

THE LEAD-UP TO MOTHER'S DAY

> By the time a florist finishes assembling a Mother's Day bouquet, many of its stems have traveled thousands of miles, passed through countless hands, and been in the works for months — if not years.

Behind every bloom is a complex and time-sensitive supply chain that stretches from breeders and farms to wholesalers and retail shops, all working in sync to get fresh flowers into consumers' hands.

Most of the year, the supply chain operates at a steady pace. The weeks ahead of Mother's Day and Valentine's Day, two of the floral industry's biggest holidays, are the exceptions.

"Due to the huge volumes, there is an extreme amount of planning needed by growers, airlines, trucking companies, freight forwarders, the USDA, customs brokers, importers, and wholesalers," says Tom Alders, owner of Alders Wholesale in New York. "The system is stretched way beyond what regular weekly volumes are, so pre-planning is essential to be able to move the flowers through to the florists efficiently."

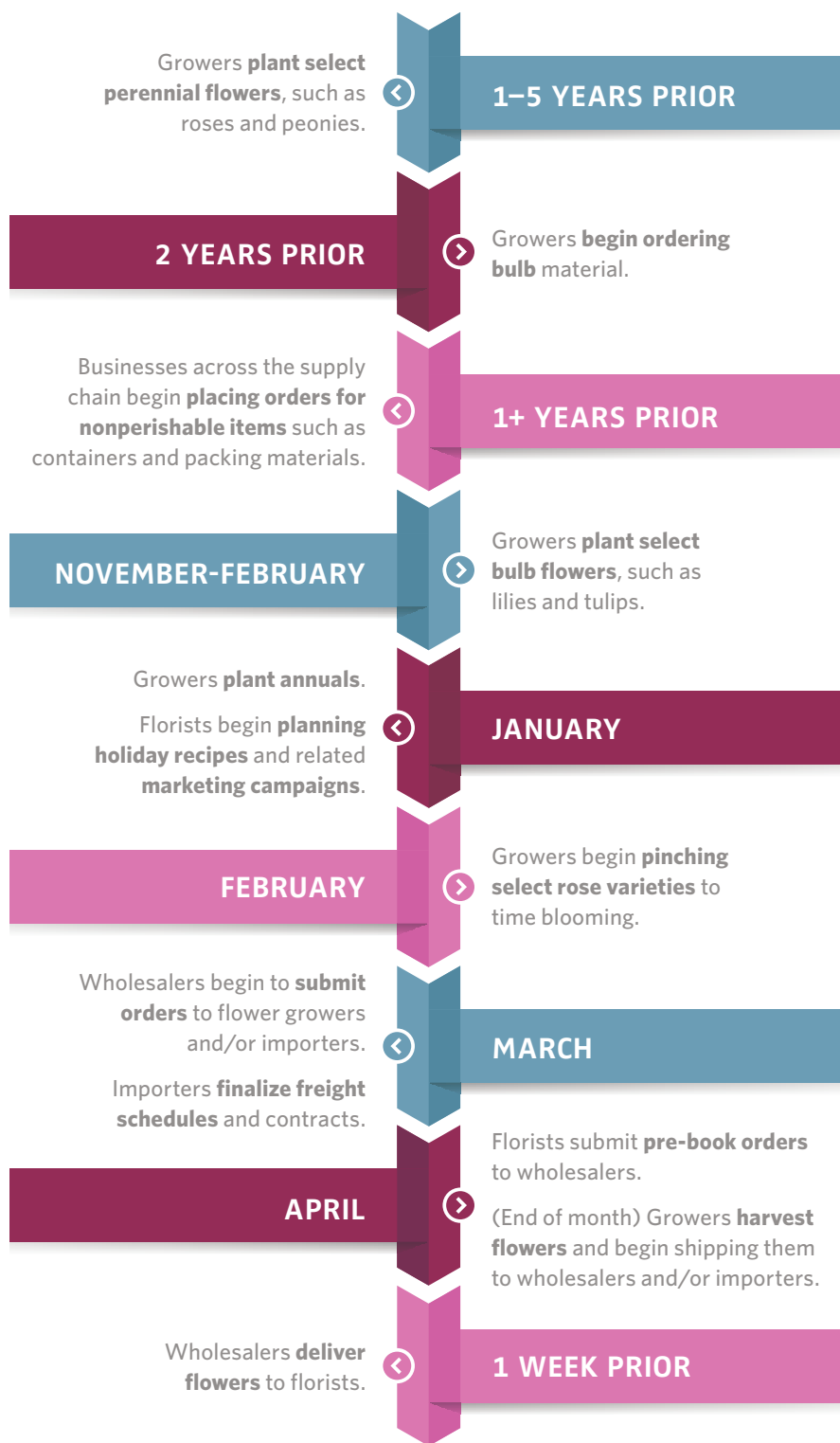
The Association of Flower Importers of America (AFIA) helps support and facilitate the flow, as imports make up about 80% of the flowers sold in the United States. Christine Boldt, AFIA's executive vice president, says the supply chain must scale up for Valentine's Day and Mother's Day to ensure it doesn't buckle under the increased volume.

Importers work with their freight forwarders to make sure they have enough space on the airlines and sea containers to ship from the farms to the importers, she says. Then they need to lease extra trucks and drivers to pick up the flowers from the airlines and ships and deliver to the truck lines, which fan out across the country. Importers also need extra warehouse staff to help process the extra-large volumes.

This timeline illustrates the floral supply chain, showing when key players are making crucial decisions to ensure that fresh flowers and hard goods arrive on time. It underscores why wholesalers push for pre-orders and why florists should think about Mother's Day before Valentine's Day. 🌸

Here's what's happening in the industry in the years, months and weeks leading up to Mother's Day.

Timeframes may vary depending on the business, holiday and weather.



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