

Lesson for Intermediate and Advanced Learners

Rikka

Work and commentary :
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【Lesson 87】

Arrangement of Maeoki and Tome Branches

Maeoki is positioned to curve away from the *seichusen* (invisible centerline) and extend forward at almost a right angle. The branch extending forward is of no specified length. As *maeoki* functions to provide the entire arrangement with a three-dimensional appearance, the branch should be of a length sufficient to serve this purpose.

When studying *rikka* works in photographs or illustrations, it is difficult to know whether a branch is protruding forward and then to determine its length. We can recognize the approximate length of objects extending horizontally by sight, but doing so for those extending backward or forward is all but impossible. In this context, *maeoki* needs to be positioned so that it is clearly protruding forward. The *Rikka* Introductory Curriculum advises that *maeoki* should be longer than *do*. On the other hand, *maeoki* can be shorter than *do* depending on the condition of the floral material used. One such case would be when using intrinsically short floral material as *maeoki* and lengthening it by attaching a stick (referred to as a “leg”) gives the material an unnatural appearance.

Now, we discuss the height at which *tome* (or “-dome”) branches begin to curve away from the *seichusen*. The height is referred to as “*de*.” Formerly, *rikka* works were larger than those of today, and branches assembled as *maeoki* (e.g. box tree) appeared thick, consisting of *shin*, *soe* and *tai*. Accordingly, in these works, *in-dome* and *yo-dome* were positioned to begin curving away from the *seichusen* at different heights. In a *rikka* work, *yakueda* and *ashirai* branches on the right and left sides were basically positioned to begin curving alternately

at different heights, so that they do not interfere with each other. However, in today's *rikka* works, *maeoki* are assembled to appear thinner than previously, correlating with *shin* and *uke*. This causes the *de* of *nagashi* and *hikae* to differ only slightly in height. Consequently, *de* of *tome* branches on the right and left sides of a work (*in-dome/yo-dome*) are of the same height, the aim being neat organization of the *mizugiwa* (the part of the roots of the floral materials just above the water surface).

The *sashikuchi* (insertion point) of *in-dome* is between *maeoki* and *nagashi*, while that of *yo-dome* is between *maeoki* and *hikae*. When using a thin-stemmed plant (e.g. sword fern) as *tome*, binding three stems or winding Floral Tape around the stems works for secure positioning of the stems on the *kenzan* as well as height alignment. However, in a *rikka* work composed both of *kimono* (woody materials) and *kusamono* (grassy materials), *kidome* combines with *irogiri* to connect the spaces containing the *kimono* both in front of and behind them. Thus, even when using a thin-stemmed plant as *tome*, each stem should be positioned separately while adding thickness via one means or another.

Along with the *de*, height and *sashikuchi* of *tome* branches, *maeoki* that extends forward also plays an important role in organizing *mizugiwa* beautifully. *Mizugiwa* is the focal point of an arrangement and has a deeply significant meaning in *rikka* expression. Creators must pay due attention when arranging these important branches. ■

