

DESIGN 101

aka Floral Design made Easy!

by Kathy Ward

Article Five: Petite Designs

With the large number of clubs having flower shows, I thought it would be helpful to discuss Petite Designs. Petite Designs are included in most flower show schedules, and many new designers are more comfortable making a smaller design.

According to page 73 of the *Handbook for Flower Shows* (2017 edition), a Petite Design is a design which is between 3 and 12" in height, width and depth. The actual required size will be defined by the schedule. The schedule may also specify whether fresh and/or dried plant material should be used and the design type (traditional, creative, or even a specific design type). Done correctly, petite arrangements are miniature versions of full-sized flower arrangements.

Creating a Petite Design

Step 1 - Prepare a Staging Panel

By making your staging panel first, you create a frame of reference to use while crafting your design.

- A staging panel is made by cutting two squares of heavy paper (or other material) using the height, width, and depth specified in the schedule. If you are creating a 6" x 6" design, you would cut two squares that are 6" by 6".
- Support one piece so that it will stand up. I usually tape a small glass bottle to the back of the paper, but any method that will hold the paper up without being visible from the front of the design is fine. The other paper will lie flat on the surface your design will set on. By using the same material (color and texture) for both squares, the design will stand out with a cohesive background.

Step 2 – Choose your Container

It is difficult to just look at a container and know that it will be the right size for a particular petite design size. Using the frame of reference you just created will help you to choose an appropriate container. Generally, the container will be about 1/3 as high as the vertical panel (height requirement). Containers can be purchased specifically for making petite designs - clay pots, glass bottles, acrylic or metal sculptures. Using a little imagination, you can also create containers using materials from around the house – a lipstick tube, a seashell, etc. I sometimes like to use an oven-bake polymer clay (Sculpey, FIMO) that you can purchase from craft stores to make my own ceramic-like containers.

Step 3 – Choose your Plant Materials

When choosing your plant material, you consider the color, texture, form, pattern, line and scale, just as you do when making larger designs. Selecting materials with the correct scale is probably the most challenging element. Fresh greenery that works includes air plant, *cryptomeria*, boxwood, wax flower, *nandina*, parsley, rosemary, etc. For fresh blossoms you could use *Limonium*, lavender, *coleus*, aster, *hydrangea*, miniature rose, and statice to name a few. Dried foliage, nuts, seeds, flowers and *lichen* can also be used.

Step 4 – Critique your Design

Once your design is finished, step back and take a critical look at it. Evaluate it for balance, contrast, dominance, proportion, rhythm and scale – the design principles. Be sure that nothing extends beyond the frame of reference. **Taking a photo of the design is a good way to evaluate it. From the photo, can you tell that it is a Petite Design ... or does it look like a full-sized design?**

If you enjoy making Petite Designs and would like to learn more, there is a wonderful book, *Guide to the New Petite*, written by Anna G. Burns. It contains many examples of Petite Designs of 5, 8 and 12" with a list of the materials used for each design.

Here are a few examples of Petite Designs:



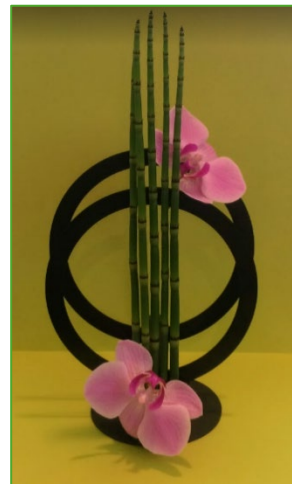
5" x 5" Tubular Petite - Oven-baked clay container, dried *hydrangea* blossoms painted with nail polish, aluminum wire, orange fuel tubing



6" x 6" Petite - Pottery container, *iris* leaves, chive blossoms



10" by 10" Petite - Painted toilet paper tube, deodar cedar cone, painted sticks, paper shape



12" x 12" Petite - Metal sculpture, *equisetum*, miniature orchid blossoms



12" by 12" Petite - Dried *allium*, braided tube ribbon with wire inside



12" x 12" Petite - Driftwood, cone flower seed head, braided palm, *lichen*, *celosia*