

# Arranging by Design

*What, Where, When and Why.....and HOW!*

*by Suzy Valentine & Rose Ford*

*Illustrated by Suzy*

*Floral Design*

*an Art Form using Plant Material of Any and All Kinds*

*For Your Home      Your Pleasure      Your Way*

*and/or*

*to Share      to Show      to Explore*

## *About the Authors*

Rose Ford and Suzy Valentine grew their friendship while completing the Florida Master Gardener Program in 2003. Both were born and raised in New Jersey, but life took them on very diverse paths which merged again in Collier County at Master Gardener training. About that time they both joined Naples Garden Club and then the newly formed Gulf Coast Garden Club.

Rose gardened in various homes in southern New Jersey through all four seasons, focusing on growing hosta and daylily collections. Gardening is her passion, followed by designing with foliage cut from her garden. Design skills were learned while working holidays in her husband's florist shops. Before settling in Naples, Professor Ford retired from Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, after a 35 year teaching career. Rose's Florida garden is different from "up north" with many different colors and shapes to inspire her continuing love of picking a few leaves and creating something lovely!

Suzy gardened in subtropical Brazil for 32 years where she was an active leader in the Sao Paulo Garden Club. Learning about, growing and arranging the abundant plant material there prepared Suzy well for living in Southwest Florida. Her knowledge of tropical and sub-tropical flora is an asset which she willingly shares. Suzy became a National Garden Club Accredited Flower Show Judge in 1977, along with others in the first International Affiliate School in South America. Now a Master Judge, she has proven her talents by winning all the NGC Top Awards offered. But she recognizes that not everyone wants to follow the detailed directions required by NGC for designs and flower shows! Sometimes we just want to do it "My Way".

Friendships deepen when interests and life experiences are shared. Developing ideas for garden club programs; leading and guiding the club as officers; exploring the latest culinary arts; haunting thrift shops for treasures and containers; supporting each other through family ups and downs have cemented their friendship.

Creating **Arranging By Design**, melding our mutual expertise and talents, was Suzy's challenging idea. It provided fun and laughter for us—and we hope it is a useful resource for you!

## ***Introduction***

Design is a plan bringing order to an art form, using the Elements and Principles of Design to create Beauty, Harmony, Distinction and Expression.

How the Elements and Principles are applied will vary from one art form to another. Thus, Architecture, Sculpture, Interior Decoration, Fashion, and Floral design all use the same Elements and Principles, but in different ways. The desired result is to create something pleasing and purposeful. The 'why' may be to design housing for one or more families, or to dress women attractively, or merely to express a creative idea.

We are all artists in some way, using the Elements and Principles in our daily lives—often without even realizing it. Our homes are furnished and decorated to create comfort and beauty, we select clothing, jewelry, make up and accessories to complement and enhance our image.

All around us we see color, forms and shapes. Buildings, gardens, shops, art galleries, trees, golf courses, markets, the sky, the sea.... Our senses are bombarded constantly with these, whether they be man-made or natural, and yet we continually want to add MORE to our visual realm with new additions to our closets, cupboards, homes, travels, etc.

With this book as your guide, we hope to open your eyes and imaginations to a universally practiced art form called Floral Design. Others may call it Flower Arranging, Ikebana, or some other word, but the common element is the use of plant material of any and all kinds, from fresh flowers and leaves, dry materials from any part of any plant, fruits, vegetables, berries, seeds, wood, bark, roots, etc. to create a pleasing result.



## ***Why, Where, When, What.....and HOW!***

You may want to make your dining or coffee table 'pretty' for company, or you received a gift of flowers and want to do more than just shove them into a plain glass vase. Perhaps your own garden produces abundant flowers and foliage and you want to bring some inside. Or, you go to the grocery store and see those bunches of wonderful flowers in so many colors and shapes—at such a great price!

You might be asked to help at your church with Sunday's flowers, or decorate tables for a special event at your club, provide cheer at a hospital or retirement community, celebrate a school event, or perhaps just enjoy flowers among friends.

Or.... you might be in garden club that is having a flower show! You have read the schedule and one or more classes appealed to you, and you have signed up. If you didn't volunteer for a design class you like, you might be asked (begged) to enter a class you aren't totally comfortable with. Don't worry—this book will help you!

### ***A floral design is called for!***



### ***After What, Where, Why and When are established, we come to "HOW."***

We hope to give you many simple guidelines, tips, suggestions, hints, recommendations and advice to help you gain confidence and proficiency in using plant material and other components to create a pleasing result.

An important note is to clarify that our guidelines are not strictly limited to National Garden Clubs, Inc. (NGC) standards and requirements regarding Floral Design. NGC prohibits certain things in Standard Flower Shows which may be allowed and even desirable for use in other venues and on other occasions. Specifics will be noted elsewhere.

It is also important to understand the difference between Traditional and Creative Design. Abstract Design evolved from Creative Design, and will only be explained briefly here. When you're ready for it—you'll know, and perhaps you already are exploring abstraction. But, all art students first must learn the techniques of the Old Masters. Only then do they have sufficient understanding of the Elements/Tools and the Principles/Rules to be able to bend or even break rules in order to express their own creativity.

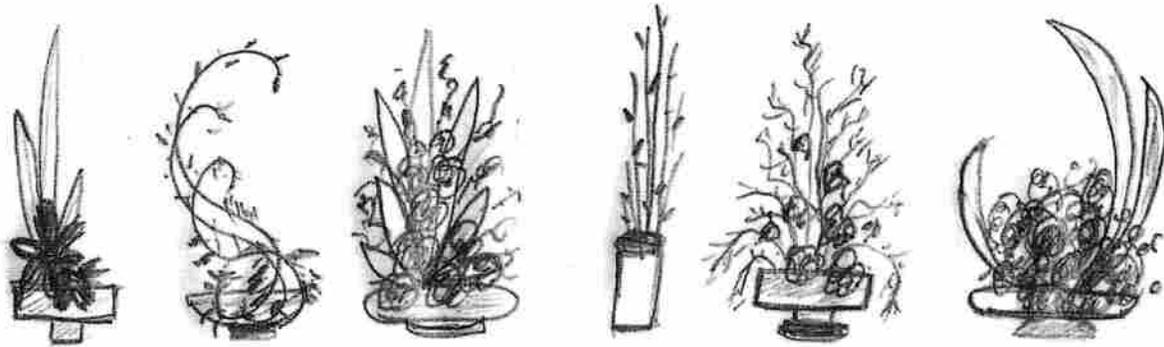
## General Design Styles

Traditional Design: an art form placed in (a) Space, usually to decorate a given area. It includes Oriental, European, and American Traditional (a combination of Oriental and European). They are based on geometric forms (triangle, crescent, cylinder, etc.) and usually use common garden materials in a naturalistic way, radiating from one point of emergence. Depth is important, and achieved by overlapping, placing some forms in profile, and finishing the back. Rhythm and Balance are created by gradation of color and size of plant materials. These designs include Line, Line-Mass and Mass Designs.

Line: the dominant feature is the direction of the line material, which may be vertical, horizontal, diagonal, crescent, S-curved, zig-zag, etc.

Line-Mass: the line, which may be any of the above directions, is strengthened with the addition of more plant material, creating a balanced *center of interest*.

Mass: large quantities of plant material are used to form a closed, but not crowded, silhouette. A variety of forms, colors and textures help create interest.



Creative Design: an American art form which incorporates Space, creating a relationship between Space and Form. It is *eclectic*, mixing any and all *components*, and molding them by *plastic organization* into a three-dimensional concept with much Depth. Instead of the required geometric form, the designer is free to use the Elements and Principles as desired.

Abstract Design: They are Creative, but must be organized in a non-realistic manner. Components are *juxtaposed* in non-realistic groupings, and should be bold in color and form.



## OK, so how do you begin?

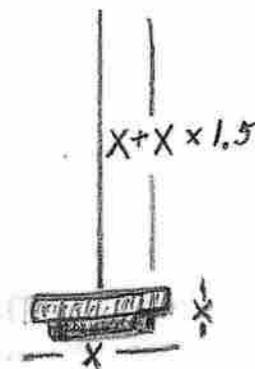
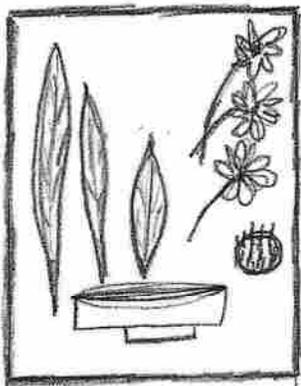
### Well, let us begin at the beginning—it's a very good place to start!

Select your *components*. These include a *container, vase* or other receptacle (such as a shell or *weathered wood*) which will hold and hide your *mechanics* (*oasis, kenzan, needleholder*) and of course—*plant material*! All designs, whether simple or complex, are strongly influenced by their components. Containers are extremely important as they should guide all other aspects of the design. A simple container in a neutral color is easiest, but if there is decoration, including flowers, or strong color/s, the design should repeat those colors and forms. Any decoration must relate to the location, as well as to the plant material. Make sure the opening is large enough to accommodate the plant material needed for the design you envision, and the height and overall size of the container is suitable for the intended Space. And of course, make sure it is stable. If you use a pitcher style container, plant material should appear to be pouring from the spout with taller stems emphasizing the handle. Unusual or creative containers call for creative designs but you may use a simple container for any style.

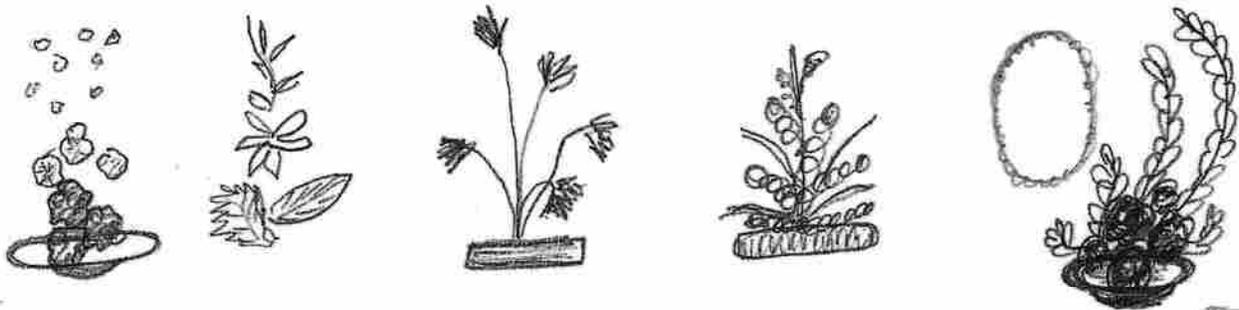
The "Where" has determined what is suitable for the location, whether antique or contemporary, and "When" influences availability. Today all sorts of plant material is commercially available any time of the year! If your design is for home, office, church, library or other location outside of a flower show, you must determine the Size of all components to be right for the location or Space. If you have been given a specific sized Space, as is usual in a flower show, plan to fill that Space/Place adequately. You may include a *base* or *underlay*, and they can add Size to the overall design.

As you develop your design plan, make sure the plant material harmonizes with the Place/Space in Color and Size. Depending on the style and/or geometric form you choose, select just enough variety to provide interest. More than 3 different kinds and forms of flowers or foliage may cause confusion (except for a Traditional Mass Design). Less is more!

Placing the three main lines first, whether foliage or flower or branch, determines the silhouette and spatial limits. Height and width should be just right for the container and the intended location. A good rule of thumb is for plant material to be  $1\frac{1}{2}$  times the height plus width of the container. Filling in is easier with those as guides.



Keep the Elements and Principles in mind as you select and place each stem. Remember that good Balance is created with larger, darker colored forms nearer the bottom, and lighter, smaller forms above. Flowers should be on different levels and angles with some facing out and/or up. Depth requires materials to be placed on different planes, front to back. Dominant forms, sizes and/or colors should be arranged first, and all additional material should contribute to Rhythm—the visual path your eye takes through the arrangement. Always remember to have the location clearly envisioned, so the completed design fits in that Space. Example: a mirror or picture on the wall behind may determine whether to have a left or right direction to your chosen shape, and if it is reflected, the back must be finished effectively. If your design will be seen all around, such as a table centerpiece, work that way, turning your design each time you add something.



When you think you may have finished, pause, step back, look from different angles. Stand up or sit down. Study your work with a fresh eye. You probably have more plant material in your bucket, but DO NOT BE TEMPTED to include it just because you have it! In fact, you might consider removing one or two stems or leaves. Use that to make another design! Snip carefully with your clippers rather than try to pull something out, as that may disturb other stems and cause unnecessary problems.

***Smile---and enjoy your efforts!***



## ***Helpful Hints or Do's and Don'ts***

There are many “do's and don'ts” out there—some of which have been said for 70+ years—others have come about recently. Except for specific “don'ts” which come from National Garden Clubs, Inc. (NGC) and only apply to Standard Flower Shows or official events governed by NGC, you may choose to follow or ignore some or all! Call it artistic license, or personal expression or creativity, but it is YOU and YOUR ideas, whatever others may think. Of course, we encourage you to do as art students must and learn the basics from the Masters and teachers first.

NGC has several specific “no-no's” in the 2017 Handbook. No artificial plant material may be used in any exhibit in any Division. Artificial means imitation, handcrafted or manufactured to represent and/or appear as real plant material. That includes metal, silk, plastic or other materials, even natural things like wood, bone, or anything else, if it is made to imitate real life. Fresh plant material may not be painted, dyed, glittered or flocked. The Design Division should not include landscapes, scenes or anything representing an actual item of clothing, person, animal etc. No living members of the animal kingdom may be included, nor any taxidermal representation thereof. No flags of any nation may be used.

So, unless you are entering an NGC Standard Flower Show with a design, go ahead and do what you want! We all have objects we've acquired in our travels, inherited, or gifted that could be incorporated in a design we create for our own pleasure or for any occasion except an NGC one. Remember—this is FUN!

### ***Do's***

- ❖ Do make sure your container and mechanics are clean, and your plant material is fresh and well conditioned.
- ❖ Do define your outline/silhouette first.
- ❖ Do use as few different kinds of plant material as possible in any one design.
- ❖ Do keep larger, darker colored flowers lower than smaller, light colors.
- ❖ Do place all materials on different levels and planes for Rhythm and Depth.
- ❖ Do keep a center of interest, or focal point, low in the composition for visual stability.
- ❖ Do avoid an inverted triangle look (greater width at the top).
- ❖ Do face flowers in different directions, but don't have them stare at each other.
- ❖ Do group flowers of a kind in a mass design. Hit and miss placement causes a confused effect.
- ❖ Do plan for interesting *voids* and spaces.
- ❖ Do make sure no leaves are underwater.
- ❖ Do cover or hide the mechanics (kenzan or oasis) as much as possible with design materials.
- ❖ Do 'break' the rim of the container with some flowers and/or leaves when appropriate.
- ❖ Do enhance the beauty of each flower by not overcrowding.
- ❖ Do consider an all-foliage design using different kinds of leaves—with no flowers!

### ***Don'ts***

- ❖ ***Don't worry if your design looks like Charlie Brown's Christmas tree—he loves it!***



## ***Petite or Miniature Designs***

Petites are just like all other designs except in Size. NGC sets the maximum dimension at 12". The size you need for your home or other location doesn't need to be precisely limited. The most important thing to remember when choosing components is Scale. Use naturally small plant materials rather than cutting or manipulating to reduce the size. And remember—petite designs require petite containers! You may use all sorts of things you probably have around your house as simple containers—jar or bottle lids, medicine tops, makeup accessories and craft items for example.

Take a picture of your completed Petite and look with a fresh eye. You should not be able to tell whether it is 4" or 4' high! If something stands out as too large, remove it and select a different, smaller stem.

These are fun to do, and can be used in many locations in your home.

***But—remember those Elements and Principles!***



## ***Table Settings***

Setting a table for any meal, occasion or number of people is an art form. "First you feast with your eyes, then with your stomach" is an old Asian saying. The components for a table setting, including a design, follow the guidelines already mentioned. Whether a breakfast tray for one or a sit-down dinner for eight the Elements and Principles apply. Additional factors include:

- ❖ Size and shape of table
- ❖ Degree of formality
- ❖ Number of people
- ❖ Occasion/meal
- ❖ Table covering and napkins
- ❖ Dishes, glasses, cups and flatware
- ❖ The floral arrangement/design (NGC calls this a 'Decorative Unit')

***Select your components with special consideration for Size, Color and Texture to create a pleasing effect.***

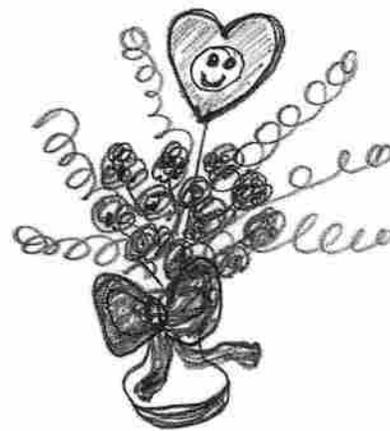


## ***What To Do With a Dozen Roses--or Carnations or Chrysanthemums or.....?***

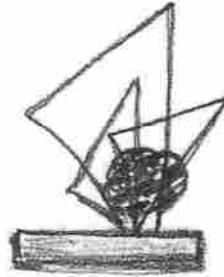
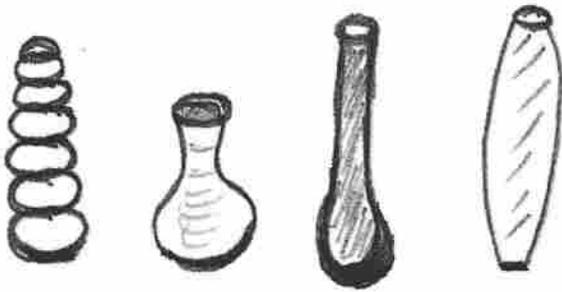
So-- you bought or were given a bunch of flowers! If they are not already in a glass vase (which most gift flowers from a florist are) the first thing is to get them in cool, fresh water. If the flowers were presented in person, smile and say thank you before attending to the flowers' needs. Guests have needs also, so make sure they too have a cool drink! Put the gifted vase somewhere where the giver will see that you appreciate it --even if it isn't exactly to your taste or liking. Be polite! You can re-arrange later--taking off any ribbons, bows, balloons or other undesirables!

If you bought the flowers-- or were given them wrapped and not in water-- cut the stems with a sharp knife or clippers and remove any leaves which might be underwater. Save the good leaves and discard any unattractive ones. Use the flower food in the little packet and just stir it into cool water with a stem. A special bucket might be a good idea to keep handy in the kitchen or laundry just for flowers and foliage. Make it pretty and it will look good even if you don't get around to arranging until later.

Instead of putting all 12 (or however many are in the bunch) in one container, consider dividing them and creating 3, 4 or even 5 small designs. The following sketches illustrate how to use one or more flowers in various ways. Cup style kenzans are excellent for these simple designs, and we recommend you acquire as many as you can, in different sizes.



At one time bud vases were common. Small glass vases are still popular with florists. Thrift shops have dozens of them for sale, usually costing 25 – 50 cents. Besides kenzans, other small containers you may have around the house can be used effectively with just 1- 3 flowers and some foliage. If you need more greenery, step outside and see what shrubs and other plants are right there. It's pretty hard NOT to have many sizes and kinds of foliage available here in Florida year around. Even if you live in a condo and do not have your own garden--nature provides you with abundant choices. Be careful to pick or cut discretely, and take advantage of landscapers working nearby who may be piling up great choices! They'll be happy for your help. ***Smile and say thank you to them, too!!***



PAPYRUS  
'FRAME'  
ONE  
FLOWER



## ***Tool Kit of Useful Items***

Clippers: strong enough for heavy branches, but sharp enough for clean stem cuts.

Scissors: sharp enough for trimming leaves and delicate stems.

Knife/knives: several sizes for cutting oasis, plant material, etc.

Oasis: floral foam which holds water and keeps stems just where you want them.

Kenzans: heavy metal needlepoint holders, usually brass. Various sizes and shapes—the more the better!

Wire: different gauges and colors for various purposes.

Tape: for different uses. Include waterproof, clear, green, flexible and any others you can.

Pins: straight, of various sizes.

Glue Dots: dots and strips are strong enough to hold lots of things right where you want them.

UGLU: specific brand of strong glue strips, made by Oasis company.

Glue gun: to attach dried material to other dry surfaces, plus many other uses. *Careful—hot glue can burn!*

Wooden skewers and toothpicks: hold fruits, vegetables, etc. together and where you want them.

Measuring tape/ruler: helps to determine sizes and relationship to location.

Soft absorbent cloth: wipes up spills.

Soft brush: cleans individual flowers or entire area of undesirable debris.

Other items as needed or wanted.

## ***Conditioning -- Preparing Plant Material in Advance of Arranging***

When cutting leaves and flowers to use indoors, have a bucket of clean water ready. Use clean, sharp clippers. Early morning or late evening is usually the best time—not in the hot midday! Many flowers and leaves hold up best if submerged totally for several hours or overnight. Recut the stems of bought bunches, or gift flowers. Cut at an angle to open a greater area for water absorption. Keep the buckets of materials in a cool, dark place until ready to use. Flower food packets which often come with purchased flowers are useful to extend freshness.

Go ahead and make your design/s when you are ready. Take a deep breath—and remember to have fun!

After some days, you probably need to add more clean water to the container. If possible, place the whole arrangement in a sink and let fresh water run through. This flushes out old, dirty water and debris and gives the arrangement a new look. If you cannot move it to a sink, use a turkey baster or similar to siphon out old, dirty water and freshen with a watering can.

## ***Glossary***

- Abstract:** non-natural and/or non-realistic
- Accessory:** a subordinate object used in a design
- Arrangement:** organizing plant material and container according to Elements & Principles of Design
- Background:** area behind a design, be it a wall, panel, niche or anything else
- Base:** a stand or foundation used beneath or instead of a container
- Center of Interest:** (see Focal point)
- Compatibility:** two or more things which go together/co-exist harmoniously, without conflict
- Component:** part or element of a larger whole
- Conditioning:** process of ensuring freshness of plant material through water absorption
- Container:** receptacle for plant material and other design components (see also Vase)
- Contrived flower:** a recognizable flower or other botanical specimen, made of any material
- Contrived form:** a new form, not representing any specific botanical object, created from any material
- Decorative wood:** all-inclusive term for any dried wood, including driftwood, barnwood and weathered
- Design:** (see Arrangement) Newer term for what always has been 'flower arranging'
- Driftwood:** wood gathered from nature, often shorelines, of any size or condition
- Eclectic:** deriving ideas, styles or designs from a broad and diverse range of sources
- Feature:** a dominant object or component
- Floral:** relating to flowers and other plant material, as in floral design
- Focal point:** (see Center of Interest) an area in a design where the eye goes naturally
- Ikebana:** Japanese art of flower arrangement
- Juxtapose:** to place components in different ways to create depth and 3-dimensional look
- Kenzan:** Japanese word for their invention of what may be called a pinholder/needleholder/frog but is a heavy metal object with many sharp upright 'nails' to hold floral stems in any position
- Manipulate:** to change, control or alter the appearance of natural plant material in any possible way
- Mechanics:** devices used to control position of plant material and other components
- Miniature:** a plant part smaller than normal, or dwarf (see Petite for Design meaning)
- Niche:** staging panel, usually with a back and two sides
- Oasis:** foam block which absorbs water and holds stems in place
- Petite:** current term describing small or miniature designs
- Plant Material:** parts of any plant- including roots, stems, bark, leaves, buds, flowers, fruits, vegetables
- Plastic organization:** organizing design components within the space to create depth
- Pinholder:** heavy device with many sharp nails to hold stems (see Kenzan)
- Structure:** arrangement of and relations between the parts of something
- Underlay:** any material or fabric placed under an exhibit or design to enhance
- Vase:** traditional word for a receptacle for flower arrangements (see Container)
- Void:** empty space, refers to such spaces in a design
- Weathered wood:** wood affected by environmental conditions creating a decorative appearance

## Color

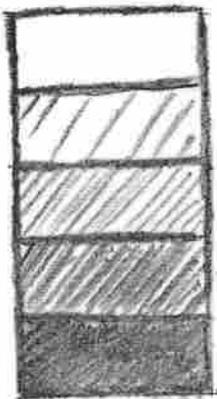
Color is one of the most important elements of design, as its immediate visual impact strongly affects our reaction to whatever we are seeing. We all have favorite colors which show in our choices for clothing, furnishing our homes, and elsewhere. How we use colors in all aspects of our lives gives psychologists many reasons to analyze reactions. Red is a good example. It is interesting to note that men and women seem to react differently to Red, whether it be the color of clothing, cars, or flowers!

When selecting plant material for a design consider how the color/s will interact and what effect they may have on the viewer. Strong, bright, pure colors are exciting, while tints and pastels are perceived as soothing. The occasion should help determine appropriate colors.

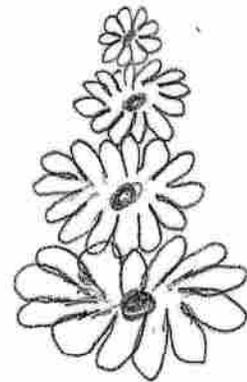
When light strikes an object and is reflected in the eye, we see color. Without light, there is no color. The quality of the light affects how a color is perceived and bright daylight or evening dusk give very different messages to our brains.

The Color Wheel is a useful tool to help understand how color impacts all art forms as well as our daily lives.

The three Primary colors are Red, Yellow and Blue. Secondary colors are Green, Violet and Orange. These are made by mixing two of the Primary colors. Intermediate colors, Red-Orange, Yellow-Orange, Yellow-Green, Blue-Green, Blue-Violet, Red-Violet, are formed by mixing a Secondary with one of the Primary colors on either side of it on the color wheel.



*Pure color is called Hue*  
*Tints are Hues plus white*  
*Shades are Hues plus black*  
*Tones are Hues plus gray*  
*Gray is white plus black*



Warm or Advancing colors are Yellow-Green through Orange, Red, and Red-Violet. These colors seem to advance, stand out, attract and hold the eye.

Cool or Receding colors are Green through Blue to Violet. They do not attract or hold the eye's attention.

If you are making a design for a large area, such as for a church, be careful with the "Cool Blues"! You may have a perfectly lovely mass arrangement when viewed close up, but if you look from a distance, such as from the back of the church or room, you will see 'holes' because the Blues just disappear! That's what we mean by Receding. On the other hand, using pastel blues in a small design celebrating a new baby boy would work well, as it would be enjoyed 'up close'.

# Color Wheel

