

Identifying Floral Design Tools and Supplies

IMAGINE trying to paint a picture without a canvas or a brush. Even with a wide variety of paints with which to work, you could not create the artwork without tools and supplies. Tools and supplies are important for creating floral designs, too. Floral tools and supplies are discussed in this unit.



Objective:



Identify tools and supplies used in floral design.

Key Terms:



anchor pin	floral tint	poly foil
chicken wire	florist knives	pruning shears
corsage or boutonniere pin	florist shears	ribbon
dip dye	florist wire	ribbon scissors
finishing spray or dip	foil	stem dye
floral adhesive	glitter spray	underwater cutters
floral foam	greening pin	utility scissors
floral foam holder	hyacinth stake	water tube
floral glue	lightweight foil	waterproof tape
floral spray	needlepoint holder	wood pick
floral tape	pan-melt glue	
	pick machine	

Floral Design Tools and Supplies

Floral design tools make floral work more efficient. Knowledge of the tools and their use for floral design is necessary for those conducting floral work.

CUTTING TOOLS

Cutting tools are those items used to cut plant materials and such design supplies as floral foam, ribbon, and foil.

Florist Knives

Florist knives are used for many floral design tasks. Their primary use is for cutting stems. Folding knives and paring-type knives are the two choices for designers. A folding knife is easily carried in one's pocket. To be effective a florist knife must be kept sharp. Because of this, safety is an issue. The correct cutting method involves holding the stem with one hand. With the other hand, the knife is held at an angle to the stem. The cut is made as the stem is pulled away.



FIGURE 1. Knives are efficient tools for any floral designer.

Shears

Shears are cutting tools used to cut woody stems. **Florist shears**, which are sometimes called swelled-blade shears, look like scissors with short, serrated blades. Florist shears are recommended over scissors because they cut through plant material without pinching the stem. Besides cutting plant material, florist shears can be used to cut florist wire.

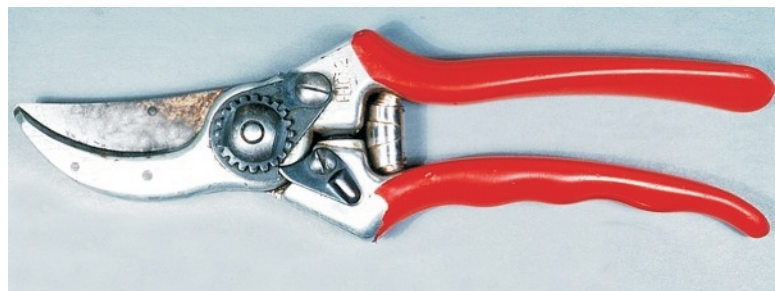


FIGURE 2. Florist shears (top) and pruning shears (bottom) are used for cutting woody stems.

Pruning shears cut thick and tough woody stems. There are two styles. The recommended style has a sharp cutting blade and operates much like a scissors. It provides a clean, smooth cut. The style to be avoided has a sharp blade that cuts the stem against a flat surface. As it makes the cut, the stem is pinched and tissues are crushed. To protect the blade edge, never use pruning shears to cut florist wire.

Scissors

Scissors are useful tools in the design area. **Ribbon scissors** have long, sharp blades designed for cutting ribbon, netting, and fabric. They should not be used for cutting stems or florist wire, because those uses will damage the blades. **Utility scissors** are used to cut paper, leaves, and other materials.

Underwater Cutters

Underwater cutters are designed to cut flower stems while they are submerged in water. The practice extends the life of the flowers and is especially recommended for roses.



FIGURE 3. Utility scissors can be used for trimming foliage or cutting paper or other materials.

SUPPLIES FOR CENTERPIECES, SPRAYS, AND VASE ARRANGEMENTS

A wide range of floral products are used for a variety of purposes. Some supplies are used for centerpieces, sprays, and vase arrangements. Some materials are used with everlasting flowers.

Supplies for a container arrangement begin with the container. An arrangement can be made in any container imaginable, and many types of containers are available through wholesale florists.

Floral Foam

Floral foam provides support and stability for the stems. Floral foam crushes easily and does not return to form.

There are two types of floral foam. One type is a porous material that holds water for fresh cut flowers. It is most often green and available in a brick measuring 3" × 4" × 9". The brick is easily cut



FIGURE 4. Floral foam is porous and easy to cut with a knife.

with a floral knife, butter knife, or heavy-gauge wire to fit the container being used. The other type is dry foam typically used for dry arrangements. It is usually available in brown.

Anchor Materials

Floral foam can be attached to a container with waterproof tape, an anchor pin, or pan-melt glue. **Waterproof tape** comes in widths of $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch and in green, white, or clear. It is used primarily to secure floral foam in a container. An **anchor pin** is a plastic four-pronged design mechanic secured to the bottom of a container with floral clay or glue. It is particularly useful with a low bowl. **Pan-melt glue** is an adhesive that can be used to secure floral foam to a container. Dry foam is dipped into the pan-melt glue and promptly placed in the plastic container or liner. Pieces of pan-melt glue are heated to a temperature of 275°F (135°C) in a skillet.

Mechanics for Floral Support

Two mechanics other than floral foam that provide support for flowers are the needlepoint holder and chicken wire. A **needlepoint holder** is a design mechanic consisting of a heavy metal base with many sharp, closely spaced upright pins or needles. It also goes by the names frog and pin holder. Needlepoint holders are used for designs with just a few flowers and with line designs. **Chicken wire** is a wire mesh used alone in a vase or in combination with floral foam. The chicken wire provides added support for heavy and/or thick floral materials.

Other Supplies

A **greening pin** is a two-pronged metal pin with an “S” or flat top. It is used to secure moss or other foliage.

A **water tube** is a plastic tube with a rubber top that has a small opening to accept a floral stem. The tube holds water and is used for boxed flowers that may be out of water for a while.

A **hyacinth stake** is a long green wooden stick to which flowers can be attached for additional support.

A **wood pick** is a narrow piece of wood with a wire attached at the top. It is used with dried or silk flowers to give stems added length or strength. Wood picks are available in various lengths.

Foil is a material used to wrap pots or line baskets and containers. There are two types. **Light-weight foil** has color on one side and is silver on the other. **Poly foil** is a bit thicker due to a thin

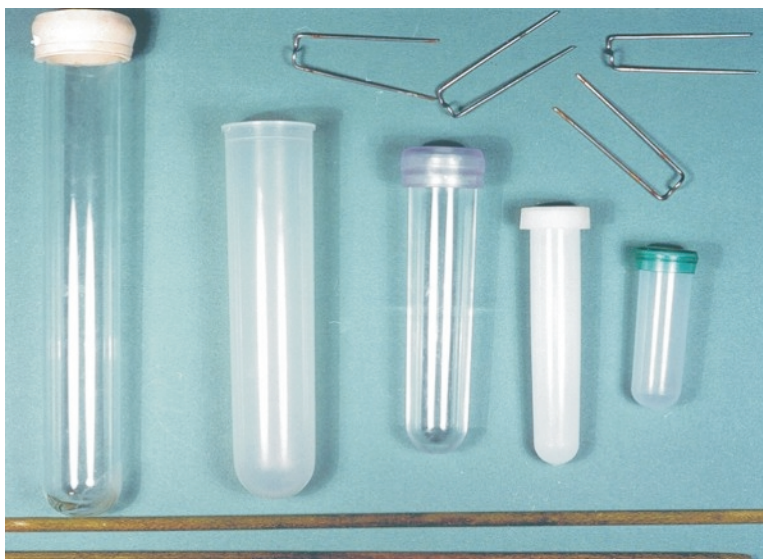


FIGURE 5. Water tubes, hyacinth stakes, and greening pins are common floral design supplies.

plastic covering on the less colorful side. It provides some protection from leakage of moisture. Foil is available in a wide range of colors.

A **pick machine** is used with dry flowers. It attaches a metal pick to a stem or bunch of stems and, in essence, lengthens and strengthens the stem(s).

SUPPLIES FOR CORSAGES, BOUQUETS, AND BOUTONNIERES

Floral design supplies lessen the work involved in the construction of corsages, bouquets, and boutonnieres. They also allow a greater range of work to be completed.

Florist wire is sold in 18-inch lengths and is available in different gauges, or thicknesses. A smaller gauge number means a thicker wire. Usually #26 wire is used for bows, #24 for medium-weight flowers, and #22 for heavier flowers.

Floral tape is paper coated with paraffin or wax. It is available in 1/2- and 1-inch widths. Half-inch floral tape is used to cover wires and stems of corsage and boutonniere work, while 1-inch floral tape is used for bouquets and wreaths. Floral tape is available in many colors. When it is stretched and pulled tightly around the work, it sticks to itself.

Ribbon may be satin, cotton, silk, paper, or burlap. Common ribbon sizes are #1, #1½, #3, #5, #9, and #40. Ribbon sizes #1, #1½, and #3 are used for corsage work. Ribbon sizes #5 and #9 are used for potted plants. Large bows used for funeral sprays require #40 ribbon.

A **floral foam holder** is a plastic cage with a handle. A saturated piece of floral foam is placed inside the cage. Although the arrangement is not as sturdy as a bouquet that is wired and taped, the flowers stay fresher longer.

Floral sprays and tints are materials used to change the natural colors of flowers to match fabric colors. A **floral spray** is an opaque paint that completely masks the flower color. A **floral tint** is a translucent paint that allows some of the flower color to show. A **glitter spray** contains glittery, metallic color.

A **stem dye** is a color solution transported up through the xylem of the stem to flower petals.

The color of a flower head can be changed by dipping it in a semitransparent color solution called a **dip dye**.

Floral glue is used for many purposes, such as securing silk flowers. A glue gun heats the glue, which is extruded with the pull of the trigger.

A **floral adhesive** is used in the construction of a hair piece or corsage.

A **finishing spray or dip** is applied to a finished corsage to seal the stomata. Sealing the stomata reduces water loss from the plant tissue and extends the useful life of the floral piece.

A **corsage or boutonniere pin** is used to attach the floral work to clothing. A corsage pin is longer than a boutonniere pin. Both pins have rounded tops.

Summary:



Florist knives, florist shears, pruning shears, ribbon scissors, and utility scissors are common tools used to cut plant materials and design supplies. Underwater cutters are used to cut submerged flower stems.

Many floral products are used for centerpieces, sprays, and vase arrangements. Floral foam provides support and stability for the stems. Floral foam can be attached to a container with waterproof tape, an anchor pin, or pan-melt glue. A needlepoint holder and chicken wire provide support for flowers. Other tools or supplies used in design work include greening pins, water tubes, hyacinth stakes, wood picks, foil, and pick machines.

Floral design supplies for corsages, bouquets, and boutonnieres include florist wire, floral tape, ribbon, and floral foam holders. Floral sprays, floral tints, glitter sprays, stem dyes, and dip dyes are used to change the appearance of flowers. Floral glue, floral adhesives, finishing sprays or dips, and corsage and boutonniere pins are other supplies.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. What types of cutting tools are used in floral work?
2. What are the two types of floral foam?
3. What are common supplies used in designing centerpieces, sprays, and vases?
4. What are common supplies used in designing corsages, bouquets, and boutonnieres?
5. What supplies are used to change the color or appearance of flowers?

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Visit floral supply company Web sites and browse their online catalogs. Note the items available for designers. Some sites provide information on how the items are used.

Web Links:



Floral Supplies Directory

<http://www.save-on-crafts.com/allisofprodi.html>

Designing with Oasis® Floral Foam

http://www.smithersoasis.com/res_florists2.php

Mechanics and Supplies (PowerPoint presentation)

http://72.14.203.104/search?q=cache:_kgJdtMB3msJ:lr010.k12.sd.us/mechanics.ppt+florist+shears&hl=en&gl=us&ct=clnk&cd=6

Cutting Tools

<http://www.hort.vt.edu/faculty/McDaniel/hort2164/R5CuttingTools.htm>