or pink. So color isn't foolproof.
3. Next is the month or time they are in bloom.
4. Another way is through their fragrance. Plum has strong smell, while cherry not much and pear can be a bit unpleasant.
5. Lastly is through the branches' characteristics such as color, shape and how the blossoms attach onto the branch.

I have attached a Visual Guide Chart below with these features in the left column and the different type of flower blossoms across the top.

Quick Visual Blossom Features Guide Chart

Feature	Plum (<i>Ume</i>)	Peach (<i>Momo</i>)	Cherry (<i>Sakura</i>)	Pear (<i>Nashi</i>)
Petal Shape	Round, smooth	Oval, Pointed, star-like	Heart-shaped, split tip	Round, smooth, wider
Color	Pink, white, red	Dark pink, reddish	Pale pink, white	Pure white, slight greenish tinge
Blooming Time	Jan–March (earliest)	March–early April	Late March–April	April–May (latest)
Fragrance	Strong, sweet	Mildly sweet	Faint to none	Mild to musky
Branch Appearance	Dark, rough, blossoms attach directly to branch	Slender and reddish, flowers grow in pairs	Grayish-brown, flowers cluster on long stems	Dark brown, widely spaced clusters
Unique Traits	First to bloom	Often paired flowers	Clusters with notched petals	Dark specks in center
Symbolism	Perseverance	Feminine beauty, used for Girl's Day	Impermanence	Protect against evil, Prosperity purity

Here is a diagram of the petals shape, color and blossom's orientation on the branch.





Plum



Peach



Cherry



Pear

Cultural note – in Japan, they have the “cherry blossom front” or *10akura zensen*. This is the gradual northward movement of when the cherry trees begin blooming. It is due to the wide temperature differences between opposite ends of the country. It is closely watched every year to give the estimated time the cherries will bloom in a specific location. So, in Okinawa that might be late January and in Hokkaido that may be in early May.



On the JFC cherry is associated with April because in the mid latitudes such as Kyoto and Tokyo that is when they bloom. Cherry is a national symbol of Japan and representative of new beginning as the Japanese fiscal and school year begin on April 1st.

Hanami, flower viewing, dates back more than a millennium to the Heian period when nobles would write poetry under the trees. Then in the Edo period the samurai would hold picnics under the trees and more of the public began to take part in these festivities. Cherry is the metaphor for the samurai’s life - beautiful, brief and honorable in their fall!

In early April last year, I was fortunate to be in Tokyo and experienced the “cherry crazy city” when they announced *mankai* or full bloom. The picture above was taken at Aoyama Cemetery which is located not far from Ohara School headquarters.

I hope this inspires you to pay closer attention to the spring’s flowering trees this year and to feel more confident in identifying them.

Using the solar calendar now may throw the materials monthly timing off. But my sensei always said “you can lead the season by a month, but you never go backwards.” So if it is March and you have cherry blooming go ahead and use it and don’t look back.

Bibliography

- *ChatGPT conversation February 15, 2025*
- *Google images*
- *Live Japan Perfect Guide by Westplan, a trio of female blog writers*
- *Japanese Floral Art Symbolism, Cult and Practice* ©1961 by Rachel Carr

ANNOUNCEMENTS



UPCOMING CHAPTER EVENTS

The **Southeastern Ohara Chapter** is excited to announce its 2025 Spring Seminar, taking place March 18–20 at the Cannon Centre in the heart of Greer, South Carolina. This intimate gathering offers SEO members a chance to deepen their Ikebana practice under the expert guidance of Sub-Grand Master Jose Salcedo, celebrated for his engaging and insightful teaching.

Participants will work with seasonal materials, including *Camellia japonica*, *Rohdea japonica* (Sacred Lily), and *Cornus mas* (Cornelian Cherry), capturing the elegant transition from winter to spring. The seminar's registration fee of \$650 covers all lessons, plant materials, and lunches for the three-day event. Space is limited to 20 participants, ensuring a focused and supportive environment.

The seminar is open to SEO members only. If you're not a member but wish to participate, you can join SEO for a biennial membership fee of \$50 (covering two years). For more information about SEO, membership, and the seminar, visit <https://www.seohara.org/index.htm>. You can also reach out to the SEO President, Karen LaFleur-Stewart, at passerina216@icloud.com.

Make this spring unforgettable with the SEO Spring Seminar—an opportunity to create, learn, and connect in the vibrant community of Ikebana enthusiasts.



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 NAOA 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