

BUILD A SKILLED WORKFORCE FOR YOUR BUSINESS

> Everyone who touches a cut flower affects how long it lasts and how well it performs. Each employee in a retail floral business needs to understand the simple but essential care and handling practices and follow them faithfully.

And during the COVID-19 pandemic, employees need to know how to minimize risks to themselves and customers. As in any business, training is critical. The key elements for *flowers* include processing upon arrival, sanitation, correct use of flower food solutions, and temperature regulation. Key elements for *people* include masking, social distancing and sanitation.

Sanitation

There are steps that prevent the spread of floral diseases such as botrytis and exposure of stems to dirt and bacteria. The following checklist can guide your training program for proper sanitation.

- Use a floral disinfecting cleaner.
- Clean buckets with a brush and cleaner.
- Dump liquid after cleaning.
- Rinse buckets after cleaning if recommended by the manufacturer. Some cleaning products do not require rinsing.
- Clean clippers and knives with a disinfecting spray or by dipping them into the solution.
- Wipe down design tables every 2-3 hours with floral disinfecting sprays.
- Remove old flowers from cooler daily.
- Sweep floors 3-4 times per day.
- Dump garbage outside the building at least twice per day.
- Clean cooler (walls and benches/tables) monthly.

Care and Handling Solutions

Flowers must have water and sugar to live and open. Just placing stems in water is not enough. The water must contain horticultural sugar, a water

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Find a primer on how to thoroughly clean buckets, a recap of the top floral cleaners and more on COVID-19 best practices at [safnow.org/moreonline](https://www.safnow.org/moreonline).



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uptake enhancer, and a buffer to lower pH. These elements are contained in professional flower-food solutions. Homemade solutions do not provide comparable results. Flower foods help to reduce the microbial activity in the water. Unchecked, microbial growth in the water will clog the stems and restrict water uptake. Water must flow from the flower-food solution to the flowers to get sugar into the flowers so they will open. Train your employees to:

- Select appropriate commercial flower-food products; mix the solutions according to directions.
- Re-cut stems, if needed. Some solutions do not require re-cutting.
- Place flowers into cold solutions to reduce microbial growth and accelerate water uptake.
- Use an automatic injector (dosing unit) to mix solutions.
- Use freshly cleaned buckets.
- Use fresh, clean, cold water. Never reuse water.

Temperature Management

Most flowers should be held between 34 and 38 F for best longevity. Tropical flowers should be held between 50 and 55 F, because colder temperatures will cause chilling injury. At these temperatures, flowers reserve sugars, ethylene and ethylene-sensitivity are reduced, and botrytis grows much more slowly. Employees should:

- Set cooler thermostat at 34-38 F (or 50-55 F for tropicals).

- Measure the temperature of the water in a bucket twice a day (9 a.m. and 3 p.m.). The temperature of the water is more stable than air temperature.
- Select an employee to read and record the cooler temperature two times per day.

COVID-19 Best Practices

COVID-19 poses special challenges for the safe operation of every business. For the safety of employees and customers, follow these guidelines from the CDC and other health organizations:

- Ask employees and customers to wear a face mask.
- Keep employees and customers 6 feet apart by rearranging work areas and marking the retail floor area.
- Wash hands frequently. Keep hand sanitizer handy.
- Avoid use of shared tools and materials unless sanitized first.
- Disinfect workspaces regularly.
- Disinfect door handles, cooler door handles, customer service areas, credit card machines, and all other commonly used or touched items at least every two hours.
- Improve ventilation as weather permits by opening windows and doors. 🌬️

Terril A. Nell, Ph.D., AAF, is the research director for the American Floral Endowment, professor emeritus at the University of Florida and past president of SAF.