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## FORMS AND FUNCTIONS OF FLOWERS AND FOLIAGES USED IN FLORAL DESIGNS

You have been asked to design a floral arrangement for a customer. The customer has indicated the type of arrangement he wants and how much he wants to spend on it. This is your first arrangement to design and create by yourself. Where do you begin?

Before creating a floral arrangement for a customer, a professional designer first plans the design in his/her mind. The principles and elements of floral design guide the designer in determining the types of flowers and foliages to select. Each type of flower and foliage used in the design will have a unique function or purpose. Additional factors the designer considers in planning the arrangement include:

- color scheme or theme of the arrangement,
- seasonal availability of the desired floral materials, and
- cost per stem of the floral materials.

In the global marketplace today, almost all flowers and foliages used in floral design are available throughout the year. However, during the season when a specific type of flower is most plentiful, its cost is lower than when the flower is out of season or in greater demand. This is characteristic of most commodities.

Availability and cost of floral materials are important considerations a designer must keep in mind when planning and pricing weddings, parties, or other events months in advance. To remain current, the designer should keep in contact with local floral wholesalers for material availability and cost.

### FORMS AND FUNCTIONS OF FLOWERS AND FOLIAGES

The individual shapes and forms\* of floral materials have important influences on the overall pattern or silhouette of American style geometric floral designs. As a result, floral designers must consider the unique characteristics of floral materials when selecting them for floral designs and arrangements.

Floral designers group flowers and foliages according to their shapes and forms. Four groups of floral materials exist based on the form and function of the floral materials within an arrangement. These groups include floral materials used for line, form, mass, and filler. Floral designers use materials from any single group, or a combination of groups, to create attractive floral arrangements.



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\* Underlined words are defined in the Glossary of Terms.

Floral materials are not limited to being in only one group. A single flower type may serve more than one function in different arrangements. The creativity of a floral designer can express the form of the same flower in several different ways. For example, a carnation functions as a mass flower in a round arrangement and as a line flower in a bud vase. In a large arrangement, the same type of carnation may function as a filler flower. If a carnation is of a new variety or color, it may even be featured in an arrangement as a form flower.

The different groups of flowers and foliage serve as a guide for creating a floral arrangement. Most floral designers begin floral design construction by placing the line flowers first to create the outline and geometric shape of the design. Form flowers added next develop the focal area, or focal point. Mass flowers added after the form flowers add visual weight to the arrangement. Filler flowers added last provide a finishing touch to the arrangement.

## LINE FLOWERS AND FOLIAGES

Line flowers are tall spikes of blossoms with florets blooming along the stem. They create the outline for an arrangement and establish the height and width of the design. Most line flowers have larger, more open blossoms at the base of their spikes, decreasing toward the tip. The natural gradation of size encourages the eye to travel along the line of the spike. This element of line assists the designer in creating the focal point of the arrangement.

Line flowers are also effective for establishing curvilinear lines in floral designs. The natural curve of floral materials, such as gladiolus, creates a curving line. Gently bending the stems of some spike flowers, such as callas, will create a more dramatic curved line in an arrangement.



Snapdragon

Delphinium

Liatris

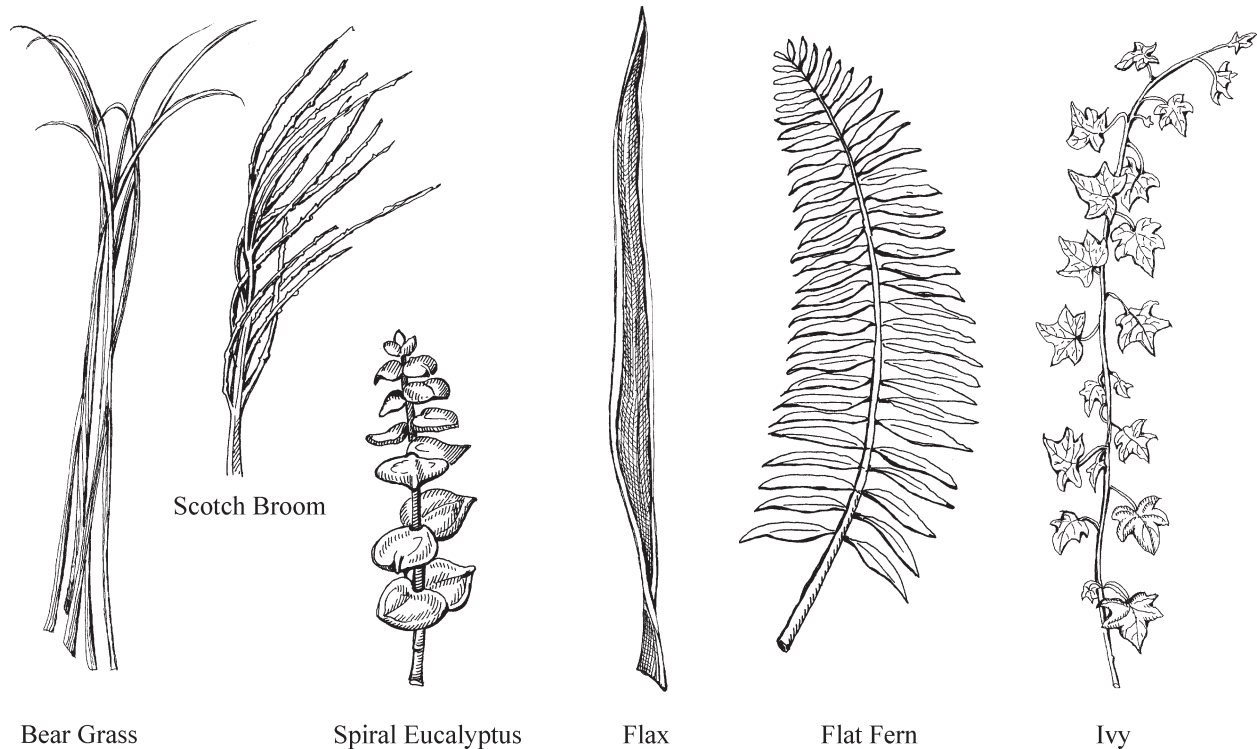
Gladiolus

Stock

Cattail

Pussywillow

Foliage types with linear shapes are effective for repeating or complimenting lines established by the line flowers. This creates repetition and unity within the design. Foliage with a curved flowing line, such as bear grass, also adds motion to a design.



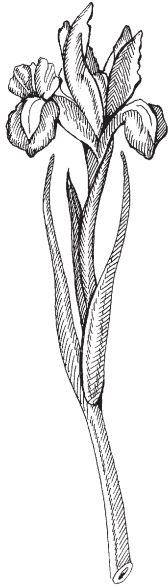
## FORM FLOWERS AND FOLIAGES

Line flowers and foliages lead the eyes to the focal area in a traditional American style geometric arrangement. The focal area is the location within the arrangement where the designer positions the form flowers, or the most unique and distinctive flowers of the design. Form flowers positioned in the focal area are unique in shape and color to attract the attention of the viewer.

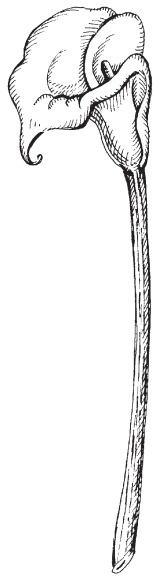
The design element of space is important in the focal area of an arrangement so the unique characteristics of the form flowers are clearly visible. The element of space also allows each flower to maintain its individuality.

Form foliages have interesting textures, colors, and/or patterns that allow them to stand out among the other floral materials in a design. Space is the essential design element that allows these novelty foliages to be noticed.

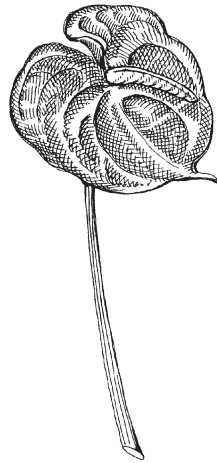
In contemporary floral arrangements, altering the natural habit of the foliage is common to create unusual forms. Such altering of foliage allows a common type of mass foliage, such as leather leaf, to have the characteristics of a form foliage.



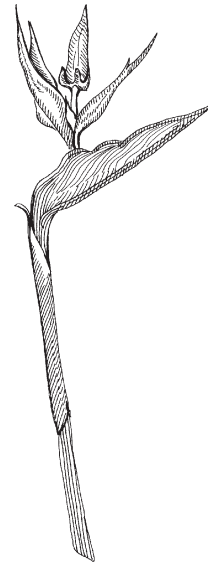
Iris



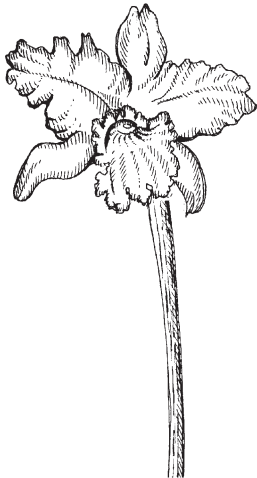
Calla



Anthurium



Bird of Paradise



Orchid



Lily



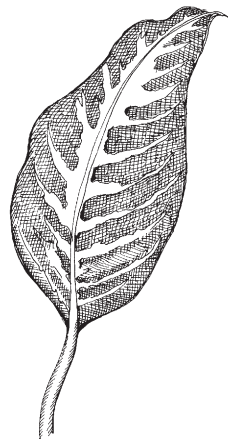
Ruscus



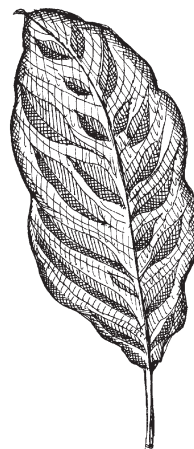
Seeded Eucalyptus



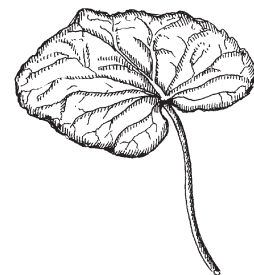
Equisetum



Diffenbachia



Calathea



Galax

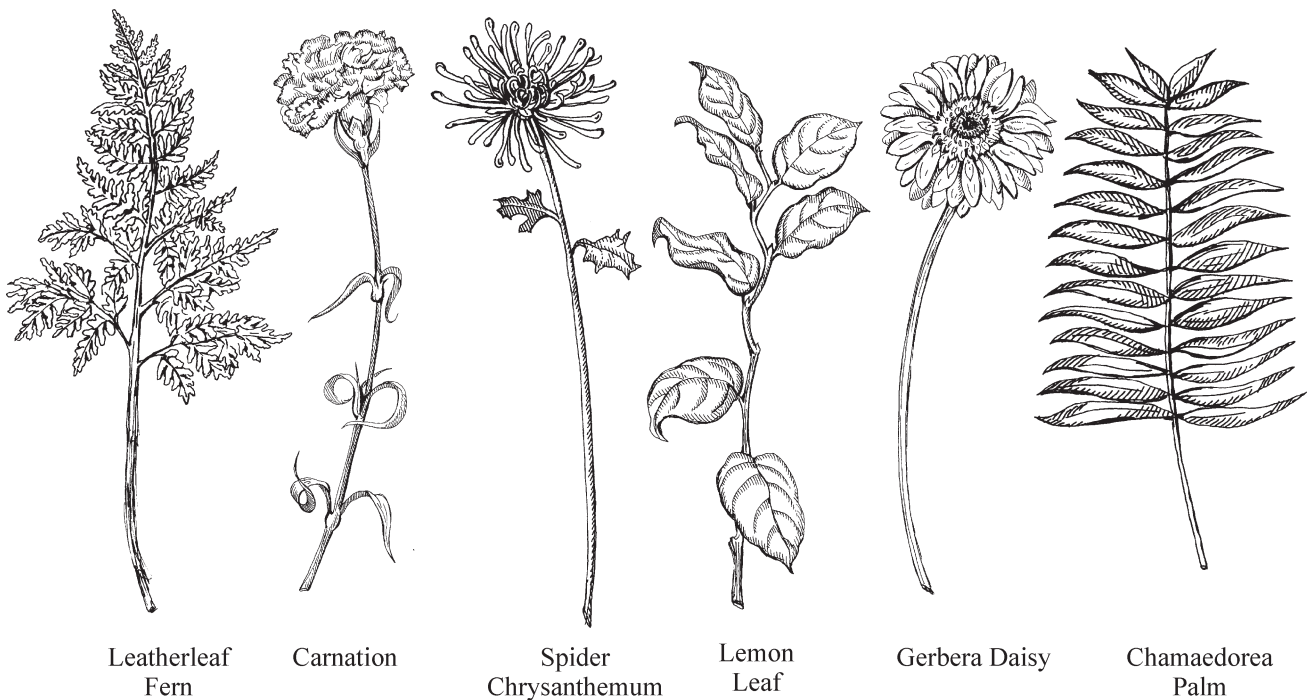
## MASS FLOWERS AND FOLIAGES

Mass flowers consist of a single stem with one solid, rounded head at the top of the stem. They function to add mass or visual weight to an arrangement.

Mass flowers inserted near the rim of the container draw attention to the focal area. They unify the arrangement with the container. Mass flowers are also effective for adding depth to the arrangement.

Mass foliage also function to add mass and visual weight to a floral arrangement. They accent the shape of the arrangement and fill in any areas not already occupied with flowers. In addition, mass foliage are effective for covering the floral foam and for concealing any other design mechanics.

Several types of foliage are suitable for adding mass to a floral arrangement. Floral designers often use more than one type of mass foliage in an arrangement to create variety and to avoid monotony.



## FILLER FLOWERS AND FOLIAGES

Filler flowers consist of small sprays of flowers. Floral designers use filler flowers to fill in the spaces among the mass flowers within the framework of a floral design. Filler flowers are also effective as an accent for the other floral materials within the arrangement.

The textures of filler flowers add another dimension to a floral arrangement. Button chrysanthemums define boldness. *Gypsophila* or baby's breath adds a delicate appearance. Statice creates line.

Floral designers who use filler flowers to add a finishing touch to an arrangement must be careful not to add too many. Doing so will create a crowded and cluttered look within the arrangement.



The small leaves of filler foliage are effective as accents in creating unity and harmony. The feathery textures of plumosa and sprengeri help lighten or soften an arrangement. The coarse textures of huckleberry and boxwood provide contrast.



Button  
Chrysanthemum



Plumosa  
Asparagus



Huckleberry



Gypsophila



Statice

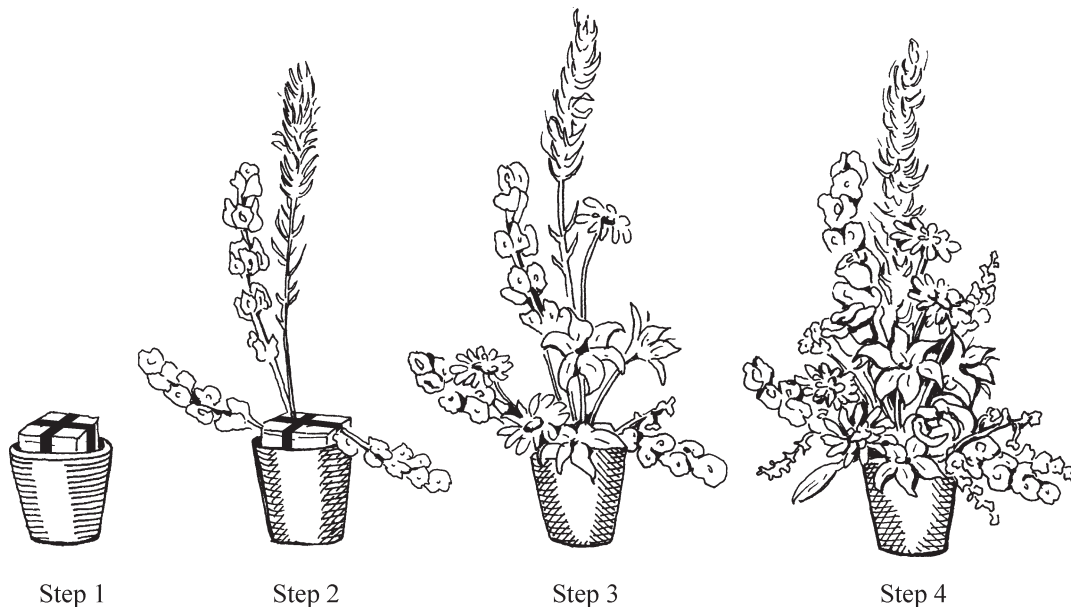


Sprengeri Asparagus

## SUMMARY

Four groups of floral materials exist based on the form and function of the floral materials within an arrangement. These groups include floral materials used for line, form, mass, and filler.

Each of the four groups of floral materials contributes to the entire design. Each material has a function and serves a purpose.



Line materials create the framework while form materials define the focal area. Mass materials provide visual weight. Filler materials provide gentle accents for the other floral materials within the arrangement.

Before choosing specific flowers and foliage for a floral arrangement, a floral designer must consider the function and purpose of the material within the arrangement. Flower color, cost, and seasonal availability are additional considerations in selecting the individual flowers and foliages for an arrangement.

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## REFERENCES

The references listed below were used in the development of this topic and can be researched for additional information. References indicated with (¹) were consulted and permission for use was given.

*Book of Floral Terminology*. Baltimore, MD: The American Institute of Floral Designers, 1999.<sup>¹</sup>

*Flowers by Design*. Lansing, MI: The John Henry Company®, 1994.<sup>¹</sup>

Griner, Charles. *Floriculture: Designing & Merchandising*. Albany, NY: Delmar Publishers Inc., 2002.

Hunter, Norah T. *The Art of Floral Design*. Albany, NY: Delmar Publishers Inc., 2000.

Ingels, Jack E. *Ornamental Horticulture: Science, Operations, and Management*. Albany, NY: Delmar Publishers Inc., 1997.

*Teleflora Encycloflora: Purchasing and Handling Fresh Flowers and Foliage*. Teleflora, 1994.<sup>¹</sup>

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Definitions for terms in this glossary are taken from *Book of Floral Terminology*, developed by the Education Committee of the American Institute of Floral Designers.

Curvilinear line – A line consisting of bends and arcs that flows in more than one direction.

Filler flower – Branched or clustered floral material, such as *Gypsophila* or statice, used to fill in spaces between the major components in an arrangement. It usually remains subordinate to the other floral materials.

Floret – A small or single flower within a flower inflorescence, such as a snapdragon.

Form – The actual shape of an individual component of a composition.

Form flower – Any plant material whose shape is the most distinctive feature, such as an iris.

Line flower – A spike or spike-like inflorescence with an elongated stem, such as gladiolus, liatris, and larkspur.

Mass flower – A single rounded flower at the top of a stem used for adding mass to a design. Foliages and accessories may also be termed “mass” when used to cover mechanics or to add mass.

Pattern – The silhouette or outline of an arrangement, or flower, as observed against its background.



## BRAIN PROBES

**SHORT ANSWER/LISTING:** Answer the following questions or statements in the space provided or on additional paper.

1. Name several factors a floral designer considers when planning and selecting floral materials for an arrangement.

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2. List the four groups that exist for floral materials based on the form and function of the floral materials within an arrangement.

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3. Describe the function or purpose of each of the groups of flowers and foliages that are used in a floral arrangement.

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4. Describe the sequence of placing line, form, mass, filler flowers, and foliages in a floral arrangement.

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5. Differentiate between a line flower and a mass flower.

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6. Why do floral designers often use more than one type of mass foliage in a floral arrangement?

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7. What happens to a floral arrangement if too many filler flowers are added to the design?

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**MULTIPLE CHOICE:** Circle the letter next to the correct answer.

8. All of the following are mass flowers except
- a. orchids
  - b. carnations
  - c. roses
  - d. daisies
9. All of the following are line flowers except
- a. gladiolus
  - b. daisies
  - c. stock
  - d. snapdragons
10. When ordering flowers from a wholesale florist, one should consider
- a. availability
  - b. cost
  - c. colors
  - d. all of the above

**TRUE/FALSE:** Circle the “T” if the statement is true or “F” if it is false.

- T   F   11. During the season when a specific type of flower is most plentiful, its cost is higher than when the flower is out of season.
- T   F   12. Mass flowers add visual weight to a floral design.
- T   F   13. Altering the natural habit of a common type of mass foliage allows it to take on the characteristics of filler foliage.
- T   F   14. A line flower consists of a single stem with one solid, rounded head at the top of the stem.
- T   F   15. Compared to plumosa, the coarse texture of boxwood helps soften an arrangement.

# Floral Identification

C M C P E H T R D U L E D P H M M Y G T O D A N T A A B J B  
 L V S H U T L R N M X X H K L W S Z L L H A K D Q U I P P L  
 Z L Q G X M J O A H Q T M W X U K C H I F O F I K G L T G J  
 M V N S N E T N L A N U S C M E M N J A L L A C B D L G I I  
 N O U E I G T P E M I H L A N P N O I T A N R A C L R H G I  
 P T G S Q H F L R N U R N O H X R B S T X N B G W A C P S D  
 B I E L U N B U I P C M R N Y U H B F A Y Y N O S B I C J T  
 T G C R A T Z H F I Z O E H X V V E Q C S B L R A B O Z X O  
 B M I X Q D P E O V K F F H F Y R R E B E L K C U H T P U M  
 F U T T S L I Y S B A F F R T N I M R O I Q H H I S M X V D  
 M X A P E E A O L I G S A K B N L E V W Z N M I B F C N I U  
 R G T D J N Z B L A D A E A G A A Q Y M Y R N D F W I U Z G  
 P R S E E D E D E U C A L Y P T U S R E E Y X F Y S C U S J  
 X U N U E Q Q I B P S U R A H J S D Y O V G G Z C K X D R I  
 H N B I N C U F H H U S E A X U I X M R Y C G O N C W E I O  
 E B T H O R I F Z I J R H L P L R L E Q H U T T Z V T I F V  
 K O L E H L S E A F O S T W A F I M T M J C Q P A T L Z V A  
 X N C J X W E N B D A P A G B R O U Y G H B N K A G C B F N  
 B A N R G S T B E V P E E E E V I D M B C F X K E K J Q P X  
 D S T E P S U A A E N R L G G M I P R U W E Y B V U X C V C  
 X L Y A M N M C R E B S N N R N L O S I J K K X U P F S W T  
 E M I L Y A L H G E H E N D O D O L E V B O I I J D S S P H  
 Y E N F H P P I R Z R T L Z B M T O D Y L F I R E U C H L B  
 K S Y C M D R A A P L B A U N F E E Y R Q H S V O F Z B M E  
 T B K B B R D U S T O C K L P O L L G U C T L T R G F U A K  
 S T S A J A G W S B R J D V A Z E B B X S X V A I M O S T U  
 D A G G I G B V Q M T I V I E C D M E P G H P A S I G Q Z W  
 A Y H S F O K I B H K S S M J Q K R S W X L B V Q K Z P S M  
 E U Y A L N M R R P M W M E E A J J A Y W K U A O K W J D E  
 O Y M L A A X B D P U Z B E M C Z Q H L P A U H U S Q Y J L

Anthurium  
 Baby's Breath  
 Beargrass  
 Bells of Ireland  
 Bird of Paradise  
 Calathea  
 Calla  
 Carnation  
 Cattail  
 Chamaedorea Palm

Chrysanthemum  
 Delphinium  
 Diffenbachia  
 Equisetum  
 Flat Fern  
 Flax  
 Galax  
 Gerbera Daisy  
 Gladiolus  
 Huckleberry

Iris  
 Ivy  
 Leatherleaf Fern  
 Lemon Leaf  
 Liatris  
 Lily  
 Orchid  
 Plumosa  
 Pussy Willow  
 Ruscus

Scotch Broom  
 Seeded Eucalyptus  
 Snapdragon  
 Spiral Eucalyptus  
 Sprenger  
 Statice  
 Stock

## **CONCEPTS TO CREATIVITY**

- Visit a cut flower wholesaler. Walk through the floral coolers and identify the four basic forms of flowers and foliages.
- Sketch or find a picture of an arrangement containing all four forms of plant materials. Identify how they are used in the arrangement.
- Sketch or find a picture of an arrangement using only two forms of plant materials.
- A customer wants iris included in an arrangement to be delivered in December. Would you be able to get this flower from your local wholesaler and how much would it cost? Suggest alternatives if the flower is not available.
- Alter a foliage to change it from a mass foliage to form foliage.
- Prepare a display of flowers and foliages and group them according to forms. Change the display as you receive new shipments and label the plant materials by name.

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