

*Twelve Tips  
For Flower Arranging.....*



*Rittners Floral School  
Boston, Ma.*

## **Introduction:**

Hi. Welcome to The Rittners School of Floral Design in Boston, MA. I am Dr Steve Rittner, Director of Rittners Floral School.

At Rittners Floral School we love to give ourselves very specific floral art assignments...We set interesting floral related goals for ourselves, and then present the results in ebooks or videos.

Floral art involves the outward presentation of flowers placed in interesting and satisfying ways.

But there is also an inner game as well. How do we approach our floral art? Are there any tips that we can share with flower arrangers that may make creating their own floral art more pleasant, easy and fun!

This ebook is the result.

My thanks to our staff including Sherry Ricupero, an amazing floral designer and teacher. Thanks also to my family. Their support is essential for these kinds of projects.

I hope you enjoy this contribution.



# *Twelve Tips for Flower Arranging*

<b>Don't be afraid to start. Just do it!</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Collect Containers</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Don't Like Or Dislike A Technique Just Because it's Easy</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Be Aware of the Various Categories of Florals</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Be Proud of things Besides the "Hallelujah Chorus" Designs</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Practice, Practice, Practice</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Learn Photographic Skills</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>It's Not Always About You</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Collect Books And/Or Images</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Just Relax And Have Fun</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Be Open-Minded About All Botanicals</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Learn To Discipline Your Designing</b>	<b>15</b>



## *Don't Be Afraid To Start*

One of the biggest problems people run into when doing their floral designing is the fear of somehow making a mistake, especially when trying something new.

Don't worry about making mistakes. First of all what you may think is a 'mistake' may actually not be one. People may look at that design and simply feel it is lovely. In other words, you may believe that something you did was a mistake, but no one else looking at that floral would see it that way.



What if it really is a mistake? Mistakes help us learn. If we don't make them, we don't learn from them.

In my opinion the most critical "mistakes" in a floral design usually have to do with bad construction mechanics. If it easily falls apart then that is an issue that most likely needs improvement.



## Collect Containers

Containers are the heart of every vase arrangement. The choice of container can definitely impact upon the character of the design and how it is perceived.

If you are selling floral art, then containers are simply a commodity to be carefully considered, purchased, used and sold along with the arranged botanicals. They are part of the art, just as oil and canvas are part of a completed oil painting.

To a floral designer, containers do become more than just a commodity. They are like our friends, with very specific strengths and weaknesses.

They are also a wonderful source of inspiration. They have unique features that you will appreciate in differing contexts.

Invest in them for your own personal work. Collect them. Periodically add to your collection. Care for them. And use them in your designing when you need to have very specific features for a floral piece that you need to display or possibly photograph and post online.

You will be amazed at how your containers will spark and inspire you.



**Collect  
Containers**

## *Don't Just Like or Dislike a Technique Because it's Easy*

At the heart of floral designing is mastery of a wide variety of techniques, and approaches. All too often people will “like” or “dislike” a technique because it is easy or harder to do. That is simplistic. Keep an open mind. Stay impassive. Don't react as to the ease of the technique or even whether you find it aesthetically pleasing. Learn as many techniques and approaches as possible and then pick and choose from them as needed to achieve the visual effect that you are trying to accomplish. You will be amazed at how some technique or approach that you may have seen or noticed somewhere may be dormant for years, then all of a sudden be useful in achieving a floral designing construction goal.



# *Be Aware of Characteristics of The Various Categories of Florals*

We can divide floral product into some major categories.

There are linear flowers like glads, liatris, bells of Ireland and delphinium.

There are form flowers that have very distinctive shapes like lilies, and anthurium.

There are mass flowers that tend to be round in shape like a carnation or a peony.

There are accent flowers (fillers) that have small florets like statice or baby's breath.

There are our foliage/mechanic covers.

There are branchy things like birch branches and curly willow.

There are berries like hypericum berries, viburnum berries and ilex.

These types each have very specific characteristics. Combinations of these will enable you to come up with all kinds of wonderful effects in your floral art.



## *Be Proud of Things Besides The "Hallelujah Chorus" Designs*

There is a kind of design that we call the "Hallelujah Chorus Design" (from Handel's Messiah ). It is that big, fancy, very expensive, dramatic designing that you look at and hear the "Hallelujah Chorus" go off in your head. Many floral designers live for these things. They immediately show them off if/when they make them. Of course it is human nature to be proud if you create something like this.

But in my opinion, there is a lot to be said for the gratification that comes from something small but cool, or the novelty that brings smiles to people's faces.

Take enjoyment from **everything** you make not just the huge expensive items.





## ***Practice, Practice, Practice.***

There has been some debate over how much deliberate practice will enable you to become expert in any field, but the reality is that the more you do, the easier the whole process gets. I know that no one loves the concept of practice. When I was a youngster learning a musical instrument, practice was synonymous with drill and boredom. But there IS something to be said for doing a lot of something you are trying to master. The more you design with flowers, the easier it gets. Pure and simple. If you are a pro, you have the opportunity to get better and faster with every design assignment. If you are a hobbyist go out and buy flowers regularly. Then play with them. Take your designing apart and remake into other things. The more you design with flowers, the more you have a chance to experiment., to see what would happen if you mixed this and that.. or positioned the stems this way or that way. **The trick is not viewing it as boring or monotonous drill, but to use it as an opportunity to PLAY!**

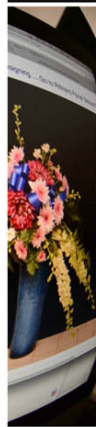


## Learn Photographic Skills

Very useful on multiple levels. The ability to take photos enables you to make images of your designing that you can keep far beyond the design's lifespan. It allows you to make what is normally considered a transient art, far more durable. Through photography you can also examine changes in your designing over time, compare various things you made, compare them with images of others' floral designing and also share your floral designing with others online. It also allows you to preserve examples of designing that may incorporate items that may not necessarily be in season.

I also believe that photographic skills can be very handy to the floral designer because they further strengthen your ability to **actually see what is there, to compose within a finite frame and to consider issues of color, balance and composition.** In other words **visual literacy in one art form can inform and strengthen skills used in another.** No. You don't need to be a techie who is into all kinds of camera gear or controls. Use a phone. Use a camera on programmed mode.

Keep the tech stuff simple. Read a book or two on photographic composition. Yes. It will make you a better floral designer.



## *It's Not Always About You...*

If you are a pro and you are selling your floral art it is definitely not about you. You are designing to meet the desires of the purchaser and the intended recipient (may not always be the same individual). That implies that even if you don't care for a certain "style" or combinations of flowers or colors, that it is not relevant. You are creating the designing for someone else. As I say to my classes, "Keep an open mind. It's not whether you would put it in your own living room. If you sell enough florals to go in other people's living rooms, you can take the profit and put whatever you want into your own living room... "

If you are a hobbyist, your designing can be a bit more self-centered. But if you are a smart hobbyist you will keep an open enough mind to be willing to consider and create many differing floral art approaches.



## Collect Books And / Or Images

Every floral designer needs sources of inspiration. One very good source is to look at the designing of others. Although print may be “old media” the format is not yet dead. There must be some reason the codex (books) have been around for so long. In spite of digitization, there continues to be an explosion of floral related print resources that are available, with more and more available each year.

The advantage of print is that you can not only browse the photos, but also open up ten or fifteen books or magazines that you own on a table and cross compare them.

While there are also a huge number of resources online, such cross comparison in the digital realm does present additional challenges.

Bottom line: Whether you prefer print or digital, **the ability to look at lots of images of various florals from many sources will help to inspire you and spark your own creativity.**



## *Just Relax And Have Fun!*



It is one thing to make every day florals. It is another to experiment and try new things. That takes courage and conviction especially if you intend to share the results with others. I have seen some hobbyists (and even pros) literally paralyzed and afraid to experiment, fearing that they “don’t have what it takes” or will never be able to do it as well as this designer or that designer.

I have found that in general people do tend to be their own worse critics, often fussing about very specific aspects of a floral piece that absolutely no one else would focus upon.

**Just relax and have fun! The more you approach your floral art as joyous fun, the better.** If the design works, fine. If it doesn’t, the design will die in a few days and you will make another.

And even if it doesn’t turn out the way you expected, you can still learn from the “mistake.”

Ironically sometimes that “mistake” may result in a floral piece that is even better than what you set out to make.

## *Be Open-Minded About All Botanicals*

People in social situations often ask what I do for a living. After I respond, that I own a floral school, the next question I am often asked is “What is my favorite flower?” They expect me to say “roses” or “orchids” or some other flower, based on my general preferences.

The reality is that **every flower is my favorite flower depending upon what it will do for me in terms of creating my design, and also depending upon what kind of psychological effect I am trying to achieve.**

Let me give you some simple examples. A rose becomes my favorite flower when I want to choose a prestige flower that is universally beloved. A carnation, on the other hand can also be my favorite flower if I am seeking something that is reasonably priced, long lasting, and available in a huge range of colors.

I think this is a more realistic way of viewing botanicals as a floral designer or flower arranger. It is based less on a general gut reaction, but rather on **an intelligent and careful analysis of how the botanical can be useful** in my art. Please consider this approach. It will expand your design options.



## *Learn To Discipline Your Designing (Amounts/Contents)*

Smart floral designers practice what we call “disciplined floral designing.” Disciplined floral designing means control of our materials-- to make them do what you want them to do and control the amounts of materials you are using. As a hobbyist this may not seem important, outside of not overspending on your vase arrangement hobby. If you eventually turn your hobby into a means of supplementing your income or into a profession, the ability to control your materials can make the difference between profit or loss.

How to do this? Decide on very specific amounts that you are going to use in a floral piece before you make it and try to adhere to that. Another strategy is to take a variety of flowers for use, and then put a few to one side, not to be used until towards the end of the designing. (like the extra amounts that you might take if you had to go back to your floral refrigerator). Either way you are consciously controlling materials.

Incidentally disciplined floral art doesn't necessarily mean small. My students have learned that even a huge piece can be “disciplined” in terms of controlling content.



## *About Rittners Floral School*

Rittners Floral School is one of the longest running and finest private floral design schools in North America.

Located in the prestigious Back Bay neighborhood of Boston, Rittners Floral School attracts students from all over North America and abroad by the excellence of its courses.

Rittners makes use of the latest educational theory, teaching and floral technologies, to bring its students outstanding diploma programs in floral designing....

Rittners Floral School's only business is floral education.

Whether your goals are rest and relaxation, stress reduction, or vocational, you will really enjoy the various hands-on workshop floral art courses offered at Rittners.



Rittners Floral School  
345 Marlborough St.  
Boston, MA. 02115 USA  
617-267-3824  
[www.floralschool.com](http://www.floralschool.com)



**What?**

**You're Still Reading this?**

You should be phoning 617-267-3824, visiting [www.floralschool.com](http://www.floralschool.com) or emailing [steve@floralschool.com](mailto:steve@floralschool.com) for more information about our great hands-on floral design classes!





*I hope you enjoyed  
this!*

*That's All for  
Now !!!!!*