

## **The Mechanics of Arranging**

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### **SOME BASICS:**

**CLEAN CONTAINERS** - Use containers which are clean. Going through your stockpile of containers on an annual basis is usually a good idea. Clean the containers with dish soap and a little laundry bleach. Rinse well. Besides cleaning up your containers, you reacquaint yourself with containers you may have forgotten about.

**GOOD ROSES** - Good horticultural practices will produce roses that are of superior quality that will have increased substance. These will give you better performance whether you are using the arrangement in a show, in your home, church or office.

**CONDITIONING** - Cut early in the day or late in the day; this is when the plant sugars are highest in the plant. If there is a choice, it is generally conceded that evening is better.

**FLORAL FOAM** - There are many brand names, but the widest used one is Oasis®. Soak well in a bucket or sink, using floral preservatives if you wish in the water. Once it is well soaked, cut with a knife to fit the container. Use vase tape to hold in place if necessary; I prefer the clear tape; it sticks very well to the vase and is invisible.

Develop your skill at arranging with floral foam to the point that you only insert the stems once. Inserting stems in foam makes holes (and holes don't hold water and nourishment for your stems). Cut on an angle (this is critical). I always do my perimeter stems first; that means that I have identified my height and width with foliage stems, and then fill in the middle.

Never re-use foam. It is very inexpensive. Used foam is full of holes and has become filled with bacteria; these are two agents that reduce the life of your design. Act smart and not cheap.

**KENZANS (NEEDLE HOLDERS)** - These are a must for Oriental designs, particularly Moribana. Kenzans will not foul the water. Oriental designs should be pristine in appearance, no excess material, nothing in the water or below the lip of the container, and immaculately clean.

**ORCHID TUBES AND PICKS** - These are used for modern designs and in places where blooms and plant material are needed to come from an unusual angle (like upside down or sideways). There are also small tubes to be used for miniature designs. I have found one additional technique to be used for all tubes; before filling with water, cut a sliver of foam the size needed to fill the tube, then fill with water, then put the cap on. Dry the exterior completely if you are to fasten the tube with hot-melt glue. If in a modern design, paint the same color as the wood or metal that the tube is attached to; this is a way to make the tube far less conspicuous.

**SPECIAL ADAPTATIONS** - If creating an arrangement using dried material, I will want my material to stay dry and not absorb the water used for the arrangement. I place my dried material in a tube, then insert it in the floral foam.

**REFRIGERATION** - In general, I do not plan to refrigerate more than four days. I condition my material for at least an hour. Transportation is in foam (or Coleman) coolers. Each bloom is protected with a foam cup (sliced down the side halfway - to the center of the cup), and each stem is in an orchid tube filled with floral preservative (like Flora-life, Chrysal RVB). I protect foliage by using layers of floral waxed paper in between each layer of blooms. Do not crowd. I use either ice blocks or ice cubes encased in a zip-lock bag (I do not want additional moisture). Miniatures are usually carried in a separate cooler.

**STORING THE BLOOMS AT THE SHOW SITE** - I find that I would rather have the blooms in my hotel room than in the storage room provided for the show roses. Therefore, I keep them in my room and arise early and do the designs early in the morning. The containers, filled with foam, or whatever mechanics I need have been prepared the night before. The tags have been prepared, and all that remains to be done is the design and enter the names of the varieties.

**NON-CONVENTIONAL MECHANICS** - I have rarely used glass frogs and other holding devices. I personally do not believe they are dependable.