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
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.

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.

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

**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 Forget-me-not True love, good memories, faithfulness, remember me Official flower of the Alzheimer’s Society
Aste Symbol of love, daintiness, contentment Fern Magic, fascination, the secret bond of love
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 Patience in adversity Poinsettia Be of good cheer
Chamomile 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
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