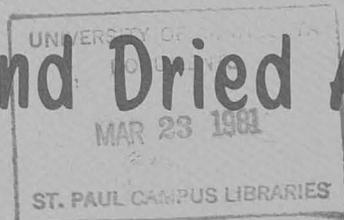




Bouquets and Dried Arrangements



The abundance of nature awaits your discerning eye once you begin to see the possibilities for dried arrangements along the roadside, in your garden, in vacant lots, along the lake shore, and in the forest. Start gathering interesting weeds and grasses, seed pods and foliage, pieces of driftwood, and stones and shells today. No season is better than another. Some excellent choices for bouquets might be branches, milkweed pods, sumac, dried berries, and grain heads. For high color, collect such materials as Japanese lanterns, mullein, cockscomb, and straw flowers from your garden.

Gathering and Conditioning Materials

Pick strawflowers when they are about half open and are showing good color. Strip off the leaves and tie in small bunches. Hang them upside down in a room which is well ventilated, dark, and dry.

Place Japanese lanterns in an upright or a horizontal position to dry.

To keep straight stemmed materials straight, hang upside down in bunches in your drying room. If hanging upside down causes unnatural positions of flowers or leaves, lay flat, and turn periodically.

To make interesting arrangements, you may want some curved stems. For these, dry tall grasses and greens in wide mouth containers.

Colorful leaves may be pressed between layers of paper placed on a flat surface. Place a weight on top. Change the paper periodically. They are ready to use when the leaves are rigid and no moisture is left on the paper (from 2-4 weeks).

Crush the stems of colorful foliage and place them in a container of 1 part glycerine and 2 parts water to preserve the color. After about 2 weeks, the leaves will become darker, but will blend well with other bouquet materials. (Rhododendron leaves turn a rich mahogany brown.)

To keep dried materials free from dust until you wish to use them, cover the bunches with paper or plastic bags.

Give seed pods a coating of shellac or clear nail polish to keep them from opening and dropping their seeds. Once opened, spraying with hair spray will help control such flying seeds as milkweed and dandelion.

Cattails should be cut early and may be treated in a number of ways:

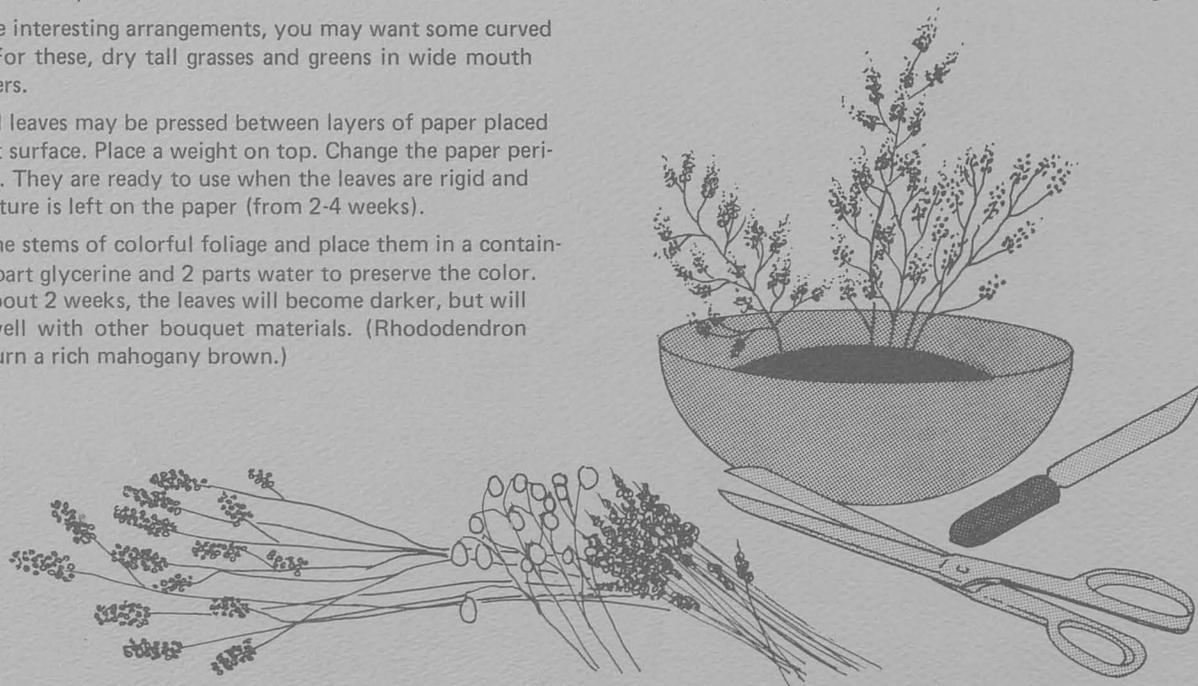
Dipped in alcohol to kill possible insects

Dipped in shellac to hold the fur in place

Sprayed with flat lacquer, hair spray, or fixative (a special protective spray found in art and handicraft stores)

Pick sumac, mullein, and dock at different stages to get variations in color. Early color is lighter, while late fall color is deeper and richer.

Gourds should remain on the vine until mature and they have gained their full color. Cut gourds from the vines with a sharp knife or pruning shears with 2 or more inches of stem remaining attached to the fruit. Allow to dry one layer thick in a light, warm, well-ventilated place for several weeks. To hasten drying you may prick holes in the ends with a darning needle.



When they are dry or cured, wash and dry them thoroughly. To polish hard-shell gourds, apply pumice or fine steel wool. To give them a gloss and heighten the color, apply water emulsion wax, clear varnish, or shellac.

To prevent stem breakage, dip the stems of any dry materials in water for 5 to 10 minutes before you start to arrange them.

Pine branches and evergreens may be used in winter bouquets. They last a long time if placed in water, although sometimes it is necessary for two containers to be used in the arrangement—one empty for the dried materials and one with water for the evergreens.

Pine cones offer a variety in sizes and shapes, from the large ones picked up in National Forests, to the tiny ones clipped from your Christmas tree. As you vacation in different states, collect the different sizes and shapes.

Pick-up driftwood, sea shells, and many shapes and colors of rocks on lake and sea shores. These may be used along with or as a part of some arrangement.

It is often desirable to incorporate flowering branches and fresh flowers with dried and preserved materials. As with pine branches, two containers may be necessary. To force flowering branches for use in the early spring, cut the stems of early blooming varieties such as pussy willow, apple, pear, forsythia, plum, cherry, peach, dogwood, or flowering almond and immerse them in water for a day. Then set them in water at room temperature. If they fail to open, repeat the soaking for a day.

Try coating colorful leaves with salad oil applied with a small soft cloth. Place the leaves between layers of newspaper to remove any excess oil.

Most of the flowers from your garden can be dried with sand or silica gel desiccant without too much loss of color or form. Flat, daisy-like blossoms dry more successfully than thick, complicated flowers such as roses and peonies. Generally, a length of florist's wire is substituted for the stem before the flower is dried.

Things To Keep In Mind

Select a suitable container

Start out with a few basic shapes. Many containers can serve for both dried arrangements and fresh flowers. For dried arrangements, however, it is not necessary to have containers that will hold water. A favorite bowl or vase that is cracked can be used.

For variety you will need:

- A low, round bowl
- A tall pillow or rectangular vase
- A shallow, rectangular container
- A tall column-shaped vase
- A basket or two of interesting form and texture



Since dried materials need no water, you may also use flat trays, discs of wood or metal painted harmonizing or contrasting colors, fiber or bamboo mats, or slabs of wood.

Make sure that the color and texture of the container or base harmonizes with the materials used, as well as with those near where it is placed. Beware of brightly colored and highly patterned containers. As a general rule, the design and color of the container should tend toward neutral, since the arrangement should be more dominant.

Suit the container to the materials you are using. Often the materials themselves suggest the best kind of container.

- o Slender grasses or wheat with small cattails in a tall amber glass vase.
- o A light, natural color basket filled with dark brown pine cones and a few colorful strawflowers.

Place to best advantage

Make the arrangement to fit the space where it will be used. Its size and proportion should relate to where it is placed. A tall arrangement needs plenty of vertical space, while a low, flat arrangement may look better on a coffee table. A one-sided arrangement should be viewed from one direction and is better against a wall or background; a round, three-dimensional arrangement can be viewed from all sides and seldom needs a background.

Watch backgrounds

Be sure the background for your arrangement is a flattering one. Highly patterned wallpaper or panelling makes a poor background, while a plain color provides opportunity for the arrangement to be seen and enjoyed. Light backgrounds make excellent foils for dark materials, while darker ones show light materials to advantage. A contrasting color may be a flattering background.

Help in making arrangements

For holding materials in a container or on a base:
Chicken wire (crumpled)
Needlepoint holders

For keeping materials and holders in place:
Floral foam
Sand, gravel, rocks
Floral or modeling clay
Paraffin wax

For wrapping stems and holding arrangements in place:
Floral tape
Florist's wire

For cutting stems or wire:
Shears or knife
Pliers or wire clippers

Needlepoint holders, chicken wire and other auxiliary containers should be hidden or camouflaged. Wrap the holder with floral tape to help hide it.

Basic Principles of Arranging Dried Materials

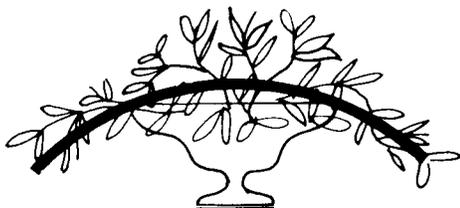
Design

Design is the planned arrangement of all the parts, the materials, and the container. Designs may be grouped in two general classes: mass and line arrangements. Among the basic shapes are:

The triangle which lends itself to many variations in height and width.



The convex curve is often used for arrangements which need to be kept low.



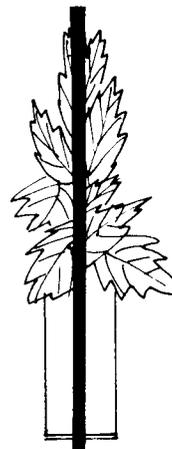
Round and oval shapes satisfy the viewer's eye.



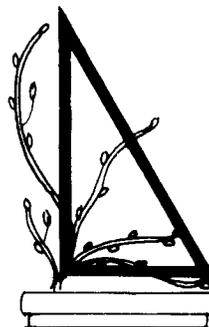
The moon or crescent is a pleasant variation and can be used with materials easy to manipulate into a curving line.



The perpendicular, vertical line or torch arrangement is used with tall materials.



The right-angle triangle shape is usually most effective in a shallow rectangular container.



The Hogarth or S-curve emphasizes its curved line.



The Oriental style of arranging flowers and dried materials has an emphasis on line, and each element of the design is symbolic. Many contemporary style arrangements also stress line and are sometimes considered modified Oriental. Traditional arrangements generally are full and symmetrical and are based upon mass rather than line.

Scale and proportion

Scale and proportion are the relationships of the sizes of the different materials used individually and together with the container. A good criterion is to have the arrangement about 1½ times the height of a tall container, or about 1½ times the width of a low container.

Balance

Balance is the creation of calm and stability within the pattern or design. The visual weight of materials and container must be considered. Light colored, feathery and delicate materials visually weigh less than dark, heavy solids. Light, delicate materials are often used at the edges of an arrangement with heavier, darker elements at the center. Symmetrical or formally balanced arrangements have virtually the same materials on either side, while asymmetrical or informally balanced ones have two sides distinctly different, but the arrangement still has visual equilibrium. Oriental arrangements are almost invariably asymmetrical.

Color

Good color combinations in dried arrangements are as important as in fresh flower bouquets. Lighter colored materials are often used at the outer edges while darker and more contrasting colors are grouped at the base or center of the arrangement. Even though several colors are used, one should be dominant.

Focal point or center of interest

At the focal point or center of interest, the main lines of the design come together. This is where the choicest materials are usually placed or where the brightest colors are used.

Rhythm

Rhythm in the arrangement is achieved by the repetition of a color, a material, by using graduated sizes, or by repeating a line. Rhythm carries the eye gently from one part of the composition to another.

Harmony

Harmony is created when there is a perfect blending of all elements. The materials used, the container, the accessories, the setting, and the finished arrangement all seem to belong together. They are a "total."

Additional Ideas and Suggestions for Arrangements

- o Open milkweed pods on a flat, natural, gray piece of driftwood on a dull grayed chocolate brown or dull blue-gray tray
- o Japanese lanterns and cattails with their spear shaped leaves in a tall bottle, in a torch arrangement
- o Pine boughs in a handled basket with a few ears of strawberry popcorn
- o An allium seed head hung like a starburst ornament from a wrought iron chandelier
- o A few branches of bittersweet in an old ironstone or pewter teapot
- o Colored candles to match or contrast with pine cones, acorns and nuts, or grapes around driftwood
- o A combination of blonde corn tassels and brown dock in a textured pot on burlap
- o A combination of apples, pears, squash, corn, and other fall fruits on a bed of colorful leaves
- o Brilliant Japanese lanterns, iris seed pods, and a colorfully striped gourd on a bamboo raft or placemat
- o An osage orange, dried corn leaves, and corn tassels held in place on a needlepoint holder
- o A flat tray-like basket with a variety of gourds, nuts and a few sorghum heads
- o An airy cluster of frothy grasses loosely arranged in a clear glass cylinder. For drama, try this in front of a small spotlight aimed toward the ceiling
- o A crescent arrangement of rhododendron leaves and spiky thistle heads
- o A "couple of large handfuls" of wheat straw with the heads intact tied with a red ribbon. Cut off the bottom of the straw evenly and stand vertically as a centerpiece

If you cannot bring yourself to discard a dried arrangement after you are through with it, store it for future use in a large plastic bag, or dismantle it and use the materials again. Don't leave it out for months to collect dust.

Artificial coloring of dried materials is usually not considered necessary. It may be done for special occasions or unusual effects, but beware of creating discordant elements in the arrangement or disrupting the subtle color harmony of the natural materials.

Remember that simplicity, or the use of a few materials with beautiful lines and forms, gives a greater pleasure than too much crowded all together.

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