Understanding the Design Elements

BY MANIPULATING design elements, one can create very different designs. For example, think about how an arrangement of ruby red roses would compare with an arrangement of lavender roses. Or, consider a tall, narrow arrangement compared with a low, horizontal arrangement. Simple changes make a difference!

Objective:

☑ Describe the influence in floral design of form, shape, and line; space; texture and pattern; and color.

Key Terms:

advancing color	free-form	primary colors
analogous	geometric	receding color
color wheel	line	secondary colors
complementary	line materials	shape
depth	mass flowers	space
design elements	monochromatic	tertiary colors
filler flowers	naturalistic	texture
form	pattern	
form flowers	polychromatic	

Design Elements

Floral arrangements are composed of flowers, greenery, and containers. These materials can be arranged in various ways to create visually pleasing compositions. The physical characteristics that the designer uses to create the arrangements are called **design elements**. Design elements include form, shape, and line; space; texture and pattern; and color.

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FORM, SHAPE, AND LINE

Form refers to the three-dimensional outline of an arrangement, while **shape** refers to the two-dimensional aspect of form. Form and shape can exist naturally in floral design elements,

FIGURE 1. Many variations of geometric forms and shapes may be used in floral design.

or they can be created by the designer. The common forms and shapes used in floral design are geometric, naturalistic, and free form.

The **geometric** forms and shapes used in floral design are most often the circle and the triangle. Circular forms and shapes can be varied to create ovals, fans, or crescent arrangements from the circles. Right triangles, scalene triangles, and isosceles triangles are variations of the basic triangle.

Naturalistic designs mirror the natural growth of plant material. They often include groupings of plant material. Sometimes branches are used to symbolize trees, and shorter flowers to symbolize undergrowth.

A **free-form** arrangement has a contemporary look. Free form allows the designer to take any liberty with color, form and shape, or placement. Free-form arrangements are very creative and do not have to follow any particular design rule.

FIGURE 2. The line flowers (from left to right) of heather, red snapdragons, purple liatris, and green bells of Ireland direct your eye in the arrangement to the mass flowers (lavender lilac, pink gerberas, and pink carnations) and form flowers (yellow-white alstroemeria and pink callas).

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FIGURE 3. Note how the filler flowers (sea lavender) blend both designs together. On the left, the form flowers used are open roses, freesias, tulips, and sweet peas. On the right, the sunflowers are form flowers, and the delphiniums are line flowers. (Courtesy, California Cut Flower Commission)

All forms of arrangement are created through the use of lines. **Line** is the visual movement between two points in an arrangement. The placement of lines can help create a form or shape or express an emotional response. Lines can be created through the use of line materials. **Line materials**, like snapdragons, liatris, and scotch brooms, can produce very definite vertical, horizontal, diagonal, or curvilinear lines.

The remainder of an arrangement is created through the combination of form flowers, mass flowers, and filler flowers. **Form flowers** are those flowers that have distinctive shapes, like lilies and tropical flowers. **Mass flowers** are round, solid flowers, like carnations and mums. **Filler flowers** are light, airy flowers, like baby's breath and sea lavender, that fill in the space between other flowers.

By combining any number of line flowers, form flowers, mass flowers, and filler flowers, a designer has infinite ways of creating attractive, eye-catching, visually pleasing arrangements.

SPACE

Almost as important as the areas where individual flowers are placed in a design are the areas where there are no flowers. An area devoid of flowers is called **space**. It is important for floral designers to leave space in their arrangements. A designer can also increase the apparent size of a design by adding space and depth to it.

Creating space by placing flowers away from each other gives an arrangement the appearance of being larger without using additional materials. When this technique is employed, the designer can save money by creating the illusion of a larger, more expensive design. Space between individual flowers showcases the visual attributes of each flower. This results in added interest in the design.

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Depth

Depth in a design gives the arrangement more of a three-dimensional form than just a shape. Tucking flowers in farther so they are partially hidden by others and radiating flowers upward or dangling them to the side are ways a designer can create depth and add interest and character to an arrangement.

TEXTURE AND PATTERN

Floral designers can create visually attractive arrangements by combining plant materials of different textures. **Texture** is the surface quality of plant material. Plant material can be rough, smooth, leathery, velvety, satiny, or hairy.

Plant material also has visual texture. It may look fine and airy, lacy, delicate, or bold and coarse. When the textures are varied, the arrangement can attract attention and hold the viewer's interest for a longer period.

Textures provide visual energy. Coarse textures carry more visual weight than fine textures. Glossy textures draw the viewer's attention. Combining different textures in an arrangement adds interest through contrast.

Pattern is the coloration of plant material and the arrangement of plant parts. Pattern is closely related to texture. A plant material that has a color pattern appears to be textured even when the plant surface is smooth. Color patterns of foliage and flowers add interest to an arrangement.

COLOR

Color is probably the most obvious element in design. An arrangement in which all other elements have been masterfully considered may lack appeal if the color combination is not striking.

Physiological studies have shown that colors actually help contribute to people's feelings. Colors have also come to symbolize certain occasions or events. For example, red has become the symbol for love, while yellow often means friendship or happiness. Green is very restful and symbolizes life, while blue is very cooling. Other color associations are white for purity and innocence, purple for royalty, and orange for warmth. An understanding of the color wheel is important when designing floral work.

Color Wheel

The **color wheel** is made up of primary colors, secondary colors, and tertiary colors. **Primary colors** are the basic colors of red, yellow, and blue. All other colors come from combining these primary colors. **Secondary colors** are green, orange, and violet. They are created by combining two primary colors. For example, yellow and red create orange. **Tertiary colors** are third-rank colors. By combining one primary color with one secondary color, a ter-
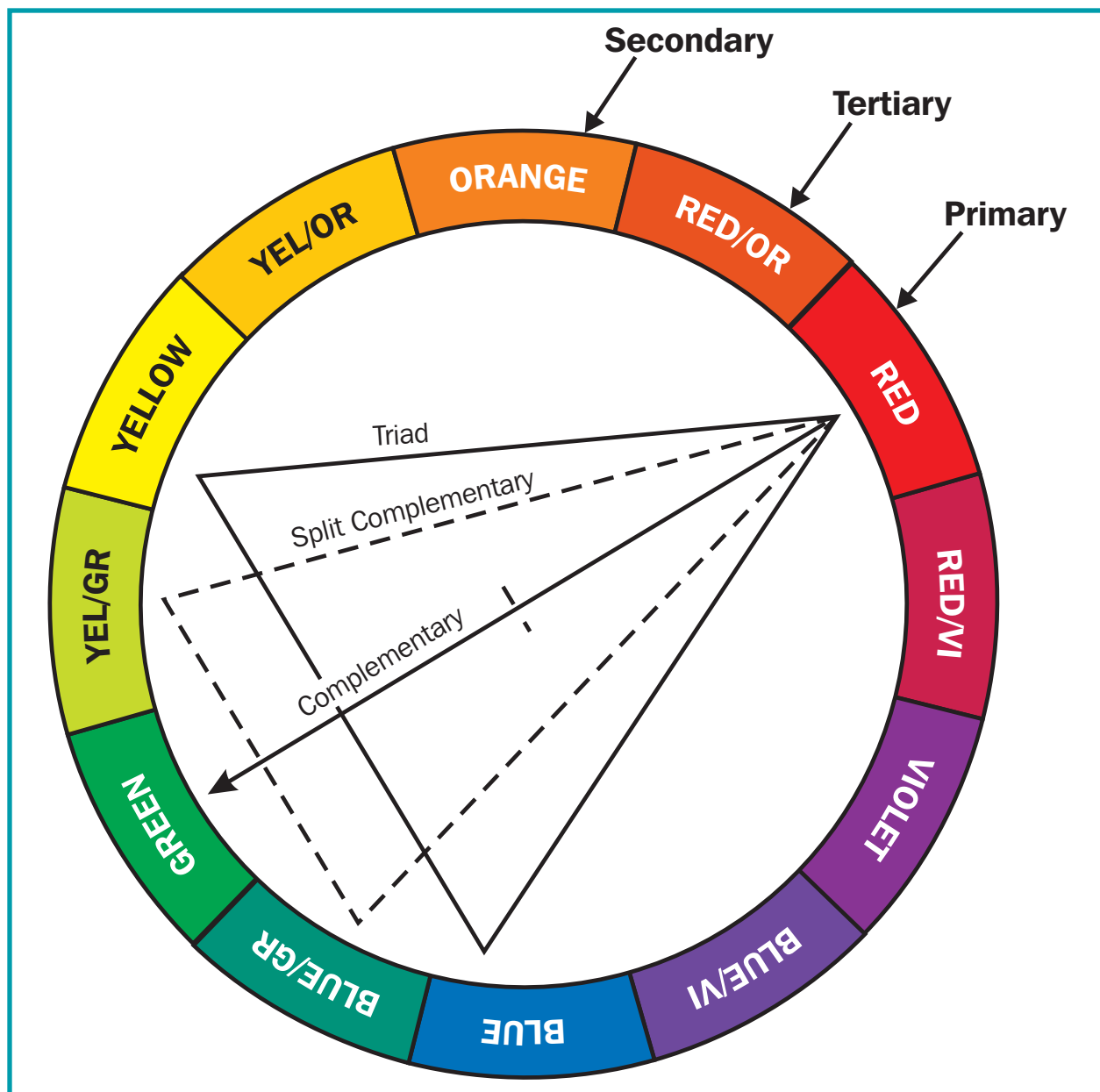
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FIGURE 4. The color wheel divides colors into primary, secondary, and tertiary.

tiary color is created. The names of tertiary colors are often hyphenated, such as blue-green and yellow-orange.

Color Schemes

Floral designers often use basic color schemes to create eye-catching arrangements. Color schemes are created through the combination of colors chosen.

A **monochromatic** color scheme would be made from one color and all its light and dark variations. For example, if red was the chosen color, the arrangement might include deep red, maroon, pale pink, and hot pink. All these colors originate from the primary color red.

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An **analogous** color scheme uses colors that are next to each other on the color wheel. An arrangement made of yellow, yellow-orange, and orange would be analogous.

By choosing two colors that are opposite each other on the color wheel, a **complementary** color scheme is created. Red/green, violet/yellow, and blue/orange are all complementary color schemes.

A **polychromatic** color scheme includes a wide range of colors.

No matter what color scheme is chosen, the designer must remember that colors are viewed differently depending on the colors with which they are combined. When yellow and violet are placed together, yellow tends to be a more **advancing color**, moving toward the viewer. Violet, on the other hand, tends to be a **receding color**, disappearing into the background. This is important to remember when creating arrangements for a stage or altar. Violet tends to disappear when viewed from a distance.

Summary:

Design elements are the physical characteristics used to create arrangements. They include form, shape, and line; space; texture and pattern; and color.

Form refers to the three-dimensional outline, while shape refers to the two-dimensional aspect of form. The common forms and shapes used in floral design are geometric, naturalistic, and free form. Line is the visual movement between two points in an arrangement.

An area devoid of flowers is called space. Depth in a design gives the arrangement more of a three-dimensional form than just a shape.

Texture is the design element that refers to the surface quality of plant material. Pattern is the coloration of plant material and the arrangement of plant parts.

Color is probably the most obvious element in design. The color wheel is made up of primary colors, secondary colors, and tertiary colors. Floral designers often use basic color schemes to create eye-catching arrangements.

Checking Your Knowledge:

1. What are design elements?
2. What are form, shape, and line?
3. How are space and depth applied to floral design?
4. How are texture and pattern related to floral design?
5. How does color affect floral work?

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Expanding Your Knowledge:

Obtain photographs of floral designs from the Internet or from periodicals. Ask yourself what emotional response each arrangement conveys. How were design elements used to create different feelings?

Web Links:

Historical Aspects of Floral Design
http://www.hort.vt.edu/faculty/McDaniel/hort2164/R2HistoricalAspects.htm

Principles of Design (PowerPoint presentation)
http://72.14.203.104/search?q=cache:jgVqjH76HfQJ:lr010.k12.sd.us/chapter3
.ppt+design+elements+floral&hl=en&gl=us&ct=clnk&cd=25

Western Elements in Floral Design
http://www.save-on-crafts.com/weselbrinflo.html

Elements of Design
http://aesop.rutgers.edu/~greenmachine/COMM_FL_DESIGN/
ELEMENTSLISTING/ELEMENTS.HTML

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