

Taking Ikebana Photographs with Your Phone - by Patti Quinn Hill – Asheville Chapter #74

Download from the app store the owner's manual for your particular phone. Go to Camera in the table of contents to learn how to use your camera. It will make all the difference in your photographs. Go to "Settings" on your phone and turn on "GRID" to show on your camera screen and leave it on permanently. This helps immensely with lining up your photo and making the image straight!

To create a better portrait of your ikebana arrangement it is best to have a blank wall behind your arrangement instead of the arrangement placed somewhere in your home. If you have a 3-fold backdrop (office supply stores carry them) and your arrangement is narrow enough, try to move the backdrop so that the vertical folds are not in the photo. If your arrangement is wider, have a helper hold the backdrop all the way open, or prop it up some way, so that the folds are diminished. Make sure that the bottom of the backdrop is straight and parallel to the table and not angled, otherwise the photo will appear to be crooked. This is another reason why using the "grid" feature is important. Or, have a helper hold the backdrop flat against the back edge of the table, but keep it level to the table or the backdrop seams will be crooked. By opening up the backdrop all the way the background will be one color. If the backdrop is folded and either side is propped open, the light hits each of the three parts differently, and therefore, the background colors are all different in lightness and darkness, which is distracting. Another option for a backdrop is to hang up a wide white blackout plastic window screen that is pulled down from a higher position and draped over a table upon which to place your arrangement. Have the front of your arrangement positioned to be square with the table. Zoom in with your feet by moving closer or crop your photos afterwards. You lose pixels when you zoom by spreading your fingers on the screen.

Position yourself correctly for a shot. Standing too high above your arrangement is not ideal. The best angle is usually from a seated or lower position so that you are not showing too much water, kenzan, or the inside bottom of the container. Showing a little bit of water and the back edge of the container is best. It will give depth to the photo. Make sure that you have some blank space on all 4 sides of the frame so that your shot is not too tight and cramped. Breathing room is needed around your arrangement.

Be sure that you are taking a level shot by visually lining up a grid line on your camera screen to be parallel to the bottom edge of your table as well as to the backdrop. Hold your phone with both hands with elbows in tight to your body and be very still, take a breath, then touch the camera button gently to take the photo. Many photos are blurry and out of focus because of camera shake.

You may notice after you inspect your photo that your arrangement may need some adjusting. It is a good idea, if possible, to take a look at the photo on your computer before you decide if it's a good shot. Or blow it up on your phone to check it out.

MOST IMPORTANTLY... Study what is on the screen other than what you are focusing on before you take the photo. It is very distracting to have "other stuff" in the photo that detracts from your subject if you want a NICE photo, i.e., specks of plant material, ikebana scissors, drink bottles, notepapers, light switches and exit signs on the wall, etc.

Notice that the title of this paper is Taking Ikebana Photographs and not Taking Ikebana Pictures. There is a distinct difference between a photograph and a picture. It can be much more than what I have written here, but this will help. It takes practice and training your eyes to see like a photographer when you are shooting. **The arrangement will always look good.** You want your photographs to do them justice. Save all of your photos in high resolution on your computer. You never know when they will come in handy.

**BACKDROP PHOTO AND EXPLANATION COURTESY OF
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These are two 3-fold foam backdrops that can be purchased from most any office supply store. The backdrop that is face down on the table has the good side down so that the front will remain usable and unmarked from water spots and dents from containers. The other one has the front opened all the way (flat). It is propped up in the back standing up as straight as possible without it falling forward. Use some heavy things behind it to keep it upright. A stack of books works well, a big box with heavy stuff in it, a wall, etc. You can figure something out if you have the two backdrops.

