

**MOTHER'S DAY** **PROM**

# Juggling Mother's Day and Prom

**Mother's Day and prom in the same weekend? Keep your shop from becoming a three-ring circus with tips from a seasoned florist.**

**By Deborah De La Flor, AIFD, PFCI**



**I** USED TO THINK MOTHER'S DAY WEEKEND WAS about as busy as it could be — until eight years ago, when we opened a location close to a high school whose prom was scheduled during Mother's Day weekend. That first year in the new location, I didn't even know there was going to be a prom. The reality of it hit me like a tornado (of wristlets, corsage pins, beads and hormones), right in the middle of getting through Mother's Day orders. It was crazy busy, and we were unprepared. We muddled our way through, but as soon as it was over, I knew I needed to have better control over the holiday and event the next year. The school had no intention of changing its prom date to please a florist, so I needed to adjust our way of handling prom to better take advantage of what could become a hefty addition to May sales.

We've since improved our processes for dealing with prom work during Mother's Day week, and I have to say that after eight years of doing it, we have it down to a science. We've learned tricks, shortcuts and processes that help us achieve our goal of giving great service and great product to as many customers as we can possibly round up, whether it's for Mother's Day or prom. Here's how we do it.

## Limit Choices

We love to exercise our creativity on body flowers, but when prom hits on Mother's Day weekend, we rein it in — not so much the creativity, but the choices. We offer a narrow menu of options: three different designs for the guys and three for the girls — each in a wide variety of color choices. Believe me, no one complains. Often, if the guy is buying the piece for the girl, we just ask what color the dress is, and he trusts us to create something memorable and appropriate. A quick conversation with a local bridal boutique reveals what the big

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colors are for the year — they're always happy to tell us — so we're ready with the rhinestones, gems, pearls and ribbon to coordinate. Therein lies the beauty of prom business: Unlike other important segments, such as sympathy designs, with a little effort, you can effectively plan ahead for prom.

## Work Smarter

Prom can be an ideal time to be extra creative. But when prom falls on Mother's Day, I follow a golden rule: Avoid wiring and taping, whenever possible. Before you fire off an e-mail to me, let me explain. It's not that I don't *do* wire and tape on body flowers — I do. But when prom and Mother's Day coincide, you simply don't have time to mess with too much of it. Kids won't mind — it's all in how you sell the pieces. (See "Make It Fast," p. 32.)

## Get Payment Early

If you institute a pre-pay policy, you won't have to deal with ringing the register on the day of prom. The students just walk in, say their last name and anyone on your staff can pull the order from your orderly storage area (more on that later).

## Streamline Production

Time is money, and the most expensive thing in your shop is labor. So you need to get the pieces made quickly. In my shop, we have two individuals who dedicate the better part of the Wednesday and Thursday of Mother's Day week to making prom orders. They do a bunch of extras in neutral colors for orders that come in later in the week. One employee puts the flowers together and hands it to the other, who's across the table adding ribbon, rhinestones or whatever accessories are called for. It just takes too long for one person to do the whole piece. Here's another tip: Often, we do the bows ahead of time, streamlining production even more.



# Make It Fast

When I say “fast,” I’m talking about designs that can be made in a minute or two. When you’re juggling prom and Mother’s Day, that’s about all you can handle. Here are some easy design ideas to try:

**Hand-tieds are hot.** We really push the hand-tieds, because they can be done in about a minute. And don’t even think about calling them “tussy mus-sies,” or the kids look at you like you’re from another planet. Here are a few favorites:

Take a few spray rose stems (savvy salespeople that we are, we call them “mini garden roses” — it just sounds better), add a collar of ‘Million Star’ gypsophilia and, presto! The result is just precious. You can even add rhinestones or pearls for an up-sell opportunity.

Six elegant, mini callas, tied off with a sheer ribbon makes for an elegant, refined look.



Another option? Take a few dendrobium stems — be sure to tell your customers they’re flown in *all the way* from Thailand — add a few stems of lily grass and a ribbon and you’re all set.

**Calling all callas.** For a sophisticated look for guys, take a mini calla, leave about an inch and a half of stem, add foliage and some tape and you’re done.

**Go “green.”** Take some green hypericum, tape it with foliage, and you’ve got an easy boutonniere that didn’t require any mechanics.

**Baby’s Breath Bracelet.** The beauty of this — aside from the fact that it’s a beauty — is that the bracelet can be prepped a good week in advance. Wire baby’s breath onto 6-inch pieces of wire, leave a loop at one end and throw it in the cooler. All you need to do is glue in the rhinestones or add little sweetheart roses. 🌹

— D.D.

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## What About Mom?

While you have those kids in your shop, don't forget to "remind" them about Mother's Day — and have affordable (\$10 to \$15) cash-and-carry items ready to go for them. We have plenty of more expensive things in the cooler that week, but they can't afford them. Keep it under \$20, and I can guarantee you you'll only add to your Mother's Day sales (and the joy of all those moms who just forked out the dough for prom night). 🌿

— D.D.



## Buy and Process Right

Of course, the only way you can prep the product early is if you're buying quality product and doing all of the right processing. Fortunately, cut flowers overall don't have the longevity problems they used to; product lasts longer than ever. But you can't skip processes on your end. We use a dosing machine, attached to the faucet, which automatically dispenses the flower food right into the vessels. Finishing sprays help the product retain moisture (but don't use it on cattelaya or phalaenopsis orchids because they don't take it well). And remember, you can't leave flowers in plastic bags or boxes for more than a day; otherwise, they'll get Botrytis.

## Simplify Storage and Pick-up

You can kill yourself getting boutonnieres and corsages done early, but if

you don't have a system for organizing the finished product, you'll just want to cry on prom day (and, let's face it, no one wants to see a florist cry). Plus, storage is at a premium at Mother's Day, so you need to plan ahead.

After a few tough years, we came up with a system that works like a charm: We save a shelf on top of our cooler for the prom orders, and we use empty flower boxes to hold the corsage and boutonnieres in their boxes and bags, in alphabetical order. Corsage and boutonniere bags and boxes (which have labels on the end, indicating "A-C," "D-H," etc.) are set in the boxes, in alphabetical order, so they can be easily pulled when the customer comes for pick-up. 🌿

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### "It Was The Best Valentine's Day We've Had In The Last Three Years!"

The ASK Kits sure do make life easier. We made both baskets and vases out of the kits at a price point of \$55.00. Keeping our cost of goods under control, as well as overtime down, really helped make our Valentine's Day go smoothly this year. We are proud to say we were out of the shop by 8:00pm on the 12th and 9pm on the 13th.  
Karen Fountain, AAF, **Flowers 'n' Ferns**, Burke, VA 22015

#### "The Ask Flower Kits Helped Save Our Mother's Day"

This is my second holiday using the ASK Kits. I can't stress enough the savings on labor and ease of design utilizing the ASK Kits. The sizes are perfect for small, medium or large and even extra large containers. Cut, place in vase, and just add flowers. The boxes sit perfectly in our cooler until ready to use. The quality of the varieties of foliage are excellent with plenty of stems to cut or adjust to any size container. No need to have a designer toil on prepping vases, just **STOP, DROP, AND DESIGN**. We love the varieties of textures, shapes, and especially the longevity of the greens. When it came to crunch time, the selections provided us with quick, labor saving designs and they allowed us to pick the colors requested and place into our pre-greened vases and out to the delivery van. We were able to fill more orders and deliver in plenty of time or Mom to enjoy.

Rhonda Little  
Millinocket Floral Shop

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#### "Nothing Could Be Easier"

I didn't know what to order that would be suitable for the Valentine's Day holiday. I also needed flowers and foliage for every day. I didn't have to price each and every item that went into the arrangements. At times, there was a line of people waiting for their bouquets or to place orders. We didn't have to **STOP** and **THINK** what went together. I could grab a bundle of greens, a bundle of flowers, show it to the customer and away we'd go.

Sheri Skrzyziarz, **SUNSHINE FLORAL**, Crystal Falls, MI



### "Thanks Again Greenleaf For Another Successful Holiday!"

As Valentine's Day was approaching, it was time to ask mom to come out of retirement and help us out. The ASK Kits were just what we needed: 1 stop shopping and picture perfect arrangements every time.  
Elizabeth, **DIMAR FLORIST**, Stuart, FL

I teach a floral design class and we used the ASK Valentine's Day box to help fill

our Valentine's day order. The ASK System allowed students who have been in class only a few weeks, to create beautiful designs. It helped students see how to mix greenery and create beautiful designs.

Shana Brittain - **AST Center High School Center**, TX

ask@greenleafwholesale.com