

## VISIT TO THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL LIBRARY (NAL)

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In the process of putting together the 2016 Yearbook, we updated all the “Resources” listed for our members and validated that these resources still existed and were not just carried over from year to year. We discovered that the beautiful collection of rare books previously housed at the National Arboretum (USNA) was transferred to the National Agricultural Library (NAL).

The USNA librarian, a wonderful lady who was about to retire, referred us to NAL and also emphasized that there are only five National Libraries in the US. These libraries do not circulate their collections; instead they serve as a repository and research facility for rare, valuable, and significant works. The transfer of the Ikebana rare books to NAL was expected to put the collection and its future in better hands at NAL than at the arboretum.



Intrigued by the possibilities, we decided to visit and see the collection. Both before and during our visit the staff were efficient, friendly and very responsive. We requested about a dozen samples from the “special collection” and a ½ dozen from the general collection.

The special collection is remarkable and beautiful. We had to be respectful of the original material from the 1700 and 1800’s; wearing gloves, and /or washing our hands before handling the books; some of which were extremely fragile and beautiful. We were allowed to take

pictures, so we have a few to share.



There was a lot of hand printed and painted material. We think it may have been on mulberry (Kozo) paper that has been a favorite of Japanese book makers for centuries. Innumerable illustrations (all hand painted) on shaping techniques, choices of material, selection of containers, and history were available. If you can read Japanese, this is truly a treasure trove for you. Even if you can’t but are visually motivated, you will learn a lot. Practitioners of the more traditional schools will find the material particularly relevant.

