



NORTH AMERICAN OHARA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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AUTUMN EDITION

SEPT
2025

Welcome to the September edition of the newsletter. As the hazy, lazy days of summer are waning, the cooler fresh evenings are on the horizon soon to be accompanied by the dazzling red, yellow and orange colors of autumn.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



GREETINGS FROM RUSS...



Greetings to All,

I am writing to you from the 2025 NAOTA Conference, where we are enjoying not only a full schedule of workshops and events, but also the beautiful weather and surroundings of the West Coast. Many of us have had the chance to explore the city and nearby areas before, during, and after the conference, making this gathering especially memorable.

The conference itself has been a great success. Professor Yokohigashi has been a marvelous instructor, guiding us through six workshop arrangements. We have studied heika, landscape moribana, one-row form, Rimpa, bunjin, traditional color scheme moribana, free expression, and more. Grand Master Ingrid Luders has been assisting Professor Yokohigashi throughout the workshops, offering her skill and gentle corrections, which have been warmly received by the members. Our Conference Chair, Carolyn Alter, Co-Chair, Diane Sayrizi, and the dedicated volunteers have done a spectacular job in planning and executing every detail.

At the conference reception, both Professor Yokohigashi and Grand Master Luders received a special honor from the Royal Rosarians, Portland's unique welcoming society representing the "City of Roses." This award was a memorable and touching gesture, and a wonderful treat for them both.

We also held our Annual Meeting, which was well attended. Among other topics, we discussed the English translation of the Sōka. While we are not ready to release a full translation yet, I am pleased to share that we plan to release a portion of it early in the new year—so please stay tuned.

Looking ahead, we are preparing to transition to a new online membership platform this year. More details will be coming soon, and we hope you will find this new system easier to use.

Please also mark your calendars: registration for the 2026 Cleveland, Ohio Conference, chaired by Isa Raganathan in consultation with Ingrid Luders, will open in mid-November. If you wish to attend, I encourage you to register promptly once the announcement is made.

Finally, I am delighted to share that the Victoria Study Group has generously agreed to host our next Minor Conference in Canada. We look forward to working with Lorian Roberts and her team in planning this future event.

With gratitude and warm regards,
Russell Bowers

THE TRADITIONAL METHOD



MULTI-VARIETY ARRANGEMENT FOR AUTUMN. 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 Multi-Variety Arrangement for Autumn does not use *eda-mono* (branch materials) at all, but uses only *kusa-mono* (grass and flower materials) that beautifully colors the fields in autumn. Because of this material make-up, the arrangement is quite unique among the *Shakei Moribana* (Landscape Arrangement).

Since ancient times, the appearance of autumn grass flowers has strongly affected the sentiments of the Japanese people. Beginning with “The Seven Grasses of Autumn”, a poem by Yamanoueno Okura (660-733) in the *Manyo-shu* a classic anthology of verse, works of classical art and literature that take these plants as their subject are far too numerous to mention. The Multi-Variety Arrangement for Autumn is the embodiment of this traditional feeling of the Japanese people toward the autumn grasses.

From a technical point of view, great skill is required to create a successful work because the branch material that makes up the structure of a typical floral composition is not used.

A basic principle of the *Yoshiki-hon-I* (Traditional Method) is to combine plants that grow in the same environment during the same season. However, while each plant differs in color and shape, there is something like a common spirit that transcends the different appearances, shapes, and colors; and grass flowers growing in the field in autumn are no exception. Thus, while there are considerable technical difficulties, the combination of these same autumnal grasses in this multi-variety arrangement will, of its own accord, produce an overall sense of harmony.

To begin the arrangement, first position *patrinia* as the *Shu-shi* (Subject), the *Fuku-shi* (Secondary), and the *Chukan-shi* (Fillers) in the *Chokuritsu-kei* (Upright Style), paying due respect to the natural growth patterns of the plant. Next, add three stems of *eulalia* in varied lengths to the *Shu-shi*. Be sure to fix the positions of the *Shu-shi*, the *Fuku-shi*, and the *Chukan-shi* with *patrinia* first, and then add the *eulalia*. If the *eulalia* were arranged first, it would be very difficult to establish a unified, coherent appearance. The tall stems of *eulalia* arranged after the *Shu-shi* *patrinia* becomes the true *Shu-shi* and the *Chukan-shi* of the composition; the *Fuku-shi* *patrinia* remains as is, while two other stems of *patrinia* take the role of the *Chukan-shi*. This is the foremost point of the Multi-Variety Arrangement for Autumn.



Eulalia, patrinia, gentian, burnet, club moss
Chokuritsu-kei

Here, the patrinia is arranged in the standard length for the *Shu-shi*, and one stem of eulalia is placed taller than the patrinia. Placing the eulalia in this way with due respect for the natural growth patterns allows for the beautiful display of both its flowers and arching leaves.

As the *Chukan-shi*, burnet is added to the *Shu-shi* group of eulalia and patrinia; it is also placed next to the *Fuku-shi* patrinia. Since burnet has fine stems with small offshoots that branch out characteristically in all directions, it is placed lower than the patrinia; if it is placed tall, it would give an extremely diffuse, scattered impression.

Gentian is arranged, one as the *Chukan-shi*, and two as the *Kyaku-shi* and its *Chukan-shi*. A third burnet accompanies the *Kyaku-shi*.

Although this is a Multi-Variety Arrangement, if eulalia and patrinia are also placed in the *Kyaku-shi* side, the work as a whole would appear repetitive and monotonous. Thus, in order to create a pleasing variation in the composition, only gentian and burnet are used on the *Kyaku-shi* side. Here, burnet plays an important role to connect between the *Shu-shi* and *Kyaku-shi* sides; without it on the *Kyaku-shi* side, both sides would appear unrelated and the whole work would lack coherence.

Because all the autumn grasses have fine stems and grow upright, take special care to avoid an unattractive, bare appearance at the base area of the arrangement. To give substance to this area, add extra leaves of eulalia at the base of the eulalia used as the *Shu-shi* and the *Chukan-shi*. Among these extra leaves, long ones may rise up, arch forward or extend toward the *Fuku-shi* patrinia, and others may flow out toward the front of the arrangement or toward the *Kyaku-shi*, adding a characteristic autumnal ambience to the work.

Since there is no branch material to conceal the base, that area must look neat and uncluttered. A tight, cramped appearance will not produce a natural impression, nor will it capture the mood of an actual landscape. On the other hand, if the base is too loose, the whole form will look scattered and disorganized. Adding various leaves to give the base a pleasing appearance is another aspect of the Multi-Variety Arrangement for Autumn that requires considerable inventiveness.

In this section, two examples of the Multi-Variety Arrangement for Autumn are shown; one uses club moss as the groundcover, and the other uses mountain fern. It is important to place mountain fern low, even though the arrangement is composed in the *Kin-kei*, in order to emphasize the appearance of autumn grasses.



Side view with eulalia and patrinia only. This is not the side view of either of the two examples.



Eulalia, patrinia, gentian, burnet, mountain fern
Chokuritsu-kei

60th ANNIVERSARY

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

On April 5th, Ohara Ikebana School of Northern California Chapter celebrated its 60th Anniversary at the Hyatt Regency San Francisco Airport. 5th Headmaster Hiroki Ohara joined the celebration and demonstrated five exquisite arrangements. His demonstration was a great success. The chapter is very honored with his participation, as it has been 41 years since the late 4th Headmaster Natsuki Ohara joined the Chapter's 20th Anniversary in 1984.



At the banquet, Headmaster Hiroki Ohara presented both Mrs. Fujimoto and Mrs. Maruyama a Certificate of Appreciation from the Ohara Headquarters. During the banquet, there was also a surprise birthday cake celebrating Mrs. Fujimoto's 99th birthday. The Northern California Chapter was established under Headmaster Houn Ohara's guidance in 1964. Mrs. Fujimoto is a founding member, has been President for 30 years and is presently an active Advisor of the Chapter.

Photos by Vanessa Wei, Northern California Chapter

LET'S GET DIGGING

JAPANESE ANEMONE

WRITTEN BY CAROL LEGROS

In this issue of *Let's Get Digging*, we are going to feature the beautiful perennial known as Japanese Anemone, or Windflower, a plant with tall spikes of delicate flowers that seem to float about the foliage on stalks between 3 feet and 4 feet tall.



This beautiful late summer plant comes in a variety of colors including white, blush pink, fuchsia pink or lavender, and the petal count varies depending on the variety. It is hardy from zone 4 to 8, and in my case (zone 4), the flowers bud in early to mid-August, and provide a beautiful display until at least mid-September.



The anemone prefers moist soil with good drainage, and handles full sun well but will enjoy part shade particularly in very hot sunny afternoons. If it likes where it resides in your garden, then it will easily multiply by spreading underground and before you know it, you will have an abundance of rhizomes.



Mine has started to creep/spread to the edge of the bed where it meets the grass. Consider planting this in a garden bed that has good borders, otherwise you may find it in your lawn. If you happen to be graced with wildlife in your area, such as deer or rabbit, you'll be happy to know that the deer and rabbit do not like this plant in their diet so you won't find them munching on it. In terms of maintenance, you only need to dead-head the spent blooms to encourage newer buds to bloom. Overwintering requires no special care, but if you are in a winter climate consider adding mulch to the base for extra protection. Try planting these beauties – you will enjoy seeing them dance and sway in a warm autumn breeze.



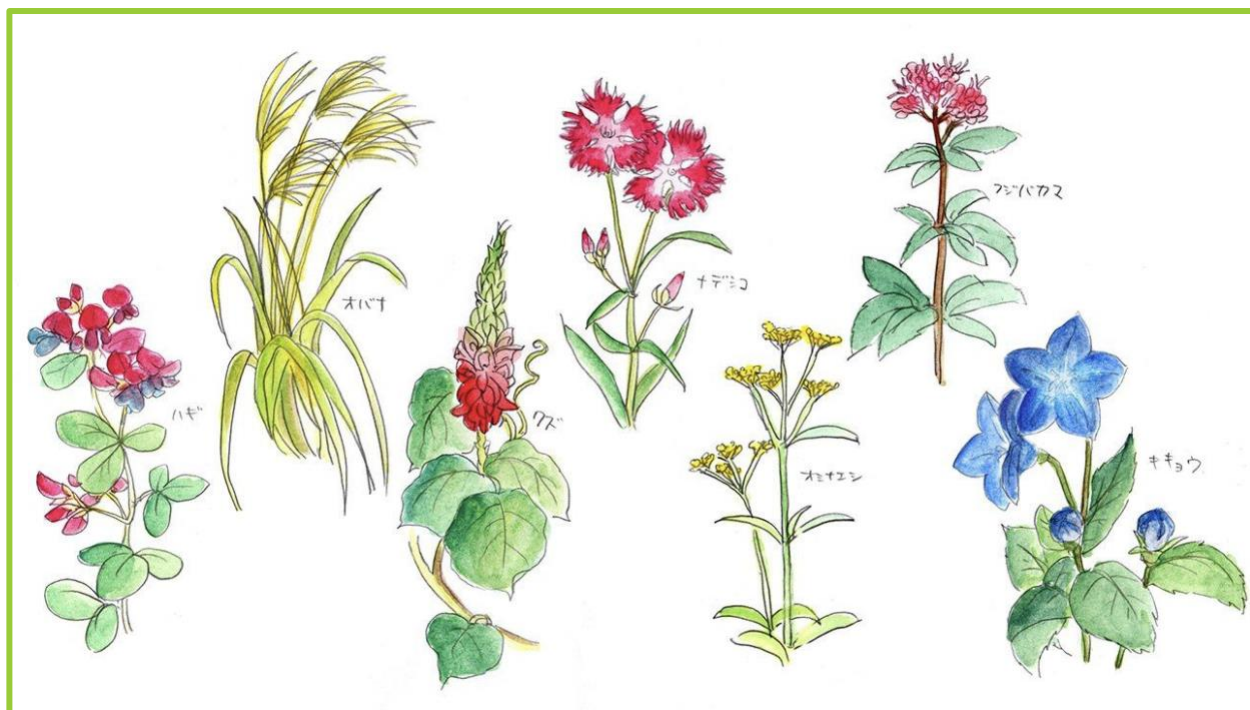
In September on the Japanese Floral Calendar we have the Seven Grasses of Autumn, also known as the *Aki no Nanakusa* 秋の七草.

Our NAOTA conference in Portland just completed and we were able to explore a variety of grasses by utilizing them in different ways. This timely newsletter now allows us to experience and extend the feelings that grasses give to us. Grasses impart a sense of line, airiness and graceful movement. These feelings portray the wind blowing and the romanticism of an autumn atmosphere. Fall has been my favorite season for as long as I can remember. What is your favorite season? If you answer fall, then perhaps you have a romantic personality also. Of course all the seasons have their own positive traits, but I'll take the cooler days, lovely coloring leaves and the changing light.

The seven flowers/grasses of autumn celebrated since the Nara period include—*hagi* (bush clover), *obana/susuki* (Japanese pampas grass), *kuzu* (kudzu), *nadeshiko* (fringed pink), *ominaeshi* (golden lace), *fujibakama* (thoroughwort), and *kikyō* (balloon flower)—and first appear together in two poems from the *Man'yōshū* by *Yamanoue no Okura*.

Cultural Note: In the poetry, 尾花 *obana*, or tail flower/ear, refers to the flower plumes of *susuki*. This is also the month for *Tsukimi* (moon-viewing), when the *susuki* plumes may stand in to represent ripening rice, linking our arrangements to the harvest moon.

You can see the material's images in the pictures below from the Nippon+1 link in the bibliography. Their botanical and Japanese names are in the table further below.



Aki no Nanakusa (Seven Flowers/Grasses of Autumn)

ENGLISH NAME	BOTANICAL NAME (genus + species)	JAPANESE (kanji)	ROMAJI	GARDEN POTENTIAL
Bush clover	Lespedeza thunbergii	萩	hagi	Cascading habit is nice hanging over a wall
Japanese pampas/silver grass	Miscanthus sinensis	尾花 (ススキ / 薄・芒)	obana / susuki	Beautiful ornamental clumping grass summer thru winter
Kudzu / Japanese arrowroot	Pueraria montana var. lobata (syn. Pueraria lobata)	葛	kuzu	*Invasive and illegal to plant in many US states. Known as “the vine that ate the south”.
Fringed pink	Dianthus superbus	撫子	**nadeshiko	Multiple colors and easy to grow
Golden lace / eastern valerian	Patrinia scabiosifolia	女郎花	ominaeshi	Becoming more popularly available
Thoroughwort / fragrant eupatorium	Eupatorium fortunei (syn. Eupatorium japonicum)	藤袴	fujibakama	Sturdy plant with long lasting blooms good for cutting
Balloon flower / Chinese bellflower	Platycodon grandiflorus	桔梗	kikyō	Easy to grow, may need staking

All seven of these perennials are native to Japan and many grow well here as noted in the chart under garden potential. *The one exception to this being kudzu. I witnessed this menace personally decades ago when on a driving trip in the southeast.

**Cultural Note: In Japan the word *nadeshiko* can also carry another meaning in addition to fringed pink. It can be a metaphor for the ideal Japanese woman. One who is beautiful, kind, graceful and gentle. Grasses are generally nice materials to use in basket arrangements and these autumn flowers are light and airy and work well also in baskets.

The fall is the perfect time to combine a fruited branch, a fall flower and a grass, especially the Japanese pampas. So, we can remember the material combination “recipe” (fruit, flower and grass). Our summer and autumn multi variety traditional landscape arrangements use these materials also. I am not including photos of the materials this time as the links below all include lovely pictures and fine interesting descriptions. The Seattle Japanese Garden link in particular has beautiful photos of five of the above listed materials. It also has more in-depth information on all of them and the two poems mentioned above.

My hope is that you will feel the autumn’s approach with deeper study into the seven flower/grasses of autumn. And that this will bring new motivation to incorporate these beautiful poetic grasses into your ikebana.

Bibliography

- [Nippon+1](#)
- [Seattle Japanese Garden](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CELEBRATING FUJIMOTO SENSEI'S 99 YEARS OF LIFE

Grand Master Fujimoto Sensei's 99th birthday was celebrated at Ikebana International San Francisco Bay Area Chapter's monthly meeting on February 21st. The day's program was titled "Celebrating Fujimoto sensei's 99 years of life". Ohara arrangements and demonstrations started the show and the finale was marked by Fujimoto Sensei's gorgeous Rimpa demonstration. The audience gave her a standing ovation. Her finale was followed by the most memorable birthday celebration blessed by all Ikebana International members, friends and visitors. We have a lot to learn from her artistic genius and marvel at her leadership and energetic mindset.



2026 NAOTA CONFERENCE

The conference next year will be held in Cleveland, Ohio in the month of May. The dates are May 13 to May 17, 2026. The workshop days will be May 14th through May 16th and the Reception will be on May 13, preceding the workshops.

Watch for the Registration email for the Cleveland conference, coming to you via email a couple of months from now, between November 10th and November 17th, 2025.



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