



Southeastern US Ohara Chapter

Cherishing, Nurturing Ohara Ikebana

The First 50 Years.... Timeline

- 1895 Ohara School of Ikebana founded by naturalist, ceramic artist, designer Unshin Ohara
- 1959 -1970 Martha Plowden Neese lived in Japan, fascinated by Japanese culture.
Studied ikebana with Headmaster Houn Ohara
Promised Headmaster she would found a chapter in her home
- 1960 - 2015 The Stone Lantern in Highlands, NC opens; owned and operated by Ralph deVille;
store focused on Asian Culture merchandise; source for ikebana supplies
- 1970 Martha Neese returned to Columbia, SC
Traveled VA, FL, NC, TN, KT, AL, GA lecturing, demonstrating
- 1971 Neese invited by Dorothy Merville(Orlando, FL) to hold study groups in spring and fall;
Initial discussions about forming chapter on eastern seaboard - from VA south to FL and
west to TX
- 1972 Organizational meetings in Merville home (Orlando, FL)
16 members
First President: Dorothy Merville
Certified teachers and students solicited
(First teachers: Louise Mobley, Marjorie Clerici, Erma Hayes, Emily Loos,
Martha Neese, Lifetime Advisor)
Chapter objectives composed and adopted:
To exchange cultural ideas;
To study and research the flower arrangements of the Ohara School of Ikebana;
To sponsor demonstrations, lectures, study groups and research of the
Ohara School of Ikebana.
- 1974 August - 36 members
Southeastern US Chapter chartered by Headmaster Houn Ohara
Officer installation in Orlando, FL
Seminar held in DeBary, FL
156 members
- 1974 Demonstration held in Atlanta, GA.

- 1974 Martha Neese built classroom/studio in her Highlands home
- 1974 -2023 Seminars offered twice yearly, sometimes spring, or summer and or autumn. Locations included Florida, Atlanta, GA, AL, NC; since 2009 held only in Highlands ,NC
- 1982 Tenth anniversary meeting and festival in Highlands, NC
- 1992 - 2016 Grand Master Betty Fuller Taylor, student of Grand Master Matsuo Tomita, became resident summer teacher at Stone Lantern
Stone Lantern often hosted welcoming reception before SEO seminars
- 1996 May 27 death of Martha Neese
- 1997 SEO installed, dedicated Japanese garden at Highlands Hudson Library in memory of Martha Neese
Generous contributors reinvigorated SEO; donors granted Life Memberships
- 2009 SEO hosted NAOTA at Clemson University
Dr. Judith Melton and Sibbie Wilson, Co-Chairs
Sensei Professor Akihiro Nishi, accompanied by Ms. Wakako Ohara, aunt of current Headmaster Hiroki Ohara
- 1992 - 2016 Stone Lantern offered lessons; Grand Master Betty Taylor Fuller summer artist in residence; Stone Lantern occasionally hosted welcoming receptions before seminars
- 2015 Death of Ralph deVille
- 2017 Closing of Stone Lantern in Highlands, NC
- 2024 May 1,2,3: 50th Anniversary Celebration in Charlotte, NC ; 32 members attend
Sensei Professor Akihiro Nishi, member of Council of Professors of Ohara School
- 2024 Logo for Southeastern US OHara designed and approved.
- 2024 ,,,,the next 50 years to *Cherish, Nurture Ohara Ikebana*
57 current members
4 living Life members
Diane Harker, Bettye Henderson, Sibbie Wilson, Mary Welford
17 active SEO teachers guiding their 84 students
Twice yearly seminars offered in summer and autumn
SEO logo designed and adopted
Congratulation letter from Headmaster Hiroko Ohara
Website: <http://seohara.org>



