Instructor: Marcia Eames-Sheavly  
169 Plant Science Building  
607-255-1781  
ME14@cornell.edu  

Horton Lab, Ken Post Labs  
Time: Tuesdays, 1:25 – 4:25 p.m.  

Teaching Assistants:  
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Course website: http://www.hort.cornell.edu/art  
2 credits  

Code of Academic Integrity: You should be familiar with Cornell’s Code which may be found at http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html. You are responsible for knowing and complying with the code.  

Office hours  
By appointment, in 169 Plant Science Building.  
I am part-time, and not in the office Wednesdays.  

Rationale  
As part of a Hort 201-203 sequence, this experiential course will focus on plant materials that are used to create art, or that are manipulated into pieces of art. It will acquaint students with a range of topics such as the use of plants in fibers and dyes, floral design, and living sculpture practices such as topiary, the woven branch, turfworks, tree sculpture and bonsai. Students will create a final project focused on these or related methods.  

Taking this course will also provide students with a unique chance to view science from a very different perspective. Creativity is the cornerstone of advancement in science. Exploring the relationship between art and science can foster an understanding of principles of design and presentation in living forms. Exploring the art of horticulture will help students view plant forms through a unique lens.  

Who should take the course?  
Given that we define horticulture as both the “art and science of growing plants,” the course would provide horticulture and plant science majors with a context for the aesthetic aspects of the discipline. It would provide non-majors with the chance to
explore an artistic perspective of horticulture in an interesting and engaging exploratory environment.

There are no prerequisites for this course. All studio activities and explorations will be at a beginner level. No formal art or horticulture experience is necessary for this course.

**Major Conceptual Areas for the Course**
- Beauty: the aesthetics of manipulating plants for human interest (or folly?)
- Self-expression and discovery: articulating your thoughts and reflections that emerge around topics and activities in the course.
- The “mechanics:” physical challenges of creating art from plant materials.
- The “horticulture:” attending to plants’ needs when using them to create art.

**Course Objectives**
Upon completion of the course students will be able to:
- Discuss the diverse ways in which artists are able to manipulate plants.
- Identify and critique non-living and living plants in contemporary art.
- Begin to articulate a “personal aesthetic:” describe what appeals to you in this intersection of art and horticulture.
- Through a final project, become proficient in one or more of the approaches presented in class, or in a distinct topic of interest.
- Critique elements of the art and horticulture covered in the class and in the readings.

**Class Format**
Class will meet from 1:25 – 4:25 on Tuesdays. Typically we will begin with discussion or presentation, and move to the studio portion of the class. We will have a number of visiting artists.

**Quality Circles**
We will use a method of embedded assessment for continually evaluating teaching strategies and student learning. This assessment focuses not on “likes and dislikes,” but on learning and approaches that assist or impede it.

Each week, the teaching assistant will be responsible for selecting several students to stay briefly after class. Because there are 25-30 students, this means that each person will only have to stay after class two to three times over the course of the semester.

After class, the TA will ask the group of four to five students to respond to these questions:
- In class today, did you get what you needed?
- What assisted with your learning?
- What could be improved?

Students in the quality circle will confer, and will share feedback with the TA. The TA will share anonymous results with the instructor (I will not know which students provided
the feedback, in an effort to encourage your candid and constructive thoughts. Students are also encouraged to talk with others in the class to get feedback to share with the TA. The instructor may occasionally pose other questions for the quality circle to consider. Quality circles have greatly influenced the way in which art of horticulture courses evolve.

**Course Resources**

On reserve in Mann Library:

Cooper, Paul. 2001. *Living Sculpture*. London: Octopus Publishing Group. This will be the primary text for the course.

Also on reserve (in Mann library, please alert us if we need to add Sibley Library as an alternative location):

*Dwarf Potted Trees*. Special Revised Edition of Plants & Gardens, Vol. 9, No. 3, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden Record.


**Course Requirements and Grading**

- **30%**, Attendance, active participation, and brief written self-assessment of your participation in and contribution to the class. Missing more than two classes can significantly affect your grade.
- **35%**, Completion of course readings, as well as completion of option 1, 2 or 3.
- **35%**, Creation, materials, and presentation of a final project of your choice, as a group or individually, on a topic of interest.

**Choices available** (see descriptions of these options below):

- Option 1, eight weeks of journal writing OR
- Option 2, review of the readings OR
- Option 3, an art and horticulture web feature on a topic of your choice.
**Journals**

**Option one** is for students to keep a journal for the 8 weeks of the course – any 8 out of the first 10. Students will:

- Briefly summarize learnings from the class and from the readings.
- Extensively critically reflect on content and its application to you and your interests.
- Make connections and compare with other experiences.
- Email journals to ME14@cornell.edu, once each week. Paste your journal from Word directly into the email message. The subject line can contain the week (week 1, week 2, etc.).

Please note: I will ask your permission to share portions of your journal in presentation or publication settings. Your identity would remain anonymous, and in addition, entries used would be general examples that would not in any way reveal your identity.

**Review of Readings**

**Option two**, students will write two papers, 3 - 4 pages in length, critically reflecting on what you’re learning from course reading assignments, as well as their application to you and your interests. These are due on March 7 and April 25, respectively. You are encouraged to make connections and compare with other experiences, state your opinions about the writings, and reflect on more than one reading in a paper. This isn’t intended to be a dry review of course readings.

**Art and Horticulture Web Feature**

**Option three**, students will produce a concise, well-written Word document with accompanying photos that addresses an aspect of gardening and art for the home gardener. This option will be written for a web audience, and needs to be original material, not drawing from existing copyrighted work. Photos also need to be original images or other digitized art that you create or is not copyrighted. Option 3 may be presented, for example, as a series of steps that outline a garden project, including background information, materials needed, time required, safety considerations, etc. Topics might include: topiary in the home garden, creating living willow sculptures at home, a creative aspect of garden design, making and using garden enhancements, or working with mosaic and concrete in the home garden. Your project will be considered successful if gardeners can easily follow your instructions without assistance.

For option 3, you will provide to me a CD with three pieces: the Word document with the inserted images; a Word document with text only and no images; and the original image files that you created in a separate folder. We ask that you do this so the instructor can see how the images and text go together, while providing separate pieces that make the translation to an HTML format easier. Questions? Please see the instructor.

**You must commit to option 1, 2, or 3 during the first week of class.**
Final Projects
Students will work on their own or in small, self-identified groups on a topic of interest. Each student/group will provide a presentation to the class, the last day of class. If you're working in a group, you will also provide to the instructor:
• a brief review of useful resources and/or inspirations;
• description of how to care and maintain the project over time, if this applies;
• and a brief self assessment of your contribution to the group process.

Criteria for grading final projects:
• Adhering to each of the deadlines – you provide the instructor with a description of your final project by February 21, and present your final project to the class on May 2.
• Demonstrated work over the course of the semester. Your project should evolve over time, since it reflects a significant part of your grade, and shouldn’t come together at the last minute. During your presentation, you’ll describe the process and your work as it progressed.
• Reflects a major conceptual area of the course.
• Clearly shows the link between art and horticulture.
• Originality and creativity!

Individuals or groups may want to explore a topic from class in more detail, or consider an area of plants used in art or as artforms not covered in class. Examples:
  Batik, shibori, or tritrik, or another method of making designs on cloth with plant-based dye.
  Musical instruments from plant materials.
  A tree sculpture, turf work, topiary or piece of woven branch art.
  Mixed media: use of both living and non-living plants in sculpture.
  Detailed plan for crop art.

Project must be approved by instructor.

Supplies Needed
Nearly all materials will be supplied in class. Due to the highly experiential nature of the course, and the significant number of supplies, there is a materials fee.

For the ikebana studio, you will need to collect several small branches and stones (such as river pebbles, often sold in arts and crafts stores). You’ll also need a small bowl, about the size of a cereal bowl – we’ll show an example.

Materials fee
$35, checks payable to Cornell University, due by the third week of class.
Deadlines at a Glance

- You must commit to option 1, 2, or 3 during the first week of class.
- Students choosing Option 1 – journals begin the first week of class, all 8 are due within the first 10 weeks (by April 4).
- February 21 – brief description of final project due.
- Students choosing Option 2, first paper summarizing readings is due March 7th, second paper is due on April 25th.
- Students choosing Option 3, the text and accompany photos for a web feature, all products are due on April 25th. You have the option of submitting work earlier, editing, and submitting a final copy on April 25th.
- A brief self-assessment of your participation in and contribution to the class, in the form of a one page paper emailed to the instructor, due on April 25th.
- Last day of class, May 3 – final projects are due. You will have 5 minutes to present the final project to the class; more time allotted to groups. Please remember that group projects have additional pieces that are required (see final projects above). All these pieces are due on May 3.

Therefore, when class ends on May 3, all your course requirements should be complete!

The Course at a Glance

**Week 1 (January 24):**
Course expectations and goals, course syllabus.
Tour of the greenhouse, discussion of space request and final projects.

Suggested journal topic (for option 1): When was the last time you had the opportunity to really immerse yourself in the plant world, whether a garden, forest, greenhouse, or other? Describe it, talk about it – how did you feel, and what do you remember most?

**Week 2 (January 31):**
Plant medicine with 7 Song
“It is a thing of beauty to manipulate plants into medicine”
- 7 Song’s background and travels.
- Plant parts and how they’re used.
- Making medicines -- teas, tinctures and oils.

For more information: 7song.com

Read for next week:
*Economic Botany*, Chapter 16: Fibers, Dyes and Tannins

Suggested journal topic: We rely on plants for everything - food, shelter, clothing, inspiration - do you think we forget the significance of the plant world in our lives? What are your thoughts about how we view the plant world, individually, as a culture…?
Week 3 (February 7):
Plant dyes and fibers: history, culture, use
Interact with plant fibers, indigo dye studio
Bring a small item to dye
Wear old clothes!

For next week, read in *Living Sculpture*:
Introduction, pp. 6 – 11.
Turf-works, pp. 64-95.

Suggested journal topic: Think back over the last several years. What were the greatest two or three *learning experiences* that you’ve had? What qualities do they have in common, what do you remember from them? Did they always occur in a classroom setting, or not at all? (On this one journal, it is ok to depart from an art of horticulture context, although it is ideal to relate it back to the topic.)

Week 4 (February 14):
Turfworks presentation by Frank Rossi
Overview of mowing patterns, and the carving of earth slabs, turf and peat to create living sculptures.

For the ikebana studio next week, you will need to collect several small branches and stones (such as river pebbles, often sold in arts and crafts stores). You’ll also need a small bowl – we’ll show you an example.

Suggested journal topic: Would you have thought, before coming to this class that turfgrass could connect in any way to art? React to the presentation, your perspectives, and relate to any experiences you may have had with this topic.

Week 5 (February 21):
Floral design
Ikebana with visiting artist Sonja Skelly

**Brief description of final projects are due today.**

For next week, read:
*The Art of Floral Design* (by Norah Hunter): Skim Section 1 in its entirety, and read through Chapters 11 & 12.
*The Art of Floral Design* (by Paul Thomas and Jo Avison): Flip through in its entirety, looking at photos for ideas.

Suggested journal topic: Flowers are an important part of celebration. Yet, many students have said that they resent the connection between commercial roses and Valentine’s Day, giving flowers as a symbol of love, or connecting certain flowers with certain occasions. What are your thoughts about that? What’s your favorite flower and why?
**Week 6 (February 28):**
Floral design, continued
- Basics of line, form, color, different types of arrangements
- Students create small arrangement

For next week, read in *Living Sculpture*:
Sculpture in Leaf, pp. 12 – 37.

Suggested journal topic: Plants are linked closely with human well-being. Are you noticing anything with respect to working with plants this semester, and an impact on your own peace of mind and well-being?

**Week 7 (March 7):**
Sculpture in leaf
- Revival of interest in topiary
- Introduction to broad range of contemporary approaches
- Students complete topiary project

For next week, read in *Living Sculpture*:
The Woven Branch, pp. 38-63.

Suggested journal topic: Unlike some aspect of horticulture, topiary waxes and wanes with respect to public interest. Do you find this artform appealing, or not? How have you reacted to images of pruned shrubs and shaped trees? Do you find them to be things of beauty, or do you dislike the “management” of them?

**Week 10 (March 14):**
The woven branch
- Introduction to the making of sculpture or semi-functional features by interlacing flexible young stems and branches of shrubs and trees.
- Presentation on how artists work with living plants by shaping, training and weaving into sculpture, furniture and architecture
- Create woven art from a variety of materials.

Guest, Craig Cramer

For next week, read in *Dwarf Potted Trees*:
pp. 4 – 13, 27 – 42.
Skim the rest of the handbook.

Suggested journal topic: How is your final project progressing? Is it a joy, a struggle, a challenge, all three? Share your progress and address challenges you’re facing along the way.

**Week 11 (March 28):**
Bonsai
Guest, Dr. Albright

For next week, read in Living Sculpture:
Tree Sculpture, pp. 96-119.

Also read in Forms into Time:
Through the Narrow Door, the essay by Marina Warner, pp. 8 – 24.
Glance through photos of work throughout the remainder of the book.

**Week 8 (April 4):**
Tree sculpture presentation: using traditional methods of horticulture, such as grafting, to make sculpture from living trees
Guest, Dr. Ken Mudge

Learning to graft with Hibiscus
Plan for next week: choosing designs for apple grafting in the Minn’s Garden

**Week 9 (April 11):**
Tree sculpture, continued
Meet in the Minn’s Garden to graft apple trees into shapes
Dress appropriately for inclement weather!

Examine photos in:
Artists Land Nature

**Week 12 (April 18):**
To be announced.

**Week 13 (April 25):**
Visit from Paul Cooper, artist and author of Living Sculpture.
Workshop focus to be announced.

**Week 14 (May 2):**
Presentation of final projects