

Flexibility of Branches: Cornus wave



Some trees and bushes, and especially young twigs, are very flexible. This flexibility holds many creative possibilities. The extraordinary flexibility of Cornus branches, that can be bent in almost any position without breaking, inspired me to make this arrangement. These flexible branches are a good solution when the use of a kenzan is impossible in a moribana vase. Thanks to Cornus I was able to create a base structure for the flowers in this strangely shaped vase, without the need for a kenzan.

After finishing, Ben, my husband, told me it looked as if it was inspired by architecture.

It reminded him of the famous Sydney Opera House, in Australia.

MATERIAL

Cornus stolonifera, *Helleborus 'Queen's Red'*



STEP BY STEP



1 Top view of the vase I used



2 Front view of the vase.



3 Measuring the Cornus branch.



4 Cut the branch to the required length, depending on the desired height of the Cornus curve.



5 Brace the ends of the branch on either side of the vase, creating a curve in the centre.



6 Front view of the curved branch.



7 Top view.



8 Continue to add branches, but vary the height of each of the curves.



9 Front view.

STEP BY STEP



10 The Curves are placed in a descending order.



11 To create movement, add more Cornus branches. Start on the right.



12 Place a next branch and curve it to the left.



13 This is the result after adding the first curved branches. The length and degree of slanting are different.



14 Continue to add more Cornus branches.



15 The flow of the branches coming out of the vase should follow the same lines as the curved structure. Make sure the branches do not cross one another.



16 Add flowers.



17 The final result.



Laced sweet pea

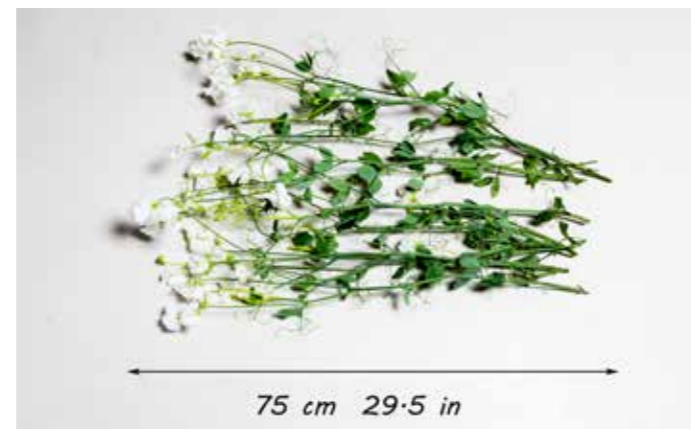


I am always attracted to the smell of sweet peas. Sweet pea is an elegant climber with long stems and tiny curly side branches or tendrils that provide support.

When material is slightly flexible, explore the possibility of intertwining it. Here I have intertwined the tendrils by hooking them into one another or by twisting them together. The result is an impressive volume made with a very delicate material. Creating volume or mass is one of the principles of Sogetsu Ikebana.

MATERIAL

Long stemmed sweet peas (*Lathyrus odoratus*).



STEP BY STEP



1 For the structure of this arrangement, we are focusing on the curly tendrils.



2 Cut the flowers from the main stem



3 Remove the leaves as well, especially the larger ones.



4 This is the part we use for the structure.



5 Prepare a vase with a small opening or with several small openings. Measure and look for a good position in the vase.



6 The stems are a slightly flexible, so it is possible to creating curves without breaking them. The tendrils help to hook one stem into another.



7 Build the structure stem by stem gradually creating space and volume.



8 First create volume in one direction.



9 Next, increase the volume by adding branches on the other side.



10 Make the volume asymmetrical.



11 While arranging turn the arrangement around, so that you can view it from all sides.



12 Add the sweet pea flowers.

Droopy Tulips (Long-Stemmed Tulips)



Tulips are popular all around the world. They come in many colors and lengths. Long-stemmed tulips tend to hang down as soon as you put them in a vase. Don't try to fight this, but be inspired by it and make the most of this feature. The long stems are slightly flexible, so they can be intertwined. It gives the stems more strength and adds an element of surprise and playfulness to this arrangement.

A point to remember is that; when your material is not behaving as you desire, just step back and re-examine your material. Try to use and highlight specific features of the material instead of fighting it. This will make your arrangements more natural and exciting.

MATERIAL

French long-stemmed tulips.



STEP BY STEP



1 Choose long-stemmed tulips



2 Prepare the tulips. Cut off the leaves you don't need. Don't forget to cut the end of the stem slanted and do this under water.



3 Instead of cutting, you can also remove leaves by tearing them off the stems.



4 Prepare a vase with one small opening or choose a vase with two small side openings (as is the case here). Add the first flower.



5 Add more flowers and play with their natural curves.



6 Place all tulips in a different positions.



7 Instead of letting the leaves hang down, curl or fold them.



8 The very long stems are somewhat flexible, which allows you to intertwine some tulips. It will strengthen them and hold them in place.



9 Use the leaves to create extra depth.



10 Turn the vase around to decide on the best view.



11 Another view.



12 Finished arrangement.

Rolling Waves (Tulips Parts)

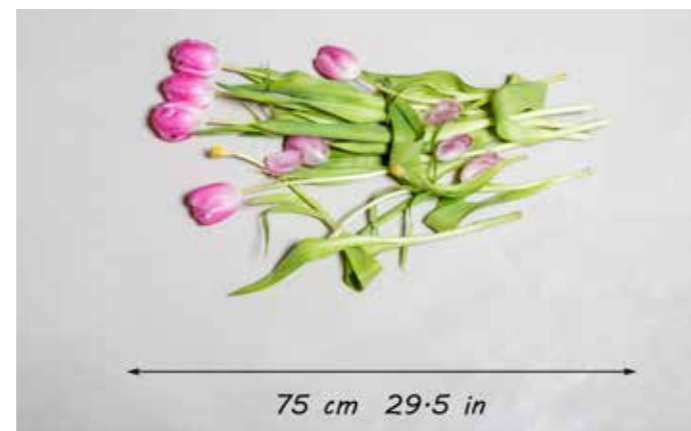


In spring, I always have a lot of arrangements on display in my atelier. Sometimes I only remove them when the flowers have completely wilted. As they say in Japan, there is beauty in imperfection. One of my withered arrangements was the inspiration for this composition.

Sometimes flowers lose their petals, but the stem is still firm and beautiful, as was the case with these pink tulips. Their curly stems reminded me of waves breaking on the shore. Often these waves carry driftwood, so I added some tulip petals at the end of the waves to symbolize this.

MATERIAL

Old Tulips



1 Prepare the flowers by removing the leaves and petals.



2 Measure the stem and look for the best position in the vase. I used direct fixation. But depending on your container, you might need to use cross fixation.



3 Emphasize the shape of the tulip stems.



4 Create a wave



5 Take care that each stem is standing on its own.



6 Leave a few small leaves on some of the tulip stems as they can enhance the wavy effect.



7 To add a touch of color, create a mass of flower petals at the base of the arrangement.



8 Place one petal at the end of a stem to create the effect of waves carrying something to the shore.

Tailored fashion (Weaving Leaves)



When I work with large leaves, I always treat them as if I am working with fabric. In high school, I learned dressmaking, so handling fabric comes naturally to me. Leaves are flexible, just like fabric, so to create volume and stability, the leaves have to be intertwined. Weaving provides enough stability to shape an arrangement.

Different leaves have different shades of green, different sizes, and textures. Here I used Cordyline, Aspidistra and Typha leaves. I tend to use these leaves a lot because they are widely available and affordable in Belgium. They are also flexible and robust. Of course, you can use other types of leaves to make a similar arrangement. The possibilities are endless. In this arrangement I used the interwoven leaves to create the feeling of an upwards movement.

MATERIAL

Cordyline, Aspidistra, Typha leaves



STEP BY STEP



1 Choose and prepare three Cordyline leaves.



2 Place the three leaves on top of one another at different lengths. Place the longest one first and end with the smallest on top.



3 Make an incision of +/- 3 cm (1,2 inch) in each leaf on either side of the central vein. Make sure that the incisions are aligned.



4 Weave a Typha leaf through the incisions.



5 Repeat steps 3 and 4 two more times, but make the incisions at a different place on the leaves.



6 The result as seen from the front.



7 The result, seen from the back.



8 Place the group of leaves in a vase (preferably with a small opening). Bend the leaves over.



9 Place the ends of the Typha in the vase.



10 If the leaves don't stay bent, put one Typha leaf on the inside to keep the Cordyline leaves in a bent position.



11 Here you see that the tips of the leaves are lower than the rim of the vase.



12 The view from the back.



13 Make a second group of 3 leaves. In this group I combined Cordyline and Aspidistra leaves.



14 Position the second group of leaves behind the first one and make sure their height differs.



15 Weave a Typha leaf through one of the Typha loops of the group of hanging leaves, and straight-up through the second group of leaves. In this way, you will be able to secure them in place.



16 As a result of weaving the Typha leaves through the larger leaves, you can shape and model the arrangement.



17 The view from the back.



18 The view from the right-hand side.



19 Finished arrangement.

Flexibility of Leaves



Liriope is a plant with grass-like leaves. The leaves are strong and can grow to be 20 to 50 cm (8 to 20 inches) long.

Whenever I get a new material in my hands, I always play with it for a while. I fold it, tear it apart, bend it, just to get a feeling for the material. That is how I found out that Liriope leaves are so strong that you can actually knot them. When these knots are combined, it is possible to create a significant mass or structure.

In this arrangement I have combined the Liriope with just one flower, hidden within the mass of Liriope knots.

MATERIAL

Liriope and Dianthus



STEP BY STEP



1 Hold a Liriope leaf close to the bottom and wind the leaf around two fingers.



2 Make one more turn around your fingers to form two loops.



3 Put the tip of the leaf underneath the loops and pull.



4 Repeat Step 3 and pull again.



5 Finally, thread the end of the leaf through a loop.



6 Pull.



7 This is the result.



8 You can make a second knot closer to the top of the leaf. Wrap the leaf around just one finger.



9 Make a second loop and tuck the end under the loops.



10 Pull the end.



11 Pull until the knot is secured.



12 The result.

STEP BY STEP



13 Create a mass of knotted leaves with either one or two knots on each leaf.



14 Prepare a vase with a small opening and arrange the first leaf.



15 Add a second leaf.



16 Add the third leaf. You can position the leaves by threading the end of one leaf into the loop of another leaf.



17 The leaves support one another.



18 Progressively add more leaves.



19 Bit by bit, you create a nice volume.



20 Try to create both mass and movement.



21 Adding a single flower adds color and depth to the arrangement.

Flexibility of Leaves



Often arrangements are on display for a long time in my house. I remove them if they start to smell or begin to fall apart. When I use leaves in an arrangement, I allow them to dry out completely. Some leaves become brittle and delicate; while others become more transparent or gain a lovely color palette. There is beauty in each stage of decay. When I see that a leaf is drying beautifully, I put it in a dark place, usually my garage. When completely dry, I save them in a cardboard box for future use.

Dry leaves provide a lot of possibilities as they do not need water and you can even spray-paint them. There is, however, an element of difficulty. Using living material brings movement and life to an arrangement, but when you use with dry material, you have to work a bit harder to bring life and tension in the arrangement. One way to achieve this is using a firm line and emphasize it - as I did in this arrangement. With a strong line, you can bring movement, that adds life and tension to the arrangement. ●

MATERIAL

Dried leaves, *Ranunculus asiaticus*



STEP BY STEP



1 Prepare a vase, preferably with openings on the side.



2 Choose dried leaves with sturdy stems. Fold the stem so that you can secure it in the vase.



3 Place the leaf in a side opening of the vase.



4 Prepare the next leaf and place it in the same hole.



5 For the time being, let the leaf stand or hang, depending on its structural strength



6 Choose a sturdy third leaf and fold the stem so that it can be fixed securely in the vase.



7 Leaves that are dried out curl up. You can use this feature to insert one leaf inside the fold of another leaf.



8 This is the result. Try to create the an effect as if the leaves are floating beside the vase.



9 Combine the dry leaves with contrasting fresh spring flowers.



10 When you have a vase like mine with many openings, ensure that the stem of the flower is long enough to reach the water.



11 Finished result.

A Tropical Bird (Plants)



I live in a mild climate and can enjoy an abundance of green material most of the time. This is certainly inspirational, but once in a while, I come across tropical material and get excited. For me, this rare exotic material triggers different parts of my brain. Tropical flowers remind me of tropical birds. This was also the inspiration for this arrangement. Flexible palm leaves are excellent materials to represent the wings of a bird.

MATERIAL

Cycas revoluta, Heliconia



STEP BY STEP



1 Choose a vase and fill it with water.



2 Pick a leaf.



3 Check the flexibility of the leaf by bending it into a circle.



4 Prepare a piece of wire, fold it double, and attach it about 8 cm under the tip of the leaf. Slowly create a circle by pulling the tip of the leaf towards the stem.



5 Fasten the tip of the leaf and the stem tightly together with the wire.



6 Place the leaf in the vase.



7 Prepare a second leaf in the same way. Place both leaves together as shown here, or in a composition that suits your vase and leaves.



8 Prune away the side leaves to emphasize the opening in the second leaf.



9 Here you see the result after the side leaves are cut away.



10 Add a third leaf to the right-hand side of the arrangement in its natural form.



11 Add a flower behind the upright leaf, as if it's hiding behind the leaf.