A shipping package for a floral grouping including a sheet of material bonded to a support member and wrapped upwardly and gathered at a portion above the floral grouping to enclose the floral grouping. A bonding material joins the gathered portion, and a plurality of perforations in the sheet of material provides for the detachment of a detachable portion above the floral grouping. The support member can be provided as a foldable member to form an outer enclosure about the floral grouping with the sheet of material forming a substantially watertight enclosure between the floral grouping and the outer enclosure.
SHIPPING PACKAGE FOR A FLORAL GROUPING

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a divisional of U.S. Ser. No. 09/872,281, filed May 30, 2001, which claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application Ser. No. 60/208,366, filed May 31, 2000, and is expressly incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates generally to the field of packaging, and more particularly, but not by way of limitation, to a shipping package for protection of a floral grouping during shipping and handling thereof.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

[0003] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a packaging assembly includes a floral grouping disposed in a shipping package in accordance with the present invention.

[0004] FIG. 2 is a cross-sectional view of the packaging assembly of FIG. 1.

[0005] FIG. 3 is a perspective view of the shipping package of the packaging assembly of FIG. 1 in a flattened, unwrapped position.

[0006] FIG. 4 is a perspective view of another embodiment of a packaging assembly including a bed of growth medium supporting the floral grouping.

[0007] FIG. 5 is a cross-sectional view of the packaging assembly of FIG. 4.

[0008] FIG. 6 is a perspective view of another embodiment of a packaging assembly including a floral holding material supporting the floral grouping.

[0009] FIG. 7 is a cross-sectional view of the packaging assembly of FIG. 6.

[0010] FIG. 8 is a perspective view of another embodiment of a packaging assembly including a flower pot supporting the floral grouping.

[0011] FIG. 9 is a cross-sectional view of the packaging assembly of FIG. 8.

[0012] FIG. 10 is a perspective view of a support member with extending portions that are foldable to provide an enclosure about the floral grouping.

[0013] FIG. 11 is a perspective view of a packaging assembly including the support member of FIG. 10 with the support member shown in a partially-folded condition.

[0014] FIG. 12 is a perspective view of the packaging assembly of FIG. 11 in a fully-folded condition wherein the support member circumscribes the floral grouping.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0015] Referring now to the drawings, and more particularly to FIGS. 1-3, shown therein is a packaging assembly 10 which includes a shipping package 11 and a floral grouping 12. The shipping package 11 includes a support member 14 having an upper support surface 16 and a lower surface 18, and a sheet of material 20 attached to the upper support surface 16 of the support member 14. The sheet of material 20 is constructed to enclose the floral grouping 12 and provide a substantially water tight enclosure.

[0016] The sheet of material 20 can be provided with a peripheral edge defining a generally flat, rectangular sheet of material, but can also be provided with any shape, being geometric, non-geometric, asymmetrical and/or fanciful, as long as the sheet of material functions in accordance with the present invention. The sheet of material 20 may be, by way of example, but not by way of limitation, circular, conical, combinations thereof, or any other shape, as long as the sheet of material 20 functions as described herein.

[0017] The sheet of material 20 can also be provided with side ventilation holes (not shown), or the sheet of material 20 can be made from gas permeable or impermeable materials. When multiple sheets of material 20 are used together, they may be connected together or laminated, or can comprise separate layers. Finally, it will be appreciated that the sheet of material 20 can be substantially flat or angled such that when disposed about the floral grouping 12 and any other item contained with the floral grouping 12 and enclosed by the sheet of material 20, the sheet of material 20 may extend a distance upwardly beyond the floral grouping 12. Any thickness of the sheet of material 20 may be utilized in accordance with the present invention as long as the sheet of material 20 can be disposed about the floral grouping 12 as described herein. Preferably, the sheet of material 12 is within a thickness range of about 0.1 mil to about 30 mils.

[0018] The sheet of material 20 can be constructed from any suitable material that is capable of being disposed about the floral grouping 12. Examples of material suitable for use are paper (untreated or treated in any manner), cellophane, foil, polymer film, fiber (woven or non-woven or synthetic or natural), cloth (woven or non-woven or natural or synthetic) burlap, or any combinations thereof.

[0019] The term polymer film when used herein includes synthetic polymers such as polypropylene or naturally occurring polymers such as cellophane. A polymer film is relatively strong and not as subject to tearing as compared to paper or foil material. The sheet of material 20 can also be constructed from a cling material such as, but not limited to, Cling Wrap made by Glad, First Brands Corporation, Danbury, Conn.

[0020] The sheet of material 20 may vary in color. Further, the sheet of material 20 can consist of designs which are printed, etched, and/or embossed; in addition, the sheet of material 20 may have various colorings, coatings, flockings and/or metallic finishes, or be characterized totally or partially by pearlescent, translucent, transparent, iridescent, or the like characteristics. Each of the above-named characteristics may occur alone or in combination. Moreover, each surface of the sheet of material 20 can vary in the combinations of such characteristics.

[0021] The sheet of material 20 can also be constructed from one or more sheets of polymer film or combination of one or more sheets of polymer films and a sheet of foil wherein at least an outer surface can be provided with a pattern printed or embossed pattern thereon. The sheets of material employed to produce the sheet of material 20 can be connected together or laminated or may be separate layers.
While specific embodiments have been described, they are illustrative and not limiting of the scope of materials contemplated as being well suited for use in the sheet of material 20.

The floral grouping 12 can be cut fresh flowers, artificial flowers, a single flower or other fresh and/or artificial plants or other floral materials and may include other secondary plants and/or ornamentation or artificial or natural materials which add to the aesthetics of the overall floral grouping 12. Further, the floral grouping 12 may comprise a growing potted plant having a root portion as well. However, it will be appreciated that the floral grouping may consist of only a single bloom or only foliage, or a botanical item, or a propagule. The term “floral grouping” as used herein includes “floral arrangement.”

The floral grouping 12 is disposed within a cavity 22 (FIGS. 1-2) provided by an upward folding of an outer portion 24 of the sheet of material 20 to form a wrapper with an upstanding concave characteristic shape. FIG. 3 shows the shipping package 11 of the packaging assembly 10 of FIG. 1, in an unwrapped condition prior to wrapping of the floral grouping 12, wherein the sheet of material 20 is in a flattened, unwrapped position. As best viewed in FIG. 3, a medial portion 26 of the sheet of material 20 is attached at the lower surface 18 thereof to the upper support surface 16 of the support member 14 to anchor the sheet of material 20 to the support member 14. The medial portion 26 of the sheet of material 20 is thus preferably centrally disposed relative to the support member 14, and the outer portion 24 extends radially therefrom in a manner surrounding the medial portion 26.

FIG. 2 shows a manner of attachment of the medial portion 26 of the sheet of material 20 to the support member 14 by a bonding material 30 interposed therebetween. Fixing the sheet of material 20 to the support member 14 facilitates wrapping of the outer portion 24 of the sheet of material 20 upwardly around the floral grouping 12 and gathering of a distal portion 28 of the sheet of material 20 in order to protectively and/or decoratively enclose the floral grouping 12.

The distal portion 28 of the sheet of material 20 can be gathered a distance above the floral grouping 12 and closed to fully enclose the floral grouping 12 within the cavity 22 provided by the upwardly folded sheet of material 20. A bonding material 31 can be used to retain the distal portion 28 in the closed position to provide a decorative appearance and/or a substantially water tight protective wrapping of the sheet of material 20 about the floral grouping 12. By wrapping the sheet of material 20 in this manner so as to enclose the floral grouping 12, the support member 14 and the sheet of material 20 support the floral grouping 12 in a desired position to prevent movement of the floral grouping 12 relative to the support member 14 during shipping and handling of the packaging assembly 10.

The term “bonding material” when used herein includes an adhesive or a cohesive. Where the bonding material is a cohesive, a suitable cohesive material must be placed on the adjoining surface for bondingly contacting and bondingly engaging the cohesive material. The term “bonding material” also includes materials which are heat sealable wherein adjacent portions of the material are brought into contact and then heated to affect the seal. The term “bonding material” also includes materials which are sonically sealable and vibrationally sealable, as well as heat sealing lacquer which may be applied to the sheet of material.

The term “bonding material” when used herein also includes any type of material or member which can be used to affect the bonding or connecting of the adjacent portions of the material or sheet of material to affect the connection or bonding described herein. The term “bonding material” also includes ties, labels, bands, ribbons, strings, tape, staples or combinations thereof. Some of the bonding materials would secure the ends of the sheet of material 20 while other bonding material may bind the circumference of the gathered portion of the wrapper that is formed by the sheet of material 20.

The outer portion 24 of the sheet of material 20 has a detachable portion 25 to provide access to the floral grouping 12 while leaving the sheet of material 20 anchored to the support member 14. That is, while the remaining outer portion 24 is disposed about the floral grouping 12 and the medial portion 26 is attached to the support member 14. The detachable portion 25 can be delineated by a plurality of perforations 27 along which the detachable portion 25 is detached from the remaining outer portion 24 of the sheet of material 20.

Following are several versions of packaging assemblies constructed in accordance with the present invention described hereinabove.

FIGS. 4 and 5

FIGS. 4 and 5 show a packaging assembly 10a which is substantially similar to the packaging assembly 10 with the exception that the packaging assembly 10a includes a bed of growing medium 32 within the shipping package 11 for supporting the floral grouping 12. The medial portion 26 of the sheet of material 20 is bonded to the support member 14 and the outer portion 24 is folded upwardly and joined at the distal portion 28 by the bonding material 31 to enclose the floral grouping 12 and the bed of growth medium 32 contained within the cavity 22 of the wrapper formed by the sheet of material 20. The bed of growing medium 32 can be a material suited to the establishment and support of the floral grouping 12 root system such as, but not limited to, potting soil.

By wrapping the sheet of material 20 so as to enclose the floral grouping 12 and the bed of growing medium 32, the support member 14 and the sheet of material 20 laterally support the bed of growing medium 32 so the floral grouping 12 is supported in an upright position to prevent the floral grouping 12 from toppling during shipping and handling of the packaging assembly 10a. The wrapper provided by the sheet of material 20 also provides a substantially water tight enclosure. By interposing the sheet of material 20 between the floral grouping 12 and the support member 14, the water tight enclosure of the sheet of material 20 isolates the support member 14 from the moisture associated with the floral grouping 12 in the cavity 22. Hence, it is unnecessary to make the support member 14 water resistant.

FIGS. 6 and 7

FIGS. 6 and 7 show a packaging assembly 10b which is substantially similar to the packaging assembly 10
with the exception that the packaging assembly 10b includes a floral holding material 34 for supporting the floral grouping 12 within the shipping package 11. The floral holding material 34 has a lower end 33 supported by the support member 14 with the sheet of material 20 interposed therewith, and an upper end 35 which receivably supports the floral grouping 12. The medial portion 26 of the sheet of material 20 is bonded to the support member 14. The outer portion 24 of the sheet of material 20 is wrapped about to enclose the floral grouping 12 and the floral holding material 34 contained within the cavity 22 of the wrapper formed by the sheet of material 20. The distal end 28 of the sheet of material 20 is joined by the bonding material 31. The floral holding material 34 can be a moisture-retaining member such as, but not limited to, a foam block.

[0033] By wrapping the sheet of material 20 so as to enclose the floral grouping 12 and the floral holding material 34, the support member 14 and the sheet of material 20 support the floral grouping 12 and the floral holding material 34 in an upright position to prevent the floral holding material 34 and the floral grouping 12 from toppling during shipping and handling of the packaging assembly 10b. The wrapper provided by the sheet of material 20 also provides a substantially water-tight enclosure. By interposing the sheet of material 20 between the floral grouping 12 and the support member 14, the water-tight enclosure of the sheet of material 20 isolates the support member 14 from the moisture associated with the floral grouping 12 in the cavity 22. Hence, it is unnecessary to make the support member 14 water resistant.

FIGS. 8 and 9

[0034] FIGS. 8 and 9 show a packaging assembly 10c in which is substantially similar to the packaging assembly 10 with the exception that the packaging assembly 10c includes a container such as a flower pot 36 within the shipping package 11. The medial portion 26 of the sheet of material 20 is bonded to the support member 14 and the outer portion 24 of the sheet of material 20 is wrapped about to enclose the floral grouping 12 and the flower pot 36 contained within the cavity 22 of the wrapper formed by the sheet of material 20. The distal end 28 of the sheet of material 20 is joined by the bonding material 31.

[0035] The flower pot 36 has a substantially closed lower end 38 adjacent to the medial portion 26 of the sheet of material 20, the lower end 38 supported on the support member 14 so that the flower pot 36 achieves a substantially upright position. The flower pot 36 furthermore has an upstanding body 39 and a terminating rim 40 forming an open upper end 41. The floral grouping 12 is disposed in the open upper end 41 and is supported thereby in the upright position. Alternatively, the flower pot 36 can contain the bed of growing medium 32 (FIG. 5) and/or the floral holding material 34 (FIG. 7) which in turn, supports the floral grouping 12 in the upright position.

[0036] By wrapping the sheet of material 20 so as to enclose the floral grouping 12 and the flower pot 36, the support member 14 and the sheet of material 20 support the floral grouping 12 and the flower pot 36 in the upright position to prevent the flower pot 36 and the floral grouping 12 from toppling during shipping and handling of the packaging assembly 10c. The wrapper provided by the sheet of material 20 also provides a substantially water-tight enclosure. By interposing the sheet of material 20 between the floral grouping 12 and the support member 14, the water-tight enclosure of the sheet of material 20 isolates the support member 14 from the moisture associated with the floral grouping 12 in the cavity 22. Hence, it is unnecessary to make the support member 14 water resistant.

FIGS. 10-12

[0037] The support member 14 has been illustrated as a substantially rectangular planar member having an upper support surface 16 attached to the medial portion 26 of the sheet of material 20 for anchoring of the wrapper formed by the upwardly folded and joined sheet of material 20. The support member 14 can also have extended positions to provide a supporting structural enclosure about the wrapper formed by the sheet of material 20. For example, FIG. 10 generally illustrates a support member 14a having a substantially rectangular central portion with an upper support surface 16a and a plurality of foldable portions extending therefrom, the foldable portions delineated by folding lines. The folding lines facilitate the folding of one portion relative to adjacent portions, the folding lines being provided by features such as, but not limited to, score lines, creases, perforations, and the like within the support member 14a.

[0038] More particularly, surrounding the upper support surface 16a of the support member 14a are opposing wall portions 42, 44 which are foldable toward the upper support surface 16a along fold lines 46, 48 respectively. Similarly, opposing wall portions 50, 52 are foldable along fold lines 54, 56, respectively. The wall portions 42, 44, 50, 52 can be folded substantially orthogonal to the upper support surface 16a so as to circumscribe the sheet of material 20 that is anchored to the upper support surface 16a in the manner discussed hereinbelow. FIG. 11 illustrates a partial folding of the wall portions 42, 44, 50, 52 in a packaging assembly 10d wherein the sheet of material 20 is anchored to the upper support surface 16a of the support member 14d; the sheet of material 20 being upwardly gathered and joined to enclose the floral grouping 12 which is supported within a bed of growth material 32 such as previously discussed and shown in FIGS. 4 and 5.

[0039] FIG. 12 shows the fully folded position of the wall portions 42, 44, 50, 52 which together form a wall circumscribing the sheet of material 20 and the contents within the cavity 22 formed by the upwardly folded and joined sheet of material 20. The wall portion 52 has a pair of opposing tabs 58, 60 that are folded inwardly along fold lines 62, 64, respectively, to supportingly attach to the adjacent wall portions 42, 44. In a like manner, wall portion 50 has tabs 66, 68 that fold inwardly along fold lines 70, 72 to supportingly attach to the adjacent wall portions 42, 44. The wall portions 42, 44 have distal tabs 74, 76 which fold inwardly along fold lines 78, 80 to double over and attach to the wall portions 42, 44 to stiffen the wall portions 42, 44 and to trap the tabs 66, 68 of the wall portion 50 and the tabs 58, 60 of the wall portion 52. A bonding material, as previously described, can be employed to attach the tabs.

[0040] The support member 14e further has a cover 82 that folds toward the upper support surface 16a along fold line 84, and a distal tab 86 that folds inwardly along fold line 88. The cover 82 and distal tab 86 matingly engage the
plurality of wall portions 42, 44, 50, 52 to substantially enclose the wrapper of the sheet of material 20 and the contents within the cavity 22 thereof. By interposing the sheet of material 20 between the support member 14a and the floral grouping 12, the support member 14a is isolated from moisture associated with the floral grouping 12 in the cavity 22. As such, the support member 14a can be provided of a non-waterproof material, such as corrugated paper or cardboard. In this manner, the support member 14a provides a structurally supporting outer enclosure about the floral grouping 12 and the sheet of material 20 provides a substantially water tight inner enclosure.

[0041] It should be understood that changes may be made in the construction and operation of the various components and assemblies described herein and changes may be made in the steps or the sequence of steps of the methods described herein without departing from the spirit and the scope of the invention as defined in the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of packaging a floral grouping for transport, the method comprising the steps of:
   - providing a support member having an upper support surface and a lower surface;
   - providing a sheet of material having a lower surface and an upper surface and a medial portion surrounded by a radially extending outer portion;
   - applying a bonding material between the upper support surface of the support member and the lower surface of the medial portion of the sheet of material to anchor the sheet of material to the support member;
   - placing the floral grouping on the upper surface of the sheet of material;
   - wrapping the outer portion of the sheet of material about the floral grouping to enclose the floral grouping in the sheet of material; and
   - closing a distal end of the outer portion of the sheet of material to provide a substantially water tight enclosure about the floral grouping.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of providing the support member further comprises forming a plurality of upstanding wall portions and joining the wall portions to form a wall circumscribing the floral grouping.

3. The method of claim 2 further comprising the step of providing the support member with a cover that matingly engages the wall circumscribing the floral grouping to enclose the floral grouping with the sheet of material and the support member.