

# Contemporary American Flower Arrangements

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Horticultural departments in various colleges and universities offer some type of course in the field of flower arranging. Some of these are from the amateur viewpoint, others are concerned with commercial floral design. Whichever is given, the basic design principles are the same.

This article is prepared to clarify some thinking on the classification of the designs that are most often done today.

One of the oldest practices of man is to classify and name objects and things about him. When one hears a conversation about flower arranging, he often hears certain types of designs mentioned. Much confusion exists relative to classification of flower arrangements because very often the person talking forgets to state the basis on which the classification is made.

There are many historical and national types of arrangements and they all have their value in the over-all study of the art. Perhaps the most beneficial classification for the average arranger in this country is the one given by the Federation of State Garden Clubs in their handbook on Flower Shows. The term **Contemporary American** is used and will be defined below. Similarity in name or description should NOT cause one to confuse contemporary American with other national types of designs.

Classification for the three major types is based on: 1. quantity of plant (or other) material used, 2. the amount

of emphasis of the element **LINE**, and 3. openness in the arrangement.

Contemporary American Flower Arrangements are classified as: 1. Line Designs, 2. Massed-line Designs, and 3. Massed Designs. American Line Designs are often made with more material than the Oriental would use and with more emphasis on color and focal material. Massed-line Design is truly American and might be called a hybrid between the Oriental line arrangement and the European mass arrangement. Contemporary Massed Designs are simplified as compared to period mass arrangements; colors and kinds are grouped and the numbers of kinds of material used are often kept to a minimum.

Distinguishing characteristics of the Contemporary American **Line Design** are: 1. Restraint in the quantity (amount) of materials used. 2. A limited number of varieties used, usually three or fewer. 3. Openness of silhouette with emphasis on voids. 4. Very little depth even at the focal point. 5. Strong emphasis on **LINE**. 6. Emphasis on simplicity, elimination of confusion and competing interests.

**Massed-line Designs** may be characterized in the following manner: 1. A moderate amount of material is used (more than in a line arrangement). 2. The number of varieties of material may be increased to 3 or 4 depending on the skill of the arranger. 3. Openness of silhouette is emphasized but with decreasing emphasis on negative areas.

4. Depth at the focal point is increased and often emphasized and a strong center of interest or focal area is developed. 5. Line remains dominant, but light mass is added. 6. The greater amount of material, as compared to line, is handled to maintain simplicity and to eliminate conflicting interests.

**Contemporary Massed Designs** have the following characteristics: 1. Large amounts of materials are used, (Most people think of massed arrangements as being made on a large scale.) 2. The number of varieties of plant material may be increased to 6 or 8 or more. 3. Silhouette is closed. 4. Depth of the entire arrangement is emphasized. A focal area is developed with dominant forms or colors. 5. **FORM** is dominant and **LINE** receives very little emphasis. 6. Forms and colors are grouped to create simplicity but a massed arrangement will not be as simple as one of the other two.

One should decide which of the above he is going to make before beginning the structural process. Arranging becomes much easier when we plan what we are going to do. Houses are planned! Automobiles are designed, but arrangements (according to some) are supposed to just happen!

Perhaps your institution could promote some interest in a flower arranging course. Louisiana Tech has considerable interest among regular college students and also among adults for afternoon and evening classes for credit or non-credit.