

Sangetsu North America



Winter Newsletter #28

January 2023

Editor's Message:

Happy New Year! I hope that everyone had a joyous holiday season. We, in the Vancouver area, had unusually cold, snowy weather just before Christmas, but it was truly beautiful!

This edition of our newsletter will focus on our Sangetsu Conference which took place in Tucson Arizona this past October. A total of 26 attendees (including volunteers and council members) enjoyed the workshops, presentations and comradery during the three days. Exams were offered on the fourth day, and we now have two new Instructors and two new Senior Instructors. Congratulations to all!



A special thank you goes out to Reid Sasser, our tireless photographer who took wonderful photos of our arrangements, as well as great posed, and candid shots. He generously gave everyone a thumb drive with all the pictures!

Joan Fairs, Editor

Dues:

As the New Year begins, your Sangetsu dues of \$50.00 (USD) are "due" for 2023. Dues help sustain the balance of the Sangetsu account as well as support our licensing, website and webmaster fees at *Sangetsu.org*. Checks should be made to **Sangetsu North America** and mailed to treasurer **Karey Karam at: 7201 E. Paseo San Andres, Tucson Arizona 85710.**

Your dues entitle you to:

- discounts on vase purchases
- the opportunity to use our promotional materials and logo,
- conference discounts
- be able to conduct classes as a certified instructor of the Sangetsu School of Ikebana.

Should you wish to purchase Sangetsu business cards contact our webmaster (Angelica Hesse) at: angelica@brandyourlight.com

As an instructor, you are encouraged to forward pictures of your arrangements to the first page of the *Sangetsu.org* site. The city where your classes are held are featured on the site and public inquiries from the web are forwarded to the appropriate instructor by Councilmember/Master Instructor Helena Arouca.

Thank you for keeping your dues up to date and for being a part of Sangetsu North America. You help us all with every class you teach and every student you inspire.

50th Anniversary Sangetsu Conference, October 21-23, 2022

2022 marked the 50th year since the founding of the Sangetsu School of Ikebana, and so it was propitious that we were able to hold our long-awaited Conference in October of the year. The Tucson Johrei Center gave us the use of their beautiful space for the three-day event. The five of us on the Council met there several days beforehand to prepare. We drove to a wholesale florist near Phoenix to select and order materials. We counted, selected and washed vases, hauled and set up pedestals, work tables and chairs, filled buckets and organized the space—thankfully with the ready help of several local volunteers. On Thursday we received and prepped all our flowers and branches and finalized our plans. Most participants were coming from across the country, but all had arrived smoothly by that evening.

Although the last two conferences had been focused on Instructors and Instructor candidates, this year we had opened the doors to people at all levels of experience in Sangetsu. Besides current Instructors and candidates, we had advanced and intermediate students, as well as “rusty” students and complete beginners. We planned to end the conference with an Anniversary Exhibition on Sunday evening, open to the public. We also had a wonderful store, set up by Treasurer Karey Karam, with vases, kenzan and other supplies for the participants. Helena Arouca brought a selection of her beautiful handmade vases for sale, and we even had custom aprons produced for the occasion. Truly we wanted to share the heart of Sangetsu with as many people as possible.



Day One

Friday morning all gathered at the Center for the opening ceremony, starting with a wonderful *Taiko* performance—traditional Japanese drumming—by a member of a local performance group, an opening prayer and greeting

by Rev. Gerry Nangle, and a welcome by our local Council



Member, Terry Quinn. Then we started the day's program with a talk by Patricia Dickson on the concept of “*Shin Zen Bi*—Truth, Virtue and Beauty.” She then taught a class on *Shoka*, using

aspidistra leaves and added flowers. After lunch, Joan Fairs showed a premade arrangement of a traditional basket arrangement, and explained some of the guidelines in making it. Then she taught a class on *Nageire* and the use of *komi*.



Later, I demonstrated and taught one of the Rhythmical Lines—Plane and Mass—and, after we all cleaned up, the first day came to a close. We were pleased to see how well even the beginning students did, and this was to continue throughout the conference.



Day Two

Saturday morning I gave a talk--“Transformation Through Prototypes” --on the power of flower arrangements to affect the world around them. I showed how a basic *Moribana* arrangement can become a miniature landscape—a prototype of paradise—and their own arrangements reflected this. After lunch, Helena Arouca spoke on “Cultural Influence in Sangetsu.”

She then taught two more Rhythmical Lines—Lively Motion and Parallel Lines—using the bright colors so loved in her native Brazil. Joan ended the day with a class

on Technique of Omission for the more advanced participants.



After cleanup we gathered for a celebratory Anniversary Dinner, crowned by a special performance by a gifted local *shakuhachi* player.

Day 3

On Sunday, we gathered for our last day. Patricia spoke on “*Korinka: The Essence of Sangetsu*,” and demonstrated using an antique basket—a family heirloom of the late Michiko Ajiki, specially lent for the occasion.



Helena demonstrated Horizontal style *Moribana* for the newer students, and all made their final arrangements.

That afternoon, while the next day’s examinees practiced elsewhere, students watched Terry put together a beautiful, tall *Taisaku* arrangement for the Exhibition.

Then Patricia took the lead as we set up the exhibit. We had been selecting different people’s arrangements for display throughout the course of the conference and those, along with the morning’s *Korinka* arrangements, made up a truly wonderful exhibit—displayed beautifully on white pedestals throughout the Center’s large altar room.

Although we had done very little to advertise the event, we had at least fifty guests come to enjoy the Exhibition. A sheet cake had been ordered for the reception—and,



after correcting the inevitable misspelling of “Sangetsu” with a little knife work—it was served to all comers, as they lingered long in their enjoyment of the beautiful arrangements. I had stepped outside just before we opened the doors, and—to my delight-- a few rare moments of rain sprinkled the

garden to bless our 50th Year Exhibition—truly an auspicious event, at the culmination of a wonderful Conference.



Our grateful thanks to Reverend Nangle and the members of the Tucson Center for granting us the use of their beautiful space, and for the invaluable assistance rendered by those who volunteered their help in so many ways.

Lorna McMurray, Sangetsu Council

Sangetsu Examinations Tucson Conference- 2022

It is hard to describe the excitement I felt planning the testing of four candidates at the 2022 Sangetsu Conference. It was a privilege.

Putting together these exams took a good amount of time. It was most important for us to come up with the right questions for the candidates.

Before finalizing the exam, with fellow master instructors Terry and Joan, we went over it multiple



times to try to stay fair, and to include what was most important to highlight the candidate's knowledge.

After the preparations for the written test came the preparation for the practical part! Preparations included a lot of discussion about the test materials.

Getting all the candidates ready was very exciting. We had the students repeat making many of the arrangements over and over again in order to master them.

Once the test day finally arrived, it was a mix of nervousness and excitement for all! After all candidates were finished with the arrangements, Joan and I entered the room and I could feel the rings of light (energy of flowers in the room). I am so happy to report that all candidates passed! The best part was to deliver the good news to all, bringing them much deserved relief!



Examinees and examiners: Silvia dos Santos, Helena Arouca, Marcello dos Santos, Mary Jane Sasser, Mitsue Johnson, Joan Fairs

We hope to have several more candidates for our next conference in Vancouver in 2024! Thank you for allowing me to be a part of this pivotal process.

Helena Arouca, Master Instructor

Testimonials:

Although all participants were asked to provide some feedback as testimonials about the conference, only a few submitted their comments. Mary Jane Sasser from Maryland volunteered to send out a survey, and tabulate

the results. Therefore, several of the comments from the survey are included anonymously. Also, please be assured that the council has reviewed all the responses carefully, and are using the information to improve on our next conference.

Joan Fairs, Master Instructor

"A wonderful opportunity to learn how to create multiple types of arrangements from masters of this art form. The large number of practice arrangements really solidified what I learned, plus I received one-on-one critiques and guidance from the experts! I left feeling confident to start making my own arrangements."

Cheryl Toth

"The long awaited conference most definitely did not disappoint. Having one of my students attend was also very joyful for me. Pat Dickson's words and talk left me so fulfilled especially what was said about "just being Sangetsu". It becomes who we are, what we do, and why we keep doing it until we can't do it anymore! Kudos to the Council for all you do and did to make such a successful event. Plenty of others who made sure our needs were taken care of as well. Wonderful group of Sangetsu practitioners to experience this special time for sure!"

Natalie Montecalvo

"The thing I liked best about the conference was getting information from all the teachers from all over our beautiful country. I loved learning the different styles and viewpoints from the different teachers. I also liked meeting everyone and feeling like a family of Sangetsu-ers! Take care until we meet again!"

Barbara Schaffer

"It was a great conference. I look forward to more!"

Mary DiLibero

"Our October 2022 Sangetsu North American Conference was a wonder and delight for me. I am so grateful to our leadership for persevering, planning, and executing a wonderful conference.

This experience surprised me, challenged me and finally pushed me to the next level on my ikebana journey.

First the program was ambitious, rich and well executed. I was surprised by the schedule because I doubted my endurance and was afraid of what fatigue would do to my arrangements. The wisdom of leadership soon became apparent. The schedule contained strategic breaks that ensured that there was time to recharge between sessions. Each session had its own special sauce/flavor; those flavors built the conference. Each teacher's different style, materials and pet peeves made for lively sessions and different responses from the attendees. There were universal discussions of lines but also the history of our school and Japan were organically interwoven in the lectures. I know I will use much of what I learned in the classes I will be teaching

The depth and variety of criticism that I received challenged me. Coming into the conference I thought that I would be lucky if one of the teacher's had time to critique my arrangements. During the actual conference I enjoyed having one, occasionally two and once three critiques of the same arrangement. At first it was confusing but after the first session I realized that the variety of feedback pushed me to really look at the arrangement again and refine it in different ways.

Finally, this conference was planned and executed with an attention to detail that ensured that each of us had the opportunity to dive deeply into our ikebana practice and move forward. The conference concluded with the exam, for me. I found the exam itself to be exactly what I expected. Helena Arouca and Joan Fairs were clear, encouraging and open to questions right up until the last minute. After the exam they walked me through their conclusions, gave me feedback and shared the final results with me face to face. Such a challenging but affirmative and encouraging process. Now today the wind is blowing and the skies are grey and I could do with a little lift. No worries, I will just double click on my Sangetsu Conference 10/22 Tucson picture folder and let the images remind me of the flowers, that amazing sunset and the joy we shared together. “

Fondly, Mary Jane Sasser

I experienced the spirit of Meishu sama and Rev Ajiki; strong and vibrant throughout the conference. I enjoyed meeting like hearted spirits and made a new friendship.

Overall I learned the art of ikebana is both technical and a creative practice that brings joy to both the creator and the viewer. I look forward to using my newly acquired skills to bring joy and beauty to my home and others in my community.

Outstanding effort made by Sangetsu Council and members of the Johrei Fellowship who assisted in the success.

Long range planning was very challenging and I am very grateful that you all kept trying to make this happen until you did make it happen. THANK YOU!

The different styles and suggestions of the teachers were surprising. My takeaway was how much I enjoyed the conference and a reminder of how much I love and miss making flower arrangements. Also that I have a lot more to learn about it!

I was VERY grateful for the food! What a genius gift of planning! I am happy to pay more so that on the long conference learning days I do not need to be concerned, worried or thinking about my next meal. I do not have to get in a car, find/choose a place to eat & park, nor did I have to look at a menu and make all those decisions. It was pure joy to just focus on the flowers. I got to use all that extra brain power on my arrangements. That knocked it out of the park for me.



Alice Blisten(on the right) was in charge of the fabulous food.

Many thanks, Alice!

A New Year and New Beginnings

As many of you know, we held our 2022 conference in Tucson Arizona, where two new *Instructors* were certified: Mitsue Johnson and Silvia dos Santos with two instructors graduated to *Senior Instructor*: Marcelo dos Santos and Mary Jane Sasser. Though COVID limited so much over the past three years, hopefully a sense of normalcy will soon return and we will all get back to the classroom. With that hope, I have compiled a few tips from a previous article I wrote about preparing for a class.

Before Class: Think about the arranging style you would like to present and plan to gather the accompanying green materials and flowers either in your community or from your florist. Glancing through your *Sangetsu* book at the examples and noticing what's happening during nature's cycle are good ways to help you decide the arrangement style.

I'm always thankful that I'd written a lesson plan. Think of it as a script, put every word you want to say to paper. You'll find that just the act of writing will solidify what you say by the time you present. The lesson flows better and you probably won't need your script at all.

On class day set up the class space early. Set up flowers, greens and vases. Do you provide cutting bowls, towels, scissors? Do you prepare a sample arrangement before students arrive, or do you demonstrate in front of them during class?

We have so many wonderful poems in our book and it's good to begin class by reading one. Also, announcements about other flower activities in the community can be mentioned at this time. What about YouTube sites to share? (Rijo Miyamoto has a wonderful one.)

What arrangement you will present, the proper vase and where the arrangement will be displayed, is illustrated in the book, and gets you into the heart of the class. Know your materials, students will often ask about them. Explain the lines and where you have decided to put your flowers. Talk about space, an important element in a Japanese flower arrangement. Give students plenty of time to complete their arrangements but keep the class moving.

As the student arranging time finishes, have everyone clear away cut stems and debris and turn the arrangements so they can be seen by the class. We often walk around the tables to talk about each one. Rather than calling it a critique (some are intimidated by the word critique) I sometimes refer to it as sharing. It's important to find a positive element in each arrangement but also not be timid about pointing out

areas that need work. I think it's respectful to the artist to ask permission before moving pieces of the arrangement to illustrate your point. And lead a clapping moment for each effort before moving on to the next arrangement.



Finally, cleanup is an important closing element to a *Sangetsu* class and it should be emphasized. Try to get a head count for the next class and announce the proper vase if students are bringing vases from home.

Though these are practical suggestions, *Sangetsu* is very much a spiritual practice. Aim for a respectful but a lighthearted class.

Teaching *Sangetsu* has been a privilege and pleasure in my life. You will see, as I did, that the teacher becomes the student.

Terry Quinn, Master instructor

More Pictures From the Conference:



Sangetsu Council members: Joan Fairs, Lorna McMurray, Patricia Dickson, Helena Arouca, Terry Quinn



Helena and Mary



Joan and Louise.



"No seconds!" Lorna



Lorna, Karey and Gretchen



Carol



Terri with raffle fundraiser items



Cheryl and Dina



Small bundles of flowers for sale at the exhibit. Everyone helped make the posies. They got sold out!



Marcelo and Joan

Exhibition





Many thanks to all who participated in making this such a successful conference.

To see a 3 ½ minute video which Helena recorded of our whole exhibition, please see [sangetsu_north_america](#) on Instagram.