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# Sunken Garden: Ikebana in the Landscape

St Petersburg, FL #65, USA

What began for St. Petersburg Chapter as an inquisitive venture has now become one of two major and distinctly different exhibitions we have each year. Ikebana in the Landscape, now in its fourth year, has been quite an unfolding enterprise. Sunken Gardens in St. Petersburg, Florida is a city-owned historical landmark open to the public. Its many trails weave under huge canopies of old trees into sun-drenched lawns and through a wondrous variety of well-planned tropical specimens and landscaping. It is well attended by seasonal tourists from around the world as well as being a local institution and a venue for weddings and special events.

This outdoor approach to show and do ikebana was conceived as a good and new way to increase public awareness and appreciation of ikebana. In 2015, Programs Chair and new member from the Washington, D.C. area Aimee Jackson (Sogetsu School) initiated the first outdoor exhibit and has organized it each year since. Jackson, a fine artist, was drawn immediately to the sculptural challenges and scale requirements such a display would dictate as a way of growth and unfolding challenges to our membership.

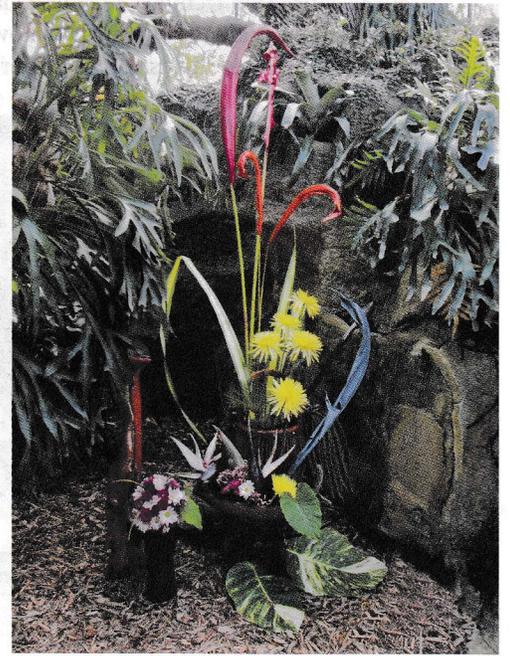
What is unique about doing ikebana here is that designers choose their own sites. We are not assigned or confined to designated spaces. It works two ways: either you have a concept and build it in your selected location or the site inspires and dictates your design. For most, this approach is very fresh, since ikebana is most often arranged into an architectural and mostly predictable and stable setting. In this natural setting however, pre-existing organic backgrounds and structures provide inspiration. Settings are worked from within. Imagination has free reign. The elements rule.

Certain guidelines and restrictions were specified as safeguards to the botanical specimens and safety of the visitors. No nailing or puncturing. Anything driven into the ground as mechanical support was to be approved on a case-by-case basis to prevent damage to irrigation systems or roots. We learned some new and handy other methods of tying and affixing, as well as some basics of construction and engineering.

Other considerations are the durability of our constructions and how the materials we select hold up to the weather: sun, wind, rain or sprinkler systems.

Bamboo harvesting, cutting, polishing, and splitting are some of the techniques we had the fun of sharing. One group constructed a large 5-x-14-foot bamboo grid onto a courtyard wall to display an exotic arrangement of several *hana tsutsume* (traditional Japanese flower wrapping), large tropical leaves, and branches. Another group used suspended shoji screen frames, vividly painted leaves, silk fabric, flowers, and driftwood. A third built a construction with painted split bamboo. Our abilities with outdoor requirements of structure and scale have improved in both technique and latitude of artistic expression. We have had growing member enthusiasm and participation each year. We work as both as groups and as individuals.

St. Petersburg Chapter and Ikebana International both receive great PR through the Garden's publicity system and the local media. Teachers of each school present demonstrations in the outdoor Amphitheatre. Ikebana in the Landscape has become a very popular spring attraction for Sunken Gardens. We have gained new membership and presence and the Gardens have enjoyed increased novelty and attendance. Ikebana International has been granted permission to lead a limited number of special tours for the 2019 exhibit.



**Ikebana International**  
Misaki Bldg. 5F, 3-28-9 Kanda Ogawamachi  
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-0052 JAPAN  
ikebana@ikebanaHO.org www.ikebana.org