

Lesson B2–3

Understanding the Principles of Floral Design

Unit B. Floriculture

Problem Area 2. Floral Design

Lesson 3. Understanding the Principles of Floral Design

New Mexico Content Standard:

Pathway Strand: Plant Systems

Standard: IV: Exercise elements of design to enhance an environment (e.g., floral, forest, landscape, farm).

Benchmark: IV-A: Apply basic design elements and principles to create a design using plants.

Performance Standard: 2. Apply elements of design (e.g., line, form, texture, color). **3.** Incorporate principles of design (e.g., space, scale, proportion, order). **6.** Select plant(s) for design.

Student Learning Objectives. Instruction in this lesson should result in students achieving the following objectives:

1. Define floral design.
2. List the principles of design.
3. Explain the concept of proportion.
4. Explain how the concept of balance is applied to floral design.
5. Describe how rhythm is applied in floral work.
6. Explain how the principles of dominance and focal point are used in floral design.

List of Resources. The following resources may be useful in teaching this lesson:

Recommended Resources. One of the following resources should be selected to accompany the lesson:

Biondo, Ronald J. and Dianne A. Noland. *Floriculture: From Greenhouse Production to Floral Design*. Danville, Illinois: Interstate Publishers, Inc., 2000.

Other Resources. The following resources will be useful to students and teachers:

Griner, Charles. *Floriculture: Designing & Merchandising*, Second Edition. Albany, New York: Delmar Publishers, 2002.

List of Equipment, Tools, Supplies, and Facilities

Writing surface
Overhead projector
Transparencies from attached masters
Copies of student lab sheet
Examples of floral designs (pictures or actual designs)

Terms. The following terms are presented in this lesson (shown in bold italics):

Asymmetrical balance
Balance
Centering
Contrast
Counterbalancing
Dominance
Floral design
Focal point
Free, variable rhythm
Physical balance
Principles of design
Proportion
Radiation
Regular, repeated rhythm
Repetition
Rhythm
Symmetrical balance
Transition
Variation
Variety
Visual balance
Visual weight

Interest Approach. Use an interest approach that will prepare the students for the lesson. Teachers often develop approaches for their unique class and student situations. A possible approach is included here.

Obtain pictures or photographs of floral design work from the florist in town or the Internet. FTD has a calendar that has great designs that can be used for this purpose. Ask the class why the design looks good and how it could be improved. You might also try designing a poor looking piece and bringing it into the classroom. A discussion could involve how to make this bad floral design look like the one in print.

Summary of Content and Teaching Strategies

Objective 1: Define floral design.

Anticipated Problem: What is floral design?

- I. **Floral design** is the art of organizing the design elements inherent in plant materials and accessories according to principles of design art. Another common term is floral arranging. People who arrange flowers typically use floral design techniques.

This is an introduction to the rest of the lesson. Use TM: B2–3A to assist in this introduction to floral design.

Objective 2: List the principles of design.

Anticipated Problem: What are the principles of design and how are they used?

- II. **Principles of design** are rules and guidelines used by the floral designer to create a beautiful composition. The use of these rules promote creation of beautiful, artistic arrangements.

Major Principles

- A. **Proportion** is the pleasing relationship between size and shape among objects and parts of objects.
- B. **Balance** in a flower arrangement refers to the arrangement's equilibrium and equality in weight, both physical and visual.
- C. **Rhythm** is the orderly organization of a design elements to create a visual pathway.
- D. **Dominance** in a design means that one design element is more prevalent or noticeable, thereby capturing interest of the viewer.

Minor Principles

- E. **Radiation** is the design element that makes it look as if all stems are coming from one point.
- F. **Repetition** is repeating the use of floral design elements to create unity in the work.
- G. **Transition** is the smooth gradual change from one material or element to another.

- H. **Variation** is the diverse assortment of materials, stimulating interest.
- I. **Contrast** describes objects arranged with a striking difference, stimulating interest.
- J. **Focal point** is the center of interest of the design, visually tying it together.

Using photos of floral designs, discuss with students the different principles of design. It might be valuable to do an inter-curricular activity with the art department on this topic.

Objective 3: Explain the concept of proportion.

Anticipated Problem: How is proportion achieved in floral design?

III. Three aspects must exist to achieve total proportion:

- A. The design must be in proportion to where it is going to be displayed. The display area could involve a room, a table, or in certain cases a person wearing it. Proportion involves the concept that the design be suitable for and in harmony with its location.
- B. The height of an arrangement should be 1½ times the height of its container's greatest dimension. There are a few exceptions to this rule, including the idea that height may be increased to create proper dimension with the room. Another increase might be because of the materials with which the designer is working.

The container is a primary factor in determining appropriate height. Four aspects need to be considered in determining proper height:

- 1. Physical dimensions of the container
- 2. Its color
- 3. Its material and texture
- 4. Its shape

Heavy, dark containers will support taller arrangements, whereas a glass container will provide an excellent base for shorter arrangements.

Another exception to the rule is with respect to centerpieces and horizontal arrangements. A centerpiece should not obstruct the view of those people participating in a dinner conversation; therefore these arrangements need to be kept low. A horizontal arrangement is short, but its linear dimension should be about 1½ times the size of the container.

- C. Flowers and foliage of equal or nearly equal size will help in achieving proper proportion of flowers and foliage. For example, large mums should not be mixed with baby's breath.

The key to this topic is demonstration and application. Have the students complete a floral design and have them take photographs of it at home where it is displayed. You might create two designs that are not in proper proportion and then redesign the arrangements in front of the students to show them how to correct their design problems and illustrate what the issues are. Use TM: B2–3B through TM: B2–3D to reinforce the factors floral designers consider in achieving proper proportion.

Objective 4: Explain how the concept of balance is applied to floral design.

Anticipated Problem: What is balance and how is it achieved?

- IV. Balance, meaning design equilibrium or equality in weight, can be achieved through several different methods.
- A. **Physical balance** is the actual stability of plant materials within the container. A properly designed arrangement that has physical balance will not fall over and can stand freely on its own.
 - B. **Visual balance** refers to the perception of the arrangement being balanced—being equal in weight on both sides of the central axis. A design that is not visually balanced will bother the viewer much like a crooked painting on a wall. Visual balance should be evident from three views: side to side; top to bottom; and front to back. There are two types of visual balance:
 - 1. **Symmetrical balance** is present when a design has the same physical balance on both sides of its central axis. Symmetrical balance is historically European in style and the designs are referred to as having formal balance. Typically symmetrical arrangements are exhibited in formal or symmetrical settings. Examples of symmetrical designs are oval, round, fan, triangle, inverted T, vertical arrangements, as well as oval and round centerpieces.
 - 2. **Asymmetrical balance** is present when a design has unequal material placements and weight on each side of its axis. This is referred to as informal designs and stems from oriental influences. Asymmetrical balance is achieved through compensation and counterbalancing. Examples of asymmetrical designs are crescent, Hogarth curve, fan, diagonal, vertical, ikebana, scalene, and right triangle centerpieces.
 - C. Designers use three main techniques to help achieve balance.
 - 1. **Visual weight** is a flower's perceived lightness or heaviness based on its color, shape, and pattern. Varying visual weight helps achieve the compensation or counterbalancing in asymmetrical designs. Lighter materials and color are used toward the outside of an arrangement, whereas heavier materials are used toward the center.
 - 2. **Centering** is the technique of placing dominant plant material along a design's central vertical axis. This allows heavier plant materials to be placed higher in a design.
 - 3. **Counterbalancing** means balancing plant materials on one side of a design with visually equal materials on the opposite side. This technique is essential in asymmetrical design work, and can be used to avoid strict mirror imaging in symmetrical work.

There are many good videos on the market that explain the various design shapes and how to achieve balance in an arrangement. After viewing one, lead a discussion on the various topics that were covered. Display TM: B2–3E to help illustrate the major types of balance.

Objective 5: Describe how rhythm is applied in floral work.

Anticipated Problem: How is rhythm created in a floral design?

- V. Creating a pathway for the eye to follow is the purpose of rhythm. An arrangement with good rhythm will cause the viewer to look at the entire arrangement. There are two types of rhythm. **Regular, repeated rhythm** is present when materials are repeated at regular intervals from the top to the bottom of an arrangement. **Free, variable rhythm** is an unstructured style with subtle flowing movements created with unstructured materials. Five techniques that can achieve both regular and free rhythm are:
- A. Radiation—Stems radiate out naturally from the container. A top view shows the stems appearing as spokes on a wheel. Crossing stems is avoided.
 - B. Repetition—Repeating design elements throughout an arrangement including, but not limited to, color, shape, space and lines.
 - C. Transition—Change from one material to another. It should be smooth and gradual. Lighter flowers near the container edge blend into the heavier ones near the center.
 - D. **Variety**—Diverse assortment or differing components in a design. Variety focuses attention and stimulates interest and imagination.
 - E. Contrast —Describes objects that have striking differences beyond mere variety or diversity, taking variety to a higher degree.

Create several designs before the students arrive and allow them to create designs of their own using the techniques covered in this objective. The topic might be covered prior to this in a lecture and discussion format. Reinforcing the concepts while designing any arrangement will build the students' confidence in this area.

Objective 6: Explain how the principles of dominance and focal point are used in floral design.

Anticipated Problem: What is dominance and how is a focal point used to create it?

- VI. The use of dominance suggests to the viewer what is important in a design. Interest and attention are captured when one feature dominates and others are secondary.
- A. Dominance can be achieved by:
 - 1. Using dominant plant material
 - 2. Using an emphasized design element
 - 3. Using a distinct style of design
 - 4. Using a theme
 - 5. Using a focal point
 - B. A focal point—center of interest—can be created several different ways. It is important to note that not all arrangements need a focal point or center of interest. If however, one is intended, there are several methods to create one:

1. Use of large flowers
2. Use of special form flowers such as orchids
3. Employing dark shades
4. Variation of concentration of plant material
5. Use of framing materials
6. Use of strong color contrast
7. Radiation of plant materials to a particular area
8. Use of accessories

This topic should be covered in a general discussion but can be reinforced with photographs of various designs. Have each student pick a different focal point technique and use it in their design work.

Review/Summary. There are many principles of design. As students begin to design arrangements, they will begin learning the techniques necessary to achieve their chosen designs. The market provides a great number of videotapes and filmstrips on this subject, which will help in summarizing this information in a quick manner.

Application. When students create their first designs in class, remind them of the techniques they are to use. Then grade their work on these techniques. Included in this lesson is an example of a grading sheet (LS: B2–3A) that might be used in evaluating an arrangement. You might bring in an arrangement and discuss the techniques that are used in achieving a good design. Contact a local funeral home and see if the class might obtain arrangements that go unused at the end of a memorial service; this would provide a basis for discussions on this topic.

Evaluation. Have the students do an evaluation of a floral design and explain in detail how they would improve it. Have them explain the techniques they would use to improve it. Make sure they provide reasoning as to why they think a design is poor. A short written quiz is also included in this unit.

Answers to Sample Test:

Part One: Matching

1=h, 2=a, 3=g, 4=c, 5=e, 6=f, 7=i, 8=j, 9=b, 10=d

Part Two: Completion

1. symmetrical
2. asymmetrical
3. 9
4. small
5. Counterbalancing
6. Centerpiece and horizontal

7. physically
8. Floral design
9. Centering

Part Three: Short Answer

Radiation

Repetition

Transition

Variety

Contrast

Test

Lesson B2–3: Understanding the Principles of Floral Design

Part One: Matching

Instructions. Match the term with the correct response. Write the letter of the term by the definition.

- | | | |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| a. balance | e. radiation | i. transition |
| b. contrast | f. repetition | j. variation |
| c. dominance | g. rhythm | |
| d. focal point | h. proportion | |

- _____ 1. The pleasing relationship between size and shape among objects and parts of objects.
- _____ 2. Equilibrium and equality in weight, both physical and visual.
- _____ 3. The orderly organization of a design element to create a visual pathway.
- _____ 4. A design element that is more prevalent or noticeable, capturing the viewer's attention.
- _____ 5. The design element that makes things look as if they are coming from one point.
- _____ 6. Repeating materials in floral design to create unity.
- _____ 7. The smooth gradual change from one thing to another.
- _____ 8. The diverse assortment of materials, stimulating interest.
- _____ 9. When objects have a striking difference, stimulating interest.
- _____ 10. The center of attention in a design, visually tying it all together.

Part Two: Completion

Instructions. Provide the word or words to complete the following statements.

1. A design that is equal on both sides of the central axis is called _____ in form.

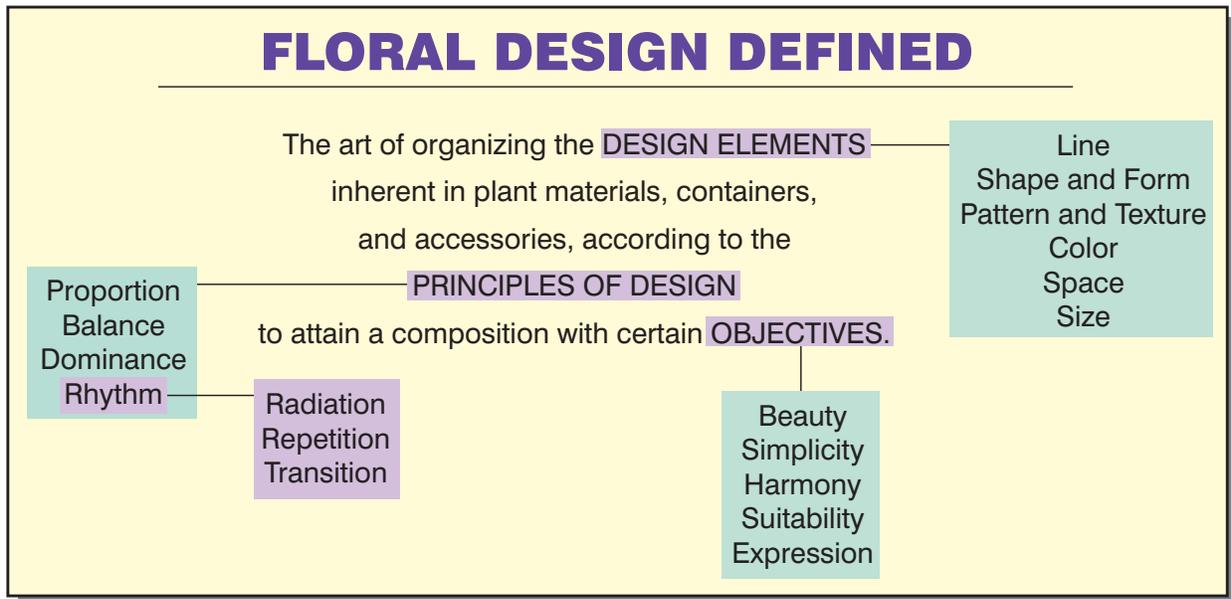
2. The _____ design form is derived from the orient and is considered informal.
3. A container that is 6 inches high should contain an arrangement that is _____ inches high.
4. An arrangement for a small end table should be _____ in size.
5. _____ means to balance plant materials on one side of a design with visually equal materials on the opposite side.
6. _____ arrangements are exceptions to the “1½ times” container rule.
7. Arrangements that are not _____ balanced will fall over.
8. _____ is the art of organizing the design elements inherent in plant materials, and accessories according to principles of design art.
9. _____ is the technique of placing dominant plant material along the central vertical axis.

Part Three: Short Answer

Instructions. Provide information to answer the following questions.

Name the five techniques used to achieve rhythm.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

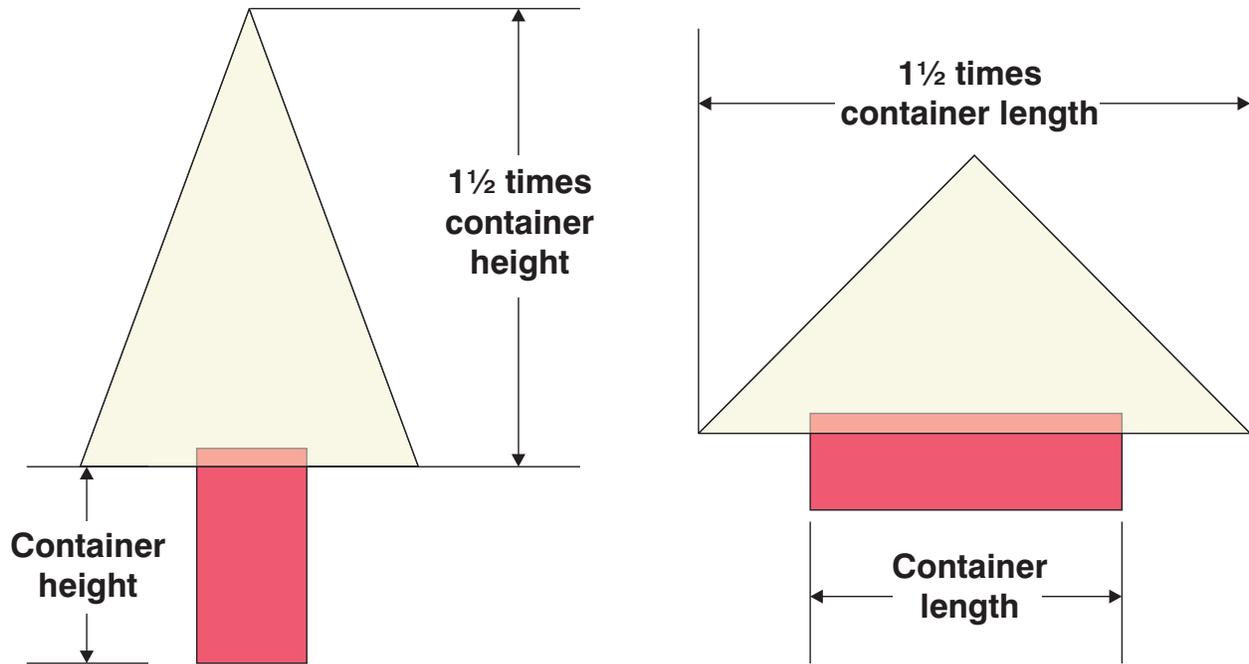


(Courtesy, Interstate Publishers, Inc.)



Bulky pottery can visually support a taller, larger floral design than a clear glass vase of the same height.

PROPORTION



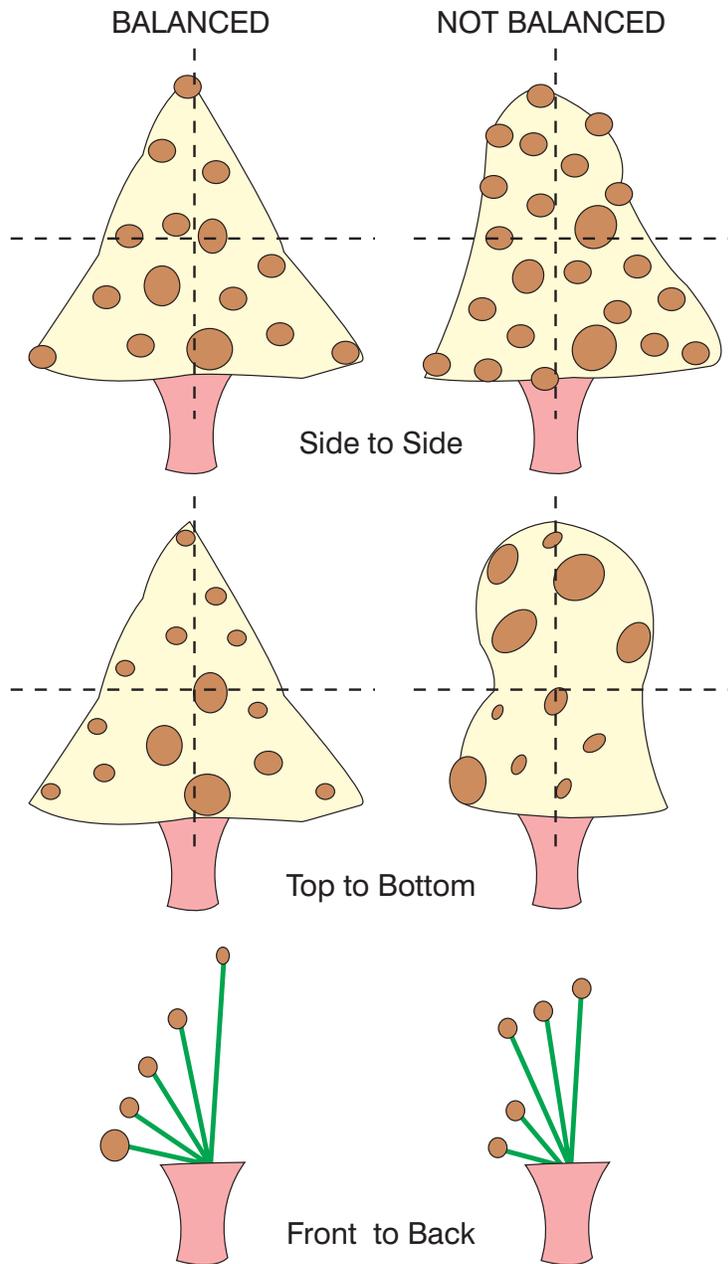
(Courtesy, Interstate Publishers, Inc.)

STEPS TO PLEASING PROPORTION

A CHECKLIST

- **Determine display area**
- **Select a container**
- **Select plant material in proportion to the display area and the container**
- **Establish a height**
- **Establish a width**
- **Note changes in proportion as you work**
- **Make necessary adjustments in proportion as you work**

VISUAL BALANCE IN FLORAL DESIGN



(Courtesy, Interstate Publishers, Inc.)

Lab Sheet

Floral Design — Evaluation Sheet Using Floral Design Techniques

Principles of Design	# of Points Possible	# of Points Achieved
Proportion	10	
Balance	10	
Rhythm	10	
Dominance	10	
Radiation	5	
Repetition	5	
Transition	5	
Variation	5	
Contrast	5	
Focal Point	5	
Total	70	