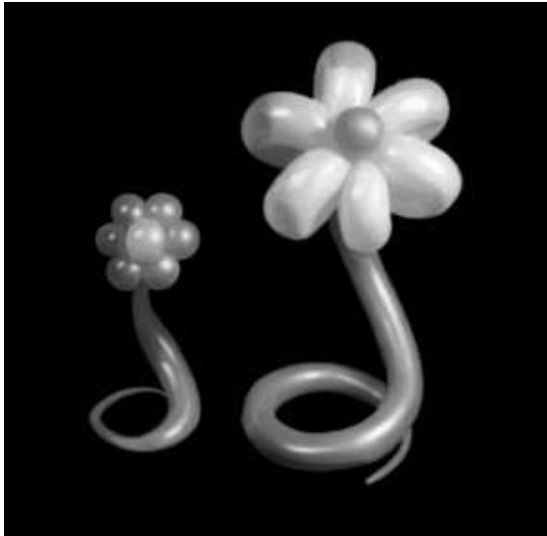


These are techniques and tips for three basic approaches to growing balloon flowers:  
1. with Round Balloons, 2. with Long Balloons, and 3. with Internally Structured Balloons.

## Secrets from the Past

The two internally structured flowers below by Graham Rouse are among the very first "Fantasy Flowers" and show valuable techniques which are seldom taken advantage of by balloon artists today.

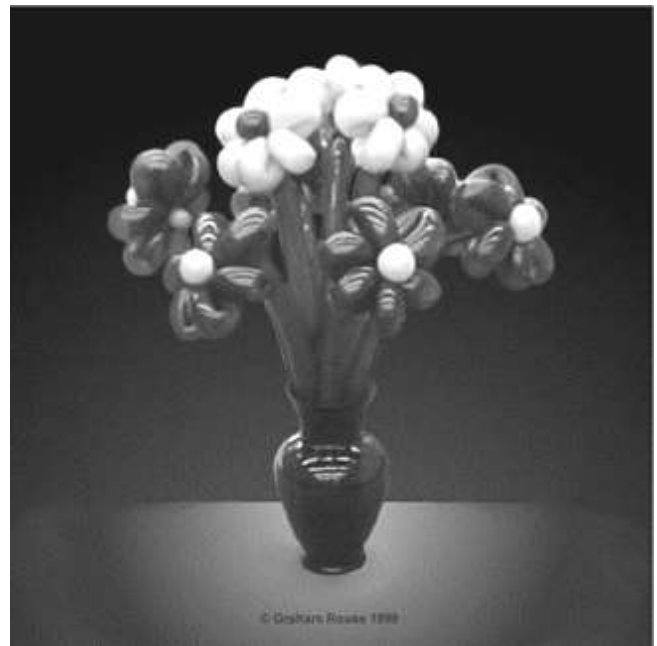
1. These designs from early in 1983 use internal wire structures in the stems of the flowers.
2. These designs incorporate internal structure in balloons with air pressure inside.



The combination of these two techniques allows the stems to take on both sculptural form and support functions. The flowers do not even require an additional container or base.

If you pursue the idea of air pressure in your internally structured balloons you can create some very unusual and exotic forms in the flowers and in the associated "greenery". It is important, however, to round off and/or pad the ends of structures you use inside the balloons to protect the latex.

Internally structured and pressurized stems are especially valuable as replacements for normal air filled stems. Air filled flowers such as the round balloon flower and long balloon flower shown above often use air filled #260 balloons for stems. Since the stems carry the weight of the flowers and often have more exposed "skin" for the air volume they contain than the flowers themselves; the stems are usually the first parts to weaken. The whole flower then droops or falls. Also, air filled long balloons are relatively bulky compared to real flower stems. This makes it difficult to produce flower arrangements in normal flower bases and containers.



The photo above shows an example where balloons straws were used as internal structure for long balloon stems. The long balloons were partially filled with air and massaged to make them thin at the bottom.

This made it possible to fit all the flowers in the vase while allowing the volume of stem greenery to increase in simple, elegant forms as they exited the vase. It also means that the stems will hold up at least as long as the flowers themselves.

## A Sip of Imagination

We occasionally make use of standard drinking straws for internal structure in balloon stems. This is very inexpensive and easy if you use drinking straws of appropriate diameter. You need different widths for #160's, #260's, or #350 balloons. Slide the straw into the long balloon, give it a puff of air and tie it off. Use the knotted end to tie into the center of the flower. Pinch the stem between two petals of the flower and you are set.

It is quick and easy for planting small flowers in your garden. Just stick them into dirt, clay, putty, sand, oasis, or holes drilled or punched into more solid bases. This straw system also makes it easy to put the stem into a coat pocket, lapel, small vase, etc. You may even put a pin through such a stem to attach the flower to a shirt or blouse.

