

Using silk florals as interior accents

By Maria Fox

There is no beauty like that of nature — or so you might think. Nature can be replicated. And in the world of artificial florals (also referred to as silk florals or artificial botanicals), nature is not only replicated, it is often enhanced.

Botanical varieties are created in a myriad of styles and designer colors. And while they are inspired by those in the gardens and on the hillsides of the world, many are deceptively manmade. Add to that the thousands of varieties of foliage, grasses, sticks, berries and twigs and you have a designer's dream: the beauty of nature hand crafted to compliment and coordinate with today's home interior.

Every good interior designer knows that a room is not complete until it has at least one botanical accent. From a simple green plant to a dramatic floral statement piece, botanical accents add an element of life to a room. Take a look in any decorating magazine, you will rarely find a room void of this natural finishing touch. Without some sort of botanical accent, whether it be live or manufactured — rooms don't pop, and just feel unfinished. With the addition of an orchid plant, vase of coordinating floral stems or a lush green plant — rooms come alive, are instantly cozier and become spaces where humans will want to dwell.

Today's artificial botanical is not the same as our grandmother's. Silk flowers have evolved into true decorative accents, providing color and life that will last for years. High quality manufacturers produce silk florals that are deceptively real looking, in decorator colors and in hundreds of varieties. Professionally designed custom silk arrangements can pull a room together, setting it apart from a décor lacking that special designer touch.

Susan Geiser, head designer at Wight's Home and Garden in Lynnwood has a few tips for best results.

Use an experienced designer with five or more years of experience at a reputable store with a wide selection of colors and styles. Not only will this ensure a good finished product, but also, a large quantity on hand denotes volume buying discounts from manufacturers, decreasing the cost per stem.

A handful of round shaped flowers will not create an impressive floral statement. Proper design requires a variety of floral shapes, textures and characteristics to look professional. These often include branches, various foliage and berries. Ask to see examples of the designer's work and if possible references from past clients.

Bring your paint samples, fabric swatches and a few snapshots of the room for ease in selecting the perfect colors.

And lastly, before finalizing your order, as colors do change in different environments — take a few stems home to test in

the lighting of your home.

In over 30 years in the floral industry Geiser has seen many design trends come and go. One trend that is particularly strong today is that of dried natural materials like pods and sticks. This returning design element was very popular 25 years ago when floral materials were quite limited. Now, it is a wonderful compliment to the contemporary styles of today adding an organic texture that works really well with another emerging trend — tropical florals.

Artificial botanicals are great for seasonal decorating. Many loose stems and bushes lend themselves to a casual look and require no professional designing. Stems casually arranged can look as if they were picked from the garden and are easily stored when the season has ended. Those daffodils you love so much in April for their springy cheer will make way for the cozy warmth of autumn leaves in the fall. A nice pot of summer grasses can be transformed a few months later by replacing it with holly.

Other tips include purchasing enough stems to fill the container snugly and don't try to re-use materials that are old, worn or faded. Opting for too few stems or those past their prime may seem economical, but a mediocre arrangement will diminish the aesthetic qualities of even the best interior décor.

Information courtesy of Wight's Home & Garden, 5026 196th St. S.W., Lynnwood. Contact them at (425) 775-3636 or visit www.wights.com.