



For definitions of terms, how this competition is organized and details on the entry or judging processes, please consult the other relevant competition materials:

- [Floral Arrangement Competition Guide](#)
- [Horticulture Glossary & FAQ](#)
- [Judging Criteria](#)

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF WHEN ENTERING:

1. Is this presented well/properly groomed/clean?
2. Does my container match my materials/theme?
3. How healthy are the materials? (Exception: Ikebana)
4. Are all of the materials I want to use allowed in the division/class?
5. Is all of the information correct on the entry tag?



ADVICE FOR FLORAL ARRANGEMENTS

Competition set-up

Skill Levels

Exhibitors are expected to submit all entries in the correct division/class according to their skill level:

- AMATEUR: for exhibitors who arrange flowers as a hobby or pastime, do not regularly present or promote their work for sale and/or are students of the art.
- PROFESSIONAL: for exhibitors who are actively and regularly exhibiting and selling their product(s) or are employed in the field.
- OPEN: these competitions are open to all California residents aged 16 and older, regardless of skill level.

Size limits

All arrangements are expected to fit within specific size constraints:

- Miniature Arrangements – less than six inches in all dimensions (length x width x height).
- All other arrangements – no larger than 2 inches long by 2 inches wide by four inches tall.

When in doubt, imagine a box of the relevant dimensions. Your arrangement should be able to fit entirely within the box without anything poking out.

Composing your arrangement

Note: floral arrangements may use commercially grown materials.

Find your vision

One of the most common comments we hear our judges make is, "What were they going for here?" To avoid this issue, ask yourself these questions before you create your entry:

- "What is the theme and what does it mean to me?"
- "What do I want viewers to take away from this piece?"
- "How do I bring my vision to life?"



The bent stems of this entry really helped to complete the "triangle" theme

Note: accessories are permitted as part of your overall arrangement, but emphasis should be on the creative use of natural plant materials to represent specific themes rather than the excessive use of props.

Focal points

When someone looks at your arrangement, what is the first thing that they will notice or that you want them to see? If that question is hard to answer, your piece is likely lacking a focal point (a primary area of interest) or a center (the section the rest of the arrangement is built out of/around, especially for items like bouquets that are meant to be viewed from 360°). Focal points can take many forms—a single flower, a structure, a specific area of color, etc.—but are vital to help ground the viewer as they look at your piece.

Although the judges will consider entries from different angles, the expected viewing direction is always given the most weight. Many types of arrangements have an obvious "front" (e.g., wreaths), but don't forget to consider the viewing angle for all types of entries.

Let it breathe

Without a doubt, the most common critique we hear from the judges is either "it's too busy" or "there's too much going on here." More is not always better. **Negative space** (empty areas) allow our eyes to more easily follow existing lines/movement, notice colors and find focal points without getting overwhelmed.



Hide!

Generally speaking, items like floral foam or floral frogs used to stage the flowers in an arrangement should be hidden by the plant material (exception: Ikebana). Judges often mark entries down when staging items are visible.

Mechanical adjustments

Don't be afraid to make changes to the natural materials if it helps to complete your desired vision. Bend stems, trim and/or cut leaves, pluck unwanted petals/flowers... as long as you keep the changes purposeful (and neat and tidy) they might be able to take your arrangement to the next level.

ADVICE FOR IKEBANA

Ikebana Style Guide

These notes are meant to provide a brief explanation of the main styles we are looking to exhibit in our competitions. This information is NOT comprehensive.

Rikka

Rikka is often claimed to best represent the philosophy of the Ikenobo school, attempting to evoke in a small scale the scenery of nature and the harmony of different elements coming together in a landscape.

Formal versions are normally composed around seven (7) or nine (9) main branches. Different materials have different meanings: trees, for example, represent mountains and grass represents water.

Shakei Moribana

The name roughly translates to "arranging flowers to copy a landscape," which summarizes this style well. Often considered the typical format of the Ohara school, these works generally arrange floral materials in wide, shallow containers to evoke a natural landscape with a water feature.

This style may include dead leaves and/or flowers in the water to reflect how these fallen items are incorporated into water features in nature.

Rimpa-Cho

Closely related to Rimpa paintings from the Edo period of Japan. This style aims to evoke similar scenery as the paintings using floral materials. Because they're modeled after another art style, these works don't necessarily aim to give a realistic feeling and may be somewhat two-dimensional in their design.

Shōka

This style uses one to three (1-3) types of flowers to express how plants grow rooted in the earth, with the aim of emphasizing the life of individual plants. Formal versions compose the arrangement around three (3) primary branches called Shin, Soe and Tai (likened to heaven, earth and man).

Hana-Kanade

A newer style of the Ohara school that focuses on inward-facing structures. Principal stems usually intersect in this approach, quite different from the outward-spreading forms more common in other Ikebana styles.

Freestyle

As the name suggests, freestyle Ikebana arrangements are not limited to any specific rules. However, basic tenets of Ikebana still apply; freestyle works should display a keen understanding of nature and intentional use of floral materials.