

1st Prize

**a withered garden;
the lolly stick epitaph
of a family pet**

Danny Blackwell

This haiku is a carefully selected and combined collection of modest elements; it is not visually flashy, nor does it contain any eye-catching rhetoric. Even so, the poem is filled with genuine love and its accompanying drama. The more modest the elements, the more deeply it moves readers in a genuine haiku. The fact that such a lolly stick was used as an epitaph implies that a child was likely the one who took the initiative to make it. It was probably a small pet, and the child suggested making a grave for it because the child loved the pet, and the parents and family accepted this as they loved the child. The child may have asked to place flowers on the grave. However, it is now the season when many things have withered, and there are no flowers in bloom anywhere. So all they could prepare was a tiny stick. A tomb made of a small stick in a withered field: it is such a shabby scene, but the sincere story of love is apparent. (Yuzo)

2nd Prize (a)

**philosophy books
are traded for hiking boots
the summer mountain**

Valerie Rosenfeld

The boots most likely still carry the scuffs and habits of their former owner — marks from rocky paths, traces of a shared life. The poet accepts them, walking now with a friend's memory into the summer mountain. This

haiku celebrates friendship and the release of the self. Its structure flows from quiet thought ("philosophy books") to movement ("hiking boots") to nature's vastness ("the summer mountain"), back to thought again — forming a subtle arc from reflection to action to renewal. (Hiroyuki)

2nd Prize (b)

**on a moonless night
the red coal of your cigar
burns between stories**

Karin Hedetniemi

A cigar flame glows in the dark, moonless night. In this scene, some stories must be told by the person at night. There must be some people listening to him/her. Between those stories, it's likely that no one is talking, and it's quiet. In this way, the light and darkness, the relationships between people, and the soundscape are all beautifully expressed in this short piece. But that's not all. What sort of story is being told? The word 'stories' can even refer to larger life events. If so, this opens up readers' imagination further. (Yuzo)

3rd Prize

**the withered garden
a bench that no one sits on
but afternoon light**

Clark Strand

The personification of "afternoon light" brings a gentle depth to this haiku. And if one senses this light as the soft imprints of a beloved who is no longer here, its emotional resonance quietly deepens. In that light, the "withered garden" may be felt as a space

steeped in memory. This piece is a poem rich in evocative power, embracing the wild beauty of a withered garden shaped by the presence of absence. (Hiroyuki)

Honorable Mentions

blue mussel season
the months with the letter R
are happy once more

Danny Blackwell

scent of plum blossoms...
the clink of champagne bottles
in our morning trash

Joshua Gage

two yellow onions
his spaghetti recipe
always starts with two

Alison Woolpert

perching on one foot
in the withered flowerbed
plastic flamingo

Charles Trumbull

trip to the city
her "to-do" list blown away
by the winter wind

Priscilla Lignori

it was a short night
before you gathered your gear
and went off to war

Caroline LeBlanc

(more on other side)

kannazuki night
all the dumplings disappear
from the shrine altar

Keiko Izawa

palliative care
a branch of loquat flowers
our light in the dark

Debbie Strange

the receipt I held
when they phoned about your fall
two red onions (loose)

Louis Talbot

departing geese call
river gathers their feathers
in widening rings

Charles He

Kiyoshi and Kiyoko Tokutomi Haiku Contest

The Annual Tokutomi Haiku Contest of the Yuki Teikei Haiku Society (YTHS) is named for Mr. Kiyoshi and Mrs. Kiyoko Tokutomi, bilingual speakers of English and Japanese. They founded the Society in 1975 to foster writing haiku in English along traditional Japanese guidelines. YTHS studies (but is not limited to) this form. The Tokutomi Haiku Contest is the longest-lived contest in the West that requires contest entries to follow this traditional form.

Contest Guidelines

This contest is for English language haiku written in the traditional form of three lines using a 5-7-5 syllabic pattern. Each poem is required to contain one (and only one) season word (kigo) from the following list chosen for this year's contest:

New Year: New Year's gift, scent of plum blossoms, first smile

Spring: hilltopping (mating butterflies), blue mussel, melting snow, departing geese

Summer: short night, heron, summer mountain, midday nap

Autumn: olive harvest, autumn retreat, godless month (*kannazuki*), moonless night

Winter: withered garden, loquat flower, winter wind, onion

Contest Judges 2025

Hiroyuki Murakami is a Japanese haiku poet living in Tokyo. He was a *dōjin* of Yukuharu Haiku Society to 2019 and has been a YTHS *dōjin* since 2022. Member of the Japanese Association of Haiku Poets and translator for *Haiku International*, the Haiku International Association's journal. Regularly contributes haiku and commentary to *Geppo* and YTHS members' anthologies. He published *Harvest Moon*, his own English/Japanese haiku collection in 2023.

Yuzo Ono is a haiku poet and writer based in Japan. He studied at the University of Tokyo (BA) and the Royal College of Art (MRes) in the UK. He won the Modern Haiku Association Award for Criticism in 2002 and the Modern Haiku Association New Talent Award (honorable mention) in 2005. He is a councilor of the Haiku International Association and a member of the British Haiku Society. website: <https://yuzo-ono.com/>

The cover art is by **kris moon kondo**, a longtime friend and member of Yuki Teikei Haiku Society since 1992. She has been writing haiku and painting haiga style since she first arrived in Japan by ship in 1972.

Contest Coordinator: Kathabela Wilson

Brochure Layout: Rick Wilson

Yuki Teikei Haiku Society



Winners of the
Kiyoshi and Kiyoko Tokutomi
2025 Haiku Contest