

Gather a



Winter Bouquet



A well-balanced arrangement of grass and miniature ivy.

Although dried plant material cannot compete with fresh flowers in color it has a special appeal of its own. Color seems somewhat less important because there is a special beauty and character in the texture and unusual shapes that dried material takes on. Lines are graceful and there is a lightness and a delicacy which suggests simple line designs rather than mass arrangements.

An advantage of dried plant material is that as you tire of one arrangement you can take it apart and rearrange the materials in a different design. The same arrangement carried through the winter becomes monotonous, dusty and messy-looking. To give your dried material a lift, you can add a few fresh flowers or growing ivy occasionally. However, dried materials should never be placed in water for the stems rot. Whenever fresh flowers are used with dried plant material, they should be put in a separate water-holding container. Place this container among the plant material so it doesn't show. If you combine wheat with gladioli, as is done sometimes, it is at a time when wheat is as available as are the glads.

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EXTENSION SERVICE

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY
OF AGRICULTURE AND APPLIED SCIENCE

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Plant Materials Suitable For Drying

Bells of Ireland	Milk weed pods
Bittersweet	Pentstemon or Beard's Tongue
Brome grass	Pine cones
Cattails	Plume grass
Celosia or Cockscomb, both types	Pussy Willow
Chinese lanterns	Queen Anne's Lace
Dictamnus or Gas Plant pods	Radish seed pods
Everlasting	Reeds
Goldenrod galls	Russian Olive berries
Gourds	Salvia
Grasses	Sour Dock
Grains — wheat, flax, oats, etc.	Statice
Honesty or Lunaria	Strawflowers
Hydrangea	Sumac
Larkspur	Yarrow
Lily and Tulip pods	Yucca pods

Gather And Dry Materials

All of the materials listed as suitable for drying grow in North Dakota. Experience and your imagination may suggest other possibilities. When your materials are dry, store away in boxes for future use.

For much of the material, drying has been done already before you gather it, as is true of the various seed pods, such as milkweed and radish pods.

In drying flowers, such as cockscomb, strawflowers, sumac, Queen Anne's Lace and yarrow, remove the leaves to stop further growth. Then tie in small, loose bunches and hang them, with their heads down, in a cool, dark place. Darkness is essential for preserving their color. Thorough drying takes at least two weeks. The stem of cockscomb may be so weak and brittle that you will need to remove it and use florist wire or pipe cleaner for a stem.

Gather sour dock at various times during the growing season for a variety of color — green, pinkish, beige, light brown and deep chocolate brown. Unless it is dry already when you gather it, hang dock in a cool, dark place.

Cattails may be cut from the time they appear until the end of summer for a variety of color. Those cut early are less apt to split and scatter seeds. The very slender cattail is easier to use in arrangements and is beginning to appear in North Dakota sloughs. If stems and leaves are still green the slender cattail will not pop open. To prevent mature cattails from opening, cover with shellac or with self-polishing kitchen wax.

Prick a hole in the ends of gourds with a large needle to allow them to dry thoroughly inside. Otherwise they may decay and have to be discarded. Wax gives your gourds a high durable gloss. Rub on paste wax and polish briskly with a soft cloth to make the gourds shine. Additional coats of wax will further brighten the colors and prolong the life of the gourds. For higher gloss, shellac or varnish may be used.

Wax to give your gourds a high, durable gloss.



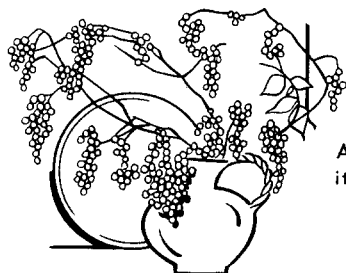
Shellac or varnish gives gourds a high gloss and brighter color.

Florists think enough of yarrow, a yellow umbel type flower, that they raise it both for fresh and dried arrangements. It has good lasting qualities and retains its yellow color.



Two spikes of sansieveria give height. Yarrow or Queen Anne's lace might be used for the umbel shapes in foreground.

Bittersweet is popular in fall arrangements. Use it in your arrangement before it becomes dry and brittle. Because it is a twining plant, it tangles and breaks easily when very dry. When you gather plant material be sure to cut rather than pull it, lest you uproot and destroy it. If a plant is on the state's conservation list, of course you will not pick it at all.

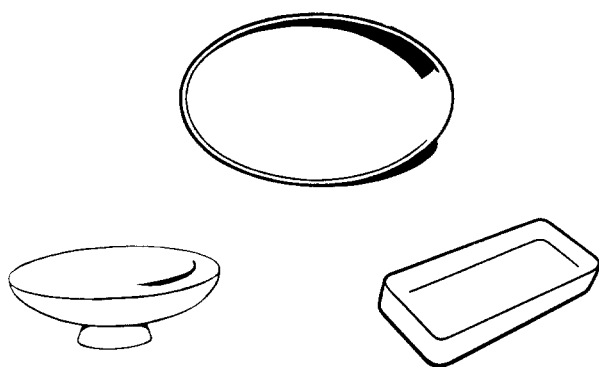


Arrange bittersweet before it is dry and brittle.

Another method for drying plant material is to wipe it with a non-salty oil and put it flat between layers of newspaper for several weeks. Leaves and ferns are dried successfully by this method. Place a board or other weight over the layers until dry. Newspaper layers may need to be changed several times before they stop absorbing plant moisture.

If you want curved stems for some of the seed pods, tie them together first. Hold the stems under hot water until they are thoroughly wet. Shape them to desired curves and let them hang upside down to dry. Standing grasses and greens in kegs or fruit jars to dry will develop curves in stems.

Autumn leaves are sometimes treated with glycerine to keep them soft and somewhat leathery in appearance. Cut leaves when they are just beginning to turn, before they dry on the trees. After they are cut, put the stems immediately into a 50 per cent solution of glycerine and water. It will take two or three weeks for the stems to take up as much of the solution as they can absorb. Add more water if necessary during this period. Wipe autumn leaves with an oiled cloth to keep them from curling.



Shallow containers are good.

Containers And Bases

A shallow container is good, especially when you have a line design in mind. Or, since no water is needed, you may eliminate the container and use a polished wood base. The base may be a cross section, a little over one-half an inch thick, of a burl or a tree trunk. Sand the wood on both sides until it is perfectly smooth. Wrap sandpaper around a block of wood, about the size of a blackboard eraser, for easy handling. Finish the wood with a clear finish, using 2 or 3 coats of penetrating seal or varnish.

Another suggestion for bases is masonite or plywood. Cut this material in circles, squares, or free form, any shape or size to suit the purpose. A good finish is paint or enamel. Use neutral colors — black, gray or off-white. Bright colored bases would offer too much contrast with the dry plant material.

Bases help complete the arrangement just as well as vases or low bowls. They can be used with a base to improve the apparent balance of the whole composition. Sometimes a large area needs to be more adequately filled. Then select a base to extend the dimensions of the arrangement.

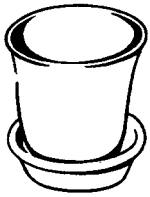
Tools, Holders And Accessories

Sharp shears or pruners are needed for cutting rather than tearing plant material when gathering it.

Needlepoint holders are used for dry arrangements as well as for fresh. Use a needlepoint holder and modeling clay to hold driftwood in place. Chicken wire must be used in a vase. Since water is not present, styrofoam can be used too. Punch holes where you want the stems to go, since stems are so brittle they may break if forced into the styrofoam. Sand in a vase will hold dry materials.

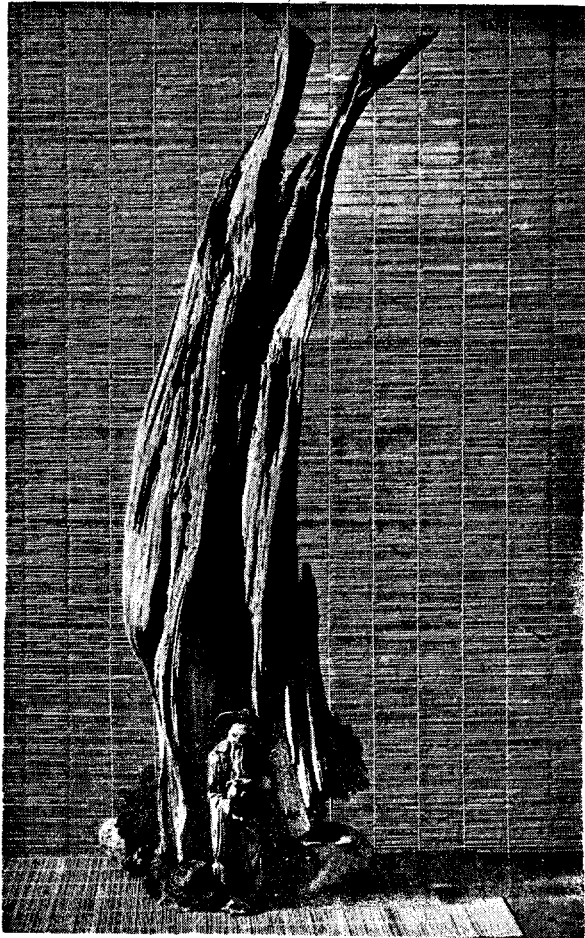


Use modeling clay to anchor needle point holder.



Chicken wire or sand will hold plant material in a deeper vase.

To hold needle point holders in place, use modeling clay or florist's clay. You might find use for corsage wire and florist's tape to help hold materials where you want them. If a stem is too short, you can lengthen it with another stem, holding the two together with florist's tape.



Drift wood and figurine.

Sticks, pebbles, and stones gathered from the woods and roadside will often add interesting texture and line to your arrangements.

They're hard to find on the spur of the moment, so start a collection when you don't really need them. Keep them stored and ready for use in your flower-tool cabinet.



When cutting materials for drying you may find an interesting piece of well-weathered wood to use in one of your arrangements. In North Dakota petrified wood may be a possibility.

Interesting stones in several sizes are excellent in low bowl designs or with wood bases. Pebbles or shells may be used to cover the needle point holder.

Basic Principles

Flower arranging can be as simple or as complicated as you make it. But with dry materials it is best to keep it simple. The important thing is to add cheer to your home and have fun doing it.

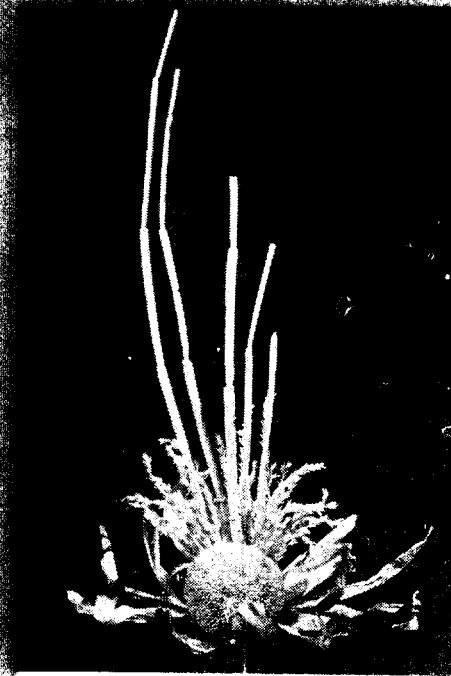


Corn tassels, dock and figurines.

To achieve balance each stem, flower or seed pod you add to an arrangement should form an imaginary triangle. It is visual balance you are seeking, not necessarily actual, that creates beauty.

No matter what you do, each arrangement should have the elements of good design; that is, proper proportion, good balance, harmony and rhythm. But there are no hard-and-fast rules for the art of flower arrangement. Once you really know the rules, you will know too when you can break them.

A good design avoids a flat look. It has a center of interest and this center of interest should be low enough to give the arrangement weight.



Use different heights and different amounts of material. Corn stems, tassels and leaves with osage orange are used here.

Harmony is important. To be artistic your plant material and container should belong together, and the design should be appropriate for its particular setting. Some dry material is dainty and light weight. Others are heavy and coarse. Keep this in mind when combining material in an arrangement.

Odd numbers are better than even numbers in a good composition. Repetition of forms and shapes makes for effective arrangements and gives rhythm to the design. Use different heights and different amounts of materials. Let stems curve as they want to. Try to avoid placing two objects of the same height or size in the same arrangement.

In making an arrangement, start with the tallest object or plant material. Then place the next tallest, which may be about $\frac{2}{3}$ the height of the tallest. Place a third piece which is about $\frac{1}{3}$ the height of the tallest object. These three pieces usually outline the triangle and may complete the arrangement. Or add more material if needed for a good design. Remember to keep the larger, heavier-looking material near the base. Spikes give height, direction and grace. Open spaces are good at the top but there should be no vacant spaces at the bottom of any line design. The foundation must always appear solid.

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