



Always Flowers Around You!

**Floral
Starters**

By Nadja

(c) 2014 Nadjah.com



Floral Starters

Dedicated to all the Flower Girls who helped me for years along the way.

Don't you just love flowers? I do! Do you remember that first crystal vase that your husband gave you? Or are you remembering the first bouquet he gave you, and your mother brought out her vase for you to use? Well, with all the good memories, the important part is that it is still fun to have flowers around you so that you may keep enjoying them with an array of arrangements for each holiday, (or each day for that matter).

Flowers are pretty, exotic, beautiful, fragrant, lush, colorful, simple, delicate, and plentiful. One of the truest joys to floral arranging is to be able

to grow and gather your own flowers for your home and friends, but of course that is not always possible. We all are fortunate enough, however, to have flower shops, farmers markets, on line deliveries, grocery store boutiques, and corner flower stands. I like all of these outlets but I usually will pick up fresh flowers at the grocery store boutiques, because it is so convenient. I normally use my garden flowers for everyday small vase arrangements. I have a non-ending collection of small vases that are fun to fill. I even have a very small glass vase from France that my Mother gave to me and of course it is very special to me. Small, special little vases can be very effective and attractive using a bouquet of very small flowers gathered either monochromatically or as a European garden mix. I like to place unique small arrangements on individual place settings, or line them up on a buffet. If you prefer, single or double open roses can also occupy a variety of vases.



We can create a certain ambiance using just roses, rather than daisies and pansies, for example.

OK, lets start with beautiful rose arrangements. Roses, with all of their elegance, are easier than you think to arrange. First of all, what is the occasion? If you are purchasing roses you usually have quite a selection of colors to choose from. I'm going to start with a romantic evening dinner so I am using red roses. Now this is a dinner for two so I will purchase two dozen roses and one bunch of gypsophila. When purchasing roses, look at the foliage for freshness. The leaves should be nice and green. There are several different arrangements you can make, so I will arrange my personal choices for you.

For example, I am setting a small round table with a lace tablecloth, candles, crystal, and one dozen of the two dozen roses with half of the babies breath as my center piece.



I have a beautiful crystal bowl, about 5 to 6 inches in height, and diameter, and I fill it with water about $\frac{3}{4}$ full and add about $\frac{1}{2}$ packet of floral preservative. Now I will layer my flowers.

First a stem of babies breath, then I lay four roses on top of the babies breath, and continue layering the babies breath and roses until all 12 are layered.

Since I am using my bowl for this center- piece, I will have to cut off a lot of the stem length.

I will gather up the layered rose bouquet, with the roses all the same height, and hold it up in front of the vase to measure just what height I want the roses to be in the vase. I like them to be just above the bowl itself. I then take the bouquet, lay it back down, and proceed to tie all the stems together with a piece of ribbon, or pipe cleaner, which works best for me. I will remove some of the leaves from the stems that will be below the water line, and cut my stems straight across and immediately place the roses in the bowl, and they will be very pretty indeed on this table. That's it, not difficult, but very gorgeous for this occasion. Every two days, I will re-cut the rose stems, and place them in clean water.

Remember, it's true, I still have one dozen roses to arrange. Since I have a buffet, I will now arrange the remaining one dozen roses in a tall vase, with the rest of the filler babies breath, while leaving most of the leaf foliage on the roses. I fill my rose vase half way with water and sprinkle in some flower preservative.

I then pick up all my roses, give them a quick cut and place them in my vase. I arrange the flowers so each one has its own space. I then place my babies breath stem by stem in between the roses, stripping each stem just before it goes into the vase. I step back and take a good look at my arrangement and fuss with it a little until each flower looks just right to me. The roses will highlight the romantic dinner and are also a presentation that could be used for engagement parties, special birthdays, Christmas, graduations, and so on! The amount of arrangements that you create is your decision. There are so many wonderful occasions, and if you love flowers as much as I do, then you will enjoy decorating with them. Studies have shown that having flowers around has a happy effect on people, so by all means lets have flowers around us.

Summer time brings colorful thoughts to mind. Of course, I still cut and arrange my miniature and long stem roses, but I do tend to buy big bunches of daises, fillers, and bright colored lilies,

along with sunflowers to arrange. These are some of my favorites that I like to decorate with in the summer. I will make two arrangements using four bunches of sunflowers. Often times one bouquet of sunflowers contains three flowers, so using six sunflowers per vase will give a nice full arrangement.

If you use the clay pot décor, for example, for that afternoon picnic in the backyard, then you just need to gather the six flowers, tie a ribbon or pipe cleaner around the gathered stems, and then cut straight across so the flower heads fit flush to the top rim of your container. Green fillers are very nice to tuck in with these flowers, your choice, of course. If it is a birthday party you could add some stick balloons. Now, too, the gerbera daisies make wonderful arrangements as you could purchase up to ten gerbera for each six to eight inch vase, and that will give you a very colorful, and appealing, arrangement.

I think most flower people have their favorites, just as I do, so go for it. I enjoy arranging a big bunch of daisy mums with a big bunch of babies breath in a tall vase. This is a very attractive fresh look. Just be sure to change the water daily and pick away any green foliage from the stems. This ensures a longer life span for your pretty flowers. Also, keep your stems long so they are in proportion with your vase.

The easiest way to measure is to merely hold one of the stems next to the vase to make sure that the height of the flowers stand one and one half to two times the height of the vase. You can always build up the height by using floral accents such as marbles or rocks placed in the bottom of the vase. Your vase may be beautiful, but remember it is the flowers that want to make the main statement, so keep things in proportion, and the flowers will catch your eye.

I know you are thinking about those custom arrangements that you see and you are wondering, "How could I create those?" I'd like to say, with some practice you most certainly can. OK, you have the vase or the piece of pottery that you want to use for that special occasion and you have chosen a long and low centerpiece design for the table. First of all you need to purchase a block of floral foam, or as we like to call it, a block of oasis, from a local flower shop or a craft store. Soak it in water then cut a piece to fit snugly in your compote. Be sure also to keep the oasis raised above the vase so you can get those long stems like a gladiola or a white spider mum in the oasis to give you the length that you want. Before you begin arranging, tape the oasis with floral adhesive tape. Bring the tape across the vase and stick it to both edges with an extra small piece of tape crosswise over each end of the tape to secure it.

There you go, you're all set now to make your arrangement. Measure the length and width of the size arrangement you want.

Often times I will buy two big mixed colorful bouquets to use. Some like to place their foliage, or babies breath, in first and work from there. Or, you can place the flowers in first, then the greens, etc.



When cutting your flowers you should use some small garden snippers. The key to making a beautiful arrangement is to make sure each flower has its own space, so to speak, which means each flower has its own place, with no overlapping.

Of course you can add bows (cute for baby showers, for example), or ornaments, bling accents, fruit on sticks, or whatever you like.

I might suggest that practicing really can give you some confidence for your creations. Another good thing to do is to practice with some artificial flowers.

Get yourself some small wire cutters and a block of light styrofoam for artificial arrangements, and no water will be needed. This is a good way to practice and just think, artificial arrangements can be beautiful too. I have a very colorful one on my table right now with pink stargazers, off white daisies, and plum and lavender colored mums. Everyone thinks that it is real. Of course fresh is my favorite, but the artificial is a great way to practice different shapes and sizes.

Once you begin to use your imagination, or photos you admire, there are endless possibilities, which you can use to create some beautiful designs. If you have a basket or a certain container that you'd like to use, you can

purchase an economical vase to place in that certain container to protect it from getting wet. It just has to be able to fit into the basket or vase that you would rather not place the oasis in directly. If it is a crystal vase for example, place some green leaves or crinkled cello paper between the two vases to camouflage the inside container. Just be sure to tape it in so it is secure and doesn't tip over.

There are all different sizes and shapes of floral arrangements to design and that is the beauty of it. You might ask yourself what to do with those very tall vases that you have. Well, one idea I like is to buy about forty long stem beautiful gladiolas, trim the stems and place in the tall vases half filled with water. It is as easy as that and now what an elegant effect this is. Beautiful enough for a wedding!

Speaking of weddings and wedding bouquets, that is something you can also create.

Of course, if it is a very large wedding that you are thinking of, I would encourage you to use a well known florist, especially if you need church arrangements, pew bows, etc. And, if it is to be catered, you will need assistance. On the other hand, if you have a small wedding, at home, and you have a strong desire to accomplish some arrangements and bouquets, by all means, create them. It will make for some fabulous memories.

Hand tied bouquets are very popular and fairly simple to make. Whatever flowers you decide upon, gather all the stems together just the way you want them to be. Then you can wrap the stems with ribbons and secure them with pearl headed pins. Cut the stems the length you wish. Satin, lace, or cloth ribbons are available at the craft stores. Usually there are all sorts of beautiful wedding accents to buy.

Gather all the stems after they are cut, and tightly tie a piece of ribbon around the base of the stems to hold them together. Now go ahead and begin wrapping your stems with ribbon.

Be sure the ribbon is wrapped snugly. You can over-lap the ribbon, if necessary, and when you reach the end of the stems, tie a knot with the ribbon, and pin in the ends. Place a row of cut pearl headed pins in a straight row from top to bottom of the ribbon wrapped stems. Just use a wire cutter to cut the pins shorter as you don't want the pins to stick anyone. This way, they just go in the stems. Very pretty! Use your creativity for the bouquets and ribbons.

Boutonnieres and corsages can be ordered unless you want to wire, tape, and glue.

Well, it's all fun, but, as you know, flowers are perishable just as food is. Flowers are normally very last minute, but of course you can do your creating a day ahead of time. Just try to keep everything cool, so the freshness of the flowers shows through for the big day. If you keep them in the fridge, be sure to wrap them in plastic.

Keep the flowers away from the fresh fruit, because fruit gives off certain gases that can harm the flowers. Do not put them in the freezer.

Large wedding arrangements, as well as funeral wreaths, should be ordered with a good local florist. It just makes it much easier for you. It is always proper, of course, to purchase a healthy green plant, and place some fresh carnations, or daisies, or roses in water vials into the soil of the plant for a sympathy gift. This sort of thing you can easily deliver yourself as with a flowering plant, or dozen roses arranged.



Small, delicate, dainty nosegays are a must have and oh, so pretty, especially for that graduate, recital, flower girl, birthday lady, or just because. Purchasing or picking just the right flowers can depend upon the season.

Of course, with the digital world we live in now just about any type of flowers can be shipped to you.

Remember hearing about forget-me-nots, or those tiny perennials that everyone loves, especially the poets? Oh yes, and don't forget Lilies of the Valley, the tiny white, bell shaped flowers, and blue bonnets, the Texas bonnet shaped flowers. All of these small stemmed flowers are easily gathered into a small nosegay, and tied with #2 ribbons, letting the ribbons flow below the stems, using an assortment of colors. Small delicate bouquets as these are perfect for just the right person.

Presentation bouquets for the girl walking down the red carpet, or the bouquet to be given to the valedictorian graduate make a wonderful statement. Again, this is a layering process, but we will be graduating down, so to speak, as a presentation bouquet is an arm held bouquet. You can use fillers also with the dozen roses or mixed bouquets. Fillers include bunches of assorted greens, babies breath, wax flowers, lavender, or any small headed flowers. Layer your flowers and fillers and gather all your stems. First start with a stem or two of filler and one rose, then more filler and graduate down with another single rose and fillers, then three roses and filler, then four roses and filler, and then three roses and filler. Tie all stems together at the base of your bouquet and trim the stems neatly. And finally, tie a large fluffy bow (same color as the roses) around the bouquet. You can also wrap this bouquet with cello of any color, leaving the flowers in open air and the bow at the base of the bouquet around the cello. This makes a nice effect for a presentation bouquet.

If you want to place the rose stems in water vials, then the bouquet should be wrapped. Presentation bouquets as well as nosegays can be used as centerpieces also. For example, once the bouquets are presented and then taken home, they can be placed on the dining room table for further enjoyment. My husband's sister-in-law, Mary, always makes the prettiest centerpieces for her table. She even posted one on face book for all of us to enjoy. It was Easter, if I remember correctly, and she used some of her garden flowers, along with candles and a ceramic bunny. It was just the way she placed everything. It really was impressive to me, just as a painting would be. When you are at home usually you have the time to decorate effectively, just the way you want it to be.

Decorating with green and flowering plants is a wonderful way to have a long lasting live decoration for weeks. I like to fill baskets, pottery and glassware with plants and Spanish, or green moss. This type of garden look gives a very fresh feel to the home.

It is nice to use two inch, four inch, and six inch plants such as kalanchoe, miniature roses, mums, and tropical exotics along with philodendron, peperomias, African violets, wandering jew, orchids, and even cacti. Be sure to line your containers first with plastic wrap, especially if you are using a basket because you will be lightly watering your plants periodically, and/or, changing the plants around, or adding small flower arrangements.

One last thing I would like to cover before wrapping up this little book, and that is preserving flowers. Some people want to preserve their flowers, and I must admit that it isn't always that easy to do at home. First, of course, is pressing those delicate African violet type flowers in a book. The pressed flowers can be used for making cards, or framed designs. For my treasured friend Molly, I pressed some miniature rose foliage and white periwinkles, then arranged and glued them on paper and framed the design. It made a nice nostalgic floral wall hanging. Actually this was fun to do, and the important part is that she really liked it.

I was happy that I chose the green and purple leaves with the ivory colored flowers, a good color combination. Roses can be tied and hung upside down to air dry. It takes about a week for the roses to thoroughly dry, and then they can be arranged. The various colored roses, other than red, work best. The silica gel sand is another method used for drying flowers and works good as the sand takes the moisture out of the flowers, allowing them to dry. Craft stores usually carry this particular sand and normally the directions for use will be included. The flowers then can be mounted, arranged, placed under glass domes, or, of course, just gathered and placed in a vase with perhaps some needed wiring of the stems. Freeze drying, which is done professionally, is an excellent way to preserve flowers, especially wedding bouquets.

So, there you have it, and I know you must be anxious to get started creating. Just be sure to have fun with your flower projects, and good luck!



© 2014 Floral Starters - All Rights Reserved