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Three Symbols Bring Orient To America

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STEP ONE - The leaves of the ordinary canna plant are arranged in classical Japanese fashion. Place a tall leaf first, with its tip directly over the base. The second blade is cut two inches shorter, and placed to the right of the first. The third is cut very short and placed at the left, forming a diagonal line with the second leaf.

STEP TWO - Two more leaves of the canna plant fill in the vertical line, and two short ones are furled and placed to the center. This deliberate composition follows the Japanese design concept of heaven, man, and Earth.

STEP THREE - The foliage arrangement can be used alone, or any seasonal blossoms added. The flowers should follow the three-level form of the original canna design.

You don’t have to be a graduate of the O’hara School in flower arranging in order to enjoy the fresh, unusual, mysterious qualities of the Japanese treatment of flowers. It’s a matter of creating, and it’s a way to awaken from the winter season.

What is it that gives the oriental flower arrangement its charm? And once created, why does it have such lasting quality? Severe line, coupled with informal balance, is the distinguishing feature of this ancient art; and simplicity is a basic concept. The breathless beauty we sometimes experience when we see a mass of color is often forsaken in the oriental arrangement for the design which will express patience, kindness, love, and sympathy.

Symbolism persists everywhere in the Orient, as does flower arranging. It was logical to combine the two. An example is the trinity of Heaven, Man, and Earth present in every work. Heaven is represented by the tallest flower and often takes the central position. Earth seeks the lowest point near the mouth of the vase, and Man occupies the middle level. Heaven and Man face each other, and Earth looks up to both.

There is a new trend in arrangements of this century, and that is the representation of miniature landscapes. The precision and dignity, so obvious in the resulting product, indicates some of the values held by the people of the Orient.

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Oriental Flowers—

So let’s go to the garden and cut a few down! This really isn’t the best approach. Consideration should be given to the placement of the arrangement — the vase to be used, the color of the background, and the general atmosphere of the room. Tall groups should be placed at eye level; low and flat ones, below eye level. Vines may be hung from any height.

Flowers are not the only part of an attractive composition. Branches are frequently used to add background and texture to the bouquet or arrangement.

So you’re now ready to venture out with your scissors. Don’t be overanxious and snip off only buds. Cut the flowers long enough to allow gentle bending of the stems when you work with them. This will give graceful curves to your design.

Now that you have them in the house, choose the vase you wish and give the flowers room to breathe. An Oriental arrangement has a “comfortable” rather than “crushed” feeling. Consider also the spaces between the flowers, and create a background which is attractive. It is best to avoid visible crossing of the branches which causes loops to form.

Remind you of the Orient? And it’s all due to your unique use of your American resources!