Basic Floral Arrangements - Contemporary

About the Presenter

Thea Adams studied floral design at North Hennepin Technical College and currently studies Japanese floral design. She enjoys creating arrangements each year for ‘Art in Bloom’ at the Minneapolis Institute of Art (April 24-28, 2013). Thea volunteers during the summer months in the Japanese Garden at Como Park in St. Paul. Her love of gardening and design extends to her own miniature railroad garden complete with flowers, trees and plants and buildings all created to scale. She has been a University of Minnesota Extension Master Gardener for Wright County since 2008.

Basic Floral Arrangements – Contemporary

Flower arrangements can brighten any room and bring the garden inside, especially during the winter months. This presentation focuses on arranging outside the box (the traditional vase) by employing tools like fresh floral foam and materials like branches to add interest. Notes for two examples are included.

Design Tips

Foundation

Create a stable foundation for your contemporary arrangement so your flowers will stay where you put them. Facilitate horizontal or cascading lines, by extending floral foam half an inch or more above the top of your container and inserting stems horizontally into the foam. Beware of inadvertently creating a ‘Swiss cheese’ pattern of holes in the floral foam by repeatedly repositioning your flowers in your quest for perfection – this may result in thirsty flowers that don’t stay where you want them. If this ever happens, get a new block of foam and start over!

Design

Create a focal point in your arrangement to draw attention to it. Incorporate rhythm to encourage the viewer to look further. Use accents sparingly as secondary points of interest. Cover the mechanics of your floral work of art with greens and filler flowers.

The focal point, a material different from the others in the arrangement, is traditionally located low in the design, near the container rim. An intermediate focal point may be used to connect to very different parts of an arrangement. The direction of lines and stems can help strengthen the focal point.

Avoid the visual confusion of crossed stems, multiple focal points or too many accents.

Carefully choose colors. A monochromatic color scheme of varying hues and textures is striking. Massing several stems of one flower or judiciously repeating accents throughout the arrangement is also effective. For a challenge, design an arrangement to compliment an art object in your home.
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Tools/Supplies

- Clean Sanitized Waterproof Container
- Sheep’s foot jack knife or floral scissors to cut flowers without pinching the stems
- Water source where flower stems can be cut under water
- Clipper for branches
- Floral foam for fresh flowers – fully saturate with water before inserting flowers, use only once
- Glue gun to secure floral foam to the container before soaking it in water
- Waterproof tape to secure already soaked floral foam to the container
- Pin holders (frogs)
- Spool wire, floral picks
- Fresh Flower Food to feed flowers, control bacteria and promote water uptake by the stems

Materials

- Cut Flowers from local florist, grocery store, big box store, farmers market, garden
- For green, use green leaves and branches from the store or from your yard
- Filler materials like solidago (golden rod), static, wax flowers, etc.
- Branches from yard or purchased
- Moss
- Accents

Care of arrangement

- Start with a clean container!
- Remove most of the leaves from the flowers – leaves turn yellow while the flowers are still fresh.
- Absolutely no leaves in the water! They decay and shorten the life of your arrangement.
- Use greens for green.
- Place arrangement out of the direct sun and drafts
- Use fresh floral food to feed flowers, control bacteria and promote water uptake by the stems
- Change water, re-cut stems, remove declining flowers every 3 days or so

Favorite Materials

- Curly willow branches
- Fan tail willow branches
- Lotus pods
- Spring flowering branches – apple blossoms, forsythia
- Lilies
- Mums
- Alstroemeria
- Ornamental grasses
Delphiniums with Rhythm

Definition

Create a focal point in your arrangement to draw attention to it. Incorporate rhythm to encourage the viewer to look further. Use accents sparingly as secondary points of interest.

Arrangement shouldn’t be too perfect or it may look fake!

Select your materials

This arrangement has a monochromatic color scheme of varying hues and textures inspired by my love of delphiniums and the blue thistle-like eryngium.

Create a stable foundation for your arrangement

- Cut and trim floral foam to fit your container
- Foam should be 1 – 1 ½ inches higher than the rim to allow the stems to cascade over the rim of the container
- Use a hot glue gun to fix the foam to the container
- Note: Cut a notch in the foam for watering the arrangement
- Soak the foam in water containing floral preservative after gluing

Create for arrangement

- Insert base material thistle-like eryngium around the rim – the focal flowers with overlap the base, but it is necessary to get the finished look
- Place the focal flowers, white spider mums at the rim
  - This arrangement has a traditional focal point using a different material and located low in the design, near the container rim.
  - Note: Use stems long enough for a good connection with the foam
- Rhythm is created by repeating elements that are similar or slightly different causing feelings of motion and energy.
  - Two blue delphiniums
  - Two stems of blue thistle-like eryngium
  - Most obvious – two fan tail willow branches
- Finish covering the mechanics with greens and filler flowers.
  - Your arrangement can have a front and a back, but it cannot have a bad (unfinished) side.
Horizontal Interpretive (Parallel)

Definition

- Flowers are parallel
- (easy way to avoid the visual confusion of stem crossing)
- Obviously horizontal because it is much wider than it is tall

Select your materials

- For a parallel design, an upright flower like liatris (gay feather) is a good choice

Select a low rectangle container for your design

Create a stable foundation for your arrangement

- Cut and trim floral foam to fit your container
- *Foam should be 1 – 1 ½ inches higher than the rim to allow the horizontal flower insertions critical to this design*
- Use a hot glue gun to fix the foam to the container
- Note: Only put glue on the bottom of the foam - don’t let any spill onto the top because it is impossible to insert flowers into a glued surface

Soak the foam in water containing floral preservative after gluing

Inserting stems at right angles is tricky – try this order

- Start the parallel upright flowers, the pink liatris
- Next, the parallel horizontal flowers
  - Shorter end of purple statice
  - Longer end of green carnations with Holland ruscus
  - Side of pink liatris
  - Side of purple statice
- Upright green chrysanthemums
- Lastly, cover the mechanics with greens