

# ROSE ARRANGEMENTS

## DESIGN COMPONENTS, ELEMENTS & PRINCIPLES

By Marty Hammond

Includes excerpts from ARS *'Guidelines for Judging Rose Arrangements'*.

Is there anyone who grows roses and does not cut them for bouquets in the house? In this way we enjoy the roses full potential. Rarely do I give a single rose on a bush, the attention I give one I have cut and brought inside. However, Many people don't really give much thought to the best treatment of roses when using them in cut arrangements. Creating exciting and interesting arrangements can be very rewarding and add beauty and fragrance to your home and add much pleasure to your rose growing hobby. I am always very intrigued by the composition and creativity achieved in cut rose arrangements.

When You want to be more creative and make an interesting and attractive arrangement, rather than a single rose in a vase, there are a few general rules to follow. The first being how and when to cut the roses. I try to cut roses in the early morning, putting them in a bucket of warm water for about an hour. Keep the flowers dry but submerge as many leaves as possible. I cut the stems longer than I anticipate needing in the arrangement, so I can re-cut the stems under water again later. When ready to begin my arrangement, I remove the leaves and thorns that will be below water level, and make a clean angle cut of the stem UNDER WATER, which prevents air blockage on the stem. Sometimes I use a "stripper" to remove thorns on very thorny varieties, but I prefer to break off the leaves and thorns, or cut the tip off the thorns for a cleaner look. Over time I have found some roses are more cooperative; they are slow to open, lasts a relatively long time and age attractively. You will learn which varieties are best for arrangements and choose those over ones that open quickly, and have a short life span in the house.

I then decide where in the house I'm going to display my arrangement, which is usually in the family room, and choose a vase or container that fits the location. All containers and utensils used should be clean. Keep in mind, the arrangement will last longer if kept out of the sun. If I'm making a table centerpiece, I want it to be low enough so I can see over it while seated. If I'm placing the arrangement on the fireplace mantel or end table, it can be tall and stately. If I'm creating a specific design, I may use 'Oasis' foam to achieve my desired effect. Oasis foam can be re-used sometimes, if dried completely between uses.

Then I choose what other flowers, greenery or decorative items I want to use as filler, since my roses are to be the focal point of my arrangement. I have found 'rosemary' is a great filler, which it's delicate tiny blue flowers and dark blue-green foliage. However, 'rosemary' can over power the scent of the roses, so if I'm using fragrant roses, I will usually use ferns, camellia branches, iris leaves or honeysuckle as filler. The honeysuckle also has it's own scent, but it seems to be in harmony with the roses.

Besides fragrance, you need to consider color. Not all roses look great together, and you'll have a more pleasing arrangement if you pay close attention to how you combine your colors. Try to choose roses at different stages of openness, to add interest. When a bloom becomes spent, remove it and replace it with a partially open bud to extend the life of the arrangement. I like to mix mini roses into my arrangements, if I can get blooms with long enough stems. Often my minis are used in small vases grouped together, when the stems are too short to use them in an arrangement with other flowers.

Another factor to consider is the use of cut flower preservatives. Research has shown that the life of fresh flowers is dramatically extended with the regular and proper use of floral preservatives. However, many argue that roses really don't need floral preservatives, they will last just as long if

the stems are re-cut under water every day, and given fresh water. This is easy to do if you have just one or two roses in a vase. If you have created a design that requires the use of a device to hold the roses in place within the arrangement, you may benefit greatly by using a cut flower preservative. The term preservative doesn't mean it actually preserves the flowers, it only extends their lives. It does this by supplying sugar or nutrients and energy to the flowers. It also contains a bactericide to kill bacteria and other organisms in the water, which clog stems, inhibiting water and nutrient flow to the flower. It also acidifies the pH of the water – making the water wetter – which increases and maintains the uptake of water and nutrients by the flowers. It's important to note the ingredients in floral preservatives are not toxic to humans or animals. Some people use aspirin, bleach, sugar, pennies, non-diet 7-up, Listerine, etc., to extend flower life. Any of these by themselves cannot provide the balance necessary, nor can you be sure of a proper dosage. Any homemade preservative should contain sugar, a bactericide and an acidifier, but how do you measure the correct balance? I take the guesswork out of it, and use a commercially prepared floral preservative. It's easier, safer and more effective, if used correctly in proper proportions. Too much preservative can be moderately toxic to a flower, actually decreasing vase life. Too small of an amount actually promotes bacterial and microbial organism growth, so is then no better than or even worse than using plain water. Remember, whether using preservatives or not, roses are heavy drinkers, and you need to pay close attention that they do not go dry in the container or vase.

The eight "Basic Designs of Floral Arrangement" are 1. HORIZONTAL, 2. VERTICAL, 3. TRIANGULAR, 4. CRESCENT, 5. OVAL, 6. MINIMAL. 7. LAZY "S" OR "HOGARTH CURVE", and 8. FREE STANDING.

The "design" is the pattern or plan of an arrangement. All floral arrangements, except wreaths and garlands, originate from these eight basic designs. To give a little more technical overview, I have outlined the Components, Elements and Principles of designing an arrangement, excerpts taken from the ARS '*Guidelines for Judging Rose Arrangements*,'93 Rev.

**DESIGN COMPONENTS OR STRUCTURAL PARTS OF THE ARRANGEMENT** are put in place to form a design. Every component must be suitably selected so that it will work harmoniously with every other component to establish a unified design. These components are:

1. **Plant materials**, fresh, dried or treated. Other flowers may be used in combination with rose but the roses must be dominate.
2. **Container** is the receptacle that holds the plant materials, mechanics and other components. If fresh plant material is used, it must be "functional", in that is must be adequate to hold water. The container acts as a foundation for the design. The container must be a design that is in harmony with, but subordinate to, plant materials in size, form, color and texture.
3. **Mechanics** are the devices and aids used to secure components in the desired position. 'Oasis foam', pebbles and packing material are some of the most commonly used. The structure and stability of a design depend on the skillful use of appropriate mechanics. They should be placed so they are not distracting.
4. **Background** is the surface in back of, underneath above and on either side of an arrangement, within a visual frame or a physical frame. It must enhance the design, not distract.
5. **Base** is an optional component of a design. If used it provides bottom visual balance or can add additional height to a design.
6. **Accessories** in a design is anything in addition to the plant material, container, base, background or mechanics. Accessories must be subordinate to the design and used to add visual weight and balance, help interpret theme, help express a mood or feeling, or to add aesthetic appeal or interest. Accessories should be harmoniously related to the other components. Ribbons and bows are two of the most commonly used accessories.

7. **Material.** Anything may be featured, but only if it dominates. In rose arrangements, the roses are what you most likely want to be featured.

**DESIGN ELEMENTS OF AN ARRANGEMENT** are the visual qualities of a design, the visual characteristics of the physical components. The elements are space; line; form; size; texture; pattern and color.

1. **Space** is the unoccupied area in and around the design. The total space is three-dimensional. In homes, total space is determined by wall areas and furniture.
2. **Line** is the visual path from one point to another in a design. Line establishes the structural framework of a design and is usually the first part to be placed. Line should express directional movement.
3. **Form** is the shape or structure of the arrangement. It is three-dimensional, height, width, and depth, which is dependent upon placement of plant materials. Open form has spreading parts with spaces. Closed form is solid and compact with few spaces.
4. **Size** is a visual or apparent dimension of line, form or space. It is influenced by color and texture. Warm colors seem large and dominating. Cool colors seem to recede and disappear into the design. Glossy textures seem larger than dull textures.
5. **Texture** is the surface quality of the components of design that appeals to the senses of sight and touch. It may be rough or smooth, coarse or fine, glossy or dull, hard or soft. Texture provides interest in the design through contrast I textures used in the right proportions.
6. **Pattern** is the silhouette or outline made by the design against its background.
7. **Color** is the most powerful of all the elements in design. Color is symbolic and expressive. It is an important element to suggest feelings, emotions, moods and ideas or objects through association.

**DESIGN PRINCIPLES OF AN ARRANGEMENT** are used to organize design elements.

1. **Balance** is the actual and visual stability of an arrangement. It may be *Asymmetrical*: approximate equal visual weight composed of different elements on each side of a central axis, or it can be *Symmetrical*: similar on two sides of a central axis.
2. **Dominance** is the use of more of one element than another. More of one color, form or texture.
3. **Contrast** is difference. It is achieved by placing opposite or unlike qualities or opposing elements together in a way that emphasizes difference. For example: Shape (round-square), Line (horizontal-vertical) Color (light-dark) Texture (rough-smooth).
4. **Rhythm** is the flow or feeling of related movement that carries the eye through the arrangement. Rhythm may be regular and repeated or free and variable and can be evident in line direction (vertical, horizontal, diagonal, radiating, cascading); gradation in size, form color or texture and repetition of size, form, color or line direction.
5. **Proportion** is the relationship of the area, volume or amount of one part of an arrangement to another part, and of one part to the whole, and the whole to the space it occupies.
6. **Scale** refers to the size only. The size of plant materials to the container; the size of other flowers, if used, to roses; the size of any accessory or base to the container; the size of the arrangement to the background. The size should be "not too big, not too small, but just right" in the relationship with other design components.

Once you try designing and creating arrangements, you'll find it very challenging and exciting. We have several books on Arrangements in our RSSM Library, which are available to RSSM members upon request. These books give excellent guidance and ideas for both fresh cut and dried arrangements. Start simple, then begin to expand your ideas and become creative. You may be surprised to learn you have untapped artistic ability.