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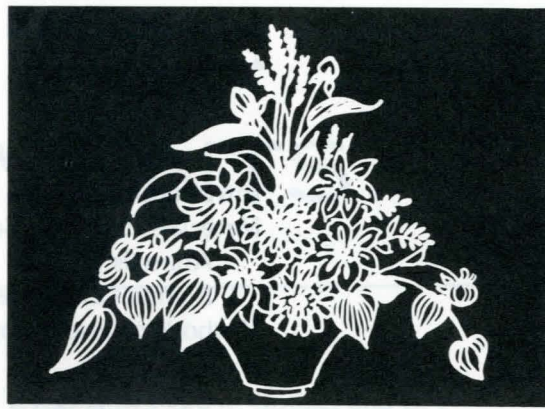
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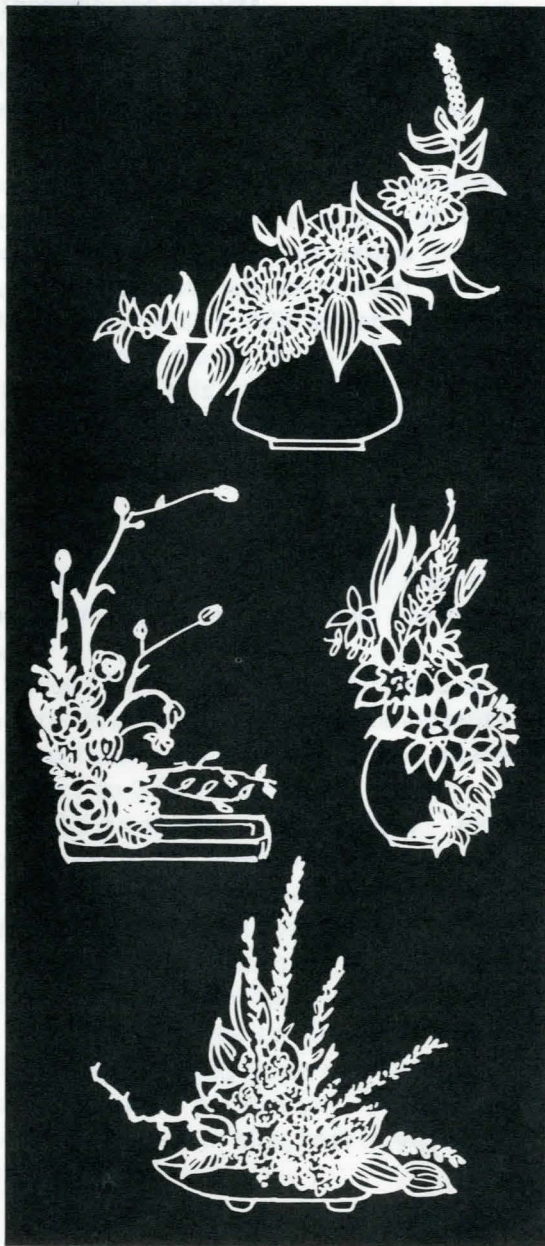
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WINTER BOUQUETS

and other dried ARRANGEMENTS



EC 73-2020

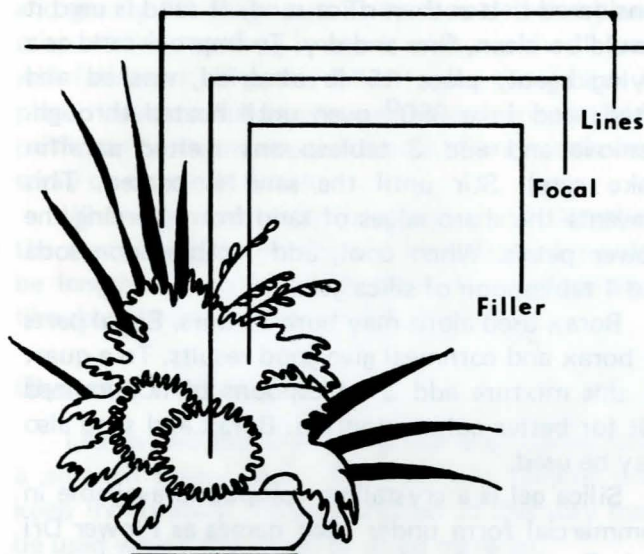


Extension Service, University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Agriculture Cooperating with the
U. S. Department of Agriculture and the College of Home Economics
E. F. Frolik, Dean J. L. Adams, Director

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WINTER BOUQUETS and other dried ARRANGEMENTS



By Magdalene Pfister
Extension Specialist (Home Furnishing)

Introduction

Drying flowers and arranging them was part of gracious living in Colonial times. A visit to Williamsburg, Monticello or Mount Vernon reveals the creative skills of 18th Century women. In Victorian days flowers were pressed and designed into pictures.

Although fresh flowers are available the year around today, we enjoy dried materials especially for their line and texture. Often floral shops carry dried plant materials to be used alone or with fresh material.

It is not difficult to collect and to preserve materials for dried arrangements. Growing, collecting, preserving and using plant materials can be a year around hobby. Rocks, cones, seed pods and weathered wood are some articles from vacation spots that can add to the fun and interest in making distinctive arrangements.

Ways of preserving plant materials include drying, pressing and treatment with glycerine. Forcing branches to bloom early indoors and using evergreens, vegetables and fruits add to the wealth of usable materials in the winter.

Materials to Grow, Collect and Dry

There are three types of materials in a traditional bouquet. These are materials for line, for focal point and for fill-in.

You will want to collect a variety of each of these types.

Linear materials include branches, stalks, grasses and spike-form flowers. It is with these that a basic design or outline can be shaped before adding the other parts. A line design can be lovely by itself.

Focal material gives the center of interest. Individual flowers are in this group but other important looking materials can be used.

Fillers add dimension, help soften and unify the design. Goldenrod, Queen Anne's lace, salvia and baby's breath are in this group.

Plants for winter bouquets may be grown in the garden.

Annual Plants

1. Rose Everlasting or *Acroclinium* (*Helipterum humboldtianum*) grows one foot high or more.

2. Winged Everlasting (*Ammobium alatum*) has shiny white flowers with yellow center—beauty due not only to flowers but to peculiar and interesting broad stems 1 to 3 feet high.

3. Globe-Amaranth (*Gomphrena globosa*) erect, branching and 1½ feet tall.

4. Common Strawflowers (*Helichrysum bracteatum*) average height 2½ feet.

5. Rhodanthe (*Helipterum manglesi*)—dainty rose and white flowers similar to *Acroclinium*.

6. Statice-Rat-tail Statice (*Limonium suworowi*) has spikes or rose colored flowers set close together. Notchleaf Statice (*Limonium sinuatum*) has irregular shaped heads in blue, rose or yellow.

7. Squaw corn.

8. Gourds

Biennial and Perennial Plants

1. Baby's breath (*Gypsophila spp.*) cloud-like sprays of white flowers.
2. Chinese-lanterns (*Physalis alkekengi*).
3. Sea lavender (*Limonium latifolium*).
4. Honesty, Peter's-penny (*Lunaria spp.*) in the second year will produce white and purple blooms. Later small disc-like seed pods form which grow to size of a dollar.

Methods of Preserving

Air Drying

Some plants and grasses take more graceful curves if dried in an upright position. Nature dries grasses and pods which can be gathered in the fall.

Small pliable branches may be shaped in graceful curves before drying. They may be placed around the inside of a basket or other container or tied in graceful curves to a coat hanger.

Mullein in the rosette stage can be dried by placing it over an inverted saucer to help keep its shape. Strawflowers should be picked in the bud stage and the leaves removed. Insert floral wire into each before drying. Some milkweed pods picked green may be pried open and dried after the silk is taken out to add variety of shape. Cattails should be picked in early summer rather than fall for better color and because they are less likely to shed.

Oven Drying

Nuts and cones may be dried in an oven set at 250° for several hours. Paper towels or tissue inserted in an artichoke will help it dry in an open shape. Hedge balls may be sliced and dried in the oven for making contrived flowers or mushrooms.

Pressing

Leaves on branches and ferns tend to curl when they are air dried. They are better pressed between several thicknesses of newspaper and weighted down for several weeks. Leaves may be pressed with a warm iron over wax paper.

Flowers may also be pressed between absorbent paper and can be used to make pictures.

Burying In a Drying Agent

It is possible to preserve flowers so they keep their shape, color and texture by surrounding them with a desiccant. Flexibility is lost but stems may

be replaced with wire. Color changes very little with yellow and orange flowers. White flowers tend to be cream color when dry, but larkspur, daisies, feverfew and mock orange dry white. Most blues are unstable. Red and purples dry darker. Avoid using very dark colors.

Sand was used to preserve flowers centuries ago. Oolitic sand, such as found at Salt Lake, is considered better than silica sand. If sand is used it should be clean, fine and dry. To improve sand as a drying agent, place 15 lb of dried, washed and sifted sand in a 350° oven until heated through. Remove and add 3 tablespoons melted paraffin (take care). Stir until the sand is coated. This prevents the sharp edges of sand from piercing the flower petals. When cool, add 1 tablespoon soda and 1 tablespoon of silica gel.

Borax used alone may burn flowers. Equal parts of borax and cornmeal give good results. To a quart of this mixture add 3 tablespoons of non-iodized salt for better color retention. Borax and sand also may be used.

Silica gel is a crystalline compound available in commercial form under such names as Flower Dri and Dryonex. It gives excellent results but is expensive. However, it can be used again and again. While most crystals are white there are some blue ones which turn pink to tell you the silica gel has absorbed maximum moisture. Then you place the crystals in a shallow pan in a 250° oven. When the blue returns it is ready to use again.

Other desiccants include kitty litter and perlite aggregate which can be purchased in building supply centers.

Flowers in prime condition should be dried in the mixture shortly after cutting. Choose a container that allows the flowers to be surrounded by at least an inch of the mixture. When using silica gel the container needs to be sealed.

It takes patience and skill to cover a flower without disturbing the natural position of each petal.

Flowers such as roses, carnations, mums and jonquils are dried heads up. Leave about one half inch of the stem. If floral wire is inserted into the hard green base (the calyx) it will be held in place by the shrinking stem.

Pour an inch layer of the drying agent in the bottom of the container. Then form a depression in the center and position flower. Start from the outside of the flower petal and work inward row by row pouring the drying agent slowly.

Some flowers are buried heads down. Zinnias, daisies and calendulas are in this group. Larkspur, snapdragon and other spike flowers as well as flowering branches like forsythia are dried horizontally. A folded cardboard strip with notches cut out will help support the flowers.

Time required to preserve the flowers will vary from 1-8 days. To remove flowers pour off mixture and gently lift them out. They should feel dry and crisp. If left too long in some mixtures the flowers will fall apart. If petals fall off, glue them back in place. Use an artist brush to remove dusty particles, particularly cornmeal and borax. Spray with hair spray or clear mat finish.

When you are ready to arrange these, lengthen the stems with floral wire and tape. Stems may also be lengthened by inserting them in a hollow stem like day lily and wrapping with green tape.

Glycerine Treatment

Leaves and branches preserved in glycerine have a smooth satiny look. They remain flexible and keep indefinitely. Foliage treated in this way may be used with either fresh or dried material.

Glycerine, available in drug stores, is fairly expensive, but solution remaining can be used again. Antifreeze can be used to treat foliage.

Use one part of glycerine to two parts warm water. Add a few drops of household bleach to prevent mold.

It is important that plant material treated this way be alive. To preserve color in fall leaves immerse branches in the solution 6 - 12 hours. The base of branches may be crushed and placed upright in a tall container for 36 hours or longer.

Bittersweet treated in this way does not become brittle and lose its berries. Use short stems and let stand in the solution no more than 5 days. If left longer, the berries will turn brown.

Bells of Ireland spikes are ready for processing when the lowest tier of the bells begins to brown. If picked sooner they will collapse. The tip of the spike will not process and should be removed. Food coloring may be added to the glycerine solution. Parchment-like Bells of Ireland are produced by adding 2 tablespoons to 1 cup of glycerine solution and later by exposing the bells to full sun.

The time required for processing varies greatly. When the liquid level in the jar stops going down the materials have taken enough.

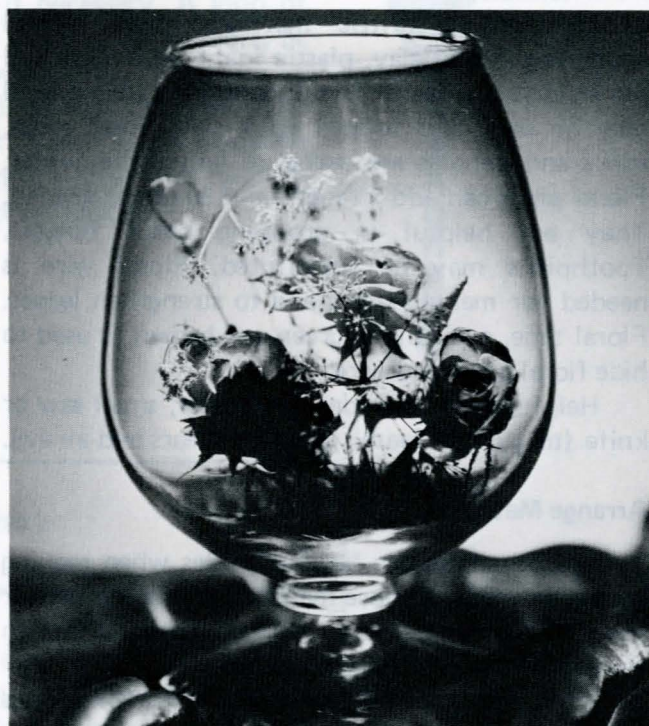
Leaves change color during the process. They may become dark brown, providing a good

background for lighter or brighter focal materials. Pleasing color changes can be obtained by exposing glycerine-processed foliage to full sun. After several days the leaves may change to warm browns, bronzy reds and gold.

Storing Preserved Materials

Store preserved materials in a dry, dark place. Direct sunlight will fade colors and humidity will wilt preserved flowers and may cause loss from mildew.

Blossoms may be rested on styrofoam or cardboard placed in an airtight container with some drying agent in the bottom. Floral arrangements may be made in brandy snifters or other clear containers or in a shadow box and sealed.



Suit boxes and boxes from the florist are good for storing and keeping materials dust free.

Making Arrangements

Plan the Arrangement

The same principles apply to making dry arrangements as fresh ones. It may take more materials and more time for gathering, storing and putting together. But they can last longer and so the relationship of materials, container (or base) and the location in the home should be given careful thought.

Design is the basic shape of an arrangement, usually a variation of the triangle, circle or line. A traditional bouquet is a mass of many flowers and foliage arranged symmetrically. Contemporary designs are more informal, depending on line, texture, form and space for interest.

Tools and Supplies

Wide varieties of containers or holders are possible for dry materials since water is not used. Wood, basketry, brass, copper, pewter and pottery are harmonious with most materials. Porcelain, silver and crystal combine nicely with preserved fine-textured flowers like roses. Cover brandy snifters and glass domes to protect arrangements from humidity.

Lightweight, brittle materials need careful anchoring. Floral clay, plastic foam, wire mesh and pin holders are useful. In tall containers, damp sand may be used and topped with clay. Sheet moss, rocks and pebbles are useful in hiding the holder. Floral picks can add strength and length as needed. They are helpful in grouping small flowers. Toothpicks may be substituted. Floral wire is needed for making stems and to strengthen leaves. Floral tape, available in green and brown, is used to hide floral picks and wire.

Helpful tools include wire cutter, small saw or knife (to cut the foam), pruning shears and an awl.

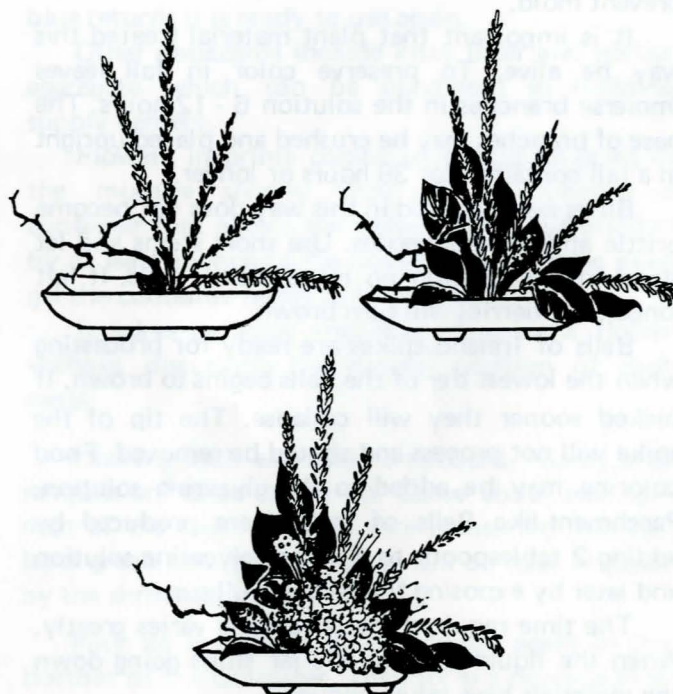
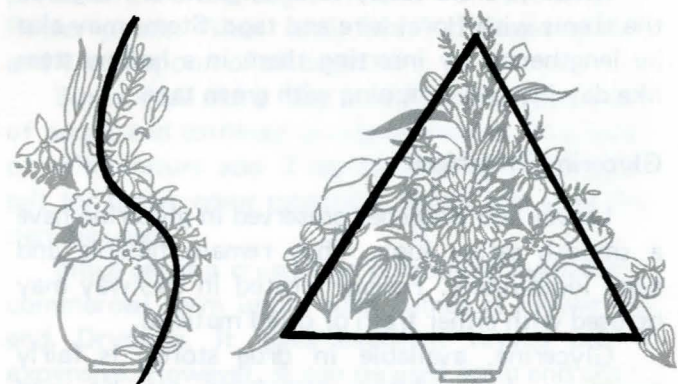
Arrange Materials

Art principles are helpful guides when making an arrangement. Choose materials and container (or base) that are in harmony with each other and with the setting where they will be seen.

Then determine the basic design. Establish lines to form an outline. Cut the stems of dried materials on the slant because sharp ends are easier to insert. Height is determined by the visual weight of material and container. Prairie grass may be 2 or 3 times as high as a tall pottery vase. If placed in a low container, prairie grass will exceed the one and one half times diameter often recommended.

If your dry material is too straight dampen it with warm water and gently bend it to the curve you need. Keep both hands close together as you shape it.

Your arrangement should look balanced. This can be achieved by placing larger, heavier or darker material at the base or center with lightweight smaller materials at the outer edge or upper part of





If your flowers or foliage were preserved without stems, add them now. Insert the material in a hollow stem and bind the two with floral tape. Or use floral wire or picks. Twigs make good stems for leaves.

An easy way to wrap stems and wire is to use a three-inch length of floral tape and hold it tightly in one hand while twisting the wire or stem with the other. More tape can be added. Group small flowers or other materials, then place a floral pick within an inch and a half from the stem ends. Wire the two together. Cover with tape if necessary. A loop of wire on the back of large leaves gives support, or the leaves may be stitched with wire.

Place lines and materials so that the eye will be carried to the focal point. Make stems originate from a central point. Contrast in size, form, texture or color may provide the accent needed.



Summary

1. Gather, collect, grow and preserve a variety of materials.
2. Store materials in a dark dry place.
3. Coordinate materials, container and setting.
4. Establish line, then add focal and filler as needed.
5. Express a mood or theme. Have fun!
6. Change arrangements from time to time. The same ones all season are boring.