

Lesson for Intermediate and Advanced Learners

Shoka

Work and commentary :
Professor

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【Lesson 50】

Features of Nishuike

Nishuike are arrangements using two kinds of floral materials. These feature beautiful contrasts between the plant used as *shin* and *soe* and a different plant used as *tai*.

The *densho* "Mawariikenomaki" states:

Beginners should use the same floral material for all three *yakueda* branches of *shin*, *soe*, and *tai* (*nejime*), while they should avoid using different floral materials for these *yakueda* branches. An additional floral material should be used as *nejime* when the *mizugiwa* (the part of the roots of the floral materials just above the water surface) appears simplistic and accordingly causes the work as a whole to seem incomplete. *Nejime* is not always necessary. It is best to compose a work using a single kind of floral material.

Nejime is the *tai* typical to *nishuike*. There are five typical occasions on which *nejime* is added to a work:

- When the plant used as *shin* and *soe* has no flowers
Composing a work using a flowerless plant alone may cause the work to appear colorless or feeble. In this case, adding *nejime* will brighten up the work.
- When the plant used as *shin* and *soe* fails to evoke a sense of the season
Each plant blooms only at a certain time of year. When *shin* and *soe* are composed of plants that are not in bloom, a seasonal flower should be added as *nejime* to provide a sense of season.

- When the flower of a plant used as *shin* and *soe* appears unnatural if used as *tai*, due to its *shussho* (intrinsic, specific properties of plants)

Examples include *taremono* (drooping plants) or *nabiki-mono* (swaying plants) such as scotch broom, winter jasmine, or *Spiraea cantoniensis*.

- When the number of branches of a plant suffices for use as *shin* and *soe*, but is inadequate for *tai*.
- When expressive intention demands a different flower for *tai* despite the plant used for *shin* and *soe* branches having its own flowers.

Creators should always bear in mind that *nejime* is an additional flower to complement the flowerless plant used as *shin* and *soe*, for which reason the floral material used as *nejime* should not overpower the *shin* and *soe*. Creators should also note the principle of *kokon enkin*, which is to position *kimono* (woody plants) higher at the rear of the work and *kusamono* (grassy plants) lower in front of the *kimono*. The two plants must not be mixed at the *sashikuchi* (the position of the cut stems of floral materials placed in the vase). If the plant used as *shin* and *soe* is *kusamono*, another plant added as *nejime* must also be *kusamono*; if the *shin* and *soe* are *tsuyomono* (plants having qualities of both *kimono* and *kusamono*), *nejime* must be *tsuyomono* or *kusamono*; and if the *shin* and *soe* are *kimono*, *nejime* can be *kimono*, *tsuyomono* or *kusamono*. I sometimes encounter works using *tsuyomono* as *shin* and *soe* with *kimono* as *nejime*, but this combination is incorrect; creators must be careful when combining the two plants.

February is the month in which many plants begin to bloom. Let us enjoy creating ikebana using various floral materials in the springtime.



* Japanese text and picture: p.24-25