

# floral management

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THE FLORAL BUSINESS AUTHORITY

NOV/DEC 2021 | VOLUME 38 | NUMBER 5

## Color Us Impressed

Chrysanthemum wins SAF's 2021  
Outstanding Varieties Competition



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# floral management

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## WHAT DOES A POST-COVID FLORAL INDUSTRY LOOK LIKE?

> The floral industry has certainly experienced change during the pandemic, and more changes are yet to come as the industry adjusts to constraints in the global supply chain, unprecedented demand, higher costs and advances in e-commerce.

Those were points I spoke about during the keynote presentation I gave at the Society of American Florists' annual convention in Orlando this fall. I discussed the floral industry pre-COVID, how COVID affected each sector of the industry, and my forecast for how the floral industry will look post-COVID.

Pre-COVID, numerous driving forces were affecting the industry including the transformation of supermarket "masstige" floral departments, increased traction of online floral, growth in the event and studio florist sector, demographic influences on weddings and funerals, and influences of technology on supply chain logistics. Industry challenges included a lack of available talent, succession planning, and a general resistance to change.

The latter challenge — resistance to change — was certainly influenced by COVID. Several industry firms interviewed said they were able to fast-track changes that normally would have taken several years and accomplish them within a matter of months due to the sense of urgency brought about by COVID-induced uncertainty.

When considering what a post-COVID floral industry will look like, I made the following observations:

Pent-up demand will continue into 2023 with the increase in weddings and corporate and personal events. Funeral flowers are also in high demand, with loved ones finally able to hold memorial services. The Delta variant will be pivotal in its influence on the growth rate of these events.

More closures, mergers and acquisition activity are to be expected, including bouquet makers buying up farms and mega-wholesale florists developing economies of scale.

Industry supply chains will be constrained until mid-2022 at least. Supply

chains will be reconfigured to reduce risk (but it will come at a cost). This may provide room for niche players. Demand for local flowers will be stronger. Firms will build inventory in the short run, so we can definitely count on a bullwhip effect with inventory.

Airline rates and freight container prices will remain high with limited space availability, and the severe truck driver shortages will remain indefinitely. "No touch" freight is inevitable, as are standardized (better stackable) boxes.

There will be more B2B vertical coordination with consolidated ordering, more standing orders and increased lead times (1 year vs. 6 months). Expect a greater use of web shops and online platforms, and more virtual sales contacts/demos. Relationships will be more critical than ever.

There will be a short-term restriction in the retail florist purchasing palette. Certain flowers/greens will be in short supply, providing an opportunity for other flower crops. Fewer new flower introductions are likely.

E-commerce applications will expand and the use of technology, such as artificial intelligence, customer relationship management software (CRM) and fulfillment software, will continue to disrupt.

Packaging innovations will accelerate toward development of alternatives to plastics, standardized box sizes and reduced volume of packing materials.

Logistics innovations will accelerate, such as warehouse automation, big data analytics, sea freight, alternative entry ports, and combining freight to create truckloads.

Operating costs will continue to be influenced by safety requirements for workers and customers, and health care costs will be impacted accordingly. Surpluses of certain flowers are inevitable but not until 2023 or beyond. 🌸

**Charlie Hall, Ph.D.,** is the Ellison Chair in International Floriculture at Texas A&M University.





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## CHANGING TIMES

> My passion for writing and flowers runs deep. I've been a business reporter for a daily newspaper and a flower farmer. I'm excited to bring those two experiences together to serve as editor in chief of *Floral Management*.

I see this magazine as a vehicle to bring the Society of American Florists' members the information and resources they need for professional and business growth. It serves as a think tank for new ideas and industry trends. It offers practical advice. It connects members by sharing their stories and strategies. Above all, it is — and will remain — the floral business authority.



I had the pleasure of listening to some of the greatest minds in the industry, while also talking with members about what's keeping them up at night, during SAF's annual convention in Orlando. It's that kind of connecting that will play a role in guiding the content of these pages. Please, reach out to me at [ajedlinsky@safnow.org](mailto:ajedlinsky@safnow.org). Share your observations, your ideas, your needs, and what SAF can do to help you. You can also send us your feedback in our reader survey, which will be emailed to all of our members in November.

In this issue we celebrate the "Best in Show" from the SAF's Outstanding Varieties Competition. Turn to page 24 to see which flower earned the top prize!

Bruce Wright's "Design Room Dynamics" offers strategies to keep flower and labor costs in check. The benefits of controlling these facets will help keep your business healthy and competitive.

Paul Goodman, CPA, PFCI, looks at how supply chain issues are raising costs and offers practical advice on how to adjust your prices.

Economist Charlie Hall, Ph.D., gives us some food for thought in the "Viewpoint" column on what the post-COVID floral industry will look like. The pandemic has dramatically changed the industry for the good (high demand for fresh flowers) and the bad (supply chain disruptions). Hall's observations and research is invaluable. His insights on how the industry will evolve can help us plan future business strategies as we look ahead to 2022 and beyond.

We hope you enjoy this issue as we close out 2021 strong — stronger together.

Amanda Jedlinsky, Senior Content Strategist  
[ajedlinsky@safnow.org](mailto:ajedlinsky@safnow.org)

## More Online

### NEW LEARNING RESOURCES

The Society of American Florists' 136th annual convention featured educational sessions that covered a variety of timely industry trends and challenges, from consumer spending forecasting and labor trends to design techniques. Digitized handouts from many of the 20 sessions are now available online to give members access to expert insight and tips shared at convention.  
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Ads that disparage flowers to promote other gifts is a marketing tactic that is most common during major floral holidays. As the winter holidays approach, The Society of American Florists is here to help combat negative publicity. Spot a negative ad? Email SAF's marketing and communications manager, Elizabeth Daly, at [edaly@safnow.org](mailto:edaly@safnow.org). SAF will respond and ask that the company reconsider their advertising approach. SAF also has resources to help you protect your business by responding to negative marketing promotions on your own.  
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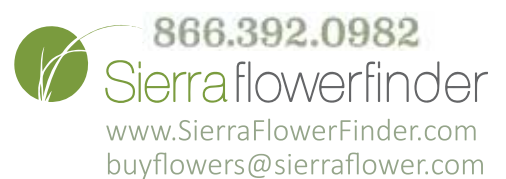


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See [safnow.org](https://safnow.org) for more details.

## SAF ORLANDO 2021

### What was the best thing about attending the Society of American Florists' convention in Orlando?

The extremely vital and needed breath of fresh air to see and be with my extended floral family again!

**Sharrai Morgan-Faulkner, AIFD, PFCI**  
Holly's Fine Flowers, Port Townsend, Washington

My very first convention after spending some 30 years in the industry. Glad to see what SAF is doing for our industry, especially at the government level. What a way to connect with the industry — whether it be colleagues or even your competition.

**Andrew Lee, Ball Seed Company**

We made some important business decisions and set plans in motion as a direct result of sessions we attended and people with which we were able to network.

**Heidi Tietz De Silva**  
Petersen & Tietz Florists & Greenhouse  
Waterloo, Iowa

I had the privilege of attending the SAF 2021 convention for the first time. It was amazing to have a group of people that think like you and that share in the same struggles as you. I felt right at home among "my kind of people". The business seminars were all so educational and I came back so inspired to get to work on some new ideas shop.

**Brenda Sterk, Eastern Floral**  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

In a short time we gained so much information about the floral industry as a whole. We learned how to best use some of the emerging social media to promote the shop. We made contact with several new suppliers and are looking forward to working with them. Old friends were everywhere and new friends were found while we all enjoyed learning, networking and having fun. We will certainly return next year if at all possible.

**Carla Fussell, Cullman Florist**  
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## STARS OF THE INDUSTRY HONORED AT SAF ORLANDO 2021

> Hundreds of industry members gathered in September for SAF Orlando 2021, the Society of American Florists' 136th annual convention. While there, they honored the top leaders in the floral industry.

### Floriculture Hall of Fame

Floral industry pioneer Kenneth Royer, AAF, was the 2021 inductee into the Society of American Florists' Floriculture Hall of Fame, the floral industry's highest honor.

As a second-generation owner of Royer's Flowers & Gifts, in Lebanon, Pennsylvania, Royer was the first florist in the country to implement computerized systems for his multi-shop operations, and one of the first to import directly from South American growers. His business strategies were so successful that in 1998 he published the book "Retailing Flowers Profitably" and held dozens of seminars on topics from marketing to management and postharvest care.

It was those accomplishments, as well as the respect he commands within the industry, that earned him a place in the Floriculture Hall of Fame. Greg Royer, Royer's son and chairman of the board at Royer's Flowers & Gifts, accepted the award on behalf of his father, who at 90 years old couldn't attend the event.

When Royer learned he was being inducted into the Hall of Fame, "He was speechless," his son told the audience. "The highlight of his year was coming to meetings like this. He still has a passion for the industry."



**FLORICULTURE HALL OF FAME** Greg Royer (second from the left) accepted the Floriculture Hall of Fame award on behalf of his father, Kenneth Royer. Royer is pictured with members of the SAF awards committee Lori Wheat, AAF (left), Dwight Larimer, AAF, PFCI (second from the right) and Marvin Miller, AAF (right).

### Gold Medal Award

Scott Trees, Ph.D., a prolific breeder of ornamental plants, received the Gold Medal Award, which honors the originator of an outstanding product of significant horticultural and commercial value.

Trees, who retired in June 2021 from a 40-year career in the industry, has 309 patents for plants and seeds. Among them are verbena, impatiens, salvia, snapdragons, cestrum, scabiosa, phlox and more than 100 geraniums. He also created the AngelMist Angelonia series, which was the first commercial Angelonia on the market.

In his remarks, Trees thanked his long-time employer, Ball Horticulture Company, for believing in him and his colleagues for executing his ideas.



**GOLD MEDAL AWARD** Scott Trees, Ph.D., received the Gold Medal Award, which honors the originator of outstanding product of significant horticultural and commercial value.

### Alex Laurie Award

James Faust, Ph.D., a professor of floriculture physiology at Clemson University and a leading expert on poinsettias, was the recipient of SAF's Alex Laurie Award, honoring an individual who has made broad-scope, long-lasting contributions to research or education in the floriculture industry.

Faust's first job out of college was at a commercial greenhouse that grew 12 acres of poinsettias. The experience sparked a passion that was the focus of his 30-year career.

This past summer, Faust, along with John Dole, published a book entitled "Cut Flowers and Foliages" that they hope to become the leading international text for the cut-flower industry.



**ALEX LAURIE AWARD** James Faust, Ph.D., received the Alex Laurie Award, which honors an individual who has made broad-scope, long-lasting contributions to research or education in the floriculture industry.



**TOMMY BRIGHT AWARD** Kevin Ylvisaker, AIFD, CFD, PFCI (pictured), received the Tommy Bright Award.

**Paul Ecke Jr. Award**



Robert "Bob" Williams II, AAF, PFCI

The Paul Ecke Jr. Award, which recognizes exemplary devotion to profession, industry, and community, was given to Robert "Bob" Williams II, AAF, PFCI, former vice president of North American

operations at Smithers-Oasis.

In just 23 years in the floral industry, Williams dedicated countless volunteer hours to help the organizations he served, including SAF and WF&FSA, develop programs and strategic plans. He also lectured at Kent State University and served his community as a deacon and a Sunday school teacher and volunteered with an addiction

recovery ministry. Williams retired in 2016, but continued consulting in the industry until 2020, when he was diagnosed with ALS. The disease progressed quickly and by late summer Williams was unable to travel. He was presented with the award in August at an event in Kent, Ohio, which was attended by family and industry friends and recorded.

"All I ever wanted to do was to go wherever God sent me and use those talents that he gave me to bring some value to the service of others," Williams said in the recording of the private event. "Thank you so much. But above all, for being my friend, thank you for walking my way, for allowing me to contribute to your lives in some small way."

Williams passed away on Sept. 27, 2021 — just four days after the Orlando awards ceremony — at the age of 75.

**Tommy Bright Award**

The Tommy Bright Award, which honors PFCI members for a lifetime achievement in floral presentation, was given to Kevin Ylvisaker, AIFD, CFD, PFCI, and posthumously to David Shover, AAF, AIFD, PFCI.

Ylvisaker, a top designer in the country, has worked on several high-profile events including the inaugurations of George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton. His designs have also been published several times in industry and consumer magazines, and lectures around the world. He also serves in the industry, notably as a past president of AIFD.

Shover, who passed away in 2020, was honored for his work designing for presidential inaugurations, Lord & Taylor design shows and Bloomingdale's Bridal Fair. His accolades include the Capital Cup and the Mid Atlantic Florists Association's silk design contest. In 2012, he represented the United States at the Putrajaya Flower and Garden Show in Malaysia, where he held classes for local floriculture students. He also served as chairman of the PFCI board of trustees and was slated to become the president of AIFD. 🌿



**TOMMY BRIGHT AWARD** Family and friends of David Shover, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, accepted the Tommy Bright Award in honor of Shover, who died in 2020.



## GEORGIA DESIGNER WINS SYLVIA CUP AT SAF ORLANDO 2021

> Jenna Naylor Temple, owner of Bloom with Jenna in Grayson, Georgia, won the 52nd annual Sylvia Cup Design Competition at the Society of American Florists' annual convention last week.

"I'm shocked and surprised," Temple, AIFD, said after learning she was the winner. The grand prize included the trophy, \$3,000 and free registration to the SAF convention next year.



**SYLVIA CUP DESIGN COMPETITION** Jenna Naylor Temple, owner of Bloom with Jenna in Grayson, Georgia, won the 52nd annual Sylvia Cup Design Competition.

**"I keep my style simple and as clean as I possibly can."**

*Jenna Naylor Temple*

Alejandro Figueira Fernandes, AIFD, president and design instructor at Alejandro Figueira Floral Artistry, Inc., in Davie, Florida, was first runner-up and received \$500; Patience Pickner, AIFD, PFCI, SDCF, owner of The Picket Fence in Chamberlain, South Dakota, was second runner-up and received \$250.

The event was sponsored by Certified American Grown, which supplied the flowers and foliage, and Smithers-Oasis, which provided the cash prizes and design supplies.

The 12 competing designers were challenged to create three designs in the theme of "Artistry through Mythology."

The first piece was a floral piece appropriate for the mother of a bride or groom in a style that would impress the wife of Zeus and queen of the ancient Greek gods, Hera.

The second piece was an all-foliage arrangement, in which the contestants used the Oasis Floral Media Terra Brick to create a floral design for Persephone, the Greek goddess of vegetation.

For the third design, the designers created a sympathy piece for Helios, the Greek god of the sun. The arrangement also paid tribute to Orlando — the "Land of the Gold" — by including gold in their arrangements.

This was Temple's fourth time competing for the Sylvia Cup. She said she believes it was her minimalist style that helped her win this year.

"My style is 'less is more,'" she said. "I keep my style simple and as clean as I possibly can. The less that's in there, the less they have to judge you on."

The judges said Temple's designs displayed her depth of understanding of the elements of space in floral design. 🌿

**Elizabeth Daly** is the Marketing and Communications Manager of the Society of American Florists.



**SYLVIA CUP DESIGN COMPETITION** Members of the PFCI Board of Trustees, which organizes the Sylvia Cup Design Competition, pose with the contestants.



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SNAPSHOT

# Make a Statement with Holiday Themes

> Each year, Arkansas-based florist Tipton & Hurst turns itself into a must-visit holiday destination. “Christmas is a big deal here,” says vice president and star floral designer Chris Norwood. “Our displays pull people in from all over the state. It’s at least a fourth if not more of our total annual sales.”

Beyond its typical assortment of arrangements, wreaths, fragrances, candles, and home décor, the floral giant goes big at its flagship store in Little Rock with 25 to 30 themed displays of ornaments and collectibles. Each theme — based on either color, trend or a concept such as “woodland” or “O Holy Night” — is arranged on a tree.

“Our trees are custom made not to overwhelm the items on display. Each item is positioned more as a gift object and less as a tree ornamentation,” Norwood says. Since the store’s layout is open with limited wall space, the merchandising team looks skyward for additional real estate. “We do a lot of suspension from the ceiling, like a mobile of ornaments, or we’ll group them on a chandelier,” he adds.

But the trick to Tipton & Hurst’s holiday success goes beyond just the quality of their merchandise and artful displays. What customers also appreciate is the continuation of key themes from year to year. “We have about 15 consistent themes that carry over,” Norwood says.

To generate even more interest in their holiday displays, the company hosts an open house each November.

After successfully navigating a challenging 2020, Tipton & Hurst is primed for yet another successful holiday season this year, even if more adjustments need to be made. The ability to pivot is one of the reasons why this veteran florist has endured since 1886. 🌿



**HOLIDAY CHEER** Tipton & Hurst holiday displays highlight holiday themes.



## SOCIAL SAVVY

# Create Quality Video Content

> In June 2021, Instagram product head Adam Mosseri announced that Instagram is “no longer just a square photo-sharing app.” In other words, the social media giant is adapting to shifting user habits and increased competition from platforms like TikTok and YouTube by ramping up its preference for video.

Recently we sat down with Dani Gill, marketing director at In Bloom Florist, for advice on filming videos. The floral shop and design studio, based in downtown Orlando and Lake Mary, Florida, has prioritized video in its marketing for years.

“Honestly, whenever Instagram launches something new, we jump right on it,” says Gill. “When Reels came out a couple years ago, we embraced them.”

Here are her tips for creating and implementing video on social media:

- **Camera or iPhone?** “iPhone! It’s a lot easier because you already have it in your back pocket. And surprisingly, we’ve found that an iPhone’s audio quality exceeds that of a camera’s (without external microphone). We occasionally use our DSLR camera for longer, more stylized videos, but people are used to seeing iPhone-quality videos on Reels, and we always want our videos to look cohesive with others on the platform.”
- **Editing in-app or third party?** “Most often, we take the video ahead of time and edit it with Adobe software called Rush. Then we upload it to Reels and add text. The editing tool within Instagram can be tricky; we find it easier to edit before uploading.”

**“Honestly, whenever Instagram launches something new, we jump right on it. When Reels came out a couple years ago, we embraced them.”**

— Dani Gill

- **Serious or fun?** “We find that educational topics hit a good note with our customers. We do a lot of ‘how to’s.’ For example, our most popular Reel to date is a DIY video on how to dye white flowers. We also like to shadow our employees to see what their typical day is like.”
- **Extra lighting?** “We shoot all our video in a big window with plenty of natural light. The only time we add lighting is to shoot products for our website.”
- **Main feed worthy?** “What’s great about Reels is you can choose whatever cover image you want. We shoot a photo specifically for the Reel cover to make sure it’s cohesive with our feed and branding; then we add a title. People can see the pretty image and the title of the video before they click.”
- **Social media calendar?** “We have an aggressive posting schedule of once per day, which requires that we plan everything out a month in advance. Once we have an idea, we think about how best to share it, whether by photo or Reel, and then we execute. I recommend setting aside a day every week for shooting and editing video.”
- **Results?** “Our first Reel had almost 10,000 views. We were like, OK, we’ve hit on something here. We try to post at least one video per week. Compared to static images, our Reels get more comments, saves, and shares, which helps us reach new audiences. Overall, it’s important to stay on top of Instagram’s new features. If you’re not using Reels, you should be.” 🌸

## TEAM BUILDER

## Build Camraderie by Giving Back

> Today, many businesses infuse community service into their team meetings and corporate events to make a positive impact in their communities and beyond. Companies are getting more and more involved in philanthropic work. You can see it, from internally sponsored volunteer days to bigger environmental efforts.

Encouraging your team to make a positive impact on the community has significant benefits: Coming together for a cause, providing real goods or services to an organization in need, and raising the “good works” visibility of your company are just the start.

Here are some ideas on how you and your staff can pool time, talents and resources to make a difference as a team:

- Contact a local animal rescue league or homeless shelter and ask for a donation list. Encourage everyone on your team to bring an item to your company’s holiday get-together. Set up a donation station in your shop and ask for contributions on your social media accounts.
- Use extra materials to create small bouquets for a local hospital to brighten up patients’ rooms.
- Pick your favorite nonprofit and give the staff some love. A beautiful arrangement for their lobby is certain to brighten their workday.
- Donate a portion of a weekend’s proceeds to an organization whose mission resonates with you and your team.
- Ask your followers on social media to nominate someone who goes above and beyond for others in the comments.
- Inspire future florists by hosting an arranging class at a school or after-school program. The kids can bring home their creations as gifts for their loved ones.
- Get involved in an important community event: decorate a float for a holiday parade, create affordable arrangements for a school play, or bring gifts to first responders. 🌸

**Jennifer Sperry** is a contributing writer for *Floral Management* who focuses on lifestyles, florals and interiors.

## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



### What's hot at the shop:

"Red roses have always been a staple, but customers are getting more comfortable with purchasing mixed flower bouquets. The arrangements might include some roses, but in a different color, like deep pink, cream, blue or yellow. Houseplants are popular, and peace lilies fly off the shelves faster than anything else. Recently customers have been looking for snake plants or golden pothos, probably due to their relative ease of care."



**FLORAL FAMILY** Chet Whitnah (right) with his brother, Cooper Whitnah (left), and father Kent Whitnah (center). Above, Chet with his digital tools.

**Marketing Coordinator**  
Capitol Hill Florist and Gifts  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

➤ As fourth generation in a florist family, Chet Whitnah literally grew up in the shop. "The joke is that I've been working here since I could walk," he says. He started his career in elementary school sweeping up, washing buckets and processing flower shipments. These days he's responsible for the shop's online and print content, managing Google and Yelp listings, along with social media and advertisements — but that's not all he does.

"I'm definitely a jack of all trades, pitching in where I'm needed — designing a bouquet, loading a delivery van or assisting a customer," he says. "We have a family motto, 'Many hands together and soon the work is done.'"

### How we use social media:

"We focus on Instagram, with Facebook a close second. Our following is small, but we're happy with the growth we've had. Customers often ask us to make something similar to a certain post. Our most effective posts are the ones that show actual employees or delivery drivers. Those get a lot more traction because of the human aspect."

### My go-to tools:

"I use Canva just about every day to create anything from flyers to Instagram stories. It's a great website to make any form of visual media and very easy to use. For photo editing, we use Lightroom. I enjoy it because it allows you to enhance a photo without altering the content too much to where it looks artificial."

### Who I follow:

"Plant hobbyists, including House Plant Journal and the Plant Daddy podcast. I own a lot of plants, so many that you just have to stop counting after a certain point. It's definitely more than 100. I don't have anything very rare, but I do have a couple of trendy ones like ZZ Raven and Philodendron 'Birkin.' My favorites right now are a *Hoya australis* I bought from a local nursery and some *Pinguicula* 'BCP Golden Eye' that I ordered online." 🌿

**Julie Martens Forney** is a contributing writer to *Floral Management*.



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## 4 WAYS TO INSPIRE YOUR TEAM

> In my previous career I worked for a national insurance company where continuing education was a core component. Now, as the owner of a flower shop, I also emphasize to my staff the importance of continuous learning. I tell myself and my team all the time: Never stop learning. If you don't use it, you lose it, so exercise that brain!

I was shocked to learn while chatting with a well-known floral designer and educator that some other owners aren't as invested in the growth and development of their designers. I am a life long learner and lover of change, and I encourage my team to embrace ongoing education as well. I make sure to either bring in a designer or send team members to floral conferences once a year, and I share tutorials often. Here are four ways to inspire and educate your team to learn and keep your business ahead of the competition:

### 1. **Constant Flow of Golden Nuggets**

Send a tutorial (video or blog post) to your staff weekly on various topics, anything from how to take a better picture with your cell phone to tips for handling an upset customer or even tutorials on how to lessen stress at work with simple stretches. Share short videos and articles, then ask your team to tell you how they are going to apply what they learned.

2. **Get a Hobby** Studies have shown that having hobbies uses a different part of the brain, improving memory and concentration (and we all can use that!). As a team, take some time to work on something non-job related such as a paint and sip class, a trip to a zipline course, or a yoga class a several times a year. Not only will experiences like these activate their brains and improve their performance,

but you'll also build team morale and enjoy lower turnover.

3. **Rewarding Incentives** Sending a team member on an all-expense paid trip to a floral conference may sound like a huge expense to you, but to your staff it is a huge privilege! Use it as an incentive. Perhaps you have a contest for your designers and the winner gets to go. Maybe it's an anniversary gift when an employee has been with you so many years. No matter how you treat it, make it an incentive to work hard and get rewarded. Then, have them share what was learned at the conference with the rest of the team over a breakfast meeting before the store opens.

4. **Book Club** This idea was first introduced to me by Manny Gonzales, who owned Tiger Lily Florist with his wife Clara for many years. Gonzales created a book club within his company, meeting once a week to discuss the chapters he assigned. I recommend shorter reads that can be applied to both work and life, such as "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" and "Failing Forward." These self-development classics will also serve your business well. I also recommend "The Little Red Book of Selling" by Jeffrey Gitomer. It has few words, lots of illustrations and massive amounts of tips your staff can use to make the buying experience better for your customers.

The key is to simply never stop learning. Whether it's new trends, skills, the latest app or something out of your comfort zone, you and your team will only grow and better serve your customers. And I promise, it will be far more fun than high school calculus class! 🌿

**Heather Waits, AAF**, owns Bloomtastic Flowers & Events in Columbus, Ohio. She also coaches wedding pros to have profitable and rewarding businesses.



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## EXOTIC APPEAL

> Thanksgiving through Valentine’s Day follows a predictable rotation of styles: burgundy and orange flowers (chrysanthemums, namely) partnered with gourds for Thanksgiving, followed by a peppermint palette accented with glitter and greens for the winter holidays, concluded with a simple (but stately) dozen red roses at Valentine’s Day. One way to capture customers’ attention, differentiate your brand from competitors, and command a higher price point? Reach for fresh product that’s more unusual and unexpected, like proteas.

Proteas play a big role in Mountain High Flowers’ signature look. “We use all kinds of varieties, all year long and for all occasions,” says Martha Aaron, AIFD, TMF, owner of the Sedona, Arizona shop. She uses a lot of orange, red and yellow pincushion proteas throughout the fall, then segues to mink varieties (which include some lovely shades of pink and green) for the winter. “They add some flair for holiday designs and are fantastic to pair with red roses for Valentine’s Day,” she says. Wedding clients, meanwhile, often request king and queen varieties — large, show-stopping specimens coveted for boho-inspired nuptials. “Proteas are so hardy and long lasting that they’ve become a staple in our shop,” Aaron says. “They even have a unique look when dried, so we’ve started drying all our proteas that may turn before we can sell fresh, and we use them in designs. Clients who want something unique are very attracted to these beautiful blooms. And we can definitely charge a premium price for them.”



**PROTEA REPENS ('SUGARBUSH')**  
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**BANKSIA MENZIESII ('RASPBERRY FROST')**  
Resendiz Brothers



**"PARTY #1  
PINS" BOUQUET**  
Splendor Proteas



**"PINWHEEL  
3-STEM PINCUSHION" BOUQUET**  
Splendor Proteas



**"KITCHEN SINK" BOUQUET**  
Splendor Proteas



**BANKSIA CANDLES**  
Resendiz Brothers

Loral Thompson, CFD, greenhouse manager for Vons Grocery and a professor of floral design at College of the Sequoias in Visalia, California, shares Aaron's affection for proteas. "They provide amazing texture," she says, adding that she likes to pair them with other intriguing accents, including artichokes and green pomegranates.

Here are a few varieties and protea-filled bouquets to inspire you. 🌿

**Katie Vincent** is the senior contributing writer and editor of Floral Management.



**"PRINCE ALBERT" BOUQUET**  
Splendor Proteas



**"NEWCASTLE" BOUQUET**  
Splendor Proteas



**PROTEA PINATA**  
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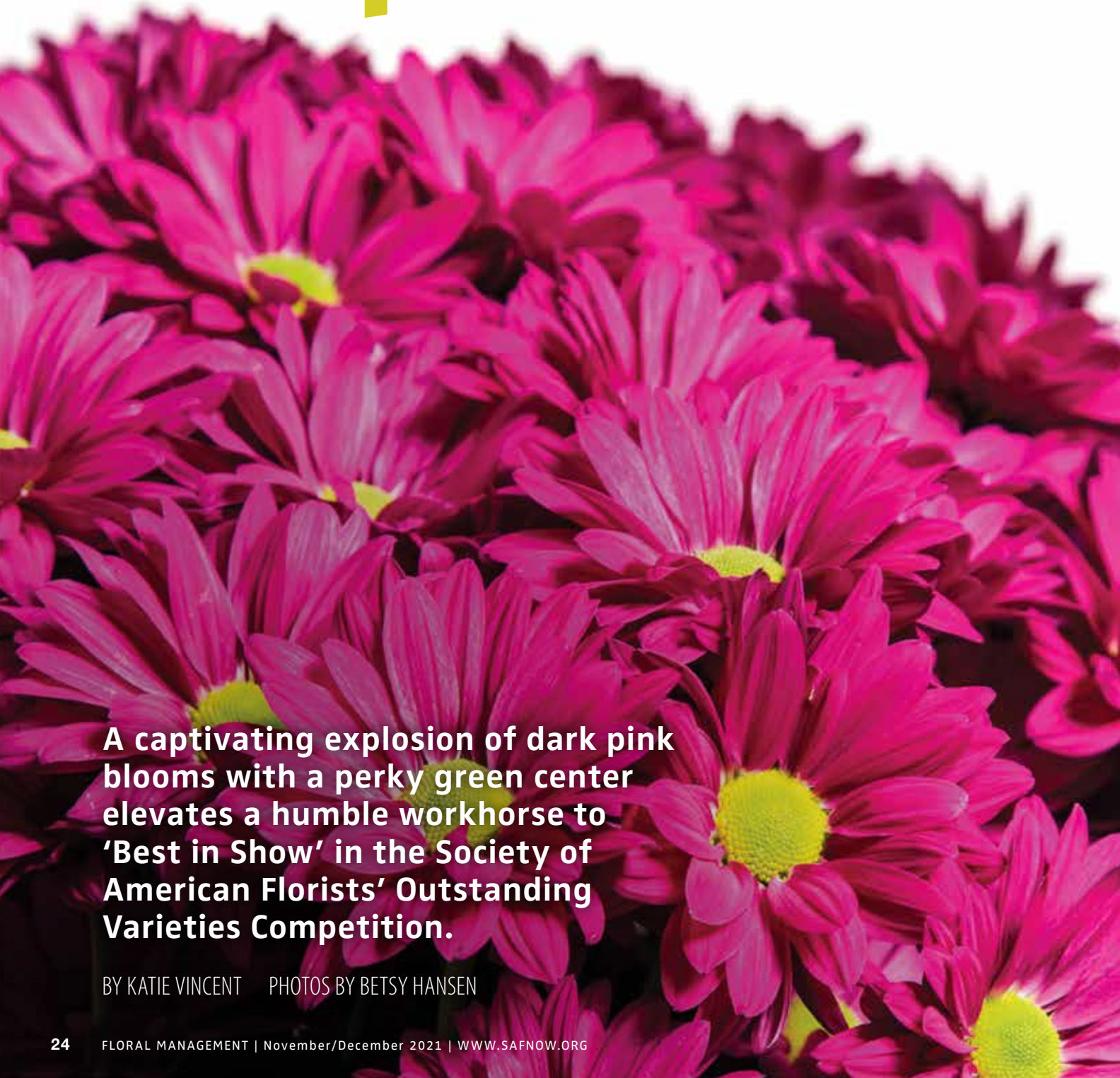
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# Color Us Impressed



**A captivating explosion of dark pink blooms with a perky green center elevates a humble workhorse to 'Best in Show' in the Society of American Florists' Outstanding Varieties Competition.**

BY KATIE VINCENT PHOTOS BY BETSY HANSEN

# 'AMOR CANDY' TAKES TOP PRIZE



## 'AMOR CANDY' CHRYSANTHEMUM Danziger "Dan" Flower Farm

The first thing you notice is the color. So began every conversation about 'Amor Candy', a new spray chrysanthemum bred and grown by Danziger, which won the coveted title "Best in Show" in the Society of American Florists' Outstanding Varieties Competition, held in conjunction with the organization's 136th annual convention in Orlando, September 21-23.

"It's so intense, it practically vibrates," says Renee Tucci, AIFD, PFCI, of Renee Tucci Creative in Chalfont, Pennsylvania, who helped judge the competition. "It looks very rich, and it pairs beautifully with jewel tones, greens and blues."

"This is no ordinary pink chrysanthemum," says fellow judge Tim Dewey of DVFlora in Sewell, New Jersey. "It absolutely pops with that vibrant shade next to its lime green center."

Judge David Register of FernTrust in Seville, Florida, knows customers will embrace 'Amor Candy'. "We offer dyed foliage in this color," he says. "It's extremely popular."

"Reminds me of wine — like a Merlot or a claret," says judge Lani Callister of Ensign Wholesale in Salt Lake City.

James DelPrince, Ph.D., AAF, AIFD, PFCI, associate extension professor at Mississippi State University, pointed to the juxtaposition between the rays [the petal-like parts] and the disks [the centers]. "You have red-violet and yellow-green," he says. "These are direct opposites on the color wheel, which gives a very strong presentation."

J Schwanke, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, of uBloom immediately made the same observation. (Although his work on the PBS series "J Schwanke's Life in Bloom" prohibited him from traveling to Orlando, he followed convention events closely through social media.) "Complementary colors — those opposite on the color wheel — are known for being bold, attention grabbing and exciting," he explained, offering Christmas's red and green palette as an example. "When we see a complementary color combination, we're subconsciously thinking of a party waiting to happen."

Color was but one reason 'Amor Candy' bested a room full of growers' most prized products. "It's technically a very good flower," says judge Ben Dobbe of Holland America Flowers in Arroyo Grande, California. "The foliage is flawless, and every single bloom is consistently formed."

A strong vase life (more than 15 days) and year-round availability appealed to judge Miguel Yopez of Orlando Wholesale Florist.

Tucci, Callister and DelPrince all remarked on the chrysanthemum's "floriferous" quality and long laterals. "Those traits make it easy to use in a vase, foam, wire mesh, chicken wire, coconut coir, and rockwall base," DelPrince says. "There's so many reasons this entry was head and shoulders above the rest."

Judges' comments overjoyed the Danziger team. "We knew we had a game-changing chrysanthemum on our hands," says Betty Finkelstein, global cut flowers brand manager. Launched in 2020, 'Amor Candy' "immediately aroused much interest among retailers, wholesalers and growers from Colombia, Italy, India, Israel and Mexico."

The SAF 2021 Outstanding Varieties Competition drew 146 entries from 24 companies. Judges scored each entry individually, based on color and commercial appeal, stem and foliage, bloom form and size, and overall presentation. To provide a range of perspectives, the judging panel included three growers, three wholesalers and three retailers. Judges evaluated specific categories of flowers, and the highest-scored entry from each category won "Best in Class." The judges collectively assessed these winners, naming 'Amor Candy' the best of the best.

Read on to learn more about the rest of the competition's winners.



Best  
in  
Class

'LEONORA'



'MAXIMA'



'BABE'



'FREE SPIRIT'

## Bulb Flower

### 'MAXIMA' ROSELILY

#### Oregon Flowers

"I searched for an imperfection but truly couldn't find one," Dobbe says. "The stems are very sturdy and can support the weight of the flower head, which is huge." Dewey thought the vibrant white color, mild fragrance, and lack of pollen made 'Maxima' a great choice for weddings. "It has a spectacular presentation," he says. Its alabaster complexion gives it a "timeless quality," Tucci says, while its double form — a relatively new introduction — has major benefits. "It's a novelty, which consumers love, and it has compact blooms, which designers love," she says.

## Garden Rose

### 'LEONORA'

#### Rosaprima

"This was a 10 in every category," Yepez says. "Its overall presentation is really gorgeous, and I love how its color shifts from white to yellow depending on how light hits it." Register, too, noticed a lemony complexion from certain angles. "That's very popular," he says. Judge Jordan Prosser of Botanica International Design & Decor in Tampa, Florida named it his favorite entry of the whole competition. "It's an absolute showstopper," he says.

## Other Flower

### 'HANOI' RANUNCULUS

#### Equiflor – Rio Roses

"Ranunculus can be hit or miss," judge Jodi McShan, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, of McShan Florist in Dallas, Texas says. "This one is outstanding — a good size, uniform color and shape, and a stem strong enough to hold the flower upright, where others sometimes disintegrate." The color, which could be manipulated to look more blush or pink depending on what it's paired with, is "very hot," DelPrince says. Callister agrees. "Anything blush sells," she says.



'HANOI'

## Spray Rose

### 'BABE'

#### Equiflor – Rio Roses

"It's a blind competition, but I knew immediately this was 'Babe', which means the farm did a great job growing it," Callister says, adding that she has a standing order for the flower every Monday. "It's my favorite orange, it always opens fully, and it has several blooms per stem." DelPrince appreciated the entry's long laterals. "This enables you to break it down easily," he says. Additionally, it had lush and healthy foliage and a proportionate display of open and closed buds, which provided "a nice surface area of color," he says. "And any time a consumer sees roses, it increases a design's value." McShan called it a "great fall staple."



## Standard Rose

### 'FREE SPIRIT'

#### Natural Flowers, Inc.

A perennial favorite, 'Free Spirit' received top marks for marketability and versatility. "Customers just love this combination of white, pink, orange, peach and cherry," Yepez says. "It's always requested — at least throughout the spring, summer and fall." The distinctive coloring excites consumers and "immediately improves a design's perceived value," says Prosser.



'ELIZABETH'



'BUBBLICIOUS'



'ROMANCE'

## Alstroemeria

'ROMANCE'

**Natural Flowers, Inc.**

Dobbe deemed this alstroemeria practically flawless. "The foliage was clean and green with no splotches," he says. "And every stem looked exactly the same." Tucci admired its saturated ruby hue. "During the holidays, we're always looking for red and you don't really find that many products that put out this intense a shade," she says. "It's really great to see it here in a more affordable flower."

## Decorative Foliage

'ELIZABETH' **LYSIMACHIA**

**Royal Flowers**

'Elizabeth' was the first product that caught DelPrince's eye on his initial walkthrough of the competition room. "There were only a handful of line flowers, so this really stood out," he says, emphasizing how crucial line flowers are — not just for altar pieces but also for building the framework for any floral design. Currently pursuing his European Master Certification, DelPrince appreciated its vegetative form. "It has a very organic appearance and good negative space," he says. Callister was blown away by its size and presentation. "You never see lysimachia like this!" she says. "They're usually only five or six inches tall."

## Dianthus

'BUBBLICIOUS'

**Golden Flowers, Inc.**

"Very natural-looking and pretty," says McShan. "It can be hard to find this deep bubble gum pink, which would be perfect for baby arrangements." Callister, too, described the pink as especially attractive. "It's also bigger than any carnations we usually see," she says. Its fluffy aesthetic and feminine coloring gives 'Bubblicious' major appeal, DelPrince says. "From a distance, it looks like a small peony. This would be a real winner in a mixed arrangement that retails for \$50 to \$75."

# *'Tis the season for California Grown Flowers*



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# Blue Ribbon Winners

## Alstroemeria

### 'MILA'

#### Golden Flowers

This variety earned high marks for its workhorse qualities. "It's extremely versatile," Dewey says. Tucci envisioned it in designs for three-quarters of the year. "It pairs well with pinks, purples, pastels, and greens — you could use it for pretty much everything but Thanksgiving and Christmas," she says. "Additionally, it's very fruitful and lasts a long time, which consumers love."

### 'VELVET QUEEN'

#### Golden Flowers

This deep pink-purple enchanted judges. "It looks like Merlot," says Dewey. "It's a great color for multi-season use." Tucci agreed. "It's rich and robust — and so versatile," she says. "You could use it to level up a monochromatic pink design. It contrasts nicely with jewel tones, as well as yellow, orange and green." In the summer, she'd love to pair 'Velvet Queen' with a chartreuse hydrangea and cymbidium. "It would pull out the ruby-colored speckles in the cymbidium so beautifully," she says. The dark spots in the corner added visual interest for Dobbe, who also admired the uniform shapes, clean foliage, and bloom count (eight per stem). "This was neck-in-neck with the 'Best in Class' winner for me."

## Chrysanthemums

### 'SKYLIE'

#### Dümmen Orange

"This looks very refreshing," Dewey says. "It's a very vibrant white." Dobbe had similar remarks. "It looks very clean," he says. Tucci admired its compact laterals (ideal for foam-free designs), cup shape (gives it a showy aesthetic), and its pure white color. "This would take paint well," she says. "That's a huge asset right now while we're dealing with supply chain issues."

### 'SARAH'S BRUSH'

#### Ball SB

Named in honor of Sarah Armellini, an industry pioneer and an avid painter who recently passed away, this chrysanthemum has delicate burgundy stripes, resembling paintbrush strokes. "The effect is very crisp," Dewey says. "It's a novelty that would be an incredible enhancement to any arrangement." Tucci described it as a user-friendly and versatile variety that could fit in spring and fall palettes equally well. "It has compact laterals that are great for foam-free designs," she says, adding that it had very healthy foliage, "so you don't have to worry that it could fall in the vase and lead to botrytis."

'MILA'



'VELVET QUEEN'



'SARAH'S BRUSH'



'FAIRYTALE'



## Chrysanthemums

'ALMA PINK'

### Deliflor Latin America

Distinctive coloring wowed judges. "It looks like someone threw a red piece of clothing in a load of whites," Dewey says. "With its green center, the pale pink really pops," Dobbe says. Tucci anticipates that retailers will embrace it, as their customers like seeing things that are new and unusual. "I've never seen anything like it," she says, adding that it has a cupped shape, which adds dimension and visual interest, and it boasts an impressive 13 blooms per stem. "You can do a lot with this chrysanthemum," she says.

'FAIRYTALE'

### Golden Flowers

Tucci can't wait to get her hands on this variety, which she identified as a perfect dahlia substitute. "Dahlias are so popular, but their availability is limited and quality inconsistent," she says. "It's great to have a dependable product like this instead." She also appreciated its flexible stem that can be manipulated while designing without fear of breakage.

'SWEET DREAMS'

### Golden Flowers

Dewey appreciated this pompon's long laterals, which his customers value. "It's a very unique shade between brown and lavender, giving it year-round appeal," he adds.

'TOPSPIN'

### Dekker Chrysanten Colombia

Dewey described this chrysanthemum as "a strong feature-type flower." Dobbe couldn't find many flaws. "It's a pure white, with uniformly formed blooms, and perfect foliage," he says. "I thought this was a contender for 'Best in Class.'"

'TOPSPIN'



'ALMA PINK'



'SWEET DREAMS'



# Blue Ribbon Winners



'YOLK'

## Chrysanthemums

### 'ALJONKA VINTAGE'

#### Dekker Chrysanten Colombia

"Not outwardly orange or bronze," this variety need not be reserved solely for the fall, Dewey says.

### 'MAPLE'

#### Deliflor Latin America

Dobbe loved this pumpkin-colored variety. "This was one of my favorite colors in the whole competition," he says. "It is so perfect for fall." He also awarded it high points for its uniform petal formation and excellent foliage.

### 'SERENITY SALMON'

#### Deliflor Latin America

Delicate striping impressed Dobbe and Tucci, who both declared it a "fall staple." "The petals almost look painted, and the center is slightly speckled," Tucci says. "The combination is just magical!" The teddy bear center helps it pass as a dahlia substitute, she added.

### 'YOLK'

#### Deliflor Latin America

Dobbe loved the saturated, golden color. "This name is just perfect," he says. "It absolutely captures the brilliant yellow." Dewey saw "a hit" for fall and summer and noted that its shape was "dahlia-like." "I know a lot of people would appreciate a good sub for dahlias," he says.



'ALJONKA VINTAGE'



'MAPLE'



'SERENITY SALMON'



**'NOBBIO CHERRY'**

## Dianthus

### 'BRUT'

#### Golden Flowers

"It's the palest pink to champagne shade that is in such high demand," Callister says. "Customers absolutely love these earth tones." DelPrince echoed her comments. "It has a large flower head, good stem, and nice foliage, but its main feature is that color that's so sought after right now."

### 'NOBBIO BLACK HEART'

#### Golden Flowers

A "beautiful blend of black, cranberry and red," this variety adds richness and depth, DelPrince says. "It would shine in any arrangement that's well illuminated." McShan thought it had a luxurious feel, comparing it to 'Hearts', a garden rose that earned Best in Show honors in 2013. "It looks expensive," she says. "Customers will like it, especially for Christmas."



**'BRUT'**

**'NOBBIO BLACK HEART'**



### 'NOBBIO CHERRY'

#### Golden Flowers

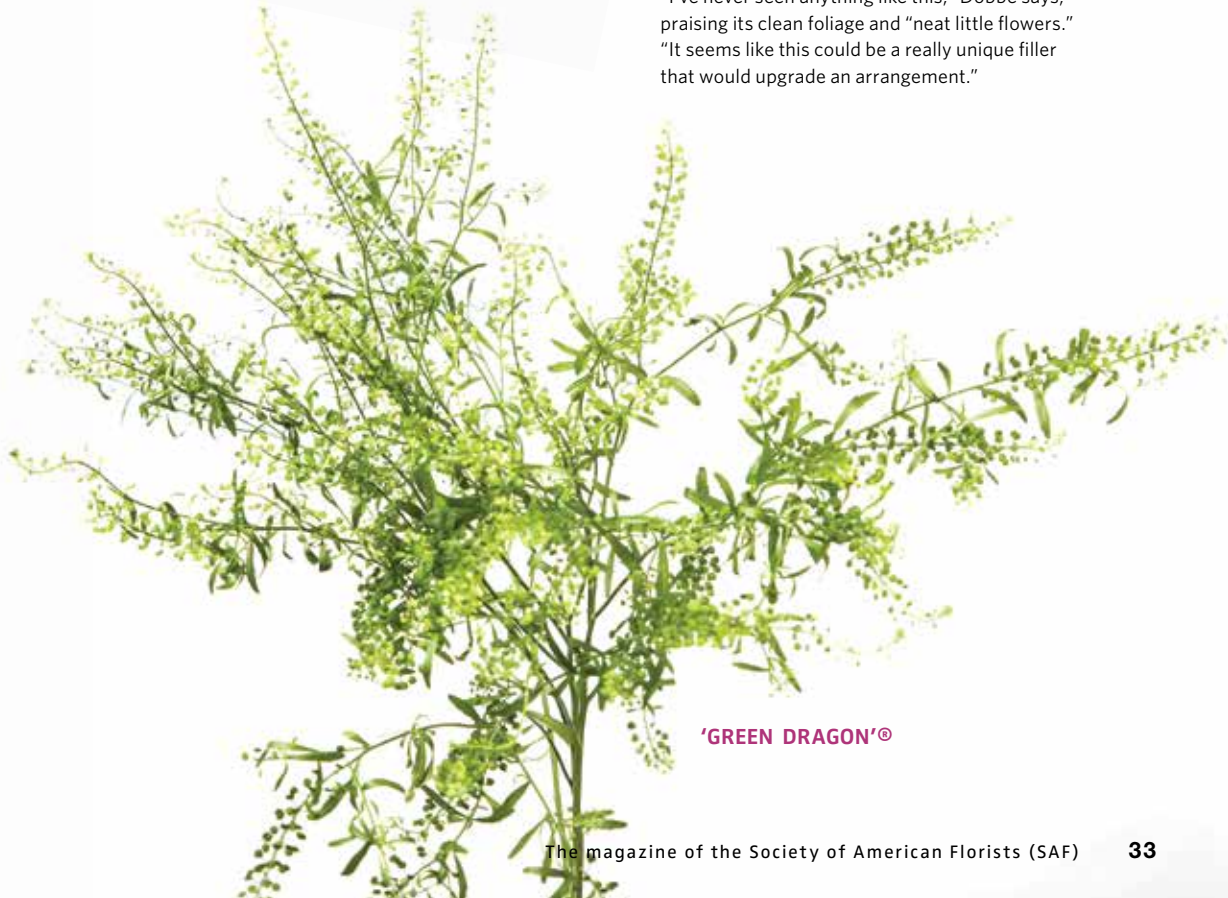
"From my past experience in retail, I know people often request something 'cheery' or 'cheerful', and this carnation enables florists to easily fill those orders," DelPrince says. Bi-colored flowers excite customers, Callister says, adding that the hot pink/raspberry combination can work year round. McShan concurred, calling it "an everyday staple."

## Decorative Foliage

### 'GREEN DRAGON'® LEPIDIUM

#### Danziger "Dan" Flower Farm

"I've never seen anything like this," Dobbe says, praising its clean foliage and "neat little flowers." "It seems like this could be a really unique filler that would upgrade an arrangement."



**'GREEN DRAGON'®**

## Bulb Flowers

### 'CATEMACO' ORIENTAL LILY

#### Oregon Flowers

Dewey was blown away by the “gigantic” bloom size. Tucci, too, remarked on “monster” blooms. “It has such visual impact, and I love the ombre effect on its petals.” Dobbe awarded it a perfect score. “I grow this variety and know that it’s hard to produce in the summer,” he says. “This was grown really well. The stems are super strong to hold up those ‘crazy huge’ heads.” The color, too, has major marketability, he says. “This is a very popular variety for Valentine’s Day and Mother’s Day.”

### 'DALIAN' ORIENTAL TRUMPET LILY

#### Oregon Flowers

Scrutinizing each stem, Tucci could tell that every single bloom was going to open. “This is very unusual, in my experience,” she says. The massive lily “begs to be used in a large showy design that requires grand scale,” she says. “The fact that its laterals are close together is very beneficial for designers — it’s basically nature’s version of the ‘grouping technique,’ which saves us a step.”

### 'VIOLA' ROSELILY

#### Oregon Flowers

“With roselilies, it’s hard to get the stem, flower, and foliage to all come out right,” Dobbe says. “This variety hits all three points spectacularly.” Tucci rated it highly for marketability — “consumers love novelties like this,” she says — and its “massive visual impact.” Dewey could see it used for anything from funerals to weddings and other events to Valentine’s Day.



'CATEMACO'



'VIOLA'



'DALIAN'



## Other Flowers

### 'ARCTIC ICE' KING PROTEA

#### Rosamina SAS

Callister liked that this entry showed the protea in two stages. "The open version would be great for a bridal bouquet, while the closed version would work well for everyday arrangements," she says. Its size makes 'Arctic Ice' ideal for event work, McShan says, adding that its creamy color would be popular with brides. DelPrince scored it highly for consumer appeal. "Exotic flowers like this always get a 'wow' reaction," he says. "And customers love to dry them, so you can market this as something with a ton of value."

### PREMIUM WHITE HYDRANGEA

#### Groflowers

A hydrangea of this size and formation is rare, McShan says. "You don't normally see them with a head this large, florets this uniform, with a great spherical shape and gorgeous dark green foliage," she says. DelPrince agreed on all accounts, adding that he loves how it provides its own mechanics for floral design. "You just stick stems right in it," he says.

### 'REGINA' ANTHURIUM

#### Green Point Nurseries

Callister had never seen an anthurium with this color or shape. "It's a nice Merlot — really striking," she says. That distinctive shade bridges reds and violets, DelPrince says.

### 'ROSITA BLUE' LISIANTHUS

#### Equiflor – Rio Roses

DelPrince applauded this entry's airy form, unblemished foliage and attractive edges that look as though they'd been dredged in paint. McShan scored it highly for its head size and marketable color.



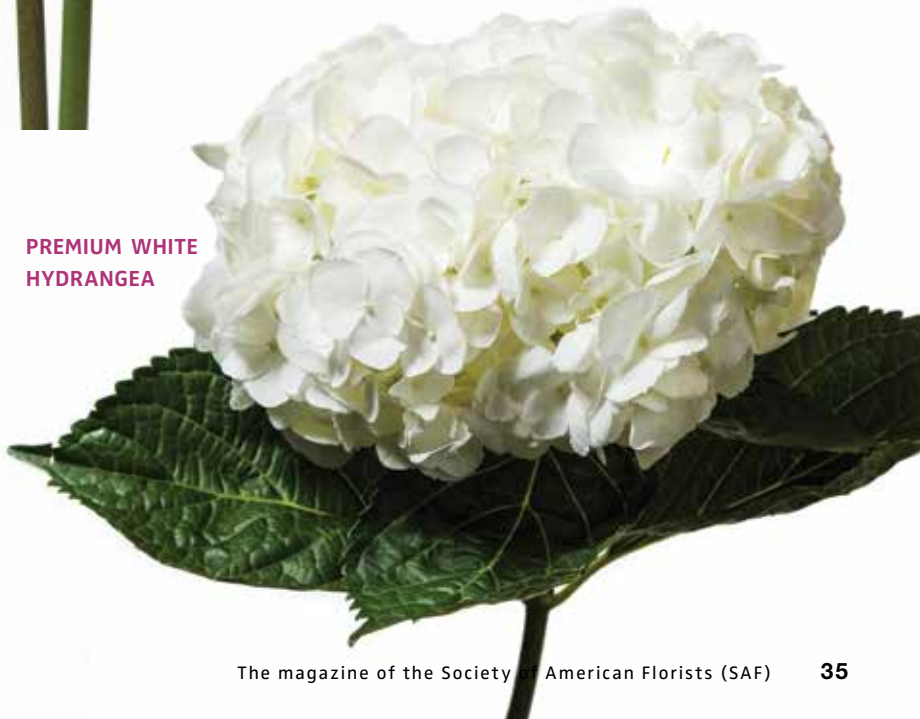
'ARCTIC ICE'



'REGINA'



'ROSITA BLUE'



PREMIUM WHITE  
HYDRANGEA



# Blue Ribbon Winners

## Other Flowers

### 'MAUI' ANTHURIUM

#### Green Point Nurseries

McShan liked how this anthurium was shaped like an elongated heart. "It's more interesting than the flat varieties you usually see," she says. DelPrince pointed out that all the spadices pointed in the right direction — an advantage for designers. Callister considered its red coloring extremely versatile. "It's neutral, not overly feminine, so it'd be a great choice for a man's funeral," she says. "A lot of schools use this color too, so I could see it in homecoming designs."

### PEACH GLADIOLUS

#### Glad-A-Way Gardens

"I immediately recognized this," Callister says. "I have two standing orders of this a week. That tells you I love it." DelPrince says a strong gladiolus "is always a welcome material" for large-scale designs. "This one is especially lovely," he says. "The sequencing of the bloom opening is strong from the bottom to the top, and that cantaloupe shade pairs really beautifully with blues." McShan, too, commented on the color. "People are always asking for peach," she says. She also liked that the stems were "huge, but manageable — not limp."

### 'TOYAMA PEACH OBAKE' ANTHURIUM

#### Green Point Nurseries

"It has nice and bright spadices that align nicely," DelPrince says. "That helps designers create rhythm in an arrangement."



'MAUI'



PEACH GLADIOLUS

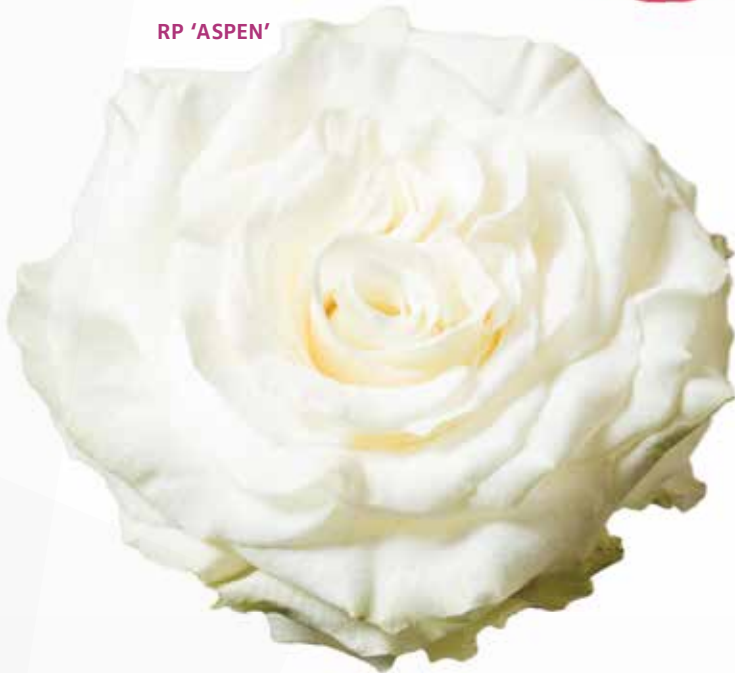


'TOYAMA PEACH OBAKE'

**'DARK X-PRESSION'**



**RP 'ASPEN'**



## Standard Roses

**RP 'ASPEN'**

### **Rosaprima**

"White flowers are the hottest items right now, so it's definitely marketable," Register says. Although smaller than other entries, 'Aspen's' petal count gave it a lush, garden-like look, he added. Yepez rated it highly for its strong stems ("designers request this," he says), nice greenery, and good vase life.

**'DARK X-PRESSION'**

### **Rosaprima**

Hot pink and orange, "with hints of sherry," 'Dark X-expression' impressed Yepez with its versatility and marketability. Prosser, too, admired that color — "very rich," he says — and its full shape and high petal count. "This would be a great value because it looks a lot like a garden rose — almost like a peony, even."

**'NEW FACE'**

### **Agricola Circasia SAS C.I.**

"Somewhere between coral and burnt orange, this rose works with a variety of palettes, making it a good everyday rose," Yepez says. Prosser echoed these comments. "It's extremely versatile," he says, adding that blooms opened nicely, and it didn't have many thorns. "That's huge for us preparing for events," he says. "It's a lot of extra work processing roses that are thorny."

**'NEW FACE'**



## Standard Roses

### 'CANDLELIGHT'

#### Naranjo Roses SA

"This was my favorite rose entry," Register says. "It's huge, has a high petal count, and absolutely gorgeous foliage." Yepez thought this variety looked like a more affordable version of customer favorites 'White O'Hara' and 'Playa Blanca'. "It's enormous and it opened quickly," Prosser says.

### 'FULL MONTY'

#### Naranjo Roses SA

"This takes up a ton of space," Yepez says. "It reminds me of 'Playa Blanca' but in hot pink. My customers would love it." Register agreed. "The petal count is really high and the way it rolls open at the edges makes it look especially full," he says. The bold, bright color doesn't appear in too many Botanica weddings, "but we use this variety a lot for parties," Prosser says.

### 'MANDALA'

#### Naranjo Roses SA

In 'Mandala', Yepez spied a quality medium pink that designers could use all year round. Prosser called it "a great choice for Valentine's Day," pointing to the rose's big head with ruffled edges that lend a romantic, garden aesthetic. Register liked its distinctive formation. "It has a tight center, yet large, open petals," he says.

### 'PRINCESS CROWN'

#### Rosaprima

"I couldn't wait to learn what variety this was so I can order it," Prosser says. "It was very, very easy to give this a blue ribbon — the blooms are massive, the color is in high demand, and I love its ruffled edges." Yepez knows his customers will love it. "We're always trying to source light peach," he says. "And it has a high petal count, which gives it a showy presentation." Register admired its vintage look. "I imagine this would be a hit for weddings," he says.

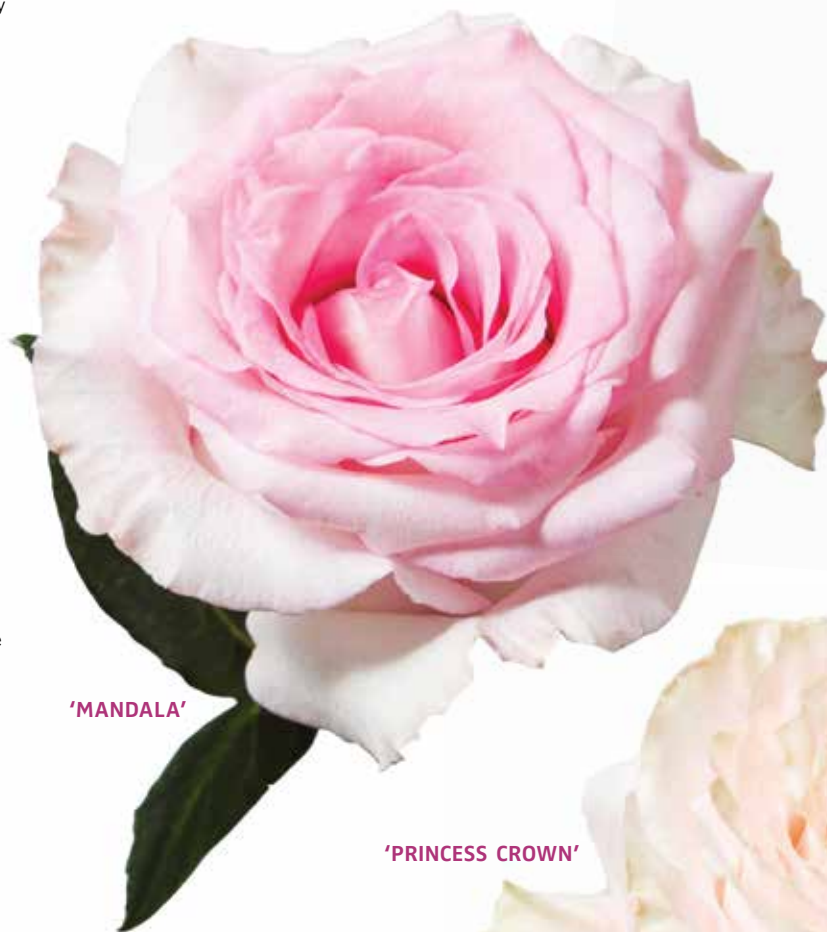
## Garden Rose

### 'EUGENIE'

#### Rosaprima

"I immediately recognized this was a David Austin rose," Prosser says. "It's pricey, but you get a lot of show for your money." In addition to its "wow factor," 'Eugenie' impressed Prosser with how quickly it opened. "That's very advantageous for event work," he says. Yepez thought it'd be an excellent choice for weddings. "Depending on what you pair it with, you can see peach or pink undertones," he says. "Brides like its scent, too." 🌹

**Katie Vincent** is the senior contributing editor of *Floral Management*.



'MANDALA'

'PRINCESS CROWN'







**'EUGENIE'**



**'CANDLELIGHT'**



**'FULL MONTY'**

## 2021 COMPETITION JUDGES

The Society of American Florists extends its thanks to the following Outstanding Varieties judges for their expertise in this year's competition:

### Retailers

**Jodi McShan,**  
AAF, AIFD, PFCI  
McShan Florist  
Dallas, Texas

**Jordan Prosser**  
Botanica International  
Decor & Design Studio  
Tampa, Florida

**Renee Tucci, AIFD, PFCI**  
Renee Tucci Creative  
Chalfont, Pennsylvania

**Wholesalers**  
**Lani Callister**  
Ensign Wholesale Florist  
Salt Lake City, Utah

**Tim Dewey**  
DVFlora  
Sewell, New Jersey

**Miguel Yopez**  
Orlando Wholesale Florist  
Orlando, Florida

**Growers**  
**James DelPrince, Ph.D.,**  
AAF, AIFD, PFCI  
Mississippi State University  
Biloxi, Mississippi

**Ben Dobbe**  
Holland America Flowers  
Arroyo Grande, California

**David Register**  
FernTrust  
Seville, Florida



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# Design Room Dynamics

**Leverage these strategies to keep fresh product and labor costs under control.**

BY BRUCE WRIGHT

**T**he labor market is tight. Designer payroll is a high cost of doing business. Flowers are in short supply and getting pricier by the month. What can you do in the design room to maximize productivity and to keep rising costs from overtaking profits?

## **Measure your margin**

Start with a simple check: Compare your costs in fresh cut flowers to a dollar amount that represents your sales of those flowers for one week. Are you making a healthy net profit?

You don't have to do this every week, or examine the figures with a fine-tooth comb, says Vonda LaFever, AIFD, PFCI and CEO of Flower Clique, a provider of business tools and services for retail florists. The idea is, first, to know whether you have a problem; second, to establish a baseline to measure your progress.

Finding your costs is easy: "Just clip your invoices together and add them up," says LaFever. Some florists enter those figures into an online system such as QuickBooks.

To calculate sales, run sales reports that reflect any category where fresh flowers are the major product component. "Look at arrangements, roses, casket sprays — anything that comes out of your design room that has fresh flowers," says LaFever. "Add all of these up and compare them to your costs."

Clearly, “arranged flower sales” includes some costs that are not fresh product (containers, foam, etc.). If you were comparing your total cost of goods sold to sales in these categories, you might expect it to be something like 33%, according to LaFever — using a ballpark figure.

“Roughly 8% of that will be associated with containers,” she further explains. “So, your goal for just fresh flowers is 25% of sales or less.” Again, that’s not a firm standard, because every shop’s situation is different. The real point is to establish a baseline figure so that in the future you can monitor whether that figure goes up or down.

### Control shrink

Don’t overlook the importance of rigorous care and handling procedures in controlling product costs. It’s been shown time and again: The time and money invested in the three C’s — cooling, care, and cleanliness — provides a rich return on investment, both in terms of reduced shrink and in terms of customer satisfaction.

How cool is your cooler (optimal temperature is from 33-35 degrees Fahrenheit)? Do you treat all your fresh cut flowers with an appropriate hydrating, storage, or vase solution, carefully mixed in the right proportion? Are buckets, design tools and work surfaces regularly cleaned and sanitized? Links to research and practical advice on each of these topics — cooling, care, and cleanliness — can be found on the website of the American Floral Endowment.

### Eliminate overstuffing

When it comes to controlling cost of flowers, overstuffing is enemy No. 1. And while it has long been acknowledged as such, the problem persists — mainly because solutions can seem cumbersome and time-consuming.

“It’s a real challenge between left brain and right brain,” says Michelle Jones of Flowers by Michelle in Las Vegas, Nevada. “You know you’ve got to stay on target money-wise, but on the creative side, it’s like, ‘I’ve got a hole there, and it will look better if I just throw this one flower in.’”

The traditional way to counter that tendency — and in Jones’s experience,

the one that works the best — is to use a pricing sheet to record the retail price of every stem used in a design.

Skilled designers, of course, know in advance how to select flowers that will add up in a way that approximates the goal. But a pricing sheet provides a necessary check. “It’s when designers do it all in their mind, instead of making an accurate calculation, that problems arise,” says LaFever.

Today, Jones’s team is relying less on pricing sheets than in the past because they have found they can achieve the same result using design recipes. But it remains a sure-fire method that is also handy for keeping track of substitutions in design recipes.

“When they first start using it, no one’s a fan,” says Jones. “I’ve never met a designer that’s like, ‘Oh, I love this!’ But once they get used to it and see the advantage of it, they’re fine with it.”

Some designers see it as a fun challenge, Jones says.

“I’ve had designers get excited and say, ‘Look, I got within 20 cents of the goal!’” says Jones. “It becomes a personal challenge.”

Stuffing is the easy way out; hitting a price target with a design that looks full and well balanced is the mark of a professional.

### Rely on recipes

The arrangements on your website should have a design recipe and be priced for profit. So, if you stick to the recipe, you’re set. Of course, those two provisions — correct and current pricing and sticking to the recipe — are key.

At Town and Country Flowers in Huntington, Indiana, the website features some Teleflora and FTD arrangements, but most designs on the website originate with Flower Clique. Owner Jeannie Myers counts on pricing guidance and regular website updates from Flower Clique for assurance that the designs can be reproduced profitably because of the recipe. “Knowing that I have profitable product showcased on my website gives me a level of comfort,” says Myers.

Even if the order is “designer’s choice,” that’s no reason not to fill the order using a time-tested and profit-verified recipe design. “When the recipe

is chosen, the recipe and picture are printed off for the designer and attached to the order,” says Myers. Any substitutions need to be flowers of similar value, although color and texture should be considered as well.

Given today’s supply chain issues, recipes require a watchful eye in relation to flower prices and availability. Good relations with suppliers have served Myers well, she says, to keep wholesale costs and flower choices as consistent as possible. That helps her control costs in the design room.

### Track designer productivity

It’s also important to track labor costs. This is something Myers does every two weeks when she does payroll. Since hers is a small shop with not many employees (her design room might have from one to three people in it, including herself, on any given day), she doesn’t find it necessary to look at design labor as a separate labor category.

In fact, one of the lessons she has learned is that keeping track of her business costs doesn’t have to reach a daunting level of detail. It’s more about making regular checks on key indicators.

By contrast, Absolutely Beautiful Flowers in St. Petersburg, Florida, is a big, high-volume shop with as many as 10 to 15 designers and design assistants all working together on a busy day. Co-owner Brian Sykes says he and his partner make a point of tracking designers’ productivity daily. The designers fill out a form for the shop manager, which then gets keyed into the system.

“They know they’re being tracked,” says Sykes. “And they know, if their number drops, they’re going to have a discussion with me: ‘I brought you up from \$11 an hour to \$12, then \$13, then \$14, because you were doing 34 arrangements a day, and now you’re dropping back to 25.’ A blip for a day or two is not going to trigger anything, but more than that, we’re going to talk.”

### Divide the labor

At a large shop like Absolutely Beautiful Flowers, hiring design assistants is a no-brainer. But even at smaller shops, it can be a helpful strategy. “Anytime you can help a designer in preparations

— pulling vases and flowers, possibly pre-greening the containers — it's going to speed up production for your designer, who is the most expensive member of your staff," notes LaFever.

Take a careful look at what your designers do and consider what a trainee can be taught to do. Processing is a great example, says Sykes: "On a Monday morning, with 110 boxes of flowers to unpack and process, we have two people physically moving the boxes, two people cutting, two people treating the cut stems with Quick Dip, putting them into buckets and getting the buckets back into the cooler."

**"You know you've got to stay on target money-wise, but on the creative side, it's like, 'I've got a hole there, and it will look better if I just throw this one flower in.'"**

—Michelle Jones

That situation won't apply in most shops. But consider that while many of the jobs designers are sometimes required to do — such as sanitizing coolers, buckets, tools and work surfaces — don't require design skills, they do require a dedicated employee's priority attention and expertise. And if the result is that your designers work fewer hours, but you can afford to pay them a little more, that may be a win-win.

Also bear in mind that switching gears from one job to another drains focus and efficiency. "I know that at many shops, especially smaller ones, the designers are also the customer service people," Jones observes. "What I found early on, even when my shop was small and I was the only designer, was that it really helped to have a customer service person to process flowers and take phone calls."

Flowers by Michelle employs six designers and about 18 employees total, including part-timers. Jones's customer service staff not only relieve designers of distracting phone duties but grease the wheels doing things that otherwise might not get done.

## Train and plan for speed

New designers are typically expected to produce a certain number of designs per hour after an initial training period. "When I have a new designer, I place their station next to a fast designer, so they can get a sense of the pace," says Jones. "And that works. They don't want to be the slowpoke in the bunch."

Pulling flowers and greens for a specific design takes considerable time. If you don't have an assistant to perform that task, encourage designers to learn how to fetch everything they need, including hardgoods, at one go — perhaps even for more than one design.

Techniques for efficiency that most florists use only at busy holiday times can sometimes be adapted for other times of the year. That includes making popular designs in advance and even using an assembly line to work more quickly.

"We have learned that we can have a designer make up maybe 10 or 12 of the most popular designs off our website, so they're just waiting," Jones says. "Then we can just grab them, tag them, and send them out the door as needed," including for designer's choice. "That has really helped improve productivity. We might also green up a bunch of vases and then pull them out to speed up production for a customer who's just walked in and is in a rush, or for a driver who's got to get something out quick."

At nonholiday times, this works especially well with vase arrangements that can be altered or even combined as needed.

"If you sell a designer's choice at \$150, and you have in your cooler two premade bouquets at \$79 each, you can combine them," suggests LaFever. "We call it bundle fusion! In addition to

saving design time, now you don't have to spend time pulling the stems or calculating the cost."

Premade foliage bouquets are available from some foliage suppliers, LaFever noted. Again, not only do they save time in design but they are also already priced out. A designer can drop them into a vase or use the stems to cover foam in a container and begin adding flowers.

## Organize your design room for efficiency

Reconfiguring the layout of your design area in such a way that designers take fewer steps to reach the cooler or the sink, or to fetch containers, can be a major time-saver.

At Absolutely Beautiful Flowers, this opportunity came about in the worst way, following an arson attack that destroyed the shop so that it had to be rebuilt from scratch. "I had always found it frustrating to see people carrying buckets of water around to soak the foam," Sykes recalls. "So, for the redesign, we put in external taps, one for each station, with marine hoses about eight to 10 feet long. The plumbing wasn't cheap, but the savings in time and productivity has been huge."

Before the fire, containers and other hardgoods were stored in cabinets against a back wall, as in most flower shops. At the staff's suggestion, items that were formerly stored on shelving were instead displayed on peg board with hooks. Some items also now are stored in aluminum tackle boxes, one below each design station. The new system not only saves design time, says Sykes, it also makes the inventory process easier.

That story drives home what might be the most fundamental strategy of all, when it comes to controlling costs: If you are a store owner or manager, remember to make your design staff your allies in the effort. Stress and show how the benefits of controlling both product and labor costs accrue to all, by keeping the business healthy and competitive. An appeal to team effort goes a long way. 🌿

**Bruce Wright** is a contributing writer to *Floral Management*.

EDITORS' NOTE *Paul Goodman, MBA, PFCI, and Derrick Myers, CPA, CFP, PFCI, love a good financial management challenge, however big or small. Send your questions to [fmeditor@safnow.org](mailto:fmeditor@safnow.org), and we'll challenge the experts to tackle them in an upcoming article.*



SHUTTERSTOCK/VECTORMINE

# Price Check

## Rising costs demand taking a hard look at what to charge.

BY PAUL GOODMAN

**L**ower product availability and increased freight costs are impacting the supply chain, and likely, your bottom line. If the idea of raising your retail prices makes you nervous, you're not alone. However, if you want to stay in business and be profitable, you need to take a second look. Let's look at what's happening with supply and demand, and then do some analysis on how much you need to charge.

### Product Availability

Whether it's hardgoods or fresh product, there is no longer an abundance. There are several factors contributing to shortages, but they all stem from one source: the pandemic.



When COVID-19 hit in mid-March of 2020, many businesses shut down or severely limited operations. Workers were laid off and production dropped, not just domestically, but across the globe.

Suddenly shelves were empty. As businesses in the floral industry — including manufacturers, growers, importers and wholesalers — slowly reopened, they experienced a lot of snags along the way. Manufacturers couldn't produce as much due to limited inputs and a reduced workforce. Delays in shipping snarled what is usually a steady stream of imports. Backlogs at ports in the United States worsened. Growers had to replant crops to increase production. This all translates into fewer products available for florists.

### Freight Charges

Although many products are produced domestically, a majority come from abroad. Container shipping was affected severely when manufacturers stopped or slowed production due to COVID outbreaks and a reduced workforce. That's because less manufactured product resulted in fewer shipping containers being used, and fewer containers in one direction means fewer containers in the other direction.

Importing fresh product became difficult as well. The floral industry depends primarily on airlines to get their perishable products from foreign growers to a domestic hub as quickly as possible. Airlines saw a steep drop in traffic and cut back on flights to South America. This caused freight prices to increase.

Flowers are also facing competition from other products for space aboard planes. Airlines charge for freight primarily based on the product's weight. That pricing is not favorable to flowers, which are a lightweight product but take up a lot of space. For example, it's more profitable for the airline to transport blueberries than it is to transport flowers, because the blueberries weigh more and take up less space. Once the flowers arrive in the U.S., the truck driver shortage is causing further delays.

### Demand Is Up

No one could have predicted that the demand for flowers and foliage would be so great when the pandemic first started, but that is exactly what hap-

pened. When Mother's Day 2020 rolled around, it turned out to be a blockbuster for many florists. Orders easily surpassed what they had been in 2019.

How did that happen? In hindsight, it makes sense. People were staying home. Restaurants were closed or limited to carry-out. Entertainment venues closed. The competition for discretionary dollars disappeared. Add to that the fact that people were isolated but still wanted to connect with friends and loved ones, and flowers were the perfect answer. Florists continued to see a 15 percent to 40 percent increase in sales each month in 2020 compared with 2019 sales.

The increased demand isn't necessarily a problem, but it certainly is part of the challenge.

### What's the Cost Increase?

It makes no difference where you get your hardgoods and fresh product. Whether you buy from a wholesaler or direct from a grower or manufacturer, your cost is increasing. The freight charges on fresh product flown from South America to Miami increased up to 50 percent in the last two years, according to an analysis of invoices from a reputable florist. Domestic transportation rate increased by 10 percent, according to the invoices. Of course, that doesn't mean you need to raise your prices by 50 percent or more. Freight is only a small part of what makes up your total product cost. Let's look at some actual numbers.

Suppose you are buying a rose directly from a farm in South America. There are three costs you need to consider: the cost of the rose, the cost of handling and freight from South America to Miami, and the cost of handling and freight from Miami to your shop. Here's what has changed:

	Cost Two Years Ago	Cost Today	Change	%
<b>1 Rose</b>	.96	1.05	.09	10%
<b>International Freight</b>	.10	.15	.05	50%
<b>Domestic Freight</b>	.043	.047	.004	10%
<b>Total cost</b>	1.103	1.247	.144	13%

The cost of the rose is the biggest expense in the total cost. So, even though international freight increased considerably, it doesn't affect your overall cost nearly as much from a percentage standpoint. There may be some variation in this example because while freight prices may be fairly steady, the cost of the rose can vary dramatically depending on how many stems you buy and when you buy them. As a rule, the lower the cost of the flower, the bigger impact the freight cost will have on the total cost.

### Your Marching Orders

Although you could calculate each of these three items for every product you purchase, it doesn't have to be that tedious. What you do will depend on where you buy your products.

If you buy from a wholesaler, take your current price and simply apply your standard markup. All the increased costs will be reflected in the final retail price, and you will maintain your profit margins. If you are buying direct from a farm, use your total landed cost and then apply your standard markups. (Total landed cost is the combination of the cost of the product, plus any international freight and domestic freight.)

A typical pricing problem for retail florists is how to deal with prices going up and down. The best solution is to settle on a realistic average price for each product. Don't try to adjust your prices with each price variation. Adjust prices only when a pricing trend becomes apparent. 🌸

**Paul Goodman, MBA, PFCI**, is a former CPA and the founder of Floral Finance Business Services based in Tulsa, Oklahoma, editor of Floral Finance and author of "The Profit-Minded Florist."

## CALIFORNIA SUPPLY CHAIN UPDATE

> Since the beginning of the pandemic, the floral industry has been learning to cope with shortages and delays, no matter where the flowers were grown. But how does California — which supplies as much as three-quarters of flowers grown commercially in the United States — fit into that picture?

California flower farmers are thriving. “The majority of the farms I know of have been having one of their best years ever in 2021,” says Steve Dionne, executive director of CalFlowers, the California Association of Flower Growers & Shippers.

It’s not that California flower growers aren’t affected by most of the same factors that have disrupted the supply of

flowers from Colombia and Ecuador — including issues with labor, transportation, and climate change. But the California story comes with its own twists.

### Some Go Missing

One effect of the pandemic on South American flower farms has been the acceleration toward consolidation. Bigger farms have swallowed smaller ones without an overall reduction in cultivated acreage.

In California, by contrast, the pandemic encouraged a significant number of well-established growers to simply stop producing flowers. The reasons predate the pandemic. They include rising costs, rising land values (tempting

owners to sell), and a lack of successors for some family-owned businesses.

Among those who exited the business at the beginning of the pandemic were Ocean View, specializing in stock, and Skyline Flower Growers, known for snapdragons. As a result, according to Tim Dewey, VP for procurement at the New Jersey-based wholesale distributor DV Flora, there is a shortage of high-demand-line flowers that would traditionally have been purchased from California.

Thanks to a spate of hot weather, stock is now almost unavailable from California. “We’re importing stock from South America for the first time in 26 years,” says Joost Bongaerts of the California-based wholesaler and national shipper Florabundance.

**“Workers have to be constantly checking the drippers in the fields. The water district is talking about increasing rates, which are already high. The frost lines are dropping, so we’re having to change where we grow some crops, and even take a hard look at what’s doing well and what isn’t. You’re not going to continue to water things that aren’t making it.”**

—Diana Roy



### It’s Getting Hotter

While the harvest from Colombia was delayed this year by cold weather, California flower farmers had to cope with record high temperatures and severe dryness. Both conditions are chronic in California, but likely to worsen in coming years.

Strict state regulations, the high cost of water (in places where farmers do not have wells), and a recurrent pattern of dryness alternating with deluge have California growers turning to sophisticated tools for water management, from soil sensors to reverse-osmosis purification of recycled water.

The prospects are daunting, nonetheless. One might think proteas would be the perfect crop for an era of climate change, but heat and drought are having a worrisome impact even at Resendiz Brothers in southern California, where proteas, pincushions and other field-grown flowers and foliage — most native to Australia or South Africa — sprawl over more than 100 acres of steep, naturally dry hills.

“Workers have to be constantly checking the drippers in the fields,” says Resendiz Brothers’ Diana Roy. “The water district is talking about increasing rates, which are already high. The frost lines are dropping, so we’re having to change where we grow some crops, and even take a hard look at what’s doing well and

what isn't. You're not going to continue to water things that aren't making it."

## Workforce Woes

"Labor was an issue long before Covid," says Dionne. "It's the largest cost center on any flower farm." In California, where flower farmers are competing with the state's other agricultural interests, flower farm workers are paid more than minimum wage.

"We're having to pay our help more, which I don't mind, because we're able to get more for our product now," says Lou Neve of Neve Brothers, a grower of roses and other flowers in Sonoma County, California. "But we can't attract more people. I don't know what happened to all the agricultural workers. There's not enough to go around."

At Kendall Farms, a Southern California grower of waxflower, eucalyptus and other crops, the workforce was cut by 60 percent at the beginning of the pandemic. Today it's at 100 percent of what it was — but with current demand, the company could grow by another 20 percent if they could find workers, says Jason Kendall.

Some Southern California growers have moved their production to Baja California, in Mexico, to operate with a lower cost of labor. The crops they grow there can be trucked north to San Diego or Oxnard and then shipped across the United States.

## The Lure of Cannabis

California legalized recreational use of marijuana in 2016. Some flower growers converted their greenhouses to grow what was then a lucrative crop.

"There were a lot of investors looking for opportunity," says Dionne. "It was a kind of gold rush." The conversions certainly had an effect on flower supply — an effect that is being felt more acutely today, when the market is tight.

Today, cannabis prices are down. "Growers tell me, now is not a good time to get into cannabis cultivation in California," says Bongaerts. In addition



SHUTTERSTOCK/ CAMELLIA VINTAGE

**"We're having to pay our help more, which I don't mind, because we're able to get more for our product now. But we can't attract more people. I don't know what happened to all the agricultural workers. There's not enough to go around."**

— Lou Neve

to lower prices, fees and taxes cut into profits. It's possible, Bongaerts says, that in the next year or two growers and investors will turn from cannabis back to flowers, where the prices have been rising.

## Strength in Diversity

While florists might know California best for just a dozen or more flowers, including tulips, lilies, snapdragons, gerberas, proteas, and waxflower, the actual range of varieties numbers in the hundreds and is constantly expanding.

That's because the state's climate and geography are so diverse and support a wide range of products from the chilly north of the state to the sunbaked south. And when South American imports entered the market, many California growers turned to an adventurous variety of higher-end, specialty crops ranging from fancy tulips and fruiting or flowering branches to exotic proteas.

That is both a strength and at times, a marketing challenge, since many of the lesser-known flowers — chocolate cosmos, for example — are seasonal or produced in relatively small quantities. That makes the pathway from farm to florist more difficult.

At the same time, as growers and buyers search for ways to circumvent the industry's supply-chain challenges, a trend to buy direct from the farm has taken a portion of California's flowers out of the traditional circulation.

The good news is that when a specific flower is not available, California has something else to offer, equally novel and trendy. "There are not as many flowers of certain types to fill the demand," says Bongaerts. "But there's no shortage of flowers." 🌸

**Bruce Wright** is a contributing writer to *Floral Management*.

## UP YOUR SOCIAL SAVVY

> For those of us who aren't Gen Zer's, social media can feel quite intimidating. Getting started with a social media presence or even improving the one you already have may take a backseat in priority to the daily demands of your business. No matter where you are on the spectrum of social media savviness, there are steps that you can take *today* to get your social strategy back on track and start creating your most captivating content yet!

If you are just getting started with social media or if you feel like you don't really have a sound strategy, you need to first start by answering a few key questions:

Who is your target audience?

Depending on your business and where you are in the floral industry, you could be trying to market to a wholesale florist, a retail or studio florist or even the end consumer. Furthermore, depending on your business model, you could be marketing to one or more of these audiences. If that is the case, you need to define who your primary audience is to determine what type of content would be most relevant and engaging to them.

What platforms does your target audience use to interact with your brand or brands like yours?

Just because new and shiny social media platforms continue to pop up (hello, TikTok and Clubhouse) doesn't mean you need to be on every single one of them. It is better to prioritize and focus your attention on the platform(s) where most of your audience engages and create optimized content for those platform(s).

The next two questions go hand in hand. What makes you uniquely different from your competition? In other words, what unique value proposition can you offer your audience?

Focus on what you want your brand to be known for and what is unique to your business. Do you work with local suppliers, support your community, have an outstanding customer service team, or have any proprietary or patented technologies or products? These are the types of things that you want to make sure you highlight to make your brand stand out.

What are the goals for your social media accounts? Are you trying to attract new customers and leads, create brand awareness, drive traffic to your site, increase online sales, notify your audience of sales and promotions, or provide your audience education on a certain topic? Developing specific goals holds you accountable for tracking the success of your social media campaigns.

Now that you have defined your audience, your goals, thought about your unique value proposition and determined the social media platforms you are going to utilize, it's time to do some planning. If you don't have one already, you *need* a content calendar to organize your ideas and establish a regular cadence of posting. There are many resources that you can download online to help you. HubSpot offers a free option that is a simple Excel file, or you can use a project management software like ClickUp that has built-in content calendar templates to edit and customize. Create a shared document to serve as a "parking lot" of ideas for future posts or content. This helps keep your social media content pipeline full.

After you have a content calendar in place, it's time to create! Here are five helpful tips to create captivating content your audience will love:

**1. Keep it simple.** You only have a few seconds to capture your audience's attention, so be sure that your captions and content are succinct and to the point. Keep paragraphs to two or three sentences at the most and use bulleted information or lists to organize your thoughts if possible.

**2. Be authentic.** Even in the digital age, it is still true that people buy from people. Being authentic on social media and featuring the people and personalities that make up the fabric of your company's brand are more likely to produce an engaged and loyal audience.

**3. Use video.** Use more video content. Whether it is a 15-second Instagram Reel on social media to let potential customers know about an upcoming sale, or a Facebook or Instagram live session showcasing your seasonal products, video content is much more likely to get noticed by your audience and produce more engagement and interactions.

**4. Add a call to action.** Make sure you let your audience know what you want them to do. If you have developed a strategy and set goals without having a defined call to action, you will not have a way to measure the success of your campaigns. Some actions you may ask your audience to take are sharing your content, going to your website, making a purchase or providing feedback on a new product launch.

**5. Take advantage of free resources.** Producing professional looking and engaging content is a lot easier than it used to be. By far one of the easiest apps to use is Canva. However, other free resources such as Animoto, Adobe Spark, Pixlr X and Desygner are also worth exploring to produce scroll-stopping graphics and videos.

Whether you are a social media maven or a novice, it all starts with a solid strategy as your foundation. By setting aside time to identify your audience, your unique brand and plan content, you'll ensure that your social posts have purpose and deliver results. 🌱

**Melanie Spilbeler** is a Managing Partner of FreshPath Marketing, a floral-focused marketing consultancy and agency. She also is the head of the WF&FSA Marketing Committee and sits on the SAF Wholesale Council.



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## LOVE-LY LOOKS

> 'Tis the season for glittering displays, Yuletide tunes and sugary treats — and if you're a florist, laying the groundwork for a successful February 14. At Tiger Lily Florist in Charleston, South Carolina, a small, carefully curated Valentine's Day menu minimizes the holiday melee (and costs) while also differentiating the shop from competitors. Here, owner Lisa Hayes Holmes shares two of Tiger Lily's top sellers: one perfect for high-end clients, the other popular with budget buyers. 🌿

Find complete recipes at [safnow.org/moreonline](https://safnow.org/moreonline).

**Katie Vincent** is the senior contributing editor of *Floral Management*.



**GRAND GESTURE** This lush, full design boasts some premium flowers (garden roses and proteas) that customers can't resist. "It is always a sellout," Holmes says. Among its fans: former vice president Mike Pence, who was away in Rome for Valentine's Day 2020 and purchased this arrangement for his wife. "The main comment we hear is that ladies can breathe in an intoxicating fragrance while appreciating all the shades of red and unusual combination of stems." Design time: 15 minutes. Wholesale costs: \$47. Suggested retail price: \$125.



**PINT-SIZED PRETTY** A year-round staple at Tiger Lily: mason jars filled with leftover stems from the previous week and clippings too small to fit into most vase arrangements. They typically retail for \$20 and are snatched up in multiples — for everything from hospital gifts to casual centerpieces for parties. But for Valentine's Day, Holmes adds a few extra stems and bumps the price up \$10. The diminutive design is a great option for young customers, including students at the nearby College of Charleston and The Citadel, as well as fathers purchasing flowers for their daughters. "We do not use line flowers, which helps them have a nice 'roundy-moundy' look. And a mini green hydrangea makes all the beautiful colors work together," Holmes says. "These tricks make them look cute and full, and customers always perceive them as a great value." Design time: less than 5 minutes. Wholesale costs: \$8. Suggested retail price: \$29.50.



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### VERSATILE VESSEL

This creamy white vase works with practically any color palette. The simple message, "love," written in gold script lends a nice romantic touch that's perfect for Valentine's Day, but could work equally well for any romantic gift including proposals, anniversaries, birthdays and even décor for engagement parties or bridal showers. This tapered ceramic vase is 10 inches tall with a 3.25-inch opening.

[BurtonAndBurton.com](http://BurtonAndBurton.com)



### RADIANT RIBBON

These heart-adorned reels of ribbon communicate that love is in the air. Shop an assortment of fabrics, widths and patterns to add a nice finishing touch to your Valentine's Day collection. [ReliantRibbon.com](http://ReliantRibbon.com)



### LOVE BIRDS

This accent pillow featuring a pair of oh-so-adorable birds sums up Valentine's Day in pure whimsical delight. Made of 100% wool, they measure 12 by 12 inches and have a 100% cotton velvet backing, polyester insert and zipper closure. [pkhc.com](http://pkhc.com)



### 'CHEERS' TO US

This fun, themed balloon is sure to be a crowd pleaser for a variety of occasions, from a cute Valentine's Day add-on to a festive accessory for a birthday or bachelorette party. It's 37 inches tall and includes a self-sealing valve. The balloon can be inflated with helium to float or with a balloon air inflator for a stationary placement. [betallic.com](http://betallic.com)



### EFFICIENT, ECO-FRIENDLY ELEGANCE

Completing grab and go bouquets has never been easier. This kit includes single kraft paper (an understated style appreciated by environmentally conscientious clients) with pre-attached raffia ribbon to create consistently beautiful arrangements with minimal effort. Add a sparkly "LOVE" pick (also available from The Florist Shop) to give your Valentine's Day blooms a festive finishing touch. [TheFloristShop.com](http://TheFloristShop.com)

**Sheila Santiago** is the director of publishing and digital strategist for the Society of American Florists.





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## AS THE SUPPLY CHAIN ADAPTS, KEEP FRESHNESS GOING

> Demand for fresh flowers is booming, but supply is tight. The downside of that situation is evident: Prices rise and florists can't always get what they want and need.

But is there an upside? Some say that tight supply is causing flowers to move more quickly from wholesaler to retailer, resulting in fresher flowers than before.

Consider the case with open-market flowers that are purchased by wholesale florists and importers for resale to customers. In the past, these were most often held in rotation for a day or more. "What we've found at DVFlora is that we're turning that product very, very quickly," says the wholesale distributor's VP of procurement, Tim Dewey.

Once DVFlora places an order, sales staff can begin offering those flowers to customers before they arrive at a distribution center. And nowadays, florists know they need to get in line early. As a result, says Dewey, a lot of the flowers are presold. "It's not spending much time on the shelf at all," he says. "Overall, that means fresher flowers getting out to our customers and therefore to their consumers."

Floralife director Steve Daum agrees.

"Whenever the market tightens up, everything freshens up, because nothing gets rotated," Daum says.

**"The age of a flower is not measured in days. It is measured in breaths. I can reduce those breaths by lowering the temperature."**

—Steve Daum

That doesn't mean that product is moving faster through the supply chain. If flowers are fresher, it is happening despite pandemic-related delays owing to a shortage of trucking and air freight capacity.

### Things to Remember

As you strategize to keep your supply of flowers coming, is there anything new that you need to do to make sure they are as fresh as possible?



SHUTTERSTOCK/FUSIONSTUDIO

The two main strategies for retail florist buyers still hold: order early (when possible) and be flexible. In today's market, prebooking is your best option, says Dewey, to assure you get the product you're looking for and it is as fresh as possible.

Keep in mind that buying flowers in advance doesn't guarantee freshness for the end consumer unless you know you have a market waiting for them. "Yes, you end up with a more consistent product, but you need to know that you can sell it," says Daum. "If you reduce the rotation earlier in the chain only to hold it longer in your world, that doesn't bring you any benefit."

Remember, too, that when it comes to flower freshness, the most important factor is not how many days that flower has been held in rotation, but how consistently it has been kept in the cold chain (with a few exceptions).

"The age of a flower is not measured in days," Daum explains. "It is measured in breaths — in the respiration rate, the number of breaths that the flower takes over its lifetime. I can reduce those breaths by lowering the temperature."

Even when you preorder, in today's market, buyers must be prepared for substitutions. The challenge there is that varieties differ, not just in their visual characteristics, but in how well they tolerate the rigors of shipping.

"If your supplier offers you a substitute for your favorite white rose, you need to be aware of how that substitute performs, not just how it looks," Daum says.

The best solution? Give your suppliers a second and third choice in case your first is not available, so they can look specifically for those varieties.

And as always, an essential key to assuring freshness is knowing how well your suppliers, all along the chain, adhere to best practices with the cold chain and other freshness protocols. One thing Daum is seeing more of today is overpacking. With less cargo space available for flowers, and freight costs rising, it's tempting to growers to throw one more bunch into the box.

"But what does that do to the quality of the 20 bunches that are already in there?" he asks. "It reduces air circulation and increases ethylene exposure and fungal and bacterial growth" — any of which can eliminate the savings represented by adding that bunch to the box.

Going forward, the supply chain will continue to adapt — and change. What doesn't change? Cut-flower biology, and the need to find trustworthy partners in the chain. 🌸

**Bruce Wright is a contributing writer to Floral Management.**



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