

Dorothy Neighbors



Expert Tells Why Japanese 'Have a Way' With Flowers

Men and Women Alike Trained From Childhood in Art of Blossom Arrangement,
Miss Sato Kawaguchi Explains

By DOROTHY NEIGHBORS

Japanese flower arrangement is a matter of artistic interest to Occidental women who appreciate its originality, line and apparent simplicity. The following information comes from Miss Sato Kawaguchi who had charge of the exhibit of Japanese "tray gardens" at the recent City-Wide Flower Show.

"A study of the Ike-bana, the art of flower arrangement as practiced in Japan, opens up a realm of artistic conception whose existence has been practically unknown in other countries," said Miss Kawaguchi. "It is one of the most gentle and most beautiful accomplishments, founded on fidelity to nature, one of the essential requirements of all refined women of Japan."

"It is not considered an effeminate accomplishment. Priests, philosophers, men of rank who have retired from public life have been its most enthusiastic followers. A religious spirit, self denial, gentleness and forgetfulness of cares are some of the virtues said to follow from the habitual practice of the art of flower arrangement."

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"The Japanese do not cull at random," Miss Kawaguchi continued, "but select each spray or branch with an eye to the artistic composition they have in mind. The lines of branch and stem, form and surface of leaves, distribution of buds and blossoms all receive their full share of attention."

"There are many schools but all have maintained the fundamental principles of Man, Heaven, Earth which are outlined in every flower arrangement. Heaven is represented

by the tallest spray, Man midway and the lower lines are Earth. Flowers blooming out of their proper season are with a few exceptions rejected for floral composition.

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"So as not to detract attention from the flowers, vases are mostly bronze and bamboo, as simple and neutral in color as Mother Earth. The flower vases are usually wide mouthed so that the surface of the water may seem to convey the idea of the surface of the earth from which plants spring. All flower arrangements present an idea of actual growth. The plant also remains sweet longer when the oxygen is able to enter through the opening of the vase."

"Hanging vases from an esteemed friend are not to be looked down upon but are honored by raising them. From twisted crude roots or tender twigs, the artistic Japanese fashion a beautiful receptacle for a single flower or vine."

If you are interested in a serious study of Ike-bana, Miss Kawaguchi recommends that you read "Flowers of Japan," by Josiah Conder; "Art of Floral Arrangement," by the same author; "Flowers and Gardens of Japan," by Florence Du Cane, and "Japanese Flower Arrangement," by Mary Averill.