

### **Arrangements as a Beginner – Jean Stream**

Where do we begin as ARS Arrangement Novices? I do have to say “Lean and Mean” would be my first thought. Most arrangers, including myself, usually start with buckets full of flowers and several dozen pieces of greenery for filler. Beginners as well usually select their most “attractive” vases and of course we bring several to shows, just in case. It is sort of like getting ready for vacation – pack and take as much as you can, just in case. This philosophy, we soon learn, only leads to frustration. Not only do our flowers get bruised, our greenery gets tangled and wilts, and we soon realize we hardly know where to start or what to start with.

Thinking “Lean and Mean” is so much easier and will get us rewards we thought never possible. The first step will be reviewing the Show Arrangement Schedule. Look to see which class or classes you might want to enter. Next, select one vase for each class. Keep in mind when selecting your vases or containers, you want them to blend in or disappear, so stay away from shiny ones or elaborately painted ones. As you become more experienced you will soon learn that “junk” containers work best. Knowing this can be an adventure when looking for new containers.

You will then think about your flowers and filler. Always remember the Rose needs to dominate any ARS arrangement. While filler is important, many arrangements can be beautiful with just rose leaves as filler. The roses should be fresh, groomed and sized for the container. Many times this means removing some of the petals to get them sized and cleaned up. Showing your own roses will make you eligible for the ARS certificates. However, if you don't have your own roses, you can borrow some from another exhibitor and you will be eligible to win the class, but no ARS Certificate will be awarded. Be sure to put AG (Arranger Grown) on the top of the entry tag if you are using your own roses.

It helps to be creative with your filler. Look for colors that will compliment or bring out the color in your roses. Smaller leaf plants are much easier and more effective in miniature arrangements. Don't forget you can trim leaves if they are too large. This is kind of fun with the craft scissors which make cuts that look like leaf edges. It's also fun to look for odd plants and leaves to use, but always a good idea to make sure they don't wilt too quickly.

Once you have all this organized you will need to make sure you have the mechanical items to use during construction. Clean containers, wire, floral clay, tape, picks, oasis, scissors, wire cutters, cleaning cloth and maybe a few floral sticks. These sticks can come in handy if you need to use a flower with a stem that is too short. Remember mechanics are to aid in your construction and need to be used in a fashion that they are not real visible. The hardest thing I find to master is anchoring the oasis in the container. Floral tape, either green or clear, works best. Be sure your container is dry; otherwise the tape will not stick. This tape ages quickly and needs to be replaced regularly. Michaels' Craft store is a good source for most of these items.

Lastly, think about the class theme to see if you can enhance your arrangement by the use of color or textures. Most schedules don't allow for the use of accessories, so it is better to concentrate on your overall design than trying to accessorize the arrangement.

Thinking “Lean & Mean” really implies keeping your arrangement simple. A “Lean” arrangement will be one that will look uncluttered and not “frilly.” The roses will beg you to look at them and when looking at the roses, your eye will be slightly drawn to your filler and then gently drawn to your container. The “Mean” comes into play during construction. Mean what you do as you place each item. Think ahead before placing anything. Look for the flower that will be your center focal point, how long it needs to be and where it needs to be placed. Poking too many holes into your oasis will cause the arrangement to be unstable and the flowers will tend to move around.

Arrangements add a great deal of beauty to any rose show. I would encourage you to try your hand at “Lean & Mean”. That's what I've seen works best for me.

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