

DESIGN 101

aka Floral Design Made Easy!

by Kathy Ward

Article One – The Basics

Does the idea of creating a floral design make you break out in a cold sweat? Would you like to be able to make floral designs but have no idea where to start? If so, please keep reading!

I have been asked to help Piedmont District members see the fun in creating floral arrangements. This will be accomplished with quarterly articles in the Piedmont District newsletter and by holding floral design workshops for Piedmont District members. We are hoping to hold our first class in the winter or spring of 2024. Look for more information in the *Footprints* winter edition.

This first article focuses on what you need to do before you start your design. The many decisions you make before cutting a stem will impact your resulting creation. You will need to decide which container to use, which flowers to include, and how you will keep your flowers in place.

Choice of Container - The most important characteristics of containers are that they are watertight and stable. Before using a container, always test it by filling it with water and placing it on newspaper or a towel. You will be able to see very quickly if the container is leaking, by the water spot that appears. If your container leaks, but you still want to use it, you may use a plastic liner in your container or perhaps spray the interior of the container with a sealant.

A heavy container will tend to be more stable than a lightweight one. Weight can always be added to the bottom of a container by adding stones or glass beads. A container with a wider base will be more stable than one with a narrow base.

The color of the container will also impact your design. In general, when new to floral design, it is better to choose containers that are solid black, brown, gray or green with a matte finish. This type of container will complement any flowers or design styles. Initially, it is best to avoid containers that are white, very bright or shiny. Glass containers can also be tricky to use, as you do not want to be able to see the flower stems in the container.

Choice of Mechanics – Mechanics are how you hold your plant material in the desired position. Mechanics should be easy to use and invisible in the final design. Two of the most common ways of holding stems in place are a pin holder or floral foam. A pin holder, also known as a kenzan or frog, is usually used when you are making a design with a limited amount of plant material. The best kenzans are heavy and have needles close together. They can be used for fresh or dried plant material.

The second common type of mechanic is floral foam. It comes in two types – one for dried plant materials and one for fresh. The floral foam for fresh plant material is called wet floral foam, as you must soak it in water before using it. Foam should always be placed on the surface of the water and allowed to absorb the water slowly.

Choice of Plant Materials – The plant material that you incorporate into your floral design should be a combination of various forms, colors and textures. These contrasting elements will create interest in your design.

Plant material comes in basically three different forms – linear, round and filler.

- **Linear** forms help establish the structural framework of the design. Examples of linear plant materials include decorative wood, sticks, branches, cattails, pussy willow, iris leaves, delphiniums, liatris, gladiolus, etc.

- **Round** forms include chrysanthemums, roses, lilies, Gerbera daisies, sunflowers, dahlias, tulips, etc.
- **Filler** plant material generally has smaller blooms. Fillers can include spray forms of roses and chrysanthemums, fern, statice, goldenrod, Limonium, hypericum berries, etc.

When choosing your plant material, color choice is also important. You will want to create color palettes that are pleasing to you. They may be different shades of a single color (monochromatic) or perhaps colors that are close together on the color wheel – for example reds, oranges, and yellows (analogous) or possibly colors that “pop” and are across from each other on the color wheel like purple and yellow (complementary). When choosing a color palette, I like to start with a bicolored or tricolored flower and then choose other flowers that will echo these colors.

sunflowers for the round flower form and filler of purple Canterbury bells and goldenrod.

You now have a good idea of the decisions you need to make before beginning your floral design: choose a container, choose a mechanic, and choose your plant material. I hope this has given you some things to think about as you study the flowers at the grocery store or look at floral designs at your club meetings. You will never see floral arrangements the same way again!



A simple floral design made with sticks for line,