

# DESIGN 101

## aka Floral Design Made Easy!

by Kathy Ward

### Article Two – Creating a Simple Linear Design

In our first article (in the *Fall Footprints*), you learned about the decisions that need to be made before beginning a design. **In this article we will create our first design: one of the easiest designs to make - a Line Design.** This should be a fun activity, so let go of your stress and enjoy playing with flowers.

#### What Is “Line?”

Line is one of the elements of design and the foundation of all design. It creates a “path” for your eye to follow through the design, which is to say, *Line creates Rhythm!* A line may be vertical, horizontal, diagonal, zigzag or curved. It may be long, short, thick or thin. Line can be created with linear elements such as sticks, branches, cattails, plastic rods, linear plant material (e.g., liatris, gladiolus, delphiniums, iris leaves, yucca leaves, flax leaves). This is called “actual” line. Line can also be created by placement of like flowers, such that your eye moves from one blossom to the next – a bit like a dot-to-dot – creating line. This is called “implied” line.

In a line design, **one line should be dominant.** Line designs use a **minimum of plant material and have an open silhouette** (space between the plant material). The simplest of line designs can be created with a shallow or flat container or bowl, a kenzan, three pieces of line material, three round forms and three to five stems of filler material (optional).

#### Making your Design

*Step 1* – Condition your plant material. Once you arrive home with your plant material, you will want to condition it. This hydrates your materials and will keep your arrangement looking nicer for

a longer time. To condition your flowers, scrub out a bucket with soap and warm water. I often spray the cleaned bucket with a water/ bleach solution (about 4 tsp. of bleach per quart of water) and then rinse out the bleach solution. This will eliminate any bacteria that was in the bucket. Bacteria is the major cause of short flower life. Fill your cleaned bucket with a few inches of water. If you have a packet of flower “food” that comes with your flowers, you will want to add that as well (Flower food also hampers bacterial growth). Trim a few inches off each stem and remove any leaves that will be in the water. Place these stems in your clean bucket of water as you clip them. Allow the stems to hydrate for a day or more.

*Step 2* – Choose your mechanics – usually a kenzan or floral foam (wet or dry depending on using fresh or dried plant material, *Oasis* or another brand). If you are using a kenzan, attach the kenzan to the bottom of your container using florist clay. If you are using wet floral foam, place the foam on top of a deep bowl of water (and flower food, if you have some). Allow the foam to soak up water. Do not push the foam into the water.

*Step 3* – Choose your container – A low dish or shallow bowl will work best if you are using a kenzan. If the kenzan is the same color as the container, it will disappear in your design. If you wish to hide the kenzan further, you may place small stones, glass beads, moss etc. over the kenzan. If you chose to use floral foam, you will want a container with a narrow opening (like a cylindrical container). Place the floral foam in the container. Normally with a floral design, you will want an inch or two of the floral foam to project above the lip of the container, so that you can hide the edge of the container with plant material. With this design, you will probably wish to have the floral foam below the lip of the container, so that you don’t need to hide it. Another approach to the mechanics could be to use a short piece of floral foam in the bottom of your container and then place scrunched up chicken wire on top of

the foam. The mechanics of a design should not be visible in the finished design.

*Step 4* – Cut your line material - As a guideline, your finished design should be 1.5 to 2 times as tall as your container if you are using a vertical container (cylinder) or 1.5 to 2 times as tall as the width of your container if you are using a low dish/plate. Cut your first piece of line material to this length. Cut your second piece of line material so that it is  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the length of the first piece you cut. Cut the third piece so that it is  $\frac{3}{4}$  as long as the second piece.

*Step 5* – Place your line material so that it defines the size and shape of your design. All other materials should be within the lines determined by the line material. Place your longest piece of line material vertically in the center (left to right) and toward the back of your kenzan or floral foam. Place the second longest piece of line material in front of the first and slightly to the left. Let the top of it angle out slightly. Place the last piece of line material just in front of the second and slightly to the right. Again, let it angle out slightly.



*Step 6* – Cutting and place your round flowers – Choose the flower that is the smallest or least open to be your tallest blossom. Cut it so that it is about  $\frac{2}{3}$  as long as the longest line material. Place this stem in front of the first line material placed.



Cut the medium sized flower so that it will be a little less than half the height of the first blossom. Place the stem in front of the first flower and angle it slightly left or right for added interest.



Place the largest blossom near the base of the container along the same line as the other two flowers.

You may wish to angle it in the opposite direction from the second blossom.

*Step 7* – Add filler plant material if desired. Filler is used to round out the design. Place it somewhat in line with the other plant material between the blossoms. A piece added to the back will add depth to your design. A piece added low and in front will help continue the design past the rim of the container. Your completed design should be tall and slender with a minimal amount of plant material. It should not be thinner at the top than at the bottom of the design.



The instructions above give you quite a simple framework to get you started. As you are more comfortable making a line design, you may want to create variations on this theme. **Just remember that this design must have a strong line and minimal plant material.** You may vary the number of round or line forms. (Generally, an odd number of components will look better than an even number.) You may work with a vertical, diagonal, horizontal, curved or zig-zag line. As you design, think about how the size of the container, the weight of the line material, and the diameter of the round flower forms work together. **This is the scale of the components – a principle of design.**

Congratulations on making a line design, a design that you could enter in your club exhibits or a flower show. Take some time to stand back and enjoy your creation! I hope you found the fun and play that is part of floral design.