

“Hanadome”

A New Flower Arrangement Coexisting with Nature

By Yoko KASAI



“Hanadome” is a new style of flower arrangement fusing design technology and Japanese mind that respects everything as it is.

Culture Is Rooted in Its Country’s Features

The beauty of Japan has been nurtured by its nature. Bruno Taut, a German architect, said that a culture must have its roots in the country’s features. Even before the Japanese or Western style of flower arrangement developed, people placed flowers or trees in containers to admire them. Such a practice is still seen even today. Flowers are beautiful, either as a single blossom or in a mass. Both flowers and trees are gifts from nature and they breathe with nature. In spring, plants sprout up and, as seasons roll on, flowers blossom, leaves thrive and then die as autumn deepens and the plants go into winter’s sleep. We do not know how many times we are comforted and given strength by this work of nature.

As time goes on, nature has been destroyed. Due to waves of

modernization, people’s heart has lost its tenderness. In the world of flower arrangement, the inherent blessing of flowers has been forgotten, and it appears that many people think copying European styles, be they French or British, is the best way in the pursuit of beauty.

The flower arrangement activities of our group, Treschic, started in Kyoto more than 20 years ago and have spread to Tokyo and other regions. Up to date, we have continuously made efforts to develop new concepts and techniques, including *hanadome*, based on the concept of coexisting with nature.

Roots of Ikebana

The roots of Japan’s *Ikebana*, the art of flower arrangement, go back many centuries. It is said that originally it came to Japan from the Asian Continent with Buddhism along

with chrysanthemums and peonies offered as altar flowers. Since Japan’s climate is temperate and humid, trees thrived from season to season. Many *waka* poems and essays that go back to that period depict people viewing cherry blossoms or colorful autumn leaves. They also show people engaged in cherry-blossom viewing by placing cherry branches in an earthen pot. It is thought that arranging tree branches and such peonies or chrysanthemums together began during the age of civil wars in the 15th century.

Around the time when the country of Japan was unified by Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582), Christianity was brought to Japan from Europe, along with European culture. Under its influence, *Sado*, or tea ceremony, was established by Sen Rikyu (1522-1591), who was a merchant in the city of Sakai. It has been considered that *Kado*, flower arrangement, was created in Buddhist temples around that time.

Making of pottery used as containers for flowers also developed with the help of naturalized artisans from the Asian Continent. Until then, flowers were just put in containers as an offering at a Buddhist altar, but with the development of the *shoin* style, a traditional Japanese residential architecture, and the introduction of *tokonoma*, or alcoves, flower arrangements became one of the items to be placed in the alcove. To arrange flowers in long containers as well as in flat containers, it was necessary to use a flower-holder, hence *kenzan*, or a frog, came to be used. It is believed that since a straight vertical line represents



Examples of "hanadome" arrangements highlighting both Japanese and Western scenes: Without using flower-holding tools such as kenzan or oasis, the new arrangement style is good for flowers and makes transparent containers fit in well with the scenes.

Buddha standing erect, branches and flowers were added to pay homage to Buddha.

No Flower-Holders in Hanadome Arrangements

Hanadome is a style of flower arrangement not bound by the traditional Japanese-style flower arrangement or by any other old tradition. It is the only modern flower arrangement that is based on the esthetic sensibilities of Japanese people. Almost all schools of flower arrangements, regardless of whether they are Japanese- or Western-style, teach students to make an arrangement by using a flower-holder such as *kenzan* or the so-called "oasis." *Hanadome* is a technique allowing one to hold flowers without using any tool. It can be said that it was born from pursuit of the beauty of nature. By making use of the natural characteristics of plants, one can arrange flowers in any container that holds water, ranging from a very tall vase to a shallow and flat one. This requires one to take advantage of the nature of flowers and containers. Ingenuity involved in them is the design. The characteristics of flowers involve not only their colors. Some flowers have supple, curvy stems, while others have a resolute shape. Containers are also varied: some are

ceramic and others are made of glass. Some are tall while others are large and shallow. They range from a small glass to a large water bottle. Looking at an arrangement in a glass vase wrapped in aluminum foil, it was all right as long as the flowers looked beautiful, or when I see a scene on a television program in which the inside of a glass vase is soiled by the stems, I feel sorry that there is no beauty of design.

To someone who is used to the convenience of using a flower-holder, *hanadome* will look like a magic. Either *kenzan* or oasis permits one to place a flower at a location specified. By following a teacher's instruction, one may make a beautiful arrangement. Learning a design also requires copying, because one can create something new from there. However, copying is not a way to be taught. Designing is something in which one is required to exercise ingenuity.

Hanadome Can Adapt to Changes in Containers, Homes

Designing means grasping traditions and the changing times, and knowing the materials helps us create something new. Culture will disappear unless it carries on old traditions, but at the same time it should respond to changes of the

times. In Japan, old things disappeared after World War II, and the country was modernized, resulting in dramatic changes in the way we live. Wooden houses are replaced by ferroconcrete collective buildings centering on large cities. Old alcoves, which were the places to put flower arrangements, are disappearing from our residences. This may be inevitable in houses in Japan, which has a high population density.

The design of *hanadome* can adapt to any container or to any place. Today, our homes are full of electric appliances and glass furniture. In prewar days, housing, furniture and everything therein were in harmony with nature. For the sake of convenience, we have forgotten the gifts of nature. *Hanadome* is created under the concept of returning to nature and adapting to the modern age.

Hanadome brings peace and liveliness to the surroundings. Although most of the people who design *hanadome* arrangements are women, we receive endorsements from most of their partners without fail. This is probably because the design brings natural healing and energy. All flowers, even if they are cut in stems, are alive. All flowers play their parts in an arrangement without fail.

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