

## **Traditional Arrangements** – by: Kreg B. Hill

Traditional Arrangements are always very structured with set definitions and rules that need to be observed and followed. This article tries to define and clarify the different types of traditional arrangements and provides for some helpful hints so the designer may create the type of traditional arrangement desired or specified in a show schedule. Traditional arrangements are challenging and the arranger is left with a feeling of great accomplishment for an arrangement well executed using the elements and principals of design within a traditional framework.

**FLOWER ARRANGEMENT:** A flower arrangement is an art form created by organizing the elements of design according to the principals of design to attain beauty with expression, harmony and distinction.

**ELEMENTS OF DESIGN:** Space, Line, Form, Size, Texture, Pattern and Color.

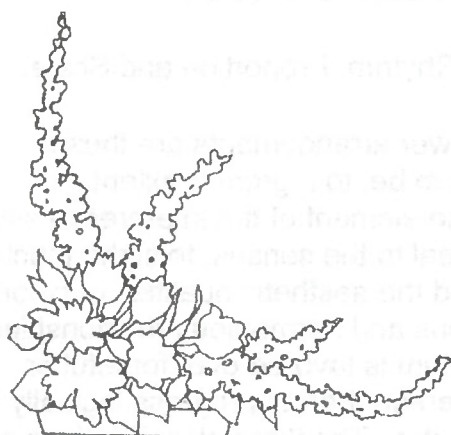
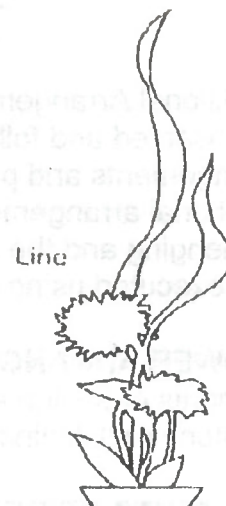
**PRINCIPALS OF DESIGN:** Balance, Dominance, Contrast, Rhythm, Proportion and Scale.

**TRADITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS:** Traditional designs of flower arrangements are those handed down from a previous generation and are considered to be, to a greater extent, decorative rather than interpretive, although there will be some element of the interpretive since one is executing the design today. These arrangements appeal to the senses; to sight, touch, and smell. Visually they emphasize natural lines of growth and the aesthetic qualities of color, form, and texture. Traditional designs stress smooth transitions and harmonious relationships in which similarities predominate over differences. Graceful rhythm is favored over forceful or conflicting movement; lines converge in a strong center of interest. Forms progress logically in size, colors are graded, and materials are consistent in character. The three classifications of traditional designs are Line, Line-mass, and Mass.

Traditional designs trace their beginnings to various European Periods. These European Periods include: Classical Greek and Roman (600 B.C. to 325 A.D.), Italian Renaissance (14th through 16th centuries), Dutch and Flemish (17th and 18th centuries), French (17th and 18th centuries), Georgian (18th and early 19th centuries), and Victorian (19th century). European styles of flower arrangement had certain similar characteristics. All were predominantly Mass designs in form, with quantities of garden flowers used for texture, color and form. Containers were characteristic of the period.

American designs began with Colonial American (17th century) which were simple, informal mixed bouquets influenced by European designs. Native plant materials were placed in utilitarian containers such as baskets, stoneware or wooden bowls. In Colonial Williamsburg (18th century) designs were generally fan-shaped; flowers were fresh with a few pieces of wheat or barley added. Mass designs, with formal balance, had greater height than width. In the characteristic designs of the Federal Period (late 18th and early 19th century), fruits were used in combination with flowers and foliage. American Victorian designs (late 19th century) followed the European Victorian designs with the lavish use of flowers in ornate containers. In the early Twentieth Century designers took the best of the Oriental and European styles and developed a design style born in the United States, the Line-mass. The other American traditional design, the Line, was adapted from Oriental designs during this same period.

**LINE DESIGN:** Line designs are adapted from the Oriental Line designs in which the linear pattern is dominant. The silhouette is open and requires great restraint in the amount of plant material used. Line compositions are usually naturalistic. Inspired by natural forms, such as the lines of a tree branch, they employ materials in a realistic manner to produce a scenic interpretation, not an exact scene. They depend on normal patterns of growth and existing curves. Flowers and foliage are pruned to clarify line and accentuate, not distort, natural characteristics. Traditional Line designs are simple and clean cut. Line designs may be vertical, horizontal, crescent, Hogarth (S-curve), zig-zag, oblique, or asymmetrically triangular with right- or left-handed variants. Vertical and horizontal line directions in combination yield the inverted "T" and the triangle Line design. In each Line design there is always a single focal area and one point of emergence.

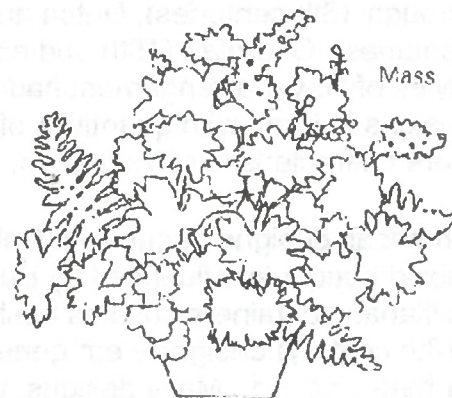


Line-mass

**LINE-MASS (OR MASSED-LINE) DESIGNS:**

Line-mass designs, merging the best qualities of Oriental Line and Occidental Mass, have an open silhouette. Additional plant material is used or massed to enhance and strengthen the line. The dominant line, for instance, is fortified with a mass of plant material at the focal area. A Line-mass design is closer to a Mass design than a Line design though the linear quality predominates. The strongest part of the design is through the center since balance and symmetry originate from the central axis; and materials with the most prominent characteristics (the roses) are placed there to draw attention to the area. Line-mass designs follow the vertical, horizontal, or other line directions of Line designs.

**MASS DESIGN:** Mass designs were adapted from the European Mass designs and use a large quantity of plant material. This type of design has a closed silhouette and almost always a symmetrical balance. Mass designs are oval, circular, fan-shaped, or triangular in form. Flowers and foliage can be either loosely arranged in an airy bouquet or more tightly organized but not crowded. As with Line designs, there is a single focal area and one point of emergence only.



Mass

**HELPFUL HINTS FOR TRADITIONAL DESIGNS:** The height of Mass designs should be approximately one-and-one-half times the height of the container. For Line or Line-mass designs, the longest line is usually one-and-one-half times the height or diameter of the container, whichever is greater. The container should be a component of the design and never dominant. If the container is too large, you may use some of the plant material to cover part of the container and visually reduce the size of that container.

The coloration of the container is very important and should be incorporated into or compliment the design. Shiny surface containers are difficult to use and may be too dominant for the design. If you are using the most difficult to use white container, the floral portion of the design better include some white plant material.

If you are doing a Line design, more is not better. Refrain from using lots of materials, even foliage. A nice, simple, clean and well defined line is the most important aspect of a Line design. A problem experienced with some designs is they appear to be very bottom heavy. This may be easily resolved with the use of bases and pedestals to raise the height of the design. The typical commercial florist arrangement is always bottom heavy so that it may be delivered easily in the delivery van. This is not a design effect to emulate.

Proportion and scale are extremely important in arrangements using miniature roses. The container for a 10" design should be between 3"-3 1/2" and for a 5" design 1 1/2"-1 3/4". The best way to determine if your design using miniature roses has good proportion and scale is to visualize the design blown-up to a standard size arrangement. Now, what component dominates the design? Does the design maintain its integrity? One should also look at the design from eye-level and not by looking down on the design.

Gradation of plant materials is another important aspect of traditional arrangements. Other flowers and foliage may be used, but remember roses must be the dominant floral material in the design. There needs to be a transition from large to small.

To facilitate this transition when cutting roses for your arrangements, remember to cut stems with just buds; stems with open buds, sepals down and color showing; and stems with exhibition and fully open blooms. (Do not worry about those not perfect blooms, split centers and bullnose blooms cannot be seen from the side or rear of the design). The design needs to be finished on all sides.

When I first started doing arrangements, one of our now deceased arrangement judges, told me that one must always be sure to put a bustle on a Mass design. The finished rear accomplishes depth and completes the symmetry of the design. While rose foliage is beautiful, if one does not remove or strip some of the foliage from the stems, the design is dominated by rose foliage. Do not crowd the roses. Each individual bloom should be seen.

Remember, there are more than just hybrid tea blooms to use in arrangements. Floribundas, shrubs and old garden roses, both individual blooms and sprays, as well as rose hips, have great form, color and texture and are excellent for traditional arrangements. Here is an opportunity for the arranger to expand the types of plant material and introduce additional elements to the design.

Interpretation of a theme or title is accomplished by the use of color, selection and placement of plant materials, and careful consideration of the container to express a feeling or mood.

Accessories such as statues, figurines, etc. are very difficult to use.

Accessories may cause design problems and always must be subordinate to the design, not a feature (dominant to the design). With great restraint, accessories may be used. The overall design of the arrangement is the most important factor to accomplish, not the use of expensive containers and elaborate accessories.

All traditional designs must be in one container and have one point of emergence, if the design has two or more points of emergence –it is not a traditional arrangement.