



## Art in Flower Arrangements

Ruth Dean

"I like not lady-slippers,  
Nor the sweet-pea blossoms,  
Nor yet the flaky roses,  
Red, or white as snow;  
I like the chalice lilies,  
The heavy Eastern lilies,  
The gorgeous tiger lilies,  
That in our garden grow."

—Thomas Bailey Aldrich.

**M**OST all of us are fond of flowers and like to have them in our homes and gardens. We are all interested in perusing the seedsmen's catalogues and selecting the flowers we like best. Flowers when carefully selected, arranged and placed add a distinct charm to every occasion.

One of the first essentials to the successful use of flowers in decoration is the arranging of the material in such a way that the attractiveness will lose nothing by the somewhat artificial arrangement necessitated by its use in interior decoration.

Mother Nature is our greatest teacher in flower arrangement. We cannot hope to rival her, but we can borrow some helpful ideas. Simplicity is the keynote.

The setting has much influence on the attractiveness of flowers in the home. Setting includes the receptacle, the background, color and form contrast. Each flower has individuality and it should be brought out in the flower arrangement.

In order to make the most natural and consequently the most interesting designs, the buds as well as the fully opened flowers should be used. A liberal use of foliage often softens and adds beauty to the arrangement. When possible always use foliage of the same species as the flower. Remember also that the chief

attractiveness of any flower is in its freshness.

We are often bewildered by the vast array of beautiful bowls and vases when choosing a receptacle for our bouquet. We are attracted by the brighter colors and unique shapes and often fail to distinguish between those vases that were designed to be the center of interest in themselves and those that were intended for flower receptacles. Since the vase is only of secondary importance to the flowers, the real center of interest, it should be very simple in design and unobtrusive in color. Low tones of gray and subdued tones of green and red are generally the best colors. Light tints of yellow and blue are good with certain arrangements. Black is often used. The color harmonies, complementary, analogous, dominant and contrast should be considered. Orange-yellow *Calendulas* in an unglazed bowl of blue is a fine example of a complementary harmony.

Plain low glass bowls make excellent receptacles for most flowers. They are especially good for sweet-peas, violets, nasturtiums and other short stemmed flowers which are arranged in masses. The use of glass blocks gives a pleasing effect with fewer flowers and also helps to form a more natural arrangement.

The vase or bowl should be sufficiently large to hold the flowers without crowding the stems. It should be of such character as to give the appearance of stability or it will fail to interest the observer. The vase should be deep enough for the water to come well up on the stems of the flowers to retain their freshness for a considerable length of time.

The beauty of line in flower and stem should be emphasized by the lines of the receptacle. In general the flowers

should be one and one-half the height of the receptacle. The more simple the receptacle the better the design. Vases ornamented with naturalistic flowers are very difficult to use. For example a vase decorated with iris may be very good when used for iris alone, but let roses be substituted and the effect is very disturbing.

Flower texture and correct use of dark and light are important considerations. Practice must follow a knowledge of design if perfection is to be acquired.

A few suggestions concerning the care of flowers may be welcomed by the amateur gardener. Flowers should be gathered in the cool hours of the day when the plant tissue is well filled with moisture. Flowers keep best when cut with a sharp knife as scissors crush the tissue and a dull knife tears the stem so that it does not absorb water readily. After cutting the material should be plunged into a deep receptacle filled with water and left for a few hours in a cool place. The petals should never be submerged.

If the stems of such plants as heliotrope, dahlias and mignonette are cut with a sharp knife and plunged into boiling water for a minute, then placed in cold water, the keeping qualities will be greatly improved. The hands, however, should be held around the flowers or they will blacken.

Cutting the stems of flowers a second time under water helps to preserve them. Clean receptacles should always be used and the water should be changed daily.

Manners are the happy ways of doing things; each one a stroke of genius or of love—now repeated and hardened into usage.

—Emerson.