

Modern Mechanics

By: Kreg Hill, kreg@kreghill.com, PSW District Chair - Arrangement Judges

Mechanics for modern designs are more complicated than traditional or oriental-style arrangements. Because modern designs have an open silhouette, a block of floral foam cannot be used. (Traditional designs have a closed silhouette and you can hide the foam.) There are a lot of options that we can use for mechanics when building a modern design. The number one goal is to be creative!

One of the first considerations is the plant material being used. Will it stay fresh out of water? As we all know, roses need to be in water. How heavy is it? This knowledge will determine your choice of what you can use and how to use it to achieve the effect you desire. Remember that mechanics may be seen but should not detract from the design.

Raffia (Natural plant material that comes in a roll and may be purchased at craft stores) Most useful material to tie plant material in place, as it will not slip when wet, in fact it does the opposite: it will tighten. It is lightweight and will not cut the plant material when pulled tight. It is also easy to conceal.

Chenille-covered wire (Pipe Cleaners) Comes in different colors and is used for attaching plant material to objects.

Styx This is an adhesive that will stick to anything. I have a horrible time getting it off!

Hot glue gun Good to use with dried materials. Hot glue will not work with fresh materials. Be careful and do not burn yourself and do not have the glue strings coming out of your design.

Orchid picks or tubes Good for providing individual water for one stem. The little rubber gasket holds the water in even if it is placed upside down. They may be painted to match or some are clear plastic. The picks and tubes are easily camouflaged. You may also hot glue the picks wherever you want them.

Kenzans (pin holders or frogs) These may not have to be covered, but should not be distracting to the design. Paint them the same color as the container.

Wire, fishing line or cotton thread You need a wide assortment.

Magnets These can be worked in pairs by attaching one magnet to the object or plant material, placing the other magnet behind whatever you desire to attach to the other or plant material to.

Velcro Small strips of this material can stick almost anything to anything, as long as the "anything" is not too heavy. This is very good for exhibition tables to attach things to the background.

Pins Any shape or size can be used, from dress making to any type of heavy-duty pins. Bobby pins and hairs pins can be quite useful as well.

Plant material This can include not only floral material, such as branches, but also fruit and vegetables, either left whole or cut. Large cut fruit or vegetables such as melons, potatoes, artichokes and apples, may be cut and the plant material inserted directly into the pieces. Small fruits such as cranberries are very attractive when used as a mechanic.

Fabric May be tied around plant material and other components and then tied onto frames, backgrounds, etc.

Creativity Whatever works - use it! There are a lot of other useful things out there, so try them.

Mechanics are one of the most important components of a design. Without some way to hold our roses in place, we would not be able to be floral artists.

To me good mechanics should never be seen, but you know that they are there. After I have judged a design (remember the judge is supposed to be standing at least three feet in front of the design) and then have to go look closely in the design and behind the design to figure out the mechanics, it means the designer has done a good job!

Photo caption:

Sandy Dixon won the ARS Artist's Award at the 2004 Spring National Convention with this design featuring the rose 'Crystalline.' (Photo by Glenn Fiery, courtesy of the PSW District)

