

Kusamono: Driftwood-Style Display

Kusamono is a Japanese planting style that is related to Kokedama, Nearai, Shitakusa, and Bonsai. Both Shitakusa and Kusamono utilize grasses and flowering elements to suggest a season or place. Shitakusa is traditionally placed near a Bonsai to suggest its natural setting and environment. On its own, it is called Kusamono and is displayed in a shallow dish or tray. More specifically, Kusamono do NOT use a traditional plant pot or container.

In this case, the Kusamono is placed creatively on a piece of found driftwood. The driftwood adds to the nature-inspired concept of Kusamono which connects the viewer with the natural environment. The variable size and shape of each piece of driftwood lends itself to plant selection and design. Each driftwood Kusamono arrangement will be unique depending on the nooks and crannies present in the wood.

What is Driftwood?

Driftwood is wood that has been washed ashore by wind, waves, or tides. It provides food and shelter for birds and aquatic life. Gribbles, shipworms and bacteria decompose the wood and gradually turn it into nutrients that are reintroduced to the food web. It is difficult to determine driftwood's age or origin due to the decomposition process – the wood could be from a fallen tree, a board from a pier, or a piece of a shipwreck! The wood floats its way down rivers and even across oceans, carrying ecological benefits along with it. As it travels, the water creates a softened, swirled look on the wood and smooths out knots to create nooks and crannies, perfect for sheltering aquatic life or for tucking away the roots of the plants used in a *Kusamono* arrangement.

Creating a Driftwood Kusamono Arrangement Supplies

- Select plants with similar watering and light requirements. They should be either ALL indoor houseplants and tropicals or ALL outdoor hardy plants.
- Choose an arrangement that suggests a season or place, a native ecosystem, or that fits some sort of intentional theme.
- Driftwood: look for interesting shapes, patterns, and crevices
- Scrubbing Tool
- Organic Potting Mix, moistened
- Spray Bottle
- Sheet Moss, moistened
- Fishing Line & Scissors
- Dry Paintbrush



Assembly

- 1. Clean your driftwood with water and a light scrubbing tool. Be sure to brush off any dirt from the grain and crevices, especially if you plan to display your arrangement indoors. A dish brush works well for this.
- 2. Play around with the placement of your plants. Plants do not necessarily need to be planted upright. Look at how the plant is growing does it grow outward or creep? Does it spread? Utilize its shape to your advantage when looking at how to fill the natural crevices in your piece of driftwood.
- 3. Remove excess potting mix from the root ball of your plant. Moisten it with a spray bottle and gently pack the roots together into a clump that is suitable for the location where it will be planted. Use extra potting mix if needed when creating a mound (see photo above).
- 4. Wrap moistened sheet moss around the plant's roots to create a "blanket" around the plant. The sheet moss acts as a sponge to keep moisture in as well as a sling to attach your plant to the driftwood.
- 5. Using a length of fishing line, begin wrapping the line around your plant and moss in order to attach it to the driftwood. You can use one long line and wrap it around many times, or use several smaller lengths. The goal is to attach the plant and moss firmly to the driftwood so it stays intact when shaken gently. The roots will eventually start to grow into the grain of the wood and latch on, becoming sturdy and firm.
- 6. Use a dry paintbrush to brush off excess potting mix and clean up your arrangement. Add additional bits of moss if any of your fishing line bindings feel loose, or if there are any areas that need additional coverage.

 Give your plants and moss a final spritz with the spray bottle and you are ready for display.

Care & Placement

- Driftwood will naturally begin to decompose over time. You may notice some dirt or dust under your arrangement. This is normal. You might want to use a table runner, tray, or decorative cloth under your arrangement to protect your surface.
- Your placement and light levels will depend on the plants you chose.
- Wood is naturally absorbent and will soak up water more quickly than a dish-style Kusamono arrangement. Aim to keep your display moist at all times. Lightly spray plant leaves and moss with a spray bottle every day. It helps to spray water directly at the crown of your plant, or even by pulling back the moss to dampen the potting mix directly at the roots every few days. Once per week, you will want to do a deeper watering by placing your whole display in the sink to soak and let water completely penetrate the moss and soil layers. Use the sprayer on your sink to gently "rain" on the planted areas of your driftwood. Let the arrangement drain before returning to its display area.
- If you are keeping your display outdoors, the summer heat will dry out your arrangement more quickly. Be prepared to water your arrangement every day by gently dousing with the hose or watering can, or by bringing it inside to soak and be sprayed in a sink.
- If you notice a plant is limp, do a deep watering immediately. If one of your plants does not survive, simply replace it by pulling back the moss and replanting.