Elements of Floral Design

Color, form, line, and texture comprise the elements of design. They are the physical characteristics of materials used in floral compositions. A designer must study the properties of each element in order to successfully combine them with the principles of design. This combination is the foundation of floral design.

Color - To many, color is the most important element of floral design. Sir Isaac Newton discovered the first theory of color. He recognized the colors red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and violet. By blending the spectrum into a circle, he developed the color wheel.

Color is a vital part of the world. It is seen in the sky, water, flowers, and foliage of nature. Human response to color may be happy or sad. Color affects the feelings of each individual differently.

Light is necessary to see color. Color is light. Every color in the spectrum can be found in daylight. When an object reflects all colors, we see the object as white. If the object absorbs all the colors, we see the object as black.

Color Wheel - To understand and achieve success in design, a florist must be familiar with the color wheel. The pigment theory divides the color wheel into warm and cool colors. The warm colors are red, orange, and yellow. The cool colors are green, blue, and violet. The warm colors are called advancing colors and require less light to be seen. These are important factors to remember when creating floral designs. A sample color wheel is provided in this chapter for reference.

Form – A shape that has a third dimension. The three basic forms used in design are the circle, square, and triangle.

Fragrance – Inherent to only some flowers and may not always be present in your flower arrangement; however, fragrance is a perceived smell.

Line – A line represents the visual movement between two points. Line gives an arrangement structure, shape, movement, excitement, height, width, and depth. There are five lines in Western style design: vertical, horizontal, curvilinear, zigzag, and diagonal.

Pattern – Patterns are repetitive compositions of line, form, color, texture, and space.

Size – The physical dimension of an object or floral design.

Space – The three dimensional area of floral design, encompassing negative and positive space.

Texture – Texture is the surface quality of a flower, foliage, or container. Textures include the actual physical feeling of an item, as well as the visual feeling.

Vocabulary of Color – To fully understand the concept of color, it is important to understand the vocabulary used to describe colors. The sample color wheel provides visual examples of the vocabulary of color.

Hue: Hue is a particular color, regardless of the quality of black or white it contains. The quality of the color helps decide the family name.

Chroma: Chroma is the purity of a color, determined by its degree of freedom from white or gray. Chroma refers to the intensity, the strength, or the weakness of a color.

36

<u>Intensity</u>: Intensity is the dullness or brightness of a color.

<u>Shade</u>: Shade is any color that has had black added to it. For example, adding black to red makes burgundy.

<u>Tint</u>: Tint is any color that has had white added to it. For example, adding white to red makes pink.

<u>Tone</u>: Tone is any color that has had gray added to it or that has been grayed by its complement.

<u>Value</u>: Value is the lightness or darkness of a color. For example, the value of red changes when white is added, and the color is lightened to a pink tint.

The Color Chart

The basic colors - Red, Yellow, and Blue - are the primary colors from which all others are made. They are the building blocks for the entire color pigment system. Nature has provided the special qualities of red which is advancing, exciting, and warm; blue which is receding, cool and quieting; and yellow which is brilliant and cheerful.

The mixture of any two primary colors produces a secondary color; orange, green or violet.

Yellow and red = orange
Blue and yellow = green
Red and blue = violet

The mixture of any primary color with its secondary color neighbor gives a tertiary color.

Yellow and orange = yellow-orange
Orange and red =red-orange
Red and violet =red-violet
Violet and blue = blue-violet
Blue and green = blue-green
Green and yellow = yellow-green

The color wheel may be divided in half to show which colors are cool and which are warm. Red, orange and yellow which symbolize blood and fire are warm; green, blue and violet recall sky and water which are cool. The warm colors advance (stand out from a distance) while the cool colors recede. These qualities become critical when decorating a display window, or a church for a wedding.
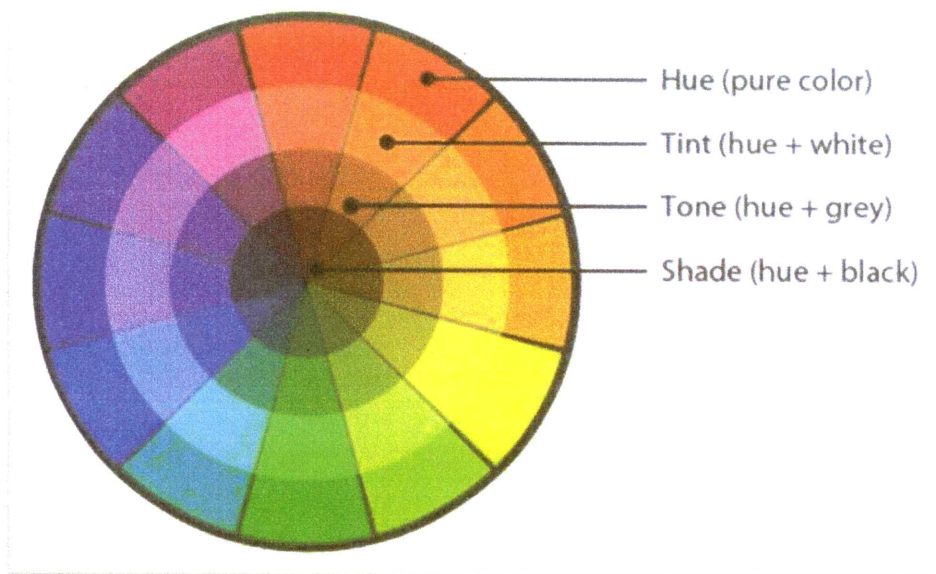
Neutral Colors

Black, white, and gray are known as neutral colors. They do not appear in the color wheel, but they are used to change the tonal quality or value of a color. White lessens color value, making it lighter. Black increases color value making the hues darker, adding depth. A white background blends colors, reducing their brilliance. Pastels harmonize well because of the large quantity of white they contain. To blend two colors that appear to "fight", mix the two in the

mind's eye. Add white with this resulting color to get the pastel. This pastel will blend the two colors and give the transition color that is needed. For example: hot pink and orange may appear to "fight" . . . mix them in the mind's eye to get bright coral, then add white to gain a soft coral. The soft coral will be an excellent transition color for orange and hot pink.

Black is used as a background for colors when they need to look intensified. Black absorbs light rays, which increases the brilliance of red, blue, yellow-orange, and green; violet is eliminated.

The following Color Wheel chart can also be found at www.tsfa.org/curriculum.html

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COLOR: The Visual Response of the Eye to Reflected Rays of Light

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- Hue (pure color)
- Tint (hue + white)
- Tone (hue + grey)
- Shade (hue + black)

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The names of colors are hues.   A fully saturated hue is color of the highest *chroma* or *intensity*, with no black, white or gray.

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Color Terminology

The following terms and definitions present the background necessary before color harmony can be clearly understood and used to the best advantage in floral design.

Color Harmony — The various usable or pleasing combinations of color.

Hue — means color, any color.

Chroma — the purity of a color, determined by its degree of freedom from white, gray or black.

Value — is the term used to designate the lightness or darkness of a hue. For example, the values of red range from pink to maroon.

Tint — any color to which white has been added (red plus white becomes pink).

Shade — a color to which black has been added (red plus black is maroon).

Tone — any color to which gray has been added.

Color Harmony

All florists work with color harmonies every day. It is necessary to know the meanings of basic color combinations.

Monochromatic Color — different values of one hue (pink, red, maroon). Color gradations must be used carefully with the strongest value placed at the focal point. Interesting textures play a vital role in this harmony, to prevent monotony.

Analogous Color — is achieved through the use of three or more hues in sequence on the color wheel, with only one being a primary color (yellow). Analogous colors produce special moods and seasonal effects.

Complementary Color — is a combination of hues in the very strongest contrast; opposites on the color wheel (red and green, orange and blue, yellow and violet). This combination gives dramatic emphasis to any decoration or display.

Triad — any three colors that are equally spaced on the color wheel (red-blue-yellow or orange-green-violet). This color harmony always creates great interest.
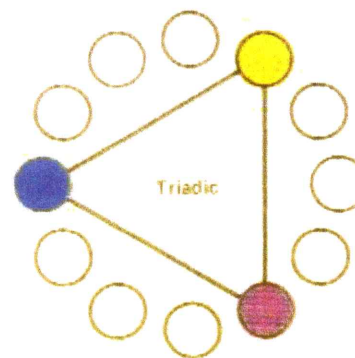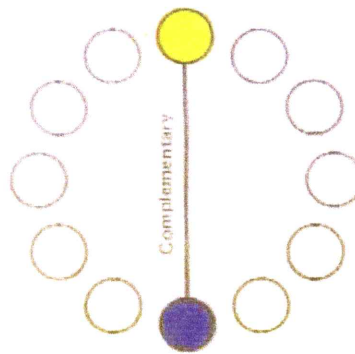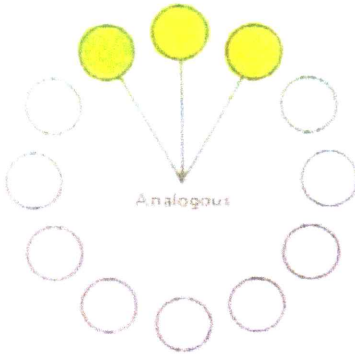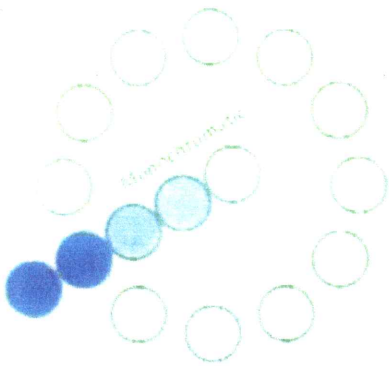
Principles of Design

The principles of floral design are a set of guidelines which help create pleasing and saleable designs. They assist the designer throughout the process of selecting plant material, visualizing a design, and constructing it. Each of these principles should be practiced with skill and sensitivity when designing an arrangement. Because many of the principles are interdependent, the improper use of one principle can result in the failure of the design. The principles of floral design are the foundation from which florists work to create beautiful designs. The following principles should be evident in every basic design created.

Asymmetrical Balance – Asymmetrical balance is achieved through the uneven distribution of material on each side of the central vertical axis. It is also known as informal balance.

Balance – Balance is the visual and physical stability of a floral design. Balance must be physical and visual.

Contrast – Mixing opposite colors and textures.

Focal Point/Focal Area/Dominance/Center of Interest – The focal area or center of interest is the point to which the eyes is first drawn and is clearly defined.

Harmony – A harmonious relationship between the components of a design can be achieved through the careful blending of textures, shapes, plant materials and colors.

Proportion – Proportion in design refers to the size of the flowers in relationship to each other, the flowers to the container, and the arrangement to its surroundings. It is also known as scale.

Rhythm - Rhythm in music is the flow of the melody. Rhythm in floral design is similar, giving life and movement; it is the unity and flow of materials that creates a pleasing image to the eye.

Symmetrical Balance – All product is equally distributed on either side of the vertical axis and is often known as formal balance or mirror image.

Unity – Unity in an arrangement is the look and feeling that the design is one singular unit.