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## Lesson 2: Flower Power

### Objectives

Students will:

- Create a flower arrangement
- Participate in an activity easily adapted for different skill levels

### Central Concepts

- Many garden activities can be adapted for audiences with different needs and abilities.


**Standards addressed:** [click here](#)

### Materials

- Plastic cups: choose smaller cups if you have a small number of flowers to work with; if some students have impaired motor skills or challenges with control over their hands, choose larger cups
- Wet floral foam (make sure the package reads "wet floral foam" -- there are other kinds)
- Anchor tape and duct tape (optional)
- Assorted flowers and foliage
- Scissors

### In-Class Activity

Making a flower arrangement is an enjoyable, creative activity with flexibility to accommodate different skill and ability levels. Throughout the instructions, you will find suggestions on how to adapt each step for success with different audiences.

Activity Steps	Example
<p>1. Collect your materials.</p> <p>If you have them in your garden, harvest flowers and foliage there. It's best to cut them early in the morning and immediately place in a bucket of water to prevent wilting. Choose plants with sturdy stems, such as zinnias (a great choice: they come in a wide array of colors, are easy to grow), daisies, and ferns. If you feel comfortable with the skill level of your students, they can harvest the flowers for the activity.</p> <p>You can also find flowers at local grocery stores and florists. Ask if they have discounts or donations available. Check with high school horticulture programs -- the teacher may be able to order flowers for you at a wholesale rate for educational purposes. Daisies, mums, carnations (regular or mini), statice, and leatherleaf are the best options for purchased flowers because they are durable and have sturdy stems. Fresher flowers are more tolerant of rough handling if your students possess excessive energy.</p>	

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2. Tell students that today you are going to make a floral arrangement. Ask them if they can think of places they have seen floral arrangements (their answers may include holiday gatherings, weddings, at church, funerals, birthday parties, etc.). Explain that arranging flowers is an art that has been practiced for thousands of years; in our society we often use flowers as gifts to celebrate special occasions. Giving someone flowers is a way to express feelings such as love, appreciation, and sympathy, and it makes people feel special.

3. Place the floral foam in a tub of water until it's fully saturated. Cut foam into pieces that fit into the plastic cups. About a half inch of the foam should stick out above the cup. If cut to a close fit, the foam should be secure and not require taping.

Explain to students that it's important not to press the foam because it crushes the air pockets in the foam so that they can't fill with water, and the flowers will not last as long. For groups of younger students and students with special needs, this step can be completed before the activity by volunteers.



4. If your students have control issues and you are afraid the cups may end up on the floor, you can secure the foam with anchor tape. Use two pieces that intersect off center.

The wet foam will make the cups heavy enough to stay in place for most students; however, for students who may have difficulty controlling their hands, secure the cups to the work surface with a loop of duct tape on the bottom.



5. Next make an example arrangement for the class.

Start with some foliage. Before placing the stems in the foam, re-cut each stem and remove the leaves on the bottom inch or two so that you have a smooth stem to insert into the foam. Choose where to stick the stem: Once in the foam it will stay in place -- as long as you only stick it in once! If you stick and re-stick stems, the foam won't hold them as tightly.

Tell students to think of the arrangement like half of a basketball and that you want to cover all sides.



reply to: [NGA editor](#).



6. After you have a light covering of foliage, begin inserting the flowers. As with the foliage, re-cut the stems, remove bottom leaves, choose where to stick them, and insert them into the foam -- just once.





7. If you are working with older students (middle school or high school), provide them with more detailed instructions on flower placement. After they insert the foliage, instruct them to construct the arrangement by creating a design skeleton: Place one flower directly in the middle and four more spaced evenly around the arrangement, and oriented horizontally -- like the four directions on a compass.



8. Once the skeleton is in place, fill in the space between the skeleton flowers with the other flowers.



9. Once you've completed an example, distribute the remaining flowers to students. If you have a limited number of flowers, tell students how many of each flower they can use. Students can then trim the stems and place them into their arrangements.

If students are not able to use scissors, have volunteers pre-cut the stems to the approximate length needed and then place them in a second cup of water for each student. When it's time to arrange the flowers, each student will receive a cup supply.

10. Once they're finished, create a name label to attach to each cup using tape and a marker. Give the flowers to people at the school (such as secretaries or cafeteria staff) as a way for the kids to say "thank you," or ask the students to take the arrangements home and give them to someone special.



## Extensions

**English:** Instruct each student to write a poem inspired by the flowers or the arranging activity. Choose a style of poem based on the curriculum standards for your grade level.

**English:** Explore the 'Language of Flowers.' Flowers have been used to express meaning and send messages throughout history. Visit the [FTD website](#) to discover the meanings associated with some common flowers. Develop a class list of flowers and meanings; then have students use pictures of flowers (e.g., from old seed catalogs) to create an encoded message for a friend or family member.

**Science:** White carnations provide a simple, dramatic way for students to witness how water moves up through the vascular tissue of flower petals. Obtain two vases of white carnations (one or more flower in each vase). Take the flowers out of the vases; add drops of blue food coloring dye to one vase and drops of red food coloring dye to another. Re-cut the stems and place the flowers back into the vases. Ask students to observe flowers over the next few days and record their observations. Discuss the observations as a group and ask students to make conclusions about their findings. (As stems draw water upwards, flowers will take on the color of the dye.)

**Science:** Learn about the different parts of a flower and their purpose. For background information and ideas, check out "[Seeds the Promise of Life!](#)", and "[Flower Courtship](#)."

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