

Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

The Wild Bunch

By Cynthia Brian

“Life is the flower for which love is the honey.” – Victor Hugo

Have you ever looked upon a glorious floral arrangement or loosely arranged bouquet and wished that you could enjoy similar beauty without the hefty price tag? In this era of celebrating the “Do It Yourself” creativity that resides within us all, I want to encourage you to step outside with a pair of shears and tap into your inner florist. If you don’t have a garden, buy bunches of greens and flowers at the flower market to create your personalized design. Don’t be tempted to buy a bouquet and plopping it in a vase. Be original, add flair, go wild. The plethora of fall leaves, berries, seedpods, feathery plumes, vines, and wild grasses lend themselves to designing dazzling garlands, holiday themed topiaries, romantic wreaths, and exquisite floral centerpieces. All that is required is a bit of imagination and plenty of chutzpah.

To be successful, use innovative combinations of foliage, flowers, and wispy elements. Fruit, vegetables, herbs, succulents, and even weeds add appeal to displays. Urns, bottles, flutes, boots, pitchers, or any vessel that holds water can become an attractive base vase.



Big leafed plants such as philodendron add drama to an urn when combined with roses, palm fronds, feathery plumes, and splashes of color.

Photos Cynthia Brian



A beautiful bridesmaid bouquet of loosely arranged and hand-tied magenta lilies, stargazer lilies, fuchsia colored roses, Russian sage, narcissus, freesia, and bear grass are adorned with a grape cluster.

Choose a color scheme. Do you want a boisterous mix or monochromatic spray? Depending on the occasion and the final location placement, the arrangement can be tall, low, rambling, cascading, lush, simple, or fancy. For best results, allow flower stems to soak for 24 hours in 8 to 10 inches of water after cutting before creating your masterpiece.

Trade Tricks and Tips

- Pick flowers early in the morning as water content is highest while the temperatures are cooler.
- Choose buds that are tight to ensure longer post harvest life.
- If you bought your flowers and greens, wash the stems under running water before cutting. Do not trim under water as tap water sources may contain fluoride, which is injurious to a variety of cut flowers such as gerbera and freesia.
- Cut stems on the diagonal to provide the bloom with the greatest amount of surface area exposed to water. Relatively little water is absorbed through the walls of the stems.
- Add a drop of bleach to cold water to deter bacteria.
- Remove all thorns from roses with a knife



A lovely loose mixture of the best of fall flowers including dahlia, zinnia, hydrangea, allium, eucalyptus leaves, and agastache.

- Remove all leaves below water level to prevent rot.
- For soft-stemmed flowers like calla lilies or Star of Bethlehem, submerge stems only in a small amount of water.
- For woody stems such as Protea, fill the vase to 8 inches or more.
- Pull or cut the stamen out of lilies. The bloom will last longer and you won’t have to worry about the yellow stamen staining clothing or furnishings.
- All flowers release ethylene gas. Ripening fruit and damaged flowers result in a significant increase of the concentration of the gas, causing arrangements to deteriorate more quickly. Remove dead or aging petals, keep flowers away from fruit, and ventilate the room. Don’t store bouquets in a refrigerator with apples or other fruit.