



Cornell University Cooperative Extension



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Making Fresh Flower Arrangements

What You Need to Know

This activity is one of the easiest, most pleasant ways to bring the outdoors in! Handling and arranging fresh flowers is very enjoyable, and this activity costs, at most, a few cents per participant. Flower arranging is an appropriate way to involve participants of many different abilities and offers an opportunity for reminiscence and social interaction.

Materials Needed

Before you do this activity, you will need flowers and vases.

Advance Preparation

It is midsummer now, and there are several sources of free flowers for this activity.

Source 1: If you are fortunate enough to be located near open fields, there are common wildflowers, such as daisies, black-eyed Susans, Queen Anne's Lace, chicory, phlox, cattails, sunflowers, and grasses with ornamental

qualities. With time you'll find others such as purple loosestrife, golden-rod and asters. Flowers like these are sure to bring back pleasant memories for the participants. Often, these flowers are yours for the picking; perhaps you can ask a volunteer to cut them for you. Remember to bring a five gallon bucket with a few inches of water in the bottom. If you are picking on private property, ask permission of the land owner! Make sure to pick only common "weeds"; do not pick protected flowers, and only pick a portion of the flowers blooming in an area. Don't forget to include some greens. Be cautious of plants such as buttercups; their sap can be irritating and cause dermatitis to some individuals. You can also include some colorful berries, but be careful to only get ones that aren't poisonous!



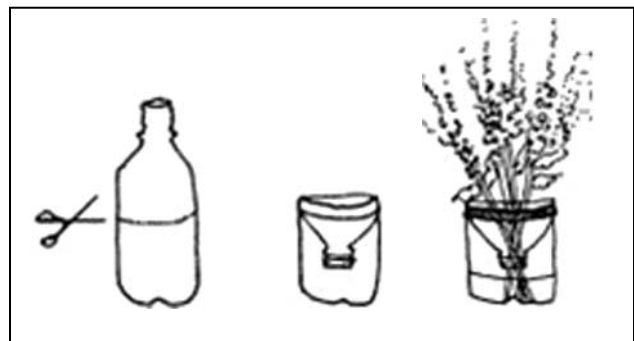
Source 2: Overflow from people's gardens. If you ask people from your local garden club or post a request, you are sure to get a response. At this time of year, cosmos, zinnias, marigolds, coreopsis, pansies, etc., are all in need of cutting so they will continue to bloom. Take advantage of this surplus and ask for contributions.

Source 3: Recycled funeral arrangements. This source is available all year. For example, you may want to develop an on-going

arrangement with a local funeral director. Once each week you can arrange a delivery of "almost new" floral arrangements, or pick them up yourself. Participants and volunteers can sort through the flowers, saving the green blocks of floral oasis, (the blocky water-absorbing material that is often at the base of floral arrangements), presentable flowers, greenery and vases. Then, residents can make new flower arrangements for the center of each table in the dining room, so there are always fresh flowers for them to enjoy. If participants are making small, individual floral arrangements for their own use, it's likely that you won't have enough vases for each person. In addition, many small vases are easy to tip over, have small openings that the flower stems must be inserted into, and are made of glass. The idea for this easy-to-make flower "vase" will be enthusiastically received. The vase is non-spill, nonbreakable, costs a nickel (you will lose the five cent deposit), and has a large opening that funnels the flower stems down into the water. Note: this container may also be used to hold paintbrushes and non-toxic paints.

Here's How You Make It

Take a 16-ounce plastic soft drink bottle, either clear or green; it will be roughly seven inches tall. Remove the plastic label. Using a single-edged razor blade or utility knife, cut the bottle in half, 3-112" up from the base. (It helps to draw a line around the bottle with a fine-point magic marker.) Simply invert the top half of the bottle into the bottom half, and "seal" the seam with colored plastic tape (even adhesive tape can be used.) Fill the "vase" with one inch of water.



Making the Floral Arrangements

Now you are ready to begin. Provide each participant with a vase and a selection of flowers and greens, or have people work together. There are ways to make the activity easier for individuals who have difficulty with dexterity. Have each participant work on a placemat made from non-slip rug backing or shelf-lining which is widely sold in discount stores in rolls. If the vase needs additional stabilization during preparation time, temporarily tape it to a cardboard base as shown. Enjoy the flowers, encourage conversations about gardens that participants have enjoyed, and be sure to comment about what makes each arrangement special!

