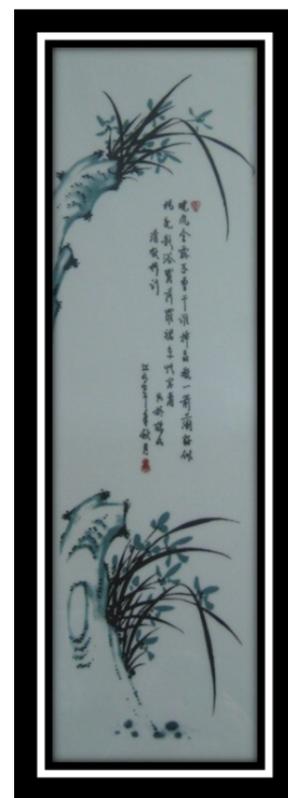




Plum Blossom



Orchid



Chrysanthemum



Bamboo

This is the most popular Chinese painting to represent the best of friendship. It is known as "**The Four Gentlemen (四君子)**". They refer to the four plants: the plum blossom (梅), the orchid (蘭), the chrysanthemum (菊) and the bamboo (竹). Their qualities represent fortitude, fragrance, tenaciousness and indifference. These four kind of plants are grown in difficult weather, needs intensive care and straight tall spiritually growth that could resemble the characteristic of strong will and hardship of friendship.

Plum Blossom - Hope, Faith, and Undying Love (Winter). A plum blossom may live for over 100 years. It has a very old rugged trunk that resembles a dragon contrasted with delicate soft young blossoms. The plum blossom consistently returns each year and is the first flower to bloom. In the winter, when there is snow on the ground, the plum blossoms defies winter and blooms, symbolizing hope and faith for return of spring. Faithfully each year, the plum blossom displays its blossoms like a peacock parading its feathers to attract a mate, and therefore symbolizes undying love.

Orchid - Modesty, Beauty, Joy and Purity (Spring). Orchids were originally a somewhat secretive plant that grew in remote locations and hid behind rocks. The Orchid represents spring. The beauty and grace of the orchid is fragile in form, with no violent tendencies. Like the plum blossom, its fragrance is never overpowering, symbolizing humility and nobility.

Chrysanthemum - Courage (Autumn) Chrysanthemums are one of the last flowers to bloom each year. They maintain courage in face of cold winds and early snows and defiantly bloom in full colour glory. The chrysanthemum reminds us that it is possible to triumph when the going gets tough and to be brave when faced with adversity.

Bamboo - Gentle Strength (Summer), A bamboo stands upright. It is flexible, bends with the wind, and maintains an upright position. It bounces back with the weight of snow but does not break. A bamboo remains strong, honest, and true to its principles. The bamboo represents summer, since it is abundant with growth during this season. It also symbolizes energy, vitality, nobility, and gentleness. The inside of a bamboo is hallow - conveying the tranquillity of inner peace. Furthermore, the flexibility and strength of the bamboo stalk also came to represent the human values of cultivation and integrity in which one yields but does not break.