Study Guide: Creating A Linear Vertical Arrangement

Rittners Floral School
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Contents That You Will Need To Create This Arrangement:

° Container
° Foam
° Glads (4) or other linear flower
° Carnations (5 stems)
° Mini or Medium Sunflower (At least 3 stems)
° Baker fern/Leather leaf
° Curly willow or other branchy material

The contents are approximate depending upon the size of your container, what flowers are available to you, their level of development, how dense you like your design, and your own specific tastes. For example we used four glads. You may substitute another linear flower. If you used delphinium, it may take 5-6 stems depending upon the size of the flowers and your own tastes.
What is a Line Arrangement?

Line arrangements, are also sometimes called Linear Arrangements, Western Line, and even Geometrical Designs. Essentially they are floral designs that are based on geometrical shapes. These include a huge range of shapes such as verticals, horizontals, diagonals, L Shapes, inverted T, and a range of triangular variants (eg. equilateral triangles, right triangles, scalene triangles) and more.

Technically a round or hemispherical shaped arrangement is also a “geometrical” shape but it sometimes can feel confusing to put it into the same category as a triangle. Yet round and oval shapes are so widespread and important for the floral designer that we usually classify it in its own category, as simply “round designs” (as opposed to line or linear arrangements.) You have already learned a round arrangement.
Many people who do floral designing find line arrangements to be difficult and/or intimidating. It is often easier to stick with round and oval shapes. But learning line designing need not be scary if it is taught well. (And that is why you are taking these lessons! We are excellent teachers! Just had to pat myself on the back! Ok. Enough of that....Let’s go on....)

Learning linear designs **gives you many more design options in your floral art.** Being able to make linear designs makes you a much more competent designer. Your designing may even amaze your friends and family.

Linear designs **can be adapted to any season and any holiday.**

When you really get skillful at line arrangements you can even **play with multiple linear motifs within one design.**
What shape are we going to make?

The arrangement that we are going to make in this lesson is called a “vertical vase arrangement.”

It literally goes up and down, as you can see in the photo.

Verticals can be made very large and impressive (with very little effort!)

It is possible to make a vertical arrangement that can be viewed all the way around but they typically tend to have a front side and a back side. (This tends to be true of most line arrangements in general.)

It is a nice design for a reception area or entry area. It would work on a mantel or sideboard table.

With the appropriate colors and symbols it could be created for any holiday or occasion.
Every flower arrangement starts with a container. Containers are among the floral designer’s best friends. Like your live friends, each container has its own unique qualities.

The container we are using here is a footed pedestal. It looks nice when we light it up fancy for a portrait doesn’t it? But bluntly just about any container can be used for this arrangement.

I like this container because it is rich looking and has a certain gravitas. Another term for a container that has become popular lately is “vessel.” It does sound a bit snobbier doesn’t it? Because this container looks fancy I will call it a vessel. But regardless of whether you design in a “container” or a “vessel” as long as it holds water/foam and you like it, it could be used for this vase arrangement.
This particular container required 2/3 block of foam, but again your mileage may vary depending upon what container you choose to use. What is important is that you wedge your foam in tightly so it doesn’t move around on you.

Some designers use green florist tape across the top of the foam/container to attach to the opposite sides of the vessel to try to make sure that the foam is not going anywhere.

I don’t do that unless I have to. The reason is that any spots of foam on the top that are covered by the florist tape become dead zones as far as stem insertions are concerned.
One very easy way to get a vertical shape is to start with some linear flowers. Glads are a lovely example. They are tall, come in a variety of colors and are impressive. Look at how tall this design has become with one quick and easy stem insertion!

Now don’t fuss if you can’t find glads when you want to create this arrangement. Other linear flowers would include liatris, larkspur, delphinium, bells of Ireland, and snapdragon. Any of these could be used. Would the design look exactly like the one presented? No. But you could still create a very attractive vertical vase arrangement and that is the purpose of this lesson.

You may even want to experiment with variations in your linear flowers. Consider how the total feeling of the arrangement would be different when using bells of Ireland instead of glads!
Place a second glad next to the first one but slightly lower.

Impressive isn't it?

Don’t fuss. You CAN DO THIS!
A third glad is placed lower to the left.

Notice we are placing them like stepping stones or stairs. (One to the left, another to the right and then a third to the left.) We are keeping them in close to each other.

Are you seeing a vertical shape taking place? Think of it like a skyscraper in a big city.
We are going to use the glads almost like a backdrop against which we will place some of our mass shaped flowers like our carnations.
We are creating another step like arrangement with the carnations starting towards the right and going lower to the left...
And then a carnation down below as shown. We will be adding several more carnations even lower in a few moments.

Here is a thought question. The alternating carnations are also creating a line from the top down towards the base (just as the glads did.) Could this arrangement be made just using mass flowers and not using a linear flower at all?

The answer is .... (drumroll............) definitely yes. It can be done. I think that the use of the linear glads first, make this vertical even more obvious, and a lot richer looking. But it could also be done quite nicely with just mass flowers, form flowers or some combination of the two.
For some variety let’s add some sunflowers.

They are bright, bold and make you feel good.

They also provide a nice contrast between the darker red violet glads and the pastel pink carnations.
Add a second sunflower. Notice there is a pattern here.

Just as we staggered the placement of the carnations, we are following a similar approach with the sunflowers, gradually working them from top to bottom.
Dr Steve poses in a great action shot!

Here are the three sunflowers alternating with the three carnations. The trick to getting this kind of effect is to do the carnations first, leaving plenty of space, and then adding the sunflowers.
Now let's add a couple of carnations down near the bottom of the arrangement, one to either side of the sunflower at the base.

We could simply add some foliage or moss to cover the foam. I think you can see that the vertical has been created quite nicely.

But wait.... There's mooooorreeee!

Let's play with this just a little more.
We consider glads to be a linear flower, but **look at this great trick.** We can **cut the individual florets off along the stem and place them into an arrangement just as we could place a mass or form flower.** (While the flower is no longer ‘linear’ in the strict sense of the term, it still can be used quite effectively). You can do this trick with many of the linear flowers.
This trick is used in this arrangement to add several florets at the very bottom of the arrangement and also one small piece of glad between the sunflower and carnation that are at the bottom right of the design.

It quite literally allows our eyes to follow flowers from the very top of the first glad, right down to the metallic base. The vertical vase arrangement is much larger.
The last flower placements effectively completed our vertical vase arrangement.

All we need to do is add some foliage to cover the mechanics.

But we are going to do something extra. This next step is totally optional. Notice that we are adding some curly willow along both sides of the design.
The addition of some branchy stuff adds a certain amount of ‘fluidity’ to the composition. There is a nice contrast between curvy branches and the very straight glads, carnations and sunflowers.

They don’t have to be exactly the same on each side. But the addition of the willow or any other branchy type material certainly makes the arrangement feel more dynamic.

Try it. You will find that some people love the effect of the branchy stuff. Some people don’t like it at all. Ultimately you will create this kind of an effect (or not) depending upon the tastes of design’s recipient.
A few pieces of baker fern or any other foliage at the bottom in between the flowers and around the back lower side of the design are appropriate finishing steps.

Don’t forget to add water to the foam every few days!
Impressive and yet really easy to create! Also notice, the number of flowers used here was not all that many: Approx 4 glads, 5 carnations, and three sunflowers.

Many designers think that the way to design is to throw as many flowers as you can into your arrangement. But that is not really necessary if you know what you are doing. Remember, it’s not what you use, it’s how you use it.
Some Questions To Consider:

1. What is a line arrangement?
2. What are three alternative names for line arrangements?
3. Name four different line arrangement shapes.
4. Why is it important to know how to create line arrangements?
5. Why did Dr. Steve start by using glads in this line arrangement?
6. Do you think the same trick could be applied to creating other line designs? Why or why not?
7. Could this vertical line be made just using mass or form flowers?
8. Are linear flowers like glads always linear? Explain why or why not.
9. Many designers simply throw a lot of flowers into a design to achieve their effect. How many flowers were used in this arrangement? Why would the number of flowers used in this design be significant?
10. Why did Dr. Steve use curly willow towards the end of the design?
11. How does the choice of whether to use branchy material or not depend upon the recipient of the design?
Linear floral art can result in impressive floral pieces that look complex but are actually quite easy to achieve.

We hope you enjoyed this online lesson. We certainly enjoyed presenting it to you.

At Rittners Floral School in Boston we provide floral design instruction that includes a wide range of different styles and techniques.

Folks from all over the US as well as abroad, learn floral art skills from Rittners Floral School because we are great floral designers, and just as importantly because, as you can see, we are outstanding teachers!!

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