

Part I: The Art of Flower Arranging

History and Trends

ARRANGING FLOWERS is not a new custom. It dates back nearly three thousand years to the Egyptians, who not only sent many expeditions to Africa to bring back trees and plants for their gardens, but used flowers for decoration in their daily lives.

In Japan, flower arranging began about 600 AD, when a Buddhist monk brought back from China the custom of placing floral offerings on their altars. After centuries of study, meditation, and religious interpretation, it has reached a plane only a little below that of Japanese graphic arts.

In Europe and England, arranging flowers did not develop into a major art, as did music, sculpture, and painting, though flowers were widely used among the nobility and the upper classes. The shape was usually triangular and formally (symmetrically) balanced, with many varieties and colors massed and crowded in ornate containers, often with elaborate accessories.

In the early settlement of America, our ancestors were too busy establishing a new life and facing hardships and dangers daily to have time or thought for flowers. Most of the plants grown in their small gardens were either for food or medicine. The few treasured ornamentals they had brought with them were stuck in any available container and enjoyed for their beauty alone.

But in the early 18th century, when life became a little easier, flowers began to take on importance as decorations. The style of arrangements copied those of Europe — solid masses, rich and varied colors, oval or triangular shape with symmetrical balance.

It has taken nearly three hundred years for flower arranging to become a nationally popular hobby here in America. It was in the early 1930's that a movement was begun to break away from the traditional, massive style and to turn to the Japanese for line, voids, restraint, and asymmetrical balance.

From these two worlds has come our present day American concept that has rightfully taken its place among the important arts. It is a combination of the Oriental line and space, and the Occidental mass and color, developed into a line-mass and named "Contemporary American". This style is fresh, new, different, vigorous, and unmistakeably American. It is an art for everyone who loves flowers, for it is neither difficult to learn, nor is it limited to any age group. It does not require wealth, for materials can be found in the garden, along the roadsides, or in the fields and woods. It is as useful as well as a creative art, for the finished arrangement adds charm and beauty to the home, and brings pleasure to all who see it.

There is a new trend in flower arranging that is variously called "Dynamic", "Free Form", "Interpretive", and "Abstract". It is following the lead of present day painters, sculptors and architects, with emphasis on "creativity". It is suited to many of our modern homes and our casual way of living. Change is good, for change is progress and any static art soon becomes a decadent art. But no matter what direction this new trend takes, it cannot survive if it violates the basic principles of design.

Arrangement and Composition

IF YOU ARE GOING TO LEARN how to arrange flowers, then you must first understand what an arrangement is. A precise definition is difficult. Webster tells us that to arrange is to "put in proper order, to dispose in the manner intended or best suited to the purpose."

The key word is "order". Orderliness is a methodical, systematic process, a step-by-step procedure planned to avoid clutter and confusion. A bunch of flowers picked at random without regard to their sizes, shapes or colors and stuck haphazardly into a vase, just might be pleasing because of the beauty of the individual blooms. This is the method our great-grandmothers used and the results are rightfully called "Bouquets" or "Nosegays". They could not, by the widest stretch of the imagination, be called an "arrangement" as we understand the term today.

A flower arrangement is a three dimensional picture — having height, width and depth — made from living plant materials. Done with skill and with full attention to the principles of art, this picture will be pleasing; but add to it your own personal touch, your imagination, and your creative ability, and you will have achieved a masterpiece. The qualities that raise it above the ordinary and make it outstanding are distinction and originality.

Distinction

Distinction means noticeable excellence, definite superiority. It refers to the *way* in which the flowers are arranged — not *what* plant materials are used. Perfect workmanship is essential. A truly distinctive composition will convey an inspirational message to all who see it. Distinction can be achieved with the

most ordinary of materials, providing they are arranged in an unusual manner. It is easier to attain distinction by using clean lines; bold contrasts in form, texture, and/or color; and restraint in the amount of materials.

Originality

Originality means something new, not done before, not copied or imitated. It refers to *what* is used, not how it is used: unusual and different combinations of plant materials that are harmonious in form, texture, and color, that raise the design above the commonplace. A good example is one seen several years ago at a flower show, in which the exhibitor used a single, slightly moss-covered branch, two leaves of the skunk cabbage, a dull ceramic frog, and a weathered wood base. The combination of materials was not only original, their textures and colors blended perfectly. This composition was also distinctive in the use of one bold line, superior craftsmanship, and the interpretation of the theme "Early Spring".

Composition

When flower arranging began to become so popular in America, an "Arrangement" was defined as one without accessories, limited to flowers, foliages, and container. A "Composition" was an arrangement using one or more accessories. This no longer holds true and today the two terms are used interchangeably. Both mean an aesthetic floral picture, a planned grouping in which each part has a pleasing relationship to all other parts, and includes flowers, foliages, container, accessories, and backgrounds.

Design

A DESIGN IS A PLAN. Just as you need a pattern before you cut out a dress, or a recipe before you bake a cake, so must you have a plan before you make a flower arrangement. Design means a planned relationship between flowers, foliage, container, accessories, and location. It may be a mental picture or a sketch on paper but, in either case, it must be carefully thought out if the result is not to be hodgepodge.

Your design will depend on several things: your own personal preferences in colors and shapes, what you want to create, where you will use it, the occasion for which it is intended, and the flowers available.

Design defined: A design is the plan of a composition in color, of various shapes and sizes, arranged in an orderly and rhythmic manner to achieve a balanced, stable and harmonious picture.

Types of Design

All designs fall into one of three classes, or types — line, mass, and line-mass. These are illustrated at the bottom of this page.

Line — A line arrangement is one that depends on strong lines for major interest, emphasizes voids and open spaces, uses a small amount of plant materials, and restraint in the use of color. It has height and

width, but little depth; it is asymmetrically balanced and may or may not have a focal point.

Mass — A mass arrangement uses a greater quantity and variety of materials and is full but not overcrowded. It has depth, few voids and open spaces, places emphasis on color, and has a well defined center of interest. It is usually symmetrically balanced.

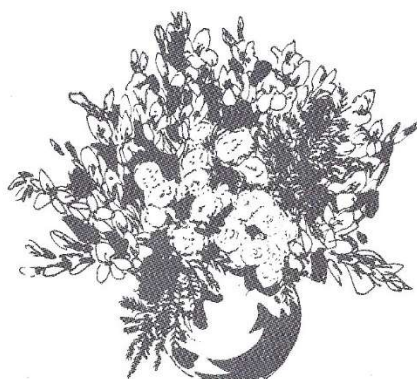
Line-mass — This is a combination of the line and the mass design. It is basically a strong linear pattern decorated with a light mass. It has depth, some voids, a definite silhouette, and a center of interest. It may be either symmetrically or asymmetrically balanced, but it will have a definite color scheme.

Elements of Design

Elements are variously defined as factors, parts, components, ingredients, constituents of an arrangement. They are quite different from principles, but are of importance in planning a design.

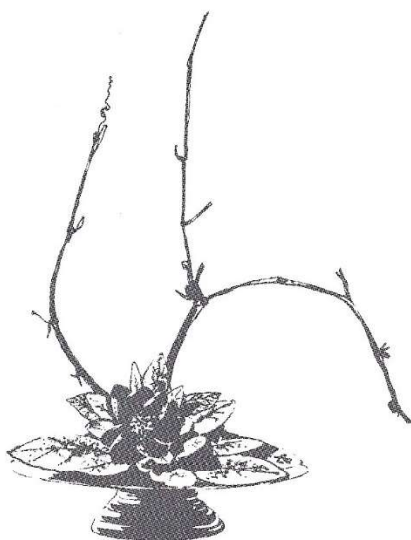
LINE

Lines are the framework, or the skeleton of the arrangement, around which the rest of the composition is built. This framework determines the shape



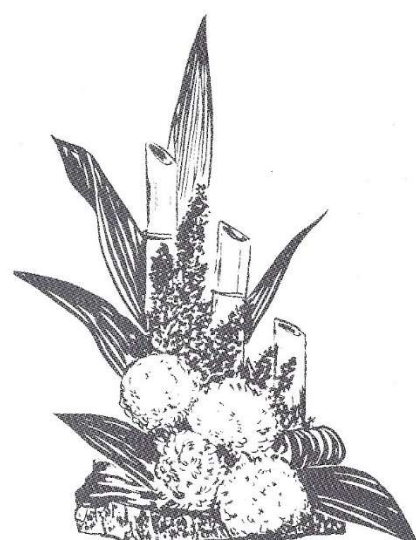
MASS

Mass design with salmon glads and bronze mums in a brown bowl. A diagonal line of Leather-leaf fern adds greater interest. Strong focal point placed a little off center for better balance. Few voids.



LINE

Line arrangement with much emphasis on voids. Wild grape branches are well balanced by the weight of the mullein leaves and the black container. Focal point is a brilliant red, camellia flowered begonia.



LINE-MASS

Canna leaves, corn stalks, brown dock and yellow mums in a shallow container (completely hidden) on a natural wood base, form this distinctive line-mass arrangement. The treatment of the canna leaves is especially effective.

of the arrangement, as well as its size. Lines may be straight or curved. *Line direction* means the way in which lines are placed, and this can be done in only three ways:

Vertical line — Stresses height rather than width and is placed at right angles to the horizontal line or plane. This is a line of strength, force, vigor and power, and is not only the most dramatic but also the easiest to do. It makes us think of church spires and tall, stately trees and expresses a feeling of aspiration.

Horizontal line — Stresses width instead of height and is placed parallel to the surface. Think of the horizon and you will remember the word "horizontal". This is a line of peace, quiet, tranquility, and slow action; it suggests sleep and rest.

Diagonal line — Slanting or sloping placement, neither vertical nor horizontal, but somewhere in between the two. The purely diagonal design expresses restlessness, insecurity and uncertainty, but diagonal lines used in combination with vertical and horizontal can be very striking. One way of achieving depth in an arrangement is by using diagonal lines.

Curved lines — Take the same directions as straight lines (vertical, horizontal, diagonal) but are more graceful, appealing, and interesting. They can be used alone or in combination with straight lines. Curved lines express motion, animation, and gaiety.

FORM

The terms, "form" and "shape," are often used to express the same thing, but there is a difference. Shape is the outline, the contour, the height and width of an object, while form is shape with the third dimension (depth) added. A circle is a shape, having height and width; a globe is a form, for it has height, width and depth. But for general purposes, they can be used interchangeably. All designs are based on one or more of three geometric forms — the pyramid, the cube, and the globe.

PYRAMID

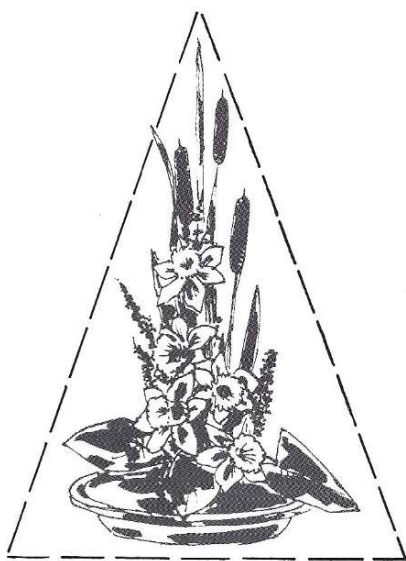
From this form come the various kinds of triangles. See three kinds shown on this page.

Equilateral triangle — All three sides having the same length. The tallest line (the central axis) is in the exact center and the focal point at the base. Using the same stem lengths on each side, the tips form the triangular outline. This is a mass design and is very easy to make.

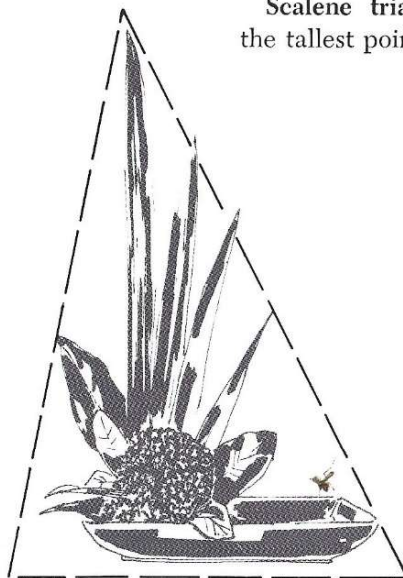
Containers can be either low or tall, but should have straight lines.

Isosceles triangle — Similar to the equilateral, but with sides of equal length and longer than the base. This is a little more interesting, since it is taller than it is wide. Both are symmetrically balanced.

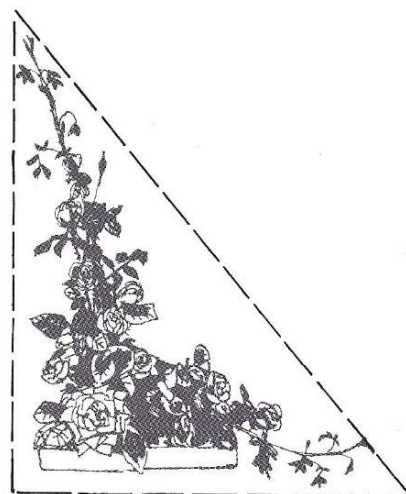
Scalene triangle — Each side a different length, the tallest point off center and the central axis imagi-



ISOSCELES TRIANGLE



SCALENE TRIANGLE



RIGHT-ANGLE TRIANGLE

Cattails, brown dock and daffodils in a Pyrex baking dish illustrate good textural relationships between dried and fresh plant materials. The philodendron leaves at the bottom complete the base line of the triangle.

Yucca leaves form the background lines of this scalene triangle and a pale green hydrangea blossom the center of interest. Dark green magnolia leaves soften the sharp contrast in forms, and the dull green container, with water showing, completes this monochromatic color scheme.

A good example of the right-angle triangle design, using only a yellow climbing rose (Golden Showers) with its own foliage, grading from bud to fully opened flower at the focal point. A rectangular container, brown outside and yellow lined, completes the color scheme.

nary, not real. The balance is asymmetrical and the focal point is at the base of the imaginary axis. This is the popular "asymmetrical triangle" and can be used in both the line and the line-mass designs.

Almost any shaped container will do.

L-shape:— A right-angle triangle, a combination of vertical and horizontal lines of equal length with the focal point at the base of the vertical. It is a stiff, rather mechanical design, but can be effectively used in pairs at either end of a mantle or placed closer together to form an equilateral triangle.

Containers are limited to the low square or rectangular, or the tall pillow types.

CUBE

The following forms are based on the cube. Three are illustrated on this page.

Vertical rectangle— This is a design of straight lines, with emphasis on height. A good vertical arrangement will not go beyond the bounds of the

container, with the focal point just above the rim. This is a good design to use with stiff, spike-like flowers and leaves.

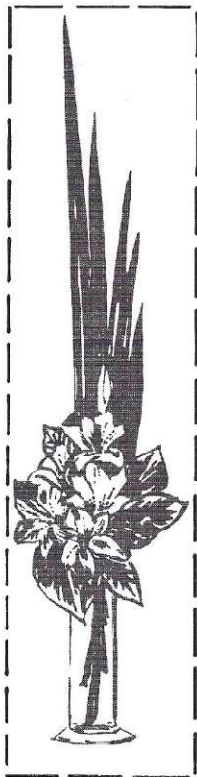
Best containers are those with straight lines but may be either tall or low.

Horizontal rectangle— Emphasizes length instead of height and is usually long and narrow. It is a very practical design for a long table and can be developed into a three-unit decoration by using a large unit in the center, with smaller but related ones at either end.

Containers are usually long, low and narrow.

Diagonal— Difficult to do well with straight lines and the result is likely to be stiff looking. Best in a tall, straight line container.

Square— This is really a circle with straight sides and because of its even distances is dull, uninteresting and seldom used. One use would be a square wreath for a door or wall— this could be most attractive and different.

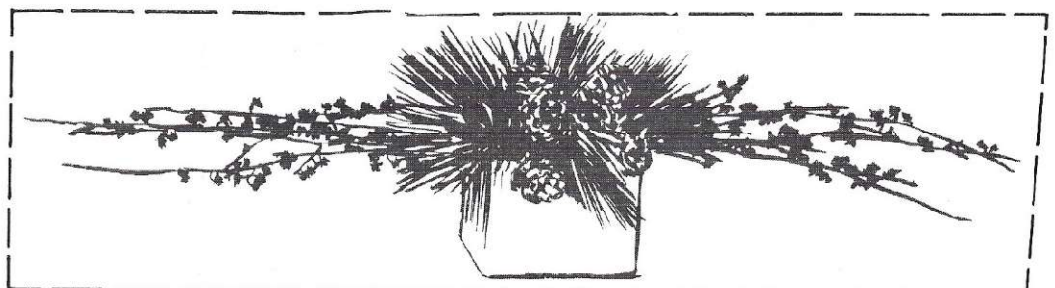
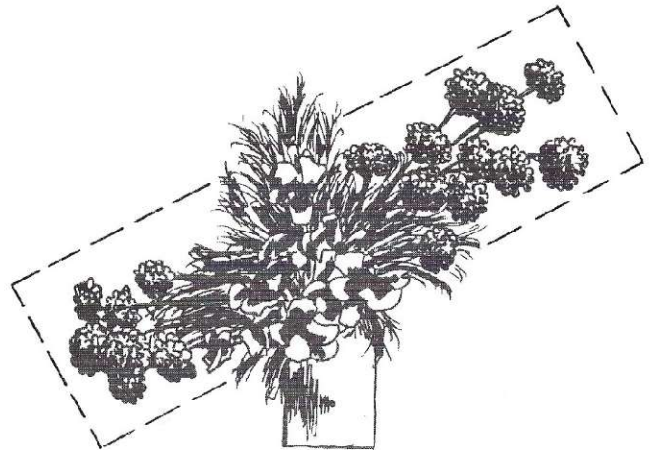


VERTICAL RECTANGLE

Yucca leaves form the tall background lines of this vertical arrangement and their rhythmic placement carries the eye to the center of interest area. The use of hosta leaves to outline the focal point (red-veined salpiglossis blossoms) softens the transition. Stems of the flowers continue the design to the bottom of the glass container.

DIAGONAL RECTANGLE

A diagonal line is achieved with orange zinnias, with brilliant yellow cannas at the center of interest and deep yellow plume celosia to tie them together. The container of brown pottery should be larger for better proportions.



HORIZONTAL RECTANGLE

Witchhazel branches form the horizontal lines, white pine

foliage and cones the center of interest. The container is dark green and the entire color scheme a little dull.

GLOBE

From the globe we obtain the four forms illustrated on this page.

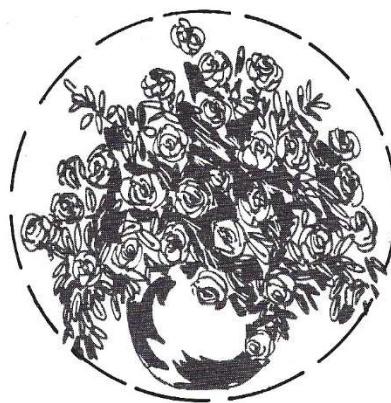
Circle and semi-circle — Lines radiate from a central point, the tips forming the round or fan-shaped outline. It can be made one-sided or finished on all sides (called "free-standing"). It can be upright for use on a table or mantle, or a flat wreath hung on the wall or door, or even used on a table. It can be a series of circles, such as an epergne, or a candelabra with four arms.

Containers are usually low round bowls, urns or compotes.

Oval — A circle that has been stretched, and made in the same way as the circle, with radiating lines. The oval form has more appeal than the circular and is the design often used in Period Arrangements.

Both circles and ovals are mass arrangements and use the same container shapes.

Crescent — Shaped like the new moon, a curved line that is less than a half-circle, with the ends curving either up or down. The upward curve is more interesting if the top line is longer than the lower and the focal point placed nearer the lower end, though both lines may be of equal length with the



CIRCLE

Deep red roses in a circular design that follows the lines of the dark green bowl. Center of interest is kept low for better stability.

focal point in the center. The downward curve, with the focal point placed high in the center, is a good design for a dinner table.

Crescents, as well as other curved designs, are limited to plant materials that will bend and hold the desired curves — or are naturally curved.

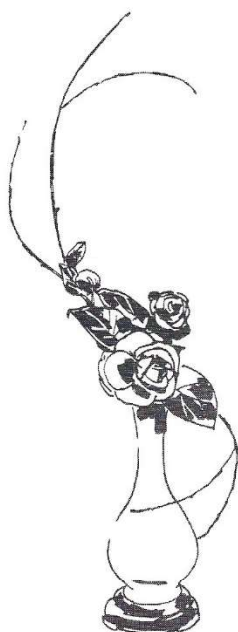
Containers are usually round or oval, low or tall.

Hogarth or S-curve — A reverse curve, a stretched out letter "S". It was named after the English painter,



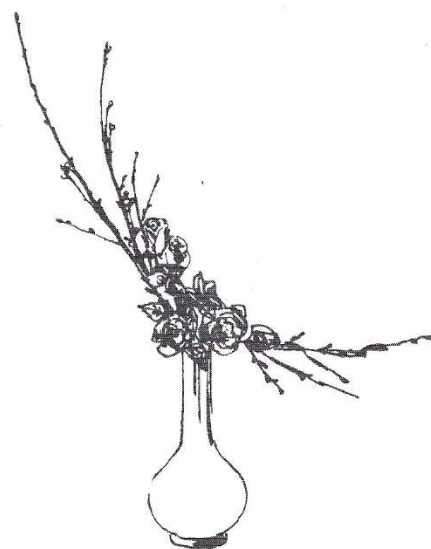
OVAL

Sharp color contrast — with dark purple lilacs in the background, well balanced by white roses in a white milk-glass compote. Pleasing use of voids.



S CURVE

Weeping willow branches are shaped to form the S-curve, and three yellow roses (bud, half-open, and full blown) form the center of interest. A yellow-green vase picks up the color of the branches; a black base adds needed weight.



CRESCENT

Pussy willow branches and pink roses in various stages of opening, complete a nice crescent design. Container is a soft gray that repeats the color of the pussies.

William Hogarth, who introduced it over two hundred years ago and called it the "Line of Beauty". It is one of the most beautiful and graceful of all forms. The S-curve may be used as a single line with a small center of interest, or it can be developed into a line-mass. The line direction may be vertical, diagonal and even sometimes horizontal, and it can be effectively used in the center of interest area in other designs. It is best used in tall vases with curves that can be repeated in the curve of the plant materials.

Spiral — This curve can be likened to the thread of a screw, or a watch spring pulled out and lengthened. It can be one or more lines curving outward, forward and downward in a half, three-quarters, one, or more than one full turn. This is a difficult design but it can be very beautiful. It is a good design for round flowers like the carnation or peony.

Containers should be round flat bowls, or tall cylinders.

SILHOUETTE

The form or shape of the arrangement, plus the voids and solids, as it is seen against a background is known as silhouette. The solids are the plant materials, the voids the open spaces between, and their various sizes and shapes make up the silhouette, or the pattern of the arrangement. Voids should decrease in size toward the center while the solids, or masses, increase. There should be no open space in the center of interest area.

TEXTURE

Is the surface quality of any object. It can be rough or smooth, downy or prickly, leathery or satiny, dull or shiny, fine or coarse, even or lumpy. Every surface has some kind of a texture and textural relationships are an important consideration in selecting materials for an arrangement. Shiny foliages attract the eye while those with dull textures blend more easily. The textures of the bases, containers and accessories must be in harmony with the texture of the plant materials.

COLOR

There is always color in plant materials, and while color is the most powerful element in a composition, it should never be allowed to become too dominant a factor. Color alone cannot make a good arrangement and is effective only when used in accordance with the principles of design. Color is explained in detail elsewhere in this Guide.

Principles of Design

Principles are basic laws, fundamental truths, and methods of operation that have been worked out, tested, and proven by master artists over the centuries. Principles are the same in all arts — music, painting, sculpture, etc. — but the way in which they are applied varies with each art. Principles cannot be changed but they can be, and are, handled differently in different arts, and by different artists in the same art. A painter, working in two dimensions, can only give the illusion of depth, but a sculptor's work has real depth. So does a good flower arrangement.

Principles are based on natural laws and they must not be confused with *rules*. As the art of flower arranging developed in America, rules were added from time to time. Many of these rules have become too restricting, so we disregard them, break them, or modify them. Some of these "rules" are:

1. An arrangement must always be $1\frac{1}{2}$ times the height or width of the container.
2. Always use an uneven number of flowers.
3. Never use fresh and dried plant materials together.
4. Always put dark colors at the bottom and light colors at the top.
5. Never use exotic or foreign flowers with native flowers.
6. Always use a horizontal arrangement on a table.
7. Always put roses in crystal or silver, zinnias in pottery.
8. Never cross lines.

All principles are closely related, are dependent on each other, and no one principle is more important than another. It is only through the proper use of all principles that a beautiful floral picture can be created, and a thorough understanding of these principles is of the utmost importance. Remember that rules may be broken, principles NEVER.

BASIC OR MAJOR PRINCIPLES

There are six basic principles of design: (1) balance and stability, (2) proportion and scale, (3) rhythm, (4) orientation, (5) harmony, and (6) symmetry.

Many authors make no distinction between balance and stability. They are closely related, but there is a difference between them. There is also disagreement among authors and teachers as to the meaning of proportion and scale. Both terms have to do with size relationships. These six principles are discussed in this section.

BALANCE

Defined, balance is the equal distribution of weight on either side of a central axis and in a *horizontal* plane. The axis is a vertical line through the center and may be either real or imaginary.

In a flower arrangement, balance means that it does not look as though it might tip over in a light breeze. *Weight* does not mean pounds and ounces, but refers to the visual attraction, the eye appeal. A large, bright flower looks heavier than a small, light one and if placed at the outer edge would make the arrangement look tippy.

There are two kinds of balance, symmetrical and asymmetrical, sometimes called formal and informal. The easiest way to understand it is to think of the seesaw. With two children of the same size and weight on either end, the lengths of the board are the same and there is equal, or symmetrical balance. But let a third child climb on one end and the length of the board on the opposite side must be increased to compensate, giving unequal, or asymmetrical balance.

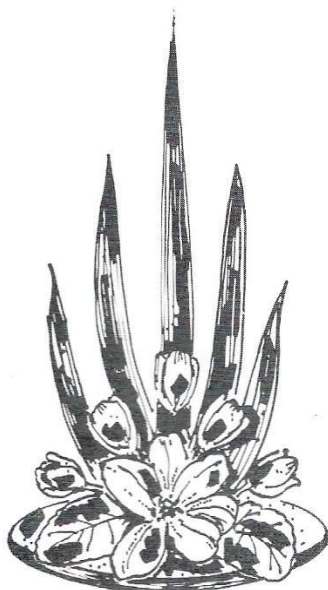
Symmetrical balance — Equal visual weight distributed at equal distances from the central axis, in opposite directions and in a *horizontal* plane. A vertical line (the central axis) splits the arrangement in half. The two halves may be identically the same, or they may vary slightly, so long as the visual weights are equal. The focal point is in the center, at the base

of the vertical line. Design forms are usually the equilateral or isosceles triangle, the circle and the oval. This is a very easy arrangement to do, for it is very mechanical.

Asymmetrical balance — Unequal visual weights distributed at unequal distances from the central axis, in opposite directions and in a horizontal plane.



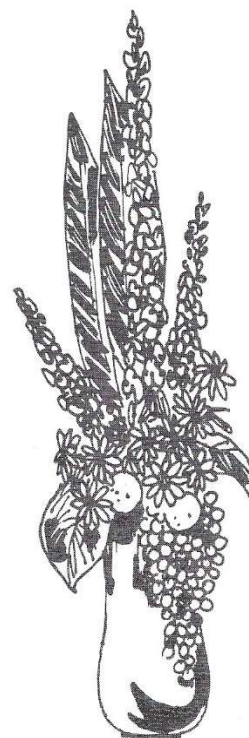
Effective use of three brilliant red gladiolus stalks, together with their own foliage, to form an asymmetrical triangle. A large black clinker hides the pinpoint holder and ties the plant materials into the black container.



Bilaterally symmetrical design with one side the exact duplicate of the other. Five iris leaves form the silhouette, five tulips the transition, and one fully opened tulip (petals have been turned back by hand) the focal point at the base of the central axis. A bergenia leaf on either side completes the design. Container is dark green.



Symmetrical balance with sides similar but not identical. Pink snapdragons, darker pink tulips, and a very dark pink anemone (placed slightly off center for better balance) form a pleasing color rhythm. Pachysandra leaves on either side carry the lines down over the pewter container.



A vertical design with asymmetrical balance. Color of green canna leaves and green gladioli (Green Ice) is repeated in green apples and grapes. White daisies add weight at the center of interest. Container is a soft yellow-green.

There is the same amount of *visual* weight on each side, but the distances, solids and voids are not identical. The focal point is at the base of the imaginary central axis. Just as in the seesaw, the long line on one side must be balanced by more material on the opposite side. The design form is usually the scalene triangle.

How to Measure Balance

(See page 53.)

To develop visual recognition of balance, a good exercise is to actually measure, with a ruler, distances on either side of a central axis. In both symmetrical and asymmetrical balances, the distance (or sums of distances) on one side will equal the distance (or sums of distances) on the opposite side. This should be done with sticks or with line drawings, since size, shape, texture and color all affect balance. The same rules apply whether the lines are curved or straight. You will find the drawings on page 53 helpful.

Symmetrical Balance

(1) Begin with three sticks. Place one vertically in the middle of a pinpoint for the central axis. Cut the other two the *same* length and place on opposite sides, at the *same* angles. With a ruler (or another straight stick) drop a plumb line from the tips and mark the point where these vertical lines touch the table. Measure the distances from these marks to the central axis. If they are not the same, it means either that your sticks are not of equal length, or they are placed at different angles — so start over.

(2) Now add two sticks of equal length, one on each side, placing them at the same angles, drop the plumb lines, make the marks, and *add* these distances to the first two. If your sticks are balanced, the sum of the two distances on one side will be the same as the sum of the two distances on the opposite side.

Asymmetrical Balance

(1) Follow the same procedure as in (1) above. Then, leaving the stick on one side in position, move the other downward, shortening it until its tip is over the mark. You now have two sticks of unequal lengths, but with their tips equally distant from the central axis.

(2) Repeat the exercise, using two sticks on one side, one on the other. The sum of the two distances on the one side must equal the distance on the opposite side. Then add a fourth stick — using two on each side; a fifth — three on one side, two on the other. Remember that the total of all distances on one side must be the same as the total of all distances on the other.

(3) When your eye can accurately see the balance

without your having to measure it, remove the central axis and repeat the exercises.

STABILITY

Defined, stability is the equal distribution of weight along a central axis, in a *vertical* plane. In other words, stability means that an arrangement does not look top-heavy. You can have balance without having stability, as in the letter "T", or a triangle sitting on one point, but neither is standing firmly. There are two things to remember in working for stability — keep the focal point low in the arrangement, and don't make the base too narrow. The wider the base, the greater the stability. A horizontal line looks much more firm and steady than a vertical one.

PROPORTION

The size relationship between the various parts of an arrangement — the flowers, foliages, container, accessories, the solid areas and the voids — this is what proportion means.

Very big flowers beside very small ones, a wide void next to a narrow one, a small group of flowers in a very big container — all would lack a good size relationship. In fact, the size of the container will determine the size of the arrangement. The old rule of $1\frac{1}{2}$ times the height or width of the container should not be completely discarded, for it is a good starting point. An arrangement that is the same height, or only a little taller than the container, is not pleasing, for there is too much sameness. On the other hand, if it is too tall it will lack steadiness or stability. See drawings on page 54.

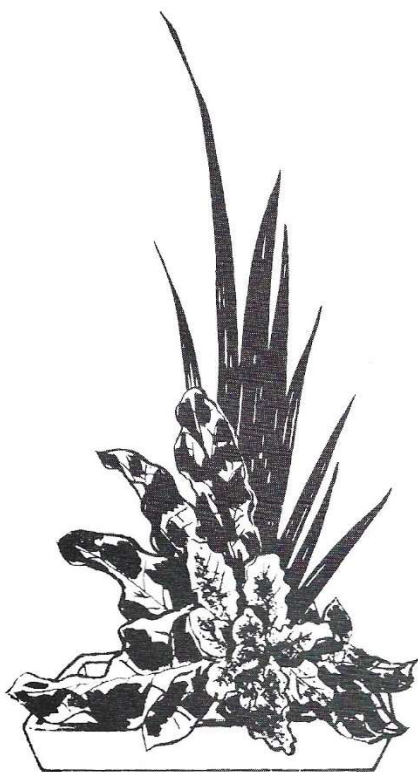
In making an arrangement, there are four main areas to keep in mind:

The background will be the largest. Here you will use branches, spike-shaped leaves or flowers, buds or very small flowers to form the outline and to give the longest, strongest lines.

The middle ground will be smaller, with medium sized, half-opened flowers, shorter stems and *medium value* colors. This is the bridge that leads the eye to the center of interest and is called the "transition" area.

Foreground, or center of interest. While this is the smallest area in size, it is the most important, for it is here that the focal point is located, usually just above the rim of the container, but breaking the line of the container edge for greater unity. This is where the largest flowers and strongest colors are used.

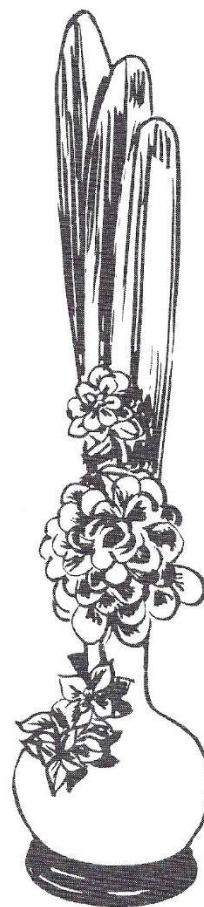
The container is very important, for it determines the size, shape, texture and color of the finished arrangement.



All-foliage arrangement using yucca leaves for the main lines (about twice as tall as the container is long) swiss chard, and a rosette of mullein leaves for the focal point. Container is a soft gray-green that blends well with the mullein.



While the height of the hemerocallis (day-lily) is actually only twice that of the container, placing the hosta leaves low increases the apparent height to two and one-half times. The large flowers need large leaves for good size relationship.



Canna leaves trimmed to a rounded shape repeat the lines of the container, and are about the same height as the container. Low focal point (a rosette of hen-and-chickens) with an off-shoot of the same plant on the left, improves the proportion greatly. Container is a dull, pale green, and the black base adds needed weight.

SCALE

Scale refers to the size relationship between the arrangement and its surrounding area—the place where it is used. You would not put a miniature on a dining table nor would you use a tall arrangement on a bedside tray.

RHYTHM

We define rhythm as the orderly spacing that gives the feeling or appearance of motion and carries the eye smoothly through the design, starting at the focal point and returning to it. An orderly sequence of sizes, shapes, colors and textures is essential. Repetition and transition both play an important part in good rhythm. See the illustrations below.

How to Achieve Rhythm

(See page 54 and 55.)

Spacing—Is the distance between various units of an arrangement *and is determined by stem lengths.*

Poor rhythm will have spacing that is either too regular (every stem just two inches longer than the one next to it) or too irregular (one stem three inches

long, the next eight inches, the third two inches long, etc.).

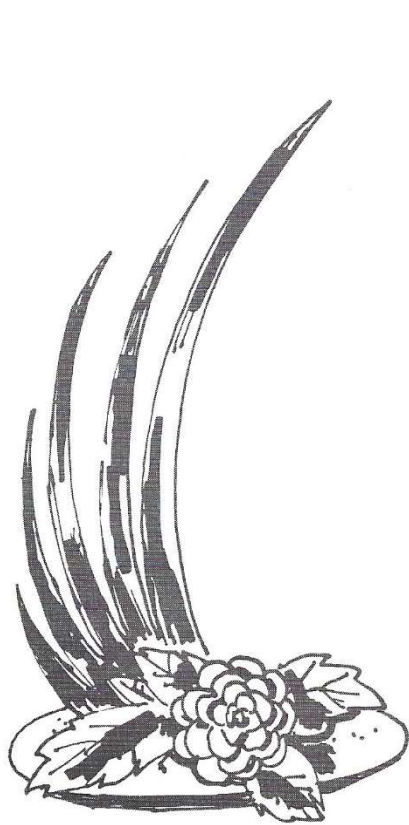
Good rhythm will have gradual but uneven transitional steps from the focal point. This can be described as regularly different differences. There are a number of mathematical progressions (a sequence or series of steps) but the one that is most used in arranging flowers is the *Fibonacci Progression*.

Fibonacci Progression

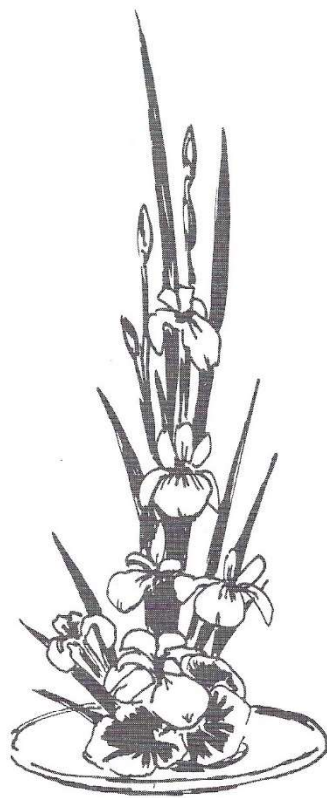
This is a progression, or series, of regularly different differences that is obtained by adding to each unit the one that immediately follows it. Two plus one equals three; three plus two equals five; five plus three equals eight, and so on. To show how this is used in flower arrangements:

Beginning at the focal point:

1st flower—stem length—one inch	(1)
2nd flower—stem length—two inches	(1+1=2)
3rd flower—stem length—three inches	(2+1=3)
4th flower—stem length—five inches	(3+2=5)
5th flower—stem length—eight inches	(5+3=8)
6th flower—stem length—thirteen inches	(8+5=13)



A rhythmic line of iris leaves is spaced to carry the eye quickly but in easy stages to the focal point—a brilliant red, camellia-flowered begonia, outlined in its own foliage. The circular lines carry out the round lines of the dark green container.



Iris foliage forms the main lines, while the flowers grade easily from bud to fully opened flower, and from upward facing at the top to forward facing at the center of interest. A small cluster of geranium leaves adds weight and unity with the container—a pie tin painted a darker blue than the blue of the iris.



A study in greens, using canna, aspidistra and pothos leaves with bells of Ireland, in a very dark green container. Facing of both flowers and foliages provides the rhythm.

Facing — Flowers all looking straight forward can be very uninteresting, and looking every which way most confusing. Changing them from looking upwards and backwards at the top (some flowers have very beautiful backs) to side facing, to forward facing at the focal point, will result in smooth, graceful rhythm.

Shape — Combining flowers that have different, but related shapes. The gladiolus has a linear shape, but the somewhat rounded form of the florets is similar to the purely round dahlia. The way a flower is faced will change its apparent shape. A round flower facing upward looks oval in shape.

Size — The gradual change in size from the smallest at the outer edges to the largest at the center of interest. There should be a medium size in between, to avoid too big a jump. A rose bud, a half opened rose, and a full blown one are good examples of both size and shape rhythm.

Color — This too means a gradual change: from one hue to another (yellow to orange); from one value to another (light yellow to dark yellow); and from one *chroma* to another (a bright, intense yellow to a dull, soft yellow). Color rhythm also includes color areas, grouping colors together to avoid a spotty, hit-or-miss effect.

ORIENTATION

Orientation is the distribution of units *around* a central axis and the direction the materials take from the axis. To put it simply, orientation means the third dimension — *depth*. If all lines are placed like the spokes of a fan, the arrangement will be flat like a fan. But if some are pointing backward and some forward, there will be depth. Be careful not to overdo the line directions, or the arrangement will appear to tip forward or backward.

To check your arrangement for depth, look at it from the sides to be sure the lines (both front and back) are neither too long nor too short; look down on it from above to be sure the lines are going in the right directions.

One way in which you are sure to have depth, is to finish the arrangement on both sides. But if it is to be used on a mantle or against a wall, carry some of the side material farther around toward the back. An illusion of depth can be obtained by using the cool, receding colors (the blues and the violets) toward the back.

HARMONY

(See diagrams on page 55.)

Harmony is a basic principle that is more difficult to define, for it deals with the intangibles (the aesthetic qualities) rather than the physical properties. Har-

mony is that which is pleasing, appealing, and with no jarring or discordant notes. A harmonious composition is one in which all units — flowers, foliage, container, accessories and background, are in complete agreement with each other. Harmony is the end result of knowledge and application of all principles.

In working for harmony, there are pitfalls to avoid, and some of these are:

- (a) Crossing lines to a degree where each line leads the eye in opposite directions.
- (b) Enclosing spaces where two lines meet, or seem to meet, at their tips.
- (c) Very sharp angles.
- (d) Sandwiching or scattering colors.
- (e) Too many colors.
- (f) Too much material, crowded and massed with too few voids.
- (g) Tangential lines (abrupt change in direction).
- (h) Too sharp a transition in sizes, shapes, textures or colors.
- (i) Too much, or too little variety in the different elements.
- (j) Too dominant a container.
- (k) Stems that do not come together at the focal point but seem to march away.
- (l) Disregard of any of the principles.

SYMMETRY

This is a principle that most authors do not venture to explain and few even mention. It is not difficult to understand and it does play an important part in flower arranging. Symmetry means beauty of form and this beauty is achieved by an orderly, precise and rhythmical placement of like units *around* or *along* a central point or axis. There are many kinds of symmetry, but there are only three that concern us in arranging flowers. See diagrams on page 55.

Bilateral symmetry — One side of the arrangement is exactly like the other. The same flowers and foliage, individual or in identical units, placed in the same positions on each side of the central axis and in the same plane. The fan and the sunburst are examples of pure bilateral symmetry. Do not confuse this with symmetrical balance, in which the opposite sides may, or may not, be identical.

Equidimensional symmetry — All points (or tips) are equidistant from the center, like an orange stuck full of toothpicks. This is the design most often used for formal dinner tables, though the lengths of the units on each side are frequently varied for greater interest. The two end units have the same length, the side units are shorter, and the secondary units (in between) a still different length.

Spiral or helix symmetry — A good example of the spiral symmetry is a garland coiled around a lamp-post. In arranging flowers, the various units are placed around a central axis (real or imaginary) the stems becoming shorter as they curve outward, forward and downward. The spiral can be a half, three-quarters, or a full turn; it may have one, two or even three lines. When more than one line is used, they must be kept parallel and fairly close together. This is a good design for flowers of one size, shape and color (such as the peony, carnation, and lily) for by good outward facing, their apparent size and shape will be changed.

MINOR PRINCIPLES

When the basic or major principles are understood and mastered, it is time to study those which we call "minor" or "supplemental". We do not say that these are less important, for they are all necessary for a good arrangement. But failure to use, or the incorrect use of these principles, will not be so serious and the resulting faults will not be so glaring. Some authors call them "principles", others "factors", and still others "results". Whatever name they are given, it is important that they be understood.

UNITY

Like harmony, unity is difficult to define. The two are closely related but we can distinguish between them by saying that harmony is agreement, lack of discord, total beauty, while unity is a oneness, a "togetherness", an artistic wholeness that results in harmony. Unity is the tying together of all parts — the plant materials, container, accessories, backgrounds — having each part in its right place and leaving out everything that neither belongs nor adds something to the picture.

An all-yellow arrangement in all-blue container would lack unity, but a little blue added to the center of interest would "pick up" and repeat the blue of the container. Some foliage or flowers over the edge of the container will break the straight line of the rim and tie the two together.

Two focal points in the same area compete for interest and there is confusion. In a combination of flowers and fruits, foliage in both areas will tie them together.

A red and white arrangement, with all red flowers on one side and all white on the other lacks color unity; but select white flowers with a red center to go with the all red and you will not only have unity, but a striking color contrast.

DOMINANCE

In flower arranging, dominance means more of one element than another, stressing or emphasizing one line, one shape, one size or one color, with all others taking second place.

You would not use two vertical lines of the same height side by side — one must be shorter to give the other greater importance or dominance.

If you use a round with a spike flower, use more of one than the other; with a small, medium, and large flower all the same kind, the large will dominate because of its size — there's more of it.

Don't use colors in equal amounts, for they will fight for attention. Dominance adds distinction and character to an arrangement.

CONTRAST

Putting elements together in such a way that their differences will be brought out and emphasized. We usually think of contrast as applying to color, but there is also the contrast of shape — a spike with a round flower; contrast of line — a curved with a straight, or a diagonal with a vertical; of sizes — large with small; of textures — dull with shiny.

Contrasts or differences are used to relieve dullness and monotony, but it can be overdone. Too great a contrast, or too many differences can result in discord and confusion. Variety may be the spice of life, but too much variety in an arrangement results in a mixed-up jumble. On the other hand, too little variety produces a tiresome sameness.

FOCAL POINT

CENTER OF INTEREST

Here again, the two terms are often used to mean the same thing and this is acceptable, though there is a slight difference.

The focal point — That spot in the arrangement that first attracts the eye. It is the starting point, where the eye begins to travel through the arrangement, and the place to which it returns. It can be compared to the bull's-eye of a target. It is at the focal point that all lines of the design converge, or come together. It is here that the largest flowers, the strongest colors, the most unusual foliages, the "eye-catchers" should be placed. It must be strong enough to attract the eye but not so strong that the eye cannot escape. It can be in the exact center, or off center, depending on the kind of balance used. It should be kept low for greater stability, should neither recede nor look pushed in. It should not be overcrowded, but neither should there be holes.

There can be more than one focal point in an arrangement, but *not* where they can be seen at the same time. In a free-standing composition, it is much more interesting to have different focal points on opposite sides. It is even possible to make a pleasing arrangement that has no focal point at all. The arrangement itself becomes the focal point for its surrounding area and the beauty of the plant material the major attraction. But generally, a focal point and a center of interest are important in a good arrangement.

Center of interest — The area immediately above and around the focal point, also called the foreground.

REPETITION

Doing the same thing over and over — that's repetition. In flower arranging, using the same unit without any variation is tiresome and dull. But by repeating it with slight changes, it is given emphasis and importance. Instead of using zinnias of all one size and color, vary the size from small to large, the color from light to dark. A green and white foliage will repeat the white of the flowers or of the container.

Design forms can be used to repeat container forms; flower colors to pick up and repeat container or background colors; and accessories to repeat both shape and color of container and plant materials.

TRANSITION

Transition means a gradual change from one color to another, from one size to another, from one shape to another, from one stem length to another. Some authors call this *gradation*. With small, medium, and large flowers there is good transition. Take away the middle one, and there is no transition — just contrast.

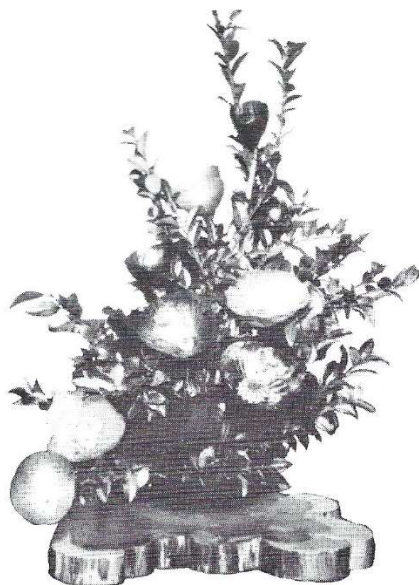
Transition is the easy flow or movement from the center of interest to the outer edges of an arrangement through the area (mid-ground) that connects the focal point with the silhouette. It is here that the medium colors, middle sizes and in between textures are used. Many times an arrangement has excellent lines and a well developed focal point, but nothing in between to connect them, to tie them together.

Outstanding Arrangements from Flower Shows



A versatile piece of driftwood — this one has been contrived from two separate pieces secured to a weathered wood base and can be used in many ways. A line of Scots pine following the lines of the driftwood with three bright red, feathered birds makes a long-lasting arrangement. It can be used in early spring with budding branches; later with daffodils or tulips; with garden flowers during the summer and with fruits and vegetables in the fall.

Arrangement by Mrs. Wm. J. Ullenbruch
Dimondale, Mich.



most unusual and original use of red and white onions, cut in half, hollowed out and glued to Oriental Poppy seed pods, to form "onion poppies". Light green, shiny leaves are massed for the focal point.

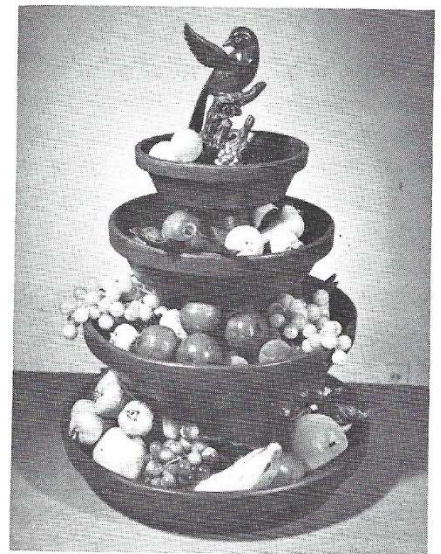
Arrangement by Mrs. Paul Ziegelbaur
Franklin, Mich.



The lines of the wisteria branches follow the lines of the container, and the rounded heads of the sunflower seed pods repeat the round end of the branch at the left. Subtle balance is achieved by the placement of the pod on the right, and the irregularity of the base carries out the general feeling of unity.

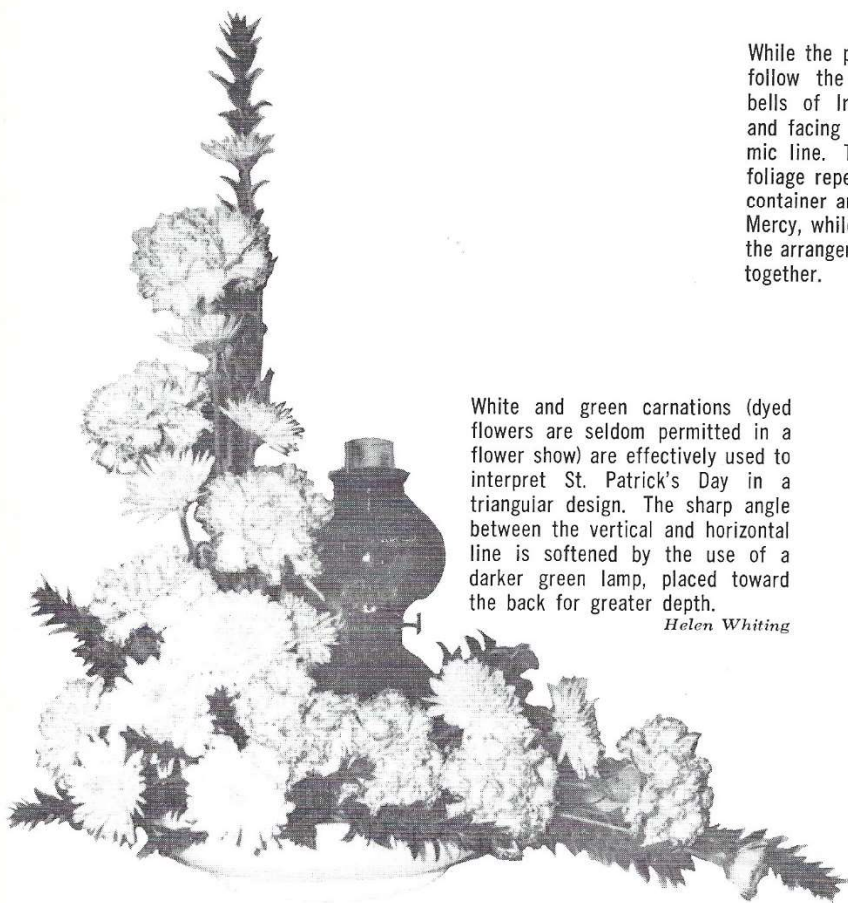


A bold design in black and white, with the deep voids between the sanseveria leaves forming the silhouette, filled in with salal (lemon) leaves at the center of interest area. The entire design is well suited to the very modern lines of the container, and the square black base with a white center adds the weight necessary for good stability.



This is a home made epergne, called a "Virginia Planter", contrived from inverted clay flower pots and clay saucers in graded sizes. Both pots and saucers were first brushed with Val-Oil to seal the pores, sprayed with two coats of black rustoleum paint and then "antiqued" by rubbing in a jade green enamel while the black paint was still wet. A very versatile container that can be used for flowers, fruits and vegetables, or for living plants.

*The three arrangements
above designed
by Mrs. Fred
Stefansky*



White and green carnations (dye flowers are seldom permitted in a flower show) are effectively used to interpret St. Patrick's Day in a triangular design. The sharp angle between the vertical and horizontal line is softened by the use of a darker green lamp, placed toward the back for greater depth.

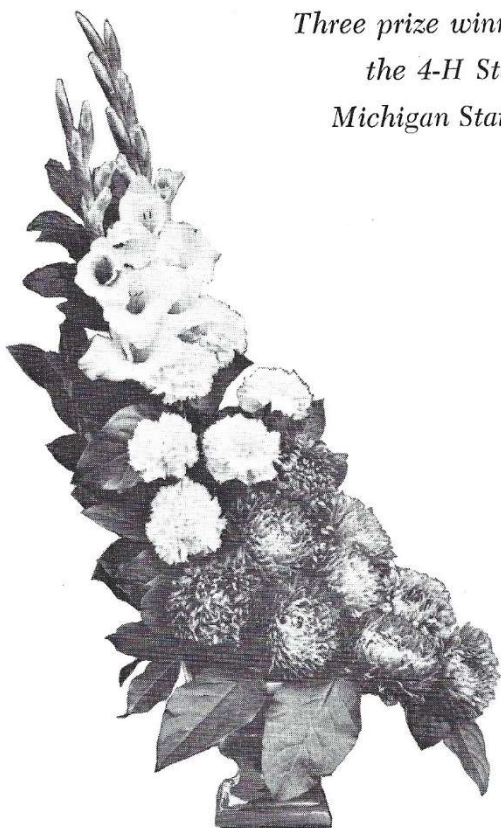
Helen Whiting

While the pale green Fuji mums follow the main lines of the bells of Ireland, their spacing and facing determine the rhythmic line. The green and white foliage repeats the white of the container and of the Goddess of Mercy, while the black base ties the arrangement and the figurine together.

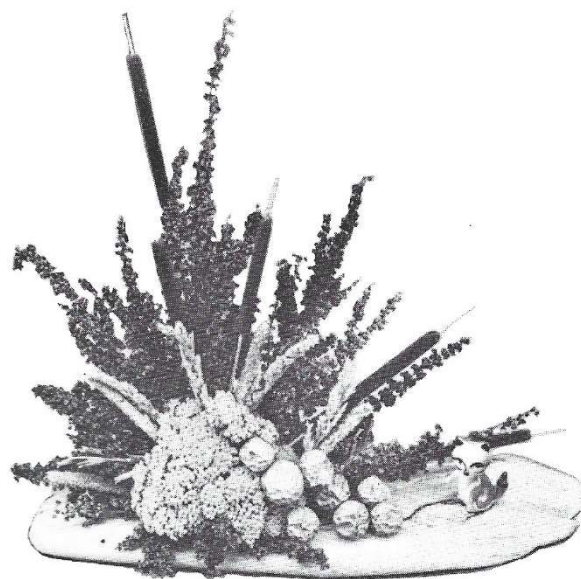
William Mason



*Three prize winning exhibits at
the 4-H State Show
Michigan State University*



Mass arrangement in a modified L-shape. The contrast in colors between the light value of the glads in the background and the dark value of the asters in the foreground was given a good transition by the use of a middle value color in the carnations (which do not show up in the photograph). Outlining the entire arrangement in green foliage adds greater unity. A little too much weight on the left.

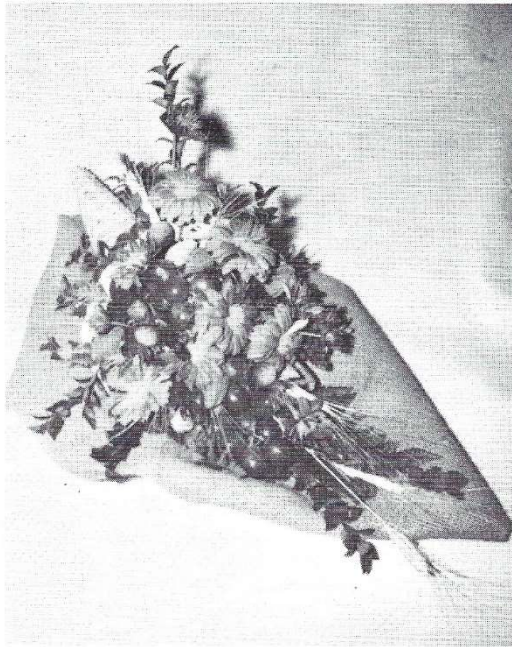


An analogous color scheme using all dried materials. Dark brown cattails and dock in the background are well balanced by the deep yellow of the tansy blooms at the focal point. The bright orange of the Chinese lanterns calls attention to the accessory, which is well related in both color and texture. The natural weathered wood base adds the finishing touch.

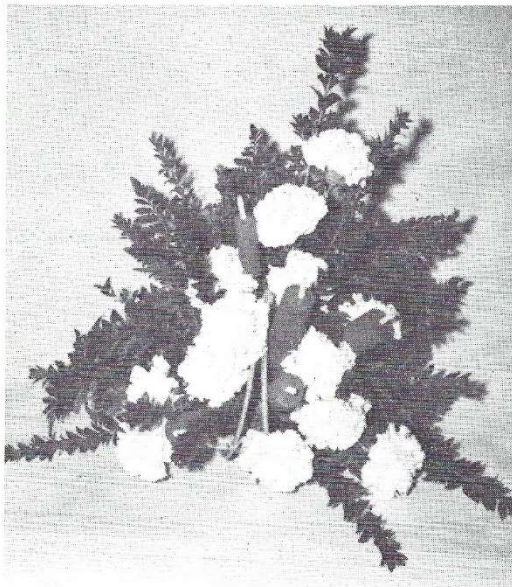


This symmetrically balanced, fan-shaped design achieved excellent depth. The salmon color of the background glads was repeated in the throats of those in the mid-ground, and the yellow-green of the Fuji mums emphasized the green of the grapes. (Container too small for best proportion.)

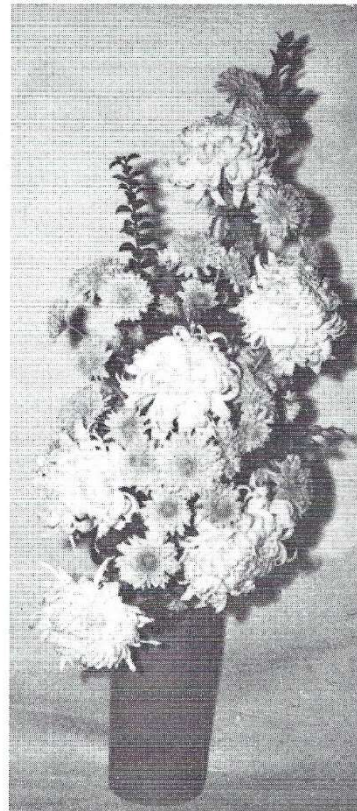
Student Exhibits — Flower Show Forum, Michigan State University



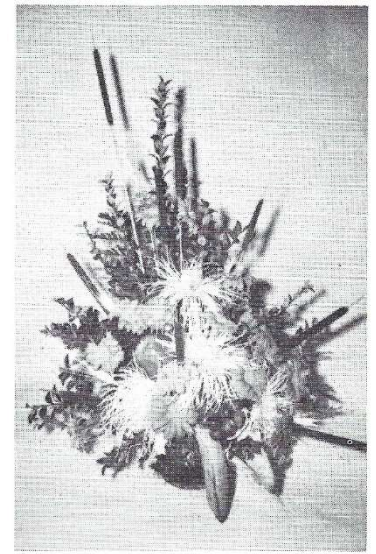
A brown burlap cloth is folded to follow the shape of the wicker cornucopia container and has an excellent textural relationship with the bronze pompon mums and the grapes.
Dave Raymond



A very pleasing interpretation of the "Fourth of July" using white carnations and five brilliant red firecrackers in the center of interest area.
Ronald Brahmner



This exhibit has excellent proportions between the plant materials and the container, in a vertical, mass design. The angle at which the photograph was taken makes it appear off balance, but it was not. The large mum at the lower left is the focal point and is in the exact center when viewed from the front.
Jim Dionne



Titled "Thanksgiving", this is a very pleasing combination of fresh and dried plant materials and fruits. Very subtle balance.
Randall Muebarger



This illustrates the importance of remembering that shadows are a part of a design. Red carnations form the single line of rhythm and green foliage completes the contrasting color scheme.
Kenneth Smith

Three black masks were used to interpret "Halloween". A dark gold ribbon around the brown board base picks up the colors of the bronze and yellow mums. The fern foliage provides the voids.
Julie Ganser