

DESIGN 101

aka Floral Design made Easy!

by Kathy Ward

Article Six – TABLES

As so many clubs are having flower shows this spring, I thought we'd talk about a favorite design type at flower shows - the table. It is one of the design types that most schedules include and many new designers feel comfortable with. According to pages 76-77 of the *Handbook for Flower Shows* (2017 edition), there are two types of tables - the Exhibition Table and the Functional Table.

The Functional Table

The one we see most often is the Functional Table. This is a table that is planned and artistically set for actual food service. It includes dishes to eat from, glasses or cups to drink from, napkins, and usually a tablecloth and/or placemats. Flatware can be included but often it is not to keep the table less cluttered. A "decorative unit" must be included. This is a design that contains some plant material. A potted plant alone does not qualify as a design. Additional accessories are also allowed, unless the schedule specifies otherwise.

The schedule will usually define the type of table and the style of dining. It often tells you the number of place settings required. The table can be set in an informal manner (casual dining) with paper products, stoneware or other table appointments that fit the prescribed style. A table may also be semi-formal for more sophisticated dining. The schedule could state that the dining would be alfresco (outside). A tray for one is also popular on schedules. For a tray, the setting should be ready to carry and set in front of someone, therefore no napkin is allowed on the plate and the decorative unit must be stable.

The Exhibition Table

An Exhibition Table is an exhibit that is not meant to be functional. It just suggests the service of food with no requirement as to the type or number of table appointments. Plant material must be used, but it need not be a design. An exhibition table reminds me of a display you would see in the housewares area of a department store.

Judging Table Designs

As with all designs, the functional table and exhibition table are judged by the design scale of points.

- Almost half of the allotted points are based on the balance, contrast, dominance, proportion, rhythm and scale within the design.
- Additional points are from the selection and organization of components, conformance to design type (functional or exhibition table), expression of title and distinction (craftsmanship, uniqueness, creativity).
- A card is required for table designs, listing not only the plant material used, but also the make/pattern of dishes and beverage service, if included.

Creating a Table Design – To create your table design, you will need to decide on an item or two that you would like to build your design around. It could be a plate with a pattern or an accessory that exemplifies the Class title. In creating your table design, it is important to repeat some of the colors to create cohesiveness. For example, a color in a plate could also be found in the tablecloth and the floral design.

The list of possible table appointments includes

- Dishes (paper, glass, plastic, metal, wood, china, porcelain, stoneware).
- Glasses/cups/mugs (glass, plastic, china, paper) for beverages.

- Flatware (metal, plastic, wood).
- A tablecloth, placemat, a runner, napkins.
- Salt and pepper shakers
- Candlesticks, with or without candles.
- A design or plant material.

Not all of these components need to be present in every table design. Too many items on a table can impact the rhythm, as well as the overall aesthetics. In choosing your components, it is important to remember the style of design, as specified by the schedule. A silver water pitcher would look out of place with a picnic setting. Likewise, you would rarely use paper napkins with a fine china plate. Use of fine china or silver flatware is discouraged, as breakage or “misplaced items” could occur.

For a functional table, the floral component must be in proportion to the table size. As a rule of thumb, it should take up no more than one-third of the table space. If the diners are seated across from each other, the design should be low enough (or high enough) that it doesn't impact the line of sight of the diners. If the diners are seated on adjacent sides of the table, the design may be higher.

Here are three examples of Table Designs.



Exhibition Table



Functional Table



Table for One