

# Valley Decorating Company

## Float Building Manual & Product Supplies



Metallic  
Floral  
Sheeting

Vinyl Floral  
Sheeting

Vinyl  
Grass Mat

Metallic  
Grass Mat

Fringe

Extra Long  
Fringe



All products made in USA!

Festooning

Sequin Sheeting

Letters

# SO YOU WANT TO BUILD A FLOAT?

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Congratulations! You will soon discover the joy of creating a wonderful thing – a parade float. Floats can be built from just about anything, by just about anybody. Trailers, trucks, golf carts, tractors, boats and barges have all been decorated to make a memorable parade entry. Even young children can decorate shopping carts or wagons for a parade. It's all about adding to the spirit of your community, spreading smiles and laughter among the spectators on the way.

At Valley Decorating, we take pride in making the finest professional decorating products that will allow you to create your own award-winning float in the least amount of time. Valley was known for designing and building floats for the Pasadena Tournament of Roses Parade. We have built upon this experience to become the leading manufacturer of high quality float decorations since 1946. Our innovative concepts and superior materials make it easy for you to turn your ideas into reality.

The most frequent question we are asked is how to get started. We have created this Float Building Manual and Product Supply Catalog to help you make a spectacular float. You find easy-to-follow instructions, pictures for design ideas, and products that can make your float a winner.

Have fun...and happy building!

Parade float photos courtesy of:

- Associated Attractions..... Chicago, IL
- Baylor Chamber of Commerce..... Waco, TX
- Carnival San Francisco..... San Francisco, CA
- City of Key Largo..... Key Largo, FL
- Green Float Company..... Garden Grove, CA
- June Huntsman..... Byron, CA
- Othello Community Festivals..... Othello, WA
- Parade Float Builders..... Navarre, OH
- Presentations..... San Antonio, TX
- Rojee Decorating..... Medway, MA
- Southwest Parades..... San Antonio, TX
- Tahoe Arts Festival..... Lake Tahoe, CA
- Texas Cavaliers..... San Antonio, TX
- Three Rivers Festival..... Fort Wayne, IN
- Upbeat Parade Productions..... San Jose, CA





A grand prize winner from Valley Decorating Company, past builders for the Tournament of Roses™ Parade.

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# Float Building Guide

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## Getting Started

Begin by gathering information from parade officials. Find out about rules, entry fees deadlines, etc. Make sure you understand what is *not* allowed in the parade. Some parades don't allow semi-trucks because of size restrictions. Some allow only self-propelled floats. There also may be rules prohibiting throwing items off the float, such as beads and candy. If applicable, find out the judging categories and the parade's theme so you can adapt your design accordingly.



## Designing Your Float

Creative brainstorming is the first step in float design. As a warm up, think of things that a child would enjoy doing: going to a circus, skateboarding, riding in a submarine, space travel, etc. Then come up with a list of strange, funny, or interesting animals, people or creatures. Pirates, dinosaurs, space aliens, giant bugs, angels and clowns are examples. Can you combine these ideas to make your entry more memorable? How about clowns on a submarine with polka-dot shorts flying from the periscope!

From your list of ideas, can you incorporate the parade's theme? If your parade falls on a holiday, think of symbols that represent the holiday. As an example, for Valentines Day, how about a float with candy hearts as props that say LUV YOU and BE MINE? You can use flags, fireworks, or Uncle Sam for the Fourth of July. If your parade is part of a county fair, get creative with food, vegetables or animals. Play with the sizes of them: giant turnips? OH MY! How about using a play on words such as "Fair or Fowl," "My Fair Lady," or "Fair Weather Friends?"

Plan ahead to draw people's attention. Things that move, such as wheels, windmills, flags, and costumed characters will add life to your unit. Flashing objects such as metallic decorations or mirrored surfaces will also attract your audience's eye. Recently, the cost of special effects have become more affordable. Fog and smoke machines, confetti cannons and bubble machines will add a new dimension to your float.

Dont' limit yourself to just the visual aspect. If you can, incorporate all the senses. Use music and sound effects. Even peppermint scent can be sprayed from a Christmas float! You may also want to involve your audience. Get them to sing along with your music, do the Chicken Dance or do The Wave."

While designing your float, keep your message in good taste. If your theme is humorous, make sure no one will be offended. If you are using your float as a way to gain exposure for your business, a clever message will be remembered much longer than a blatant advertisement.

After you have chosen your concept, make a sketch using ¼" graph paper. A scaled drawing will help you know how much material you need to purchase.



## Safety First

Parades are a wonderful experience, but it is your responsibility to keep your float's riders and drivers safe. If riders will be standing, build stanchions for them to hold onto. Some parades require seatbelts for children on floats. If there will be a generator on board, be sure to allow for proper ventilation. You must also allow ventilation for any enclosed area of your float that contains drivers or riders. Make sure the exhaust can escape and the engine receives airflow to prevent overheating. Keep a fire extinguisher handy and make sure your decorations are flame retardant.

## Material Suggestions

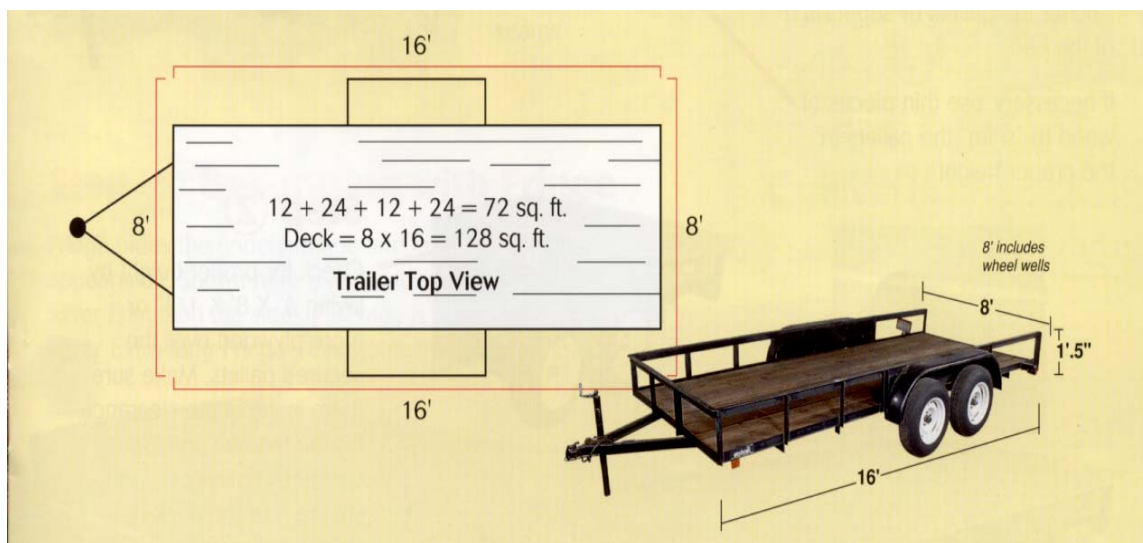
Here are items commonly used in float construction:

- 4' x 4' Plywood
- Nails & Drywall Screws
- Flexible Board
- 2 x 4's and 1 x 2's
- Plumber's Tape
- Spray Adhesive
- Construction staplers and staples
- Tape Measure
- Cordless Drill with
- "L" Brackets
- Scissors
- Screwdriver Attachments
- Wire & String

## Measuring Correctly

**For the top deck and sides:** To cover the float with Floral Sheeting, Grass Mat, or Sequin Sheeting, multiply the length times the width of each area to be covered, then add the totals together. This will give the total square footage. In the example below, the top deck is 128 square feet (8' x 16') and the sides are 72 square feet (2 sides of 8' x 1.5' and 2 sides of 16' x 1.5'). Always add an extra 10% to your material to overlap seams and fold over edges for a better appearance.

**For the trim:** To decorate around the float with Fringe and Petal Festooning, measure all the sides and add them together to get linear feet (8' + 16' + 8' + 16' = 48') and add 10% when ordering.



The trailer in this example, and in the "Step-by-Step Instructions" section, is 8' x 16' and measures 48' around the perimeter.

**For props:** Imagine each prop as if it were inside a box. Using the formula to find the area, multiply the length by the width of each side and the top of the imaginary box, and add them together.

# Step-by-Step Instructions

Float building is easy and fun...when you know how. We have created these easy step-by-step guide for building a basic parade float with Floral Sheeting, Festooning, Fringe, Sequin Sheeting and Letters.

## Getting Started

Find a float platform that is sturdy, safe, and legal to tow.

Low-boy style trailers like this are ideal for float building.



## Step 1

Find well-made pallets that are approximately the same height as the trailer's rails. You may need to stack them. If there are no pallets available, use vertical wood supports. Anchor the pallets or supports of the bed.



If necessary, use thin pieces of wood to "shim" the pallets to the proper height.



## Step 2

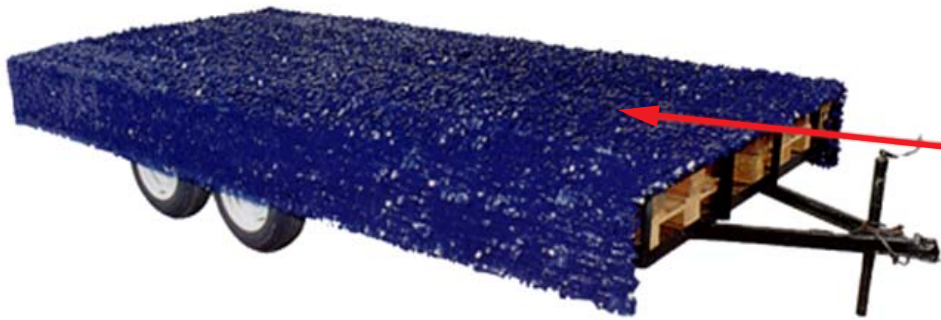
Check for proper height by laying 4' x 8' x 1/2" or more plywood over the secured pallets. Make sure there is adequate clearance for the fenders and tires. Center the plywood, then secure it to the deck or pallets with screws or nails.



Continue forward with the pallets and the plywood to complete the deck.

### Step ③ Side Skirts

Use “L” shaped brackets, available at your local hardware store, to attach wood side skirts to the top deck of the float. If you will be towing your float to distant locations or multiple parades, we suggest attaching the side skirts with hinges. This way, you will be able to fold the side skirts back onto the deck. This can prevent damage to the decorations during transit.



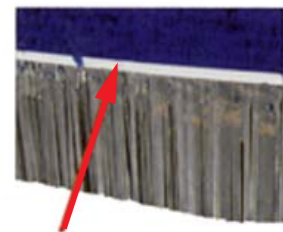
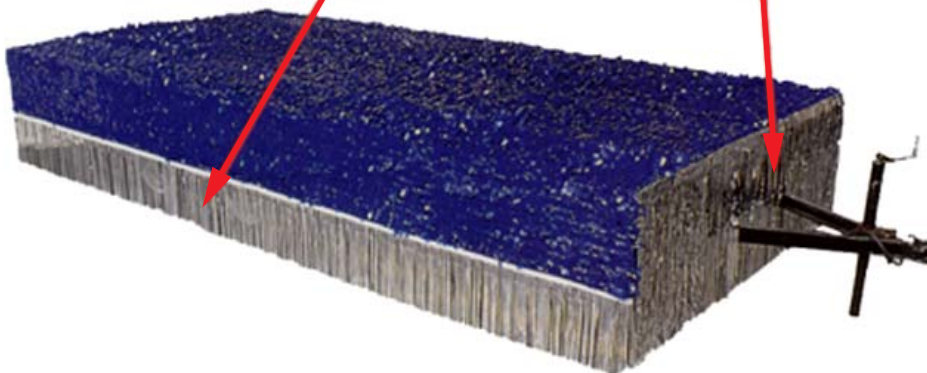
**Tip:** Run Floral Sheeting length-wise along the trailer to cut down on seams.

### Step ④ Floral Sheeting

Give your float a professional floral appearance by rolling out our 36” wide Floral Sheeting. Use a construction stapler to attach it to the wood top deck and wood side skirts. Be sure to pay extra attention around the edges and corners to make sure they are secure.

### Step ⑤ Decorating with Fringe

Fringe hides the undercarriage and gives it a “floating” appearance. Shown here is 10’ wide x 14” drop Metallic Silver Fringe on the sides. 3’ wide x 30” drop Metallic Silver Extra-long Fringe decorates the front of the float.

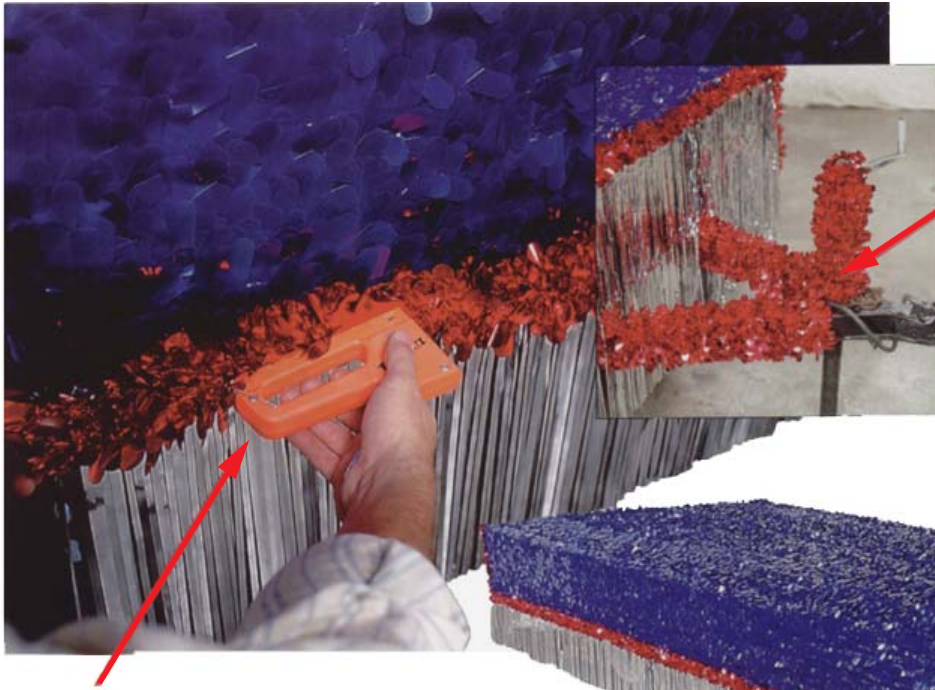


Note the white cotton header on the 14” Fringe. Staple through this cotton header, through the Floral Sheeting and into the plywood sides.

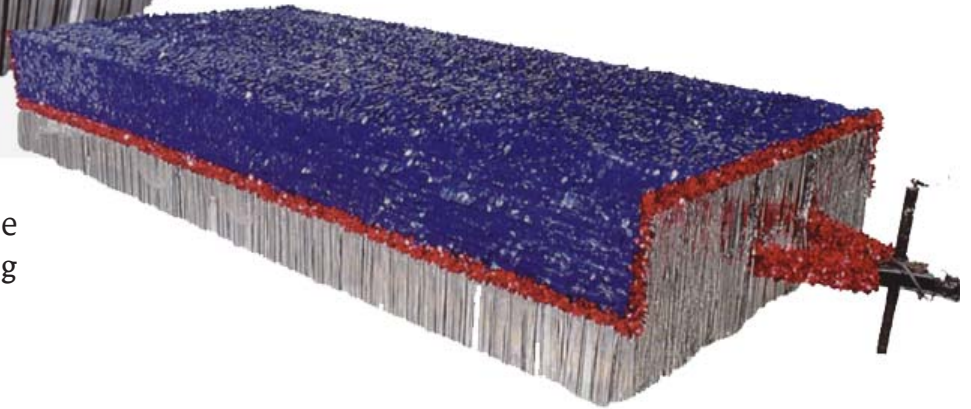


## Step ⑥ Petal Festooning

Petal Festooning is a great way to accent curves and edges of your float. It can be used to wrap the trailer hitch area or shaped to form letters. It is also used to hide seams where materials come together.



Use a construction stapler to staple through the Fringe and Festooning and into the wood sides.

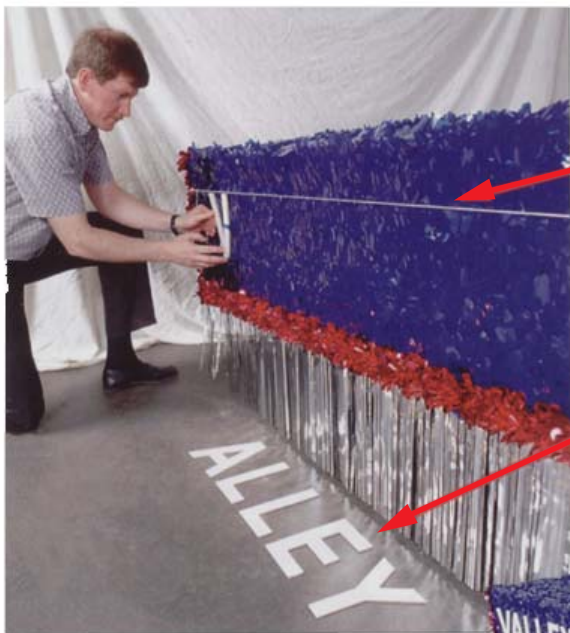


## Step ⑦ Letters

Measure down from the top of the skirt equally on both ends to get a straight mark for your letters and numbers. Shown here are 8" letters.

The sides of a float are a great place to put your organization's name. Remember, your main message will be on top of the float.

Tip: Lay out your letters along side of the float to get the correct spacing between letters.





## Step ⑧ A Word About Props

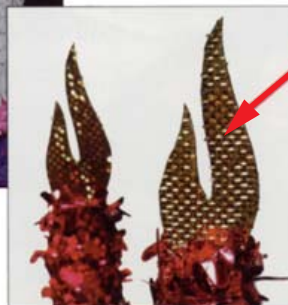
Your props help to convey the visual message you will send to people watching the parade. Props can be made from a variety of construction materials. Sonotube™ from a local hardware store is perfect for pillars and columns. Flexible sheet-board will allow you to make wide circular objects. Good old-fashioned chicken wire works very well for molding a curvy shape. Papier maché is another wonderful construction material that is easy to work with.

“L” brackets or plumber’s tape can be used to secure props to the deck. When decorating areas of detail, use Sequin Sheeting along with Floral Sheeting to add interest and dimension to your design. Bright colors or shiny materials will catch your audience’s eye. Remember, an entertaining float is a memorable float. It’s important to cover your props with flame retardant materials, such as the luster vinyl or metallic decorating products from Valley Decorating.



Our “cake” uses two flexible sheet-boards stapled at one end and then bent back over and stapled at the other end. This makes a fat, round tube the shape of a cake.

The “Frosting” is white Floral Sheeting and Pink Festooning attached with a construction stapler.



Sequin Sheeting is versatile and easy to work with. Scissors or a razor knife will cut it easily. It is perfect for a three-dimensional look, which can make your candle flame “flicker”.

Sonotube™ wrapped by metallic red Floral Sheeting gives a glittering look to your candles. Simple 12-volt motors in each tube will turn the flames, creating a “flickering” look.

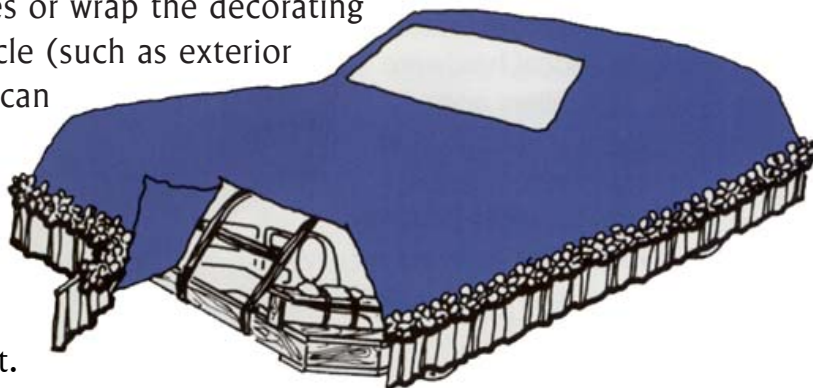


# DECORATING A VEHICLE

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It's easy to quickly convert your own vehicle into a parade sensation.

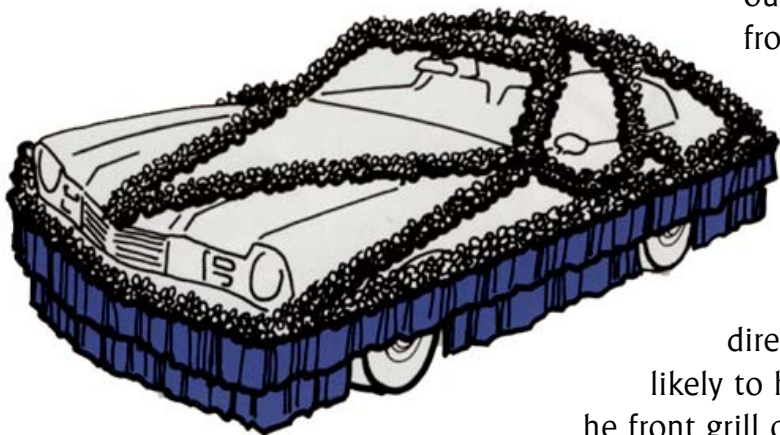
To secure Festooning and Fringe, use ties or wrap the decorating pieces around anchor points of the vehicle (such as exterior mirrors, door handle, bumper, etc.). You can carefully tape Festooning and Fringe directly onto a clean surface, providing the surface will not exceed 90°. Masking tape will leave the least amount of residue, which can be removed with WD-40© or similar product.



For a more finished appearance, attach Floral Sheeting, Festooning and Fringe to a wooden frame and hang by cloth straps. The Floral Sheeting covering the vehicle is pinned to the cloth straps and then pinned at the seams. Be sure not to scratch the vehicle's finish when applying the pins.

You can also glue the Floral Sheeting to a contoured cloth or vehicle cover. Just cut out the piece over the driver's window and door, so the driver can get in and out. The Fringe can also be stapled to a wooden frame, using Petal Festooning as a trim. A second layer of Fringe can be taped around the bottom of the vehicle, so that it just clears the ground and leaves the wheel wells exposed. Be sure the frame is wider than the vehicle to allow room for the wheels to turn properly.

In addition, make certain that there is adequate ventilation and that the driver's vision is not impaired; if it is, walkie-talkies should be used. In many cases, the exhaust pipe must be extended out from the decorations, to prevent fumes from gathering. Care should be taken to trim the Fringe and Festooning so that it never comes in direct contact with a hot surface, such as the exhaust pipe.



Remember to avoid placing decorations directly on the hood of your vehicle if it is likely to heat up during the parade. If necessary, keep the front grill of the vehicle exposed to avoid over-heating.

If the vehicle is being used to tow a float, make sure the tow ball extends behind the decorating frame, or allow space in the frame so the tow bar can be easily attached and move freely.



# HOLIDAY FLOATS



Holidays and parades go hand-in-hand. The May Day float uses a contoured deck to make it appear less “box-like” and beautiful bright colors that represent springtime. Because there is limited visibility, the driver has a spotter, walking alongside the float, to help him maneuver. The Cinco de Mayo float is alive with dancers in costumes that bring the spirit of Mexico to life.

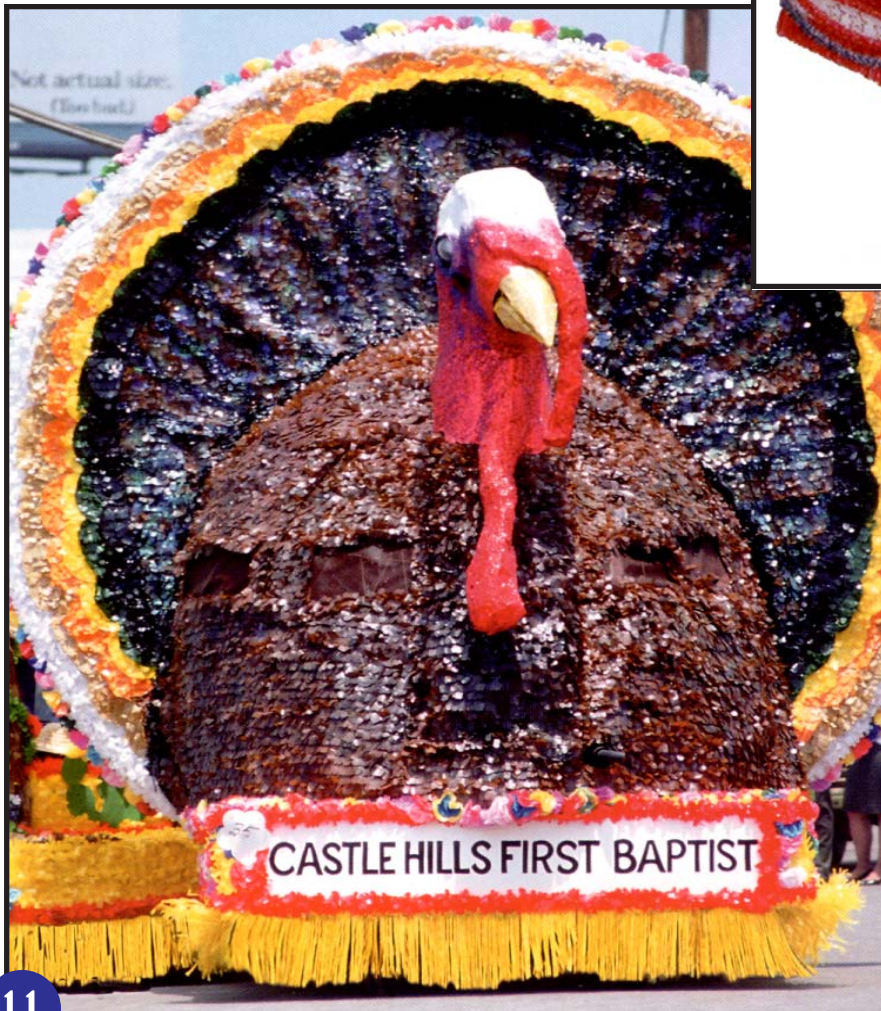




The traditional colors of red, white and blue, are used with metallic gold trim on the “Eagle” float (left) to emphasize the patriotic feel. The eagle, stars & stripes, waving flags, Betsy Ross sewing, and the fife and drum corps are all symbols of American independence.



Firecrackers can be made from any cylinder-shaped object (see the Christmas Candle Float, top of next page). Sparks are made with flexible metal rods wrapped with Valley’s Metallid Gold Festooning.



Having trouble coming up with a theme for your float? Think of symbols associated with the holiday. This excellent entry leaves no doubt in the viewers’ mind that nothing says Thanksgiving like a turkey.





The Holiday Season is a magical time to promote your organization. Here a television network used its mascot and tied it into a Christmas theme to promote itself in a positive light.



The “Frosty the Snow Man/Christmas Ornament” photos (left), show that the front and back should look good coming and going.

The Candy Cane float (below) shows how a tow vehicle can be hidden and incorporated into the design. Notice how the white Floral Sheeting was cut to look like snow.





# HOMECOMING FLOATS



These homecoming units demonstrate how you can deliver a clever message. The “Elvis” float (top left) shows the king of bump and grind doing the same to an opposing mascot. The school that built the “Pig on a Stick” float (top right) was playing the Arkansas Razorbacks football team for homecoming. They used animation on their giant rotisserie to roast the pig. The “Bulldozer” float (left) had the theme “Bulldoze the Competition.”





All of the floats on this page demonstrate modes of travel which imply motion. The “Plgs in Space” float (left) is ejecting a “Razorback” out of its payload doors.

The school that built the SWC (Southwest Conference) Iceberg float (right) was playing a school from rival conference, the SEC (Southeast Conference). The theme of this float is a play of words: “Into the S.E. Sea.”



These two river boats show how the same type of float can have a different message. They each use a different play on words. The float shown above says: “Paddle the Frogs”, and the float on the right says: “Steamroll the Hogs”. The use of animated paddlewheels and fog billowing out of the smokestacks add to the realism.



# FLOAT DECORATING MATERIALS

## Floral Sheeting

(36" wide x 10 yd. or 25 yd. rolls)

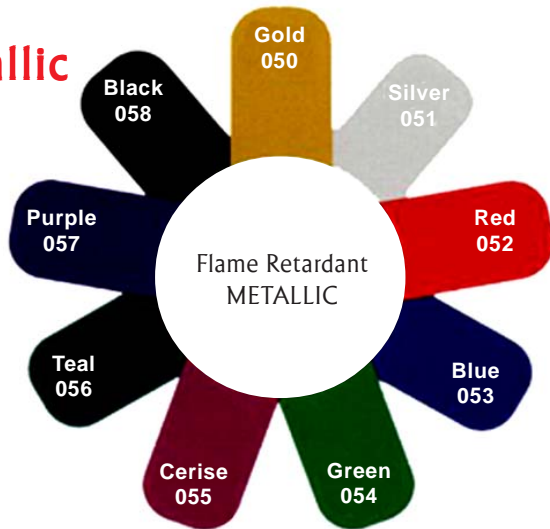
Beautiful Floral Sheeting is designed to simulate flower petals. It's rain proof, flame retardant and, with care, reusable. It's easy to use, too. Just roll it out, staple it down, and the biggest part of the job will be done. Curved edges are easily decorated on props, decks, side skirts, etc.

Floral Sheeting is the most labor-saving product available to cover your float cost effectively. Available in metallic and vinyl luster colors.



Note: Actual colors may vary from shades shown below

### Metallic

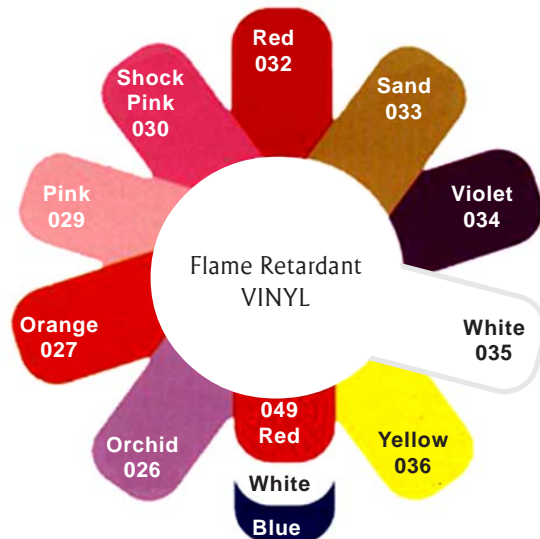
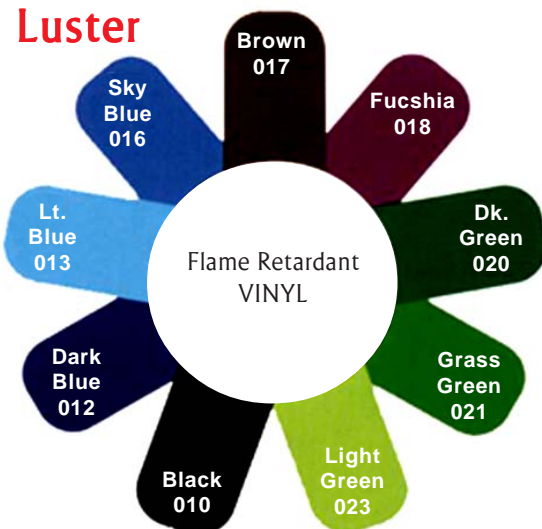


Valley's Red, White and Blue Floral Sheeting is also great for decorating patriotic events, political rallies, fireworks stands, and stage fronts.

10 yd Vinyl Luster 1-41013  
25 yd Vinyl Luster 1-41033

10 yd Metallic 1-41023  
25 yd Metallic 1-41043

### Vinyl Luster





## FLOAT-AWAY FRINGE™ (10' wide x 14" drop)

Make your designs “float” with Valley’s vinyl and metallic Fringe. Stapled around the skirt base, fringe attractively conceals the wheels and undercarriage of your float. Available in vinyl luster and metallic colors.



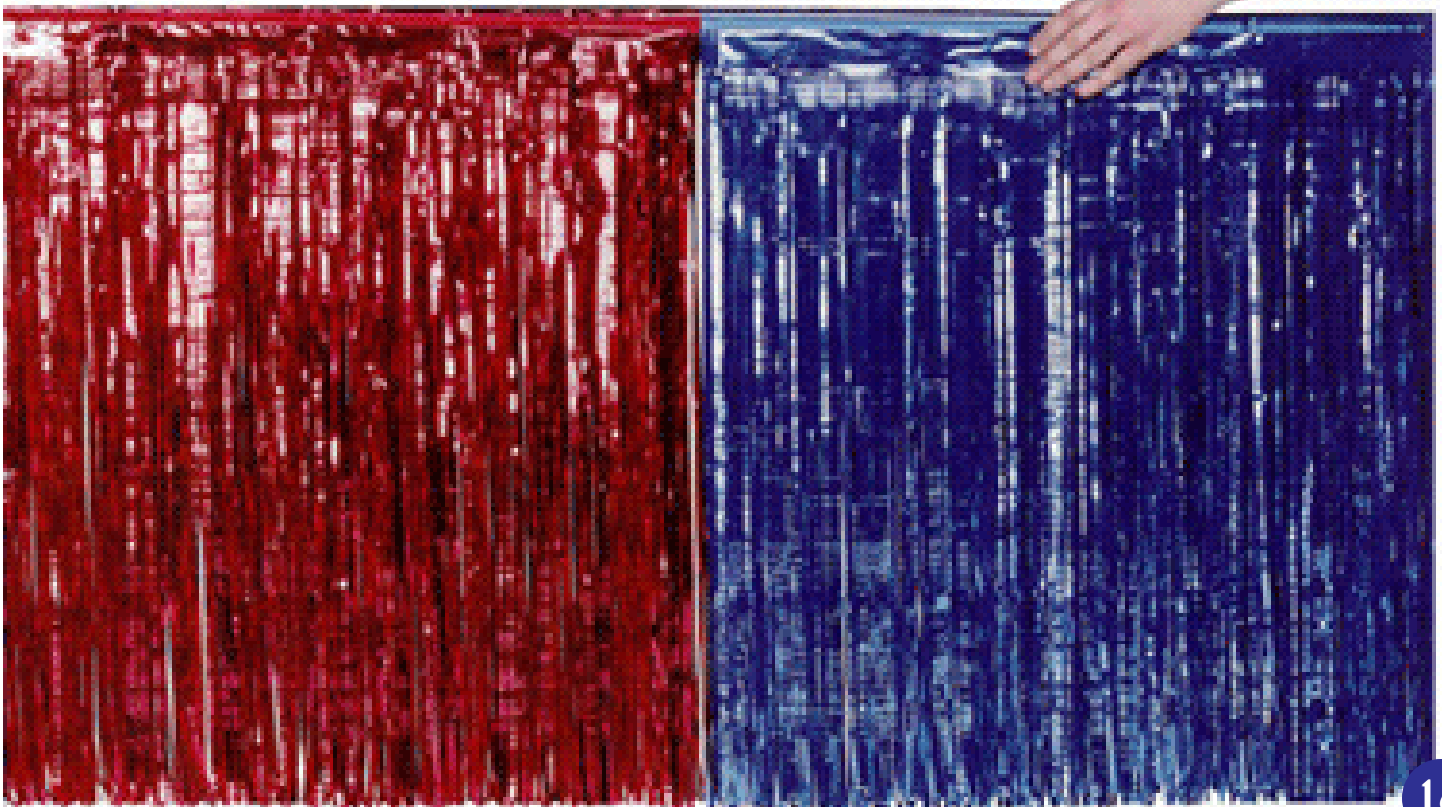
Metallic 1-41083

Vinyl Luster 1-41073

## EXTRA LONG FRINGE (30' wide x 30" drop)

Extra Long Fringe is perfect for decorating flat-bed trucks, semi-trailers, etc. The 3' wide x 30" long sections make it easy for one person to apply. It's also faceted for a shimmering effect. If fringe is too long for your application, simply trim to the proper length. Available in METALLIC colors only.

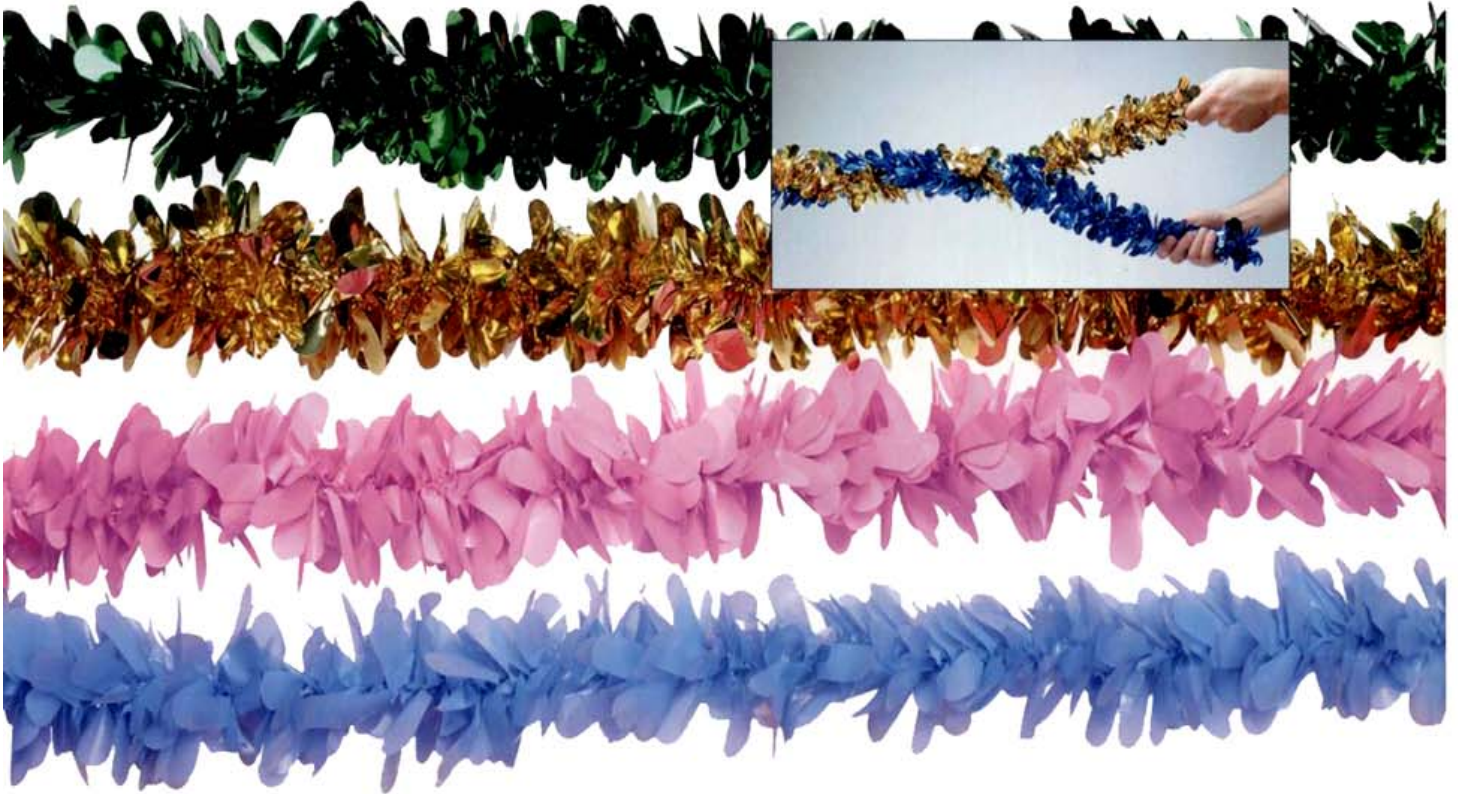
Metallic 1-41084



## PETAL FESTOONING (48' long)

Petal Festooning looks like a fluffy rope of flower petals. Use it to accent edges, wrap poles, create canopies, drape from ceilings, or form letters in any script. Simply braid it to create candy canes, barber poles, spiral effects, etc. Available in luster vinyl and metallic colors.

Luster Vinyl 1-41053  
Metallic 1-41063



## LETTERS & NUMBERS

Put your message out front with durable pressed-board letters & numbers. Valley's letters & numbers can be covered with glitter, confetti, paint, Sequin Sheeting, or other decorative materials. Attaches easily to float with nails, adhesive, screws or staples.



4½" 1-41093

6" 1-41103

8" 1-41113

12" 1-41123

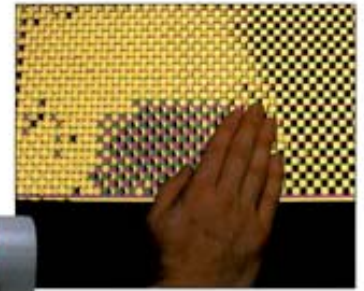


# SEQUIN SHEETING (8" wide x 10 x 25 yd. rolls)

Sequin Sheeting will add extra sparkle to your decorating project. It has raised dots giving a brilliant "3-D" effect and displays different colors when viewed at different angles. Use it to create dragon or fish scales, jeweled treasure chests, shimmering water, banners and pennants, even costume trim.



10 yd Metallic 1-46200  
25 yd Metallic 1-46400



Orient the dots to give maximum reflection to your creations.

Sequin Sheeting is perfect to use for accessories and costumes.

# GRASS MAT

(3' wide x 10 yd. long)

Valley's Grass Mat looks better than the real thing. It's perfect for sports, garden, Easter or Hawaiian themes. Display uses include grass huts, signage, produce displays, etc. It's made with the same roll out, staple-down ease of use as Floral Sheeting. Available in grass green vinyl luster and for more "glitz", metallic gold or metallic silver.



10 yd Vinyl Luster 1-41133 10yd Metallic 1-41153





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