

Floriography: The Language of Flowers

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Educational Objectives

- Understand a brief history of Floriography
- Increase knowledge of the unspoken meaning behind species and the colors of flowers
- Create unique bouquets of flowers with a special message

Floriography simply means the language of flowers. Every flower holds a different meaning based on its species, color or both. The condition of each flower and the way they are presented can also hold an unspoken meaning to the recipient. Once you learn the meaning behind the different flowers, words can be replaced by a bouquet.



The language of flowers has been recognized for hundreds of years throughout the world. You can find floriography in Shakespeare's plays, folklore, mythology and even ancient Egyptian text. Every sentiment can be expressed with flowers.

Flowers derive their meaning and symbolism from ancient myths, legends, medicinal qualities or the scents they carry. One popular myth is the story of Narcissus, a beautiful man who fell in love with himself after seeing his reflection in the water. He adored his reflection so much that he never left the lake and Narcissus flowers – aka daffodils – grew in his place. Narcissus now symbolizes requited love, return of affection, sympathy and the coming of spring. Lavender signifies purity, silence and serenity, stemming from the fragrance it creates to soothe and relax.

Queen Victoria was fascinated by flowers, and during her reign, dozens of flower dictionaries were published. She also popularized the tussie-mussie, which is a type of small bouquet in a decorative holder. They

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would be wrapped with ribbon or doilies and carried or pinned to clothing. The central flower, also known as the focus flower, was the main message of the bouquet. If other flowers or herbs were added to the bouquet, their message had to add to the focus flower's meaning. Every flower in the bouquet carried a message.

Wedding Flowers

The use of flowers has become a wedding tradition over the years. For example, it is a longstanding tradition for the bride to choose the flowers in her bouquet based on the meaning of each flower. According to the almanac, as an example, look at the royal flower bouquet at the wedding of Prince William, Duke of Cambridge, to Kate Middleton, now the Duchess of Cambridge. Her all-white bouquet had lily-of-the-valley, representing trustworthiness and purity; sweet William, representing gallantry; hyacinth, representing loveliness; myrtle, representing love in marriage; and ivy, representing continuity. Altogether, these flowers' meanings reveal the hope of a loving, everlasting marriage.



A modern tradition is to highlight a particular flower for each bridesmaid's bouquet that represents their personality. There is also a medieval tradition for the groom to wear a flower that is a part of the bridal bouquet in the buttonhole of his jacket to declare his love by wearing his lady's colors.

Other flowers that symbolize love are:

- **Red Roses** – Passion and endless love
- **Red Tulip** – Perfect love, one true love
- **Dahlia** – Lasting bond and commitment
- **Red Carnation** – Love and fascination

Birth Flowers

Each month has a flower that symbolizes the characteristics “inherited” by those who are born in that month.

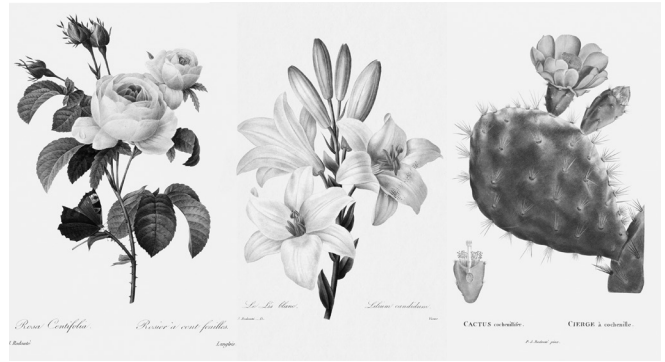
Month	Flower	Characteristics
January	Carnation	Pride and beauty
February	Violet	Modesty and humility
March	Daffodils	New beginning and rebirth
April	Sweet Pea	Good wishes, friendship and kindness
May	Lily of Valley	Sincerity, happiness
June	Honeysuckle	Pure happiness, fires of love
July	Delphinium	Cheerfulness and goodwill
August	Poppy	Eternal Sleep
September	Aster	Love
October	Cosmos	Order and harmony
November	Chrysanthemum	Joy and Optimism
December	Holly	Good luck

Victorian Era Flower Symbolization

During the 1800s, learning the meaning of flowers became a popular hobby. Many homes had a guide to explain the meaning of each flower and how to give flowers to express additional thoughts and feelings without the use of actual words. For example, “if the flowers were given upside down, then the idea being conveyed was the opposite of what was traditionally meant,” according to the almanac. Another example that displays an obvious message is being given a wilted bouquet. The chart below explains some of the meanings of flowers according to the Victorian Era.



Flower	Meaning	Flower	Meaning
Aloe	Affection or grief	Dill	Powerful against evil
Amaryllis	Pride	Eucalyptus	Protection
Apple blossom	Preference	Fern	Magic, fascination, the secret bond of love
Aste	Symbol of love, daintiness, contentment	Forget-me-not	True love, good memories, faithfulness, remember me <i>Official flower of the Alzheimer's Society</i>
Baby's Breath	Everlasting love	Lilac	First emotions of love
Basil	Good wishes	Lily	Majesty
Begonia	Beware	Lily, Pansy	You fill my thoughts
Black-eyed Susan	Justice	Lily, Calla	Modesty, beauty
Cactus	Ardent Love	Peppermint	Warmth of feeling
Carnation: Fascination	Fascination	Poinsettia	Be of good cheer
Chamomile	Patience in adversity	Rose	Love and beauty
Chrysanthemum	Truth	Sage	Good health and long life
Crab blossom	Ill nature	Sunflower	Pride, sunshine, devotion
Daffodil	Unrequited love, you are the only one, chivalry	Thyme	Courage and strength
Dahlia	Good taste, pomp	Tulip	Declaration of love
Daisy	Innocence, Loyal love, I'll never tell	Willow	Sadness
Gerber Daisy	Cheerfulness		



Color Meanings in Flowers

In floriography not only does the species of flower and how it is given have an unspoken language, but the color had hidden meaning too. However, the meaning of flower colors is not perfectly defined.

Rose

- **Red** – Love, I love you
- **Pink** – Grace, admiration, happiness
- **Peach** – Modesty
- **White** – Purity, secrecy, a new beginning, a fresh start
- **Burgundy** – Unconscious beauty
- **Purple** – Enchantment
- **Orange** – Fascination, desire
- **Yellow** – Infidelity, jealousy, decrease in love
- **Dark Crimson** – Mourning
- **Lavender** – Love at first sight
- **Coral** – Friendship, modesty, sympathy
- **Moss** – Confession of love

Carnation

- **Pink** – I'll never forget you
- **Red** – Admiration
- **Purple** – Capriciousness
- **White** – Sweet and lovely
- **Yellow** – Disdain
- **Striped** – I cannot be with you

Chrysanthemum

- **Red** – I love you
- **Yellow** – Slightly loved
- **White** – Truth



Lily

- **White** – Virginity, purity, heavenly
- **Yellow** – Happy, walking on air
- **Orange** – Hatred
- **Tiger Lily** – Wealth, pride



Activities

1. Create your own arrangement to gift to someone a special unspoken message:

You will need:

- Vase
- Three flowers
- Optional: Ferns or other greenery, baby breath, herbs, ribbon

- a. Have participants select three flowers based on the meaning of each flower.
- b. Create a simple arrangement using the three flowers and greenery.

To create a tiered arrangement:

1. Place greenery in a vase.
 2. Cut each flower at a different length – one tall, one middle, and one short.
 3. Place flowers in the vase.
 4. Add filler such as baby breath or herbs if desired.
 5. Tie a ribbon around the vase and gift it to someone special.
2. Say “Thank You” with flowers! Identify someone who has helped you during a difficult time, supports you or took you out to lunch as a treat. Show your gratitude by giving them flowers.

You will need:

- a. Pink roses: Helped you through tough times
- b. Hydrangeas: Expresses sincere, heartfelt sentiment and represents gratitude and understanding
- c. Sweet Peas: Gratitude and thank you
- d. Iris: Hope and trust

Resources

[almanac.com/flower-meanings-language-flowers](https://www.almanac.com/flower-meanings-language-flowers)

summitmastergardeners.org/wp-content/uploads/MG-Branded-Resource-Sheet-Floriography-Sue-Worstell.pdf

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