Creative Arts: Exploring the Art of Floral Design

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Project Outcomes:
- Demonstrate an understanding of the elements of art and the principles of design in floral design.
- Understand the fundamentals of floral design.
- Identify various types of flowers and other plant materials used in floral design.

What is Floral Design?

Have you ever had an interest in growing flowers or making flowers arrangements for your home? Do you enjoy being creative and using your hands?

Arranging flowers gives you a chance to participate in an art activity, to express yourself creatively, and to make your home or room more livable and attractive.

As a floral designer, you are participating in an art form. The main difference between flower arranging and the other arts is the medium. Your medium is plant material. What paint is to the painter, clay is to the potter, flowers and foliage are to floral designers. Your medium is alive and will die quickly unless given proper care.

Most floral arrangements are made for a particular purpose or place. The arrangement should be suitable for its intended use. A good floral arrangement should be expressive of a theme or idea and of one's own personality.
To Get Started:

Use the chart below to list your favorite flowers and why you like them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My favorite flowers:</th>
<th>Why I like them:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now consider the following when beginning the process of floral arrangement:

1. When selecting your plant materials, you must consider **color, shape, texture, size, space and expressiveness**. These are the visual characteristics or **design elements** of all objects.
2. Next you must decide on the style or design for arranging your plant material. Three general styles — **Line Arrangements, Mass Arrangements, Line-Mass Arrangements** — are the basis of all floral designs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line Arrangements</th>
<th>Mass Arrangements</th>
<th>Line-Mass Arrangements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Line Arrangement" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Mass Arrangement" /></td>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Line-Mass Arrangement" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. In selecting a style, consider the place where the arrangement will be used or the occasion for its use.
4. The shape of the container may provide ideas.
5. Your greatest inspiration, however, should come from the plant material itself. Let its shape, the way it grows or the combination you choose suggest the right way to use it.

There is no end to the many possible variations of the three basic styles of flower arranging. Look for ideas in books, magazines, flower shows, florists’ windows and arrangements made by your friends and family. Then use your own imagination to create new arrangements that will express your ideas and personality.

(Source: *Flower Arranging*, University of Illinois Cooperative Extension, 1978.)
Success in flower arranging starts with your skill in selecting plant materials that will be suitable for the arrangement you want to make. Here are some of the things to think about — the design elements — when choosing flowers and foliage:

**Color**

Colors have different effects on the viewer. Appropriate use of color is important in floral design.

**The Color Wheel**

Artists and designers are masters of color. They have a way of organizing the colors into groups to help them use them in their work. They use the color wheel to do this.

Reds, oranges and yellows are generally bright and stimulating and are considered warm colors. Warm colors tend to be advancing colors (to the eye) and have more visual weight than cool colors.

Blues, greens and violets are usually tranquil, peaceful and restful and are considered cool colors. Cool colors tend to be receding and have less visual weight than warm colors.

There are three groups of colors that make up the color wheel: primary colors, secondary colors and tertiary colors. Some flowers naturally grow in a variety of colors, while others have been selectively grown and hybridized so that they come in several different colors, tints and shades of colors. Use the color wheel as a guide when determining what colors you will use in your floral design. Refer to Creative Arts and Design Level 1, Activity 1 to learn more detailed information about color.
Activity 1: Test Your Knowledge

Look at the pictures below. Identify each type of flower as either a warm or cool color. Note: Some flowers may be a combination of both warm and cool colors.

Warm-colored flowers: ___________________________________________________
Cool-colored flowers: ___________________________________________________
Flowers that are a combination of warm and cool colors:
_____________________________________

Color Harmonies

When creating a floral arrangement, it is important to make sure that flower colors harmonize with one another, with the container and with the background (for example, a tablecloth) against which the arrangement will be displayed. The following color harmonies or color combinations are generally accepted as being pleasing to the eye.

Related Color Harmonies:
**Monochromatic** – Consisting of one hue and its tones, tints and/or shades. Example: light blue, blue, navy
**Analogous** – Colors near each other on the color wheel. Example: blue green, green, yellow green
Contrasting Color Harmonies:

**Direct complements** – Colors lying opposite one another on the color wheel. Strong contrast is achieved by using direct complements. Examples: *red and green, orange and blue*

![Direct Complement](image1)

**Split Complements** – A key hue is combined with two hues on either side of its direct complement on the color wheel. A pleasing, interesting and subtle combination. Best results are achieved by using one color dominantly. Examples: *green with red-orange and red-violet; red with yellow-green and blue-green*

![Split Complement](image2)

**Triad** – Three hues equally spaced on the color wheel. A triad color harmony is eye-catching. Generally, one color should dominate with the other colors used to a lesser impact. Examples: *orange, green and violet; red-orange, yellow-green, and blue-violet*

![Triad](image3)

Activity 2: Test Your Knowledge

Look at the pictures below. Identify each arrangement as being one of the color harmonies listed above.

![Flower Arrangements](image4)
Shape

Another element of design that is very important in floral design is shape. Flowers, leaves and stems come in many shapes. Plant materials are categorized into three main groups according to their shape:

**Spiky or linear shapes:** These are best for line and line-mass arrangements. They set direction and cause a feeling of movement, and they are often used to form the skeleton of the arrangement.

**Mass or rounded shapes:** These are best for line-mass or mass arrangements. As focusing shapes, they may be used to develop the focal point in line-mass arrangements, or they may make up almost all of a mass arrangement.

**Spray or filler shapes:** These are best for mass and line-mass arrangements. Use them as background materials and as space fillers in mass arrangements, and prune and thin them before using in line-mass arrangements.
For photos and descriptions of floral design materials refer to Mississippi State University Extension Publication 3226.

Floral Arrangement Shapes
Using the three main types of flower shapes, you can begin to see how they are used to create various arrangement shapes. Below are some examples of different shaped arrangements using a variety of flowers. (Source: https://www.dotcomwomen.com/home/flower-arrangement-themes-2/7735/)
Activity 3: To Do

Now that you have learned about color in flowers, the different shapes of flowers and their uses, and examples of different shaped floral arrangements, it's time to put your knowledge to use.

1. Create a plan for a floral arrangement you will make.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color scheme I will use: (Color scheme name)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colors included in the color scheme:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The shape of the floral arrangement I will make:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flowers needed: Name of Flower: Type of Flower: (Line, Focal, Filler)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foliage needed:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Container to use:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Collect flowers, foliage and container you have identified in your plan.
3. Create your floral arrangement.
4. Take a picture of your finished product and upload to your portfolio. Be sure to keep your plan for possible use in a presentation.
Texture

Plant texture refers to the surface quality of plant material. Textural contrast and variety can add interest to a design. A plant’s texture may be fuzzy, glossy, smooth, rough, etc. Texture also applies to the overall effect of the arrangement of the petals or florets. For example, a spray of wax flower has an airy texture, a rose has a velvety texture and a zinnia has a dense texture. (Source of pictures below: [https://www.cleanpng.com/free/flower.html](https://www.cleanpng.com/free/flower.html); [https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/]

Wax Flower – Airy Texture      Rose – Velvet Texture            Zinnia – Dense

Size

Select flowers and leaves of different sizes. Usually buds and small flowers are used at the top and edges of an arrangement, while large leaves or fully opened flowers are placed low in the arrangement. A large element is often used as a focal point. In floral design, size also applies to apparent or visual size. A flower’s size may be expressed as delicate, heavy or bold.

Space

As you select flowers and foliage, notice that they are not like solid apples, but that there are spaces between the flowers of a spray of baby’s breath, for example, and between the petals of a daisy. You can look inside a tulip or through an iris flower. A leafy branch has odd-shaped spaces of different sizes. You may select certain flowers or leaves just because of their spaces. As you place the flowers and leaves in the container, you create spaces of various sizes and shapes. Spaces are often as important as the flowers or leaves.
Expressiveness

Through your selection of flowers and leaves you may express a mood, idea or sentiment. For example: daffodils and tulips suggest spring; cattails make you think of a swamp; white roses are elegant and formal; sunflowers are casual and suggest summer; red roses may say "I love you."

Flower Arrangement Styles

Line Arrangements
Line arrangements are adaptations of Japanese styles. The linear quality of a few branches, leaves or flowers is emphasized to produce a clean-cut, sparse look. The spaces between the plant materials are nearly as important as the materials themselves. Color is of less concern than line, shape, space and expressiveness.

Principles to Follow:
1. Most linear arrangements have asymmetrical balance; that is, one side is different from the other.
2. They are to be viewed only from the front.
3. Allowing some materials to extend toward the front and some toward the back develops considerable depth (third dimension).
4. Line arrangements may be tall in relatively small containers and still have good balance since so little material is used.
5. Most have vertical movement, but try diagonal, circular or horizontal rhythms.
6. Many line arrangements have three lines or placements. Often all three lines are of the same material, but you may select one kind of material for two lines and another for the third. Although this third placement may be fuller and more colorful, it must not detract from the strong linear effect.
7. Avoid the cluttered look by removing leaves of flowers that interfere with the main lines, which are often slender, thin and flowing.
8. Select thicker, fuller materials to develop a strong, sturdy effect.
9. Do not feel restricted to three lines. Try arrangements with two, five or seven lines.
10. Study plant materials and use them as they grow.

As you make many line arrangements, you will begin to develop your own freestyle or freeform designs.

**Successful Line Arrangements:**
1. Create a dynamic feeling of action, movement and life.
2. Stimulate contemplation and imagination in the viewer through space.
3. Encourage creative experimentation and originality.
4. Are based on the natural lines and spaces of the plant material.
5. Do not copy stiff geometric designs.

**Mass Arrangements**
Traditional mass arrangements are adapted from European floral designs. They have a thick, full look and require much plant material. The whole colorful mass of flowers and foliage is emphasized, rather than the individual flowers, leaves or branches.

**Principles to Follow:**
1. Mass arrangements may be of many shapes, such as circles, domes, crescents, ovals and triangles.
2. Ovals and triangles are good shapes because the height and width are not the same.
3. An arrangement may be made to be seen from one side only or completed all around so that it becomes free-standing and may be viewed from any angle.
4. A center of interest containing a focal point which attracts the eye is usually developed.
5. Color is the most important element in mass arrangements. Three or more kinds or colors of flowers are often combined with one or more kinds of foliage.
6. The plant materials are grouped together by kind, and the groups are blended together.
7. Choose colors that harmonize with one another and with the place where the arrangement is to be used.

Successful Mass Arrangements:
1. Contain a variety of flower sizes, textures or shapes. Although round or spray-shaped flowers usually dominate, spiky shapes are good for triangular arrangements.
2. When using round flowers, the ones at the top should face up, those at the bottom face slightly down, some face right, some left and the ones in the center face out.
3. Involves stems not being seen but all should radiate or seem to radiate from the focal point.
4. Includes good development of depth. Some materials should extend over the edge of the container.
5. Contain some flowers buried behind others to lead the eye into the arrangement.
6. Shows that space is planned around the edges to give airiness.
7. Involves obvious space among the flowers.
8. Include foliage coming out between the flowers leading the eye in and out of the arrangement.

Line-Mass Arrangements
Line-mass arrangements combine the strong line of Japanese styles with the massed effect of European floral designs. Line-mass arrangements generally have a neat, uncluttered look with definite line, a well-defined mass and plenty of open spaces.
Usually strong lines are established in the upper part by spikes or spike-like flowers or leaves, or by leafy or bare branches. Roundish flowers are placed where the lines meet and between the lines to give a solid but clean-cut massed effect in the lower part.

**Principles to Follow:**
1. Decide whether to emphasize the *line* or the *mass*. They should not be equal in measurement, area or weight.
2. Feature the line material if it is of special interest.
3. Feature the mass material if it is more interesting in color or texture. If mass is emphasized, the result is a massed-line arrangement.
4. Whichever portion dominates, the line and mass must usually blend into one whole. Group the kinds and colors of materials, then blend the groups.
5. Line-mass arrangements are often triangular in shape, mostly asymmetrical in balance and meant to be seen from the front only.
6. They are usually colorful and striking in design, and often have a strong center of interest.

**Successful Line-Mass Arrangements:**
1. The line material penetrates and disappears into the mass material.
2. Some of the mass material is brought up to mingle with the main line.
3. The main line extends down into and through the mass, emerges at the rim of the container and often extends beyond to partially cover it.
4. The result is a strong unifying rhythm that leads the eye easily through the arrangement.
5. Sometimes the arranger may purposely segregate two kinds of different materials to produce an arrangement with striking contrast.
6. At least two kinds of materials are needed — one for line and one for mass.
7. Sometimes more than two kinds are used, but a large number of different kinds and colors should be avoided as they give an overly massed and cluttered effect.
8. A second mass material may be chosen just to develop the focal point.
9. Foliage is often used to provide variety, continuity and transition between the different kinds of materials. When placed at the back, foliage adds finish and depth to the arrangement.
Putting it all Together

Looking at the arrangement in the photo above, let’s break down how the elements of design have been used.

**Color**: Warm colors (reds, yellows, oranges) are used.

**Shape**: Line flowers such as the red ginger and birds of paradise are used to build the skeleton of the arrangement. The focal flowers used are the red anthurium and roses, which bring attention to the eye. Fillers such as yellow solidago, as well as the greenery are used to fill in the rest of the arrangement.

**Size**: Notice how flowers and greenery of different sizes are used in the arrangement. Some are larger, and some are smaller.

**Texture**: The red anthurium and leaves have a shiny texture, while the roses and yellow solidago are soft and dense. The birds of paradise and the palm leaves are spikey, while the myrtle and red ginger have a layered appearance. As mentioned earlier, it is important to include a variety of textures in your arrangement.

**Expressiveness**: Notice how the warm colors, types of flowers used and the shape of the arrangement have a tropical feel. This arrangement may be appropriate for a summer celebration or a beach-front wedding ceremony.

*Source: Flower Arranging, University of Illinois Cooperative Extension, 1978.*
The possibilities of what one can do in the world of floral design are endless. When you begin to arrange flowers, remember that it is an art form that takes time and practice to learn and master. But most importantly, remember to have fun and be creative. Share the art of floral design with others and know that there is always something new to learn.

Activity 4: Show What You Know

Now that you have learned about the fundamentals of floral design, take a few minutes to analyze the arrangement shown below. Identify the colors (warm/cool), color harmony, shape, predominant texture and occasion it might be used.

**Color Scheme:**
(Warm or Cool)
Identify specific colors:

**Color Harmony:**
(Monochromatic, Analogous, Direct-Complement, Split-Complement, Triad)

**Shape of Arrangement:**
(Line, Mass, Line-Mass)

**Predominant Textures:**

**Suggested Occasion:**
Practice What You Have Learned

Now that you have learned the basics about floral design, do the following:

1. Collect the materials needed to create either a line arrangement, mass arrangement or line-mass arrangement.
2. Take pictures of your arrangements and add to your portfolio and/or create a scrapbook in order to document your progress as a floral designer.
3. Explore how you can get more hands-on experience through taking classes from local floral designers or finding online resources.
4. After you become comfortable with floral design, volunteer to help teach what you have learned to other 4-Hers.
5. Enter your arrangements in your local or county fair or other competitions.

Text Sources:

Flower Arranging (1978) (Circular 1154), John R. Culbert, Professor of Floriculture, College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences Cooperative Extension Service, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
Congratulations!

You have now completed the Floral Design Activity from the Creative Arts and Design Project.

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