

SNAPSHOT

Optimize Your Exterior

> For florists, merchandising outdoors is not a new concept. Potted plants and bouquets flow easily and naturally beyond a shop's confines, withstanding the elements and enticing passersby into either a quick impulse purchase or a longer look inside.

But what's different about Boston's Rouvalis Flowers & Gardens is that it doesn't just *have* outdoor displays, it's *known* for outdoor displays. And to owner and creative director Emily Montany, this is an important distinction. "Rouvalis has been in this exact spot since the 1970s; my partner, Sean, and I took over in 2009," she explains. "We're in Beacon Hill, surrounded by brownstones with shiny black shutters. It's a historic neighborhood and an iconic spot."

Both regular clients and new customers stop and stay a while, perusing the sophisticated displays. But that's not all — the exterior is so lush and inviting that people can't help but take photos as well. "We've had people here during their engagement shoots; we've had Instagram influencers come with their cats. We've even hosted fashion shoots and film crews," adds Montany. "Rouvalis has become a real destination. We're in the Instagram era and people are looking for backdrops, so why not give them one?"



OUTDOOR STORE Boston's Rouvalis Flowers & Gardens is known for its outdoor displays.

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— Emily Montany

Here is her pro advice on ramping up your outdoor effectiveness:

- **Embrace Word of Mouth** "Some people take pictures and leave without buying anything, which is fine," contends the store owner. "Our hope is that their posts and tags will entice others to visit. We also encourage everyone to tag their shots here with #rouvalisshopstop, and we repost our favorite every Saturday."
- **Season Heavily** Seasonal content is huge on social media, so it makes sense for displays to celebrate the time of year via color, pattern, and texture. Trends in design — Pantone's color of the year, the rise of rattan — are important to incorporate as well, notes Montany.
- **Be Eventful** Increase your reach with events, like sidewalk sales or themed gatherings. "Before COVID, we held weekly events like Roses and Rosé or Wine and Wildflowers," says the entrepreneur. "We made special arrangements and bouquets befitting the theme, and everyone relaxed and enjoyed the beautiful flowers with a glass of wine in their hand."
- **Layer Up** Montany uses a variety of furniture pieces, racks, baskets, wood boxes, and more to create inviting, multilayered displays. (But don't go so high as to cover up what's showcased in your windows, she warns.) With so much flora on display at once, the designer avoids visual clutter by grouping wares by color and type. This ensures that each finished scheme is eye-catching and enticing, even from a distance. 🌿

TEAM BUILDERS

Arranging a Better Team Environment

TEAMWORK Alison Franchi of Louisiana-based La Petite Gardenia holds floral arranging classes as team-building exercises for her corporate clients.

> As part of its full-service offerings, Louisiana-based La Petite Gardenia works with corporate clients, softening and enlivening their offices with plants and arrangements. One day, owner Alison Franchi had a brainwave. What about taking the process of infusing nature into corporate America one step further with floral arranging classes that double as team-building exercises?

“Everyone loves flowers — we’ve all felt the therapeutic benefits of horticulture,” explains Franchi, who pitched the idea of classes to her first client in 2017. “They agreed, and we started small with a group of 10. Eventually we were holding monthly classes for anywhere from 20 to 80 people. It just took off; it wasn’t anything that I planned.”

Breaking from their workday, coworkers assemble succulent terrariums, arrange mono blooms, create dried flower bouquets, or whatever else Franchi has planned. “We try to choose something that’s unique but still easy, keeping in mind that not everyone has a green thumb,” says the business owner. “The best part is that they can either take the finished product home or leave it at work as something to nurture.”

The arrival of COVID caused Franchi to pivot to remote classes, which she describes as functional but not nearly as effective for team building. She’s glad that in-person activities have resumed once more. In fact, corporations are



SOCIAL SAVVY

Take Story Time Up a Notch



contacting her to schedule floral arranging workshops to kick off the resumption of in-person workdays (and help soften the transition).

Franchi, who graduated with an art history/fine art degree from Pace University and has over a decade's experience teaching floral arranging, is a natural fit for this niche offering. And she loves seeing the benefits firsthand.

"It has such a positive effect on people — it's fun to see them pause the stress to create and collaborate," she says. "You see CEOs sitting down with their assistants, 20-year-olds mixing with 70-year-olds. People walk around and chat with one another. It's the perfect icebreaker. Everyone knows each other a little better by the end of class." 🌿



STRESS RELIEVER Team members get comfortable working together on a creative project while taking a break from workplace stress.

> You've mastered the art of the feed, but how about Stories? According to Instagram's Business Blog, with Stories, "interactivity is key." Here are some tips and tricks to take your Story game to the next level by increasing engagement:

- **Probe the minds of your followers with the Poll sticker.** Ask them which arrangement is their favorite, whether they like big or small bridal bouquets, what birthday gift they prefer, if they like your latest window display, etc. It's the perfect way to conduct informal market research.
- **Use the Questions sticker to find out what your customers want to hear about from you, the floral design expert.** They will appreciate the free advice, and it's a great way to show off your expertise. Pro tip: Save your favorite interactions to a Highlights folder for future reference.
- **Provide daily reflections — share your mood or motivation.** If you don't have time for insights every day, simplify this concept and log your feelings at the start of the work week and the end (if it ever ends).
- **Create a fun challenge for people to accept via their Stories.** Like how many floral prints can they rock in one outfit? Who has the saddest house plant? Share the results!
- **Test your followers' knowledge with the Quiz sticker.** Just ask a multiple-choice question and provide two to four possible answers (versus Poll in which you can list only two options and there is no correct answer). This is a creative way to promote either yourself or your brand — or both. Ask "Jeopardy"-style horticulture questions, see whether anyone knows the backstory behind your business name, or post movie trivia. Everyone loves quizzes! 🌿

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