

DESIGN 101

aka Floral Design made Easy!

by Kathy Ward

Article Four

Traditional Mass Design in Equilateral Triangular Form

In Article Three – Design 101, we described how to make a simple mass design that could be used as a round centerpiece. For this article we will use the same general instructions but show you how you can make a triangular design. Both designs, as described, are considered traditional designs, as they have an abundance of plant material, a closed silhouette, geometric shape, plant material integrated (not grouped by type) and all plant material radiates from a single point.

Creating your Design –

Step 1 – Select your plant material. For a small, simple Triangular Design, you will need:

- linear foliage and/or linear flowers– 5 to 10 stems, each
- filler foliage – like camellia, lemon leaf
- round flowers – 6-10, medium sized (one flower per stem); you may also use a second type of round blossom, 3 – 8 stems (optional)
- filler flowers/foilage – 1 bunch (smaller spray flowers or foliage)

For the demonstration design, I have used white larkspur as a linear flower (no linear foliage), camellia and laurel leaves as the filler foliage, pink roses for the main round flower, purple mums or white daisies as a secondary round flower and purple veronica for the filler. More information on selecting your botanical components was included in article one (Footprints, Fall 2023). Note – All back issues of Footprints can be found on the Piedmont District website, <http://www.piedmontdistrictvfgc.org>.

Step 2 – Select your container. A shallow rectangular bowl works well as a container for this design, although a round bowl can work as well. Black, brown and green are always good colors. You can also use a container that echoes the colors of your flowers.

Step 3 – Decide on your mechanics. The most common mechanics for a traditional design with fresh flowers are floral foam (Oasis) or chicken wire. A kenzan can be used but it is usually not as effective with as much plant material as is needed for a traditional design.

Step 4 – Condition your flowers. For more information on conditioning, see article two in the winter 2023 edition of Footprints, the Piedmont District newsletter.

Step 5 – Prepare your mechanics. For a Mass Design, if you are using floral foam, you will want to have the foam 1 to 1 1/2” higher than the rim of your container. This allows you to place some of the plant material into the arrangement at an upward angle, helping to hide the rim of the container. Use a single block of foam rather than trying to fill the bowl with pieces. An “X” of waterproof tape can be placed over the foam and attached to the sides of the bowl to keep the foam in place. Then wrap the tape around the top of the container to help hold the ends of your “X” in place.



If you choose to use chicken wire, take a large piece of chicken wire and crumple it into a ball and place it in your container. Make sure you use enough chicken wire for the stems to go through at least two layers of wire to keep them in position. Some chicken wire can also be secured over the mouth of the vase with waterproof tape.

Step 6 – Cut and place your line flowers/foilage.

Cut the first piece of line flower/foilage about 2 times as long as the length of your container. Place it in the center of your container toward the back. Cut two additional pieces of your line material, so that they are the same length. If they are a little shorter than your first piece, you will create an equilateral triangle (all sides the same size).



Place these two pieces of line material on the left and right side of your arrangement. They should be horizontal and toward the back of your design. The ends of these three pieces of line material define the triangle of your design. Do not place any plant material outside the line made between these points. Add additional pieces of line material to further define the sides of the triangle. All pieces should be placed toward the back and look like they are radiating from the same point in the container.

Step 7 – Place your filler foliage.

Place your filler foliage throughout the design, accentuating the triangular space inside the line material. Use stems of different lengths. These leaves are meant to fill out the design and not to necessarily hide the mechanics.



Step 8 – Place your round flowers. Place your first blossom so that it is vertical and in the center of the arrangement. Create an airy triangle with an additional 2, 5 or 7 flowers. Place the round

forms in gradually widening rows well within the triangle created by your linear foliage/flowers. Remember that they should all look like they are all emerging from a single point in your design. This means you will see the blossom from different angles. I chose to add a second type of round flower for interest – in this case large, dark purple mums. They were placed within the triangle of roses.



Step 9 – Fill in with spray flowers.

Tuck the spray flowers throughout your design. They can be used to hide mechanics, hide the rim of your container and just round out your design.



Step 10 – Complete the back of your design.

Additional filler foliage and flowers can be added to the back of your design to finish it. While being able to view some of this material from the front will add depth to your design, be sure that its placement doesn't distract from your design. Note – This design is meant to be viewed from the front. It would be perfect on a credenza, entry table or on the altar in a church.

Step 11 – Critique your design. Now that you have finished your design, take a good look at it. While this can be done by eye, taking a photo of it can be even more effective. Look at the image in step 8. Does anything jump out at you? To me, there is too much space between the linear flowers. This design is to be a traditional design, with a closed silhouette. Adding additional line

material (foliage or flowers) would improve the design.

I also notice that the dark mums in the center of the design disappear. A lighter or brighter color would have been more effective.



In the Step 9 image, the dark mums have been removed and white daisies added. This does brighten up the center of the design and the white daisies coordinate well with the white larkspur. Do you see

anything that could be improved with this design? If I draw a vertical line through the center of the design, one side of the design should appear to have the same amount of plant material as the other. To me, the left side of this design is a bit visually heavy - it has more plant material on the left side than on the right. There also appears to be a dark hole (lack of plant material) at the middle bottom of the arrangement.

In Summary--

These instructions give you quite a simple framework to get you started with Traditional Triangular Design. Have fun experimenting with linear foliage instead of linear flowers, as well as different combinations of round forms and filler flowers. Place the linear plant material in the center of the arrangement, rather than at the back, and add flowers to both sides to make a design that can be viewed from all sides. Make the vertical line foliage/flower shorter and the outer lines longer to create a centerpiece. Play with the placement of the round forms. They need not be in a triangular form; what is important is that the overall blossoms are placed within the framework of the triangle and that the effect is visually balanced.