

## Links to Learning

Want to know more? The American Floral Endowment and the Society of American Florists are keeping up-to-date information on internships/scholarships and careers in the floriculture industry on their web sites. Check them out at:

[www.endowment.org](http://www.endowment.org)

[www.safnow.org](http://www.safnow.org)

**This glimpse into the floral industry is brought to you by:**



The **American Floral Endowment (AFE)** funds research, scholarships and educational development in floriculture and environmental horticulture in order to produce solutions to industry needs and promote the growth and improvement of the floral industry for the benefit of growers, wholesalers, retailers, allied segments and the general public.

**American Floral Endowment**

1601 Duke Street  
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(703) 838-5211

E-mail: [afe@endowment.org](mailto:afe@endowment.org)  
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The **Society of American Florists (SAF)** is the only national trade association that represents all segments of the U.S. floral industry. SAF's 12,000 members are the industry's top retailers, growers, wholesalers, importers, manufacturers, suppliers, educators, students and allied organizations.

**Society of American Florists**

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[www.aboutflowers.com](http://www.aboutflowers.com)

Additional copies of this brochure are available through the Society of American Florists at an additional cost plus shipping and handling.



**American  
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Funding Industry Solutions  
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**SOCIETY of AMERICAN FLORISTS**  
*Your Growth is Our Business*



# Make People Smile

# Grow Your Future in the Floral Industry



# Make People Smile\*

It's never too early to begin planning a career in an industry where your work helps make the world a prettier place while enriching the lives of millions of people every year. Whether your interests lean toward the creative arts or science, you're sure to find a satisfying and rewarding profession in floriculture. This diverse field offers you a wide variety of challenging and profitable career choices.



**“Owning a floral business means imagining what you want and working each day toward that goal. Growers, wholesalers and retailers have an amazing bond selling beautiful products that bring happiness to people around the world.”**

Lori Wheat, AAF  
Lafayette Florist & Greenhouses, Inc.  
Lafayette, CO

\* It's a scientific fact! The Society of American Florists partnered with Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, to examine the effect of flowers on human emotion and well-being. The SAF research proves that the presence of flowers triggers happy emotions and increases enjoyment and life satisfaction. A second tier of the study demonstrates the positive impact flowers have on moods and mental acuity in the elderly. Imagine what working with flowers can do for you!

## About the Industry

The term floriculture is derived from Latin, and means “to cultivate flowers.” But the floriculture industry involves more than just cultivating. There are many career paths in the floral industry.

Would you like a career in flower production, distribution, design, retailing, operations, marketing, publishing, importing, research, teaching, greenhouse design and engineering, climate control systems engineering, soil analysis, sales or pest management? Employers also need people skilled in office management, human resources, accounting and computer systems.

In today's floriculture job market, there is a growing demand for trained professionals who have strong business skills as well as horticultural knowledge. The almost \$20 billion annual floral sales include fresh cut flowers, cut cultivated greens, potted flowering plants, foliage plants and bedding/garden plants. The top states for growing include California, Florida, Michigan and Texas, but every state offers opportunities to work in the floral industry, such as retail or wholesale florists, garden centers, supermarkets, mass market stores and colleges and universities.



## Career Choices in Floriculture

Since you have many choices of career paths in the floriculture industry, take a look at this sampling of typical job titles and the education and training you'll need to succeed in the following key industry segments:

- Commercial Grower
- Floral Wholesaler
- Retail Florist
- Importers
- Suppliers
- Research and Education

## Commercial Grower

There are more than 26,000 commercial floriculture growers in the United States with average sales approaching \$250,000.

Here are descriptions of just a few grower jobs.

**Owner** This person oversees management and expansion of all business operations and plans future strategy to ensure the business is profitable.

**Production Manager** Technically competent in the growing production of horticultural products/crops, the head grower has the ability to communicate, train, lead and manage production employees. A production manager is responsible for all stages of production for a single crop, a specified portion of that crop or a group of crops.

**Plant Breeder (Hybridizer)** Hybridizers combine the science of genetics with the art of plant selection to produce thousands of new and interesting plant types each year.

**Propagator** A propagator uses seeds, cuttings, tissue culture and other advanced techniques to produce the young plants that support floriculture production.

**Technology** Telecommunications, network management and computing are becoming increasingly important for growers. Many greenhouses are highly automated with computerized equipment and automated environmental systems.

**Sales and Marketing Manager** This person is responsible for managing the sales of product lines, developing sales projections and training and motivating salespeople.

**Sales Representative** Sales reps sell product lines to wholesale and retail clients, as well as other growers. Sales reps establish good relationships with customers and provide daily services that meet their needs.

**Delivery/Truck Driver** Some delivery personnel are employed directly by growers and others are independent contractors. Drivers deliver product to the wholesaler and retailer.



**“AFE’s internship experience opened my eyes to what it is like to work in the greenhouse industry. As a result, I chose a career growing plants instead of landscape maintenance. I am very thankful for the valuable hands-on experience provided by AFE’s programs.”**

Faith Conway  
Skagit Gardens  
Mount Vernon, WA



### Preparing for Your Career as a Commercial Grower

Personal motivation and success in high school as well as the career you choose will help determine whether you select advanced education in floriculture in the form of a technical program or in the form of a college offering a two-year or four-year degree for your choice of careers as a commercial grower.

Check out the many horticulture/floriculture scholarships at colleges and universities. Look for those that allow you beneficial work experience. Even in high school, on-the-job training in the form of an after-school or summer job at a greenhouse or other growing operation can give you real work experience. It will help you decide what career is right for you and what education you need to obtain your goals.

For some positions and in some states, licensing and/or certification may be required.

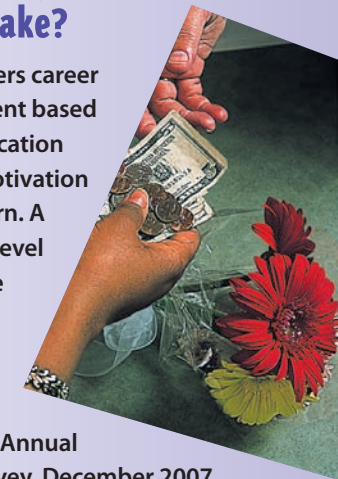
### What kind of salary can you expect to make?

The floral industry offers career and salary advancement based upon experience, education and an individual’s motivation and willingness to learn. A wide variety of entry-level positions are available above the hourly minimum wage.

According to *Grower-Talks* magazine’s 12th Annual Wage and Benefit Survey, December 2007, the average starting salary for horticulture/floriculture employees with college degrees ranges from \$25,000-\$40,000.

- Office staff positions average \$27,000, sales \$35,000,
- marketing \$61,000,
- production \$46,000,
- general manager \$62,000 and
- financial manager \$50,000.

Obviously, wages and salaries vary in different geographic areas and within industry segments.



## Floral Wholesaler

Wholesalers are the “middlemen” who gather the product from local growers or distant producers and sell it to their local retail floral customers. Some wholesalers also deal in hard goods (vases, baskets, design tools, etc.), where they buy in bulk and resell products used in the retail florist segment. They perform a number of indispensable functions for their customers, including locating products, care and handling of the product and sharing information on product use and marketing.



The wholesaler also helps the industry by identifying trends from their retail customers and passing that information on to growers to meet shifting consumer demand. There are several thousand wholesale florists in the United States today.

Take a look at these typical jobs found within a wholesale florist.

**Executive/Business Owner** The owner or chief executive provides the “vision” needed to oversee the management and expansion of all business operations to ensure success.

**General Manager** Responsible for day-to-day operations. Depending on the staff size, this person might also need training in finance, logistics and personnel management.

**Buyer** Identifying the product needs of customers and salespeople, the buyer locates and secures quality products in the correct quantities and at competitive prices. A buyer ensures the proper inventory controls to guarantee the freshest product is reaching consumers. Often a wholesaler will have a separate buyer for hard goods.

**Sales** A sales person establishes good relationships with retail florists and supermarket accounts, providing daily services to meet their needs.

**“A career in floral distribution can be exciting and rewarding. Wholesalers do everything that is necessary to assure that floral retailers have the right quantity of desirable flowers and related products at the time when consumers want to purchase them.”**

Harrison “Red” Kennicott, AAF Kennicott Brothers Chicago, IL



**Technology** Telecommunications, network management and computing are becoming increasingly important for wholesale operations. Many wholesalers use the Internet to locate sources and also service their customers via their own web sites.

**Wholesale Floral Designers** Arrange displays to show retail floral designers how to use the latest products as well as traditional favorites. This in turn helps retail florists properly care for and sell the freshest and most attractive products to their customers.

**Shipping and Receiving** Responsible for receiving products, locating shipments and packaging/shipping to retail florists. Warehouse management of fresh products requires specialized care.

**Care and Handling Specialists** All segments of the floral industry agree that the proper care and handling of floral product is one of the most important steps in getting the flowers from the grower to the final destination — the consumer. Responsible for care and handling and trained to adequately preserve a wide variety of flowers and plants.

**Importers/Logistics** Many wholesale operations import products from overseas and need to have knowledgeable staff aware of U.S. Customs procedures and U.S. Department of Agriculture plant inspection requirements.

### Preparing for Your Career as a Floral Wholesaler

Good business sense and training in general business management will prepare you for just about any career in the wholesale segment. But working in a floral wholesale operation isn't your typical nine-to-five job. Days begin early, as flower shipments typically arrive before dawn and retail customers eagerly await their deliveries in the morning. Even though the days begin early, don't rule out this business as a great place for a part-time or summer job.

# Retail Florist

There are about 20,000 retail florists in the United States. More than half of the dollars spent at retail florists are for cut flowers. Shops also sell seasonal items, home décor accessories, gift items, permanent botanicals, candy and potted plants. Retail florists must have exceptional business, management and marketing skills to run a profitable retail business. It can be a highly competitive environment. Successful florists realize the importance of continuing education and training to stay ahead of your competition and the latest trends to best meet the needs of customers.

Take a look at these typical jobs found within a retail florist.

**Owner** More than just a love for flowers, the retail florist must possess a full understanding of what it takes to run a successful and profitable business.

Working in a retail setting and completing business management courses are experience and education that will help an owner create a strong vision for the business and handle day-to-day challenges and opportunities.

**Management** Depending on the size of the store, one or more individuals directly supervise staff and operations. You may manage the buying of fresh product and supplies, oversee the sales and design teams, direct the store's advertising and marketing or monitor technology and other capital improvement needs.

**Floral Designer** Professional floral designers possess artistic and technical ability to create many styles of designs suitable for everyday, funerals, weddings and other special occasions with fresh, artificial and preserved floral materials. Designers also assist customers with their flower orders and create visual merchandising displays in the shop. Floral designers can specialize in special events, such as weddings, conventions or corporate parties.

Training is offered at floral design schools or at local community colleges or universities. Others develop their skills on the job or by internships. Some states have certification and accreditation programs for floral designers, but no state, to date, requires certification.



**"I learned things that cannot be taught in the classroom by actually working as a floral design intern."**

Ashley Grogan  
Mississippi State University  
Knud Nielson Company  
Evergreen, AL



**Care and Handling Specialists** Retail flower shops need people trained in preparing and storing flowers and plants so they stay fresh and appealing to the customer.

**Business Office** Individuals are needed to track accounts, handle payables and receivables and do bookkeeping and accounting for the store.

**Delivery** A vital part of the business is the delivery of the floral arrangements. Delivery drivers are responsible for getting the flowers directly to the consumer. The job also can include dispatching, routing of drivers and maintenance of the delivery vans. While in school, this can be a great entry-level job for you to see the true joy that flowers bring to people. Many shops hire part-time delivery help during the holidays. Requirements for the job vary widely, but most shops need licensed drivers with good driving records, knowledge of the delivery area and a friendly smile.

## Preparing for Your Career as a Retail Florist

Successful florists will tell you to get a strong business foundation and add a passion for flowers. Like any retail establishment, florists must have proven business management systems in place to ensure profitability. Retail florists have many duties, especially if they have a small shop. They need to have great communication skills and be able to juggle many tasks while providing quality products and service to their customers.



**"What I like about the flower industry is that we bring the beauty of plants and flowers into people's lives. It is so fun to show consumers the wonderful products we grow — that makes it all worthwhile for me."**

Paul Ecke, III  
Paul Ecke Ranch  
Encinitas, CA

“Research in floriculture is fun, exciting and challenging. It allows those individuals interested in plants and flowers to apply the best scientific principles to improve flowers, resolve production challenges and provide improved care and handling techniques.”

Dr. Terril Nell, AAF  
Environmental  
Horticulture Dept.  
University of  
Florida-Gainesville

## Other Segments in the Floral Industry

There are many more opportunities for you in the floral industry. Here are a few more to consider.

**Botanic Garden Staff** A variety of plant collections are available to the public through arboretum and botanical gardens. Most have public education programs for adults and children, and some conduct plant research. You could be a curator of an exhibit for a rare flower or plant species.

**High School/College Instructor and University Professor** Many high schools, vocational schools, junior colleges and universities have established floriculture specialty programs or offer classes in horticulture.

**Floral Design Instructor** Many high schools, junior colleges and vocational schools offer floral design classes. Schools and state floral associations also offer design training.

**Gardener/Horticulturist/Landscape Architect** Design, maintain or oversee public or private gardens, golf courses and parks. Public and private entities with large landscaped areas would require the talents of this group.

**Hard Goods** These are companies that manufacture the products used throughout the floral industry, such as vases, colored foil and film, dried flowers, foam, gifts, containers, baskets, balloons, cards, preservatives and more. Positions are available at all levels.



## Research Rewards

Colleges and universities that offer courses in floriculture provide opportunities for extension work, teaching and research. Exciting challenges like these are being explored:

- Tissue culture and genetic engineering increase our knowledge of breeding new varieties of floral products.
- Energy conservation and production research help growers operate more efficiently.
- Post-harvest care research helps prolong the life of products and stimulates the market by increasing consumers' enjoyment of the product.
- Integrated pest management research aids in creating new varieties of beneficial insects to manage other pests, while remaining friendly to the environment.

**Importer** You might consider a career in purchasing and selling floral-related products manufactured or grown in other countries to U.S. businesses.

**Industry Sales Representative** Commercial plant, seed and chemical companies hire people to sell their products to retailers, garden centers, wholesalers and growers.

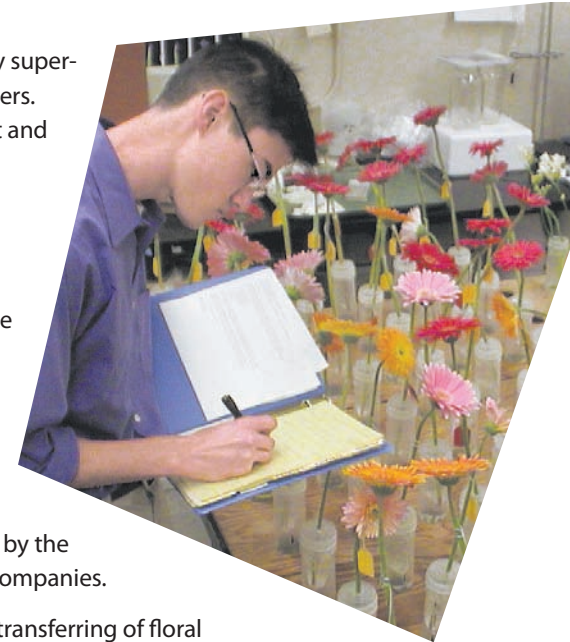
**Mass Market/Supermarket Floral** Many supermarkets are including this service for their customers. They need individuals to purchase, design, market and manage these operations in the local store and in regional or national chains.

### Publications and Communications

You might consider positions in advertising, merchandising, marketing, writing or editing in the publishing and trade press area of the floral industry.

**Scientist** A wide variety of opportunities exist for scientists to develop more economical and effective techniques for growing, handling and marketing of crops. These scientists are employed by the government, colleges or universities and private companies.

**Wire Services** These companies facilitate the transferring of floral orders worldwide. They hire sales representatives, journalists, design teams, educators and business consultants across the country to service their members.



## Are You Ready To Make People Smile?

Regardless of the specific career path you choose, success in the floral industry depends on getting the right combination of on-the-job experience and education. The most successful people in floriculture have broad experience in all facets of the industry. Think about working part-time at a local grower or florist. Many fulltime employees and business owners enter the business as part-time workers and go on to get the education and training they need to make their dreams come true.

Take a look around your own community and see what floral industry operations you can find. Your Guidance Counselor can help you investigate educational pathways to this exciting and colorful industry.