

Best AVM Articles for 2001

Edna Rourke – Underwater Flower Arrangements

(Nov-Dec, 2000)

p. 52

An underwater flower arrangement is an arrangement that is completely submerged in water and exhibited in a transparent container.

As in any other interpretive arrangement, its purpose is to display African violet blossoms in a pleasing and artistic way. The African violet blossom should be the focus or center of interest in the design. The blossoms are enhanced, supported and emphasized by the use of both interesting line and plant material. Cut plant material is used in these arrangements.

In an interpretive design class, interpretation of the title of the class is the goal. This interpretation can be either suggestive or very obvious. It doesn't mean that the interpretation has to be literal. The choice is yours.

As in any other designs, the same elements and principles of design apply. The AVSA Judges' Handbook is an excellent source of information and lists and explains all of these elements and principles.

To begin your underwater arrangement:

Select the container: It should be of clear glass and free of any design or etching. A design or pattern in the glass will be distracting and take away from the design. Examples of suitable containers are brandy snifters, bowls, jar and fish tanks (that are clear glass) and bubble bowls.

Select plant material: Keep in mind that depending on the shape and thickness of the glass of the container you use, everything you put in the container will be magnified when water is added. A round bowl will magnify more than either a vertical or straight-sided container.

Make sure all of your material is clean: Be selective with all of the components. Wash all plant material to be used and take off any damaged foliage or other imperfections.

When selecting the blossoms to be used, choose varieties that have some substance to them rather than the very delicate ones. They are more likely to hold up better and will not deteriorate as easily. Try to choose freshly opened blossoms as well as some buds.

Try to do your arrangements in advance so you have time to try it in your container with water and make any adjustments necessary.

If you plan on using a bubble bowl, remember your design will have to be inverted. You will have to make sure that all of your materials are anchored securely.

Mechanics: The same mechanics you would use in a standard design to hold everything together may be used in an underwater arrangement. However, in an underwater arrangement, material is used to conceal the mechanics. You can use pin holders, floral clay or straws wrapped with floral tape to hold the stems of blossoms or plant material. Any of these may be anchored with cling. Fine floral wire or fish line may be used to hold fine line material and foliage together before anchoring to a base. Fine gravel or stones, shells, clear marbles or glass chips are some examples of materials you

can use to cover a pin holder. Remember, before using any of these items; wash them thoroughly to remove any dirt.

A glue gun also works quite well in an underwater arrangement. The plant material is able to absorb water through the stems and leaves and the blossoms stay fresh. However, in a standard arrangement this is not possible.

Line material: There are many kinds of materials that can be used. The following are just some examples: various types of willow branches, bittersweet vine, wisteria vine, grape vine, spirea, forsythia, ivy, barberry, cotoneaster, Chinese holly, etc.

Foliage: Again, there are many plants available to use. Examples are: boxwood, holly, ivy, African violet leaves, Columnea, Nematanthus, ajuga, pachysandra, etc. are but a few.

Once you get everything together, practice before show time and you'll find how easy it becomes as well as just how much fun.