

2021 Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) Ofrenda (Altar) Guidelines

During Day of the Dead, a long standing tradition is the creation of altars, or ofrendas to your departed loved ones, or someone that you wish to honor. Traditionally, altars have the four basic elements present: **Earth** ~ usually in the form of the traditional flowers for Day of the Dead—marigolds (or any flower you or your loved one liked); **Air** ~ represented by papel picado (cut paper literally, or the colorful tissue that you see at Day of the Dead) or any object that will move on the altar with the slightest breeze; **Fire** ~ usually represented by lit candles (we suggest battery operated tea lights, or unlit candles for safety reasons); **Water** ~ usually represented by the dead's favorite beverage, or simply a glass of water (please cover!). Altars are meant to invite the dead back into your life, and our altars are the physical prayer, if you will. Many altars are stepped up in height to offer your prayer higher to the heavens. Items should also be placed on the altar that represent your loved one, to personalize it. Altars are also meant to be a healing experience for those still here. Think about it, and carefully select the items for your altar.

There are many wonderful books regarding these traditions, as well as good information online. Many of your questions can be answered there.

THE RULES: Altars are limited to one altar per family or organization. The altar is your creation and should reflect the individual for whom it honors.

We will provide the table upon which your altar is created. One half of each large table is the space for your creation (approximately 3' x 3' for an individual altar, based on availability).

Items may not be placed on the floor in front of the altar for safety reasons. Further safety restrictions limit the use of burning candles, sound, unwrapped food, open drinks or containers and/or fresh food. Costs of materials transportation, setup and take down are the responsibility of the participants.

Altars may be set up on October 25th through October 29th, between 10am and 4pm. Altar viewing by the public will occur on the Day of the Dead Celebration October 30, from 11am to 3pm. We encourage you to be here to present your altar.

Altars that are not removed by November 5th at 4pm will be subject to removal by museum personnel. If you have any questions, please contact the museum at 445-1230.