

Handout: Mechanics of Floral Design by Mickey Sanders of HFGC

Stocking the toolbox:

- . Do not try to carry everything you possess for mechanics. Keep basic tools in box then customize for the individual design.
- . Basic tools: small serrated knife (used to cut oasis); tiny scissors for trimming leaves; larger scissors; wire nips; clippers for stems; small awl, tweezers; straight pins, bank pins, assorted wires; Styx; stapler; assorted tapes; floral clay, various sizes of wooden picks.
- . Keep other means of mechanics in an organized place at home and add to your toolbox for specific designs.

Anchoring Designs:

- . Needlepoint holders--use floral clay to attach to container
- . Needle holder for foam
- . Decorative wood holder

Manipulating Plant Material:

- . Floral wire taped to the back of a leaf allows the leaf to be bent into shapes.
- . Wire inserted into Equisetum allows it to be bent into shapes. When placing Equisetum or other hollow stem material in a needle point holder, place over a wooden pick or sturdy stem to hold it in place.
- . Stems which are too fragile to be pushed onto a needle point holder, can be wired or taped to a pick.
- . To insert weak stems into foam, make a hole in the foam first then insert.
- . Several small stems can be wrapped together and inserted all at once. Example, Bear Grass
- . To drop some material over the edge of the container, have foam extending above the rim of the container.
- . Shape plant material while it is green.
- . Place stem into needle point holder straight up and down then pull it into correct position.
- . Tape a water pick to a wooden pick to elevate a stem that is too short.

Plant Materials that hold up without water for the duration of the show:

- . Test the materials that you grow. For best results, several days before cutting, water the plant deeply. Cut and place immediately in water.
- . Materials proven to hold up without water: Most tropical plant material, Sansevieria, Ligularia, Aspidistra, Galax leaves, Orchids, Liatris, Sago Palm, Umbrella Palm, Bromeliads, Succulents, Baby's Breath, Fruits and Vegetables, Palm, Amaranthus, Daylily, Hibiscus, Philodendren 'Xanadu.'

Attaching Plant Material and Other Components:

- . Styx, available from teacher's supply companies or on-line sites for mechanics
- . Glue Dots available with scrapbooking supplies
- . Spray adhesive, Texas Art Supply
- . Magnets, Hardware Store, Container Store, Web Sites for Mechanics
- . Magnet tape
- . Bendaroos, Web Site
- . Pipe cleaners
- . Tie Wraps, Hardware Store
- . Hot Glue Gun

Stabilization:

- . Stabilize lightweight containers with sand, pebbles, or marbles. To add a needlepoint holder in the container, pour paraffin over the top of sand and embed the needle point holder in the warm paraffin.

Bundling Plant Material:

- . Raffia-soak in water before wrapping and tying.
- . Wire (wrapped available from floral wholesale suppliers).

Hanging Designs:

- . Use inset bead to make attachment method invisible.

Mechanics must be neat and unobtrusive:

- . Paint needlepoint to match container.
- . Cover Oasis with moss, other plant material, or pebbles. If your foam extends above the rim of the container, use wire pins to attach moss or plant material to cover (green pins can be easily made by cutting small pieces of wire and bending them into a "u" shape).
- . Mechanics that are incorporated into the design and do not detract may show; Examples:
 - 1) Raffia that bundles plant material,
 - 2) Colored Oasis,
 - 3) Bendaroos,
 - 4) Tie wraps,
 - 5) Decorative Wire

Backgrounds:

- . Stabilize
- . Cover with unwrinkled fabric or paper
- . Use matching underlay

Miscellaneous Tips:

- . Soak Oasis the night before a show by placing it in a container of water deep enough to cover the entire block. Carry the wet block to the show in a plastic bag. Cut the block after it has been soaked.
- . Design Master spray paint has colors that are close to nature. Basil is the green that is closest to leaves and stems.
- . Turn a candleholder into a container.
- . Short stems can be inserted into water picks, the picks can be taped to wooden picks for better placement.
- . For containers that are not glazed to hold water, coat the inside of the container with paraffin.
- . Add fruit to design by using a wooden pick.
- . Use fishing weights to keep plant material submerged in water for an underwater design tie/fishing line.
- . Floral foam is not self-healing, a hole makes an air pocket that can cause plant material to wilt.
- . *The Essentials of Ikebana* edited by Patricia Massey
- . Molding Paste: cover Styrofoam to allow it to be painted; apply texture to components (Texas Art Supply).
- . Attend flower shows and talk to designers.

Practice your mechanics:

Do not depend upon some untested mechanic to hold up for the duration of the show. Always practice and leave your design in place at home to see if anything goes wrong (example: leaf detaches from the glue dot that was holding it in place).

Sources:

- . www.counffyhousefloral.com
- . www.floraldesignessentials.com
- . www.bendaroos.com
- . www.stonelantern.com