

floral management

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THE FLORAL BUSINESS AUTHORITY

SEPTEMBER 2018 | VOLUME 35 | NUMBER 6



new growth

Meet a few of the
floral industry's
up-and-comers



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MASSIMILIANO ALESSANDRO & LILKAR



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THERE'S NOTHING HOLDING YOU BACK

>When I started my career search so many years ago, I really didn't know what I wanted from this life. Like many young people, I was floating along and searching for the "perfect job" that paid the bills and made me feel good.

As a creative, it's not a coincidence that I landed in the floral industry right out of college. I knew someday I would become a floral designer and produce gorgeous weddings featured in all the big magazines. After two years of answering phones and sending orders, I was anxious to finally design, so I asked my employer to move me to the design floor. To my surprise, he told me to put my design dreams to rest. He said I was better suited taking orders by phone.

I quit that day. Although I didn't know what I would do, or how I would do it, I believed in myself and my ability to do more.

In fact, it would take three years, but I eventually opened a beautiful boutique designing weddings in Central Florida. Early on we produced hundreds of weddings in our market and became a leader in beautiful flowers and design. Yet I still found myself unfulfilled. As most owners know, having a business has challenges, and I wasn't prepared for many of them. I spent hours tinkering with numbers, processes and procedures. It was a struggle. I knew that there had to be a better way.

What I didn't realize was that all that tinkering was preparing me for my next step — and my next career, as the creator of a software platform that helps florists and designers streamline proposals, simplify payment processing and make every design more profitable.

There was a better way, but first I had to build it.

I thought about my big idea day and night, but for a long time, I pushed it down. I doubted myself. I waited for a big national company to come up with the idea themselves. After a few years, I decided it was time for me to act.

I heard no again — a lot. Even close family tried to deter me: "How can you do that?" "What do you know about technology?" Some people said my dream was too big, but I knew I had to try.

So, I did what I do best. I got to work.

While my floral design company was producing hundreds of events, I quietly planned and created after hours. I arranged meetings with developers and business experts. I took university courses, read business books, and even pitched my ideas in venture capital competitions (and won!). When I would introduce myself, I wouldn't say, "I'm a wedding florist." I'd say, "I'm a software developer for the floral industry."

One afternoon I was printing presentations and portfolios when I bumped into a former colleague. "I can't believe you're *still* working on this idea," they exclaimed. I could have let the comment defeat me. Instead, it fueled me. "Yes, I am!" I exclaimed.

When you want to achieve something big, you must believe in yourself first.

After years of risk-taking toward this wild idea, I'm so proud to be the CEO of Details Flowers Software. Today, we help many of the world's most talented florists achieve more with software that started with a dream, my dream. It's been a long journey filled with ups and downs, a lot of yes and no moments, defeats, joys and accomplishments.

The floral industry is a challenging one. Whichever segment you're working in, when you have a new idea, you're going to hear "no" a lot. But this is also an industry that's always changing, and we need those new ideas — your new ideas — to help us all thrive.

I'm proud to be part of this industry and proud to share in its entrepreneurial spirit. If I could offer any advice to other aspiring entrepreneurs, it would be this: Never give up. When your dreams may seem audacious or impossible, and no one believes in them, remember you are enough. You can do it. Dream bigger. 🌸

Corrine Heck is the founder and CEO of Details Flowers Software, which launched in 2015.
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What Inspires Us

> Say the word “Millennials” to a group of Gen X or Baby Boomer managers, and you may get some eyerolls. Kids these days! They want everything fast. They’re constantly on their phones. They stick with a job for *maybe* a year. They need hand-holding and praise. Meanwhile, say “floral industry” to Millennials, and you could get something worse than an eyeroll: a blank stare. There’s an entire industry for... *flowers*?

The trouble on both sides includes misperceptions, dated stereotypes and too little communication. Millennials are so much more than their phones and their everyone-gets-a-trophy childhoods. They’re efficient workers. Out-of-the-box thinkers. They’re obsessed with houseplants and succulents! And, while the floral industry depends on gorgeous flowers, plants and foliage, we’re also more than our unforgettable product. We’re a complex ecosystem that needs state-of-the-art technology, cutting edge marketing, innovative business practices and — most important — great people. Risk-takers. Entrepreneurs. The kinds of leaders that have always made our industry strong from one generation to the next.

As contributing writer (and long-time retailer) Manny Gonzales lays out in his Growth column, **p. 18**, Millennials want to be part of something bigger than themselves. They want to feel connected to people and the planet. They like cash (who doesn’t?), but it’s not their driving factor. In other words, the floral industry and Millennials have much in common. Why aren’t we attracting more young workers? This month, contributor Bruce Wright details the impressive efforts of Seed Your Future, **p. 30**, a nonprofit that’s looking into that question, and so many others, as it seeks to help the industry expand its pipeline of leaders. Many of the group’s findings point to the importance of outreach and education. As Anna Ball, co-chair of Seed Your Future and president and CEO of Ball Horticultural Company, told Bruce, “people don’t know that horticulture jobs can involve art, design, technology and science.”

Many young professionals in their 20s and 30s, of course, have already started on their paths within the industry, as senior contributing editor Katie Hendrick Vincent and contributing writer Julie Phillips Randles detail in our



cover story on **p. 22**. From California college kids who traveled to Alaska to learn about peonies to a young researcher who plans to study flower scent and undergrads who surprise classmates with free plants to young professionals finding their own way through trial, error and constant learning, the story reflects just how much our industry offers to next gen members who are ready to take on new challenges — and why it’s so important for all of us, across generations, to look for opportunities to mentor, collaborate and grow together. 🌿

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FLOWER SCHOOL DAYS

Former SAF president and American Floral Endowment research coordinator, Terril Nell, Ph.D., AAF, wrapped up a five-part series on extending flower life and maintaining flower quality in the August issue. Review each article (and share them with your team!) at safnow.org/moreonline



SEO MADE EASY

Dive into on-page SEO with the latest video from SAF’s “Your Online Brand” series. Learn about all of the HTML components that influence a web page’s SEO, including how to identify and troubleshoot on-page SEO errors. safnow.org/TechTips



FRIENDLY FACES

Does networking make you nervous? Calm your fears by checking out the list of attendees who’ve registered for SAF Palm Springs 2018. At press time, close to 300 were registered — even more by the time you read this issue. Click on “Look who’s registered” at safnow.org/annual-convention.



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Economic Worries

➤ In the July 18 issue of SAF's Wednesday E-Brief newsletter, Charlie Hall, Ph.D., professor and the Ellison Chair in the Department of Horticultural Sciences at Texas A&M University, said the effects of new tariffs are "not going to be pretty" and warned of reduced consumer spending. Read that story — and stay updated on breaking news between issues of *Floral Management* — at safnow.org/news.

I think we'd all be fools not to heed Professor Hall's warnings. I would take this a step further and say that Charles Hall's predictions will be exacerbated by our broken immigration policies and practices. It's difficult enough that agricultural sectors are challenged by limited access to seasonal farmhands, but this problem exists across the economy — just ask crab fisheries around the Chesapeake, light manufacturers in the Northwest or construction companies just about anywhere. If an employer can't find the right workers, it doesn't matter how many customers or clients you have.



SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/AFRICA STUDIO

This administration and Congress seem to have all slept through the lecture in Econ 101 about how "People are the fundamental drivers for any economy and the growth of that economy." People are both workers and consumers and they need access to affordable housing, good wages, schools for their children, health care, etc. Flowers, as Hall points out, are not necessities. We can focus on "small ball" factors in the floral industry, get them all right and still lose because the overall economy tanks. We need to work toward a broad, robust economy, while preparing for challenging times if the overall economy falters. 🌱

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BUSINESS ADVICE, DESIGN INSPO AND CONNECTIONS AWAIT IN PALM SPRINGS

➤ The wait is nearly over for hundreds of floral business professionals headed to SAF Palm Springs 2018, the Society of American Florists 134th annual convention, Sept. 12-15 in Rancho Mirage, California, an event featuring more than 50 educational sessions, 20 networking activities and beloved programs, including the Supplier Expo, Outstanding Varieties Competition, the 50th Annual Sylvia Cup Design Competition and the Premier Products Showcase.

"I'm excited for the entire experience," said first-time attendee Zsuzsana Hutchinson of Flowers by Zsuzsana in Hillsboro, Oregon. "I'm looking forward to learning new techniques and design styles, I think the education will be priceless, and it's always fun to see new products."

Sue Kendall of Kendall's Flowers in Chickasha, Oklahoma, is eager to participate in her second convention. "I loved the last one — it was the best educational event I've attended," she said. She's especially excited for the hands-on workshop with Kevin Ylvisaker, AIFD, PFCI, CAFA, where she'll learn some easy, showstopping designs to debut this holiday season.

Competing in the Sylvia Cup, taking in the beauty during the Field to Vase

networking dinner and getting inducted into Professional Floral Communicators — International top the most anticipated moments for first-timer Adam Havrilla, AIFD, PFCI, ICPF, of Artistic Blooms in Chicago. "I'm going to take in all there is to offer," he said.

First-time registrant Amra Kolasinac of Violet and Scent in Houston, Texas, is struggling to pick which sessions she'll

attend. "Design, sales, human resources, Internet technology — all these topics are valuable for my business. I wish I could clone myself so I could hit them all." Additionally, she plans to pick up some solid ideas from her peers in between formal educational programs. "I think it will be like school — some things you learn in the classroom, others in the hallways."



PUMPED UP "Design, sales, human resources, Internet technology — all these topics are valuable for my business," said Amra Kolasinac of Violet and Scent in Houston, Texas, about the educational lineup at SAF Palm Springs 2018. "I wish I could clone myself so I could hit them all."

CAN'T SWING FOUR DAYS AT CONVENTION? TRY 1-DAY IN PORTLAND

➤ Three weeks after SAF Palm Springs 2018, the association takes its 1-Day Profit Blast to Portland, Oregon, on Sunday, Oct. 7. Sponsored by Frank Adams Wholesale Florist, the 1-Day



CAMARADERIE Franny Makos of Coleman Floral & Greenhouses in Coleman, Wisconsin, and Lugene Olson of Hummingbird Floral & Gifts in Shoreview, Minnesota, inspect design mechanics together during SAF's 1-Day Profit Blast in Green Bay.

Profit Blast features four speakers from the 134th Annual Convention stage:

- Derek C. Woodruff, AIFD, CF, PFCI, owner of the Floral Underground in Traverse City, Michigan, presents "M3: Money Making Mechanics"
- Derrick Myers, CPA, CFP, PFCI, president of Crockett, Myers & Associates, Inc., leads "Treasure Hunt: Finding Your Hidden Profits"
- Tim Huckabee, president of FloralStrategies, LLC, offers "Smart Selling"
- Crystal Vilkaitis, owner of the Social Edge, reveals "What's Up (and Coming) with Social Media"

Portland marks the fourth 1-Day Profit Blast for SAF in 2018. Green Bay was the third stop with 94 industry

members gathering in mid-July. "It was wonderful to spend time with other shop owners and designers, and hear that we are all facing the same struggles day to day — and yet we all love it," said Lugene Olson of Hummingbird Floral & Gifts in Shoreview, Minnesota. "I came away with at least three solid ideas to improve my shop's profitability."

Paige Glidden of BloomNet echoed the sentiment about the Green Bay event, which was sponsored by the Bill Doran Company. "Not only was the material covered in the sessions relevant and engaging, but the sense of community and camaraderie among the retail florists, the sponsors, the speakers and the exhibitors was really invaluable."

Get details at safnow.org/1-day-profit-blast.

GROWERS, WHOLESALERS AND RETAILERS PREP FOR PETAL IT FORWARD

➤ Each sector of the floral industry has a role to play in this year's Petal It Forward campaign on Oct. 24. Whether joining the feel-good effort for the first time or repeating past successes, companies from coast to coast plan to do their part to spread the message that flowers beget happiness.

"I love that our industry sets aside a day to spread love through flowers," said Robyn Peterka of Frank Adams Wholesale Florist in Portland, Oregon. "The growers donate, the wholesaler distributes and the retailers and studio florists take time to make bouquets and hand them out — all to demonstrate the amazing feeling of giving and receiving flowers."

Vaughan's Horticulture of Naperville, Illinois, plans to participate in Petal It

Forward for the first time, "heading out of the office to hand out as many bouquets to as many people as possible," said customer service rep Edward Niebur. "The impact you can make on people or the role it can play in the global community is very meaningful."

Vaughan's and its distributor, McHutchison in Wayne, New Jersey, will coordinate with breeder Dümme Orange North America, based in Columbus, Ohio, which acquired the companies last fall. Niebur cited Dümme's motto, "uniting the world through the language of flowers," which aligns with Petal It Forward's purpose.

Arizona Family Florist will hand out pairs of bouquets in its shop to attract customers in what is not generally a



BIG NEWS Resendiz Brothers Protea Growers in Fallbrook, California, handed out protea bouquets at a local restaurant during last year's Petal It Forward, and scored coverage on "California Bountiful," a weekly television program produced by the California Farm Bureau Federation.

"pedestrian-centric" city, said Eileen Watters, the company's marketing and public relations director. Last year, AFF gave away 500 bouquets.

"People like the idea of 'paying it forward' by giving a bunch of flowers to an unsuspecting someone," Watters said. She likes the timing of the event, as it builds floral awareness going into the busy holiday season. Overall, the campaign strengthens customer loyalty and leads to potential future business opportunities, she said.

Many of the most successful Petal It Forward events worked because of collaboration among growers, wholesalers and retailers. Participants plan to continue that model, drawing on the strength of long-standing, positive relationships.

Wholesale florist Bill Doran Company, which supplies retailers in 18 states, also championed the effort, persuading nearly 270 clients to hold their own event, and notifying them of discounted product in a flyer: "Can you imagine having the ability to reach 100 potential customers and advertise your business for as little as \$100?"

SAF is compiling a list of local Petal It Forward events to show national media that this event is happening all over the country on Oct. 24. See where events are happening at safnow.org/piflist. Get your event listed by completing the Participation Form at safnow.org/PIFform. 🌱

Katie Hendrick Vincent is the senior contributing editor of *Floral Management*. kvincent@safnow.org

OUTFIT YOUR PETAL IT FORWARD FLOWERS AND TEAM

➤ If you haven't already, it's time to create and order Petal It Forward logo materials for your Oct. 24 event. SAF provides members with customizable templates for T-shirts and flower cards as well as other resources and advice at safnow.org/petalitforward. Take the templates to a printer for customization and ordering.

SAMPLE LAYOUT Attach the Petal It Forward cards or stickers to the bouquets, which have instructions for recipients to share their experience. This sample layout shows how you can customize your card with your social media channels.



Science proves flowers make people happy. If these did the trick, show us at **#petalitforward**

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DRESS THE PART Wearing T-shirts in your shop's signature colors or lime green, fluorescent pink, or neon orange will make your "Happiness Ambassadors" stand out during your Petal It Forward event — like Jenny Behlings, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, SDCF, owner of Jenny's Floral in Custer, South Dakota, pictured on the right with her team of Happiness Ambassadors.

snapshot





STOCK UP In the past year, Gang implemented a new rule for her window displays: only feature merchandise that has backstock. With this new strategy, staff can easily access a duplicate wreath (or cornucopia) without having to first dismantle and restock the display.

CURB APPEAL A chalkboard in her window display advertises upcoming in-store events, including weekly workshops. Gang said the simple, welcoming sign often draws in walk-in customers.

FOOT TRAFFIC-STOPPING WINDOWS

➤ Rachel Gang, owner of Helen Olivia Flowers in Alexandria, Virginia, strategically overhauls her retail displays every three months or so, coordinating the moves to occur just a few weeks before major holidays and during slow months so as not to interfere with busy foot traffic. The shop is located in Alexandria's bustling Old Town neighborhood, so Helen Olivia's window displays matter: Potential customers walk by the shop all day. During the last week of August, Gang hires high school students on summer vacation to install wreaths, cornucopias and other autumn-themed props. Those seasonal helpers "have been a godsend," Gang said, noting that she also brings in high school students to help dismantle her intricate vignettes. 🌿

Mackenzie Nichols is a contributing writer for *Floral Management*.
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No. 8

This is the eighth in a 10-part series aimed at empowering Floral Management readers to build a foundation month by month, sale by sale, for higher sales, more confident employees and happier customers.

NEXT-LEVEL SALES SKILLS TO MASTER

> As we enter the autumn and begin preparing for the holiday season, it's time to turn up the heat and cover some more advanced sales and customer service techniques that have proven successful in shops of all sizes. Here are my three favorite "next-level" concepts to share with your staff.

Nix the Nice

Customers regularly ask, "Is this design going to look nice?" Please understand that they are *not* questioning whether your shop is going to use the freshest flowers or create a lovely design. If they were truly worried about those factors, they wouldn't be ordering from you in the first place! So, don't get defensive.



SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/DRAGANA GORDIC

Instead, discuss with your staff what customers are *really* asking — albeit in a veiled way — when they pose the "nice question," namely: "Am I spending enough?" The best way to answer their real question is delivered in two parts. First, say, "Yes, that will be beautiful!" Doing so confirms your ability. Then follow up with, "To make more of a splash or a statement, you can spend another \$X to \$Y dollars for a fuller look." That second statement addresses their unspoken concern about money — and, of course, gives them the opportunity to spend more.

Find New Celebrations

As salespeople, we tend to be far too conservative when selling, often using our own spending patterns as a guide to what customers should/would spend. That thinking needs to change. Customers show us all the time online that given the chance to spend more, they will.

Here is my easy guide to help your team better identify and respond to those opportunities. Keep an ear tuned to customers sending flowers for ANY type of celebration: new baby, wedding anniversary, promotion, etc. Then, automatically start those sales at the larger size and bigger price points. Trust me, you will close many more big-ticket sales this way. Plus, you'll educate customers on the services you offer and maybe even inspire them to buy flowers for new events, beyond birthdays and holidays. Remember, people can't buy what you don't offer.

Leverage the Card Message

The card message provides incredibly valuable insight into what is motivating the customer to shop and how to price the most appropriate design for their needs. Talk to your employees about *always* doing two things upon taking the greeting: comment and leverage.

Once the customer has shared the card message, *make a comment* relevant to the situation, thereby showing the customer that you are involved and paying attention and expressing empathy. For example, I use simple one-liners like, "You must be so proud" and "What a great reason for sending flowers" or "Congratulations on your grandchild!" When a smart salesperson pays attention to the occasion, relationship between the sender and recipient, and the number of names on the card, he or she can leverage that data to sell higher. For example: "A great way to celebrate your parents' wedding anniversary is with one of our large designs" or "Since these get-well flowers are coming from the entire marketing department, I suggest sending one of our *large* arrangements, priced at..." Customers truly appreciate this extra, personalized touch — and they spend accordingly! 🌸

Tim Huckabee, FSC, is the president of **FloralStrategies**, which provides customer service, sales and POS system training to retail and wholesale florists.
tim@floralstrategies.com



COMING NEXT ISSUE:

Your holiday planning meeting outline and setting sales goals for your team.



"As salespeople, we tend to be far too conservative when selling, often using our own spending patterns as a guide to what customers should/would spend. That thinking needs to change."



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EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

DENIZE ZAMBRANA
Processor
Helen Olivia Flowers
Alexandria, Virginia

➤ Twelve years ago, Denize Zambrana switched career paths from her job as a chef to join the team at Helen Olivia. The change gave her more consistent hours and the ability to spend more time after work with her kids. Today, Zambrana prioritizes two things on the job: efficiency and beauty. When greenening vases, she focuses on accentuating the shape and originality of each container — and when boxes come in, she moves to get the product to designers, fast. Inspired most by her mother, who worked tirelessly in her herb garden, Zambrana said she remains enchanted by flowers and horticulture, and tries to share her love daily with Helen Olivia customers. (See pictures of Helen Olivia on p. 12.)

My processing tip:

"Process the delicate flowers first, and then move on to the harder stems. When lots of boxes come in from the wholesalers, my goal is to finish processing quickly to get the flowers in water that the designers will need first. When we get so many boxes at once, that's a

challenging goal. Each flower is different, so it's important to work quickly *and* carefully."

What I like best about my job:

"Making green-ups, creating the perfect shape for each different vase. I enjoy keeping the flowers organized and arranging the display for customers. It's amazing how many kinds of flowers we have, and it's nice to make the display so the customer can see all the flowers and imagine the possibilities for an arrangement."

My favorite processing tools:

"I prefer clippers to the flower chopper because each type of flower has a different stem — softer or harder — and the chopper cuts them all the same way. With softer flowers, cutting with clippers can extend the life of the flower — and that's added value for our customers." 🌿

Mackenzie Nichols is a contributing writer for **Floral Management**. fmeditor@safnow.org



PRACTICAL HR

A Place for All Ages

I once facilitated a session on multigenerational workplace dynamics at a convention where the keynote speaker had played a lead role in the Apollo 11 mission. He mentioned something that stuck with me: The average employee in mission control back then was about 26. The people charged with bringing Apollo 11 back safely were the ages of our current Generation Z. It was eye-opening.

You may be thinking: A 26-year-old in 1969 is different from a 26-year-old in 2018. Fair. Twentysomethings today have been raised by helicopter parents — they got accolades and trophies growing up and not that many boundaries. I hear that from Boomers a lot: This generation is nothing like mine. But with Boomers retiring and Gen X too small to fill the void, Gen Y and Gen Z are our available workforce. So, how can you help them succeed?

One way is to train them in crucial business skills they never learned elsewhere. (How do you interact in a meeting? How do you get your boss's attention in a positive way?) The other is to listen. This generation is smart — they care about society and the environment and want a sense of connection. Don't shut down ideas just because you've tried them before. Stay open-minded.

Glenna Hecht, SPHR, is a speaker, trainer, consultant and author. Follow her HR blog at glennahecht.com. Glenna@glennahecht.com

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HOW TO CATCH — AND KEEP — MILLENNIALS

> Millennials are hard-working, creative, engaged, dedicated people. Well, some are. Others are just mediocre. A few are real slackers. In other words: They're like every other generation. Surprise, surprise.

Millennials do seem different in some ways. Their colorful hair, piercings, tattoos and love of \$12 craft beer separate them from the Happy Days generation. Another difference? Their career paths. Folks coming of age in the 1950s, '60s and '70s worked at the same company for 25 years, then retired with a pension. In the '80s and '90s, people chained themselves to a desk and phone for 60-plus hours a week. The 2000s brought the tech age — folks going to work in tennis shoes, then coming home to work from their phones and tablets.

Now, their children are interviewing for our job openings. They're looking for more than, well, just work. Millennials expect an enriching career that touches people; they want money, a flexible work schedule, and a sense of individuality. They want a sense of accomplishment, security and opportunity. In that respect, the floral industry is in a good position: The blue suit, number-crunching, workaholic middle manager was never our model employee.

Want to attract and keep these workers? Here are some tips I've picked up:

Relax outdated rules. At the risk of sounding like *my dad*, I like when a clean-cut person shows up for an interview. But times change. It's time to chill on the tattoo/piercing/hair color rules. I still draw the line on nose piercings and some

tatts because we have a conservative, Southern customer base in Charleston, South Carolina, but in general I emphasize neat and clean. When they're on a hotel delivery or wedding setup, their look needs to reflect positively on our business. They get and respect that.

"Millennials expect an enriching career that touches people; they want money, a flexible work schedule, and a sense of individuality."

Let them run. A lot has been written about Millennials and their helicopter, micromanaging parents, but I've found that Millennials appreciate some freedom. Tell your Millennial what your goals are, then allow them to create their path. Guide, monitor, advise — but let them run. They've spent their lives sharing information, communicating, learning and creating. They need your wisdom and feedback — but don't be surprised when they show you new ways of doing things.

Reward their efficiency. A good Millennial is measured by their effectiveness, not the hours worked. They've seen folks become successful by being smart and driven, not just punching a clock. If they can do their job in five hours, not eight, why not? Create incentive plans that pay them for results, not hours worked. It won't cost more, and it will attract top shelf talent.

Be flexible. With smartphones and social media, the Next Gens are always connected. One of our designers works from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. She completes

orders, fills the cooler, and takes off. If we get a complicated order in for the next day, we'll text her a picture of the order so she's prepared. This schedule works well and is important to her. Sure, we need customer service coverage and a design schedule, but don't get locked in to 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. just because that's how a steel mill ran 80 years ago.

Show appreciation. We can't just throw money at people, but appreciation is free and valuable. Acknowledge contributions. Help Millennials in their other endeavors. Mentor, reward, teach and learn. One of our designers works part-time; she's launching a vintage clothing business. Another creates and sells custom jewelry. One of our drivers is training for a job in the auto industry. By accommodating their passions, we're creating value in their Tiger Lily experience, and keeping great folks on staff. Instead of worrying that their interests will draw them away from our shop, my wife, Clara, and I help them create goals and manage margins for their new businesses. We call future employers and customers on their behalf. We offer our parking lot as a location for pop-up events for their crafts. As experienced small business folks, we have contacts, resources and experiences to share.

The floral industry has never been a get-rich-quick scheme. It's a challenging, rewarding profession that adds up to more than just dollars and cents. We touch people's lives, we create beauty. Every day presents a different challenge. We're global and local. We support our community. We're artists and entrepreneurs. We rock and we roll. That's exciting to a Millennial looking for a calling. Let's give it to them. 🌿



Manny Gonzales owns Tiger Lily Florist in Charleston, S.C., with his wife, Clara. Among other honors, Tiger Lily has been voted

"Charleston's Best Florist" for 18 consecutive years. Manny and Clara live in Mount Pleasant with their kids, Luke and Ruby. manny@tigerlilyflorist.com



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AU COURANT CHRYSANTHEMUMS

> First cultivated in China during the 15th century BC, chrysanthemums were introduced to the Western world in the mid 1700s, and have long been mainstays in daily floral arrangements and bouquets. Chrysanthemums' ubiquity — particularly at bodegas and big box stores — causes some to dismiss the workhorse flower as humdrum or pedestrian. Not J Schwanke, AAF, AIFD, PFCI. Earlier this summer, the host of "Fun with Flowers and J" on uBloom.com showcased 'Magnum,' an aptly named extra-large white chrysanthemum, during a bridal bouquet demonstration. "A phenomenal flower," he said. "It looks like a dahlia and has an amazing vase life. I've had it last for more than 26 days!" He's equally enchanted with a new line of sphere chrysanthemums (akin to gerrondo gerberas) that shine in vibrant shades of gold, orange and bronze (appearing in a video later this month), as

well as the 'Yin Yang' series of black-centered spray chrysanthemums, available in white, yellow and pink, "with an incredible bloom count and long laterals" (starring in an October show). "That's just the beginning of a long list of new varieties," he said, insisting that chrysanthemums teem with diversity and intrigue.

Here are a few to elevate your designs. 🌼

Katie Hendrick Vincent is the senior contributing editor of *Floral Management*. kvincent@safnow.org



'OLÉ'
Dümmen Orange



'CARMELITO'
Danziger



'TIC TAC ORANGE'
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'SHREK'
Dümmen Orange



'FUZZBALL'
Deliflor



'CANNOLI'
Danziger



'PURPLE DREAM'
Dümmen Orange



'AMAZE'
Dümmen Orange



'HYDRA'
Golden Flowers



'SMASHING'
Golden Flowers

A close-up photograph of a florist's hands and torso. The florist is wearing a light grey button-down shirt and a dark grey apron. They are holding a large, vibrant bouquet of flowers, including several large yellow ranunculus, pink peonies, and pink hydrangeas, along with greenery. The background is a dark, textured surface.

Bright Futures

BY KATIE HENDRICK VINCENT
AND JULIE PHILLIPS RANGLES



The floral industry depends on a strong next generation. Here are some people and programs to watch.



The challenges of building the floral industry's next gen workforce are real: With unemployment low, competition is steep. Educational programs, including design schools, are nowhere near as plentiful as they've been in the past. Other "sexier" industries, which often require fewer hours and less physical labor, are pulling prospects away.

And yet ... As older generations retire or pull back from their roles, the floral industry needs young workers. Millennials (those aged 21 to 36 in 2017) now make up 35 percent of the U.S. labor force, the largest of any demographic, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data. As of 2017, 56 million Millennials were working or looking for work. That's a lot of people — carrying a lot of new ideas and energy.

So, how can the industry attract these motivated younger workers, mentor them and help them find career paths that are challenging, rewarding and long lasting? This month, we went straight to some ambitious, hard-working up-and-comers, some still in school, some starting their careers, to find out what drew them to the world of flowers and plants — and what might keep them here.



GO DEEPER

Read about a high school that's helping students of all abilities learn about flowers through classes and an on-campus shop. Plus check out SAF's research on the benefits of flowers and plants at safnow.org/moreonline.

SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/AFRICA STUDIO

The Co Cetter

Klair McDermott, AIFD, PFCI

Sunshine Bouquet Company
Miami, Florida



At 16, Klair McDermott, AIFD, PFCI, wanted an after-school job and turned to the Stop & Shop down the road from her Middletown, Connecticut home. She was assigned to the floral department, which set in motion a lifelong career. When she enrolled at the University of Connecticut a few years later, she majored in horticulture because of her prior experience with flowers. She complemented her coursework with hands-on training at the New York Botanical Garden, where she took design classes on the weekends.

Upon graduating in 2007, McDermott received a Mosmiller scholarship from the American Floral Endowment, which she used for a summer apprenticeship with Renae Brubaker of Renae's Bouquet in Santa Ynez, California. There, she learned how a retail flower shop operates, advanced her design techniques and picked up West Coast trends.

When the summer ended, McDermott returned to Connecticut, working at Guildford White House Florist while she got her affairs in order to purchase her own shop. In June 2008, she opened Klair's Seafloweers Florist in Essex, Connecticut, a quaint town near Long Island Sound. (That's right, 2008 — the year the economy turned.) She hobbled through the Great Recession and finally sold the shop in January 2010.

"The day I closed, I already had my bags packed," she said.

Her next stop: New York City.

In the Big Apple, McDermott immersed herself in the events industry, working with Floralia Decorators, the in-house floral design company for the Waldorf Astoria, followed by Jes Gordon's Proper Fun before freelancing for several different businesses. The experience acquainted her with a slew of floral industry professionals, NYC venues, design and collaboration styles — "and personalities," she said with a laugh. It was exciting work, but also very tiring.

"I felt like I was aging very quickly," she recalled. "I started thinking about other opportunities in the industry."

Active on LinkedIn, McDermott attracted the attention of a friend of a friend who was hiring for Sunshine Bouquet, a company that grows, designs and supplies flowers for the mass market.

"I wasn't sure if the pitch was real or not, but I agreed to a phone call," she said. In short order, she moved to Miami, Florida, Sunshine's headquarters. "It was a whirlwind first month, just weeks before Mother's Day 2012," she said.

On her third day, McDermott boarded a plane for Colombia to tour Sunshine Bouquet's farms. Then she was off to New Jersey, to see where the company's European and domestic product is consolidated. After that, she made numerous trips to retailers to see how they merchandised Sunshine bouquets and arrangements.

"This business has so many moving parts," she said. "I was intrigued from day one and have been every day since."

Goals: "I'm a big believer in education," said McDermott, who was inducted into the American Institute of Floral Designers this summer and will formally join the ranks of SAF's Professional Floral Communicators-International during SAF Palm Springs 2018. "There's always something new to learn and experience."

—K.H.V.

On a whim, Summer Blanco signed up to hear a horticulture professor speak during her high school's career day.

"She was so passionate talking about all the cool things she's done, including her tenure at Disneyland," Blanco recalled. "After that, I put horticulture down as my desired college major and looked for ways to get involved right away."

The summer before starting college, Blanco volunteered at Rancho Santa Anna Botanic Garden in Clermont, California, where she learned propagation techniques and how to prepare plants for the garden's retail nursery. She admired the staff's dedication and enthusiasm, which she found contagious.

"They were humble, kind people who were willing to show me the ropes," she said. "Other kids were out and about before heading off to college, but I was just planting — and I couldn't have been happier."

In the classroom at Cal Poly, Blanco found more people crazy about plants and flowers. Professors and older students steered her toward new opportunities, both academic and in the field. During her sophomore year, she worked as a cashier at Flowers by Robert Taylor in West Covina, California, picking up basic design skills and taking field trips to the Los Angeles Flower Market.

"That's when I got very into floriculture," she said. "I'm pretty sure every day of that job I said something along the lines of, 'Oh my gosh! What is this? This is beautiful!'"

The experience spurred her to concentrate her studies in botany. Her boss, sensing her curiosity and drive, told Blanco about the American Floral Endowment and its scholarship opportunities for students. The 2017 recipient of the American Florists' Exchange Scholarship, Blanco spent the past summer at Harvard University, collaborating on a research study about pollen manipulation and flower evolution.

Goals: Blanco plans to pursue a Ph.D. "I'm particularly interested in studying floral scent," she said. "It has a huge impact on consumer preference and understanding it better could benefit the industry."

— K.H.V.

The 22 Researcher

Summer Blanco

California State Polytechnic University
Pomona, California



READY TO LEAD

Once young workers enter the industry, how can you ensure they have the tools to grow? This month at **SAF Palm Springs**, outside experts and floral industry members will share tips on developing this next generation. Can't make it to California? Look for coverage in future SAF publications. Another great resource for young industry members? Join the **SAF Next-Gen Floral Pros Facebook group**. There, you'll find other young professionals from all segments sharing ideas. To join, email SAF's Max Duchaine, mduchaine@safnow.org.



The Plant Evangelists

The Collegiate Plant Initiative
University of Florida, Texas A&M University,
Pennsylvania State University



On Friday, Oct. 13, 2017, students at the University of Florida encountered some incredibly *good* luck. A new student organization, the Collegiate Plant Initiative (CPI), had lined Turlington Plaza, a busy campus corridor, with potted coleus plants — 1,000 of them to be exact — and offered them free to a good home. Delighted students swarmed the swag, snatching up everything in less than six minutes.

The giveaways, known as “plant drops,” occur every few months and serve as viral marketing campaigns for the organization, which aims to generate appreciation for plants, discover which plants in particular people love and encourage students to consider a career in horticulture, explained rising senior Virginia Frazier, CPI’s executive director.

“It’s a mad rush,” Frazier said of the plant drops. “Each one seems to draw a bigger and bigger crowd.”

A group of about 20 students, representing a range of academic backgrounds — from public relations to engineering — connected last year after taking “Plants, Gardening and You” (PGY), a popular 1-credit course taught by David Clark, Ph.D. The students discussed their mutual affection for plants, which — as SAF research has proven — can help reduce stress, increase productivity and improve moods. They also talked about what they could do to spread the plant love to their peers. This led to the formation of CPI in the summer of 2017.

Clark helped the students find supporters, both through the university and industry organizations. The American Floral Endowment sponsored the group, which became a national nonprofit in January and has since spread to Texas A&M University and Pennsylvania State University, providing educational grants and helping to source product for plant drops. The University of Florida’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences funds CPI’s research studies. Currently, the group is analyzing plant preference by gender, age and academic background by showing the roughly 400 students in Clark’s PGY class five bedding plants and asking them to pick their favorite.

“We’re going to develop a predictive model to name the demographic that will like which plant,” Frazier said.

Additionally, CPI maintains a robust list of horticultural leaders offering volunteer positions, internships and part- and full-time jobs.

“We understand that the industry has a deep supply chain,” Frazier said. “And we believe that, regardless of their major, students can find a fulfilling career in this field.”

Partners: Altman Plants, a wholesale nursery in Loxahatchee, Florida; the American Floral Endowment; the Fred C. Gloeckner Foundation, a nonprofit corporation that finances floriculture research; Proven Winners, a brand of flowering plants; and the University of Florida’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.

Goals: Next year’s plans includes 15 plant drops and more collaboration with the American Floral Endowment, replicating its student plant experiments with cut flowers and floral arrangements. The ultimate aspiration? “Become a presence on campuses nationwide,” Frazier said.

—K.H.V.

Fresh out of high school in 2005, Diana Fox got a job at Garden Gate, a retail flower shop in her hometown of Mexico, Missouri. The experience gave her immense satisfaction. She relished the creativity and enjoyed the company of her colleagues. Reluctantly, she stepped away from her “dream job” when she felt she needed a career with better pay and benefits.

“It was not an easy decision,” she said. “My heart was in floristry.”

Consequently, she took a position as a pharmacy technician. The customer service overlap between the two jobs underscored a blatant difference.

“Flower buyers are, generally speaking, happy. It’s their choice to shop there,” she said. “No one comes to the pharmacy counter willingly. They’re there because they feel sick.”

For the better part of a decade, she spent her downtime researching flower schools.

“I wanted to be a florist, but I was still skeptical that I could do it and make a profit,” she said. In pursuit of her passion, she wanted “as much preparation as possible.”

She finally settled on the University of Missouri’s Plant Sciences program, which had curriculum that covered design basics, special events and retail management, a student-run flower shop (Tiger Garden) and a student chapter of the American Institute of Floral Designers (Mizzou SAIFD).

From 2015 to 2017, Fox juggled work responsibilities and her studies, commuting 45 minutes each way from Mexico to Columbia. Time constraints prevented her from working in the school’s retail shop, but she devoured her coursework and became active with Mizzou SAIFD. This summer, she attended AIFD Discover in Washington, D.C., her third annual symposium, where she entered the student design competition and won.

Fox opened her business, The Floral Den in March 2018, concentrating for now on wedding and event design.

At press time, she had just wrapped her first wedding with the help of her mother and husband.

“My biggest accomplishment so far,” she beamed. “I’m looking forward to more.”

Goals: Fox wants to develop a sophisticated brand that will attract the area’s most discerning brides. “My modern style isn’t really something Mexico has seen before.”

—K.H.V.

The Entrepreneur

Diana Fox

The Floral Den
Mexico, Missouri

GROWING THE FUTURE

You may have noticed a theme in this month’s story: A number of the people profiled received support from the American Floral Endowment. That’s no surprise. AFE supports educational efforts focused on attracting young people to the industry and retaining them. Find out more about the group’s scholarship, internship and educational grant opportunities at endowment.org.



The Adventurers

**Matthew Brady, Jason Thaete,
Michelle Froelich, Matthew Elvena**
Scenic Place Peonies
Homer, Alaska

It's not often that something tangible comes from polite dinner conversation, but that's exactly what happened when Alaskan peony farmer Beth Van Sandt met Valerie Mellano, chair of the Plant Science Department at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, at an American Grown Field to Vase Dinner on Van Sandt's farm in July 2017.

As the women chatted, Van Sandt, owner of Scenic Place Peonies in Homer, Alaska, mentioned she was having difficulty finding interns to work on the farm for more than a few weeks. In an aha moment, Mellano suggested a partnership with Cal Poly.

This idea blossomed into reality when four interns, students from the Plant Science Department, arrived in Homer mid-June 2018 with plans to stay into the fall. Through the partnership, the students are getting hands-on experience across the farm's operations, starting with one-on-one training with Van Sandt. They are paid a stipend and receive free room and board.

Matthew Brady, a fourth-year student pondering a future in floriculture or ornamental horticulture, oversees the pack house, which includes supervising grading, de-leafing, flower processing and inventory management. He arrived with experience working in Cal Poly's greenhouses and retail nursery, and he's using his knowledge to help Van Sandt increase efficiency. Brady said the internship gave him a sense of the cut flower industry from a small-farm perspective. And it's supplementing his on-campus farming experience.

"Alaska is a niche environment with a different growing landscape. When we had a week straight of rain and then a week of pure sun, the growth rate was over 50 percent," Brady explained. "You don't see that in California."

Jason Thaete, who graduated from Cal Poly in June with a plant science degree, is tracking data on new peony varieties and managing vegetable production in four high-tunnel greenhouses. He's also been charged with scouting the flowers in the greenhouses for diseases and tracking bloom times. In addition, he set up a drip irrigation system, a skill he learned working on a campus vegetable farm.

"I came to learn about the types of flowers and the style of farm," Thaete explained. "It's one thing to read something in a textbook and another thing to apply it in the real world."

Recent Cal Poly plant science graduate Michelle Froelich is also helping with greenhouse vegetable production and an educational display garden, as well as the main farm. Froelich came to Scenic Place Peonies with vineyard, olive grove and herb farm experience, but was seeking ornamental production know-how.

Matthew Elvena, a fifth-year student, is helping with field maintenance and scouting for flower diseases; he also heads up irrigation on the farm. He's developing a routine for field checks that can be adjusted depending on that day's weather.

"I'm shadowing Beth so I can learn how to run a business," Elvena said. He's gained experience with her grading and irrigation systems and "how to be a 'people person' in order to sell a product" — all skills he hopes to put into practice when he starts a microgreens business after returning to Southern California.

Goals: Putting their knowledge to practical use. Froelich dreams of a career in horticultural therapy. Elvena can imagine starting his own farm, and both Thaete and Brady say their experiences have given them exposure to a career path they might not have recognized before. 🌱

—J.P.R.

Katie Hendrick Vincent is the senior contributing editor of *Floral Management* and **Julie Phillips Randles** is a freelance writer, editor and journalist who writes about agriculture, education and technology. fmeditor@safnow.org



Jason Thaete




Matthew Brady



Matthew Elvena



Michelle Froelich



Floral Design: Araik Galstyan
Photographer: Filip Grbic & Ranko Lazovic
Featured Garden Rose Varieties:
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Keira, Charity and Pink O'Hara



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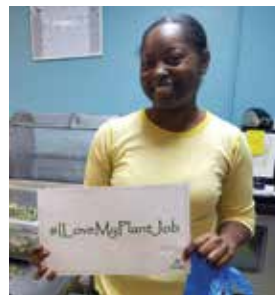
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TELL YOUR STORY Nearly 58,000 new horticulture jobs open up every year — but employers are hard pressed to find qualified candidates. Through online campaigns, strategic partnerships and firsthand accounts from real industry members, Seed Your Future aims to expand the pipeline of future leaders.

MAKING HORTICULTURE COOL



A new movement aims to show young people just how much the floral industry has to offer.

BY BRUCE WRIGHT

For those who work with flowers and plants every day and who know just how rewarding that can be, it's hard to imagine, but it's true: The plants industry has a hiring crisis on its hands.

Yes, we also call that industry "horticulture"— and that's part of the problem. Among the key findings of research conducted by Seed Your Future, a broad-based movement created to respond to the challenge, fewer than half of survey participants between the ages of 18 and 34 even knew what "horticulture" means.

The implications of such unfamiliarity came home to Anna C. Ball, co-chair of Seed Your Future (and president and CEO of the 111-year-old Ball Horticultural Company), when she was visiting a university campus a couple of years ago, talking to horticulture majors about all the things they could do with that degree.

"One young woman came up to me, an undergrad, almost teary-eyed," Ball remembers. "She had been majoring in engineering and wanted to switch to horticulture, but her parents wouldn't let her, because they had never heard of the word."

At a time when college graduates often have a hard time finding jobs that meet their expectations, opportunities in the horticulture industry are plentiful and diverse. On average, nearly 58,000 new horticulture jobs open up every year — but employers are hard pressed to find qualified candidates. Statistics from 2014 suggest that in that year, 39 percent of those positions went unfilled.

And while the shortage of recruits is here already, the real crisis looms in the near future. Enrollment in training and higher-education programs in horticulture is on the decline. Young people, many of whom live with their attention glued to their phones, suffer disproportionately from "plant-blindness"— a widespread affliction. The average American can recognize 1,000 logos but can identify fewer than 10 plants in the local environment.



"We have these growing movements — farm to table, field to vase — that are so wonderful," said Susan E. Yoder, executive director of Seed Your Future. "But so far they do not translate to an awareness of the essential role plants play in our daily lives — and that, by the way, there are some terrific careers available in this field."

Youth Speaks

The Seed Your Future movement was born in 2013, at a meeting of the American Society for Horticultural Science. It quickly grew to embrace a coalition of more than 150 partners, from horticulture companies to nonprofits, schools and youth groups.

With funding from Ball Horticultural Company and Longwood Gardens, among others, the first phase of the

Seed Your Future project was launched: research. Surveys and focus groups confirmed that Americans, and especially young people, not only lack awareness but also entertain misperceptions about jobs in horticulture.

"If you don't know about the diversity of those careers, your only image might be of someone who gets paid to mow the lawn in the middle of the summer, which is a hot, sweaty job," said Ball. "People don't know that horticulture jobs can involve art, design, technology and science — jobs where you're indoors and jobs where you're outdoors. A lot of people we employ get out in the field or walk the greenhouses, but also work behind a desk. Horticulture jobs involve working with plants, but also doing business. There are a lot of good combinations."

The phrase "green-collar jobs" nicely captures the idea of a different path from traditional office work or manual labor, she added. Researchers also confirmed that young people find the term horticulture "weird." (Floriculture, by the way, is considered a discipline of horticulture.)

The kids were quite willing, however, to suggest alternatives. Job descriptions such as "plant specialist" or "plantologist" were among many they threw out.

A common misperception is that horticulture jobs are low-paid across the board. At the same time, Seed Your Future's research revealed that young people are motivated by more than

money. Many have a strong desire to make an impact on the world around them. On that basis, horticulture has urgent appeal. What remains is to make the connection — to show how.

Real People

Communicating the diversity and impact of careers in horticulture is the next phase of the Seed Your Future project — already launched, in April 2018, with a campaign targeted to middle schoolers, called BLOOM!

"We wanted to start by talking to this age group, because we know this is a key time when young people start to think about their choice of career," said Yoder.

At **WeAreBLOOM.org** and on YouTube (at WeAreBLOOM), short videos give a lively picture of horticulture jobs you never knew existed. A young woman (one of only two in major-league baseball history) takes pride in her role as head groundskeeper for the Baltimore Orioles, where she maintains the thick, pattern-mowed sod on the playing field (a separate video explains why real grass makes the game better). The plant keeper at the Jacksonville, Florida Zoo and Gardens grows a special variety of ginger to feed to the gorillas. Other videos relate horticulture jobs to art, fashion, food culture, plant science and design.

"The videos incorporate a lot of the language that kids suggested to us in our research," said Yoder. "The strategy is

SHARE THE LOVE

Anna Ball and Susan E. Yoder will be talking about Seed Your Future this month during SAF Palm Springs 2018. Look for coverage in *Floral Management* and SAF's member newsletters.



THE PLACES YOU'LL GO Seed Your Future aims to communicate the diversity and impact of careers in horticulture through campaigns such as BLOOM!, which is targeted at middle school students.

to start with topics that the kids already care about and show how that is connected to plants."

Mission: Possible

The BLOOM! campaign is only the first step in a five-year plan (and more) spelled out in the Strategic Business Plan published on the Seed Your Future website, **SeedYourFuture.org**.

"We intend to have many different kinds of campaigns," said Yoder. "Our second campaign will be college and university focused. You might have undeclared or unhappy majors. How do you convert them to horticulture?"

Important to the mission of Seed Your Future is that supporters understand it is not a membership-based organization, but a collaborative movement, Yoder explained, meant to embrace industry, educators, nonprofit groups and individuals.

As an example, one of Seed Your Future's prominent partners is Scholastic, the educational publisher and media company, a powerful ally when it comes to getting the word out about horticulture careers to young people, teachers and parents. The plan is for Scholastic to create curricular materials that live on a custom, co-branded microsite, available and promoted to teachers, **Scholastic.com/BLOOM**.

While Scholastic is a multinational company, other partners include local garden clubs and youth groups.

"Part of what we wanted to create from the beginning were actual tools that partners can use," said Yoder. "You will see partner tool kits on our website. They include infographics that people can use today to help promote, not just interest in horticulture careers, but general awareness of plants, the benefits they bring and how important they are to the future." 🌱

Bruce Wright is a freelance writer with more than 30 years' experience covering the floral industry.
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EDITORS' NOTE *Paul Goodman, MBA, CPA, PFCI, and Derrick Myers, CPA, CFP, PFCI, love a good financial management challenge, however big or small. Send your questions to fmeditor@safnow.org, and we'll challenge the experts to tackle them in an upcoming article.*



SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/LIGHTFIELD STUDIOS

The Kids Are All Right

Planning and communication can help ease the transition from one generation to the next.

BY PAUL GOODMAN, MBA, CPA, PFCI

Last month in this space, I covered the groundwork owners need to lay before they even consider handing over their business to the next generation. (If you missed that column, don't worry: You can find it at safnow.org/moreonline.)

This month, we're turning to what you do next: You've made the decision to turn over the business. Your child or children want to take over and they have the skills to handle the business successfully. If you have more than one successor, you've decided who fits what role best based on their individual skill sets. You've created a realistic timeline. Now what?

Start Early

Most long-lasting family businesses invest a significant amount of time outside of the shop preparing future generations. In fact, a successful transition actually starts years before your child knows he or she is interested in the business.

The dinner table is a great place to share much about the business and how to run it. You simply talk about issues concerning the shop: inventory, buying, care and handling, controlling costs, being profitable. They'll also learn about people: hiring, firing, training, employee motivation, characteristics of a good team member.

Another important part of the home education centers on work ethic. Your future leaders need to have ever increasing responsibilities with discipline and rewards.

Of course, all the training in the world won't help if your kids don't want to take over the business. Here, your own attitude matters. Do you only grumble and complain about work? If so, good luck. No kid in their right mind would pursue that path. Instead, be honest but positive about the business. (Enthusiasm, of course, isn't something you or your kids can fake — but if yours is real, your kids might catch it.)

Finally, expose your children to various leadership opportunities through sports, school or church. The more they exercise leadership today, the more comfortable they will be in leadership positions in the future.

Prioritize Experience

While your child is still in school, you can give them practical training through employment in the shop. Doing so will not only begin the formal training process, but it will also be a source of income for them, and a source of labor for you.

Give them as much experience as possible. Move them around from job to job, but start them at the bottom — sweeping floors, hauling trash. Through these experiences, your child will learn all facets of the business. At the same time, they'll earn respect from your other employees. Remember, when an owner's child takes over a business without any experience, he or she is bound to encounter resentment among the staff. The flip side is also true. A considerable amount of respect and goodwill is built as employees see solid work being performed. That's much better for the long-term health of the business: When it's time for you to transition management responsibilities, relationships will already be in place.

Create Opportunities and Networks

Training from a young age at home and in the shop will give you and your successors a solid start. These additional steps and tools will help ensure success:

- 1. Find mentors.** Try to match the successor with a mentor, an older, experienced individual who can pass along insight and experience, as well as encouragement. Choose someone who has demonstrated business and personal success and is respected by the successor.
- 2. Promote education.** Encourage your children (and all of your ambitious, motivated employees) to take advantage of any industry education available. A horticultural or floriculture degree might be a good idea. Attending industry seminars and conferences is a must — they educate and expose young attendees to other industry leaders. Plus, a lot of practical advice is shared at these events.
- 3. Connect through peer groups.** Ideally, your successor will link up with a group of other successors in the industry. Currently, the industry has several informal associations of retailers located in different parts of North America. Members of these groups get together periodically to share their business experiences. These groups have been very helpful to their members. A similar peer group would be a great asset to the successor. While at industry events, help your successor seek out others in similar circumstances and form relationships.
- 4. Rotate responsibility.** Depending on the size of your business, make sure the successor has experience in all facets of the business. Only after experiencing the stresses, strains, and opportunities of each area will the successor have firsthand knowledge with which to learn and manage.
- 5. Place them in management.** Make sure the successor is involved in the

management processes, including cash flow forecasting, strategic planning, marketing planning and operational meetings. The idea is to give experience while the parents are still on the scene to make sure major mistakes are not made.

- 6. Maximize outside experience.** If possible, a successor should work for another company for a period of time. Ideally, this company would be in the same industry. However, employment in any other small business is beneficial. Outside work broadens one's perspective and, in many ways, increases the appreciation for the business being passed on to them.
- 7. Put them in the driver's seat.** The final professional test is to actually make the successor responsible for the bottom line performance of the business. Let them handle buying products, planning advertising and promotion, hiring and firing, directing employees and other management duties. The income statement will tell you how well the business was run.

Take the Long View

Transitioning a family business is certainly not for cowards. The process is a lot like giving birth. You are excited about the prospects the future holds for the next generation. You want your kids to succeed more than you have and to climb to even greater heights. For many people, creating and passing along a successful family business to more than one generation is part of the American Dream.

And the good news is, it can be done, with communication, planning and patience. Provide all the opportunities available to prepare your children professionally. Then, have faith that they will rise to the occasion and your expectations. The odds are high that they will. 🌿

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

> FTD announced this summer that three top executives are leaving their positions as the company reviews “strategic alternatives” for its future — options that could include a sale or merger. In a July 19 press release, FTD revealed that President and CEO John Walden, who was appointed in March 2017, is stepping down, along with Chief Operating Officer Simha Kumar. Executive Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer Jeffrey D. T. Severts also is leaving.



SHAKE-UP FTD President and CEO John Walden stepped down this summer, along with two other executives, in the midst of a broader corporate restructuring.

FTD also announced the launch of a “corporate restructuring and cost savings plan” to “optimize operations, drive efficiency and reduce costs.” Under the plan, the company expects to save \$18 million to \$23 million in annualized costs in 2019, in addition to cutting \$4 million to \$5 million in the second half of this year.

In an email to member florists, Tom Moeller, executive vice president of the company’s florist division, said the changes are intended to drive “productivity and profitability.” He also revealed that, starting this fall, FTD is “looking to shift a significant amount of our ProFlower’s order volume to florist-filled products, leveraging our existing FTD.com assortment. This initiative can drive more order volume and productivity by using a common assortment.”

FTD projected revenues of \$299 million to \$301 million for the three months

ending June 30, compared to \$328.1 million for the same period last year. Sales last year dropped to about \$1 billion, down roughly 7 percent from 2016.

FTD purchased ProFlowers and its sister brands Shari’s Berries and Personal Creations for \$430 million in 2014. Since then, FTD has faced increasing pressure from competitors. The company struggled on Valentine’s Day this year with a ProFlowers campaign aimed at encouraging consumers to “think inside the box.”

“FTD remains a leader in the floral and gifting industry, with widely recognized consumer brands and a global fulfillment network that includes its member florists,” Robert Berglass, chairman of FTD’s board, said in the release. “While the review is ongoing, FTD will remain focused on the execution of its strategic initiatives, in conjunction with the new corporate restructuring and cost savings plan announced today.”

Scott D. Levin, FTD’s executive vice president, general counsel and secretary, will serve as interim president and CEO. Jay Topper, FTD’s chief information officer, will take over Severts’ marketing responsibilities in his new role as executive vice president and chief digital officer. Kumar’s position has been eliminated.

VOLCANIC ACTIVITY THREATENS ORCHID GROWERS

> Some orchid growers in Hawaii have been hard hit by the ongoing volcanic activity that began in May. In the Kapoho region — responsible for roughly 70 percent of Hawaii’s orchid production — several growers have been “overrun” with lava and now face “substantial losses,” said Eric Tanouye, president of the Hawaii Floriculture & Nursery Association.

“The Hawaii Floriculture Nursery Association hosted a meeting to help affected farmers with options on moving forward,” Tanouye said. “This meeting included federal, state, county and private agencies that provided information on programs that are available to help those affected by this disaster.”

Tanouye emphasized that most growers are still very much open for business and dependent on industry support.

“We see some farms in the [hard hit] area that were not affected and are continuing to operate as usual,” he said. “We also see some farmers that were impacted already starting to reboot, so these are encouraging signs.”

Mary Westbrook is the editor in chief of *Floral Management*. mwestbrook@safnow.org

AMERICA’S CUP WINNER



STUFF OF DREAMS Katharina Stuart, AIFD, of Lee’s Florist & Nursery in Berkeley, California (second from right) won the FTD America’s Cup design competition during the American Institute of Floral Designers’ Annual Symposium in Washington, D.C. Rounding out the finalists: Derek Woodruff, AIFD, PFC; Laura Daluga, AIFD; and Samantha Bates, AIFD. Stuart will represent the United States during the FTD World Cup competition at the PHS Philadelphia Flower Show in March 2019.

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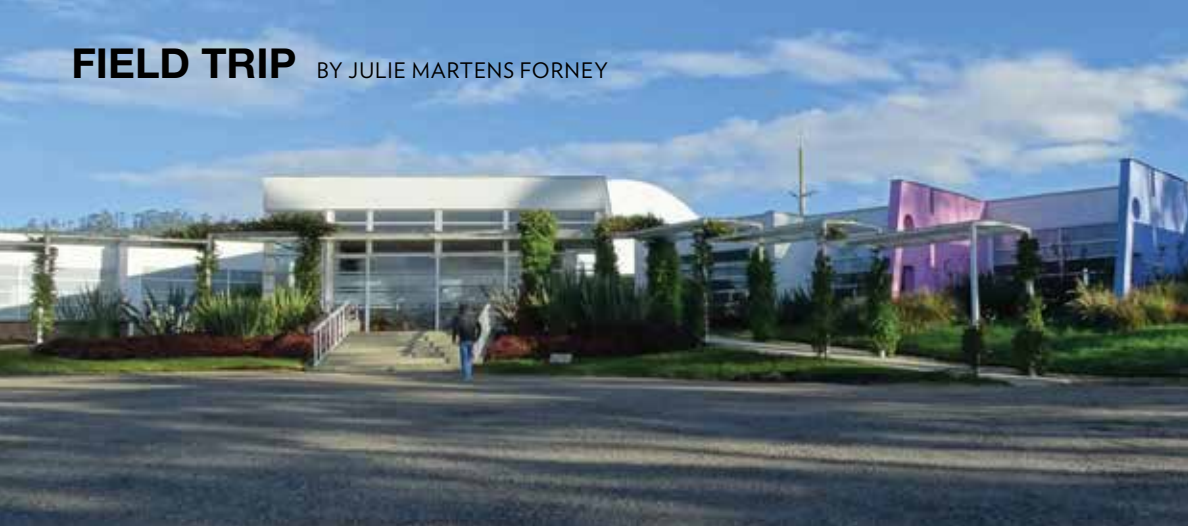


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BACK TO SCHOOL
The Elite Flower helps workers by caring for their children with an on-site daycare and elementary school.

GROWING FLOWERS – AND CHILDREN

➤ When Colombian entrepreneur Maria Fernanda Borrero started The Elite Flower in 1992, she believed that a company is only as strong as its workers. That philosophy continues to drive Elite forward today. One unusual way Elite supports its workers is by providing on-site child care at Marly, a company farm in Facatativá, located about 18 miles outside of Bogotá. The service started in 2000 with a daycare center for 38 babies. Today it's grown to a host of educational programs, including a school for grades pre-K through 5 serving 675 children.

The school is part of the Fernando Borrero Caicedo Foundation, which encompasses a variety of educational and social programs for workers and non-workers in the nearby community. Mario Serrano, director of the foundation, explained that the foundation grew out of owner Maria's concern for the company's workers.

"She is always thinking about how to help out and promote people," he said.

A Typical Day at School

The foundation transports kids to and from school. Children start their school day with a nourishing breakfast, provided free of charge, followed by classes. The school offers all the academic classes the government requires, including science, math, social studies, Spanish and writing skills. The school also teaches English as a second language.

"We're probably the only school where children receive five hours of English every week," said Carlos Vélez, who teaches English. All students from pre-K through fourth grade receive

one hour of English daily. Fifth graders receive 10 hours of English per week, including an everyday activity using Duolingo, an app for learning languages.

Through Skype, fourth graders exchange experiences with students from J. Mason Tomlin Elementary School in Mantua, New Jersey.

"Our students practice their English with the students at that school, and they practice their Spanish with us," Vélez said. The international education program came about through the efforts of Mike Mitchell, rose buyer for DVFlora, and two teachers at the Mantua school, Mike's sister, Devon Ross, and Lisa Licciardello.

"We definitely give a strong emphasis to English because that's where we believe the future is going," Vélez explained. "We don't want our children to limit themselves to their city or their country, we want them to be global citizens."

Morning classes start at 7 a.m. and end about 12:30 p.m., when the children

gather for lunch. Children also receive two snacks over the course of the day. An in-school nutritionist constantly evaluates the children's health and nutrition to ensure that each is receiving a just-right diet.



"Some of these kids live in such a tough situation that their good nutrition is probably due to the foundation," Vélez said. "When they're at home, the fridge is likely empty."

Classes continue after lunch until 2 p.m., when children head to extra-curricular activities, including soccer, taekwondo, choir, orchestra, dance, arts and crafts, and English.

"These activities let the kids break away from the regular curriculum and have fun doing things they love," Vélez said.

The average public school day in Colombia ends around 2 p.m., leaving children unsupervised until parents come home from 4 to 5 p.m. In the impoverished area around Elite Flower's Facatativá Farm, it's not hard for children to find drugs or street life-related trouble when parents are absent. Elite's educa-

tional program helps protect workers' kids by eliminating those vulnerable, unsupervised hours with a school day that runs until 3:30 p.m.

Who Foots the Bill?

Meals, school books and materials, student uniforms, transportation, extra-curricular activities — an average school day adds up to a hefty sum. Elite Flower pays for the lion's share of the foundation school. Some floral clients also contribute, supporting either the school or other programs the foundation offers.

For instance, Whole Foods' Whole Trade program delivers a percentage of sales of Elite Flowers' products back to Elite, and that money helps support the foundation. Floral wholesalers DVFlora and the Bill Doran Company also support the foundation financially.

Reaping Rewards Beyond Measure

In terms of measurable outcomes, "The company itself gets just a little benefit from having these kinds of services," Serrano said. One benefit is that the workers whose children are in the school find it easier to focus on their jobs, knowing their kids are safe.



QUICK TAKE

The company: The Elite Flower

Production: 700 million+ fresh flower stems annually over 1,483 acres of cut flower production

Employees: 9,000 (6,200 at Marly, the Facatativá Farm where school is located)

Employee Benefit: Nursery and K-5 school
EliteFlower.com

Beyond that, Serrano said, "The big benefit really comes from being proud of what we do and seeing how the kids excel in their lives. Like Laura Hernández, who started at the foundation daycare when she was two years old." Today she's pursuing a degree in international finance at La Salle University in Bogotá. She's quick to say that "If I hadn't passed through the foundation, I would not have made the right choices that have enabled me to be where I am today."

An atmosphere of love pervades the foundation school.

"You can really feel that natural love that the foundation has for the children that they are helping," Vélez said. "This is the first foundation I've worked with where there is really no intent to become lucrative. There's nothing but a pure interest in the future of these children." 🌱

Julie Martens Forney is a contributing writer to Floral Management.
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KIDS ON THE MOVE Since 2000, the Elite Flowers' program has grown from a daycare for 38 babies to a school serving 675 children.



YOUR SEO TOOLBOX

➤ Google, the most widely used search engine, has one primary goal in mind when it lists search results: to provide the best user experience possible. This means showing sites in descending order of relevancy.

When Google shows more people what they want to see, they get more users, and thus more ad sales.

Back in my days of working on cars, we had specific tools for different types of repairs. I stored these tools in a rolling cart with sliding drawers for wrenches, screwdrivers, hammers, pliers, etc. Optimizing your business website for Google search involves a similar approach — gathering different tools to get the job done. In this case, though, tools are stored online rather than in a cart.

Google Search Console

We'll start with our first tool: Google Search Console. You use this to monitor the health of your website's SEO.

Even with Google's massive infrastructure, trying to index every website on the Internet is still a gargantuan task. New content is created essentially every second. Google realistically can only index portions of the web. Therefore, for your shop's site to show up in search results, Google bots need to be able to crawl and index your website correctly, free from errors. If it can't index your

site, Google can't include your gorgeous flower arrangements or glowing reviews in its search results page.

Google Search Console gives you insight as to how much of your content exists in Google's search engine database. Use it to identify crawl errors by drilling down under the "not found" tab. Look for website pages that show a "404 page not found error." If the error message says "access denied," look at the reported links. These are likely pages that require a login. To resolve the problem, tell the Google crawler to exclude these pages using your robot.txt.

You can get a snapshot of your SEO optimization efforts by looking at your **total clicks, total impressions, click-through rates, search queries that lead to your website**, and your **average position in search results**. If you're not using Google Search Console yet, I encourage you to sign up immediately for a free account at google.com/webmasters/tools/home.

Screaming Frog

Another great tool to audit your site's pages for issues that negatively affect SEO is Screaming Frog ([screamingfrog.co.uk](https://www.screamingfrog.co.uk)). Screaming Frog is an application that runs on your computer. When you run it, it will crawl your website similarly to what a Google crawler would do. Once

GO DEEPER

Get tips on how to manage online reviews at safnow.org/moreonline.

complete, you will have a report, shown as tables and tabs, making it easy to identify pages on your site that need attention and fix them.

Semrush

How would you like to find out how other local florists' websites are performing against yours with the same keywords? Semrush ([semrush.com](https://www.semrush.com)) lets you in on your competitors' secrets. You can learn how much of their search traffic comes through paid ads, how many sites link back to them, or what their top organic keywords are.

Yoast

If your website uses WordPress, you can use Yoast to help improve SEO. This plugin applies SEO best practices for each of your posts or pages, by providing real-time analysis. It's like having an SEO expert by your side giving you tips to improve your written content until you get the green light, indicating you have met all of Google's SEO requirements.

Google My Business

For your local SEO strategy, reviews create valuable inbound links. As a test, I searched for "best florist in Manassas, VA." Google results started with the florist with the most positive reviews. This reinforces Google's algorithm preference to show the most relevant information. Make sure you set up your business in Google My Business (google.com/business). When you have your Google My Business account set up, you will be able to see reviews as they come up and respond to them.

What other IT challenges are you facing? I'd like to hear from you. You can reach me at jaldeguer@safnow.org or (703) 838-5220. 🌱

Joe Aldeguer is the Society of American Florists' director of IT. jaldeguer@safnow.org



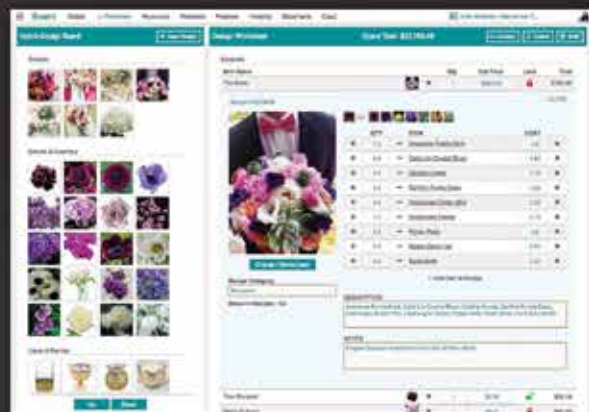


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CHRYSANTHEMUM CHEER

> Designs leaving Allen's Flowers and Plants in San Diego tend to sport a bright and sunny aesthetic — not unlike Southern California itself. To achieve “the look,” lead designer Eva Marques often reaches for chrysanthemums. Not only do these blossoms come in a range of citrus-like shades (lemon, lime, tangerine, grapefruit) that fit within the shop's perky palette, but their impressive size (particularly with spider, football and spray varieties) helps keep costs low and productivity high. “You really don't need many insertions when you use chrysanthemums, because they take up so much space,” she said. Furthermore, she said, their vase life (up to 30 days!) and intriguing texture “definitely appeal to customers.” Here, she shares two of the shop's best sellers. 🌻



LUSH LOOK A trio of foliage — sword fern, lily grass and cedar eucalyptus — gives this simple arrangement a trendy edge. It also incorporates a ton of texture (even the container sports raised dots), which increases perceived value, Marques said. Design time: 10 to 15 minutes. Wholesale costs: \$17. Suggested retail price: \$85.



PETITE PICK-ME-UP Absent fragrant flowers that could aggravate patients with allergies or respiratory issues, this cheerful design is perfect to send to the hospital. Its small size also makes it a great choice for orders headed to an office, as it sits nicely on a desk and is easy for the recipient to transport home. A lone cymbidium orchid gives it a luxurious feel. Design time: 10 minutes or less. Wholesale costs: \$14. Suggested retail price: \$60.

Find complete recipes, along with our recent profile of Allen's, at safnow.org/moreonline.

Katie Hendrick Vincent is the senior contributing editor of *Floral Management*. kvincent@safnow.org



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MADE IN AMERICA



STELLAR STAND

Manufactured in the Midwest, Syndicate Sales' new line of wire easels are designed for maximum weight support and coated with a durable powder finish, perfect for displaying sympathy sprays, wedding signage and other large show-stopping pieces. > Syndicatesales.com



THIRST QUENCHER

Customers will love these American-made water bottles with customizable designs, like this calming Mandala motif. With each sale, the company donates 5 percent of the purchase price to Global Water, an organization that provides water supplies and health-related facilities for impoverished countries. > Lovebottle.com



RUSTIC CHARM

Available in four colors, these terracotta planters resemble the ever-popular Mason jars that customers will relish as a keepsake container. Perfect for garden-style bouquets, these pieces will surely fly off your shelves. > Acheerfulgiver.com



SLEEK AND CHIC

Add some sophistication to designs with the new Paragon and Cinch vases from Smithers-Oasis. With a wide, supportive base and a high neck, this design nicely complements rounded bouquets as well as long, linear bunches of callas, delphiniums or gladiolas. > Oasisfloralproducts.com



SMART STYLE

Made with BPA- and lead-free, weather-resistant, porous materials, these containers promote air root pruning, provide excellent drainage and allow excess heat to escape, producing superior plants. Add Smart Pots to your merchandise to ensure your customers leave with a plant that will grow and prosper. > Bfgsupply.com

Mackenzie Nichols is a contributing writer for *Floral Management*. fmeditor@safnow.org

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H2O Life:
This is the first in a
two-part series on
water quality.

WATER QUALITY AND CUT FLOWER LIFE

> Cut flower processing done from farm to consumer always involves water as a medium to deliver necessary ingredients. The quality of water that you place your cut flowers in has a profound effect on how your flowers are going to perform. Understanding water quality will help you improve the look and performance of your flowers. It's essential knowledge to get the best return on investment from the postharvest care products you use.

Several aspects determine the quality of water: physical properties (mostly water temperature and any particles suspended in water), chemical properties (what other chemicals are dissolved in water) and biological properties (microbes or any other living matter). This article will focus on the chemical properties.

Water pH

The pH scale is a measurement of acidity or alkalinity of water. The pH scale ranges from 0 to 14, with a pH of 7 being neutral, a pH below 7 considered acidic and a pH above 7 considered basic or alkaline. The pH scale is such that a change in 1 pH unit equals a tenfold change in the acidity or basicity. The natural pH of water used for cut flowers could vary from 5.0 to 9.5, depending on the source of water and any other processing it has undergone. The pH of water dictates many chemical reactions, but for cut flowers, the most important implications are the speed of water uptake and the performance of flower food you add to the water. Numerous research studies have shown that cut flowers take up water fastest if the water pH is between 3 and 5. This is acidic water. Almost all cut flower food products contain "acidifiers"

to ensure the water pH is brought down to that pH range for best performance.

Water Alkalinity

The initial pH of your water offers only a limited snapshot of water quality. You also want to know alkalinity, which is also described as the buffering capacity of water. Caused by salts dissolved in water, it is a measurement of resistance of water when an "acidifier," such as flower food, is added to lower the water's pH. Alkalinity is typically measured in parts per million (ppm). The higher the alkalinity, the more resistant the water to a pH change. Typically, water with alkalinity in the range of 60 to 180 ppm works well with flower food.

If the water you use has extremely high alkalinity, you have two choices. Some flower food companies sell specific versions of flower food compatible with extreme alkalinity. Or you can purify water to remove alkalinity (deionization or reverse osmosis system) before processing cut flowers.

Water Hardness

The level of hardness refers to the amount of calcium and magnesium ions in your water (measured in ppm). If your water has high alkalinity, chances are that the water has high hardness too. As with any other living thing, flowers don't do well with very high levels of these chemicals. The most common method of getting rid of hardness in water is to use a water softener. A typical water softening process replaces calcium and magnesium ions with sodium ions. Unfortunately, too much sodium also is not good for cut flowers; therefore, "soft-

ened water" is not recommended for use with cut flowers. There are water softening units that use potassium rather than sodium, which would be better for cut flowers as high potassium levels are less harmful than sodium.

Total Dissolved Solids

The total dissolved solids (TDS) is a measurement of all the dissolved solids in the water (typically measured in ppm). It is essentially the level of salts in the water. Similar to any other living thing, cut flowers cannot handle too much salt. Research has shown having some salt in water is good for cut flower quality, so a healthy balance of salts is the best way to go. There are other specific chemicals, such as iron and fluoride, that can be harmful for specific types of cut flowers at low concentrations, so we need to keep an eye on those too.

How to Measure Water Quality

There are simple test kits available to measure these water quality parameters. Search online or check with a retailer that supplies tools for pool maintenance. If you want a comprehensive analysis, you could send a sample to a lab. Also, some flower food companies will evaluate your water for free and make flower food recommendations. 🌿

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