An Environmental Approach to Positive Emotion: Flowers

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Abstract - Since antiquity, flower symbolism has been a significant part of cultures around the world. Flowers accompany us in every major event in life - birth, marriage, holidays, graduations, illness, and finally death. Flowers have been grown in decorative gardens and used as adornment for centuries on virtually every continent on earth. Finding the right flower to give to someone your love is an art. Make sure to include a note about the meaning of the flower!

Flowers and bouquets of flowers have a meaning of their own. Flower meanings have been used to convey ideas, feelings and messages for centuries. The word, floriography, has been coined for the assignment of meaning to flowers. There is a meaning to colors of flowers, to numbers of flowers, and to groups of flowers. It is a silent language that has been largely lost to us through lack of use.

Flower symbolism began with many ancient religions. Many flowers were originally linked to ancient deities including Venus, Diana, Jupiter and Apollo. During the Renaissance, nature was viewed as a reflection of the divine. Flower symbolism was included in much of the religious art of the day and medieval gardens were often created with both the symbolic meaning of flowers and spiritual symbolism in mind. Flower symbols were used in the religious art of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and reached the highest level of development in the Victorian era.

Keywords - Emotion, Flower, Symbols

Introduction

In addition to the obvious choices of color and variety, the language of flowers also includes the way flowers are worn or presented. Presenting flowers upright conveys a positive meaning, but if they are presented upside down the meaning is the opposite. If a ribbon is included with the flowers and is tied to the left then the meaning of the flowers refers to the giver, but if the ribbon is tied to the right then the meaning refers to the recipient. Also, flowers can be used to answer questions. When they are presented with the right hand the answer is "yes," but when presented with the left hand the answer is "no."

Although the legendary associations and religious meanings of flower symbolism have existed for centuries, the use of the symbolic meaning of flowers to represent emotions was developed to a high degree during Victorian times. Due to the strict protocol of the times, emotions, wishes and thoughts were not openly expressed between men and women. Instead, an elaborate language based on flower symbolism was developed. Gifts of either single flowers or bouquets conveyed clear messages to the recipient.

Selected Flower Meanings

Here are some selected flowers and their meanings, a short dictionary.

Almond flowers -- Hope
Anemone -- Forsaken
Aster -- Symbol of love
Balm -- Sympathy
Basil -- Best wishes
Bay leaf -- "I change but in death"
Bell flower, white -- Gratitude
Bergamot -- Irresistible
Bluebell -- Constancy
Borage -- Courage
Broom -- Humility
Campanula -- Gratitude
Carnation, pink -- I'll never forget you
Carnation, red -- My poor heart aches for you
Carnation, striped -- Refusal
China rose -- Beauty always new
Chrysanthemum -- Love
Clover, four leaved -- "Be mine"
Coreopsis -- Love at first sight
Cuckoo pint -- Ardor
Daffodil -- Regard
Daisy -- Innocence, new-born, "I share your sentiment"
Fennel -- Flattery
Fern -- Sincerity
Forget-Me-Not -- True love
Furze or Gorse -- Enduring affection
French Marigold -- Jealousy
Gardenia -- Ecstasy
Gentian -- Loveliness
Geranium -- "You are childish"
Hare bell -- Grief
Heartsease -- "I am always thinking of you"
Honeysuckle -- Bonds of love
Heather -- Admiration
Hyacinth -- I am sorry, Please forgive me
Ice Plant -- "Your appearance freezes me"
Ivy -- Fidelity, friendship, marriage
Jasmine -- Grace
Jonquil -- "I hope for return of affection"
Lavender -- Luck, devotion
Lemon Balm -- Sympathy
Lilac -- First love
Lily -- Purity, modesty
Lily of the Valley -- Purity, the return of happiness
Lily, Calla -- Beauty
Marigold -- Health, grief or despair
Marjoram -- Kindness, courtesy
Myrtle -- Fidelity
Oregano -- Joy
Orchid -- Love, beauty, refinement
Pansy -- Loving thoughts
Periwinkle -- Happy memory
Phlox -- Agreement
Poppy, red -- Consolation
Primrose -- I can't live without you
Rose, cabbage -- Ambassador of love
Rose, red -- Love
Rose, pink -- Grace, beauty
Rose, yellow -- Friendship
Rosemary -- Remembrance, constancy
Rue -- Contrition
Sage -- Gratitude, domestic virtue
Snowdrop -- Hope
Star of Bethlehem -- Purity
Sweet Pea -- Departure, tender memory
Sweet William -- Gallantry
Tuberose -- Voluptuousness
Tulip, red -- My perfect lover, Reclamation of love
Violet -- Loyalty, modesty, humility
Violet, blue -- Faithfulness
Wormwood -- Grief
Wheat -- Riches of the continuation of life
The Rose

The Rose is the flower whose meaning we most understand, but here are some details of the meaning of the Rose that may be of further interest.

Rose, Black - You are my obsession
Rose, Champagne - You are tender and loving
Rose, Leonidas - Sweet love
Rose, Nicole - You are graceful and elegant, aristocratic
Rose, Orange - You are my secret love
Rose, Pink - Brilliant complexion; the glow of your smile; perfect happiness
Rose, Red - Passionate love; I love you
Rose, Single Stems - Simplicity
Rose, White - I am worthy of you; spiritual love; Innocence and Purity; Secrecy and Silence
Rose, White and Red - We are inseparable
Rose, White and Red Mixed - Unity; Flower emblem of England
Rose, White, Dried - Death is preferable to loss of virtue
Rose, Yellow - Friendship; Jealousy; I am not worthy
Rose, Bridal - Happy Love
Rose, Dark Crimson - Mourning
Rose, Hibiscus - Delicate beauty
Rose, Tea - I'll remember always
Rose, Thornless - Love at first sight
Roses, Bouquet of Mature Blooms – Gratitude

Multiple Roses

Single Rose, any color - Gratitude or simplicity
2 Roses - Mutual feelings
3 Roses - I love you
7 Roses - I'm infatuated with you
9 Roses - We'll be together forever
10 Roses - You are perfect
11 Roses - You are my treasured one
12 Roses - Be mine
13 Roses - Friends forever
15 Roses - I'm truly sorry
20 Roses - I'm truly sincere towards you
21 Roses - I'm dedicated to you
24 Roses - Forever yours
25 Roses - Congratulations
50 Roses - Unconditional love
999 Roses - I love you till the end of time

CONCLUSION

Flowers are still used today to convey feelings in a more general way than in Victorian times. Many florists provide information on the language of flowers to encourage the practice of helping modern gift-givers to "say it with flowers." The flower symbolism for many flowers has been obscured by time and may remain only as a few key phrases or words. Flowers have been given as gifts for special occasions and to celebrate holidays throughout history.

The beauty and feminine quality of flowers also inspired the tradition of naming girls after flower names. This tradition has existed in many cultures throughout history and continues today. Popular girls' names related to flowers include Rose, Daisy, Lily, Holly, Violet, Heather, Fern, Jasmine, Myrtle, and Lavender.