

PHOTOS THAT SELL: PART I

> If creating better original product images for your website and social media platforms is one of your New Year's resolutions for 2019, you're probably not alone — and for good reason. We live in a visual world, thanks to Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest and smartphone technology. Customers are looking to local florists for inspiration — and, increasingly, realistic portrayals of the designs they're ordering for their loved ones. Very few florists have access to (or the budget for) a photographer or photo studio; however, thanks to advances in photo technology, and with a little bit of creativity, creating your own custom library of unique images has never been easier.

GO DEEPER

Find out how to build a backdrop for less than \$100 at safnow.org/moreonline.

In this two-part series, I'll walk you through how we approach photos, from design conception to postproduction, at my family's business, Beretania Florist in Honolulu.

Design Smart

Control over your product offering is key to your overall profitability — so, remember to show what you want to sell. Create new photos of products that include flowers you receive in your standing orders. This is also a great opportunity to consult your staff so that you are creating designs that they are confident mass producing. As you know, profitability comes in part from speed. You can increase margins by planning new products that utilize easy-to-access varieties and hard goods that you always have on hand.

While we all love to show our "wow" work, for everyday posts on your website and social media, you'll want to avoid highlighting complicated designs — those that require advanced skill, are

more challenging to design and deliver or can't be mass produced. In addition, you should avoid designs that require you to run out and pick up stock or hard goods.

Backdrops That Deliver

The right backdrop can make or break a photo. That's why I recommend building a dedicated photography shooting and staging area. You don't need a lot of money or space to do that, either.

First, remember that a light tone background will produce the best results. Find a tabletop with wood, wood laminate or stone for modern appeal. At our shop, our tabletop is actually a piece of plywood with peel-and-stick vinyl plank flooring glued to the top — an inexpensive material you can find online or at your local hardware store. I was happy with how the table came out, and even better, the assembly required no tools.

Painted walls work best for a backdrop. I picked up a thin sheet of plywood and painted it gray. My creation mounts easily and photographs well. Don't forget that paint with a matte finish absorbs light and reduces glare, making flowers stand out. Glossy paint or bright white backgrounds will reflect light and may make photography look dated and unflattering.

Avoid curtains, roll paper, muslin fabric, worn-out columns and any roll-down material: Creased folds and wrinkles give photos an unfinished look.

Lighting Photos Right

Lighting is key to beautiful product photography. Natural lighting from a window or door is a plus, but it can be inconsistent. That's why cool, white lighting is a happy medium. A diffused light panel kit — we got ours for less than \$50 — will give you consistent light at any time of day. Make sure your background doesn't reflect your light source. Finally, avoid using a harsh flash, which makes photos look washed out. 🌿

Reece Nakamoto Farinas is a fourth-generation florist with expertise in e-commerce sales and marketing. He works alongside his family at Beretania Florist in Honolulu. reece@beretaniaflorist.com

LOOKING SHARP Photos that compel customers to purchase are composed well and have a simple background.

