

American Peony Society
Floral Design Basics
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Floral design or flower arrangement is the art of using plant material and flowers to create an eye-catching and balanced composition or display. (Wikipedia)

We achieve this by following the **principles** of design, which occur in all works of art, using the elements of design. Consider all of these when creating a design. If something looks “off” to you, it probably is.

- **Principles of Design** – standards by which design Elements are organized.
 - Balance – symmetrical or asymmetrical
 - Contrast – not everything is the same
 - Dominance (Emphasis) – what do you see first
 - Proportion – relationship with the whole
 - Rhythm (Harmony, Pattern) – how does your eye travel through the design
 - Scale – relationship between materials
- **Elements of Design** – physical characteristics of all components chosen for a design.
 - Color – complimentary, monochromatic, polychromatic, etc.
 - Form (Shape) – design and plant material = round, triangle, square, etc.
 - Light – light in the room and within the design
 - Line – creates the rhythm
 - Pattern – placement of plant material and of the components, background
 - Size – small, large
 - Space – around and within the design, “let flowers breathe”
 - Texture – plant material, container, underlay, background

The components of a floral design include the following.

- Plant material – line material, main flowers, fruit, pods, etc., filler
- Container – anything!
- Background (Staging Panel) – what is behind the design, e.g., fabric, wall, window, etc.
- Underlay – what is underneath the design, e.g., wood table, fabric, board, etc.
- Mechanics – how the design is kept together
- Accessories – optional, something to complement the design but not be dominant, do not overdo it

Designs generally fall into two categories: traditional and creative.

- Traditional Design
 - Based on a set pattern of geometric form – sphere, cylinder, or pyramid (triangle)
 - Plant material is used in a natural pattern (how it grows) radiating from a single point
 - Plant material is generally integrated with each other with minimal grouping
 - Space is minimal within the design
 - Depth provided by overlapping, putting things at an angle, finishing the back of the design
- Creative Design
 - Eclectic in style
 - Generally, restraint is used in the amount of plant material and components
 - Plant material comes from multiple locations, not necessarily in a natural manner
 - Components may be non-realistic, e.g., painted dried material
 - Space is an important part of the design
 - Non-traditional containers are often used

Design types can cross between traditional and creative with the following general categories.








- Traditional Design Types
 - Line – minimal plant material, strong linear pattern
 - Line-Mass – linear pattern with more plant material
 - Mass – large quantities of plant material, closed silhouette
- Creative Design Types
 - Angular – strong angles
 - Cascade – downward rhythm
 - Construction – architectural characteristics
 - Duo-Design – one container with two different designs on each side
 - Featured Plant Material – one plant type is emphasized
 - Illuminary – incorporates lighting
 - Low Profile – meant to be looked at from above
 - Multi-rhythmic – many different eye patterns
 - Parallel – three or more groupings of plant material placed parallel
 - Underwater – some plant material must be submerged

Helpful Hints (more relevant for traditional design styles)

1. Cut foam to fit snugly and leave one-half to one inch above the container to allow horizontal insertion of plant material. This “breaks the lip” of the container bringing the eye from the container into the design without stopping.
2. Position the container to bring the eye into the design. If there are legs, place one toward the front, put the corner of a square container to the front, etc.
3. Cut stems longer than you need when gathering. Immediately, put in water in a cool dark place to “harden off.”
4. Set straight stalks at different angles to vary the direction.
5. Cut stems at different lengths or angle them to provide variation in height.
6. Avoid facing all flowers in the same direction.
7. Keep airy forms, small size and pale shades toward the top. Keep dark colors and heavier forms toward the bottom. This helps to create balance.
8. Use flowers in different stages of development, e.g., buds, blooms, seed heads.
9. Strip off all foliage below the water line to avoid rotting in the water.
10. Avoid crotched or V-shaped branches for the top of the line. This causes the eye to go in two different directions.
11. Arrange plant material so it is one and a half to two times the size or width of the container.
12. Play with your plant material. It is okay to remove leaves, petals, etc.







The Principles of Design

(how to use the tools to make art)

Pattern		A regular arrangement of alternated or repeated elements (shapes, lines, colours) or motifs.
Contrast		The juxtaposition of different elements of design (for example: rough and smooth textures, dark and light values) in order to highlight their differences and/or create visual interest, or a focal point.
Emphasis		Special attention/importance given to one part of a work of art (for example, a dark shape in a light composition). Emphasis can be achieved through placement, contrast, colour, size, repetition... Relates to focal point.
Balance		A feeling of balance results when the elements of design are arranged symmetrically or asymmetrically to create the impression of equality in weight or importance.
Proportion/ Scale		The relationship between objects with respect to size, number, and so on, including the relation between parts of a whole.
Harmony		The arrangement of elements to give the viewer the feeling that all the parts of the piece form a coherent whole.
Rhythm/ Movement		The use of recurring elements to direct the movement of the eye through the artwork. There are five kinds of rhythm: random, regular, alternating, progressive, and flowing. The way the elements are organized to lead the eye to the focal area. Movement can be directed for example, along edges and by means of shape and colour.

The Elements of Design

(the tools to make art)

Line		Horizontal, vertical, diagonal Straight, curved, dotted, broken Thick, thin
Shape		2D (two dimensional)/ flat Geometric (square, circle, oval, triangle) Organic (all other shapes)
Form		3D (three dimensional) Geometric (cube, sphere, cone) Organic (all other forms such as: people, animals, tables, chairs, etc)
Colour		Refers to the wavelengths of light Refers to hue (name), value (lightness/darkness), intensity(saturation, or amount of pigment), and temperature (warm and cool) Relates to tint, tone and shade
Texture		The feel, appearance, thickness, or stickiness of a surface (for example: smooth, rough, silky, furry)
Space		The area around, within, or between images or parts of an image Relates to perspective Positive and negative space

Floral Arrangement Shapes



Crescent



Circle



Triangle



Oval



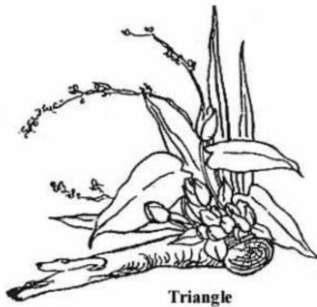
Mass Arrangement



Oval



Triangle



Triangle



Triangle



Diagonal Line



Simple Vertical



Spiral