

Sue's 10 Tips on Flower Arranging:



1. **Think about the colours** that will look good in the room the vase will go in.
2. Try purchasing **three bunches of complementary coloured flowers** see the example here and the red, blue and white ones below. Think of someone else you will give half of the flowers to in an arrangement, eg your daughter or daughter-in-law. The flowers for the golden arrangement cost \$9, but I spent \$18 on the three bunches at the Latrobe Uni market on Sunday morning

before church. This arrangement has gladiolus, yellow chrysanthemums and gerberas (the ones that look a bit like sunflowers). Leave them in water in a building (not the car) until you have time to enjoy arranging them. Obviously you will need to be planning to use vases big enough to hold half of the three bunches plus a stem or two of foliage.

3. **Find a vase** to match the flowers and the room. I prefer ones you cannot see through as they are often more attractive than glass, particularly as the bunch gets older and the flowers are still good but the leaves and stems spoil. More information about this beautiful hand painted vase is available at the end of these ten tips.

4. Find some **foliage** and put it in **first**. This arrangement has a touch of bottle brush leaves and a box hedge that often has yellow and green leaves. The arrangements below have my neighbours Lilly Pilly tree but really new growth from it always droops in less than a day so you need to pick older stems or cut out the droopy tops. Crepe myrtle and gum leaves can look good too. The foliage will help hold the flowers where you want them and provides a lovely background. You can add a little more foliage later but it is easiest to put it in first.

5. **Decide** if the vase is going **against a wall or on a table** where it will be viewed from many directions. If it will be view from many directions make sure you turn the vase around a number of times as you put the arrangement together. **A bigger throat on**

the vase will often help allow for enough flowers so it looks good all round when positioned on a table.

6. Put some of the **larger flowers** in after the foliage. Decide if the height is what you want or if it needs lowering. I will often have the vase near the edge of my bench and hold a flower in front of the arrangement with the excess length of the stem going in front of the bench so I can see where I want to cut it so the stem sits on the bottom of the vase. Usually bought flowers keep better if you cut off a bit more off the stem on an angle before you put them in the arrangement particularly roses that have not fully opened yet. Strip off most of the leaves below the water level. It adds interest if you have **different heights** and **not all of the big flowers face directly at the viewer**.

7. Put **smaller flowers in last** to add a bright or contrasting colour, shape, perfume or size.

8. **Sometimes** if it does not look just right but all it may need is **lifting some flowers** or all of the arrangement up, often this happens when you try to just pull one or two stems, the arrangement can then open up and out so it does not look so crowded.

9. **Enjoy** the look of pleasure on the face of the person you give the second arrangement to, but make sure you get your good vase back within a month. Or if you are taking them to a retirement village as my daughter and I were after I arranged all these below, a few days before, go to the op shops and buy some \$3 to \$5 vases that you can just give away with the flowers you plan to buy.



These four vases have delphiniums (both blue and purple), red gerberas, white field carnations and Lilly Pilly leaves. They are arranged in glass vases with water. I put them in a tub with a few towels between them to transport them.

10. **Don't wait for a man to give you flowers** you will love; **ladies treat yourself** to something special occasionally. **Or cut some from your garden** and arrange them in a vase for inside. That is what I have done with the pink patio rose, white mandevilla & Lilly Pilly leaves below. They are in the first vase I ever collected, it is special to me

because we purchased it while on our honeymoon in Tasmania. The vase next to it is one of a few crystalline vases I purchased direct from the potter who made them, while touring Tasmania on our next trip there. I love the frog vase from another potter which has little pools of coloured glass on it which overflow down the face of the vase.



Hand Painted China

The beautiful hand painted china jug at the start of this article and the iris vase here

were painted by a cousin of mine Joyce Austin who is a Master China Painter; she has been teaching china painting for over 45 years and has won many awards for her amazing work. My daughter and I have just enjoyed starting to learn china painting with her over the last three months. You can just see Alana's china painting in the cabinet. The jug shaped vase was a special birthday present organised by my husband with guidance from Joyce and some input from myself as to the colours, flowers and the shape of the vase I would like. Joyce still creates special order pieces for people who know what they want and allow her the time needed to make them; most vases need at least 7-8



firings. She is planning to be at our Diamond Valley Baptist Church fair Saturday March 5th 2016 selling some of her amazing collection of hand painted plates and vases. This will be a rare opportunity to purchase one of her signed pieces of art as she no longer goes to markets. But be prepared; cake plates the size of dinner plates are about \$50 each and vases vary a lot but are around \$95. No credit card facilities will be available. If you want to find out where you can learn china painting from Joyce or one of about 50 registered teachers in Victoria you can ring Joyce on 9689 4750.