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## Orchid Corsages & Boutonnieres

We all have an image that comes to mind when we think of a corsage or boutonniere. Most people will probably think of a flower or 2, pinned near the heart. It wasn't always so. For young women in the late 1800s, bigger was better and corsages were often made of sprays of flowers which prominently decorated the young lady from mid-chest to shoulder.



Corsages can creatively and distinctively be worn on wrist, ankle or neck; or decorate shoes, handbags, hair, hats, or the waist of a dress. The choice of size, shape and style of corsage should take into consideration the type of event and activities involved. A large shoulder corsage, worn below the shoulder, may be awkward to wear at an event where there will be dancing. A waist corsage may be inappropriate at a luncheon where the wearer will be sitting. The corsage should harmonize with the color and style of the garment as well as the weight of the fabric. The neckline of a light weight fabric dress will gape if the corsage is too heavy. A chest corsage may not be preferred for a garment with a complex print or textured embellishment such as beading; a wrist or handbag corsage may be more harmonious. An ankle corsage may be appropriate for a younger woman wearing an elaborate shorter dress. All orchids mentioned on page 1 can be used in any combination.

Boutonnieres are worn by men on a the left lapel of a suit coat or formal jacket and are usually compact. There are less variables to consider which makes their selection a little simpler. Color may match elements of the suit or his companion's garment. A medium size orchid bloom or 2-3 small blooms may be used for boutonnieres, look for *Dendrobium*, *Cymbidium*, *Oncidium*, *Paphiopedilum* and *Odontoglossum*.

Once you have decided on a color scheme and type of corsage or boutonniere, choose your orchid blooms, then foliage, filler flowers and accessories (bows, ribbons, tulle fans). These elements are the parts of your corsage or boutonniere. To facilitate arranging the parts in a corsage or boutonniere as well as to reduce the weight of the piece, the stems of the most parts must be replaced with wire. The wiring method will depend on the type and size of the bloom, most useful wire gauges are #24, #26 and #28. Remember that some parts may be glued in with low temperature glue, so not all pieces necessarily need to be wired.



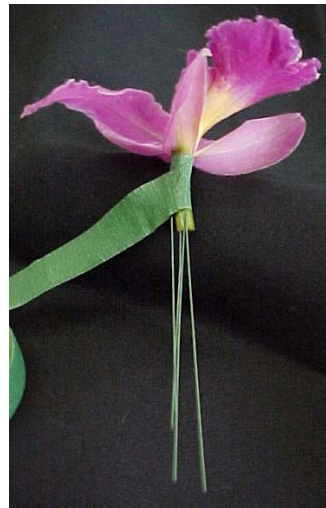
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***Cymbidium*** and ***Cattleya*** can be wired using the same method.

1. Re-cut the stem.
2. Insert a #22 or 24 gauge wire through the stem just below the flower and a smaller wire (#26) above the previous one and at right angle with it.
3. Bend wires down, using them to secure the moist cotton or tissue.
4. Use floral tape to cover the wire.



Wiring *Cattleya* and *Cymbidium*



***Dendrobium***, ***Oncidium***, ***Odontoglossum*** and ***Paphiopedilum*** can be wired as follows:

1. Insert a medium wire (gauge #24 or #26) up the stem and through the throat of the orchid.
2. Curve the end of the wire to form a loop and pull it back towards the base of the flower until it protrudes slightly at the back.



Wiring *Dendrobium*, *Oncidium*, *Odontoglossum* and *Paphiopedilum*



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**Phalaenopsis** are wired to provide extra support in the lip.

1. Cover a medium gauge wire with floral tape matching the color of the bloom and bend the wire into a U shape.
2. From the front of the bloom, insert the wire over the lip, under the column and between the lateral sepals. The bloom should not be punctured.
3. Use floral tape to hold the stem and wire together.



Wiring *Phalaenopsis* does not require piercing the flower



**Filler flowers** such as baby's breath or statice can be wired by assembling small bunches and wrapping a light weight wire around the stems, leaving a few cm of wire free before starting to wrap. Bend both ends of the wire down and cover with floral tape.



Wiring a broad leaf

**Broad leaf** foliage can be wired by piercing the back of the leaf over the mid vein, and bending the wire ends downwards, parallel to the leaf stem. Cover the wire and stem with floral tape. Other type of foliage can be wired by wrapping and wiring the same way.

**Ribbon loop** ends can be secured through a wire loop, twisting the wire around the bow, and using floral tape to cover the wire.

A single bloom with foliage and filler is a popular **boutonniere**. This is easily done by using a wired bloom, a *Dendrobium* for example, and adding a few stems of baby's breath and an ivy leaf. The baby's breath and leaf are not wired but secured around the *Dendrobium* with an extra layer of floral tape. The end of the wire, covered with floral tape, can be curled around a pen or pencil. The boutonniere will be secured with a long pin from the back side of the lapel. Multiple flower boutonnieres can be made the same way, 2 or 3 flowers will need to be wired, lighter elements may be secured with the floral tape. Ends on a multiple flower boutonniere can be gathered with floral tape and left straight or curled. They can also be gathered near the top with floral tape but individual stems left in an unwrapped cluster.



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Single flower **corsages** use much the same technique as boutonnieres but are usually slightly larger, either due to the selection of a larger flower or to the addition of more filler, foliage and accessories. Multiple flower corsages are assembled from pieces similar to single flower boutonnieres. Start by wiring a flower bud along with some filler flowers, greens or ribbon, leaving a long piece of taped wire which other elements will be taped to, this will be the spine of the corsage. Prepare a number of elements as outlined in the boutonniere's section. Wire and tape them to the spine, and curl the end of the spine.



A larger corsage may require 2 pins to secure it to the garment. Wrist corsages are made the same way as shoulder corsages but have to be mounted on a special wristlet with metal clamps. These can be purchased at most florists. The clamps are secured around the spine of the corsage and the elastic band is slipped around the wrist. A small corsage can also be secured to a barrette clip with wire for securing to the hair.