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Individual Study
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Comparisons in U. S. and Dominican Floriculture

Objective: To compare the differences in Dominican style of floral design to that of the United States. Comparing concepts, techniques and economics.

Introduction

Dominica is a tropical island that is sought after for its beauty. Tropical flowers and foliage run rampant on every hillside. Accompanying these valuable resources are the common cultural practices of gardening and floral design. This is seen in homes, churches, and businesses all over Dominica. Springfield is a prime example. Dominicans differ somewhat in their concepts and techniques of design. As Americans, we have rules for everything even art.

There is also an economic factor making Dominican floral design different, tropical flower availability. The cost of tropical flowers in America is much higher; thus making them more scarce in American designs. Many floral designers have difficulty using these flowers in arrangements, because of their larger size and unfamiliarity with their characteristics. Dominicans, on the other hand, have mastered exquisite designs and techniques using these exotic tropical flowers.

Material and Methods

The methods used in this study were personal interviews with local people who practice the art of floral design. Here at Springfield was Aurthelee and Mona. These two share the job of decorating the living area and dining tables. Another interview was conducted with Jennifer Fadell of Fadell's in Roseau. Fadell's is a florist and party shop.

Results

Working here at Springfield and dealing with the public are both very different approaches in floral design. However, both are also different in the U. S.. Mrs. Fadell finds many of her local customers prefer imported flowers such as daisies, roses, mums, etc., from the U. S.. The weddings in Dominica only consist of flowers. No rental items such as candelabras and containers are used because of the cost. In the U. S. much of the cost of the floral part of the wedding is the rentals. Servicing a wedding is also very standard business in the U. S.. Florists take all the decorations to the church and reception, and set up the wedding party with their flowers. In comparison, florists don't even take the flowers to the church here in Dominica. Also, local people bring in their own flowers to be put in an arrangement, and most American florists don't even consider this.

The concept behind Dominican designs is very similar to America. These consist of the basic line, round, and triangle designs. Although, tropical flowers are large when compared with a daisy, a rose, or even an iris. In America such flowers as an iris or Liatrice are called line flowers which are the height and skeleton of your design, the basic shape.

Dominicans use Ginger and Heliconia to create these lines which are much larger. The basic shape of their design is not done by the use of these flowers but the foliage. (Discussed later.) The next flower is called a mass flower. In the U. S. these are roses and large daisies and mums. These usually provide a focal point and fill in large spaces. In Dominica these are Anthuriums and small Torch Ginger. These fill in space and rarely provide a focal point. Next, a filler flower is added. These are tiny, fine flowers that fill in small space and give an American design its busy and cluttered look. There is no such flower in Dominica; therefore, their designs look more dramatic and simple. Dominicans really focus on foliage. Most of it is grown in their yard, for both public and private. Because their designs are so much more simple they can use variegated foliage of which is rare in the U. S.. It also serves as the skeleton for their arrangement and many times the focal point. Americans don't feel like they are getting what they pay for if the arrangement is not all flowers. They don't appreciate the space through an arrangement that gives it such a stately look. Dominican designers thrive on this concept.

Dominicans use such large eye catching flowers that often the design will be done to suit the flower rather than the area the arrangement is to go in. In America we are taught to design to the purpose of which it will be used. If the architectural line of a wall corner needs to be softened, design a tall arrangement to cover it. The concept here is just to make an arrangement that looks good regardless of its intended location. Arrangements are such that they could be naturally found outdoors. American style is always more formal.

My interviews indicated that the cost of tropical flowers in the U. S. is the major factor in their rare usage. A single Anthurium is \$.50 EC where in the U. S. they are \$4.00 dollars wholesale price. Ginger run \$1.50 EC and in the U. S. \$5-6.00 each stem. Retail mark-up in Dominica and in the U. S. is done with labor included and at the same percentage rate.

Conclusion

Dominican floral design concepts and techniques are unique to their flowers. The tropical flowers have many different uses to create a different style of arrangement. They are simple and spacious and never busy or mechanical. The economic factor in the U. S. is the reason these flowers are rarely seen. This is also why American florists have difficulty arranging them. Dominica has a wealth of beautiful plant life. In arrangements they use these things in their natural setting and they create a magnificent piece of art.