

Making Balloon Shrubs

Shrubs are generally structured more like trees but scaled closer to flowers. They may have flowers and berries but are generally heavy on foliage.

Flowers for shrubs may be made in all the ways described in other hand outs. Berries may be puffed, but not inflated, round balloons. Strings of bubbles twisted in long balloons also work well for berries.

The foliage of shrubs may be clusters of round balloons, clusters of bubbles twisted in long balloons or may be sheets of balloons. The sheets of balloons may be woven long balloons or balloon bubbles in frameworks. You could choose to create foliage that is simply a multitude of flowers that are all green balloons. You could use bunches of long balloons growing out from the center as foliage.

You may create more unusual or even "themed" foliage using specialty balloons such as bee body balloons, apple balloons, #524s, geos, and imprinted latex or foil balloons. You may stick on play money, photographs, baseball cards, discount coupons, tissue paper, etc.

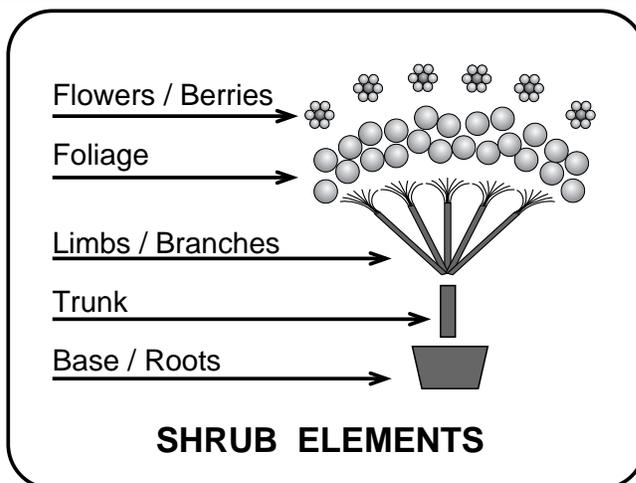
Small branches and limbs for shrubs may be constructed as described for stems in the flower hand outs.

One of our favorite techniques for making limbs or even trunks for shrubs is to insert an aluminum rod into green water hose. The rod and the water hose may be inserted into or attached to the outside of a vertical element that is firmly secured to a base. (There is more about such bases in the tree handout.)

You may cut the water hose with a utility knife or scissors to create an opening in which you may partially insert a second rod. The second rod creates a branch which may, itself, be covered with water hose. Alternately, you might insert a stem for flowers or additional foliage.

Landscaping With Balloon Shrubs

In real landscaping shrubs are often used as fillers, backdrops, fences, entrances, and even sculptures. It is rare to see these uses of balloon shrubs in balloon decor. We usually go to helium balloon clusters for fillers. We use Precisions walls, SDS or RMS for backdrops and area dividers. We use arches, columns, balloon panels and sometimes balloon tunnels for entrances. Yet, we can serve all these



functions with balloon shrubs and add a novelty to our designs rarely, if ever, seen by other balloonists, much less by our customers.

Such balloon shrubs are likely to be less efficient constructions than if we were not imitating plants, but they need not be quite as precise.

Imagine balloon hedges that guide people to an entrance covered by a lattice thick with balloon vines and flowers. Imagine four towering balloon shrubs marking the boundaries of a balloon garden. Notice the flowering shrubs that surround a central fountain. The garden and fountain rest on low platforms that roll away after dinner to reveal the dance floor. If you can see it, you can sell it.

Sculpting With Balloon Shrubs

Some of the first references that I recall to balloon sculpture, outside of balloon twisting, were those made by Rocky Toomey writing about balloon topiaries.

Creative gardeners used wire frames sculpted like geometric forms or even animals to guide the growth of plants to cover the frames and take on those same forms. Rocky had sculptured wire and net frames made to guide the covering of balloons into those same forms. This approach to balloon sculpture has become a staple of the industry.

From early on, however, the topiary approach to balloon sculpture left its plant origins and pursued realism in color and form when the sculpture is compared to the object it represents.

We want to suggest to you the possibilities of creating sculptures that pursue realism when the sculpture is compared to the plant version. The sculpture may be monochromatic and less precise than a normal version of the sculpture and yet be fully realized, recognizable and appropriate for the garden setting.