

Flower Arranging Made Easy

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— If you love flowers in your home, but feel intimidated when it comes to arranging them yourself, you'll be happy to hear that natural-looking arrangements are in vogue.

No more stiff, artificial-appearing arrangements that need each flower to be positioned exactly the same distance between flowers. Instead, arrangements that resemble a growing flower garden are gaining in popularity.

Natural-looking arrangements have no hard and fast rules. But the more an arrangement resembles growing plants, the more attractive it is.

Spikes or cylinder-shaped flowers work best in giving height to an arrangement. To insert fragile stems in Oasis, hold stems near base and poke sporadically. Round flowers are tucked around the base and to give depth in an arrangement.

Generally, natural-looking arrangements combine numerous types of flowers in a variety of colors. The flowers are arranged as if they are growing in a garden.

Choosing Foliage

Foliage is used to cover the base and provide interest throughout the arrangement. Combine several different greens — from the fine needles of pine to the complicated lattice work fronds of fern and the feathery leaves of mountain ash — to add importance in arrangements.

Arrange foliage so that the greens appear to be growing out from the center and the edges of the container are covered. Greenery should spill over the edges in the front and sides of container. Follow the shape of the foliage and work from the base up.

Many farm wives and those who live in the country have access to wildflowers and free-flowing greens found in meadows and in woodlands. Don't be timid when it comes to combining many different varieties of flowers.

Early summer is the best time to find a wonderful array of flowers. Enjoy them all — from the deliciously sweet fragrance of old roses, peonies, and sweet peas to Queen Ann's Lace growing along the roadside.

Gone are the days of strict color rules of combining colors that are close on the color spectrum. Few colors look terrible together. Colors on the opposite end of the spectrum such as orange and blue look stunning and daring.

Choosing Containers

Decide what type of container is best suited to the flowers gathered.

Use containers such as sprinkling cans, ornate dishes, watering cans, baskets, cups, mugs, jugs, casserole dishes, terracotta, clear glass, ceramic, metal, stone, and even cracked pieces of china. Baskets complement rustic, twiggy arrangements.

Allow the form of the vase to dictate the shape and style of arrangements. A tall, straight-sided vase demands tall-straight spires of flowers. A round bowl looks best with a generous curved arrangement.

Line baskets and other porous containers with plastic containers similar in size. Use fully-soaked Oasis to hold the flowers in position.

Containers provide the bed that must be in harmony with the flowers. The general rule is that the overall creation should be about three times the height of the container and twice as wide — but many delightful arrangements break this rule.

Choosing the Setting

Before beginning to arrange the flowers, consider where you will place the arrangement.

Will it be viewed from all sides or placed against a wall?

Consider the space for an idea of the scale and size of the arrangement. Coffee table arrangements should be appealing from above and all sides.

Elaborate arrangements are found in Victorian styles, which may use tremendous mixtures of flowers and foliage. Extravagant arrangements are ideal in a large room of a farmhouse, but might seem overpowering in a small contemporary room.

Caring for Arrangements

Crooked stems and hanging flowers offer an informal free-growing look, but wilted flowers look terrible. Here are some tips to follow to keep your arrangement fresh and long lasting.

- Add a few drops of bleach and a teaspoon of sugar, and stir or use flower preservatives according to directions.

- Replace the water in a vase frequently.

- Remove dead flowers, leaves, and stems. Replace with fresh flowers if necessary.

- Use a warm detergent-bleach solution to clean everything that comes in contact with fresh flowers. This prevents the spread of bacteria.

- Metal containers corrode easily and can contaminate the water and shorten the life of flowers.

- It is best to use distilled, reverse osmosis or deionized water.

- Remove foliage from stems below water line. Foliage in water creates bacteria and causes flowers to deteriorate. Remove damaged flowers and leaves because they can carry bacteria and produce ethylene gas that destroys flowers.

- Cut stems under water. When flowers are not cut under water, air gets into the stem and blocks the flow of water, causing the flowers to wilt. Place the stems in warm water preservative solution.

- Use preservatives to enhance the quality, color and lasting ability of flowers. Follow instructions for measuring and mixing preservatives.

- Never leave flowers out of water.

English Country Design

English Country is an interior design style developed from the rural cottages of England. These cottages were minimal in space and were usually built of stone or brick. The use of repetitive flowers, birds, or trellis patterns on dark backgrounds produced a busy, almost indistinguishable pattern.

Containers should be either simple glass vases, silver, pieces of china, porcelain or baskets. The flowers should be a combination of garden materials. The individual flowers are not the most important element, but the overall display should convey a feeling of warmth and elegance.



French Country is doing what it has done in France for centuries; evolving. No longer anchored in the 18th century, today's informal French style is more appealing than ever. Their interiors reflect the bright blue skies and rich colors of the Van Gogh Country. Fabrics from the French countryside have historically contributed guileless charm. Now a more softer mood prevails. Look for the new style fabrics to be more expressive in movement and scale than the more expected tiny patterned wood, block prints first refined in the mid 1700s in France.

The traditional colors such as ochres, silver green, terracotta and cerulean blue pulled from the earth, the sky and the fields of provence still appear. Also, they take a sunlit yellow from a painting, a fuchsia and a tangerine. Country French is eclectic and less cluttered than other country styles. Containers are varied, rustic baskets, terracotta, copper, wrought iron. Flowers are usually grouped in a strong European style. The design is natural and loose in feel. Country French, by intent, is never perfect.

Instead of rules, it asks for freedom and spontaneity, which combined with a discriminating eye, yields true elegance.



American Primitive has no formula for design. Many elements of American Country are inspired by the traditions of Europe. Thus the Cape Cod cottage was patterned after the English cottage, while the southern plantation homes were reminiscent of English estate homes. Function and economy are important factors in the American Country style. Fabrics and wall coverings are typically of natural materials such as cottons and wools. Prints were more often plaids, checks or wood block prints. Floral designs typically in American primitive homes are dependent on seasonally available material. Great bouquets of wildflowers are common in summer time, and changes in weather encourage the drying of materials so that arrangements can be enjoyed all year. American Country tends to reflect a more rustic environment. Baskets, wooden containers, crockery, pewter are appropriate container choices. Woody vines, dried materials and natural weedy grasses are often incorporated within the arrangements.

