

Basic Floral Design

4-H 2354L

Oregon State University Extension Service

August 1979

Contents

History	3
Principles and Terms	3
Containers and Holders	8
Teaching Techniques	9
Design Patterns	10
Design Construction	19
Summary	23

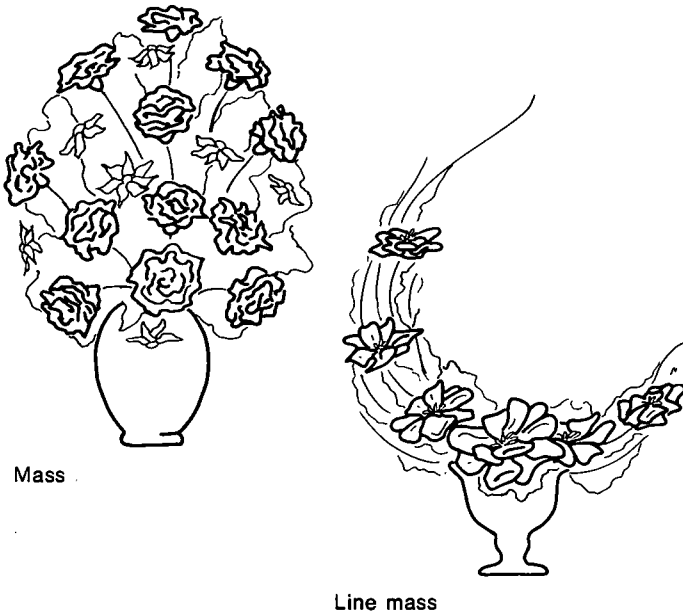
Prepared by Dave Adams, Multnomah County Extension Agent, in cooperation with the Development Committee for Plant Science Projects, Oregon State University.

4-H seeks participation of all youth regardless of sex, race, handicap, or national origin.

Basic Floral Design

This unit presents only the basics of floral design and gives patterns that 4-H participants may follow. A minimum of space is devoted to terminology and principles of floral design; many books describing these terms are available from local libraries. A slide tape series of all design principles and construction of the basic patterns is also available from the State 4-H Audio Visual Library, Extension Hall, OSU, Corvallis.

History



Most floral design today is a combination of Oriental and European influences. Oriental design is characterized by minimum use of plant materials. These arrangements often use a single flower as the focal or main point of interest and are traditionally referred to as "line" design. This conservation of natural materials was first taught by Confucius.

The European design is generally a large round or oval mass of flowers. Flower placement is not rigidly dictated as in Oriental design. The European "mass" design often does not have a focal point. The design itself is used as the room's focal point.

Much floral design in the United States is referred to as "line mass" and combines Oriental and European ideas. American floral design uses more material than the Oriental design, but far less materials than the European. Floral design in the United States is often built around linear patterns, further showing the Oriental influence.

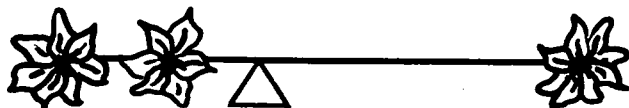
Principles and Terms



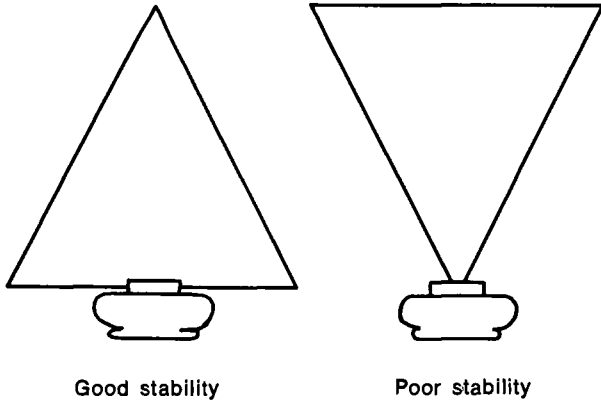
These principles have developed over many years and are used as guidelines in all types of design.

Balance. Balance refers to the distribution of "visual weight" on either side of the design's vertical axis. The design should have as much "visual weight" on one side of its vertical axis as on the other. Anything that appears to be unbalanced gives a feeling of uneasiness.

Balance can be symmetrical (both sides of the design are exactly the same) or asymmetrical (the two sides may be quite different in appearance). In all cases the "visual weight" on one side exactly counter-balances the "visual weight" on the other.

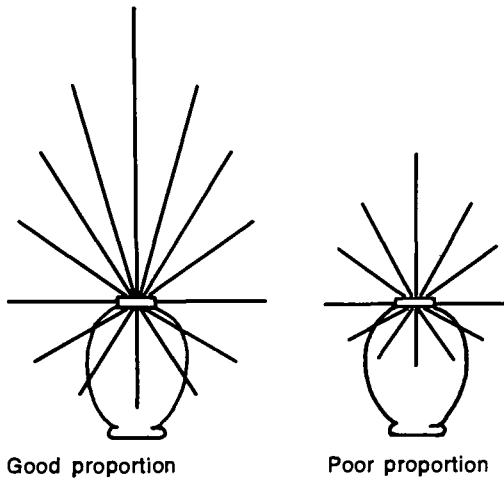


Balance



Stability. This refers to visual weight along the vertical axis. A design that appears top heavy does not display good stability. Increase stability in any object by making the base appear wider or heavier looking than the top.

Proportion. Proportion refers to the relative size of the various parts within the arrangement. Do not use a large, massive container with very small, fragile flowers. Use flowers of similar size to maintain good size proportion.



Scale. Scale refers to the size of the finished design as compared to its background. Make the arrangement for a specific area and let it fit its surroundings.

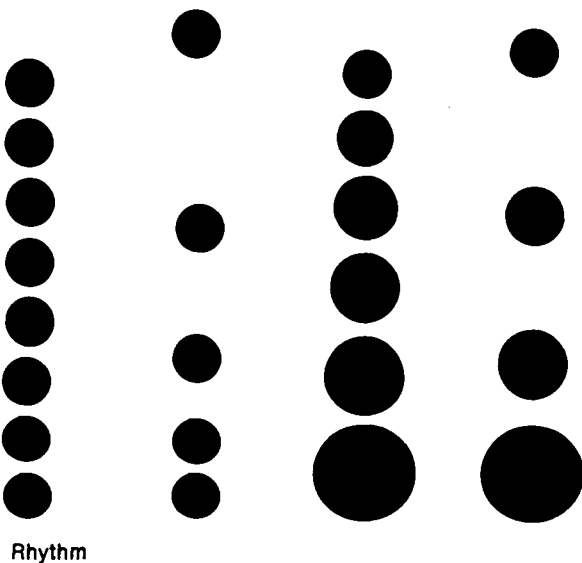
Rhythm. Rhythm is a technique of using the same color, size, texture, spacing, or shape repeatedly in a design.

Spacing. One of the most common and important ways to use rhythm in a design is through the spacing of individual flowers. This spacing leads the eye through the design and always returns it to the focal point or center of the arrangement.

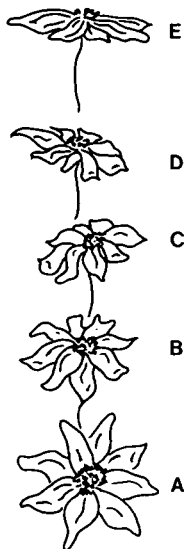
One type of spacing is the Fibonacci Progression. It is a system of regularly different differences where each succeeding item is the sum of the two immediately preceding it. For example, $2 + 1 = 3$, $3 + 2 = 5$, $5 + 3 = 8$, etc.

Begin at the focal point:

- 1st flower—stem length 1 inch
- 2nd flower—stem length 2 inches ($1 + 1 = 2$)
- 3rd flower—stem length 3 inches ($2 + 1 = 3$)
- 4th flower—stem length 5 inches ($3 + 2 = 5$)
- 5th flower—stem length 8 inches ($5 + 3 = 8$)



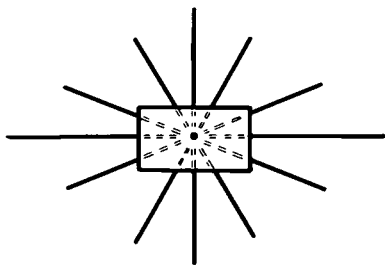
Rhythm



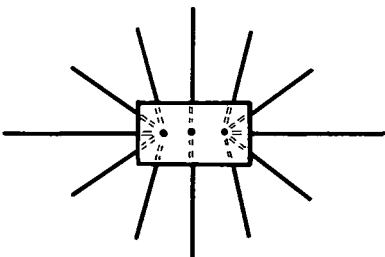
Facing

Facing (size, shape and color). Facing flowers in different directions greatly alters their "visual weight." Altering their respective positions increases or decreases the eye appeal or visual weight. Similarly, altering flower size, shape, or color creates these same effects.

For example, does **A, B, C, D,** or **E** have the greatest eye appeal or visual weight? As **A** appears largest, it would have the greatest attraction. All five are the same size, but they are merely faced differently.



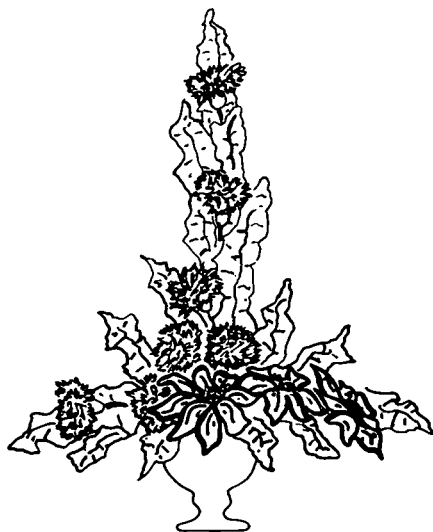
Good orientation



Poor orientation

Orientation. This refers to the radial distribution around the central axis within the design. Attempt to make all stems *appear* as if they come from one central point, but also use different lengths to avoid a flat appearance. Violation of this principle is most common in the construction of centerpiece arrangements.

Create "visual depth" or a three-dimensional effect by using flowers and greens of different lengths and by placing materials in front and back of the arrangement. If all flowers are positioned to give a flat, continuous effect, the design will look unnatural and artificial.



Dominance

Dominance. It is often very easy to develop a design using many kinds of flowers and foliages, but when the design is finished it appears to be a hodgepodge of color, texture, sizes, and shapes. Use a predominance of one color, texture, shape, and size in basic design, and compliment this with small amounts of other colors. By maintaining a dominance of one type of material, the finished design is more harmonious and pleasing.

Equal amounts of two colors often result in a lack of interest in the design. Equal quantities of material or colors compete for dominance and make the total design uninteresting.

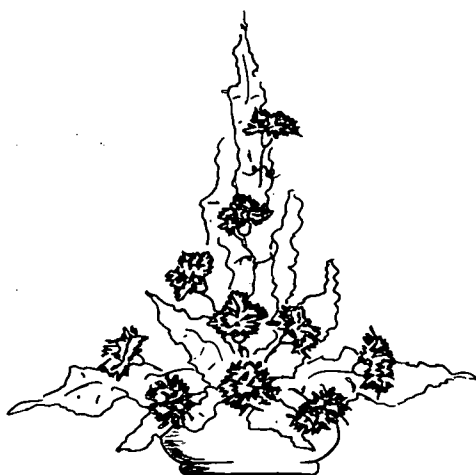


Color contrast



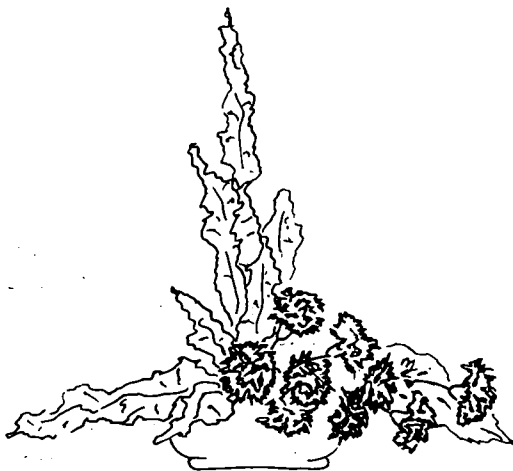
Texture contrast

Contrast. Contrast in colors, textures, and shapes enhances the differences exhibited by the other materials. Maintain a dominance of one color, texture or shape in your work, but don't be afraid to use other materials.



Good transition

Transition. This refers to the blending of colors, line patterns, textures, and other factors. Avoid sectioning your design. Sectioning occurs when you use only a single color or texture in one area and another color or texture in another area. Blend colors, textures, and shapes together to develop your design into a single complete unit. Accomplish this by using the colors throughout the arrangement.



Poor transition



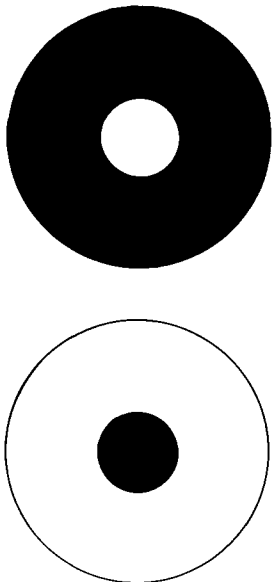
Proper focal points

Focal Point or Center of Interest. The focal point of your design is usually located in the lower center because the eye is drawn to this area. Develop the focal point by using all the principles discussed. Proper spacing of flowers moves the eye to the center of the design. This is also possible by proper facing, color, and size development of flowers.

Visual Weight. Visual weight is anything that draws, moves, holds, and returns the eye to a given place in the design. Light colors generally have more eye appeal than dark colors. The actual color, however, is not as important in eye appeal as the relative quantities of the various colors.

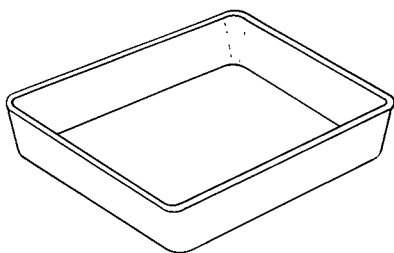
For example, a black circle with a white center, will draw the eye to the white center first, because of the color contrast and the position within the circle. A black spot in a white circle, will draw and hold the eye to the black spot for the same reason.

Color dominance and contrast is very important in design. When working with only a single color, flower facing, shape, and textures of foliage all play major roles in developing eye appeal. Although physical weight must be considered, it is visual weight that will most easily promote or destroy the finished product.

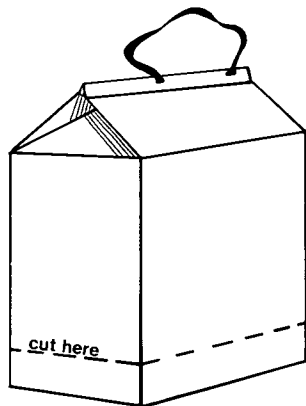
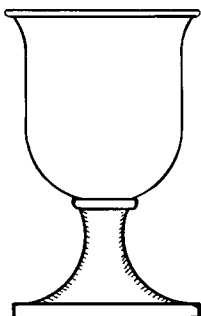


Visual weight

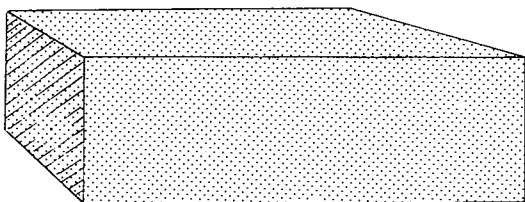
Containers and Holders



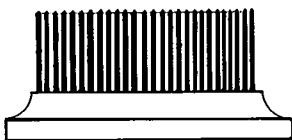
Household container ideas



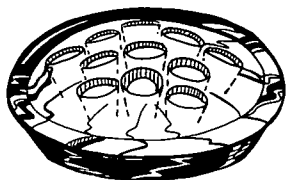
Homemade container idea



Floral foam



Needlepoint frog



Glass frog

Floral arrangement containers should be visually pleasing and compliment the arrangement. The most useable containers have wide mouth openings and are not brightly colored. Containers should not compete with or distract from the arrangement.

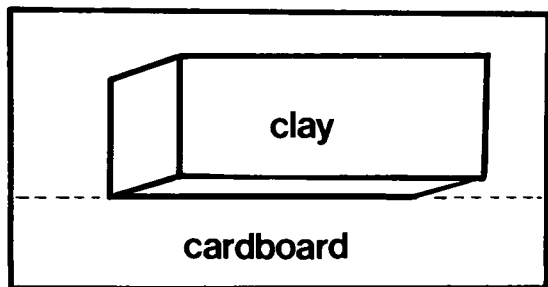
Spend time with 4-H members explaining how to locate and/or to create attractive containers. Containers from baking dishes and shallow bowls work well for beginning floral arrangers. Low, shallow containers can be made from quart or half-gallon milk containers cut lengthwise. Bottom or side sections of liquid detergent or bleach bottles may also work. When homemade containers are utilized, members may need help painting or decorating the container to complement the arrangement.

Many types of holders are available including floral foam, needle points, glass frogs, and rolled chicken wire. These materials often are attached to containers with florist clay and/or waterproof florist tape.

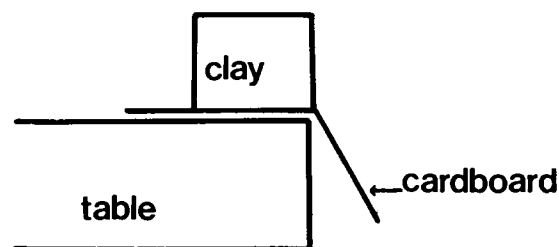
Floral foam is the most useful flower holder. After soaking in water, the foam acts like a large, firm sponge and fits in the container in nearly any position. Water is then added to the container. If the foam is placed above the rim of the container, flowers may be inserted horizontally or upside down and still obtain water. Unlike needle points or glass frogs, foam does not restrict the placement of stems and flowers.

Floral foam is sold under various brand names. Their water holding ability and structural strength are the only differences. For special table favors or other small arrangements, soak the foam in water, wrap it in colored foil, and stick the stems through the foil.

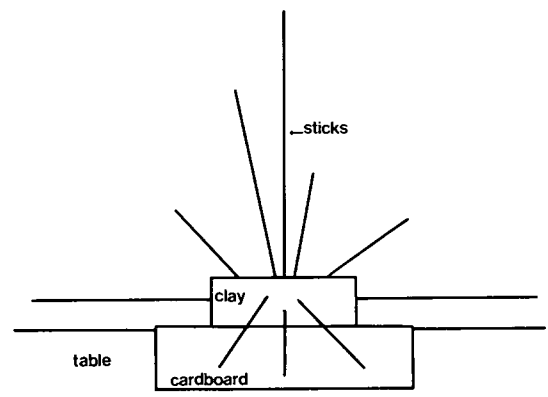
Teaching Techniques



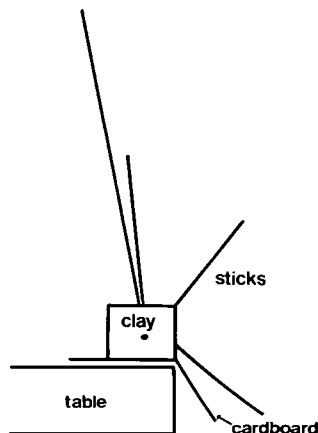
Top view



Side view



Front view



Side view

Since flowers are quite expensive and not always readily available, you may wish to teach positioning of main line flowers by using clay and sticks. Gather straight willow or filbert sticks and have your 4-H members cut them into various lengths. Do not handle the clay more than necessary; it will not hold position once it becomes warm. Place soft clay in the refrigerator or freezer for a short time to harden it.

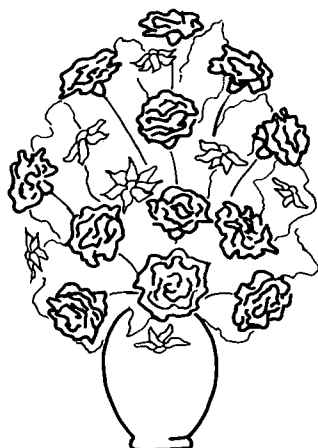
Place the clay blocks (about 2 by 2 by 4 inches or about 5 by 5 by 10 cm) on a folded 4 by 6 inch (about 10 by 15 cm) card or paper. This prevents clay oil from soiling the table top.

Assume that the table edge is the container edge.

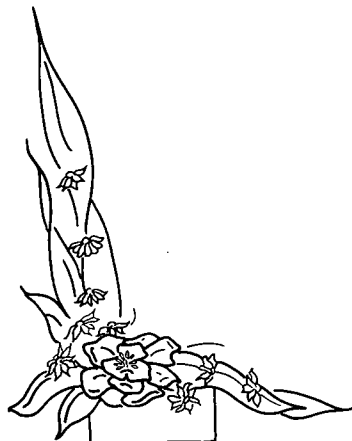
Place the clay on the table edge and use sticks to cover the edge. If the clay tips forward or backward, the design is out of physical balance. Fold the card over the edge of the table and complete the stick design following the directions in "Design Patterns."

Have beginners use flowers 2 to 2½ inches (5 to 6.5 cm) in diameter such as daisies, mums, calendula, bachelor buttons, zinnia, marigold, and spike flowers like snapdragons, salvia, and gladiolus. Foliages for beginning designers include privet, boxwood, forsythia, sword fern, and evergreens.

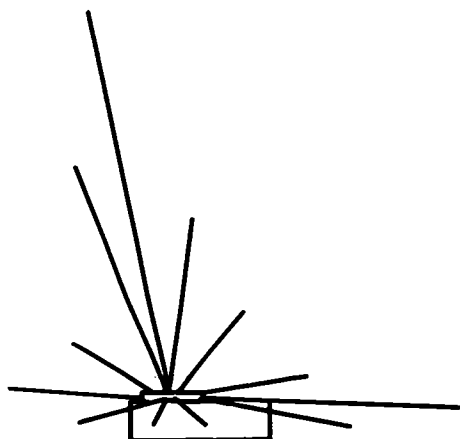
Design Patterns



Symmetric



Asymmetric



"EII" pattern

Most flower patterns are linear. There are several ways to place flowers in these linear segments. The two most common methods are symmetrical (both sides exactly the same) and asymmetrical placement (the two sides visually balanced, but different).

The asymmetrical placement usually results in narrower linear patterns and uses less material. In addition, the asymmetrical pattern assembles faster, is more aesthetic, and more pleasing to the eye.

When making asymmetrical designs such as "EII" patterns, place the second longest stem in the vertical position on the side away from the horizontal leg of the design. This helps create a feeling of balance. Placement of the second largest line in the horizontal leg may be on either side depending on balance requirements. It is usually placed below the longest stem.

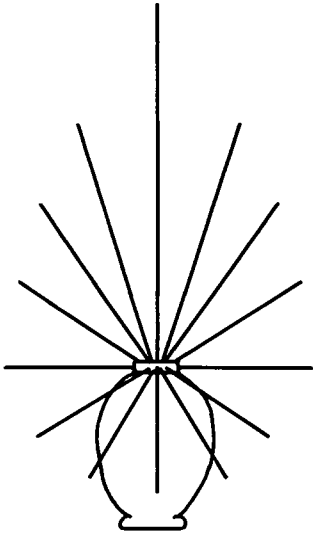
The actual mechanics of construction are similar in all patterns of design. The main differences are in the length of lines (stems) and the positions of fullness or mass within the design patterns.

As you progress from one design pattern to the next, note the slight changes in construction which are necessary.

Oval or round designs

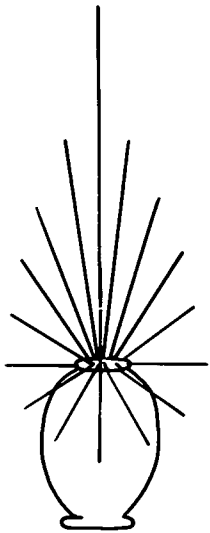
A completely symmetrical placement is normally used only in large oval or round designs.

The largest and fullest design pattern is the symmetrical *oval* or *round* design. All stems, other than the center line, are duplicated on the right and left sides.



Oval or round

Now shorten the sides and bottom.

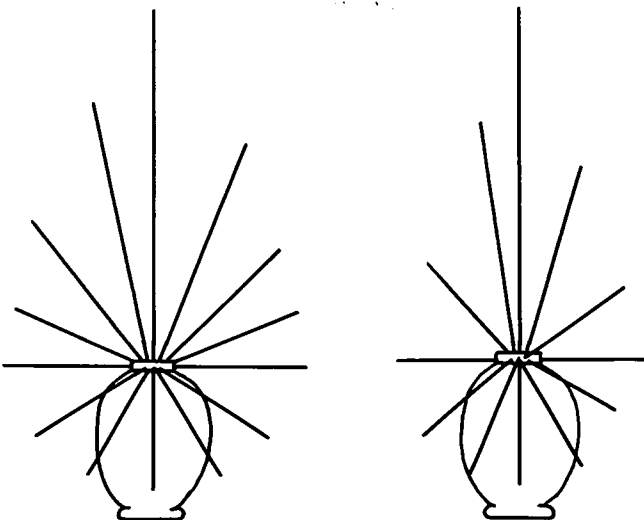


Begin shortening

Teardrop or linear designs

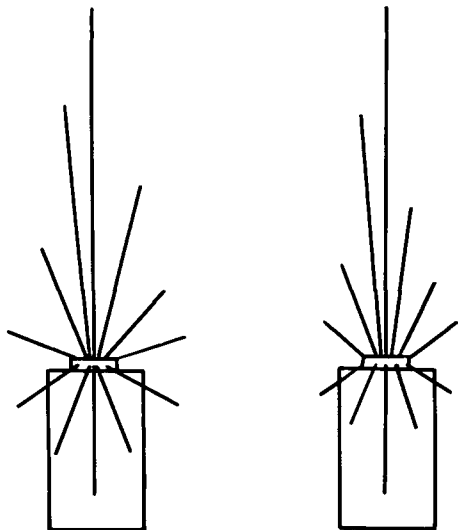
Use the same outline, but move to an asymmetrical placement of the main vertical lines. This makes a much narrower vertical line and creates an asymmetrical design.

The short stems at the base are symmetrically placed.



Beginning of a teardrop

Increase shortening the sides and the *teardrop* effect occurs.



Shortening creates teardrop

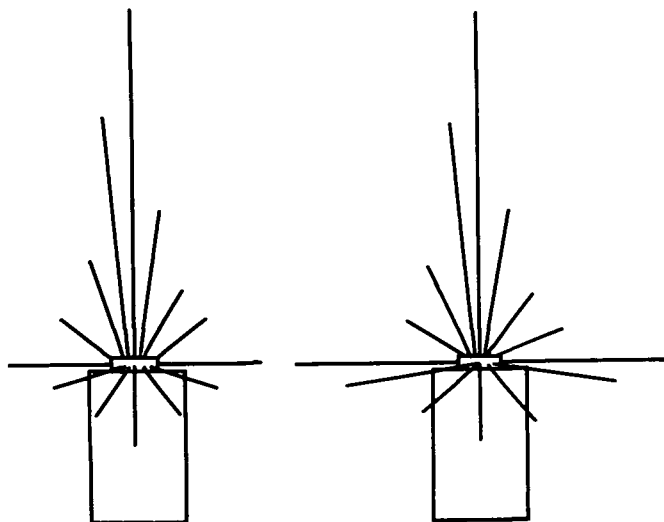
With further shortening, a very narrow *straight line* or *linear* design appears.



Finished linear design

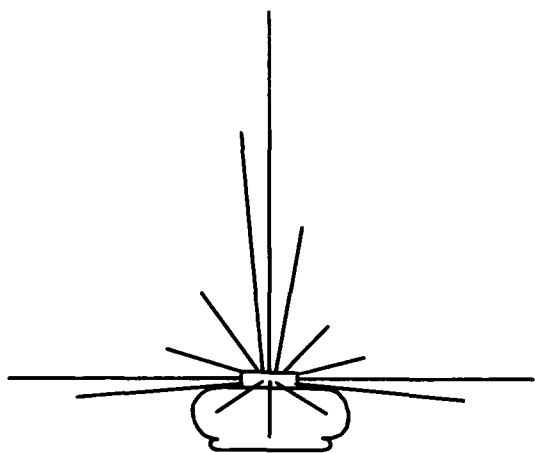
Inverted "T" designs

Now begin to lengthen the side stems.



Beginning of an inverted "T"

Further lengthening of the sides creates an *inverted "T"* design. This style is often used in front of speaker's podiums or on tables.

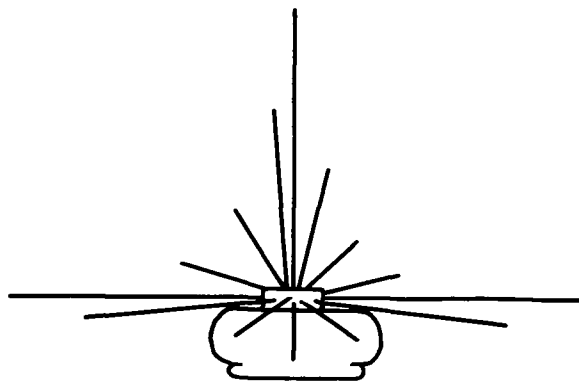


Inverted "T"



Finished inverted "T"

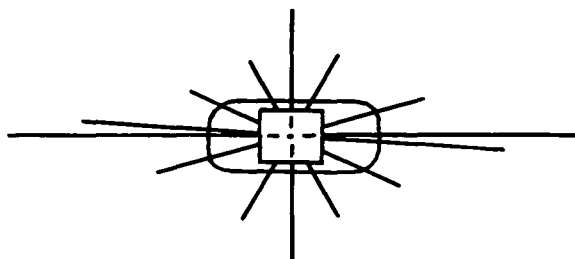
Leave the base broad and shorten the top. This resembles an inverted "T", and is popular on a coffee table or other low areas.



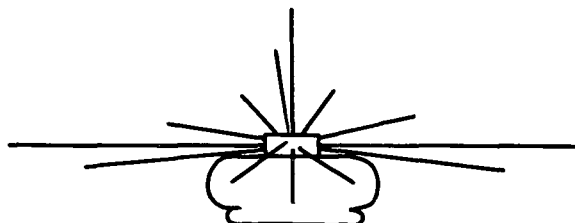
Low inverted "T"

Centerpiece design

Start with a low inverted "T" and complete the design so it can be viewed from both sides. This is a *centerpiece* design.



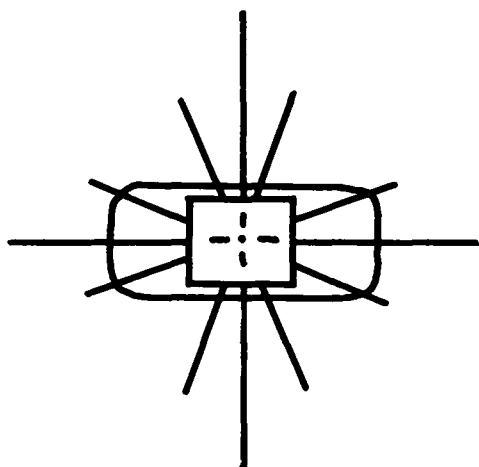
Top view, centerpiece



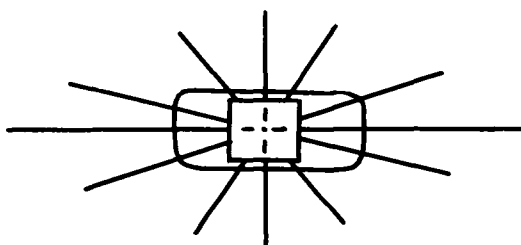
Side view, centerpiece

If the top is very short, then the placement is again completely symmetrical with the right side exactly like the left and front like the back.

Note that all stems appear as if they originate from one place within the stem holder.



Top views, symmetrical centerpiece



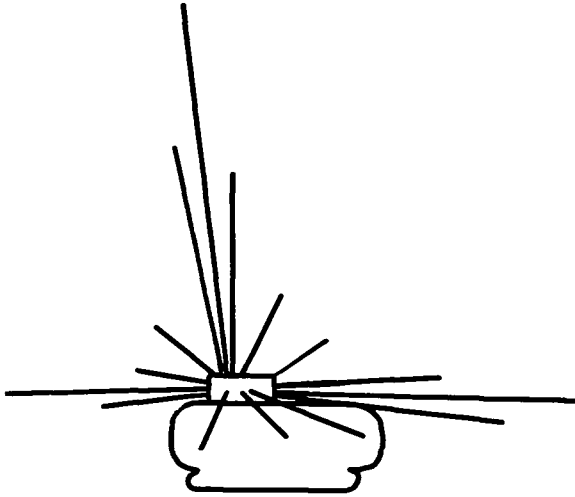
Centerpieces are made in many shapes and sizes by merely changing the length of side and top pieces. Overall shapes can be square, round, diamond (usually the most pleasing), oval, or very long and narrow.



Finished centerpiece

"EII" pattern design

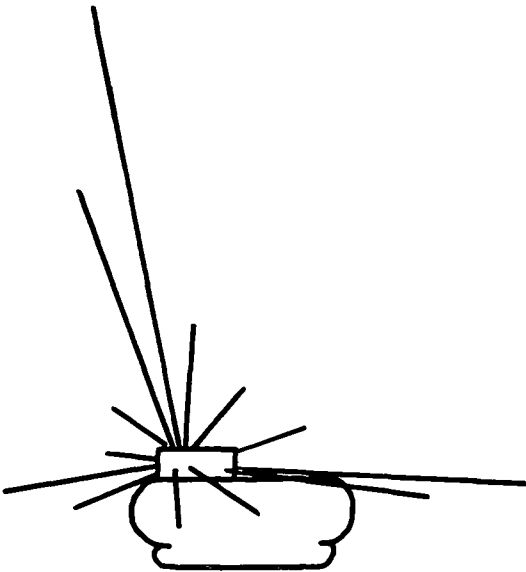
Start with an inverted "T." Move the floral foam to one side; lean the top to the same side and shorten the horizontal leg on that side to maintain balance.



Floral foam to one side

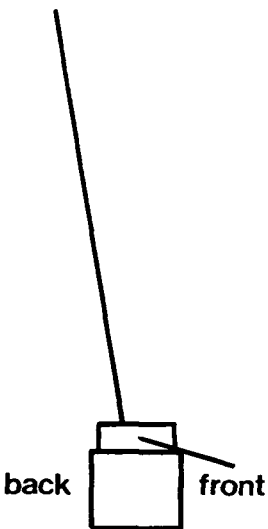
Shorten this side even more, and the *three-legged "EII"* pattern develops. As in other tall arrangements, the top leans slightly backwards to counterbalance the lower stems placed forward.

Notice that the second longest line in the vertical portion is always opposite of the horizontal leg.

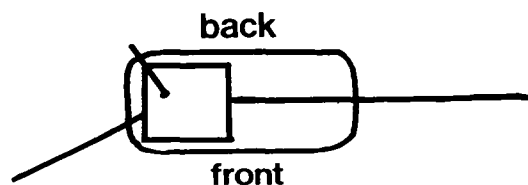


Three-legged "EII"

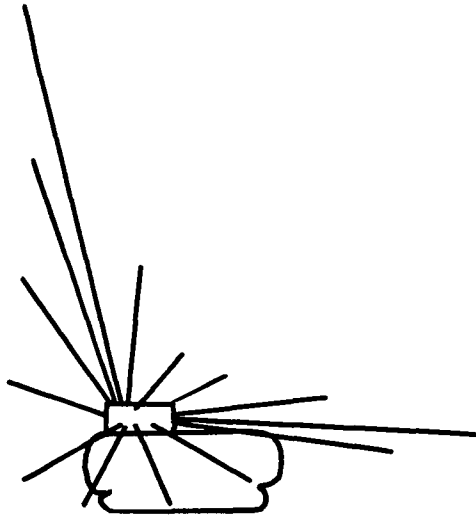
When making the three-legged "EII," position the shortened leg more forward than in the traditional "T" pattern.



Side view



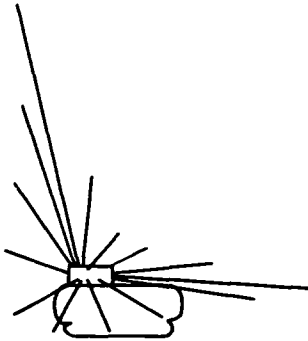
Top view



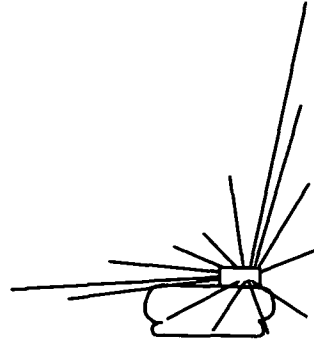
Two-legged "Eil"

Eliminating the shortened third leg develops a two-legged "Eil" pattern. The remaining horizontal portion is usually longer and the top may lean to the left or right.

Achieve balance by altering the lengths and angles of the two main lines. Notice that in all "Eil" patterns the longest horizontal leg is parallel to the table top or slightly below the horizontal. This line is never above the horizontal; if it is, the design will appear to be balanced on a point.



Left side design



Right side design

"Eils" are often produced in pairs and are placed on either end of mantles or tables.

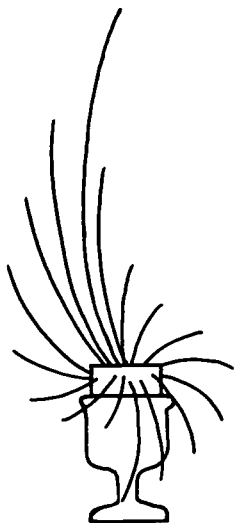


Finished three-legged "Eil"

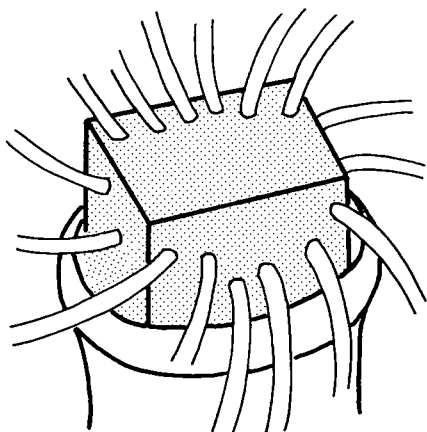
Two basic floral design patterns use easily curved materials like Scotch Broom, Pine, Forsythia, and Privet. In both the Hogarth Curve and the crescent shape, the uppermost line normally touches the center line of the entire design but this is not always necessary.

Hogarth Curve design

The *Hogarth Curve* arrangement is named after William Hogarth who believed the "S" shaped line to be the essence of beauty. This elongated, stylized "S" arrangement has most of its visual weight near the focal point or just above the rim of the container.



"S" shape (Hogarth)



Floral foam close-up



Finished Hogarth Curve

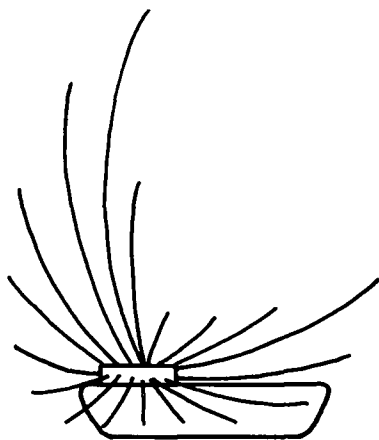
Allow at least 2 inches (about 5 cm) or more of the flower holder to remain above the container.

The arc of greens begins in the center of the stem holder and gradually moves left and forward so that the shortest stems eventually come forward and down.

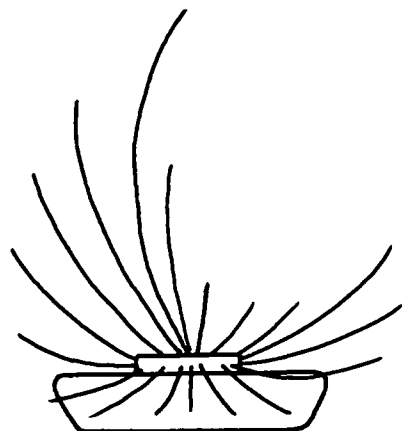
The lower half of the design is just the opposite with the longest lower line dropping out of the front of the holder and the shorter lines placed in the front, sides, and top of the holder. Focal point flowers are added only to a relatively small area.

Crescent design

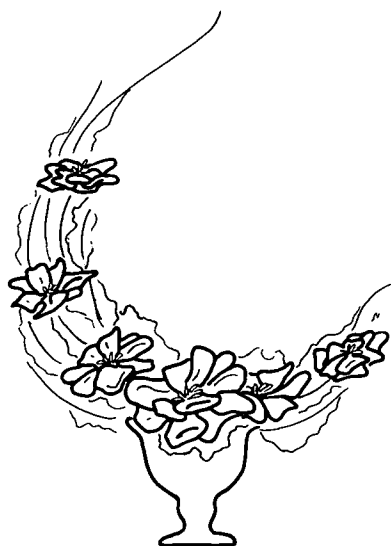
A *crescent* pattern is much easier to build when placed in a low, shallow bowl. Place the floral foam to one side of the container. The center line of the arrangement usually touches the tip of the tallest line. Many designers develop their crescent pattern counter clockwise from 12 to 4 o'clock. The focal point may be either placed on one side, (if the design is to be viewed only from one side) or it may be placed in the middle of the lowest area inside of the arc (if viewed from the top and both sides). The main lines are usually made from easily curved branches or greens, rather than just flowers. Since the crescent design lasts so long, focal point flowers may be changed periodically without rebuilding the entire design.



Good foam placement



Poor foam placement



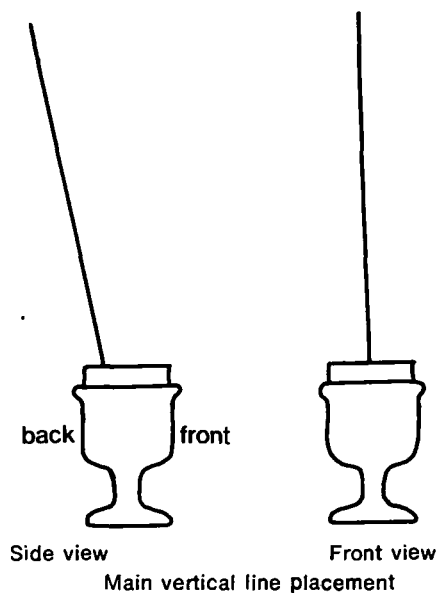
Finished crescent

Design Construction

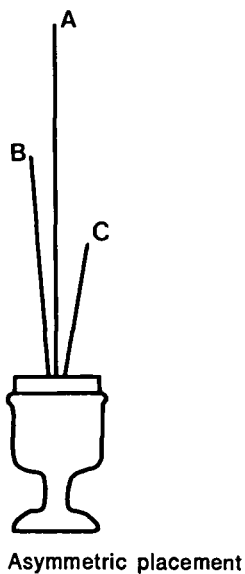
After learning about different floral designs, take a closer look at them by making two designs. Use a foam type holder (if this is not available, any type will work) and "asymmetric" placement.

Constructing a vertical or linear oval

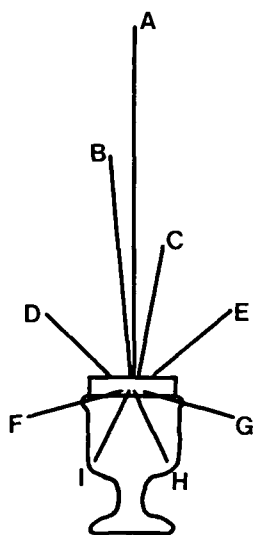
- Select either a vertical or linear oval design.
- Select a container. A tall linear shape, box shape or compote will do.
- Soak the flower holder material and place it into the container so that about 1½ inches (about 4 cm) shows above the container edge.
- Select the longest and least open flower for the main vertical line. Selecting the least open flower, reduces the visual weight at the top.
- Cut the stem about 2 to 2½ times the height of the container. Place it to the center or rear of the holder so that it leans backwards slightly.



- Find stems slightly different in length and degree of openness. Place them in the three stem pattern (asymmetric placement) to develop the main vertical line (**A, B, C**).

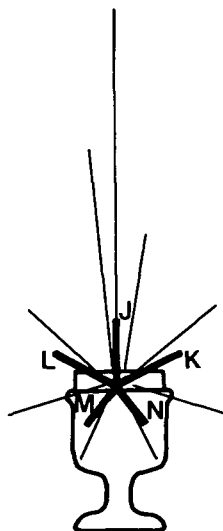


- Face flowers in positions **D, E, F, G, H, and I** in their respective directions and to the front.



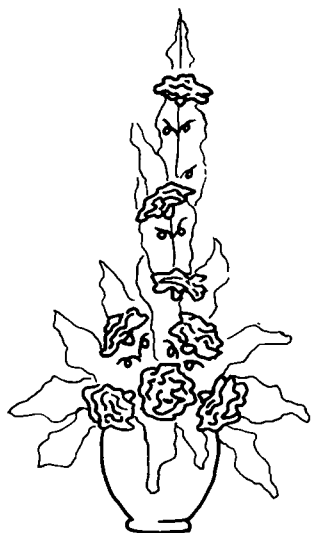
Face flowers

- Add focal point flower(s) to the center, (**J to N**). Keep the individual flowers well separated to make each flower visible.



Focal point flowers

- Add small filler flowers (such as baby's breath) at this time.
- Step back and critically review the outline of the design. Does it form the shape that you wanted? Are the individual flowers well separated, or are they bunched in spots or all on one side?
- Visually cut the arrangement in half vertically. Does the right side have the same "eye appeal" as the left side? Do some of the flowers and greens come down over the edge of the container or is there an abrupt line?

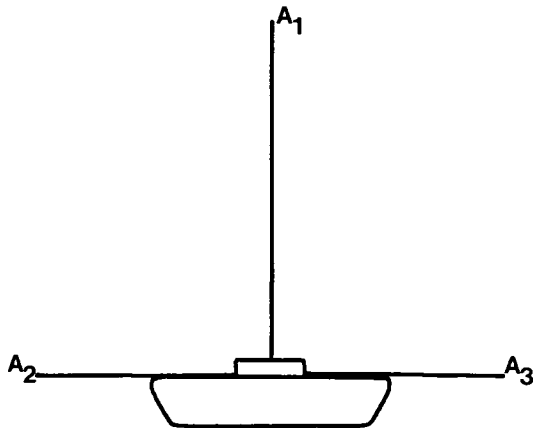


Finished vertical or linear oval

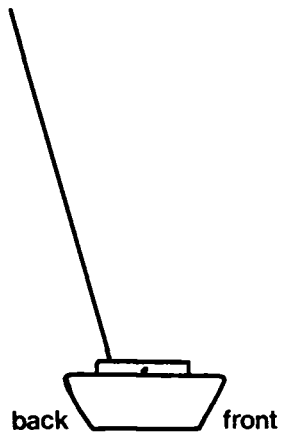
Constructing an inverted "T"

Let's now build another style of design.

- Select the "inverted "T" design style.
- Select a container. Low bowls work nicely for this style.
 - Soak the flower holding material and place it in the container so that 1½ inches (about 4 cm) of the holding material extends above the container.
 - Select the three longest, most sturdy and least open flowers for the three main lines (**A₁**, **A₂**, **A₃**).



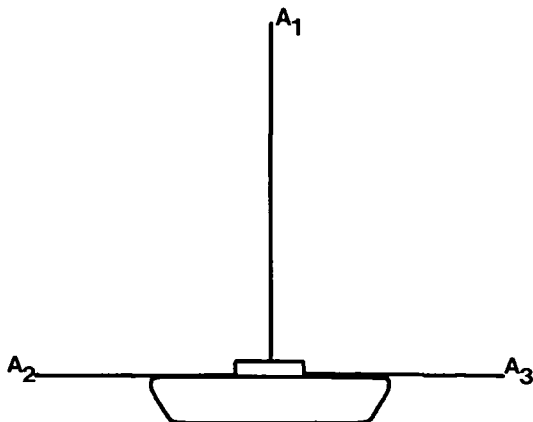
Main vertical lines



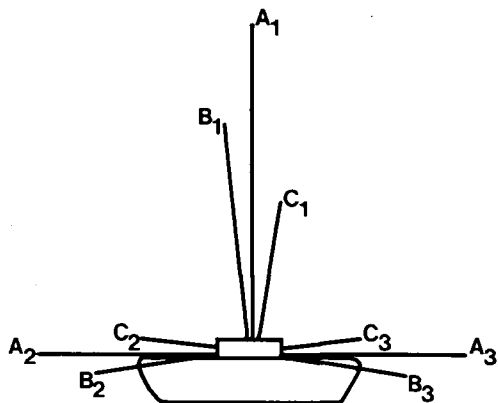
Side view, main vertical line

- Place the main vertical line to the rear or center of the holding material and lean it slightly backward. This offsets the weight in front of the holding material.

- Place the main horizontal lines so that they extend straight to the sides or slightly forward. The angle depends upon the finished arrangement's location. Allow stems **A₂** and **A₃** to rest on the edge of the containers.

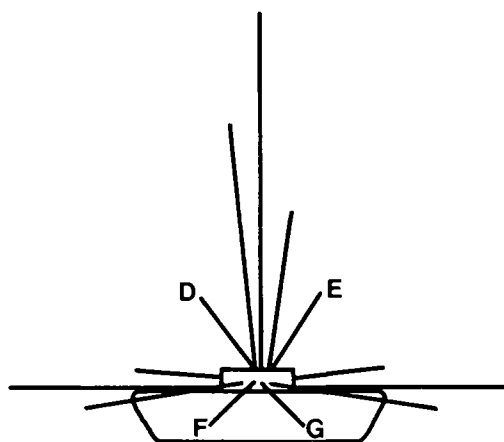


Main horizontal lines



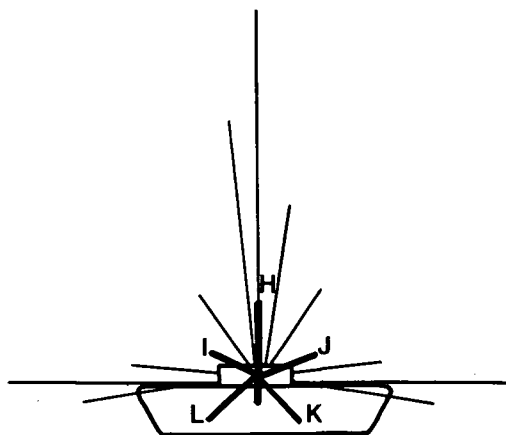
Asymmetric placement

• Fill in the three stem pattern **B₁, B₂, B₃, C₁, C₂, C₃** for each main line by using the asymmetric placement discussed on previous pages. These flowers should be heavier in visual weight than the first flowers.



Fill-in flowers

• Fill in the other flowers (**D, E, F, G**).



Fill-in flowers

Next fill in the **H, I, J, K, L** flowers as needed. Do not fill the entire arrangement with flowers, because greens will help develop depth and contrast between colors and textures. Use short stems in the central area to accentuate the linear or pointed effects of the three main lines.



Finished Inverted "T"

• The inverted "T" can be made in many shapes and variations. Linear designs are generally more pleasing and less costly to make.

Remember too, that if the first design doesn't please you, tear it apart and make another. Practice makes perfect.

Summary

These designs show the close relationship between design patterns and details of construction. Participants in 4-H basic floral design should understand and visualize that the change from one design type to another is generally not a major change but is achieved by altering a few stems.

Understanding visual balance is probably the most important design principle. Even though a piece of art is beautiful, it should not leave the viewer with an uneasy feeling because of a construction flaw.



OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

**EXTENSION
SERVICE**

Extension Service, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Henry A. Wadsworth, director. This publication was produced and distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. Extension work is a cooperative program of Oregon State University, the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and Oregon counties. Extension invites participation in its programs and offers them equally to all people, without discrimination.
