



NORTH AMERICAN OHARA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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DEC
2025

WINTER EDITION

Welcome to the December edition of the newsletter. Winter is in the air and the holiday season is upon us. May this time of year — whatever traditions you celebrate — be filled with warmth, peace, light, and joy. Wishing you and your loved ones a wonderful holiday season and a bright start to the New Year.



Dear NAOTA members,

The winter season is quickly settling in, and here in the Northeast those crisp, chilly days are making their presence known. This time of year—right in the heart of the holidays—is when I love to map out my Ikebana calendar for the year ahead. And what a full and exciting year it's already shaping up to be.

By the way, have you ever spent time with the 24-term *Sekki* calendar? I find it endlessly inspiring. Instead of viewing the year in broad monthly strokes, it breaks time into beautifully observed seasonal moments—each reflecting what nature is doing right *now*.

We are currently in **Fuyu** (Winter), a season that calls us toward simplicity, stillness, and the quiet strength of evergreens. Our materials mirror this spirit: **Matsu** (Pine), **Hiragi** (Holly), **Tsubaki** (Camellia), **Suisen** (Narcissus), and **Take** (Bamboo). Early December is **Taisetsu** (Big Snow). The cold deepens, bears curl into their dens, salmon have completed their upstream journey, and nature settles into silence.

What a beautiful meditation—and a reminder that every shift in the season invites us to notice something new.

And before we know it, spring will be here again. This coming May, our **23rd NAOTA Conference** will take place in **Cleveland, Ohio**, with Headmaster Ohara assisted by Assistant Professor **Akane Suzuki**. A heartfelt thank-you to our Chair **Isa Raganathan**, Co-Chair **Darlene Hritz**, Consultant **Ingrid Luders** and all the local volunteers for their tremendous work in bringing this event to life.

I'm also delighted to share that our **24th NAOTA Conference** has been confirmed for **Victoria, BC, Canada**, chaired by **Lorian Roberts**. More details are on the way, but I must say—springtime in Victoria is renowned for its beauty. I have no doubt the upcoming NAOTA Board, committees, and local team will create a truly memorable experience.

On that note, it is my great pleasure to announce the appointment of **E-Ling Lou** as the next NAOTA President. In the March edition, E-Ling will share her own introduction along with the new board. I have full confidence in her leadership—and as a personal aside, my very first role on the NAOTA Board was serving as Secretary under her guidance.

The new leadership team is:

- **East Coast VP:** Isa Raganathan
- **West Coast VP:** Yoko Tahara
- **Treasurer:** Naomi Goking
- **Secretary:** Carol Legros
- And I will continue as Immediate Past President (non-voting).

I am deeply grateful and hopeful as this new team prepares to take office in March 2026.

Wishing you a peaceful **Fuyu**—take a moment to enjoy the season, touch the evergreens, and embrace the quiet beauty of winter. I look forward to seeing you in the spring.

With gratitude and warm regards,
Russell Bowers

THE TRADITIONAL METHOD

JAPANESE ALDER

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).

Japanese alder is a tall deciduous tree and is used in arrangements from late autumn through winter. After shedding leaves, Japanese alder reveals its unique shape of branches with fruits; the crooked, aged appearance of the branches fits for the *Shakei Moribana* (Landscape Arrangement).

Although Japanese alder is a tall tree, branches with fruits are suitable for depicting a bush in the *Chu-kei* (Middle-View Depiction) rather than depicting a tall tree viewed from a distance. Branches are gathered at their base in the *hito-kabu-zashi* (one clump method) with emphasis on the fruits and last remaining leaves.



Small chrysanthemum is arranged as if it is blooming in colony; with one or two stems as the *Chukan-shi* beside the alder, and two or three stems as the *Kyaku-shi* and its *Chukan-shi*.

NAOTA CONFERENCE 2025



HOSTED BY PORTLAND, OREGON CHAPTER

The Portland Oregon Chapter hosted the 22nd NAOTA conference from September 8th to September 12th at the Portland Marriott located in downtown Portland, Oregon. Professor Yokohigashi conducted 3 full days of workshops for NAOTA conference attendees, assisted by Grandmaster Ingrid Luders, and Interpreter Grace Sekimitsu.

The week started off with a welcome reception on the Monday evening following the conference Registration time. During the cocktail hour, there was a surprise presentation to both Professor Yokohigashi as well as Ingrid Luders by the Portland Rosarians, the Official Greeters and Ambassadors of Goodwill for the City of Portland.



The week was filled with wonderful materials and welcome challenges in the workshops – everything from Traditional Landscapes to Heika in Baskets.





The 22nd NAOTA conference would not be possible without the organization and leadership of Chairperson Carolyn Alter and Co-chair Diane Sayrizi, as well as the hard work by all the conference volunteers. As you all know, it takes an army of volunteers to make a conference successful.

The week finished off with Professor's spectacular demonstration on Friday captivating the audience with 8 beautiful large arrangements including large Bunjin, Basket, small Bunjin, Multivariety Color Scheme Moribana, Hiraku, Jiyu Hyogen, Realistic Landscape Shakei, and Rimpa at the beautiful Portland Japanese Garden Pavilion. Grace Sekimitsu accompanied Professor as Interpreter.



Bunjin

1. *Shore pine*
2. *"Queen Elizabeth" Grandiflora rose*



Basket

1. *Oregon Grape*
2. *Chestnut*
3. *Japanese Joe Pye Weed*
4. *Solomon Seal - Polygonatum 'Striatum' variegated*
5. *Switchgrass*



Bunjin

1. *Quince*
2. *Alocasia*
3. *Orchid phalenopsis*



Moribana Color Scheme Multivariety Upright Style

1. *Leucadendron*
2. *Marigold*
3. *Freesia*
4. *Autumn Sedum*
5. *Barberry*



Hiraku

1. *Areca Palm*
2. *Baby's Breath*
3. *Asiatic Pink Lily*
4. *Amaranthus*



Jiyu Hyogen

1. *Miscanthus 'Dixieland'*
2. *Fatsia japonica*
3. *Hosta variegated 'Paul's Glory'*
4. *Euonymus*



Realistic Landscape Shakei

Mountain side

1. Azalea 'Hino Crimson'
2. Lady Fern
3. Snow berry

Water side

1. Hosta 'Blue Angel'
2. Hydrangea 'Nigra'
3. Spirea thunbergii
4. Iris Siberian 'Swans in Flight'
5. Green iris seed pods Species X 'Alabama Blue Fin'
6. Duckweed



Rimpa

Autumn

1. Cockscomb Red & Yellow
2. Japanese Maple
3. Japanese Pampas Plumes

Summer

1. Hydrangea paniculata 'Limelight'
2. Mixed color mophead hydrangeas



From left:
Professor Yokohigashi
Grace Sekimitsu

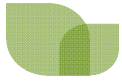


From left:
Carolyn Alter, Grace Sekimitsu,
Professor Yokohigashi, Ingrid Luders

After the demonstration, guests had time to view the arrangements up close before heading back to the hotel for the Gala dinner, our last event at the conference.

For those who would like to see more photos of the conference, visit the NAOTA website [www.ikebana-naota.org] where many of the photos from Professor's demonstration as well as the 3 days of workshops can be found. Follow the links on the site for the Gallery of photos.

RE-EXAMINING THE YOSHIKI-HON-I (the Traditional Method)



TRADITION RENEWED FOR TODAY

WRITTEN BY JOE ROTELLA

In recent issues of SOKA, Headquarters has shared information about the reexamination and renewal of the traditional landscape arrangements to use materials that are more accessible. Since many NAOTA members do not receive SOKA or cannot read Japanese, I wanted to summarize the key points that have been communicated so far. This summary reflects my understanding of what has been published in SOKA and is offered to help instructors stay aware of the School's current direction. – Joe Rotella

Beginning in February 2025, **Soka** launched a multi-part series titled “**Re-examining the Present Form of Yoshiki-hon-i [Principal Styles]**”, which continued through the autumn issues (**Soka** Nos. 891–899). The early installments introduced the background and purpose of the 130th-Anniversary re-examination, while later articles analyzed representative examples and teaching approaches.

One feature of this series, published in *Soka* No. 897 (Aug 2025, pp. 8–21), presented arrangements that explored new ways to interpret traditional works. These examples used substitute materials such as **Aotsuge** (Green boxwood, 青柘植), **Mushikari** (*Spiraea thunbergii*, 虫狩), **Kinyo Kodemari** (*Spiraea* with golden leaves, 金葉コデマリ), and **Yamabuki** (*Kerria japonica*, 山吹) to show how seasonal feeling and spatial depth can be expressed even when original materials are unavailable. This approach demonstrates that the spirit of **Yoshiki-hon-i** depends on natural relationships rather than on specific species.



Figure 1. Far-view landscape (Enkei-sōka), Upright Style (Chokuritsu-gata), featuring Hirado-hiba, Natsuhagi, Aotsuge, Hare-no-ki, and moss. (*Soka* No. 897, Aug 2025, p. 12.)

The Landscape of the Heart (Kokoro ni aru Genfukei)

Autumn issues extend the discussion to the concept of **The Landscape of the Heart (Kokoro ni aru Genfukei)**. Articles suggest that landscape expression arises from both external scenery and the arranger's inner perception (Soka No. 899, Oct 2025, p. 9). Essays by the Research Institute and commentary by Headmaster Ohara connect this idea to the founder's original aim of harmonizing nature and emotion in Ikebana.

Continuity and Renewal

Taken together, the 2025 Soka series shows a balanced effort to preserve the essence of Ohara traditional landscape arrangements while adapting methods to current conditions. The initiative is presented not as reform but as renewal – a return to foundational principles that allow the art to remain alive and responsive (Soka No. 898, Sept 2025, p. 4).

With appreciation to Naito-san, Marketing Division, Ohara School of Ikebana, for reviewing this article in consultation with the Soka Editorial Team. Photograph used with permission from the Ohara School of Ikebana. For more information about Soka, please contact Ohara School Headquarters.

LET'S GET DIGGING

CHRISTMAS HOLLY

WRITTEN BY CAROL LEGROS

In this issue of *Let's Get Digging*, we are going to feature the beautiful red berry bearing shrub named *Ilex Aquifolium*, commonly referred to as Christmas Holly or English Holly, or *Ilex verticillate* commonly referred to as Winterberry.

These shrubs are low maintenance, and typically grow in North America in full sun to part shade, in hardiness zone 5 through 9. Although they do very well in full sun, they are equally comfortable in part shade. Once the shrub is established, it is fairly drought tolerant, but it needs moist well drained soil.

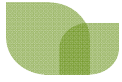


While the most well-known or popular holly bear red berries, there are a few other varieties that bear black berries (*Ilex Glabra*), or gold-orange berries (*Ilex verticillate* Winter Gold). These varieties, like most holly, require both a Male plant and a Female plant within close proximity in order to have berries.

There is also a **self-fertile** holly, *Ilex aquifolium Alaska*, that does not require a male shrub in order to bear fruit. This is the one that I have and I can attest to the fact that it produces an abundance of berries on its own. Berries ripen in the autumn and usually persist through winter providing a beautiful addition to your winter garden and food for wild life throughout the winter months when food is scarce. Whichever variety you might like to plant, you won't be disappointed at the display. But, be aware that holly berries can be somewhat toxic to humans and pets, causing diarrhea or vomiting if sufficient quantity is consumed.

With the right location in your yard, these lovely shrubs can be a center piece, or you can "go big" and plant a row of them to make a beautiful thick hedge giving you a natural barrier for privacy. Which one are you going to plant?

CAROLYN'S COLUMN

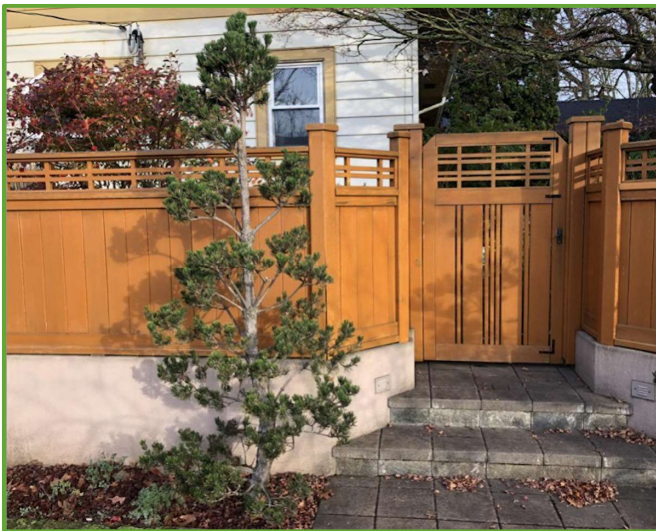


PINE 松 MATSU

WRITTEN BY CAROLYN ALTER

For the winter season on the Japanese Floral Calendar we have the three friends of winter - pine, *matsu*, along with bamboo and plum for the month of January. Pine as an evergreen symbolizes strength and longevity, endurance against adversity, perseverance, and also happiness. It is a high status, noble material. It carries much dignity and grace.

Pine branches are a place where the *toshigami*, or New Year's gods can rest. This is why you will see the *kadomatsu*, or gate pine decoration, placed at entrances of homes and businesses to bring the god's blessing to that location. At right is the Portland Japanese Garden's kadomatsu in December 2023. And below is a Japanese black pine on one side of my gate.



Winter is the best time to utilize pine in your arrangements to symbolize the New Year, however as an evergreen it may be used any time of the year.

All the various pines have different character and qualities that might make them more appropriate for a specific style of arrangement.

In our traditional landscape style it is used in the summer to portray the atmosphere of a far view of the windswept pines along the sea coast. In Japan, these are commonly black

pinus, *Pinus thunbergii*. See the book listed below in the bibliography, The Traditional Ikebana of the Ohara School pages 90-92 for a view of a coastal ikebana.

Since pines grow from sea level up to alpine levels they may also be used to represent a middle view mountain scene as on pages 58-60 or a near view such as in the fallen maple leaf arrangement on pages 173-4 to impart the sense of very late fall. For these type arrangements, red pine, *P. densiflora* and white pine, *P. parviflora* are more appropriate to use. The longer needled yellow pines are better in more contemporary Hana Isho forms. And an old gnarled branch of black pine covered in moss is best in a heika or bunjin.

So how do we tell these multiple types of pine apart? There are many possibilities including the bark, the cones or the tree's shape, etc. A quick method of pine identification though is by examining the needles. Pine's needles come in bundles attached together by a fascicle. There is a thin brown papery sheath holding the needles in the fascicle. If you look closely at each bundle you will notice either two, three or five needles. If you see more than five needles in a bundle, except for some rare exceptions, then you know you are NOT looking at a branch of pine. In that case you may have a true cedar or a larch branch.



Black and red pines both have two needles per bundle, yellow pines (such as ponderosa) will have three needles and white pines will have five needles along with a small white stripe on one or more of the needles. White pines also have lighter blue green needles and are softer to touch while the black have thicker, darker green needles and a stiffer, more rigid character Red pines have lighter green and softer needles.

This needle bundling helps one distinguish them from other evergreens such as spruces and firs, in which individual needles come directly off the stems. I have heard many people call any evergreen a pine. We need to get away from this and learn to identify what materials we are working with. In the photo above, the needles on the left are from a white pine and on the right, from a black pine.

Cultural note: Pine is often used at Japanese weddings as the two needles in the bundle represent marital integrity.

Cultural Note: The methods we use to groom pine branches prior to arranging such as rubbing the stem with a towel to remove loose bits of bark or dirt and also removing

needles that are brown or excessive between the stem junctions are similar to techniques that Japanese gardeners employ in caring for their pine trees.

The number of pines a Japanese garden has says a lot about the power and wealth of its owners. Since pines require a specific type of needling and pruning in the winter, and candling (partially removing the new growth to shape them) in the late spring, many gardeners are needed to care for them. I took this photo on the right when touring the grounds surrounding the Imperial Palace in central Tokyo. The vast amount of pine was impressive and the dichotomy astounding when surrounded by the steel and glass borrowed scenery of skyscrapers.



After arranging with pine you may notice your hands being sticky and dirty from the resin or pine pitch. I liked to climb trees as a kid and my mother would douse my hands with rubbing alcohol to get the “pitch” off. There are easier methods however. Just rub any oil (olive, canola, butter, camellia, etc) into your hands well and wash with soap and warm water and it will come right off. Or easiest of all, wear disposable gloves while working with pine.

Pines are currently available in the markets as the holidays approach. So go pick some up or cut from your yard if you are lucky to have this magnificent material, look at the needles closely and try to identify the general type you have and then choose an arrangement to show them off well. And while you are at it please enjoy the smell of the pinene. Pinene is a terpene, the aromatic chemicals that interact with our brain receptors which help make us feel calm and focused as you might notice during a walk in the woods. A mini forest bathing session can be had while arranging with pines.

When NAOTA President, Russell Bowers, invited me to write a column on containers four years ago I thought it would be interesting and that I would learn some things. So I said sure. Then after discussing Ohara’s basic containers in 2022 and our basic Bunjin containers in 2023, I thought I was finished. Then your newsletter editor, Carol Legros, asked for more on tools and preservation techniques. And another year went by. Then I thought I’d like to cover some of the Japanese Floral Calendar this year. Now here we are in December.

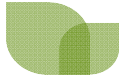
I want to thank all of you for reading my columns over the last four years. As a writer, you want people to read what you write and you hope to make some contribution to their

appreciation of your topic. I really appreciated hearing comments from some of you over the years. It let me know that I was indeed making an impact.

As we approach the end of another very busy year and my thoughts turn to goals for 2026, I feel it is time to make this my last column. I am not out of topics, but I want to have more time to focus on my own ikebana path. So many flowers, so little time. It's been an honor for me. Thank you for reading.

Bibliography

- *The Traditional Ikebana of the Ohara School* by Houn Ohara ©2019 pages 58-60, 90-92, 173-4, 182-4.
- <https://www.seattlejapanesegarden.org/blog/2019/3/15/pine-trees-part-one-beloved-conifers>
- <https://www.seattlejapanesegarden.org/blog/2019/3/25/pine-trees-part-two-matsu-the-pines-of-japan>



VIDEO EDUCATION

Years ago, the founder of NAOTA suggested we start a fund called the Donation Fund to finance activities for members, including those who were not able to attend our conferences.

The pandemic changed our lives in many ways, including the inability to gather for conferences or workshops. During this time, the Board arranged for Headmaster and a professor from the Council of Ohara Professors to prepare a three-arrangement workshop specifically for NAOTA members and paid for this educational event with the donation fund. The special workshop became available to all NAOTA members and was a huge success. The board realized that this model has great appeal to our members, and decided that the Donation Fund can be used to pay for future virtual workshops and similar educational events. Its name was changed to the Education Fund.

What do workshops do? They educate our teachers and students, so that they can improve their skills, share that knowledge with others and spread the joy of Ohara Ikebana around the world.

Anyone who would like to support events that educate and inspire us is welcome to make a donation to the Education Fund. If you would like to recognize a teacher or friend within NAOTA, what better way than to make a donation in their name. Any and all support will be greatly appreciated.

To those of you who have already donated over the years, a sincere Thank You.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



PATRICIA O'REILLY SERVICE AWARD

The Ikebana Iwaya Fund awarded the inaugural 2025 Patricia O'Reilly Service Award of \$500 to Russell Bowers for his many years of service in promoting, supporting and investing in Ikebana. This was accomplished via his multiple NAOTA Board positions over the last 10 years, his leadership of the Boston Study Group and his involvement in introducing ikebana throughout the community of Boston and other surrounding areas.



MIAMI VALLEY CHAPTER WORKSHOP

On August 11, the Miami Valley Chapter hosted a workshop in Dayton for 20 participants featuring two seasonal lessons taught by Associate Professor Kiyochi Kamo. The first lesson focused on *Narabu-katachi* (One-Row Form) using snapdragon, carnation, sword fern, and statice. After a box lunch, the second lesson explored *Shakei Moribana Shizen-hon-i* using red maple, Gentiana, and Ying Yang daisies. Sensei provided detailed demonstrations and technical guidance throughout the day. Participants appreciated the opportunity to refine their understanding of both structural clarity and natural expression within the Ohara School tradition.





CENTRAL OHIO SHIBUI STUDY GROUP SUMMER DEMONSTRATION



The Central Ohio Shibui Study Group welcomed Associate Professor Kiyochi Kamo on August 13th for a special summer visit to Columbus, Ohio. Earlier in the week he taught a workshop for 23 participants, then on August 13 presented a public demonstration at the Yokoso Center, attended by 112 guests including representatives from local cultural organizations. Sensei created six arrangements, with the highlight being a *Shakei Moribana Shizen-hon-i* using lotus and reeds gathered through a rare, supervised collaboration with The Ohio State University's Olentangy River Wetland Research Park.

The evening celebrated the natural spirit of the Ohara School and the growing Ikebana community in Central Ohio.



OTTAWA JAPANESE EMBASSY EXHIBITION

Members of the Ottawa Chapter of Ohara put together an exhibition at the local Japanese Embassy. Beautiful autumn colors abound! Check out the photo gallery on their website at : <https://oharaottawa.com/ohara-exhibition-japanese-embassy-october-4-5-2025/> or a short video of highlights at : <https://youtu.be/uojtCrzzaUw>



SENMON INSTRUCTORS

Calling all Instructors and Teachers! If you haven't already enrolled with Headquarters as a Senmon Instructor, consider doing so. For a once-yearly fee, you will receive access to educational videos from Headquarters, as well as opportunities to attend, for example, an extra workshop at the World Seminar if you are already a registered participant at the World Seminar in Japan. See *additional attachment for Registration Form*.



The NAOTA newsletter has been a labor of love, and the 5 years I've been Editor have truly "flown by". As I wrap up this last issue, I want to say that it's been a privilege to help share our news, celebrate our milestones, and highlight all that makes our organization special.

I want to say Thank You to so many of you that have contributed to this newsletter along the way, helping to shape it into what it has become:

- To Grace for all the brain storming we did together to get this off the ground
- To all of the Board members over the past 5 years for their feedback and contributions
- To the Grand Masters and Sub Grand Masters who shared of themselves with all of us, imparting pearls of Ikebana wisdom along the way
- To the Professors from Japan who kindly agreed to let us get to know them
- To the newsletter content writers, whether regular or occasional contributor

And finally,

- To all of you – the readers – for your feedback, encouragement and support. I've enjoyed the emails and conversations along the way, and am truly thankful for your kindness.

As I step away from the editor role, I'll be "passing the baton" to Fay Charlesworth. Please join me in welcoming and supporting her as she takes on the Editor role. I'll be cheering her on from the sidelines as she takes the newsletter on to even greater heights.



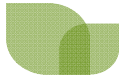
HOW DO WE REACH YOU?

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