



CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN

Ikebana: Japanese Flower Arrangement

Purpose:

Learn to use an orientation system based on a clock face; practice judging spatial orientation, relative size, and depth non-visually; learn and appreciate a system of flower arranging from Japanese culture; find alternative ways of using remaining sight to appreciate beauty.

Description:

In this activity, participants will learn a system of flower arrangement originating in Japan.

Time needed: 45 minutes

Materials (per person):

1 shallow floral container

Oasis floral foam to fit container

Tub or flat filled with water (may be shared)

Floral tape

3 long-stemmed flowers (suggest 2 irises and 1 spider mum)

1 stem of leather-leaf fern

Procedure:

1. Set up ahead of time: one container, block of oasis cut to fit container, snips, pre-cut floral tape at each spot. Place one flat without holes filled halfway with water between each pair of participants.



CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN

2. Each participant should get three long-stemmed flowers and one foliage leaf (two irises, one spider mum, and one leather-leaf fern).
3. Direct participants to moisten oasis in a flat without holes filled with water. Have participants note difference in weight of wet vs. dry oasis.
4. Place wet oasis into container, pressing down firmly.
5. Use floral tape to secure oasis in container, dividing surface of floral foam into equal quadrants. Place one piece of tape from 12:00 to 6:00 and one from 9:00 to 3:00.
6. Select one long-stemmed flower (iris).
7. Set iris stem alongside the longest dimension of the container. Snip off stem end of iris so that total length is as long as the longest dimension of the container plus about 1 inch.
8. Use an index finger to find the back half of oasis, at the 10:00 position and about 1 inch from where tape crosses in center. Insert iris stem at this point. Rather than having it stand up vertically, tip the top just slightly toward the left side.
9. Select second stem (iris).
10. Measure second stem against longest side of the container. Estimate point at which stem is 2 inches shorter than container is long. Snip stem.
11. Insert second stem into the oasis in the lower left quadrant at the 8:00 position. As you insert it into the oasis, make it slant toward you a bit.
12. Select third stem (spider mum).
13. Cut stem so that it is about half as long as the longest side of the container.
14. Insert into oasis to the lower right quadrant at the 5:00 position; angle it toward 5:00 and a bit towards you so that the flower rests just above the rim of the container.



CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN

15. Gently use your fingers to check that the lowest petals of the spider mum extend over the edge of the container.
16. Pick up the leather-leaf. Using fingers or snips, remove the top third of the stem. Strip lower leaves from this stem and insert it into foam so that it is under the spider mum, cradling it.
17. Remove remaining pieces of the fern in sections and place each section into the oasis so that the ferns form a circle like the rays of the sun around the flowers. The “rays” should hide the foam and extend just past the edge of the container.
18. If you have some vision, you can place the arrangement so that there is a bright surface behind it. This way, the arrangement almost looks like a silhouette and the form can be appreciated that way. Stand back to look at it and make any adjustment to the angles of the flowers to make it the most pleasing to you.
19. The arrangement will last for several days if the oasis is kept evenly moist by pouring water into the container and allowing it to be absorbed.