Design in Flower Arrangement

By

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and

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To Margery

FOREWORD

MANY years ago I began judging classes in artistic arrangement at various flower shows, to the accompaniment of considerable caustic comment by my friends on the subject of one whose horticultural knowledge was nil, and of many questions as to why more judges were being selected from the ranks of painters, sculptors, architects, landscape architects, and other trained designers, and fewer from among those versed only in the practical field of flower cultivation. Eventually these comments and questions resolved themselves into a request from the Garden Club of Fairfield to give an informal talk to its members on these matters and also on the basic qualities and standards by which awards should be made.

From this seed sprouted a veritable crop of lectures, so many, in fact, and in such constantly increasing numbers, that they began seriously to encroach upon the time sorely needed for my chosen profession. For years I had been asked, and had planned, to put my wholly extemporaneous talks into some permanent form, but the hours required for the task had never been available. At last the time came when I had to decide between the lecture platform and my drawing table and, because

FOREWORD

I wanted to leave behind me a final record of whatever help I may be able to give in the creation of beauty by means of flower arrangement, my wife offered to take from me the burden of assembling the material as it now appears. Much of it is a repetition of the lecture of the same title, written from memory by this most consistent and attentive member of my audiences; some of it consists of extracts from many other talks; while some has been prompted by countless remembered conversations as we have travelled far and wide in search of beauty—monologues in which I poured my aesthetic needs, thoughts engendered by my lifelong study of composition, or my convictions on the subject of art, into her receptive ears. All these apparently unrelated bits she has gathered together into this "arrangement in words". Some of it is entirely hers; sometimes, from long listening, she has used my phraseology; and sometimes I have interlarded her pages with words, sentences, or whole paragraphs of my own. The result is such that we defy even those who know us best to decide which part belongs to which one, for even we, ourselves, do not always know!

The choice of illustrations was a difficult one, as a result of the abundance of material rather than its scarcity. There were many which I wanted but had to reject because they duplicated others. So, too, there are missing the names of many designers whose work, because of its high quality, rated inclusion, but among whose available arrangements I could not find examples typifying the points I wished to stress. To these I offer my regrets and apologies.

FOREWORD

To the Garden Club of America for the courtesy and assistance extended me by that organization; to the members of clubs all over the country who graciously permitted me to use reproductions of arrangements made by them for various competitions; to the Fairfield members who responded so enthusiastically and successfully to my request for the solution in floral terms of certain problems; and to Mr. Rockwell D. Talmage for his skill in photographing the latter; I wish to extend my most grateful and appreciative thanks.

JOHN TAYLOR ARMS

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

DESIGN IN FLOWER ARRANGEMENT

Chapter I

DESIGN IN FLOWER ARRANGEMENT

For many years I have watched with enthusiasm the growth of beauty consciousness in America, as manifested by the increasing number and importance of the various flower shows, with their attendant classes in artistic arrangement. Moreover, during the course of the lectures on which this book is based, I have talked with many who have displayed a deepening in the understanding of, and a greater adherence to, the principles underlying all created beauty. This is all gain, and to those who have begun to master these principles I extend my congratulations. My message is for those who still confuse the perfection of material with the perfection of design, the importance of the part with that of the whole.

Invariably I preface my talks with the statement that I am no horticulturist. I know nothing whatever about flowers; in fact, I can call by name only the commonest varieties, while the cultivation of growing things and the intricacies of botany are even more completely closed chapters to me. Why, then, after such a confession, do I dare to come before a flower minded, horticulturally edu-

cated public with my beliefs? Because in my title for this book there are three principal words, but with only two of them am I at all concerned, "design" and "arrangement", and they are synonymous. Since for nearly thirty years I have studied design, talked design, lived design, to me they are the significant words, with "flower" a very minor factor. Do not be shocked that I thus relegate it to a subordinate position, but bear with me while I prove that, granted the title, this must be so.

From many members of my audiences during the course of each year I receive expressions of their reactions to my publicly stated views. Recently a letter came which, it seemed to me, made an interesting and essential distinction. In substance, my correspondent wrote me as follows: "All my life I have been putting flowers into vases and keeping them near me that I might enjoy their color and fragrance. I listened to all you said with interest, and I am sure you are right. But, do you mind (for I am not young) if I go on just putting flowers into vases and enjoying them that way?" I wrote her in reply that I sympathized entirely with her point of view; that it is frequently my wont to place a single rose, or a group of blooms from my garden, in any receptacle that comes to hand, such as an old tumbler or a measuring glass, and to keep them beside me in my studio for the great joy that their intrinsic loveliness brings me. Only, I told her, let us not confuse the two things. In the one case we are speaking of flowers as specimens, in the other of flower arrangements—and these are absolutely separate and distinct considerations. Here we have the point of departure,

the crux of the whole matter. We keep near us flowers that we love as ends in themselves, for the gratification which they bring to our senses in their radiant shades, or graceful forms, or exquisite perfumes. But when we make an arrangement, they become, not the ultimate end, but the means to it. They are the material, and the material only, in a composition; contributing, but subordinating, their particular qualities to the needs of the whole. And as, obviously and logically, the whole is greater and more significant than any of its component parts, you can readily see why, in this discussion, I stress the first importance of design—the one factor without which a flower arrangement cannot be aesthetically satisfying, the one, indeed, without which it is not an arrangement at all.

It might be pointed out to me at this point that blossoms hastily grouped in a container often achieve a lovelier effect than those on the distribution of which we have spent much time and thought. This happens, of course, but rarely. Usually the reason lies in the fact that, having acted instinctively and merely for our own pleasure, we are less unsparingly critical, more easily satisfied. Or it may be that, having set ourselves no particular goal, the very simplicity of the result permits the natural grace and beauty of the material to count to the full. Really a happy accident, it cannot correctly be called a design, for that word presupposes a definite, premeditated plan from which the element of chance has been completely eradicated.

If I may be permitted a digression in order to emphasize this point, I should like to make the statement, based

on many years of travel in many lands in search of the beautiful, that nature seldom, if ever, composes well. Were it otherwise, then the camera would suffice and there would be no need for the artist. You look at a magnificent landscape, or up a picturesque, old-world street to a glorious cathedral, and you feel that each is perfect in its own way. Not one thing may be added to improve it, nor may anything be taken away. Now take photographs of both views and study them as pictures, as compositions. You will find, I am sure, that your eye had instinctively refused to register many jarring features which the camera, totally lacking in selective ability, reveals. The artist's duty is to preserve the vital, necessary properties and to eliminate the unessential, inharmonious ones; to interpret but never slavishly to copy. He boldly transplants or introduces trees, moves whole buildings, changes and rearranges as the case may be, because he knows that he cannot trust Dame Nature to do these things well.

It is not because spotless tiles, gleaming brasses, and sunlight streaming through an open window, are pleasing things in themselves that Vermeer holds his exalted place in the world of art, nor because of any "happy accidents". It is because Vermeer was a great designer, a great artist, a great technician, that his paintings are enduring masterpieces. An even more striking illustration can be found in an etching such as the famous "Three Crosses" by Rembrandt. Here is no brilliance of actual color, no realistic delineation of well-known objects, but black ink on white paper, faces so summarily

indicated that in some cases the features are reduced to a mere intersection of two lines, dark shadows in which the forms are felt rather than seen, and light areas startling only by contrast. Take these factors, view them separately, and what have you of obvious beauty? Look at the print as Rembrandt put it together—great master of superb, pure, essential design that he was—and you have one of the supreme works of art of all times, an emotional record far transcending anything purely pictorial.

It may seem a far cry from immortal paintings and prints to flower arrangements, and it would be if I were addressing only those who are content with flowers for themselves alone. But when you attempt to make an "arrangement", you have committed yourself to something; you have placed your feet on the first rung of that vast ladder on which are to be found all the artists, in all their different media of expression and stages of progress. You are striving to achieve a work of art, and on your understanding of the basic principles which obtain in all art will depend, not only your success, but your joy in the effort and in the result. You may not have thought of yourself as in this category but, whenever you have an idea which demands development in some form, then it is your rightful place. It matters not what material you choose with which to clothe it—paint, clay, lines, musical notes, words, or flowers—each and all of them are built on the same essential foundation of a solid structure. This is not a personal theory that I am propounding, but a fact known for too many centuries to admit of doubt. You who are reading this have chosen blossoms or leaves,

dried grasses or seed-pods, fruit or branches, as the language for the expression of your ideas. My message to you is brief. It is not the material you have selected that matters, but the way in which you put it together—design, first, last, and always.

Having sought to make this clear, I will emphasize it by the warning that I shall not concern myself, except indirectly, with the questions of color or of individual specimens. The latter are completely negligible in the development of the particular field to which I have limited myself, except in the effect which their size, shape, texture, or outline, may have on the building up of a composition. Specimens, as such, which are notable for their rarity or magnitude, do not interest me in the least; they are important only because they constitute a means of expression, the vocabulary by which is made visible a concept of beauty. As an essay is not improved by the use of polysyllabic words just because of their length, or of obscure ones just because they will mystify all but the most erudite, and as it only profits by them when they, and they only, best and most clearly express the idea to be conveyed, so a flower arrangement does not justify the use of an orchid merely because no one else has succeeded in growing it before, or of a rose as large as a peony simply because of its size, but only if that orchid's shape or the dimensions of that rose most significantly conform to, and further, the beauty of the design. I go even farther when I tell you that a wilted flower, or one stunted in its development, at times may be used with greater success than a flawless blossom. By

this I do not mean that I prefer it to a perfect specimen or that I advocate its constant use, I merely want to disabuse your minds of the prevalent and wholly erroneous belief that the better the flowers, the better the arrangement. Just as you have often placed a bud in an area smaller than would have been adequate for the fully opened blossom, try, sometime, a blighted one with only half the petals developed. I assure you that the irregular silhouette will often add a touch of variety and charm. As to the question of wilted specimens, there I know I tread on what is, in your eyes, dangerous ground. Yet at many a flower show where I have judged I have seen an arrangement, lacking in interest in its original state, but saved as a composition by the drooping lines of one or more faded sprays. Needless to say, if the same effect could have been obtained with fresh material, the result would have been preferable but, speaking personally as one with whom the matter of line is an obsession, I would have preferred to see this wilted specimen used intentionally, for the sake of the effect it produced, than to have missed this effect altogether. I use this illustration merely to emphasize the fact that it is the composition which counts, not the material.

I have often been asked, "Which is more important in a flower arrangement, design or color?" Since one is an element of the other, the two cannot be separated for purposes of comparison; as well ask, "Which is more important, the whole or one of its parts?" Color—that exquisite and integral part of flowers in one's mental picture of them—is of value in an arrangement only as it

helps or hinders the design. This will shock many of you, I know, but it is true. Take an arrangement which has only beautiful color, reduce it to black and white, and you have nothing but unrelated masses: take another which is well designed, eliminate the color, and you still have—a fine design! In other words, color is not a basic necessity, but a most valuable adjunct. It can, and should, be employed up to the limit of its aesthetic possibilities: only remember that design can exist without it and be art, but that there is no art in color without design. To illustrate this in another medium, think of a great symphony. It is great because of the structural solidity of its interrelated parts. The bare skeleton of its composition is convincing even without the full orchestra, which is the thing which most of us hear and to which we respond. Yet without that fine, organic skeleton, what would all the varied tones of the different instruments amount to? To individual sounds and nothing more, pure and sweet in themselves, but lacking all cohesion, all sequence, all reason for being.

There is in me no lack of appreciation of the possibilities contained in color, nor of response to the perfection of material used, when I stress their negative importance in a flower arrangement. The emphasis has been intentional because, in all my years of lecturing, I have found the greatest stumbling block for many members of my audiences to be the deep-rooted belief that an arrangement cannot be beautiful unless beautiful specimens, of beautiful color, are used in a beautiful container. If this were so, then there would be no need of the artist in this

or any other medium of expression. That it is not true can be seen if you will imagine the same materials put together, in one case by a trained horticulturist with no knowledge of design, in the other case by a trained designer with no knowledge of horticulture. It is impossible to doubt which would be the more successful. Go further and give to the former a museum piece for a container and the perfection of hothouse blossoms, to the latter a kitchen tumbler and a handful of weeds or grasses. Which arrangement do you think will be finer? Again there will be no question, for design is the pure essence of beauty. It is the first and fundamental necessity which inharmonious colors or poor specimens can cloud but not destroy, or to which, once established, may be added all the glory of varied tones, all the loveliness of perfect blooms that you will. Take design away, however, and there remains nothing.

CHAPTER II

FUNDAMENTALS OF COMPOSITION

I HAVE indicated to you the supreme importance of design in a flower arrangement, as in every form of creative expression. What, then, is design, and how can its presence or absence be detected?

The answer to the first question can best be given in synonyms or in related words; for, though design is founded on immutable and fundamental principles, it is almost as indefinable as is beauty. It is scientific arrangement to satisfy the aesthetic sense, it is composition, pattern, harmony, balance, the interrelation of the component parts, and the relation of all parts to the whole. The answer to the second question lies in the study of the principles involved, and also in long training of the eye and mind. I think it is a fair statement that absence of good design is more generally recognized by the novice in appraisal, especially in exaggerated instances, than is its presence perceived. In other words, it is easier to realize that something is pictorially wrong than to know why it is, or how it can be rectified. And only by understanding and applying certain invariable rules have we a

reliable standard by which to measure our own achievements, as well as our appreciation and criticism of those of others.

At this point it would be well for me to distinguish between the "rules" governing design and the "principles" evolved from them. You cannot create a work of art with a yardstick and a set of formulae, nor do I propose to give you any such in this book. Design is neither pure science nor pure aesthetics, but lies between the two. For every rule I might quote to you, I might cite a great work of art embodying an exception to it, for the creative spirit is spurred by an inner fire so intense as to transcend all rules. It is true, however, that throughout all art certain things happen over and over again with a frequency which justifies the establishment of a rule. And the aggregate of these becomes a principle. Not only are you safe in adhering to these principles, but you will find that such adherence is essential to success.

When we endeavor to create beauty we must start with a good design. Actually the latter is not subject to division, for without the parts there would be no whole and without the whole there would be no parts. But for the sake of detailed consideration I shall divide the discussion under three headings: first, the surroundings, the physical space occupied, or, if I may call it so, the frame; secondly, the composition within that frame, its pattern and silhouette; and, finally, the lines within that composition, their balance and harmony. I shall have to use this one word design, for which there is no adequate substitute, to describe the whole as well as the parts and, if this

seems confusing, remember that I am trying to separate the inseparable, and bear with me.

Our first heading is that of the surroundings. This is a side too frequently ignored in flower arrangements, yet it is one which we so often, even if unconsciously, consider in our daily lives, that the disregard of it is astonishing. Let me illustrate this. Physically, the range of vision is limited to what can be seen at any given moment—so far up, so far down, so far to the right, and so far to the left. This is the frame for the ever changing images of all the things that you see. Rarely are they of sufficient pictorial interest to merit more than the most cursory glance but, from time to time among the countless number, there will be one before which you will pause to fix its impression upon your memory. When you do, whether you are looking at a mediaeval town, or at a magnificent landscape, or at a charming corner of a garden, if you are sensitive to beauty you undoubtedly will move forwards or backwards, to one side or the other, until you get the "view" which gives you the greatest satisfaction. In other words, you are composing the objects before you to the best advantage for, since you cannot at will move buildings, or hills, or trees, you must change your own position until the units of the scene combine into the most pleasing pattern. In addition, you arrange this picture on the retina of your eye in correct relationship to the boundaries of your vision. That may sound like an unsubstantiated theory, but it can easily be proved. Any vivid impression is remembered afterwards as a well-placed composition. Actually, at the time, vari-

ous extraneous and adjacent areas were also perceived before the center of interest claimed undivided attention. These are not allowed to intrude on this mental picture; the focal point is not off in some obscure corner, but, squarely placed before the mind's eye, not only holds the dominant place in memory but subtly and correctly is related to the limiting lines of the actual physical vision.

This unconscious application of a principle which is one of the foundation stones of good design must be consciously used, and is so used, in every form of artistic expression. The muralist has his frame established for him in the height and width of the wall to be decorated; the painter and the etcher select, the one his canvas and the other his copper plate, of just the right dimensions to permit their bounding lines properly to enclose the composition already decided upon; the architect plans a building in relation to the piece of ground it is to occupy; the sculptor, knowing in advance the location of his work, is profoundly influenced by its size and shape. Nowhere in history is the relation of a design to the space to be filled more beautifully illustrated than by the frieze and pediment of the Parthenon.

Similar conditions obtain when a flower arrangement is to be used as the decoration for some spot with a definitely established form, as a niche or shadow box, both so common in competitive exhibitions; an embrasured or flat window; a panelled wall; a mantelpiece, where the chimney-breast and fire-place are factors to be considered as well as the horizontal line of the shelf; wherever, in fact, are to be found well-defined contours forming a nat-

ural frame for the composition. Where such conditions do not hold true, the frame yet exists, equally important though less easily sensed, in the silhouette of the design itself. To illustrate this last statement, let us add to a well-composed flower arrangement one long spray extending far beyond the others. At once the beauty of the whole effect is lost, not alone because the inner balance has been disturbed, but because the outline of the composition, the frame, has been destroyed.

This frame, then, is the first important consideration in good composition. Within it, and an inseparable and integral part of it, is that which, in default of a more distinctive name, I shall now call the design itself. In the specialized field of flower arrangements this will consist of a container, flowers, and any accessories which are used. These units must be assembled according to some definite plan or they will lack cohesion and form. There are any number of such patterns, and the choice of one may be indicated by some dominant line or mass in the material, or by a predilection on the part of the designer for some special shape. There are triangles and rectangles; squares, circles, and ovals; fan shapes, zigzags, "S" curves and "Ls"; all the various ramifications and combinations of these, and many more besides. They can be drawn on paper or they can be built up of clay, of paint, or, in this case, of flowers. The compositional scheme having been once determined, however, the material must be used to develop and emphasize it, but never to confuse it.

As those who have had no previous training in design

often experience difficulty in formulating an accurate mental picture in advance, and in translating a vague idea into a workable project, I strongly advise the practice of starting with a linear basis, no matter how summary. If the curve of a stem has especially appealed to you, register it as a black line on white paper and study it until it suggests others to supplement it. Add a line here and another there, eliminate each one which breaks up the pattern you have in mind, and keep only those which further it. Suggest the relative shape of the container and, as the whole gradually evolves, indicate its general circumference in order to be sure that what lies within is in harmony with this bounding line. The result will be a definite design, containing essentials susceptible to subsequent amplification and to the details of the actual floral arranging. I believe this procedure to be of inestimable value for, not only does it help to precise the original concept, but it becomes a guide for reference when the beauty and quantity of material threaten to cloud the issue and engulf the design.

In another way also will this method be of service, in that it will demonstrate the personality of a compositional line; that is, the very real emotional effect which it possesses. If you think I exaggerate, try this experiment. Take a sheet of blank paper, and what have you? Nothing but a void within the frame formed by the four edges. Now draw a straight line across it and, at once, the situation has changed. You have made two rectangles of equal or different sizes, dependent on the position of this transverse line. In other words, a simple and rudimentary

form of composition has been created, as well as the most tranquil, for the eye is carried, undisturbed and without deviation, from one side of the paper to the other. This can be seen in a placid sea-scape, where the feeling of repose comes not merely from the representation of clear sky and calm water, but, even more, from the inherent emotional peace engendered by one long straight line. And, in direct ratio to the amount by which the latter departs from this repose, will the former lose in its sympathetic quality. The same sea, represented under conditions of storm, will, in the jagged contours of the waves and the strong oppositional movement of the high-piled clouds, create a sense of disturbance and of fear. For the eye follows no untroubled path but is caught and turned, again and again. The vertical line also is a quiet one, although in a lesser degree: rather it speaks of dignity and aspiration and it is, I believe, this inner meaning which is the unconscious but controlling reason for the fact that we almost always place long-stemmed flowers in high vases on our altars. On the other hand, do we not use the wide, low container, with its few floating blossoms—the nearest approach to the horizontal possible with the materials—wherever and whenever we require the sense of tranquillity they produce?

The oval and the circle are both serene types of composition, for again, as each always returns upon itself, an even, visual course is established with no abrupt changes of direction to mar the continuity. The zigzag, obviously, is an extremely restless motive in itself as well as in its effect, and I would discourage its use except where

unusual circumstances demand an unusual treatment (see Plate I). The square, in general, is not a pleasing form because its equal height and width introduce the element of competition and violate the principle of predominance of one single motive. As a square engraving or painting is seldom seen, or a sculptured group whose greatest width is equal to its height, so a square flower arrangement, or one placed within this shape, is questionable. A rectangle, with its long axis either vertical or horizontal, lends itself to floral arrangement, as does a triangle, either right-angled, equilateral, or isosceles. The two latter are among the most popular compositional forms in all pictorial representation, and with reason, for they offer many opportunities for development and are logical in their structural growth from a broad, firm foundation up to a culminating apex. In general, the best results are obtained if the apex is uppermost as, otherwise, the wide base tends to overbalance the whole and create a top-heavy effect. If, however, the more unusual position is adopted, then, in order to counteract this tendency, the addition of accessories at the bottom—whether of leaves, or flowers, or objects unrelated in a floral sense but possessing weight value—will restore the feeling of strength and breadth where both are needed. When this is done, the composition virtually becomes a rectangle with its long axis vertical.

There is something gay about a fan motive, with its natural feeling of growth. It seems to express a festive mood and is especially well suited to all the light and airy flowers, with their many interstices and small units,

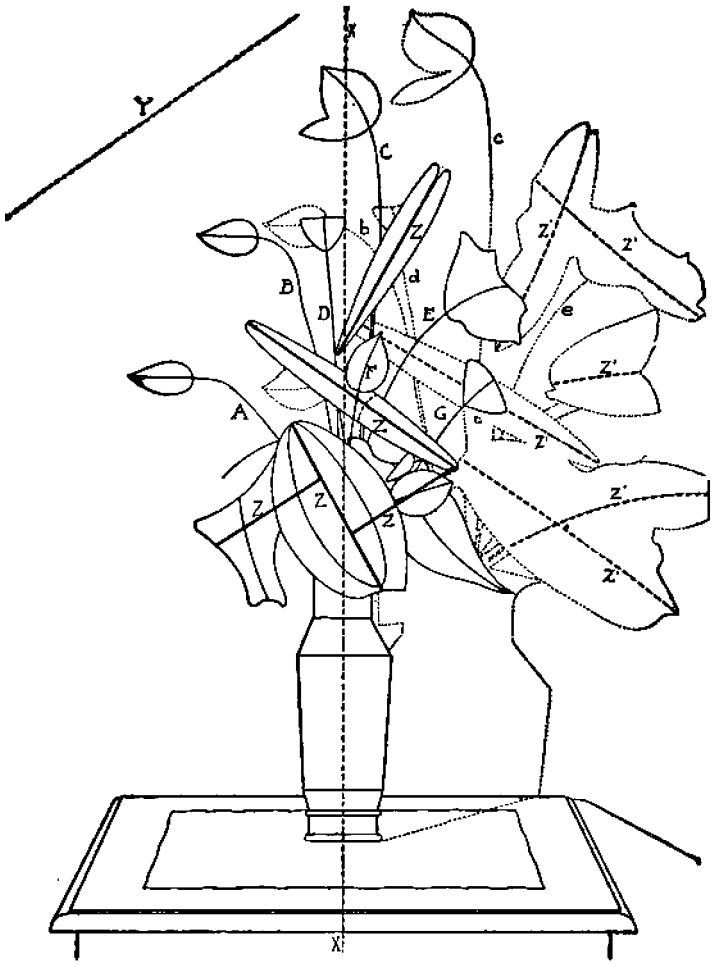


PLATE I

PLATE I *Photograph by Rockwell D. Talmage*

ARRANGEMENT BY MRS. WILLIAM H. CARY

THE NEW CANAAN GARDEN CLUB

though it is equally adaptable to larger ones also, and to a more formal aspect. In either case, the outline gains if followed with considerable regularity and with only sufficient major breaks to relieve the monotony: otherwise, there is a tendency for the whole to become a rather indeterminate mass. The right-triangle is an interesting shape to work with because of the long, sweeping, diagonal movement created by its hypotenuse across the bounding area of the composition. It must be remembered, however, that this line has established two triangles, the one occupied by the material constituting the arrangement, the other by a void. This latter is, as we shall see later, of an importance equal to that of the former. And, again, there is the "S", known to artists as Hogarth's "line of beauty", exquisite in itself and capable of great variety of development. In it are embodied in lesser degree the tranquillity of the horizontal motive, the aspirational sense of the vertical, the solidity of the pyramid, the continuity of the circle, and the perfect grace of its own double curves.

These are some of the patterns on which a design may be built, selected for qualities which, in my opinion, render them well suited to flower arrangement. When once one has been chosen it should never be lost sight of, but every blossom, leaf, and stem, should be so placed as to emphasize and further its distinctive form. I trust I shall not be accused of seeming to suggest that any pattern should be so literally adhered to as to produce monotony: that, for example, in a circular one, each element projecting beyond the exact line of the circumference should

be cut away. I only ask that, in the course of execution, the designer shall keep the design clearly in mind and, while adding every grace and charm of variation possible, will retain it as the firm and necessary foundation and reason for the work as a whole.

I come now to my last heading; the structural lines underlying the entire composition—so much a part of it, so much, in fact, the design itself, that it is almost an impossibility to treat either as a separate entity. As the body would collapse physically were it not for the skeleton, so would an arrangement collapse pictorially were it not for the design; and, to carry the comparison further, the actual bones of the one may be likened with reason to the linear elements of the other. The functions of both are the result of highly specialized characteristics, and both are units whose individual strength assures the structural solidity of the whole and on whose balance depends its equilibrium.

What do I mean when I speak of a line in a flower arrangement? Obviously, the word is not used in the generally accepted sense of a black mark drawn on a piece of paper. It can best be described, in this case as in all forms of pictorial expression, as a visual path along which the eye is led, in natural and logical sequence, from one point of interest to another. In a floral arrangement these points consist of blossoms, leaves, stems, or any other accents, and the importance of each is in direct proportion to its actual size, its color value, and its distinction of form. When a number of such units have been so distributed as to indicate a definite feeling of direction in the design,

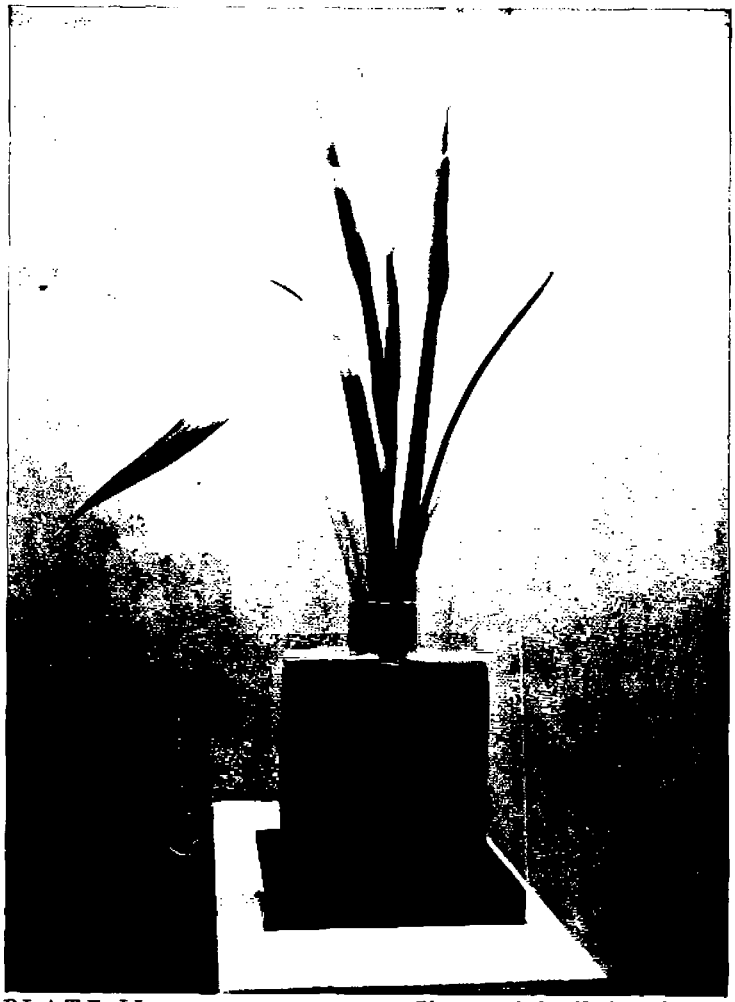


PLATE II *Photograph by Herbert Studios*

ARRANGEMENT BY MRS. HENRY H. RENNELL

THE FAIRFIELD GARDEN CLUB

a line has been created (see Plate II). Attracted by one point of interest after another, the eye is irresistibly drawn along a well developed and clearly marked path and, the larger the units used, the closer they are in their grouping, or the more nearly they conform in their placing to the direction of the established line, the more sharply defined will the latter be and the more compelling its force. This, then, becomes one of the fundamental, compositional lines, and on its individual characteristics, as well as on its relation to all other lines, will depend, not only the beauty of the design, but the design itself.

Again it is difficult, well-nigh impossible, to differentiate between the whole and its component parts; for the silhouette of a composition will be determined by its bounding lines as, conversely, certain lines, arranged in a certain way, will determine certain forms. As a pyramid could only derive its particular shape from three angles and from the lengths and directions of the lines enclosing them, so those same angles and lines, thus used, must of necessity form a pyramid. In the same example, however, the mere outline does not suffice for good design but must be supplemented, filled in, and given body and variety, by other lines contained within it, less apparent at first sight but of great importance in the structure and ultimate effect of the whole (see Plate III).

Completely linear are such things as branches, where the flowers or foliage are but minor factors; long, slender leaves and grasses; and similar attenuated forms (see Plate IV). All these are so positive and uncomplicated in their characteristics as to determine their treatment in

PLATE III

advance, and to lend themselves most admirably to the abstract loveliness of pure pattern. Where a stem supports one or more blossoms, it may create a line either as a connecting link between such forms or by the force of its own direction and continuity.

In a flower arrangement many of these lines will, naturally, start from the container and lead out into and through the material above, in some cases reaching the edge of the design, in others stopping short of it. Reversing the movement, they will come in from the mass of the design to find their logical termination in the container. Other lines will automatically be created by the proximity and continuity of units on those already described. As each line is made up of a number of points of interest, so the intersection of two of them contains the interest inherent in each one at that particular spot. A focal point is the result, and should be accented or "spotted" in some way with form or tonal value. Think of this as a junction to which each railroad brings its own quota of freight and passengers. The more roads there are, the greater will be the activity and the congestion of traffic at this center. So, the more lines of design that come together in one point in your flower arrangement, the stronger must be the emphasis there. Somewhere in the composition is a spot towards which most of these lines lead, where many of them, perhaps, cross, and here takes place the greatest accumulation of interest in the whole arrangement (see Plate XVII). The necessity for this is a logical one, and true beauty is always logical, whether as a result of principles mastered and thoughtfully applied or, more rarely,

sprung full-grown from an inspired mind capable of grasping, untaught, its underlying rhythms and progressions. This junction, then, becomes the natural location for the largest blossoms, the most closely packed masses of foliage, or the strongest tonal values. It is the heart of the whole, the artistic center of gravity, the bull's-eye of the target, and it is generally found on the main vertical axis slightly above the latter's exact center, measuring from the extreme bottom of the composition to the extreme top. The preponderance of "weight" at this focal point of greatest interest is not only reasonable, it is essential. To it the eye must be drawn by every path established in the design, and there it must be made to linger upon concentrated beauty. If, instead of the feeling of solidity engendered here, this all-important area were to be left empty; if the lines of interest were to stop before reaching it, or even if they were to be broken along their way by too great gaps in their continuity; then would the design of necessity fall apart and the effect of homogeneity and unity be lost. Once again, the logic of beauty causes this center towards which the leading lines of the design converge and the focal point of greatest interest in the latter to coincide.

Moreover, these "lines of design" possess specific, inherent qualities, which govern their effect upon us. According to their direction, curvature, weight, and relation to other lines, may they suggest repose or disturbance, anger or peace, swift or slow movement, all the impulses, indeed, which impel the designer in his creation of them. They are the words by which the artist ex-

presses his thought and, just to the degree to which they are vital and significant or dead and meaningless, will that expression be.

In the absorbing consideration of balance in a design, the vertical axis is of prime importance. It may be likened to the upright bar in the simplest type of primitive scales. Across the top of this is placed a transverse bar and, if the two arms of this horizontal motive are of equal length, or if two equal weights are hung, one on each side and each equidistant from the central point, then the arms constituting the transverse bar will remain stationary and level. If, however, the arms are of unequal length, the longer one will be pulled downward by its greater weight and, the more it is extended, the greater will be this downward pull. Equilibrium has been lost, but can be restored by placing a weight on the shorter arm in exact proportion to the added leverage exerted by the other and longer one. If there is no disparity in the two lengths, but a weight hung at one end is greater than one hung at the other, perfect balance is again lost and can be regained either by extending the arm to which the lighter weight is attached, or by moving the heavier weight nearer the central axis. In other words, distance from the center is as direct and calculable in its effect on the downward pull as is actual weight. The nearer to the central axis an object is placed, the less is its downward pull; the farther from it, the greater is this pull.

The laws of visual balance are identical with these which can be measured with mechanical exactitude. Though less apparent to the untrained eye, except in ex-

treme cases, they function with the same accuracy, and adherence to them results in an often unconscious, but none the less definite, sense of repose, while violation of them brings about a feeling of disturbance. A leaning spire is not only physically unsound, but we are mentally troubled by the sight of it; a table with two lamps and a pile of books crowded together at one end is in the nature of a command to most of us, even the least sensitive, to help in restoring equilibrium. These are exaggerated instances, but they serve to indicate our very real inner need for balance in the things about us. It is a factor as necessary to compositional harmony as the correct distribution of weight on either side of the spinal column is to the human body. Just as, without it, man could not maintain an upright position, so a design requires pictorial balance for stability. By this I emphatically do not mean that, in a flower arrangement, there should be any attempt to reproduce, by the repetition of sprays or blossoms, the mathematical duplication required by nature in the creation of legs and arms. Perfect symmetry, at least in so far as the material allows, is only appropriate for an expression in completely formal terms; it achieves equilibrium, but it is not the only method by which this may be attained. The more usual and, in general, the more interesting solution of the problem is to use weights of varying values, in which case, it must be remembered, the sum total on one side of the central axis must equal the sum total on the other. Since no pair of scales of sufficient delicacy has ever been invented, how can such an intangible thing as pictorial weight be measured? Again

it is a question of a few principles and of long and careful training of the eye.

As this discussion pertains to a specialized field, let us draw two imaginary lines through the flower arrangement which I shall assume to have been made, bearing in mind always that the same principles apply to all forms of design. The vertical line corresponds to the upright bar of the balance scales mentioned above and the horizontal one to its transverse arms. Everything to the right of the vertical, every leaf, blossom, and branch, will have a weight value on that side; everything to the left on the other. What each unit weighs in the composition is determined by its position, its size, and its tonal value. As a large piece of metal, hung at the end of one arm, exerts a strong downward pull both by the force of its own weight and the added leverage given by its point of placement, so a large flower, far from the center of the arrangement, has a double weight value in the pictorial effect. Or, as a small bit of metal at the extreme tip of one arm can counterbalance a larger one nearer the vertical bar, so a small flower, set in the lateral edge of the silhouette, can offset the apparent weight of a larger one near the middle.

Earlier in the chapter I suggested the advisability of making a diagram before beginning actual work with the flowers. Let us suppose that you have done so and that you have started by indicating one line. If this is approximately the same as the vertical axis of the composition, the next line added will extend to one side and, immediately and instinctively, you will feel the need of adding

another on the opposite side. Visual balance, you see, will have been lost and the tendency is always to re-establish it. Still another line calls for a corresponding adjustment, and so on indefinitely. Remember, however, that the more there are, the more difficult it becomes to evaluate each correctly. In this case—as you are dealing solely with lines and not with masses—length, position, and numbers, are the factors determining weight. One long horizontal line may be offset by two, or more, shorter ones which, although their abbreviation and their location near the center cause them to weigh, individually, very much less, can, by the aggregate of their forces, be sufficient to constitute an adequate balance. Similarly, a long vertical line, unless it is so near the central axis as to count on neither one side nor the other, has the same weight relation to a shorter one as in the lateral cases just mentioned. Height, also, must be counted as weight value. An element high in a design possesses what I may describe as great visual weight, while a much lower one, such as a tendril which almost comes to rest on the supporting base of a flower arrangement, has much less of this quality, and sometimes virtually none.

When it comes to working with the actual flower material chosen, to these principles of weight as applied to lines must be added corresponding principles as applied to the factors of size, which also includes compactness, and of tonal value. The former is the easier problem, for most of us are accustomed to judge, every hour of every day, the relation between size and weight in the things about us. The latter is more subtle, and is complicated by the

fact that a color changes so radically with its surroundings that it may almost be said never to be twice alike. Chinese White is the whitest of all pigments yet, if placed among pale greys, it loses its positive quality and appears much less brilliant than does a lower-keyed white surrounded by intense blacks. The same is true through the whole spectrum. A scarlet geranium is less vivid in the midst of other tones of red than it is when encircled by green leaves, while a single contrasting note of color can be a disturbing or a stimulating element in the composition entirely according to what is used around it. Increase in intensity does not, necessarily, mean equal increase in weight value, for a high key can be either light or heavy in its effect. If a color cannot be evaluated in a reasonable length of time—and too long observation will make it seem to step from its frame and dominate the whole—I have found it helpful to turn away from the arrangement for a few moments. Then, when I go back to it, the troublesome member has usually resumed its proper place and, by the force of the attraction it exerts on a fresh eye, a more just appraisal can be reached.

The rules to be observed in establishing balance may be summed up as follows: the visual weight of each element used becomes greater the farther it is placed from the central axis, the larger and more compact it is, the higher it is placed in the composition, and the stronger it is in tonal value. The converse, of course, holds equally true. How the seeming weight of a flower or leaf, or even of a petal, can be estimated, depends upon the natural sensitiveness of the designer, and upon training. A

ruler held along the vertical axis of an arrangement is an aid in separating the two halves of the composition, for it is easier to see what lies on either side of an actual line than of an imaginary one. The question as to whether a certain large blossom is adequately offset by two smaller ones can now be more accurately answered, and the important factor of balance becomes more apparent, either by its presence or its absence. In the latter case, the design will seem to be tipping over, and the fault can be rectified by seeing wherein it violates the laws of equilibrium and by making the necessary corrections. In general, it will be found that it is less often a matter of one large unit upsetting the delicate adjustment of a design than of several smaller ones whose combined weights have not been sufficiently considered. For, I repeat, perfect balance is only attained when all the units on one side have an aggregate visual weight value equal to that of all those on the other.

From among all the principles underlying good design, with their innumerable ramifications, I would select three to leave with you. If a flower arrangement possesses these, and nothing else, it will arrest the attention of anyone sensitive to composition. Give me a definite and well-considered linear pattern, balance in the distribution of the elements of the arrangement, and an interesting silhouette. We have considered the first two of these, let us now turn to the third.

When you make a flower arrangement you work with certain definite, tangible things such as blossoms, leaves, and stems. These have size, weight, shape, texture, direc-

tion, and color value; and, according to these things and to a preconceived pattern, you relate them to each other. I wonder if it has occurred to you, in so doing, that you are also dealing with something just as important as the solids. Those subtle and significant empty areas we call the voids are as vital to the success of your design as the solids which determine them and which they, in turn, govern. Change, in the slightest degree, any two solids and you immediately change the void between them. Conversely, increase or decrease this void and you push the solids farther apart or pull them closer together. An architect will consider the penetrations in his façade, that is the windows and doors, as carefully as he will the walls. Voids, after all, are but solids in reverse; each is determined by the other, and the design may be conceived in terms of either (see Plate V). The flower arrangement in your living-room might just as well have been evolved from a pattern of voids as of solids, in which case you would have applied the same rules of linear structure, balance, and silhouette, to the former as you have to the latter. It does not matter from which basis you start, for, being interdependent, if one is good the other will inevitably be good also. No one would be guilty of the flagrant error of leaving a large hole in the center of a composition, for an irresistible impulse would compel the veriest tyro to fill it, but the finer gradations of open spaces are all too often ignored. Obviously, your design will be surrounded, outside its visual circumference or silhouette, by empty space and, again obviously, it is your business as a designer to get your observer's eye out

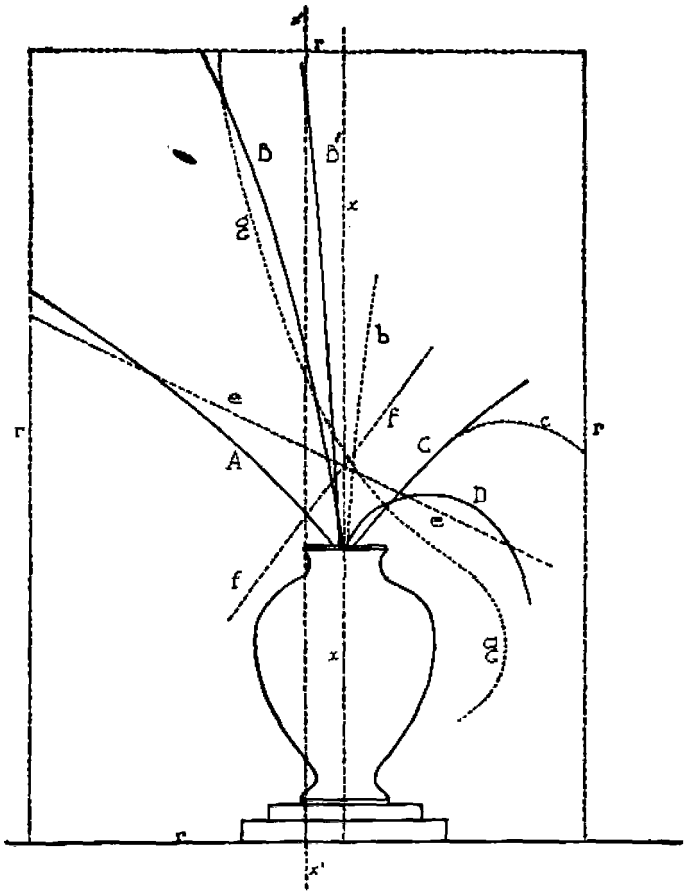


PLATE V

from the central point of focal interest to this surrounding space by easy stages and, conversely, by easy stages in again. It must not be brought to a hard edge from which it abruptly drops off into nothingness; instead, its transition from the solid of the center to the emptiness of outlying, surrounding air must be a progressive one, with the size of the forms gradually decreasing and the interstices gradually increasing. This simply means that your arrangement will grow lighter in feeling the nearer it approaches its circumference and that here, except in unusual cases, will be found smaller blossoms and those less strong in color value. Upon the skill with which these are arranged, in reference to each other and to the spaces between them, will depend the variety and charm of the silhouette. In its development there will be offered you endless opportunities for the display of ingenuity and imagination, for the generally unconsidered void has as much compositional importance as the more usually emphasized solid. Both should be carefully balanced in your design, with the interesting patterns offered by the alternately restful or stimulating shapes of empty spaces as infinite and varied as those furnished by the solids.

I am often asked exactly what relation should exist between the dimensions of the flower material and those of the container. That is, I believe, a question which cannot be answered by any hard and fast rule. It is sometimes stated that the former should be one and a half times the height of the latter and, if individual judgment cannot be relied on, this is probably as good a starting point as any. In my opinion no arbitrary yardstick is of

material value; each problem is a new one, with its own special requirements and with its best solution lying always in the application of the principles of good composition. Certain things, however, have been found to hold true in so many cases that they have come to be accepted virtually as rules, and one of these is to the effect that the height of the flowers above and that of the container beneath should never equal each other. This is reasonable and sound, but I should not include it in this chapter on composition were it not for the fact that it is a perfect illustration of my contention that, whatever it is which has been tried and found good, can always be proved to have sprung from a basic principle of design. This matter of equality between two elements is not limited to arrangements of flowers, but obtains in every form of art expression. The exact division of a thing into two equal parts makes for wearisome repetition, divides interest, introduces competition, precludes the possibility of predominance, and so violates one of the fundamentals of composition. Only when repetition can be carried farther into a rhythmic measure, has it a place in beauty. Watch out also for the positive line of the edge of the container, with its strong horizontal movement opposing the vertical one of the plant material. The receptacle is an essential and integral part of the design, as much so as the flowers it contains. It is a hard substance, unchanging in form, texture, and color, whereas they are fragile, changing, and fugitive, and it is your function as a designer to marry these two greatly differing materials, that the eye may travel easily from one to the other. The harsh edge

of the container, if unrelieved, forms an interruption to the free, upward growth of the structure of the design. It may be softened or suppressed by breaking the line of it with blossoms or leaves; by carrying the color, texture, and scale of the flowers down into the receptacle; and by repeating whenever possible its color, texture, scale, and form, in the material used with it.

It all comes down to the fact that the laws of good composition are very clear and accurate. Where they exist there is beauty, where they do not there is chaos. The beginner will do well to master and practice them. These principles can be reduced to a few basic ones, and much will have been gained; or they can be followed through all their many ramifications and subtleties into an infinitely more complicated study. As they apply to flower arrangements, I believe that the three I have stressed are the most important; those governing linear pattern, balance of parts around a central axis, and the creation of a beautiful silhouette by wise cutting of the relative areas of solids and voids.

CHAPTER III

MAKING AN ARRANGEMENT

The Flowers

DESIGN, then, is of admitted basic importance; a design can be, and always should be, determined in advance; and design is invariably found in every arrangement which satisfies the aesthetic sense and is as invariably absent from one which does not. These abstract facts having been established, it remains to show the concrete application of the principles involved in the problems presented by the use of flowers. For you, especially those of you who are beginners in this fascinating form of self-expression, may feel that it is all very well to learn rules, but that there still exists in your minds a gulf between theory and practice for the bridging of which you desire a more practical and elemental demonstration. In other words, how does one start an arrangement, with what does one begin, and why?

There are many points from which a beginning may be made, each one receiving its impetus from a personal bias or from individual requirements, from an attitude

of mind or from the element of time. For instance, if you are merely concerned with the question of disposing of the quantities of flowers which come to you daily from an abundant garden to the most cheerful and colorful advantage, then the problem is reduced to one of simple terms. You need only think of such general considerations as harmony in their respective colors, their relation to the room in which they are to be placed, and the height and width of their mass in reference to the receptacle which will contain them. If you lack inclination or time —and it takes both—for the study and careful assembling of an artistic arrangement, bear in mind the rudimentary principles I have given you and do the best you can, remembering that, as a great deal of thought and effort will bring a proportionate increase in the quality of the result, so a little thought and effort will, in the same ratio, have their effect. The very fact that you become aware of certain fundamental rules of design, and that you notice their presence or absence in the things you attempt, will so train your eye and mind that the moment will come when, with no greater expenditure of time, you will find your floral compositions more satisfactory because you have been setting yourself a higher and more conscious goal.

This, though, is rather a digression for, as I have said before, when you speak of an arrangement, you have committed yourself to something much more definite and specialized than the filling of a container with color and fragrance. The problem of a beginning can be reduced still further and may be considered from three angles.

The same principles obtain in all of them and the relationship between them is very close; it is only in the point of departure that they differ. A flower arrangement is composed of two separate and distinct things—flowers and a container. Either one may be the impetus, the first fillip to the imagination, which sets in motion a train of thought or suggests a mental picture. The third starting point is based on the specific requirements or restrictions imposed by a given space in your own house or by the terms of a competition. So your inspiration may come to you through one of these three channels—flowers which especially appeal to you, a receptacle which you desire to use, or the interesting possibilities of some particular problem.

Let us begin with the flowers for, after all, they are the material without which we should be studying abstract design instead of its application to a specialized field. Remember, first of all, that they are many things. They are color and mass, texture and silhouette, lines which hold a straight and unswerving direction and lines which curve and bend. Most of all are they symbolic words and phrases, the sensitive language by which your concept of beauty, your mood, your very self, may be revealed.

So, from the welter of loveliness in the overflowing baskets brought to you, or from the growing abundance of your garden, or from the wide range offered by the florists, choose your flowers as carefully as you would choose the words for a poem, the melody for a song, the lines for an engraving, the pigments for a painting. Se-

lect only those to which you instinctively respond, for sympathy between you and your material will have an incalculable effect on the spontaneity of your arrangement. Above all, do not permit the fact that this variety happens to be in season or that one at the perfection of its blooming to influence your choice through any sense of duty. If, perchance, tulips or sunflowers, lilies or field daisies, are most plentiful and available at a given time, do not use them for that reason but only if, at the moment, they have a special message for you. I often think of this when I pass windows massed with the huge-headed, long-stemmed chrysanthemums which seem to be the autumnal goal of professional growers. They are gorgeous in sheer size and in color, but so uniform and so unyielding in their long, straight lines that I should have to be in a most uncompromising mood before they would tempt me to an arrangement. Instead, I would rather pick the wind-blown garden varieties, for all their frost-blackened foliage; or dark leaves and a few gay-coated berries; or the last hardy roses with their outer petals browned by the cold. These would be my choice in preference to any standardized perfection, because in them I would find a variety of line, of color, of form, of suggestion, much more in sympathy with my thoughts.

Your personality, your mood, and the attraction exerted on you by certain flowers, are all, if you will but give free rein to them, excellent signposts directing you to the beginning of an arrangement. I certainly do not mean that you should put yourself through a form of searching psycho-analysis, that you should anxiously feel

the pulse of your emotions before setting scissors to a single stem; I am simply trying to rid you of the conscientious conventions and self-conscious restraints to which most of us succumb. Your garden is like a vast palette and I want you to feel free to use the limitless range of possibilities which it offers; free to choose flaming poppies for a day of reckless rebellion; stiff Sweet Williams and tidy primroses for the moments when you walk with care and circumspection; all the yellows and golds for sunny hours, or the deep purple of monk's-hood for graver ones; the hot reds and the more sullen magentas for anger; and roses, at least in my opinion, for almost any occasion. Amplify these by the number of varieties in your garden and, if you have learned to listen to your mood, you will find there its exact counterpart, even to the faintest nuance.

Flowers almost always suggest the pattern, or patterns, into which they will most naturally fall. As you pick them, be on the lookout for distinctive curves, angles of growth, masses, and unusual colorings, for any one of these may be the keynote determining the final composition, the motive around which it will be woven (see Plate I). On the twisting line of one stem you may build up a complete design; or the drooping head of a single blossom may so emphatically demand a certain treatment that your pictorial idea is at once established. If your mind is open to such suggestions you will find any number of them waiting for you, and among them is the one which most vividly and responsively offers you a sympathetic pattern. Having once selected this first motive, the

flowers, sprays, or leaves, which in your opinion will best further and develop it, should then be added.

In this connection it may not be amiss to take up another aspect of this same question of freedom and independent taste. Again and again I am asked what type arrangement is the best to follow: whether it is better to reduce to a minimum the number of units used and strive to make the one, three, or five stems of the Japanese tradition as perfect as possible; or go to the other extreme and work out the structure of the design in close masses, with many elements instead of a few, and with a wealth of color clothing the whole. Again my answer is—follow the dictates of your own creative instinct, remembering that no one manifestation of what is, after all, purely a matter of personal taste, can be called better than another. Rembrandt etched "Six's Bridge" with a very few lines, "Jan Six by the Window" with many thousands. Each is the interpretation of a mood and a place, each is a profound emotional expression, and each is an immortal masterpiece. How many flowers to use, and in what manner to use them, are questions which should be answered by you as an individual, not by arbitrary rulings. There are those who feel more stimulus to the imagination and more satisfying loveliness in the restraint of a single branch, or in the austerity of three leaves reduced to the uttermost simplicity of their pure linear forms; and there are those who find the greater pleasure in the other extreme, who rejoice in the riot of harmonizing and contrasting colors, of varied specimens, and of sheer abundance in the material used. Both are indications of

individual taste and, as such, should be encouraged, developed, and improved, but not standardized or changed. On the other hand, there is always value in an effort at something new to us, an experiment in the unfamiliar manner. Just because the approach and execution are strange, they may aid in shaking us out of the ruts of habitual thought, in giving us a widened concept of beauty, and in clarifying our ideas. Or the method at variance with our usual one may better express our needs of a given moment. Under such circumstances we should practice it, by all means, to the best of our knowledge and abilities, quite undaunted by the fact that the result may be distinctly inferior in quality to the standard we are accustomed to maintain along more familiar lines. The type of design to be selected in making an arrangement is all a matter of personal expression, to be chosen from the standpoint of unprejudiced and untrammelled preference.

You have your flowers, then, and your mental picture of the way in which you are going to assemble them, so your next thought will be of the container for them. In a flower arrangement this is much more than a mere means of holding the material in place and of keeping it in water for a longer life. It is an important and integral part of the design, as vital to its success as the flowers themselves. In height, width, contour, texture, scale, color harmony and color contrast, it must supplement, complement, and emphasize the special characteristics of the stems, the leaves, and the blossoms to be used. This aspect of the question, however, we will not dwell on now, as

we shall come to it and discuss it in detail when the container, as a starting point for an arrangement, is under consideration.

Before beginning to build up your composition, it is essential to decide where it is to be placed, for only in an empty room can it be seen and judged by itself and not in relation to all the controlling elements to be found and reckoned with in the surrounding areas.

In making this hypothetical arrangement, let us remember that the same general problems will obtain in all that you will make, with a variation only of local conditions, and that the same principles will be applied by you in the solution of them. Let us suppose that you have selected a certain table as the location for this particular composition; that fact alone will impose definite restrictions. If your taste and mood of the day have caused you to pick long branches of a spreading growth habit, and if the table is small and set in a circumscribed area, then, obviously, you will have to find another position where the height and width of your material will not be cramped, either actually or apparently. As I pointed out in the chapter on Composition, one of the first factors to be considered is the frame for your arrangement, in this case formed by the edges of the piece of supporting furniture and of adjacent pieces, and the wall in the immediate background Everything within these boundaries, as well as they themselves, will have a modifying influence upon it. If an arrangement is proportionately too small for the frame, it will have a visual value less than its actual size and will appear diminutive; if too large, it

will look crowded and all the free and airy quality, so essential to its beauty, will have been lost. In both cases it will be "out of scale", and scale in a composition is that which makes every element in it appear its true size. I have used the phrase "everything within these boundaries" and, at the risk of wearisome repetition, I want to emphasize the fact that I mean just that. Every accessory on the same piece of furniture with your flowers in their container; every book, picture, cigarette box, or other similar article; the glass, silver, and china on a dining-table; adjacent objects of every kind; all that lies within this visual frame which you have established becomes a part of your design and must be treated as such (see Plates III, VI, and VII).

Let us now consider the question of color—that of your flowers as related to that found in the rugs, on the walls, in the hangings, and in the furniture of the room in which they are placed. It is reasonable to presume that these are in harmony with each other, that there exists a fixed scheme in which there will be one, possibly two, dominating tones. If among the flowers you wish to use you can find some which pick up and repeat exactly these predominant colors or single color, the arrangement will then become an integral part of the decorations. Failing this, use lighter or darker shades, preferably both, in order that the combination of them may more nearly approximate the desired tone. Lastly, and in addition to one or both of these two possibilities, use colors which, in general, harmonize or harmoniously contrast with the general color scheme of the room. The

contrasts, especially, must be carefully handled, for no arrangement, however lovely in itself, can show to best advantage against the onslaught of too much discordant color.

There are other factors which must be kept in mind in connection with the room in which your arrangement is placed. Its actual height and width, the masses and the linear pattern of its contents, are all of importance. It is not possible in the average house—filled with the necessary furnishings of modern life, and with the unnecessary but important objects collected by most of us through the years and kept for the sake of their beauty or associations—accurately to conform to its many and conflicting compositional demands. In consequence we must confine ourselves to certain fundamentals only, such as dimensions, weight value, and general character. The height of a room is of first importance. We shall hardly fall into the error of putting towering hollyhocks into a low-ceilinged farmhouse, or a miniature vase filled with miniature flowers on the banqueting table of a baronial hall, yet less extreme instances are often found and constitute quite a common fault. A so-called "modern"* arrangement (see Plate I), in which every extraneous detail has been eliminated until it depends for its effect on the stark beauty of straight lines and of the uncompromising angles formed by them, has no place among

* Note. It would be well for any but the experienced designer to use this word advisedly and to familiarize himself, or herself, with its true meaning. It is too often confounded with the bizarre, the unconventional, and the irrational. On the other hand, "modern" architecture and decoration are logical, inevitable, and in very many executed cases of great beauty.

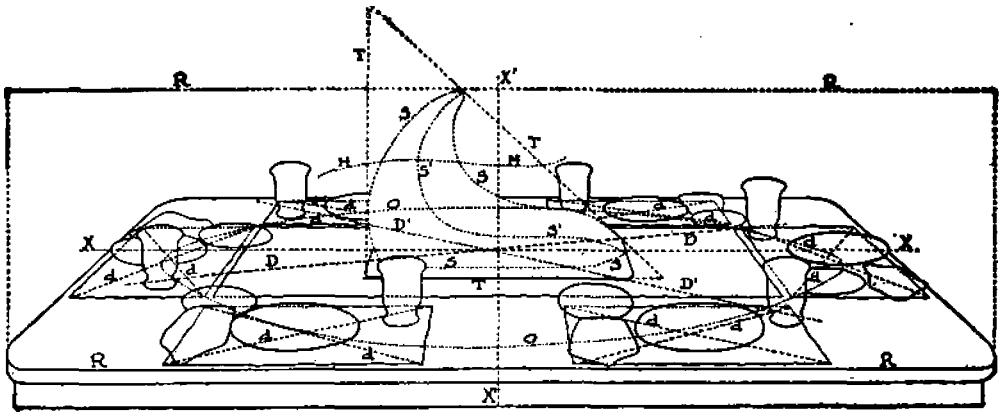


PLATE VI

PLATE VI

Photograph by Herbert Studios

ARRANGEMENT BY MISS ANNE R. WEBB AND MRS. JOHN E. CRAIG

THE SOUTH SIDE GARDEN CLUB OF LONG ISLAND

the pale brocades and gilt chairs in the drawing-rooms of a past generation. Nor does an elaborate, rather artificial French "flower-piece", so lovely and so beloved by the artists of the nineteenth century, harmonize with the kitchen furniture of an early Colonial interior.

By this I do not mean that we should be purists to the extent of confining ourselves to the use of moss-roses, dooryard lilacs, or wild flowers, if our house happens to be an old one, merely because these were obtainable at the time of its building, while the newer varieties were not; nor do I mean that an arrangement, French in feeling, cannot be used in a room furnished from another land. Different beauties can, and do, live together in perfect harmony, each adding the wealth of its particular attributes to that of the others. Only when they are too far apart in certain essentials such as mass, line, and color, is there discord. Tradition is a rich storehouse from which the artist draws that which he needs and adapts it to the requirements of the problem in hand, creating new forms where these are demanded and thus adding his contribution to the sum total of the world's beauty. All I ask is that you will adhere to the basic elements of good design when you bring flowers into your houses, for even a little thought given to them will save you many errors in the result.

Next, the decision must be made whether the arrangement you contemplate making is to be free-standing, or one to be placed against a wall or in a window. The former is associated with the dining-room table or any other location around which there is free circulation, and is, by

virtue of the numerous actual, physical points of view from which it may be approached, one which offers manifold difficulties. Outside of an exhibition such an arrangement can never be seen and judged strictly on its own merits, but is almost invariably in competition with, rather than in harmonious relation to, the many conflicting objects in its surroundings. It is, for example, extremely difficult to find a logical and pleasing connection between the all too often confused lines on a table set for a dinner and the pattern and contour of the centerpiece. Crowding is usual in such a case and, the fewer the objects used and the more significantly they are related to the flower arrangement, the more emphatically will the latter count in the whole design and the greater will be the feeling of repose and harmony (see Plate VI). In the case of the library or hall table, everything on it that does not help the composition should be eliminated, while every object that adds its quota of beauty and variety to the whole should be included (see Plate VII). The fact that this type of arrangement is called "free-standing" presupposes that it can, and will, be seen from all sides, and herein lie its greatest difficulties. You can well see that it is harder to put your flowers together so that a design will express itself clearly and pleasingly from every point of view, than so to arrange them that they may be seen to advantage from only one. It can be done, but I believe the percentage of success, as to interest and unusual qualities, to be comparatively low. It is only natural that this should be so, and we shall see many reasons for it if we will consider the technical difficulties

involved. In every other problem there is one principal side only to be reckoned with, one which can be designed to the last fine detail of balance and proportion without a thought for the back. If it is well composed, the adjacent sides will almost invariably be good also, or a very little attention and readjustment will suffice to bring them up to the standard of the front. But, in a free-standing arrangement, each aspect must be as good as every other one: the side first composed will have a reverse in which the flower faces are almost all turned the other way, while the stems and leaves are in an unrelated tangle. To rectify these errors will bring about, of necessity, many changes on the opposite side: its composition becomes disarranged, its interstices have been filled by the additions which the second side required, and its clear, linear pattern will be lost. And so, as we go around, the problem becomes one of infinite readjustment and rearrangement.

An elaborate free-standing arrangement, therefore, offers more than the usual number of difficulties and, certainly for the beginner, I strongly advise the choice of the simplest possible compositional scheme. I have seen most successful and charming solutions, especially in those where an elongated design has been dictated by the outlines of a long table. Also, the material selected can complicate or simplify the problem. Fruit is easier to use than flowers for, having no distinct face, it has naturally no reverse of less interesting aspect. In consequence it may be employed almost indiscriminately, with only the increasing or diminishing outlines of its contours, and

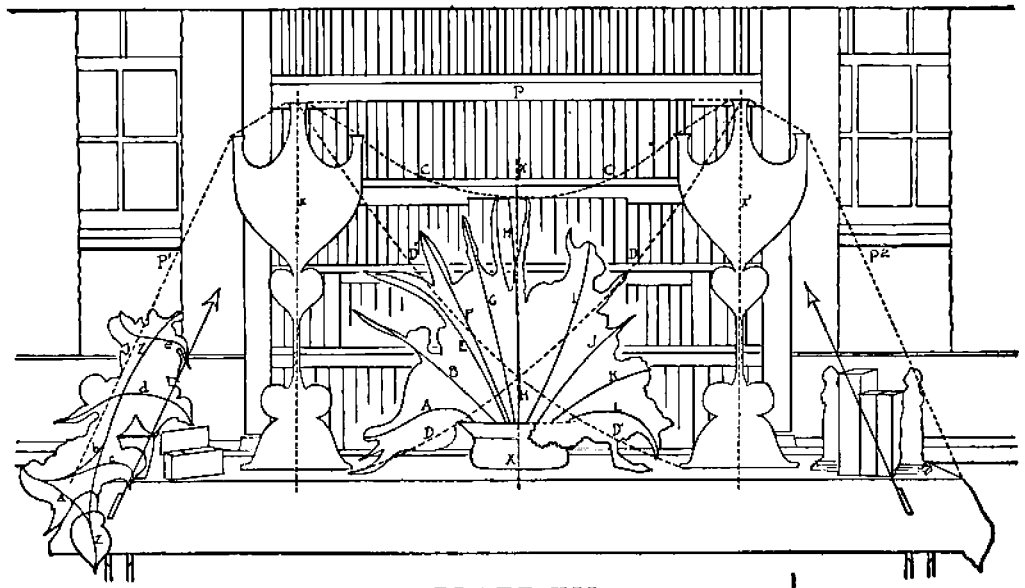


PLATE VII

the accents of its stems or blossom ends, to be considered.

The easiest arrangement of all, and the one which offers the greatest latitude of choice, is that which is to be seen against a background of plain wall space. Here the only factors which need to be taken into account (except, of course, the flowers and the container) are the height, width, and depth of the table on which it is to stand, and the color and texture of the wall behind. Further simplification is provided by the fact that the arrangement is to be viewed from virtually one side only and, as I have said before, if this is good, the lateral faces, being part of it, will be good also. In this type the designer has the maximum of freedom in his selection of unusual colors, forms, specimens, or container, but must remember always the balance, harmony, and unity which must exist between all the elements of the design.

The requirements of a particular spot, with a well defined size and shape, are not necessarily irksome limitations, but rather fascinating possibilities in the successful fulfilment of which lies a very special charm. What one loses in freedom of thought, one gains in the conditions imposed by established forms and dimensions which are so suggestive to the imagination and provocative to the ingenuity. A window, flat or embrasured; a wall niche; a mantelshelf; an area of panelling, with its strongly marked lines; all these come within this class. They say certain specific things which must be heeded in the making of the arrangements destined for their decoration. The deep-set window and the niche are definite and exacting frames with pictorial requirements

which cannot be ignored (see Plate VIII). Not only do they possess height and width, but depth as well, and the arrangements placed within them must be related to all three; neither so small that they appear dwarfed and lost in their allotted space, nor so large that they fill it to overflowing. In a word, they must not only be good designs within the bounding lines of their own silhouettes, but also within the limits of these larger, surrounding forms. And especially do I want to emphasize the fact that an arrangement must not be too deep for the penetration within which it is placed and which constitutes one of the most interesting and controlling aspects of these particular problems. When some of the flowers are pressed close against the background while others reach far out into the room, not only is the principle involved an unsound one, but the visual effect of the whole mass about to fall forward produces a disturbed and insecure feeling. The area of an embrasured window should be, in general, less completely filled than that of a niche. If too crowded, even with material correctly arranged from a purely compositional standpoint, the functional purpose for which the window was built, namely as a link between indoors and out, is defeated, and this is a factor which should always be taken into consideration in any form of decoration. Also, in this instance, everything that lies beyond the arrangement should be given very careful study, for the buildings, trees, and shrubs, which come within the line of vision, as well as the vertical and horizontal motives of the glass divisions, are a part of the composition. For example, the strong, dominating lines

of heavy stems cut with too much feeling of opposition across the muntins and mullions of a small-paned window, and are better seen against a background of plain glass.

The niche presents a simpler problem, though it is an architectural feature now rarely seen except for those especially constructed for use in flower exhibitions. As the perfect setting for an arrangement, I regret its passing. A usual modern substitute lies in the adjustment of book-shelves to leave a rectangular opening in which a small figure, or a bit of porcelain, or a bowl of flowers, may be placed. This recess is more influenced by its surroundings than is an isolated wall niche, depending as it does upon the spacing of the book-shelves and with the well defined lines and strong colors of the near-by books introducing positive factors for consideration. These latter, together with the four bounding lines of the aperture, and the depth of the penetration, are the first points to be taken into account in designing an arrangement to fill this space. The true niche, coming more properly under the heading of competitions, will be considered there.

The decoration of a mantelpiece has certain characteristic limitations as well as great possibilities. It may be handled with one arrangement in the center, or at one side; with a pair of arrangements; or with three. In all three cases flowers and containers must form an integral part of the whole design, which includes the chimney-breast, the area occupied by the fire-place, and the horizontal line of the shelf. Where a single, central arrange-

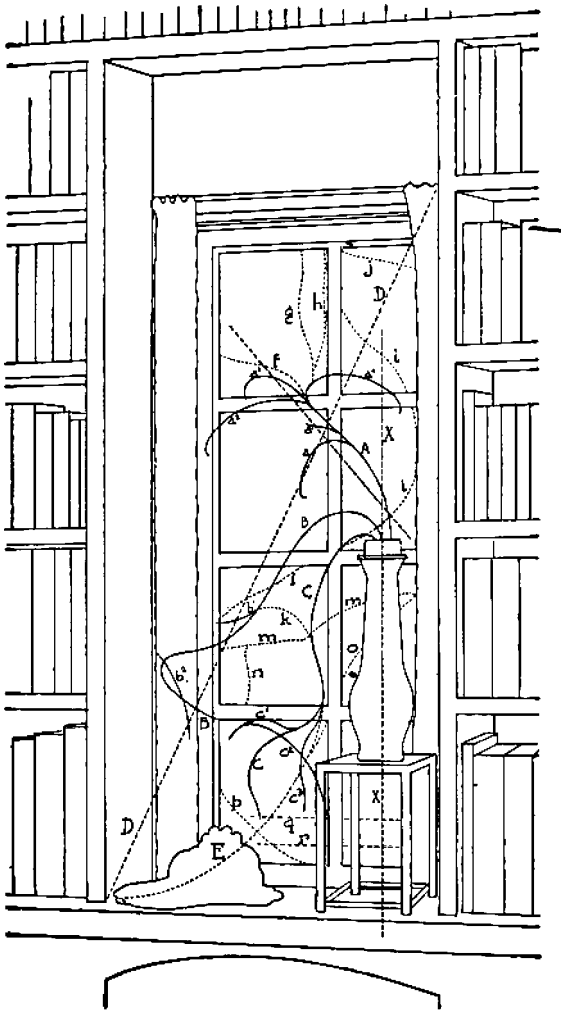


PLATE VIII

LATE VIII *Photograph by Rockwell D. Talmage*

ARRANGEMENT BY MISS ALINE KATE FOX
AND MISS ESTHER D. WATERMAN

THE FAIRFIELD GARDEN CLUB

ment is used, accessories placed on each side will draw the design out laterally; if off axis, then some other object or objects, such as a statuette, a vase, or a candlestick, will add a compensating weight value and ensure general harmony. For a mantel is essentially a formal motive, well defined in its outlines and exacting in its requirements, and it demands a certain formality in its decorative treatment. In the pair of arrangements, or in the pair on either side of a central one, you have, in my opinion, a very happy solution as well as an unusual opportunity. In spite of its symmetrical qualities, the individual groupings of the flowers may be as loose and free as you wish; or you may stress this very symmetry and use it as the keynote for a highly stylized design. In any event and whatever the manner, the single arrangement, the two, or the three, must be considered as integral parts of the composition, closely related to each other, to any accessories used, and to their architectural background. In the case of three, design your arrangements so that the central motive will differ in dimensions from the other two, being larger or smaller in accordance with the pattern you have in mind. The latter may be pyramidal in feeling, building up from each side to an apex in the center; or it may be semi-circular (see Plate IX), with the desired height at each end attained by the use of tall, slender candlesticks, or even by the accents created by lighting fixtures or pictures on the walls; or it may be in the nature of a festoon where, from a low center, the eye is carried on an upward curve to each extremity, then through the downward, drooping movement of long

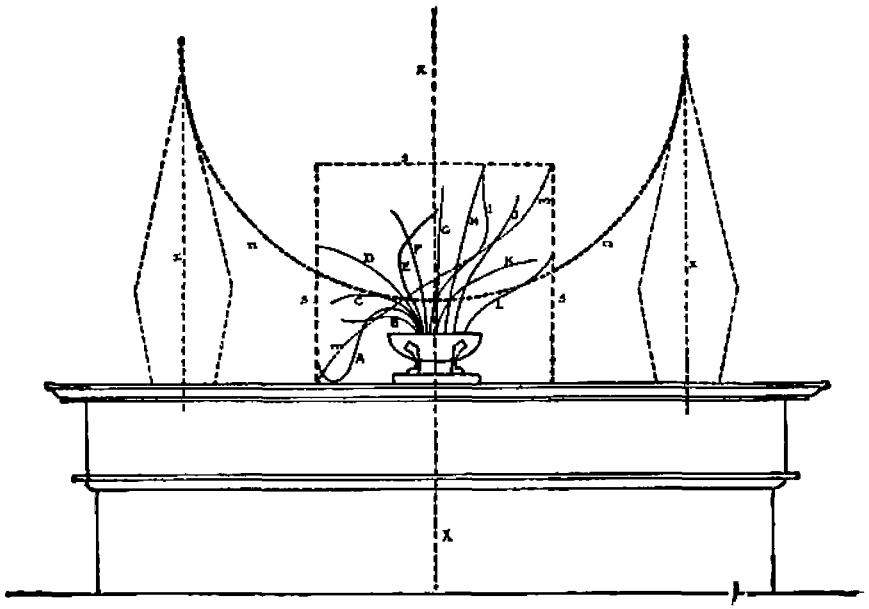


PLATE IX

PLATE IX *Photograph by Herbert Studios*

ARRANGEMENT BY MRS. STEPHEN C. REYNOLDS

THE MILLBROOK GARDEN CLUB

sprays or yet longer tendrils. In all three cases, I would recommend that the side arrangements duplicate each other in feeling and even, as nearly as possible, in lines, forms, colors, and in actual specimens used; while the third, or central one, though it may be allowed more variation, should repeat certain general characteristics of the other two. Remember, please, in this as in all the designs you create, that no striking or daring effect can be successful if achieved at the expense of homogeneity and unity. The making of one arrangement identical with another or, at least, as nearly so as the differences and natural perversity of this living material will permit, is a tax on our patience but often well worth all the effort involved. And do not fear that similarity will produce a tedious result. On the contrary, the very repetition adds emphasis, for it accents every beauty of line or color or silhouette that you have succeeded in bringing out. In this problem of the mantel arrangement lies, I feel, an opportunity to depart from the stereotyped, to experiment in patterns which are unusual—quaint or formal, flowing or rigid—to test your skill at abstract design, where there is no wish merely to exhibit the beauties of the material selected, but rather to use this material as so many units in a composition (see Plate XII).

The panelled wall as a background differs from the window in that the factors of penetration and of panes of transparent glass are eliminated, its outlines, coloring, and architectural detail, being the only established features (see Plate XVIII). A mirror behind your arrange-

ment makes it virtually a free-standing one, and it should be considered as such in your handling of it. Although the reflection is not seen in as great detail as the back of a free-standing arrangement will present, it is yet very important and, if well composed, adds greatly to the beauty of the whole effect (see Plate X).

At this point I would like to remind you of the importance of the much neglected shadow. In all design, chiaroscuro—that is, the matter of light and shade—is of prime importance. The architect considers it when he determines the depth of his penetrations and projections, the painter and the engraver are absorbed with its problems, the sculptor bears in mind its effect upon his surfaces (see Plates I, V, and XVIII). The fact that in a flower arrangement the source of light is generally stationary, means that the shadows will be stationary also. They introduce into the composition new shapes and tonal values which should be treated exactly as are those already existing there. A heavy mass of shadow on one side of the central, vertical axis, may effectually upset the balance, although the actual forms of flowers, leaves, and stems, may be in perfect equilibrium. Yet it is rare in a flower arrangement to see this matter of the shadows taken into account. Again, I am forced to repeat that no detail of light and shade, of solid and void, of form, mass, line, texture, color, scale, or material, can be neglected in the creation of that most beautiful thing, a fine design.

We have, then, taken flowers for our starting point, their choice dictated by our taste and mood of the moment; we have selected an appropriate container; and we

PLATE X *Photograph by Rockwell D. Talmage*

ARRANGEMENT BY MRS. EDWARD M. COLIE, JR.

THE FAIRFIELD GARDEN CLUB

have considered the modifying or determining features found in their destined location. From here we must turn back, as always, to the rules and principles of good design for the next and final step in the making of a flower arrangement.

CHAPTER IV

MAKING AN ARRANGEMENT

The Container

IN A flower arrangement, flowers and that which holds them are but two parts of a whole. Without either the other loses its meaning and, therefore, the container has its rightful place as a starting point from which one of these specialized designs may be approached.

Possibly we have a particular fondness for one bowl; possibly one vase has achieved more success for us than any other, and so we turn instinctively to it; or possibly the glass and china to be used on a dining-table make necessary a certain piece for the central decoration. In these suppositious cases, or in any others where the receptacle is the first consideration, this usually secondary factor becomes the determining one in the final flower arrangement. For, working in reverse order from that of our original procedure, we must now select the material in every way most suitable to it, instead of choosing the container most appropriate to the material and, with it for a guide, we must build up our composition. The

same general principles will obtain in both methods, the only differences will lie in the details of their application. A fact to be remembered in this connection is that, though a necessary and significant part of the design, the container is almost always of lesser importance and should be subordinated to the flowers. Even when it has set the key, it should be content to play the accompaniment and not the melody. This is not an invariable rule, for exceptions occur in such cases as the globe with its single floating rose, so popular at present; the wide, shallow dish containing a small wreath or a very few flowers; or the large vase holding but a single branch. In these the container predominates or at least takes equal place but, generally speaking, it is safe to assume that, in height and width as well as in general importance, it will be the lesser factor in the final result.

Let us imagine that a massive jar has been selected. The flowers for it should occupy a space which is higher and wider, if only by a little, than the area it occupies, for otherwise there will be a dwarfed and constricted look to the whole. One dimension may sometimes be less, in which case there should be a proportionate increase in that of the other for compensation. This may be illustrated by the rectangular bronze dish in which the Japanese tradition places a few slender iris. With the slight spread of the leaves, if the length of the stems equalled or were less than the length of the container, the effect would be weak; moreover, those extra inches of height make up for the shallowness of the dish; the weight has been cunningly distributed and balance has been main-

tained (see Plate XIV). Similarly, in an exceptionally tall and narrow vase, if the flower material is but a little higher and a little wider, the effect will be too attenuated for beauty. Its height should be less than that of the container, and this, in turn, can be offset by a very considerable increase in its spread. Many more illustrations of these exceptions could be cited, but they do not affect the fact that, though any rule may successfully be broken, it is safer for most of us, especially if we are beginners, to follow the premise that the larger the container, the greater should be the dimensions of the material with which it is to be filled.

For the same reason, a miniature vase requires tiny flowers, short-stemmed and small in blossom and foliage; while for all the intermediate sizes, similar proportionate relationships should be observed. In this latter class, however, the range of selection is less restricted; only when a container is conspicuously large or small need its proportions dictate with such exactitude those of its contents. For the average receptacle, one's choice is widened, and any flower material may be used except that in which the contrast of its mass, height, and width, is too extreme. In fact, I should advise as great a variety as is possible in all cases.

This is really all a part of the question of scale, though the word is more often employed to denote the interrelation of individual units in the composition, as appearing in the size of each blossom, leaf, or even petal. Obviously, baby's-breath and sunflowers are out of scale with each other but, in general, the discrepancy is not so marked

and must, therefore, be carefully studied. The shape, texture, scale, mass, and color, of the material should harmonize with similar elements in the container. A pitcher with a slender handle, or with a delicate, painted pattern, will require smaller scale flowers than would have been necessary in a heavier, simpler vessel. Moreover, in addition to their actual size, all objects possess what I have described as a visual weight value, to which the same rules apply. Even if everything else is in proportion, the apparent weight of either the flowers or the container can upset the delicately adjusted balance. Think of the solid look of a branch in transparent glass, or the frail appearance of small, pale-toned roses in an iron pot salvaged from an ancestral kitchen, and consider their incongruity quite apart from the fact that the vase might be adequate to the physical strain, or the stems of the roses long enough for good proportion. In contours, also, there is the same question of relationship. The subtle curve of a bowl or of a handle can be so beautifully repeated by a similar one in the flowers above, or its straight sides by the lines of the stems, that it is a pity more advantage is not taken of these possibilities. We do not make the mistake of putting pendant vine tendrils into a square and blocky vase, nor spiky stalks into a globe, but it is a common tendency to miss the potentialities of loveliness which a little attention to these matters will reveal (see Plates VIII, XV, and XVII).

In the handling of texture and color, adherence to the same principle in no way limits the field of imaginative effort. These are subtle things, capable of infinite devel-

opment. The porous surface of pottery and the harsh one of rough metal have textural affinities far removed from the smooth glaze of porcelain and the high finish of crystal. To go back to the previous illustration of the iron pot, can you not see the woolly look of mullein leaves or the ragged petals of sunflowers in perfect accord with its coarse-grained appearance? And is there not a close connection between the "feel" of Venetian glass and that of the most delicate of flowers? Of course there is. As for color, this is for me—as I warned you in the beginning —of secondary importance. In itself it is a vast study, in its relation to flower arrangement I will leave it to your own researches, only asking you to remember that, as far as pure design is concerned, it must never be under or over its true weight value. The heavier a color note is in tonal value, the more it weighs in the composition, and this must be kept in mind as you relate flower tones to each other and to the container, and as you experiment in the fascinating field of color contrasts and accents.

Before we leave the question of the container as a starting point for an arrangement, I want to put in one plea. We are all the victims of habits, those of thought and of practice, and among them that of using only a few favorite vases is a prevalent one. My plea is for the "forgotten container" of which every house has any number tucked away out of sight, or so long serving merely as ornaments that the opportunities they offer for floral use are ignored. Unless some particular vase seems to demand of you a definite treatment, or a special occasion determines your choice for you, do not select one

because it happens to be the first to hand, or another because it will comfortably accommodate the stems, or still another because you have had previous success with it; but look over your possessions with an eye to their latent possibilities. Take down those which have been relegated to the farthest corner of the highest shelf and, as you dust them off, see if there is not also some dust on your attitude of mind towards them. Or move the ginger jar and the porcelain plate which have occupied exact and inflexible positions in your living room for years, and observe them with an open mind. I am willing to guarantee that among them there will be one or more with unusual and charming potentialities. A case in point is the reappearance of the obsolete soup-tureen as an adaptable and frequently used container for flowers. A few years ago who would have dreamed of the beauties that lie hidden in it, the sweep of its large curves to be echoed by those of stems and branches, its silvered surface catching and reflecting colors above, or the painted flowers on its china sides repeated by real ones? Between its period of complete neglect and its present day popularity the tureen has not changed, but only the point of view towards it; someone saw its possibilities and made the first experiment with it. Trying new things is not alone fun, but it brings with it a rejuvenation of outlook and a freshened vision. I would infinitely rather see you evolve a composition out of some marigolds and a wooden shoe than to have you always arrange seven pink roses, very charmingly, in a clear glass bowl. For, I assure you, intelligent experimentation—whether in material, in color

combinations, or in containers—is an excellent way to learn, not only how to do a thing but how not to do it. From every mistake made in a conscious striving after some envisioned effect, a breadth of outlook is gained which the following of the safe and narrow course of repetition could never achieve.

One point may be mentioned here which, though it does not necessarily fall under this heading of the container, yet is closely related to it. It is not a rule but rather a convention, widely accepted because so often it has been found to be sound in practice. I refer to the theory that the natural growth habits of plants should be duplicated, wholly or in part, when they are cut and placed in water. Granted the primary importance of good design and the necessity of adhering to its principles at all costs, I concur in this opinion, and I believe that the violation of it, except to satisfy aesthetic requirements, results in an impoverished effect. Nature gave to each plant and flower its personal characteristics and, by following her lead, we can permit and encourage each to reveal every individual beauty according to her plan. Broad spreading plants never look well when crammed into the close confines of a narrow necked bottle, nor the quaint stalks of stiff growing flowers half tumbling out of a wide mouthed bowl. The natural habits of growth in both these instances would be so completely contradicted as to shock our sense of fitness. To make the same illustration serve once more, why does the Japanese arrange three, or five, or seven iris rising from one point in a low container? Because, symbolism apart, he is a

believer in nature's good judgment in such matters, and he endeavors to duplicate her conditions. Iris grow in small clumps, with stalks of varying lengths, their roots in or near water, and he brings them into his house in the same way. Similarly, when he cuts a branch for use indoors, he selects one which suggests the whole tree in miniature, nor does he add to it flowers which would take from its scale, but places it by itself in an upright position and creates the illusion of a small, growing tree. I do not mean that iris and branches should always be so treated, I am merely quoting these examples as highly developed instances of the employment of certain principles which have resulted in the creation of a specialized and very lovely type of beauty. Here arises, also, that question of air which I have referred to elsewhere. Not only is it bad design to crowd an arrangement into too small an area, but it violates our sense of natural requirement. This material which depends on the circulation of air for its very life, almost invariably requires the suggestion of it when transported into a house. We like to feel that there is room between the branches for it to breathe, and that there is space around it for the freedom to which it is accustomed, else it may easily become an artificial and unsatisfactory thing.

Under one condition the naturalistic treatment may be completely ignored, namely when the flowers are used, not as flowers but exclusively as units in the construction of an abstract design (see Plate XII). In this case they become merely objects of certain definite textures, forms, and colors, but with no independent characteristics re-

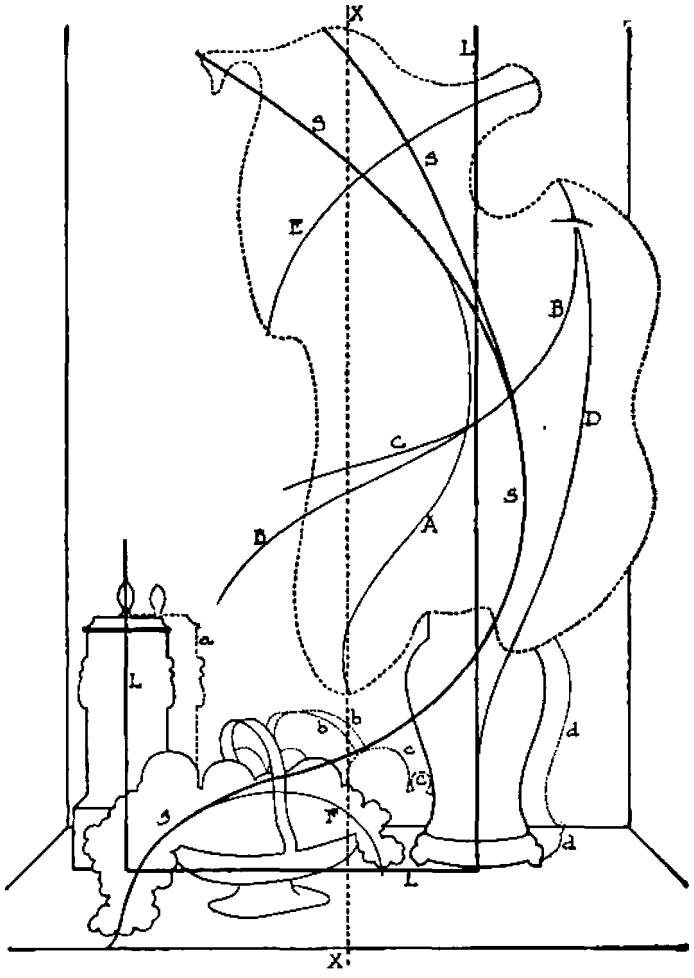


PLATE XI

PLATE XI *Photograph by Keystone View Co.*

ARRANGEMENT BY MISS HAZEL HEISSENBUTTEL

THE SOUTH SIDE GARDEN CLUB OF LONG ISLAND

quiring consideration. They are as the wools in the making of a tapestry, the paints in the creation of a picture, the bits of clay from which the statue grows. Wreaths of fruit or flowers so used do not suggest their constituent parts, but Della Robbia creations made of living material instead of terracotta. In a French flower print we do not worry about the rose which is obviously too short-stemmed to reach the level of the water, or about the security of the bird's nest, or the inappropriateness of hanging a bunch of grapes from the lip of the container, or as to how long the butterfly will stay on the leaf; we accept each element for what it is, a unit in the composition. I remember seeing in one competition a little, almost flat mound of color under a glass bell. It was a reproduction of an old wax flower-piece, and the closely set, pale tinted blossoms might have been of that material, for all the naturalistic look they possessed. They were used so entirely as parts of a design, and were so completely subordinated to it, that there was no feeling of loss in the lack of stems, leaves, and the interstices between them. In one sense, perhaps, it could hardly come under the designation of a flower arrangement, for it could have been composed of any material suggesting wax. Purely a pattern which happened to be made up of flowers, its effect depended upon the selection and placing of forms and colors. And it was a very lovely thing indeed, a perfect exposition of the beautiful possibilities inherent in this type of treatment.

With the container and flowers determined, it remains to consider the holder, that usually invisible but always

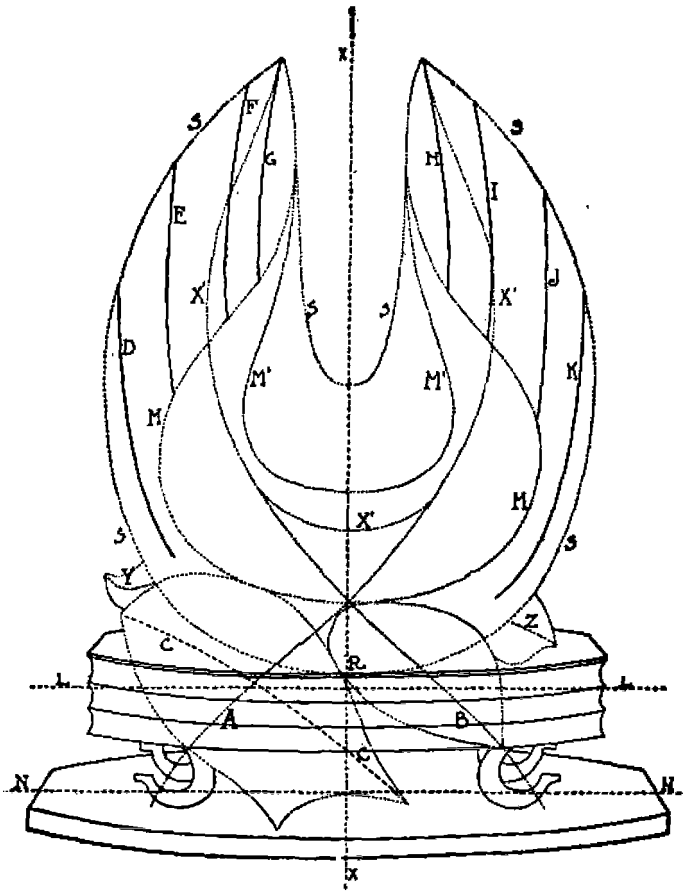


PLATE XII

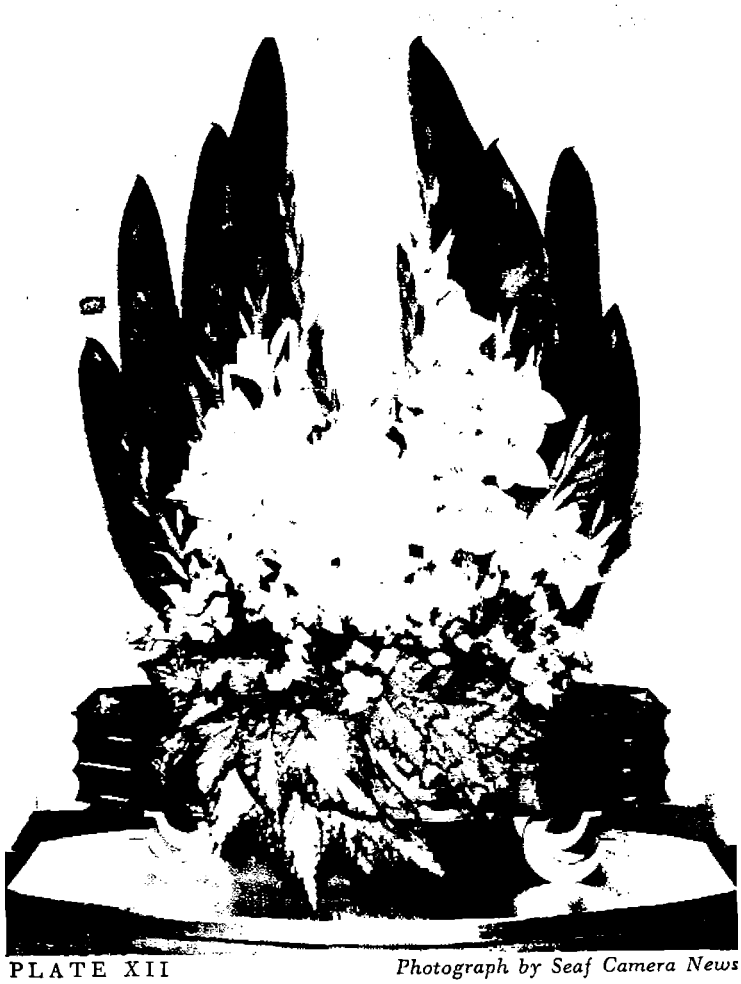


PLATE XII *Photograph by Seaf Camera News*

ARRANGEMENT BY MRS. DEXTER M. FERRY, JR.

THE GARDEN CLUB OF MICHIGAN

necessary link between the two. It may have no visual connection with the design but, in its functional use, it is extremely important. It is a tool and, as such, must be chosen for the quality which its name implies—its capability of holding the material in the desired position. Only in the rare cases where it is to be seen must its appearance be considered, and then only in regard to such elemental factors as those of color harmony, texture, and form. Otherwise it is the strictly utilitarian means by which we are enabled to carry out the idea we have in mind. From the point of view of the designer, it must be remembered that too small holes will often result in the line of a stem being irretrievably lost through the physical effort of crowding it in. Also, if these are too uniform in size and spacing, it will be almost impossible to avoid a formless arrangement. Above all, the holder must be heavy enough to counterbalance the leverage exerted by high or spreading branches, for otherwise there will be a tendency to add a flower or spray at points where their weight is needed to achieve physical stability, to the detriment of the whole composition.

An arrangement, then, can be undertaken with the flowers or with the container as the starting point. The ground we have covered will enable the designer to meet all the requirements or restrictions which a competition may impose. In consequence, it would be unnecessary repetition to treat the latter under a separate heading. Only in the niche and shadow-box do there arise special problems not usually met with in the average home, and only in the haunting fear of "what will the judges want"

is there still a ghost to be laid. The two former constitute, of course, the problem of the picture within the frame. Not only must your arrangement be a fine design, a thing of beauty in itself, but in its every detail of line, mass, and movement, it must be related to the bounding lines around it. No beauty within the arrangement itself will save it as a composition unless this harmonious relation to the frame is preserved. The "silhouette", meaning the problem which concerns itself with the shadows of material cast upon a screen, furnishes an unusual opportunity for pure design, with the elimination of color and the reduction of all the elements to terms of black and white (see Plate XIII). At this point may I stress the necessity of simplicity? The majority of flower arrangements are crowded, for it is so easy to add a spray here and a blossom there, and so hard to stop when enough has been said. Remember that, in a perfect design, not one slightest element could be taken away without harming the whole, nor need one be added. Simplicity, however, is not necessarily achieved by the elimination of material. You may have an extremely confused design in three lines, an extremely simple one in three hundred. Again, it is not a question of how many you use, but of how you use them. I cannot resist recalling here, as I have done in many of my lectures, an occasion when I was judging an important class in a big flower show. The problem was a shadow-box treatment, with no limitations as to material, open to prize winners of previous years. All the arrangements were carefully studied, all were good, all but one were crowded. It consisted

of a few sprays of pussywillows and of jonquils growing out of a simple, flat container—nothing more. Yet so completely right was each one of these units in relation to every other one, and so perfect was the harmony existing between them and the limiting lines of the frame, so delicate yet so true was the balance achieved, and so flawless the rhythm and scale of all the parts, that there resulted a bit of subtle beauty as rare as it was lovely.

As to what is wanted, there are two things to remember: first, that the requirements of the problem must be fulfilled and the restrictions observed; second, that all judges are fallible. Personally I advise the greatest latitude of treatment within the limits set. Between a good design with little variety, and a poor one with a great deal, the former is the thing to strive for; but if the problem is one dealing with shades of a certain color, or specimens of a certain species, then, between two arrangements equally well composed and executed, I believe that the one which takes advantage of the wider range is likely to have the greater success. But note that I say "equally well composed and executed", for a fine design is the first thing which a judge worthy of the name will consider. Without it all the lovely colors, perfect blooms, and charming containers in the world, will not save the result; with it you have the absolutely necessary foundation, the fundamental structure, to which you may add all the decorative notes which it can assimilate without losing its true and inward significance.

So do not let the mental hazards of competitive requirements and the opinions of judges interfere with the

purpose of what is, after all, artistic creation. For, these considerations aside, your problem is one of design, first, last, and always, and the achievement of your goal lies in the complete expression of a beautiful idea in terms of it.

Chapter V

ANALYSIS OF ARRANGEMENTS

The preceding chapters have been devoted to a discussion of the vital importance of design in the arrangement of flowers, and of certain fundamental principles to be adhered to in achieving it. The questions of material, container, and placing, have been considered. Volumes could with profit be devoted to elaborating upon the principles involved, with their endless ramifications, but within the limits of one small book I have endeavored to compress sufficient to serve at least as a guide to those who would approach flower arrangement from the standpoint of the designer. Let us now see how the principles I have stressed have been applied to actual designs as exemplified by those illustrated in these pages. They specifically demonstrate certain fundamentals of composition, and nothing that could be written would more effectually do so.

The frontispiece by Mrs. Arai speaks so eloquently of a sensitiveness to, and a knowledge of, good design, and is so simple and entirely expressive, that little can be said to supplement the actual reproduction. Yet with all its

apparent lack of complexity, it is a wonderfully subtle thing, depending for its perfection upon the complete rightness of delicate adjustments of balance, scale, and proportion. The general compositional scheme is built up around one dominant line, sweeping in a strong and graceful reverse curve from the apex down to the heavy branch at the base, through the perfectly proportioned container, into the curved leg of the stand from which the whole arrangement springs and which so lightly yet firmly connects it with the supporting table. Supplementing this principal line are two subsidiary lines, the one drooping to the right, the other rising to the left, which together constitute one diagonal, oppositional line crossing the main one at a point of concentration just above the container. Upon the length, direction, and degree of curvature of these lines depends the effect of the arrangement of plant material, and these considerations have been so carefully studied that we experience the conviction which always comes from looking upon a perfect design—that not one smallest thing could be taken away nor added, not one slightest detail changed, without detracting from the consummate beauty of the whole. Note, please, the studied arrangement of the individual lines of the pussy-willow sprays which go to make up the three main groups, how the tips of no two of them are of the same height, and how successfully they determine the voids between. These blank spaces balance about a vertical axis through the composition, exactly as the solids themselves balance about the same axis. Gradually the interstices diminish as they approach the center of the design, as

gradually do the solids increase. Repose is the keynote of the whole, and the linear forms rise and droop and bend in a rhythmic cadence which unites in one long, slow, and gracious movement. Observe, too, the rightness of scale that obtains between the plant material, the container, and the stand, each harmonizing with the others, each picking up and repeating their forms. I think I have seldom seen an arrangement so reminiscent of a bit of lovely music—which only goes to prove how akin are the rules governing composition in the two media.

In marked contrast to the tranquillity of the pussy-willows are the violent motion and angular shapes of the striking design of lotus buds and leaves (Plate I, page 18). This is typical of the best expression of the so-called "modern" spirit, in which a definite mood has been interpreted by means of wisely selected, sympathetic forms, arranged in accord with it. Placing her arrangement against a plain background and flooding it with light from one side, the designer has made the most of the resultant shadows which, repeating and emphasizing the elements in material and container, serve to augment the studied confusion and opposition which are characteristic of the whole. Elsewhere I have mentioned as requisites in any arrangement, linear pattern, balance, and good silhouette, and reference to the illustration and its accompanying diagram reveals at once the presence of all three. The dominant line is the zigzag formed by the axes Z, Z, Z, Z, Z, of the most important leaves. Not only do they cut each other at right angles, but are in turn cut sharply by the lines A, B, C, D, E, F, and G,

of the stems of buds, seed-pods, and other leaf, the entire pattern being echoed by the oppositional movements set up by the axes Z^1, Z^1, Z^1, Z^1, Z^1, Z^1, and b, c, d, e, of the shadow forms. The choice of the container is particularly happy, carrying out in its stark uprightness the strong vertical sense of the material above. Instead of soft, rounded contours, its edges are sharp and angular. Its top is diagonally cut by the long axis of the large, open leaf, and even the steep perspective lines of the ends of the table and its cover play their significant part. The same strong contrasts of line and form are apparent in the forced highlights on buds, leaves, stems, and even on the brocade and raised surfaces of the container, and the dense black of the shadows. It is a beautiful example of what would otherwise be chaos, resolved and co-ordinated into a well-knit structure by the hand and mind of a designer.

To test the element of balance in this very interesting arrangement, let us establish the main vertical axis XX through the center of its container. We find that the units of actual flower material are in equilibrium about it, the aggregate of the weights on one side offsetting that of those on the other to a nicety. But the shadows are as much a part of the arrangement as the material and the container and are, because of the direction of the light, thrown practically entirely to one side of the axis. Balance, therefore, seems to be disturbed, with a preponderance of weight to the right tending to tip the whole composition in that direction. The designer has cleverly met the situation by forcing the strong diagonal

shadow Y above and to the left. Its weight presses down hard on that side, the sense of instability is overcome, and the whole composition, with all its interrelated, interlocked parts, stands secure.

The silhouette is complicated by the additions and repetitions afforded by the shadows, but the rule of increase and diminution in voids as well as solids persists, with a resulting concentration of interest towards the center and a lightening at the edges. Thus we see our three main requirements fulfilled, and further study will reveal an equal attention to such important factors as scale, texture, and tonal harmony.

The arrangem nt illustrated by Plate II, page 20, was runner-up foı the Fenwick Medal in the New York Flower Show of 1935, and well deserved the distinction. As in the case of the frontispiece, it has not been diagrammed because it is so clear and so uncomplicated that further exposition seemed unnecessary. Seven long, slender forms have been subtly grouped into a design of six lines. The first and second from the right make one line, the third another, the fourth and fifth together still another, while the sixth and seventh make one each. The sixth line is created by the strong diagonal from upper right to lower left, or vice versa, by which the eye is carried along the bent, drooping leaf at the extreme left, through the converging uprights in the center, to the curved tip of the graceful, vertical leaf at the far right. The intersection of all these lines comes at the point of greatest concentration, on the main vertical axis slightly more than half-way from the nadir of the design to its

zenith. Simplicity and repose are characteristic of both the material and the container, the quiet contours of the latter repeated and supported by the starkly simple plinth on which the whole rests. As for balance, the three central verticals are in perfect equilibrium around the central axis, while the vigorous lateral thrust of the left-hand leaf is sufficiently compensated by the added weight given to the extreme right-hand line by the doubling of the leaves which form it. And, carrying the theme of balance to its conclusion, it will be found that the voids as well as the solids, and the system of tonal values, offset each other equally well. Even if they did not and there were a disparity in the aggregate of weights on each side of the axis, so light and graceful is the material in this instance that the strong, blocky container would ensure stability.

At this point it might be well to reiterate that, in all my discussions of balance, I refer to visual rather than physical. Any top-heavy, lop-sided arrangement can be made to stand up by filling the receptacle with lead or stones, but the composition, as such, will remain unbalanced. It is only when the visual weights are so grouped around an axis as to offset each other that pictorial balance will be achieved.

Before leaving the design under consideration, please note that the material has been inserted in the container just sufficiently far for good proportions, and not so far as to produce a sunken, engulfed appearance. It would have been easy, too, to cause constriction at the neck of the vase, instead of which the leaves and stems seem to

grow naturally from it and a logical and pleasing transition from one to the other results.

Plate III, page 22, is a perfect exposition of a pyramidal design contained within the boundaries of an isosceles triangle. Rising from the center of a long, low table on which has been placed a narrow runner, the base of the pyramid P P^1P^2 rests upon their tranquil, horizontal lines. This base is established by the bottom of the container in the center, the bowl and grapes to the right, and the stand of the peacock to the left. Note the relation of the major vertical axis X of the pyramid (passing through the middle of the flower arrangement) and the vertical axes x, x, of the accessories. The general silhouette of the compact mass of flower material is indicated in the diagram by the dotted line y. Within this are the strong, horizontal curves KK and LL, carrying the eye from peacock, through flower arrangement, to fruit and back again. These lines in the arrangement are continued by the long axes OO and RR of the accessories, the latter relieved by the short oppositionals s, t, u, v, w. Important vertically curving lines within the boundary y of the flower material are mm and nn, tending to lift the eye up from the horizontal movement created by KK and LL towards the apex of the pyramid and thus supplementing the general form of the latter.

From the dense mass of blossoms and foliage bounded by y spring the lines A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J, with their major subsidiaries c^1, c^2, c^3, f^1, f^2, and their minor ones a, b, d, e, h^1, and j^1. All these come together at a focal point through which pass also KK, LL, mm,

and nn, and to which OO and RR point, and this focus is, as is to be expected, on the main vertical axis X at what may be described as the visual center of gravity of the whole design. It has been duly accented with form and tonal value. Note the pleasing irregularity with which the radiating lines in the flower material approach the uncompromising sides P^1 P^2 of the triangle. Greater coincidence with these definite limits would have resulted in a mechanically regular effect, less would have created a ragged and unbeautiful silhouette. See, also, how the long axis OO of the peacock is carried on through the flower arrangement by the radiating lines to the right of the axis X (thus paralleling, in a general way, the side P^1) and how the same applies to RR, the radiating lines to the left of the axis, and P^2. The accessories, wisely chosen for their form, color, scale, and texture, effectually buttress the flower arrangement on each side, filling the corners of the triangle and serving as the first upward impetus to the eye as it seeks the central and dominant motive in the picture. The blossoms and the container, exclusive of these accessories, constitute a typical fan-shaped design, and it is a pity that the illustration does not give the very beautiful color harmony that was present throughout the composition.

The arrangement reproduced in Plate IV, page 26, is a lovely example of linear pattern, balance, judicious area cutting, and perfection of scale and textural relation. Five lines spring from the animated little fish container, well co-ordinated, graceful in movement, and cleverly repeating the curves of the form from which

they radiate. The drooping motives provide necessary accents along their lengths and, at the junction of material and receptacle, pleasantly unite the two. The long, curving branch that swings off to the right, with its four catkins, would perhaps weigh too much on that side were it not nicely balanced by the flippant tail of the fish and the curved handle below it. The light, striking down from above, casts shadow forms which drag the base out horizontally and ease the transition from container to table. The character of the whole design is vivacious and charming, spontaneous in feeling yet beautifully studied in its every detail.

The lilies and leaves of Plate V, page 32, won for their designer a Fenwick Medal in 1935. They resolve themselves into a pattern of eight dominant lines, A, B, B^1, C (with its prolongation c), D, the short, steep diagonal f, the long, flatter diagonal e, and the graceful reverse curve g which, beginning at the apex of the composition, sweeps down and to the right, starts out of the picture but is caught and turned in by the curving leaf, and ends in the lovely vase. All these lines come together, approximately, at the focal point of chief interest (need I indicate its location on the vertical axis of the composition slightly above the center, measuring from extreme bottom to extreme top?), perfectly spotted by the large blossom facing the observer. Balance of solids, voids, tonal values, and even of shadow forms, has been carefully calculated about the axis x, and the silhouette has been carried to a marked degree of refinement.

The relation between the material and the container in this arrangement is a particularly happy one in proportion, shape, texture, scale, and color harmony. The ample curves of the leaves and of the line g are echoed in the swelling sides of the vase, which has been judiciously raised on two square plinths. Without them the base of the container would have been weak. The textural affinity between the surface of the latter, the lighter leaves, and the pattern of the background, is especially noteworthy. Again the distribution of the shadow forms is very effective, particularly in the filling of the two large voids below the plant material and to the right and left of the vase. This use of shadows has not, I think, been sufficiently considered by many designers of flower arrangements. They are enormously important and, by a proper adjustment of the direction of the light, may and should become an integral part of the composition.

The note of white in this design is carried out in container, leaves, blossoms, and background, and imparts a quality of great purity and restraint. The strong, dark values of the tall and narrow leaves lend still greater brilliance to the white by the force of their contrast and provide a vigorous accent which, taking its proper place in the whole scheme, accentuates the delicacy of the remainder. The bounding form which encloses the design is the vertical rectangle r, whose axis x^1 is slightly to the left of the axis x passing through the container. Dignity and distinction, born of good design, are apparent in every detail of this arrangement.

In Plate VI, page 46, we come to the ever-recurring

PLATE XIII *Photograph by Herbert Studios*

ARRANGEMENT BY MRS. ALFRED B. THACHER

THE GARDEN CLUB OF THE ORANGES

problem of the dinner or luncheon table. The horizontal rectangle R encompasses this very restful scheme, containing within its limits the free-standing arrangement of fruit and leaves which is, in turn, bounded by the right-angle triangle T, as well as numerous patterns afforded by linen, china, and glass. Considering first the arrangement in the center of the table, we see that, in addition to its position within T, its general silhouette S conforms to the direction of the lateral axis S^1, while the rectangular base on which it is placed follows the long axis X of the table and the runner. The diagonals D and D^1 of the latter, prolonged through the glasses towards the four corners of the table, intersect the long and short axes X and X^1 of the table (and also of the bounding rectangle R) at their point of crossing. Though the illustration shows the central arrangement from only one point of view, it was well designed as a free-standing unit and is equally pleasing as seen by any one of the six people for whom places were set. Fruit and leaves are admirably related in form, color harmony, and scale, and the dominant line S^1 is saved from being too uncompromising by the oppositional movement H, which, cutting the arrangement in a diagonal plane, counts from all four sides of the table. Balance is good in this central motive (about both vertical and horizontal axes), as it is in the whole problem, and the silhouette has been cleverly designed from all points of view.

Surrounding the arrangement itself is the oval line O, passing through the centers of the six rectangular doilies, the diagonals of each of which are d, d. These meet, in

each case, in the middle of the plate and one, the major, is strongly emphasized by the line from glass, through plate, to napkin; while the other, the minor, is more lightly indicated by the line from bread and butter plate, through plate, to opposite, empty corner. Each rectangle established by a doily therefore parallels, in its long direction, the edge of the table near which it is placed and contains within its limits four objects, dictated by necessity and custom but thoroughly well related to each other and to the bounding area in size, shape, material, color, and pattern—that is, in design.

We have, then, the problem of a rectangle furnished by the top of a table, within which is another, smaller one, in turn surrounded by six still smaller ones, so grouped as to fulfil certain conventional functions. The central rectangle contains the arrangement of fruit and leaves, the smaller ones contain glass, china, and linen. Silver was not called for in this problem, but could properly have been introduced without in any way altering the compositional scheme. It may seem a simple thing to set a table (and I realize that, as a mere male, my convictions on the subject may well be received with distrust and incredulity), yet experience would tend to prove the contrary. It is discouraging to see how often materials, beautiful in themselves, are ill assembled, and how frequently one guest who feasts his eyes upon a well designed arrangement in the center faces another who sees only a tangled, meaningless mass of blossoms, leaves, and stems. In the case just cited not only have the limitations and the requirements of the problem been recognized and

complied with by the designers, but the objects involved have been so assembled that the result is aesthetically satisfying from every side. In this, as in so many of our daily activities, it is once again a question of design.

Plate VII, page 50, is a good solution of the problem presented by the library table and its harmonious decoration. It shows a spot familiar to the author of this chapter, so familiar, in fact, that he approaches an analysis of it with considerable hesitation and a mind divided between proprietary prejudice in its favor and admiration of the way in which well-known difficulties have been overcome. Here our flower arrangement is but one element in a scheme embracing the entire end of a room. The long, massive table, with its heavy cover, establishes a vigorous horizontal base from which spring the pilasters forming the window niches with their repeating, vertical draperies, connected in turn by the transverse shelves that support rows of tiny verticals furnished by the book backs. (The arrangement of the books was, of course, carefully considered and the one false note among them—sixth from the right on the second shelf from the bottom—was no fault of the designers. In actuality its color was harmonious. but it "took" too light and so breaks the tonal continuity in the reproduction.) As I have described the setting for the composition one senses a feeling of "building up", and this is exactly what the designers have stressed in their treatment of the decoration of the table. The general form is that of a truncated pyramid, with its base on the table, sides P^1 and P^2, and top P. Actually the silhouette droops through the line C, but the top of the line

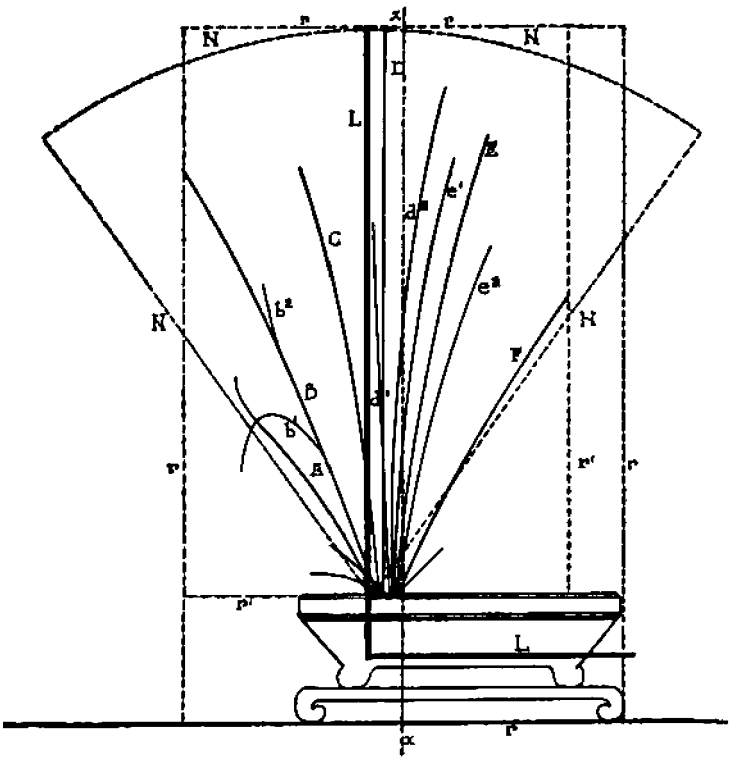


PLATE XIV

of books, P, really carries the eye across. Five objects make up the pyramid; the bowl of flowers in the center, the two flanking candlesticks, and the accessories of books and plant material at the ends. The spacing of the vertical axes of these five was all-important, determining as they do the general shape. The arrow through the books and book-ends shows how these point to the apex of x^1 in a direction paralleling p^2, while the line Z (so long and emphatic as to require the minor oppositionals a, b, c, d, and e, to soften it) performs a similar service on the other side with reference to x and P^1. Still further to tie together the objects on the table, the designers have stressed the lines D and D^1 which join the top of each candlestick to the base of the other and help knit the composition firmly together. Nothing could be simpler or more effective, yet the simplicity and effectiveness were achieved by long and careful study and by a reasoning relation of a group of objects to each other.

The flower arrangement itself possesses the necessary elements of structure, balance, and good silhouette, with due consideration to such attendant factors as scale, texture, color, and relation of material to container. Its motive is an uncomplicated one, depending on the lines A, B, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, and L, radiating from a common center on the axis X. It is of exactly the right size and shape and takes its proper place in the whole composition, saying neither too much nor too little.

The mullions and muntins of the windows introduce a restless note in the photograph, though in execution they were far less conspicuous because of the dark foliage out-

side. Forms might have been introduced on the window-sills to kill the harshness of the plain strips of woodwork directly in front of the draperies, but this was not done because of the difficulty of relating them to the objects on the table and the fear of creating a confused effect.

The treatment of an embrasured window shown in Plate VIII, page 54, is a carefully considered design, well adapted to its architectural entourage. The tall, narrow space, the lines of the curtains, and the vertical accents supplied by the books, have been echoed in stand and container, while the structural lines of the material selected are strong enough to hold their own with the leading of the glass. A, B, and C, with their subsidiaries a, a^1, a^2, a^3, a^4, b^1, b^2, c^1, c^2, and c^3, are obvious and are beautifully patterned in relation to each other, to the interstices between them, and to all the other elements of the composition. The diagonal D is strongly felt and is repeated by the prolongation of C into E, the main axis of the plate of fruit that fills a corner which would otherwise be weak. Observe that D divides a vertical rectangle having the curtain-rod as its top side, rather than the rectangle of the entire embrasure. This was wise on the part of the designers for, pictorially, the area to be filled by the arrangement ends at the top of the sash. On page 19 I refer to the halving of a rectangular space by a diagonal which establishes the arrangement in one right triangle (in this case formed by D, the line of the bookshelf's edge, and the sill of the embrasure), and this is a perfect example of such a problem. The main vertical axis X of the actual arrangement, about which all its ele-

ments must balance, will, therefore, move to the left.

The leaves, branches, porous surface of the graceful pottery container, and rough skins of the fruit, display a distinct textural affinity to each other and to the metal sash. The color scheme was subdued and harmonious throughout and the illustration shows how well balanced are the tonal values. An interesting feature of this design appears in the influence exerted upon it by the lines and masses seen through the window. These had to receive the same consideration as was accorded the actual materials used. The lines p of the clump of foliage immediately beyond the glass, q and r of the stone parapet, and f, g, h, i, j, k, m, n, and o, of the branches, all have to be reconciled to those within the embrasure, and the designers have succeeded in doing so with a minimum of linear confusion. The line m was hard to handle by virtue of its uncompromising opposition to the movement of the arrangement, but satisfactorily divides the void between B and C and cuts the container above its exact vertical center; p, by its opposition, tends to retard CE near its termination; q and r do the same and repeat the horizontality of the base; o prolongs E and ties it up with m, which, in turn, is pleasantly broken by n; k is an offshoot of C and makes one line with b^1 which reverses and moves diagonally upward through i, catching and extending the movement of C; f, g, and h, join the cluster of a^2, a^3, and a^4, as radiants from A; and j retards D at its upper end. And just as all these lines work together, and as the weight of the arrangement diminishes from base to apex, so the density of the foliage background

grows less as the eye travels up from the thick mass seen over the top of the parapet wall to the light interstices beyond the topmost panes of glass.

Two pyramidal forms, a square, and a semicircle, tell the story of the mantel decoration illustrated by Plate IX, page 56. I regret the strictly utilitarian shelf provided for the exhibitors in this competition, the high quality of the arrangement deserving an architectural setting more in keeping with it. Here we have the single central motive flanked by two symmetrical accessories, referred to on page 55. The spacing of the three objects, as determined by the axes X, x, x, has been well considered with reference to the bounding lines of the composition, and the objects themselves are of the greatest beauty. The lines A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, and L, grow naturally and gracefully from the shallow bowl. Through the square which touches their extremities run two major lines, m, a long, curving diagonal and n, a segment of the semicircle connecting the tips of the candles. Their approximate crossing coincides with the visual junction of the flower sprays, the focal point of greatest interest in the arrangement. Balance and silhouette leave nothing to be desired.

Granted the presence of good design, the outstanding characteristic of this composition is the extraordinary perfection of delicate scale and texture in candlesticks and flower arrangement. The intrinsic beauty of the material, combined with the simplicity yet subtlety of its assembling, make of this group something very much to be remembered. One false note in size or tonal value

would have upset the sensitive adjustment: as it is, there is a grace, distinction, and restraint, to the whole design which raise it to a plane of very real art.

The arrangement shown in Plate X, page 58, demonstrates the difficulties inherent in any free-standing flower design, as well as their successful solution. Although this one is set close to a wall, the mirror behind it reveals the distribution of flowers and foliage at the back, so that these had to be as carefully considered as those in front, which are the first things we see. Endless time was spent in carrying this design quality around, through the sides to the back, and back to the front again. When one side "arrived", another was disturbed and the rectifying of errors in the latter would cause others in the former. But time counts for nothing where the creation of beauty is concerned, and ultimately all the elements in the arrangement were so distributed as to exhibit a well constructed pattern from whatever side observed. Unfortunately it was impossible so to photograph it that the reflection in the mirror might show in its entirety.

Analyzing the composition as seen in the reproduction, the various linear forms that constitute it are readily detected. They come together on a vertical axis through the container, at a point slightly above the lip of the latter, the point accented by closely grouped blossoms. The dominant line is an S curve, starting at the end of the drooping spray low and to the left, sweeping up through the large rose near the center of the flower mass, and swinging up and to the left. An offshoot of it

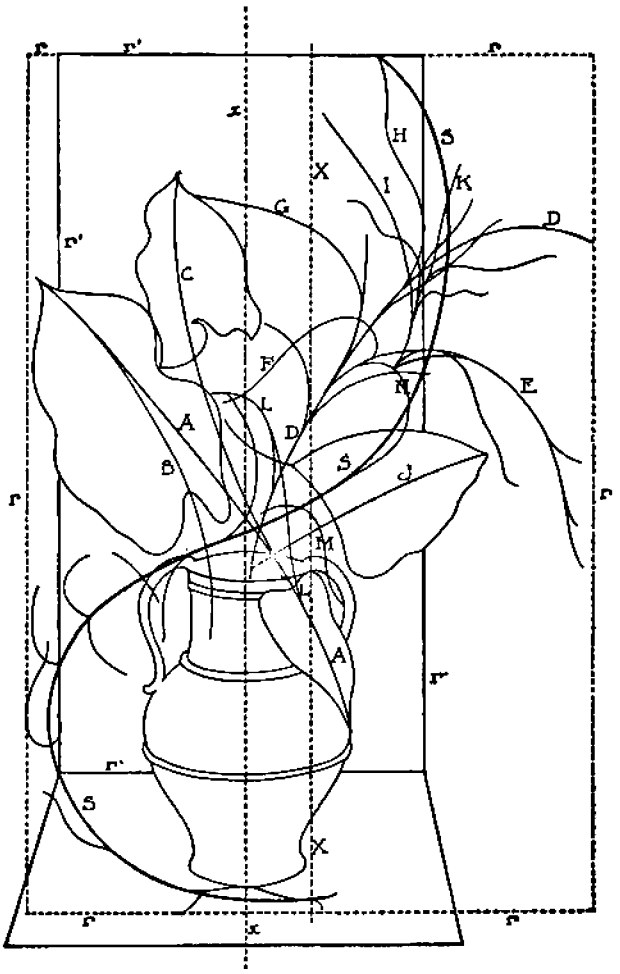


PLATE XV

PLATE XV *Photograph by Herbert Studios*

ARRANGEMENT BY MRS. CAMERON CLARK

THE FAIRFIELD GARDEN CLUB

points up and to the right, and both carry the eye towards the top of the mirror. Balance about the vertical axis is maintained in front, at the sides, and in the reflection. Note how, as seen from the front, the two sprays of coxcomb on the left and the curving tendril of silver lace vine that terminates the S, pull down hard on that side to offset the weights exerted to the right by the large rose and the upward, lateral swing of the material along the line of the S. Any tendency to weakness in the base of the vase is more than overcome by the stand which supports it and carries its contours out into the table. Obviously, too, the relative proportions of the flower arrangement and the mirror are an important consideration and, as obviously, in studying these proportions by relating them to a common vertical axis, the design should be seen from directly in front rather than from the angle from which the photograph had to be taken. The silhouette is complicated by the reflection, but the principle of gradual diminution and increase in both solids and voids has been adhered to. Scale and texture are good, and the color was exquisite.

The L shape, obtained by the intelligent use of accessories, is apparent in Plate XI, page 68. The vertical axis through the vase and flower material provides the upright, the bowl of fruit takes the eye across the base, and the axis through the jar gives the final "kick-up" at the end. The shape of the L, and presence of the accessories that determine it, automatically move to the left the main vertical axis X of the whole composition, and about it all the forms are in equilibrium. Through the

design swings the dominating, graceful line S, with its offshoot S^1. E checks it at the top, F (the chief axis of bowl and fruit) at the bottom. BB, BC, A, and D, are all supplementary lines, reinforcing S, knitting the flower material together, and drawing it into the rest of the picture. Please observe the importance of the shadow forms outlined by a, b, c, and d. They are as much a part of the design as anything else in it, repeating as they do the shapes that cast them and adding emphasis and interest to the silhouette and "body" to the entire group.

It is perhaps no violation of confidence to say that the author of this very lovely composition expressed surprise when I, whose obsession with line is well known, selected it for illustration, claiming that she was interested primarily in color and gave first thought to this in making the arrangement. May I suggest that, because color notes are welded into a design according to exactly the same principles that govern the assembling of lines and masses, she achieved the same success with the latter as with the former which, by the way, were most beautifully and sensitively handled. Textural relations, too, have been managed with great skill, the delicate quality of the mimosa being picked up and carried on in rhythmic sequence by the grapes, the pattern of the fabric, and the small scale detail on bowl and jar. Further attention should be called to the relation of the objects used in the composition to the back and sides of the recess within which they are placed.

Flower arrangements might be divided into two general groups, naturalistic and abstract. The one illustrated

by Plate XII, page 70, is a very interesting exposition of the latter or formalized type. The horticultural aspect has largely disappeared, and the flowers and leaves become merely mass and line and color in a scheme which might with equal facility have been worked out in some other medium. Its beauty is a question of pure design, and the present example proves conclusively the dependence of the former upon the latter. Beginning with the base, we have an unusual and exotic shape. The container it supports is in perfect character with it and strikes the key for the rather bizarre but wholly congruous form which rises from it. N is the long axis of the base, L of the receptacle, and the two together dictate what we may designate as the tertiary, or third most important movement in the design. X is the principal vertical axis. There are three important elements in the floral material—the massed foliage at the base, the closely packed blossoms, and the long, curving, featherlike leaves above. The low leaves fall into two groups with C and B as their main axes, paralleling the line X^1B which indicates the secondary movement of the scheme. The dotted line S is the silhouette of the material growing out of the receptacle, with X^1, its principal axis, registering the primary movement of all. Were the mass bounded by the line S to seem to touch the lip of the container at the single tangential point R, there would be an appearance of lack of stability and support. The axes Y and Z of the two minor shapes inserted at the base, as also C and B already referred to, ease this form into the vase and hold it securely in place. Within S we see the dotted

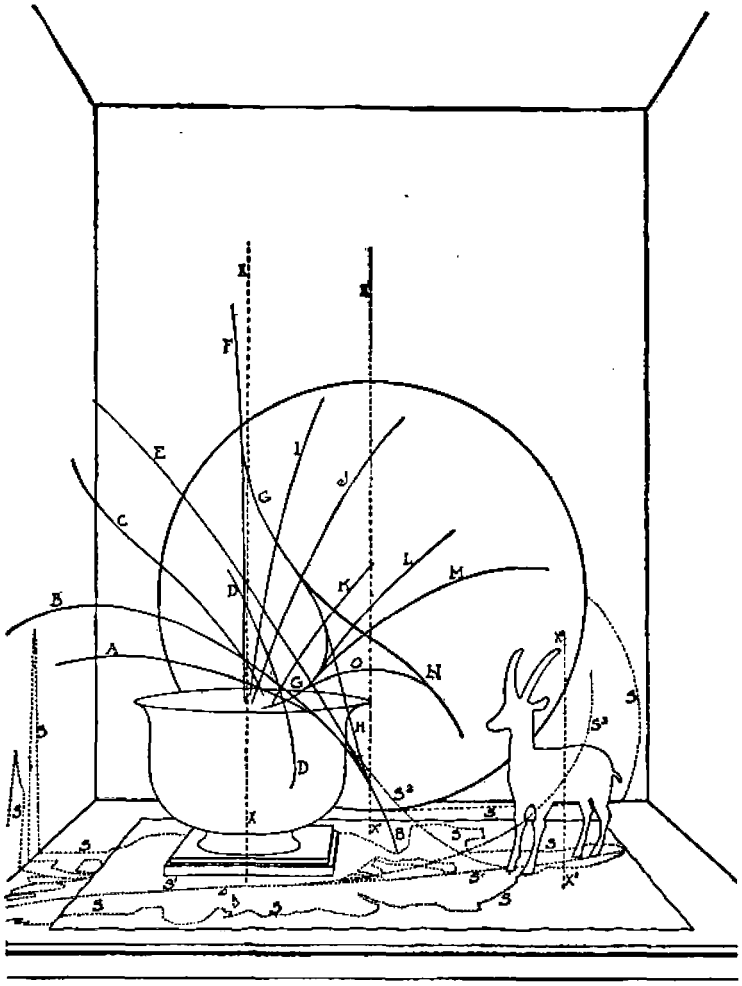


PLATE XVI

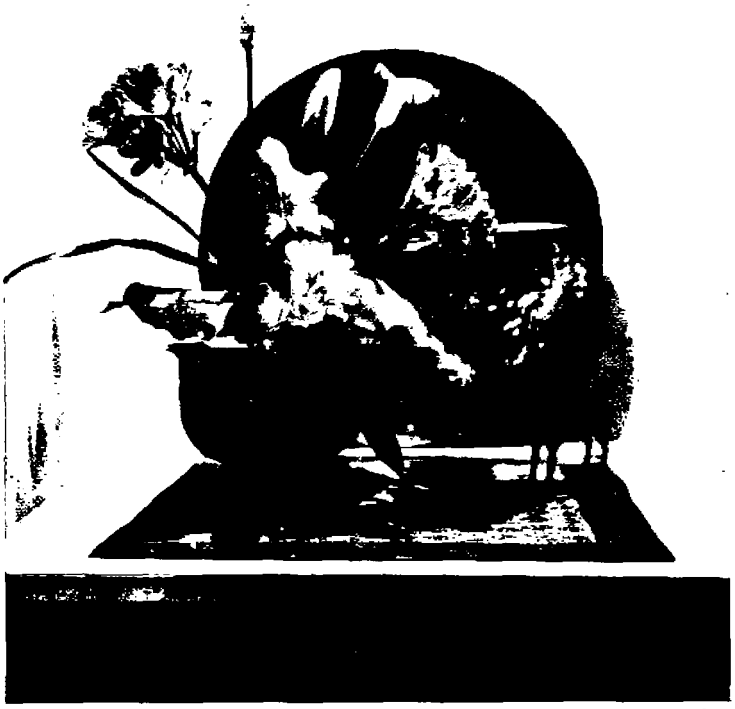


PLATE XVI *Photograph by Herbert Studios*

ARRANGEMENT BY MRS. GILBERT KINNEY

THE GREENWICH GARDEN CLUB

line M as the silhouette of the concentrated blossoms, and as M follows S, so M^1, axis of the former, follows and repeats X^1, axis of the latter. Developing the plan of the design still further, it is apparent that X^1B carries the eye down from the extreme upper left-hand tip of the arrangement to the interesting curved feet of the container at the lower right, and that X^1A does the same from the upper right to the lower left. Of the two movements we have seen that X^1B is the more important. Note the junction of the two at a point on X, and note further how the curves of the four feet pick up those of X^1 and M^1 above. It is just such refinements as these which add significance and interest to any design. Lastly, the vigorous lines D, E, F, and G, augment the movement of X^1 on one side of the axis X, and H, I, J, and K, that of the same line on the other.

So much for linear pattern. Scale, texture, and tonal harmony, are entirely right and the unusual character of the whole is homogeneously preserved throughout. Particularly effective is the central light-toned mass encompassed by the darks of leaves above and of foliage and receptacle below. It is never wise to carry symmetry too far, even in a formalized floral design, and the one under consideration is a striking example of explicitness yet restraint in this connection.

The pure linear pattern of Plate XIII, page 84, is so immediately recognizable that a diagram seemed superfluous. It is a lovely illustration of the so-called "silhouette" problem, in which a strong light behind the exhibit casts its shadow upon a paper screen in front. The reduc-

tion of the whole design to terms of black and white is an excellent test of the author's ability to put forms together in relation to each other within a clearly established frame, without reference to the distracting requirements of color harmony. In the present case the six main lines, with their supplementary offshoots, grow logically and easily from the firm, quiet foundation furnished by the horizontal container. The vertical axis of the arrangement is somewhat to the left of the base of the clustered sprays, and lines, masses, and voids, are in equilibrium about it. The indentations of the silhouette have been well considered and the placing of the whole within the frame is admirable. Without the designer's knowledge there took place in the arrangement, between the completion of it and the time the photograph was taken, two changes to which attention should be directed since they detract somewhat from the original perfection. The tallest spray of pussywillow touches the top of the frame with a resulting appearance of crowding, and the farthest line to the left has drooped until its tip is at the same height as that of the third from the right. Such changes occur all too often in any flower design, to the despair of those who work in this fascinating but tantalizing medium.

The charming design of Plate XIV, page 88, resolves itself into a fan-shaped mass of flower material whose vertical axis combines with the horizontal one of the container to form a well defined L. The whole is bounded by the upright rectangle r whose long axis is x. The arrangement falls within the rectangle rr^1 and the

fan form N and may be divided into the six lines A, B, C, D, E, and F, with their subsidiaries d^1, d^2, e^1, e^2, and their minor offshoots b^1 and b^2. They radiate gracefully from a common point, balance well around the axis x, and cut a varied and interesting pattern of voids. Again we see an illustration of the intelligent use of small units to produce larger, simple, well related forms.

The reverse curve S of Plate XV, page 94, is the dominant motive around which the whole arrangement is built, and it has been cleverly emphasized by the distribution of the material. X is the main axis of the rectangle within which the design is placed, but x is the axis around which the latter balances. The leaves extending far out to the right exert a strong pull downwards on that side, but this is offset by the greater weight, nearer the axis, of the two large leaves on the left and by the vigorous curve of the bent spray that forms the lower part of the S. A, B, and C, create a forceful movement second only to S in importance. D supplements the feeling of S and is really a part of it except in its upper prolongation. E is an offshoot of it, whereas J is an independent line strengthening S and weakening the combined movement of A, B, and C. All these essential linear forms have their approximate intersection on x at a point of focal interest. F, G, H, I, K, L, M, and N, are all lines of less individual consequence, yet each performs its appointed task in the work of the whole. Note how L and M supplement the movement A and help tie together isolated forms, and how M in particular repeats the curve of the handle of the container; how H and I constitute

the termination of S; how K and G split what would otherwise have been awkward voids; how N is part of S; and how F carries E over into A, B, and C. The smaller leaf of which A is the long axis, and the little vertical leaf at the left-hand end of the receptacle's oval rim, break the hard line of the latter and aid in blending the material into that which holds it, making the two things one. Observe, too, the harmony between the textural quality and scale of all the leaves and those of the jar, and how well the shadow pattern on the supporting surface helps to give stability and solidity to the entire composition.

I have spoken elsewhere of the circle as a rhythmic and restful shape to be used as the motive for a flower arrangement, and Plate XVI, page 98, demonstrates this very aptly. The tray determines it and the lines inherent in bowl, flowers, accessory, and shadows, conform to its dictates. X, X^1, and X^2, are the vertical axes of bowl, tray, and statuette, the corresponding axis of the whole design being slightly to the left of X^1. Beneath the circle of the tray is the horizontal rectangular form of the textile, the perspective lines of whose sides lead up through bowl and stag into the tray and suggest the general form of a pyramid as secondary to the primary circular motive. The dotted lines S outline the shadows, S^1 being the main axis of that part which falls upon the textile. S^2 carries the movement engendered by the lines A, B, C, and E, in a sweeping curve down into S^1. It is opposed and balanced by the curve S of the shadow cast by the tray upon the wall behind it. S^3 continues the movement of S^1

up through the statuette and into the tray, and S^2, S^3, and the edge S of the tray's shadow, all suggest a repeating circular form. D furnishes a mild opposition to the general motion of the combined forces of A, B, C, and E, extended into S^2. F exerts no pull one way or the other but coincides with the axis X through the container and helps build up the silhouette. G is an important reverse curve line. With its offshoot N it points to the stag, suggests a diagonal diameter of the circle of the tray, softens the vigorous action of I, J, K, L, and M, and is joined up to E S^2 by H and O. The vertical shadow forms outlined by S on the wall at the left of the arrangement balance the axis X^2 of the statuette and complete the rhythmic repetition of verticals through the design. It all sounds rather intricate, but reference to the diagram will, I think, explain the scheme, and reveal how logically, directly, and clearly, it has been worked out.

The very beautiful arrangement reproduced in Plate XVII, page 104, is a perfect example of the success inevitably attendant upon a strict adherence to the fundamental principles of good design. It is securely placed within a clearly established shape whose main axis coincides with its own and about which the elements that go to make it up are in equilibrium. It has a well defined linear pattern, a carefully considered silhouette, admirable scale and textural relations, lovely color, finely balanced tonal values, homogeneity, rhythm, and simplicity. It is, in short, a thoroughly distinguished piece of design.

The interesting container, which so repeats the char-

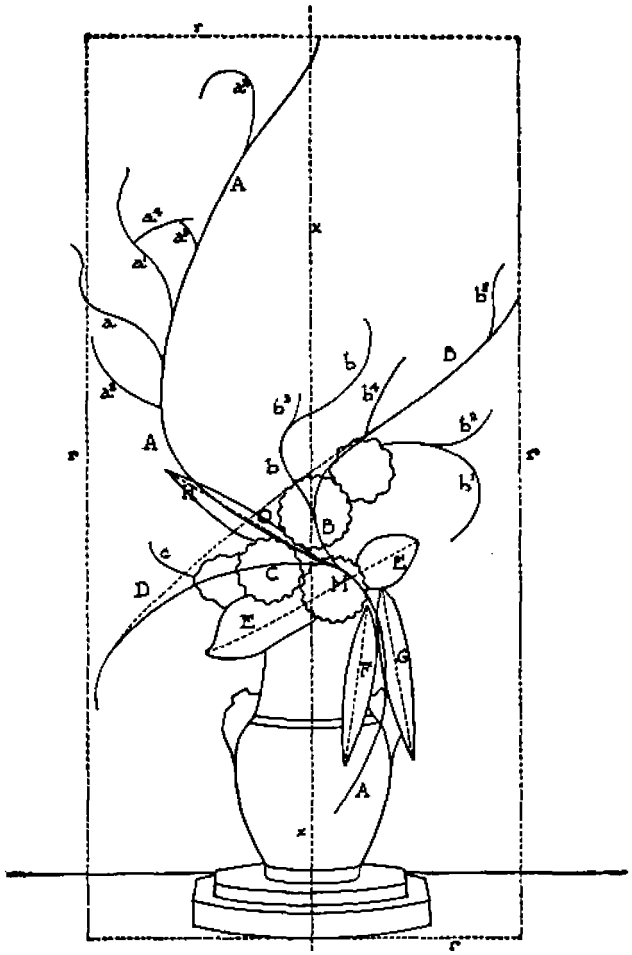
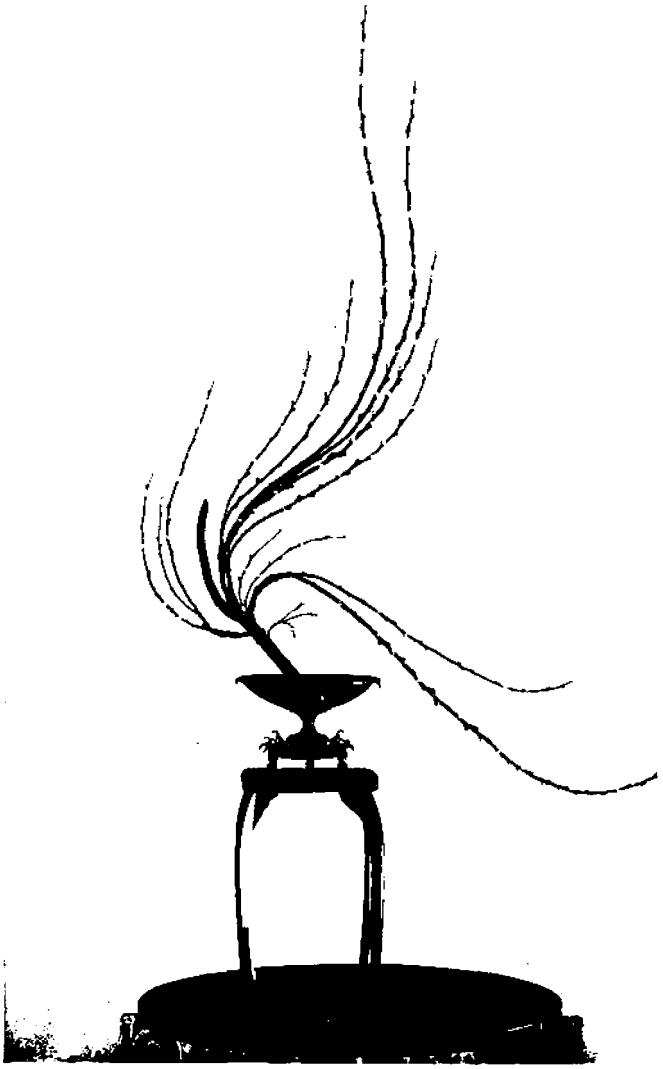


PLATE XVII



Photograph by Mattie Edwards Hewitt

ARRANGEMENT BY MRS. YONEO ARAI
THE GREENWICH GARDEN CLUB

PLATE XVII *Photograph by Seaf Camera News*

ARRANGEMENT BY MISS ALICE M. CARSON
THE HORTULUS CLUB

acter of the material it holds, is raised just high enough above the supporting surface by the well proportioned plinths. From the curve of its contour springs the long, graceful "line of beauty" A. See how the axes H, F, and G, of the three long leaves coincide with A and how the two latter serve to bring the material into the receptacle. A swings off strongly to the left, then curves back and terminates where the axis x meets the top of the limiting rectangle r. It is amplified along its upper length by the offshoots a^3, a, a^1, a^4, a^5, and a^2, the last-named turning it back and down with an arresting movement. From M, the intersection of A with the edge of the container, the secondary line B curves gracefully up and to the right, opposing its weight to A but supplementing the latter's direction and terminating against the right-hand edge of the rectangle. The tertiary line C leads down and to the left, ending against the left-hand side. B and C immediately form the strong diagonal, oppositional line DB which balances A. Their approximate intersection is the focal point of interest of the whole design and is accented by closely grouped forms. The lines b, b^1, b^2, b^3, b^4, and b^5, grow logically out of B, emphasizing without contradicting it, as does c from C. E is a short, relieving line which not only arrests the movement of A where it joins the container, but serves to break and soften the hard edge of the latter and completes the transition from the material above to that below. Note the strong, supporting curve of CA, which pushes up and against the weight of A and of the opposing curve Bb^1, and how the triangle BCD, at the focal point where all these lines come to-

gether, is packed with interesting forms. Nothing has been omitted which could contribute to the expression of a clearly conceived design, nor has one single extraneous and unnecessary form been introduced.

Plate XVIII, page 108, shows a charming arrangement, rather French in character, placed on a table against a background of panelled wall. Table, arrangement, and panelling, are all well related to each other, with X as their common axis. The reverse curve S is, of course, the dominant line of the composition. From it S^1 curves up and to the left, and S^2 down and to the right, and S^1 and S^2 together form a line repeating S and only slightly less important than it. From the contour c^1 of the mass of flower material radiate the lines A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, and K, their point of general intersection strongly accented. The movement of S^1 has been cleverly joined to that of K by the line P, which serves to bound the arrangement on the right. An interesting development of the design is the line O entirely contained within the flower material, its oval form supplementing the upper half of the dominant S. Diagonally across it, and furnishing a necessary opposition, runs the line ARH. The elements of the composition balance nicely about X (note the important function of K in this connection and the way in which S and S^2 support the arrangement on the left and fill what would otherwise be a disturbing void), the silhouette has been carefully worked out, and the lines of the arrangement are in harmony with those of the panel behind it. The scale is good, tonal values are well distributed, and the color was beautiful. Of great

importance is the way in which the light has been thrown upon the left, or stronger side of the design, in order that the mass of shadow may fall upon the right, or weaker side and serve as a support to it.

In Plate XIX, page 110, we see an excellent example of a mantel design consisting of two arrangements, similar in character and almost symmetrical in form, which, together with a taller central unit, form a definite pyramidal shape beautifully related to its architectural setting. The designers of the flower units had first of all to take into consideration the size, shape, and scale of the mantel; the height, design, and color scheme of the room; and the placing of various objects in the immediate neighborhood. Having done this, they devoted themselves to creating two forms which would be in every way harmonious. They used beautiful materials and welded the various elements of the design into a well considered and very effective pattern. There are seven vertical axes with which we are concerned—X, the main axis of the composition and, therefore, of the central unit, the candelabrum; X^1 and X^2, the axes of the arrangements at each end, repeated by the long vertical lines of the shovel and warming-pan; X^3 and X^4, axes of the two silhouettes which nicely fill the spaces between the three principal elements; and x^1 and x^2, axes of the two side candles of the candelabrum. The upright lines of the andirons and the fire-screen add their emphasis to all these verticals. PPP represents the bounding pyramid, its sides starting in the arrangements, its apex at the tip of the tallest candle, its base coinciding with the mantel-

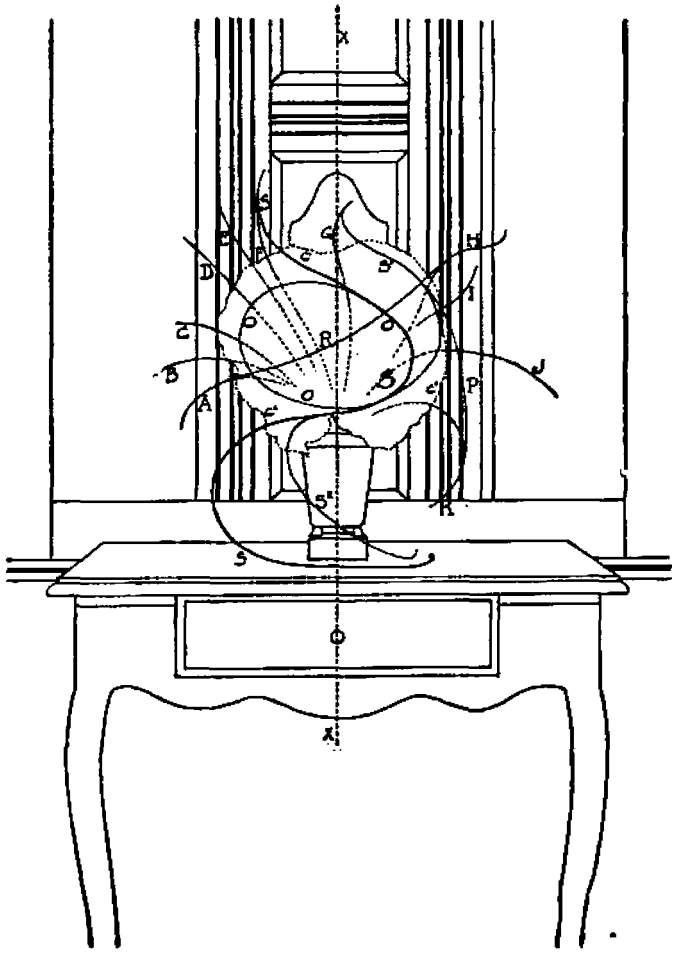


PLATE XVIII

PLATE XVIII *Photograph by Rockwell D. Talmage*

ARRANGEMENT BY MRS. WILLIAM WATSON

THE FAIRFIELD GARDEN CLUB

shelf. S is the approximate silhouette of the left-hand arrangement, S^1 of the right-hand one, S^2 of the central unit. Upon the happy relation of these three to each other and to the two silhouette portraits, as well as to the mantel and the panelled wall, depends the success of the design as a whole. Observe how the triangle P^1PP^1 falls within the larger triangle PPP and repeats it in feeling. The dominant lines of the two flower arrangements are AG and WW, each echoing, in movement and slant, a side P of the pyramid. B, C, D, E, F, H, I, J, K, and L, are attributive lines of one arrangement; M, N, O, Q, R, T, U, V, and Y, of the other. AI supplements AG, and BJ, BKL, and CA, furnish necessary opposition and contrast to both. Note how A and J point downward to the mantel, how B, C, and F, lead the eye upward to the panelling, and how G points to the candelabrum and H and I to the nearer silhouette. All these lines not only perform very definite functions within the flower arrangement of whose structure they form integral parts but, like signposts, point to and connect with other elements of the whole design. Note, too, the interesting form ALA, paralleling P and P^1 and corresponding to the oval MM of the other arrangement. Q repeats the emphasis of W in the last-named; R, O, and N, point to the adjoining silhouette; T, U, and V, lead the eye out into the panelled wall and modify, with their oppositional movements, the sweep of W; and Y unites the arrangement with the supporting mantelshelf. The oval MM, with its long axis parallel to the sides of the two triangles, has already been referred to. The two flower arrangements

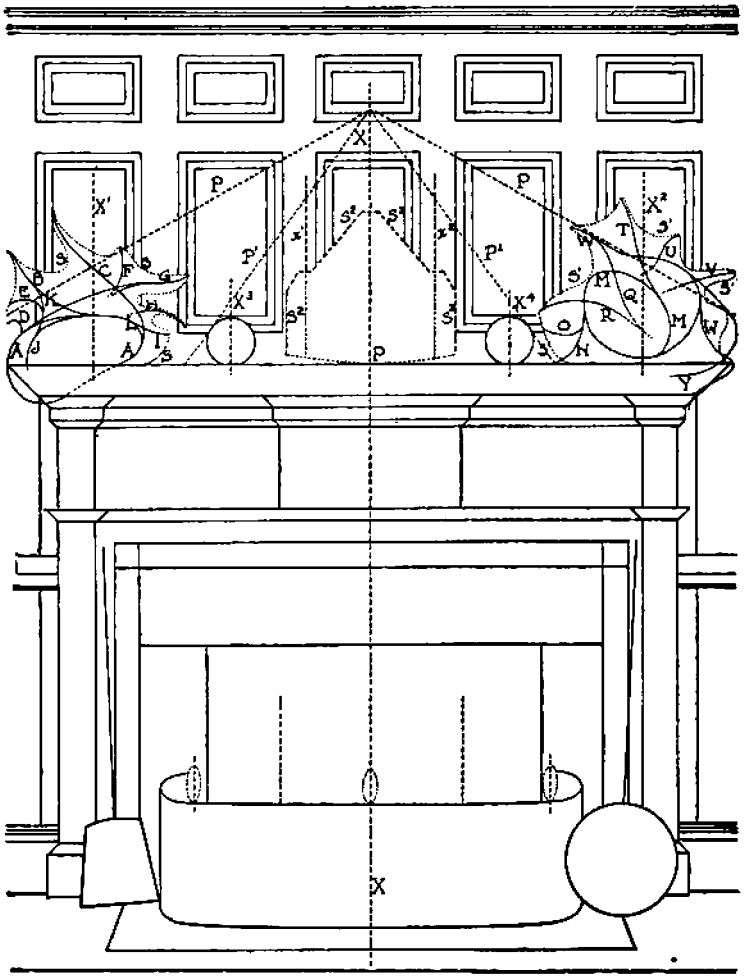


PLATE XIX

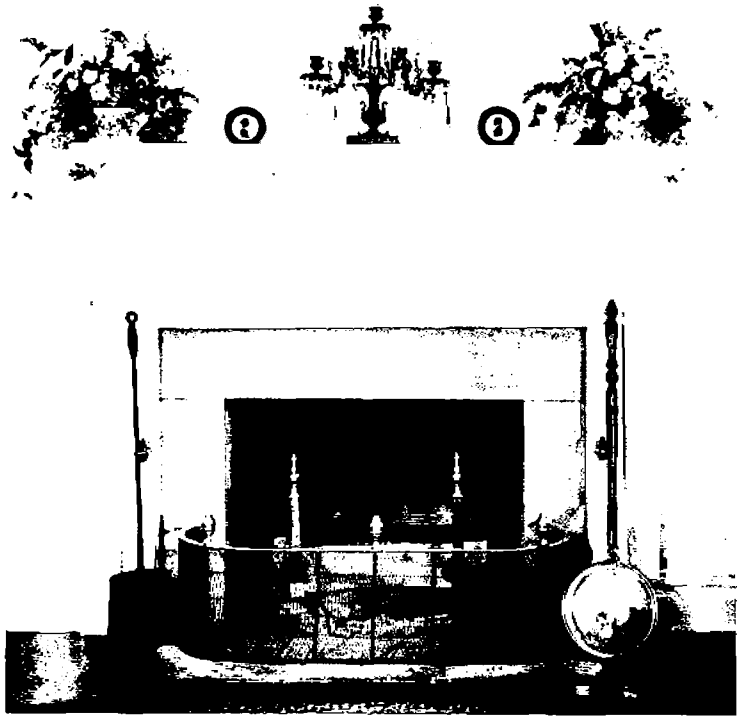


PLATE XIX *Photograph by Rockwell D. Talmage*

ARRANGEMENT BY MRS. MAYNARD BIRD AND MRS. EDWARD H. KLOTZ

THE FAIRFIELD GARDEN CLUB

well about their axes X^1 and X^2, are carefully
d for area cutting, and are flawless in scale, texture,
tion of material to container, and color scheme. Each
ceives exactly the proper amount of emphasis as an ele-
ment of the entire design, not only beautiful in itself but
successfully discharging its functions as a unit in a co-
ordinated group of objects. A subtle note is provided by
the use of two sources of light of equal strength, with re-
sulting double shadows which preserve the formality and
symmetry of the whole.

Lastly, Plate XX, page 112, is a conspicuous example
of a vigorous diagonal composition within the bounding
lines of a vertical rectangle. Had an accessory been used
on the other side, to balance the flat bowl at the right,
this feeling would have been lessened and the desi
would have become a right triangle. As it is, the str
diagonal movement from upper left to lower right,
nating in the bowl, is so obvious as to need no
tion. The vertical axis through the container
well accented by the tall central spray; lines
tion necessary to offer contrast to the diag
the design have been introduced in the r
the focal point of intersection of all
main vertical axis, has been "spotted"
about this axis as well as the solids
plays its part in the transverse mo
weight of flower material up and
scale, and tonal values, are h
nance of flower material is
container, its sturdy base,

which carries the main diagonal up and to the left has been wisely emphasized by separating it, just enough, from the material on each side, the voids thus created serving to break the monotony of the contour. Here is an excellent example of an idea simply and forcibly expressed in terms of the chosen medium.

This terminates my discussion of the arrangements illustrated in this book. They demonstrate some of the unlimited possibilities of beauty latent in flower arrangement and clearly show how, by adhering to principles which for centuries have been known to govern good design, such beauty may be achieved. It is my earnest hope that they may prove useful to those who wish to explore this fascinating field, and my sincerest thanks go to those designers who, with knowledge and patience, have created them.

PLATE XX *Photograph by Herbert Studios*

ARRANGEMENT BY MRS. PAUL KING

THE NORTH SUFFOLK GARDEN CLUB

CHAPTER VI

THE SPIRITUAL ELEMENT

IN A summary way—for, within the confines of one small book, it has not been possible to do more than touch upon the salient features of so vast a subject—I have stressed the importance of design and of its practical application to flower arrangement; I have considered the starting points from which an arrangement may be made; and I have analyzed reproductions of actual arrangements and seen wherein they conformed to the principles of good design. Perhaps you think that there is nothing more to add, that the field has been covered, briefly but completely. Yet there is one more and very vital aspect which I feel must be included before I bring this to a close, and that is the spiritual element in all forms of creative expression. I use the word "spiritual" not in its generally accepted and more circumscribed religious interpretation, but in its broader sense as indicating that which springs from the spirit, or soul, or mind, call it what you will. The creation of beauty is art, whether carried out in color, clay, lines, music, literature, drama, or in flowers. And art must have more

than technical skill, more than rules of composition and adequate interpretation; it must have this subtle, indefinable something which, in default of a better word, we call the spiritual element. With it a craftsman becomes an artist, without it he remains a craftsman—of greater or less dexterity, as the case may be—but nothing more.

We of the Occident are not yet accustomed to consider flower arrangement as a form of art. I do not know why this should be, unless it is because the very abundance of our gardens has made us prize too little the beauty they offer: it cannot be due to the evanescent quality of the material, for this is of longer duration than the exquisite notes of a glorious voice which we remember with such lasting pleasure. Yet the fact remains and, if we would find this medium of expression carried to its ultimate possibilities, treated as a very great art, and replete with this spiritual quality, then we must turn to the Orient where, in a civilization so old that ours of the West seems in its first crude stages, the use of flowers for the creation of beauty has reached a point of incredible perfection. To achieve this means, as you know, enthusiasm coupled with years of study and long hours of meditation. The tempo of our lives is too swift, the make-up of our minds too impatient, for any slavish attempt at imitation of the Japanese or of their methods, but from them we can learn many things of great value. One is the rightful place in art which flowers should take, and another is the mental attitude with which they may be approached.

Many of you, perhaps most of you, are content to

strive merely for the visual potentialities which this absorbing subject offers; while some of you are among those who have within them a vital instinct for creation but who, because of a lack of training or of facility in the usual forms through which this instinct generally finds release, experience a sense of frustration. To you this chapter is especially dedicated. In flowers you have always at hand the means of satisfying in terms of beauty that suppressed longing, as well as of fulfilling your inmost selves. For this I recommend, in particular, some study of the Japanese, with stress laid upon the teachings of the older schools. For, as I believe and as all history proves, that civilization and beauty consciousness go hand in hand and that art is not a luxury but a necessity, it must be obvious that that country, like many others, has lost much of its awareness of inner values in its present preoccupation with things material, and in its current conception of so-called progress. In the books on the older schools, however; in the rules, the symbolism, the attention to every significant detail; and in the illustrations contained in them; you will find unlimited and fruitful food for thought. It is neither possible nor wise for us, with a heritage and a tradition so at variance, to attempt literal imitation. The Oriental and the Occidental races are too far apart in their concepts of beauty, in their thought processes, and even in the actual construction and decorative requirements of their houses, for such an attempt to be feasible. Instead, it would be the unsuccessful grafting of one alien strain upon another. But many of the principles the former use may

be employed by us to our pleasure and profit, especially as regards this matter of the mental or spiritual attitude. Every true Japanese arrangement embodies in itself thought, mood, symbolism, specific meanings. The placing of each stalk and its relation to every other stalk, the height of the water in the container, the angle and direction of each smallest twig, every one of these conforms to a definite and explicit purpose. They are the words and phrases of an open book, which he who has mastered the language may read at will. From the Japanese, then, we can learn, as from no one else, that flowers can express infinitely more than visual loveliness; they can also express ourselves.

As a whole, we Anglo-Saxons are afraid of our emotions. Some instinct inherent in us, or long racial training, makes us fear to show them, and often even to deny their very existence. The self-control evinced by such an attitude is highly to be commended, as the hysterical lack of it is equally to be condemned; yet it is a pity that we have not learned to discriminate among these natural feelings, so that we may dam up the ugly, hurtful ones, and dig wide, deep channels through which the lovely, helpful ones may flow. However, we can learn if we will, little by little, with patience and effort, and I know no better way than through the study of this thing called beauty. We cannot all be Shakespeares, or Rembrandts, or Beethovens, but we can be truly and fully ourselves, expressing our emotions, as they expressed theirs, through a chosen medium. Nor can we all possess such a well-defined talent, nor so arrange our lives, that the

medium be engraving, or painting, or music, or sculpture. But all of us have access to flowers—fragile, changing, pliable, provoking, colorful, exquisite. Through them we can release these pent-up emotions of ours, satisfy the need for self-expression, and sublimate the creative longing inherent in us. If we do, the result will have in it more of intrinsic beauty than could possibly have been there without this mental, this personal, this spiritual element; while within us will be a deepened sense of fulfilment and of peace.

My creed is beauty: beauty as I see it, and hear it, and feel it about me. My waking hours are given to the effort to attain, in my chosen field, as much of that beauty as there is power within me to feel and to express. I believe in the necessity for far more beauty, in actuality and in thought, if this civilization of ours is to persist; for a mind filled to overflowing with the joy it brings has no room for ugliness, hatred, envy, malice, or sordidly material aspirations. Beauty has the power to lift us from our lower to our higher selves and, surely, the world was never more in need of this than now. Because I believe this with all the force of my nature, I have been willing to take time from the thing I most wish to do in order to talk and to write on this subject, in which flowers, and the arrangement of them, have a significant and rightful place. For beneath all the rules, deeper than any calculated visual pleasure, there is this something else which, to me, makes the whole question a vital one.

So feel beauty, think beauty, express beauty, that the world may become a better place in which to live.