

A Guide To Designing Floral Art For Thanksgiving



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Some Comments About Chanukah

Chanukah is an amazing Jewish holiday.....It is a holiday that has very ancient roots, over 2000 years old....

Chanukah is not a Jewish Christmas. Christmas commemorates the birth of Jesus. **Chanukah marks the successful conclusion of a war for religious freedom when the Jews over 2000 years ago achieved a victory to worship their own way in a Hellenistic world.**

One could argue that many cultures have celebrated holidays of light at this dark time of the year, so that there are some ancient commonalities.....

For many today, Christmas and Chanukah have become coupled in the popular mind due to a variety of factors. (eg. they usually occur around the same time of year, the commercialization of the winter holidays, a very open western society etc.), Some folks even have tried to blend the two very unique holidays into something called "Chismukkah."



And The American Thanksgiving...

Thanksgiving marks a celebration of the Pilgrims who came over to New England from Europe. They wanted to celebrate the fact that they managed to survive in a new and rather alien environment.



Many were not as fortunate and died during the early days of the Plymouth Colony

Those who survived with the aid of the Native Americans were fortunate and had very good reason to be thankful.

The holiday is one that we all now celebrate to be thankful for all of our blessings.

So What's this "Thanksgivukkah?"

Most of the time Chanukah and Christmas are around the same time of year. The two holidays have become blended in the public consciousness to the point that many talk about "Chrimukkah."

In 2013 we have a very interesting situation where Chanukah on the Jewish Calendar is converging with Thanksgiving. It is a rare event. In fact so rare that we understand it won't happen again for another 70,000 years (give or take a few!)

This has resulted in a rather wild and interesting hybrid holiday. Many are calling it "Thanksgivukkah" --both with one and two k's. (But this should not be a surprise. People love Chanukah but still sometimes have a hard time figuring out how to spell its name---under normal circumstances!)





The thing that is interesting about this hybrid holiday is that it has created an interesting popular reaction... Many folks have enthusiastically embraced “Thanksgivukkah” as a fun and interesting way to generate new and interesting combinations of customs and as an opportunity to experiment with new rituals.

The two holidays of Chanukah and Thanksgiving do have some interesting commonalities. The Pilgrims were prompted to come to America to seek the freedom to practice religion in their own way. They may have been grateful for physical survival, but their original motivation was linked to the quest for freedom of religious expression.

The holiday of Chanukah celebrates the same ideal, that of religious freedom, albeit in a different religious tradition. There are obviously differences between the two holidays, but the common threads are interesting.

Thanksgivukkah is what we call a “fusion” holiday. The ability to mix popular symbols of both of these holidays is fun and exciting.

Do We Use Thanksgiving Symbols and Colors or Chanukah Symbols and Colors?



The answer is simple. Either or both.

Typically Chanukah floral art contains white, and blue along with varied symbols. The fact that the holiday typically arrives in Dec., means that floral art for Chanukah is often created with evergreens and other seasonally typical foliage. These materials are available even in Nov. If you want your Chanukah floral art to use those same colors and symbols, you can still achieve that look.

If you wish to create typical Thanksgiving floral designs with the red, red oranges, yellows, etc. and use them to decorate your home for Chanukah 2013, that is certainly appropriate too.

Either look----Thanksgiving or Chanukah will work just fine for this holiday.



On the other hand, it is a fusion hybrid holiday this season.....

You can combine symbols and colors of **both** holidays in all kinds of ways!

And that is what makes this holiday especially interesting from a floral designer's point of view.



The interesting combination of the symbols and colors of **both** holidays contributes to the visual impact of many Thanksgivukkah floral pieces.



Symbols and Colors of Chanukah



Blue
White
Chanukkiyah (Menorah)
Dreidel
Hebrew Letters
Star of David
Maccabee
Hammer
Chanukah Gelt
Pitcher
Candles/Light
Letters from the Dreidel
Letters spelling Maccabee
Yarmulke
Tallit

Symbols and Colors of Thanksgiving

Red
Red Orange
Orange
Orange Yellow
Yellow
Yellow Green
Green
Cornucopia
Native American
Pilgrim
Turkey
Pilgrim Buckle
Cranberries
Fall Color Leaves
Wicker
Cattails
Berries
Wheat



A Gallery of Thanksgiving Floral Designs











































Menorah...



The Chanukah Menorah or Chanukkiyah is the eight branch Menorah used during Chanukah. (with the extra ninth candle used to light the other eight).

Lights are kindled on each of the eight nights of the holiday. The first night one candle is lit. The second night two are lit and so forth.

We have three floral related Chanukah Menorahs here.

This one allows an additional flower to be placed into a water tube each night....



This is a Floral Menorah where each day we add an additional candle from the day before...
Do use caution with candles and never leave them unattended....



Do we call a Turkey Chanukah Menorah for Thanksgivukkah a Chanukkiya, a Menurkey, or a Turkorah? We believe any of these names work just fine!

Here is another Turkorah (or whatever!)



Instead of lighting candles here, an additional rose is placed each night to signify each of the eight days of Thanksgivukkah. This design has the total of nine roses (eight plus the one as mentioned earlier) and the photographs here assume we are at the last night of Thanksgivukkah!





Pitcher...

Chanukah honors the memory of the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem when the Jews of that era fought for religious freedom.

When the Temple was rededicated a flask of oil was found that was supposed to only last one day. Instead it burned for eight. This is the reason for the eight days of Chanukah and lighting the lights for eight days.

The pitcher is a symbol of the container that held the oil that burned for eight days. It is a symbol that has not been used much as of late. Perhaps it is time to consider a revival?













Wreath.....



The crown, wreath or chaplet is one of the oldest floral designs on the planet. They were widely used by the Egyptians, Greeks, Persians and Romans. The Jews at that period of history enjoyed this decoration/personal ornament just as everyone else did.

In fact I was not at all surprised to learn that there are historical suggestions that when the Temple was rededicated wreaths were placed as part of the festivities.

This symbol has been neglected in recent years as a Jewish or Chanukah symbol possibly because of the much more recent association with Christmas Wreaths. However it is another symbol worth reviving. As you can see in these examples, wreaths may be incorporated in vase arrangements for Chanukah and Thanksgivukkah in creative ways.





Dreidel.....



How about an entire dreidel made of flowers?

The dreidel is a top used in a game of chance played during this holiday. It is enjoyed by the young and young at heart... It does have a serious aspect...

The Hebrew Nun, Gimel, Hay and Shin stand for the words, “Nas Gadol Haya Sham” or a great miracle was there.... נס גדול היה שם
It refers to the fact that the oil used in the rededicated Temple in Jerusalem lasted eight days (which was quite unexpected--hence the “miracle!” This is also the reason for the eight days of Chanukah and the lighting of lights each day.)

But the letters on the top also tell players whether to put money in the pot, take money out of the pot, etc... What a fun way to educate!





It's always fun to play with a friend or relative!





Horn of Plenty.....



The Horn of Plenty or Cornucopia has become a definite symbol of Thanksgiving. It stands for abundance of food and drink and that is how most people look at it today.

It is derived from Greek Mythology Our suggestion of this base for Thanksgiving may seem ironic when you consider that Chanukah was a struggle of the Jewish People to maintain their religious autonomy in a Hellenistic world.

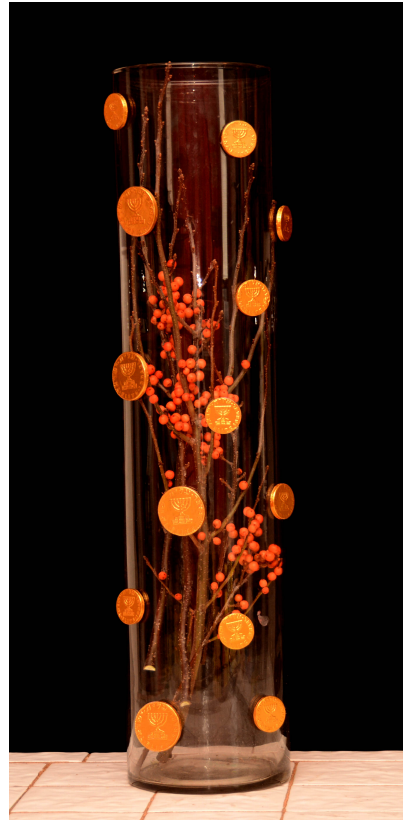
Nonetheless we can be sure that the Pilgrims were very familiar with both the symbol and its sources. It certainly makes sense as a Thanksgiving symbol. It is also visually a very unique and cool container. Can it be used for a fusion holiday of Thanksgiving and Chanukah? I would suggest that it can and should with some possible modifications.



Here is a Chanukah Horn of Plenty incorporating the blue and white of some traditional prayer shawls and also the Israeli flag.



A fall motif with our scarecrow friend enjoying an abundance of flowers while also perhaps considering his next game of dreidel.



Chanukah Gelt



In the Jewish community parents giving money to students to pay their teachers is historical fact. Of course as time went by, the students wanted their take as well.

Some have suggested that Chanukah gelt (money) can be traced back to the fact that the victorious Hasmoneans minted coins as part of their celebration.

The concept of getting Chanukah gelt or other presents on the eight nights of Chanukah is part of the pleasure that children derive from this holiday.

Many look forward to getting Chanukah gelt in the form of milk chocolates! (YUMMY!) and to using the gelt as part of dreidel play!







Maccabee



Judea was part of the Seleucid Empire. King Antiochus' restrictions on practicing Judaism brought about a major revolt.

Mattathias and his five sons led the Jewish resistance. Collectively (and one son in particular, Judah) they became known as the Maccabees.

Judah Maccabee, was known as Judah the Hammerer, possibly because of his personality, or his method of fighting (guerrilla warfare).









Table Arrangements.....











Elephant...



Antiochus used all the latest war toys including elephants.

One of the Maccabee brother's claim to fame was getting crushed by one of these elephants. (Ouch!--Sorry. The elephant does make a very neat floral piece though, minus the crushed warrior.)



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About Rittners Floral School



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Rittners Floral School is one of the longest running and finest private floral design schools in North America.

Located in the prestigious Back Bay neighborhood of Boston, Rittners Floral School attracts students from all over North America and abroad by the excellence of its courses.

Rittners makes use of the latest educational theory, teaching and floral technologies, to bring its students outstanding diploma programs in floral designing....

Rittners Floral School's only business is floral education.

Whether your goals are rest and relaxation, stress reduction, or vocational, you will really enjoy the various hands-on workshop floral art courses offered at Rittners.