

LASTING MEMORIES

> In November 2018, actress Mandy Moore floated down an aisle lined with dip-dyed pampas grass and exchanged wedding vows with musician Taylor Goldsmith beneath an arch of 60 bunches of dried baby's breath. Her bohemian-style nuptials illuminated the ethereal texture of dried floral products and helped catapult them to the top of recent design trends.

"Dried products go in and out of strong fashion, but they're really timeless classics," says Jim DelPrince, Ph.D., AIFD, PFCI, horticulture specialist at the Mississippi State University Coastal Research and Experiment Center. "Think, for instance, of Provençal style. A sprig of lavender immediately calls to mind the south of France."

For the past few years, DelPrince and his students have conducted a dried flower project, growing about a dozen varieties (including celosia, craspedia, eryngium, lavender, limonium, nigella and scabiosa), air drying them, then holding design classes with a group of master gardeners. "We stuck to just a few products, but there are hundreds of other varieties that have commercial viability. And there are so many ways to use them," DelPrince says. Among his favorite applications: body



ECHINOPS
Hammelmann's Floral LLC



HYDRANGEA
Hammelmann's Floral LLC

LAVENDER NATURAL
Knud Nielsen Company



DRIED PLUMOSA
Mayesh Wholesale Florist



PRESERVED WHITE PHALARIS
Mayesh Wholesale Florist



PALM SPEARS
Mayesh Wholesale Florist

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INDIAN PAINTBRUSH ORANGE
Knud Nielsen Company



LOTUS POD NATURAL BULK
Knud Nielsen Company



CLOVER RED
Knud Nielsen Company

flowers (corsages, boutonnieres, necklaces, flower crowns) and pressed flat (whether as a bookmark — a great activity to engage children — or as a framed piece of art). “There’s definitely a market for pressed flowers,” he says, referencing a former student whose set of four hydrangeas on blue linen sold for \$3,000 at a New Orleans auction house. When mixed with fresh cut flowers, dried flowers should be secured in a way that keeps them away from the water source to avoid botrytis, he warns.

Besides their intriguing texture and aesthetic, dried products help customers hold on to poignant moments, from school dances and recitals to weddings and even funerals. “Offering ‘lasting memories’ is a pretty strong selling point,” DelPrince says. “If you can dry a customer’s flowers, sell them a preservation kit, or arrange to have a third party do it, you’re providing service after the original sale and continuing the relationship. The dividends of that are so good.” Simply pointing out which flowers in an arrangement dry well and giving basic instructions (hang upside down on a clothesline) can also be of value, he says — and it helps refute that tired refrain, “Flowers just die,” which retail competitors love to use in their holiday advertising.

With dried products, “Planning ahead is the way to go,” DelPrince says. “You don’t want to dry flowers that have been processed to go in a vase or foam. It’s best to purchase products that have already been dried, or if you have the time and space, to grow some specifically for the purpose of drying.” Store these products in a climate-controlled space with plenty of air circulation and low humidity, and use within one year of harvest, DelPrince says.

Here are a few commercially grown dried flowers to try. 🌿

Katie Vincent is the senior contributing writer and editor of *Floral Management*.



CRASPIDIA
Hammelman’s Floral LLC