

GARDENING

An arranged marriage

By Carol Stocker

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

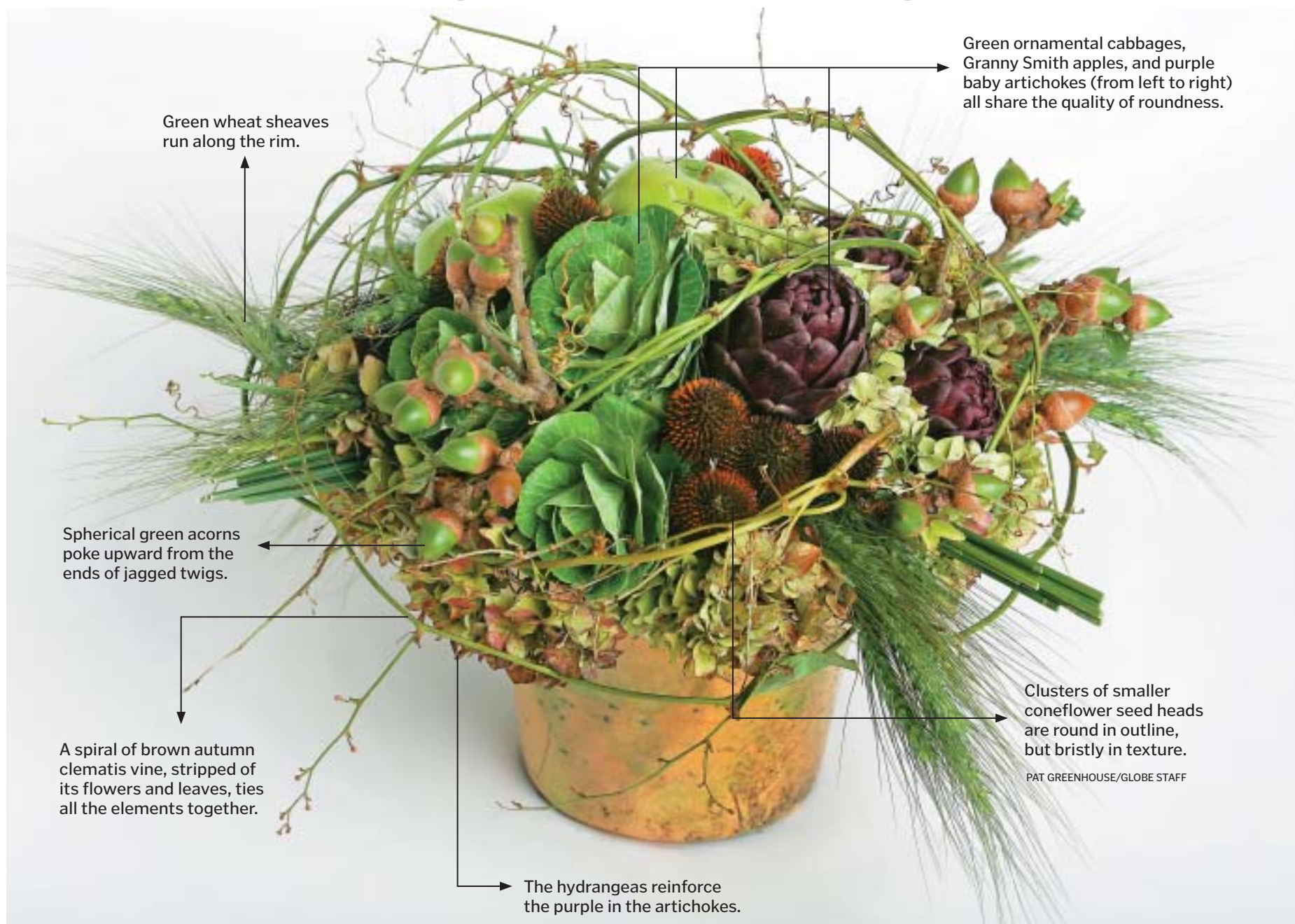
Fall arrangements have a distinctive personality, as illustrated by this inspired centerpiece by Marc Hall of Winston Flowers, the leading area florist. Many of the materials are readily available for the home flower arranger or have equivalents that can be found in your own backyard.

“Think beyond the flower head,” said Hall. “All parts of the plant should be considered — roots, stems, leaves, seed heads, and berries.”

There are, in fact, almost no flowers at all in this long-lasting arrangement. Instead Hall gathered a harvest-themed cornucopia of fruits, ornamental vegetables, and wild nuts. Each element is clustered to create solid blocks of color and texture. The central groupings of three green Granny Smith apples, three purple baby artichokes, and three small green ornamental cabbages all share the quality of roundness, creating a mounded effect.

As he moved out from the center, Hall chose increasingly spiky materials as a counterpoint. Three clusters of smaller coneflower seed heads are also round in outline, but bristly in texture with the individual seeds starting out black at the base but turning burnished orange at their tips. Spherical green acorns poke upward from the ends of jagged twigs while green wheat sheaves poke outward along the arrangement’s rim.

At this point, many people would have considered this centerpiece complete, but Hall encircled it with a spiral of brown autumn clematis vine, stripped of its flowers and leaves, to tie all the elements together like a delicate ribbon on a birthday present. The corkscrew tendrils questing off the main vine contribute their small gestures, and the whole centerpiece seems to be in motion.



Green wheat sheaves run along the rim.

Green ornamental cabbages, Granny Smith apples, and purple baby artichokes (from left to right) all share the quality of roundness.

Spherical green acorns poke upward from the ends of jagged twigs.

A spiral of brown autumn clematis vine, stripped of its flowers and leaves, ties all the elements together.

The hydrangeas reinforce the purple in the artichokes.

Clusters of smaller coneflower seed heads are round in outline, but bristly in texture.

PAT GREENHOUSE/GLOBE STAFF

The subdued coloration contributes to an autumnal feeling. Though this is a primarily green arrangement, the secondary use of the color brown in twigs and vines hints that winter is coming. The Japanese raku vessel has earth tones washed with a very pale green glaze. The surface is pocked with dark stipples and cracks to suggest the process of decay.

The only flowers in the arrangement are hydrangeas and they reinforce this sense of impending decomposition. Rather than the typically sky-blue billowy hydrangeas of summer, Hall used green hydrangeas mottled with the same Gothic purple of the artichokes. He irreverently crams these flower heads into crevices between the groupings of primary

materials, holding the other components together.

This could be an effective use for the weathered old hydrangea flower heads you may find now in your garden. They offer more texture than color. Boneheal (*Eupatorium rugosum*) or sedum Autumn Joy could also be used as filler. Pine needle twigs, or seed heads of ornamental grasses such as a penni-

setum or miscanthus could replace wheat sheaves. Seed heads of rudbeckia could stand in for coneflower. Pine cones still attached to branches could serve the same function as oak twigs. You could also experiment with grapevine or Virginia creeper in place of clematis vine.

These plants are stuck into damp Oasis, a green foam used by

flower arrangers inside containers. Grocery items such as apples or artichokes are pinned in position with 6-inch wooden cooking skewers, and can be replaced as needed for season-spanning display.

Carol Stocker is the author of “The Boston Globe Illustrated New England Gardening Almanac.”