

## DEMONSTRATION OF IKEBANA FLORAL ARRANGEMENTS

### HIROKO URAGA-SENESE AND GERARD SENESE

Written by Ronnie Brancazio



At our Sunday, May 22 Meeting, Members and Guests of LIHS experienced a truly remarkable presentation on the Japanese Art of Ikebana Floral Arrangements.



Hiroko and Gerard are a wife and husband team who present together and complement each other perfectly - she appears in traditional Japanese garb and silently demonstrates her remarkable skill in a reserved and gracious manner, while he (a native Long Islander) speaks about the history, techniques, materials, philosophy and artistry of Ikebana in a warm, open, engaging and often humorous style.

The main impression that I came away with was the extreme "generosity" of their presentation! Hiroko spent about an hour creating ten different Ikebana arrangements, each unique in her choice of container, selection of flowers and other plant materials, and style of arrangement. During this time, Gerard narrated a description of her choices and methods as she worked, while also providing a wealth of fascinating information about such topics as the Zen of flower-arranging, the symbolism of various plants, the training of Ikebana artists, and the formal rules of this style. While speaking, he was always open to questions from the audience, which he answered in a thorough, thoughtful, and knowledgeable manner.

As a further demonstration of their generosity, they donated two of the completed arrangements to the Raffle, and also raffled off the flowers and greenery from each of the remaining arrangements, which were carefully wrapped for presentation to the

fortunate winners. Not surprisingly, many more raffle tickets than usual were purchased, benefitting our Scholarship Fund!

A few of the interesting facts that Gerard shared were the following:

The Zen arts were developed by Samurai as a way to calm themselves and clear their minds. Thus, they are contemplative arts.

Ikebana is a disciplined art form in which nature and humanity are brought together.

In Japan most everyone has a Buddhist shrine in their home, and often a small garden to grow the flowers for the shrine.

All Ikebana arrangements are based on a Scalene Triangle (no two sides are the same length) symbolizing Heaven, Man and Earth, or Sun, Moon and Earth.

After the presentation and Raffle concluded, the main "buzz" in the room was that this was one of the BEST Speaker Presentations EVER! Happily, we also had excellent attendance, so that many fellow gardeners and plant-lovers were able to benefit from the event!

