

floral management

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Designing with Very Peri p. 44

THE FLORAL BUSINESS AUTHORITY

MAR/APR 2022 | VOLUME 39 | NUMBER 1

Going Green

The benefits of sustainably
grown flowers go beyond
the environment





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PAUL SWENSON PHOTOGRAPHY



ON THE COVER Melissa Nickell, marketing director at Sun Valley Floral Farms in Arcata, California, holds bunches of sustainably grown tulips. The Rainforest Alliance, whose logo is seen on the bouquet sleeve, is one of several sustainability certifications Sun Valley has earned. For more on sustainably grown flowers, turn to page 24. Photo by Paul Swenson Photography.

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Growers and florists are discovering that benefits of sustainability extend to workers and the quality of their product.

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ON INTEGRATING SUSTAINABILITY INTO BUSINESS PRACTICES

> Everyone in the industry should be asking themselves this question: What practices do I need to adopt for my business to be sustainable?

The sustainability of your business encompasses many definitions, among them being a good steward of resources — both natural resources and human resources.

Think about your business's inputs, labor, and production and distribution processes. A long-term strategy that addresses sustainability in each of those areas is essential to be successful.

Consider inputs. Which inputs are not renewable and therefore might not be available — or affordable — in the future? Which inputs are from renewable sources and what is the process they go through? Is that process sustainable? Is the renewable input and the processes to obtain it environmentally friendly? While it may be difficult to assess these criteria, look to the standards set by certification programs, such as those included in the Floriculture Sustainability Initiative.

What about labor? Businesses will suffer if they lose the ability to attract labor because workers find better opportunities elsewhere. We've seen this the past two years during the "Great Resignation." Remember, employment is about more than financial arrangements. Today's worker wants to feel good about their job and their company, and embracing sustainability is one way to achieve that.

What other influences will affect sustainability in the floral industry? Likely, government regulations and the consumer.

As an industry we can try to influence regulations, but what we can and should do is make sure we are proactive by setting our own standards. Companies that embrace changes for the common good are well received by consumers.

It is, after all, the consumer who in the end drives the market.

More and more consumers are interested in knowing how a product is produced — information on which they base their purchasing decisions. Studies show that they are increasingly willing to pay more for sustainably produced products.

For all those reasons, incorporating sustainable practices into your business operations is necessary to be successful.

Here are a few areas you can address within your business to get started:

- Carbon footprint. There are several online calculators to help you determine the carbon footprint of your business, and some even suggest ways to lower it.
- Water usage. Growers can conserve water by using rainwater.
- Zero waste. Track your waste and find ways to avoid using one-time plastics and instead reuse or recycle products.

Start incorporating sustainable practices into your business in small ways at first. Select a few goals that are achievable in the short and long term. When one goal is met, add another.

As one of the best sushi chefs in Japan once said when asked why he was so successful: "I do the same day every day, but every day I do it a little better than the day before." 🌱

Joaquin de la Torre is the managing partner of Ball SB LC, a cut-flower breeder and distributor of planting material, which is a joint venture with Ball Horticulture. He is also a member of the Society of American Florists' board of directors.





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SUSTAINABILITY BENEFITS THE PLANET — AND YOUR BUSINESS



> Setting out to tell the stories of sustainability in the floral industry was a big task. Not only is it an issue of great importance for the future of the environment and our industry, but it's also one that isn't told often enough despite all the great work happening.

When we ran the idea of this issue past our volunteer leaders, we heard that they wanted to know more about what the industry is doing to be sustainable. Retail florists, especially, were hungry for that information. They told us that more and more customers are asking about where and how flowers are grown.

We knew from that feedback that this issue needed to highlight the great practices happening and

the many benefits of sustainability — not just for the earth, but for floral businesses and their customers.

Our writers talked with growers whose practices embrace all aspects of sustainability, from cutting carbon emissions to providing social equality and welfare for its workers. They also talked with florists about the benefits of working with and marketing sustainably grown flowers.

Bruce Wright's cover story, "Going Green," (p.24) makes these points by telling the stories of certified green growers and the florists who use their products. Growers have found that in addition to being a good steward of the earth, they are also reaping the benefits of better management practices, better products, better relationships, and a better marketing message tailored to a growing number of environmentally conscious consumers.

Sustainability isn't a responsibility that lies solely with growers. Innovations are addressing sustainability in the supply chain. Check out the feature on page 32 to learn how floral companies are using technology to cut down on waste.

Sustainability at a floral shop might entail not only using energy efficient coolers and composting organic waste, but also better business practices that save valuable resources, such as time and labor. You'll want to read about the incentive plan that TeamFloral's Dan McManus created to motivate designers to work more quickly and efficiently (p. 18). In Digital Strategy (p.42), Melanie Spilbeler of FreshPath Marketing lays out the basics of automated email marketing, which can save time and drive sales.

If your shop is ready to look into sourcing sustainably grown flowers, then look to the information in the Up the Supply Chain (p. 40) to help you get started. The column provides insights on the movement to bring clarity to the many green certifications and the work being done to connect growers with florists.

It's my hope that the information in these pages will help you see how you can incorporate sustainability into your business. As Joaquin de la Torre so eloquently points out in his Viewpoint column, it's important to develop goals that not only ensure a healthy planet, but also a thriving business, for years to come.

Amanda Jedlinsky
Editor in Chief
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More Online

MAKE YOUR SHOP A PLANT DESTINATION

Demand for houseplants continues to provide sales opportunities for florists. The Society of American Florists has a collection of houseplant resources to help you tailor your marketing, set prices for plants, boost your online plant sales, and more. The collection includes free, on-demand videos from SAF's Great Big Plant event, as well as a series of articles with insights into a recent houseplant consumer study. safnow.org/plants22



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ATTRACT AND RETAIN THE BEST TALENT

When it comes to hiring, do you really know what you need? Take a step back and rethink your hiring process with SAF's **Workforce Planning and Attracting Talent** course. In under an hour you'll be guided through the hiring timeline, from identifying your ideal candidate to writing a job description, conducting an interview, and onboarding. Set yourself up for successful hiring this year! safnow.org/hirenow



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As wedding season approaches and 2023 proposals are in full swing, make sure your contracts are up to date and iron clad. The 30-minute course, **The Elements of a Winning Contract**, walks through the steps of developing a well-organized, polished contract that will increase bookings while ensuring that your product, time, and capital are protected. safnow.org/contract



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IDEAS FOR SUCCESS

> Flowers continue to be in high demand. When the Society of American Florists sent a survey in January asking about the December holidays, nearly 67 percent of respondents reported an increase in sales from the previous year. It wasn't without challenges, though. Hardgoods were delayed because of snarls in the supply chain, profit margins were squeezed by rising costs, and staffing remained a pain point for some. Survey respondents shared the strategies that they'll deploy for upcoming floral holidays — ideas that can help you plan for success!

"We were able to hire additional designers this year, but we also have additional sales staff. They are trained to assist the designers by gathering flowers and containers for orders so that the designers can focus on designing."

Marisa Guerrero, Debbie's Bloomers
El Paso, Texas

"We'll be limiting our offerings for Valentine's and leaning into our shop style/aesthetic. Rather than order too much, we're hoping to sell out of a rather exact amount of product. We also have a recipe for our 'designer's choice.'"

Ann Saltz, Prescott Flower Shop
Prescott, Arizona

"Cost of product is a big concern. We don't want to price ourselves out of the market, but we must make money. We will be super prepared [for Valentine's Day] with premade arrangements ready for Monday sales."

Heidi De Silva, Petersen & Tietz
Florists & Greenhouses
Waterloo, Iowa

"Do not give yourself too much pressure. If you cannot change the situation, then just change your mind!"

Emily Lam, Flower Affairs
Victoria, British Columbia 🌿

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SAF TO TAKE INDUSTRY ISSUES TO CAPITOL HILL IN MARCH

> The Society of American Florists' 42nd annual Congressional Action Days is returning in-person March 28-29 to take on the biggest issues facing the industry — rising costs, stalled supply chains, and labor woes.

Congressional Action Days (CAD) is an opportunity for members of the floriculture industry to gather in Washington, D.C., to show legislators that floriculture matters — and we vote. During past Congressional Action Days events, SAF members successfully increased funding and expanded reach for the Floriculture Crops Summary, maintained funding levels for the Floriculture and Nursey Research Initiative, advocated for the need for duty-free access to fresh product, and highlighted the challenges in agriculture labor.

The long hiatus of in-person meetings makes your time on Capitol Hill

even more impactful. Legislators are eager to forge relationships with constituents because election season is looming. "Members of Congress and their staffs want to reconnect with their constituents in person so they better understand the issues they should be talking about on the campaign trail," says SAF Senior Lobbyist Joe Bischoff. "CAD attendees can take advantage of this environment to focus legislators on the issues that are affecting them and their businesses."

CAD gives the floral industry an opportunity to speak to Congress with one voice — and that advocacy is more important than ever. "Every issue we bring to the Hill will be through the lens of the impact that increasing costs is having on the health of the industry," says Kate Penn, SAF CEO. "We need to make sure Congress understands the

importance of addressing agriculture labor challenges, funding floriculture research, and maintaining duty-free access to fresh product — all of which can help combat the inflation burden on floral industry businesses. We're excited to gather in person again for this time-honored and important event for our industry."

"If we want things to change, we must be involved and invest our time in getting our needs and perspective to the table with lawmakers," says past CAD attendee Toomie Farris, AAF, AIFD, of McNamara Florist in Indianapolis, Indiana. "SAF's Congressional Action Days makes that possible. SAF organizes it so that you can learn and help to move the dial on issues."

Register now for CAD 2022. Visit safnow.org/congressional-action-days to learn more. 🌿



TAKING ACTION The Society of American Florists' 2020 Congressional Action Days provided attendees an opportunity to talk with legislators about the biggest issues facing the industry. The event is back in person this year.

FLORICULTURE CROPS SUMMARY EXPANDS TO 50 STATES



SHUTTERSTOCK/FEOROV

➤ The U.S. floral industry will soon have — for the first time — comprehensive data on domestic floriculture production and sales in all 50 states, thanks to changes to a survey by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

That survey, from which the Floriculture Crops Summary is compiled, will now include growers in all 50 states and data on more crops as well as improvements and enhancements to how sales are reported. Those findings will be compiled in a report to be published in May.

The changes are a win for the industry and reflect the advocacy work led by the Society of American Florists and its members on floriculture research funding.

“SAF’s continued work to draw attention to the report has helped ensure its publication and broadened its scope,” says SAF’s Senior Lobbyist Joe Bischoff. “This information is a vital benchmark for floral industry growers and to quantify the industry’s reach and impact on the economy.”

“We’ve been working on it for a long time,” agrees Marvin Miller, Ph.D., AAF, of Ball Horticulture Company, who began working closely

with SAF and USDA/NASS in 1983 to reinstate, and later improve, the report. Miller, a long-time attendee of SAF’s Congressional Action Days, has been promoting the importance of the report on the Hill at the event with other SAF members over many years.

NASS has long been aware of the industry’s needs and wanted to start looking for ways to expand not just the floriculture report but other commodity crop reports as well, says Lance Honig, crops branch chief at the USDA/NASS. The agency decided to use the floriculture report as a pilot. “The floriculture industry is fortunate to be on the front end of that,” he says.

The report shows trends in domestic production, informs sales projections, and is used in determining government agricultural policy as well as providing data for academic studies. It is the only source of annual data on annual bedding and garden plants, potted herbaceous perennials, potted flowering plants for indoor and patio use, foliage plants for indoor or patio use, cut flowers, cut cultivated greens, and propagative floriculture materials.

The 2021 Floriculture Crops Summary will be published May 25. 🌸

2022 VIRTUAL EVENTS SCHEDULE

➤ SAF’s virtual events feature some of the industry’s top experts presenting on a variety of targeted and timely topics. Webinars are open to all members and provide practical tips that attendees can put into practice right away.

Upcoming Live Webinars

March 8 at 2:00 ET: Strategies to Accelerate Deliveries, with floral finance expert Paul Goodman, MBA, PFCI

March 15 at 2:00 ET: A Conversation with economist Charlie Hall: Results of IPSOS and economic outlook survey

April 5 at 2:00 ET: Say This, Not That – Customer Service Do’s and Don’ts, with Flower Clique’s Vonda LaFever, AIFD, PFCI, and Lori Wilson

Register and start learning now! Events are free for SAF members and available to non-members for a fee at careerconnection.safnow.org/live-events/.



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Elizabeth Daly is the marketing and communications manager for the Society of American Florists.

SNAPSHOT

Stem Bar Impresses and Delights Customers

> When customers enter WildFlower Stem + Sundry in Glen Burnie, Maryland, they are greeted by a stem bar filled with buckets of blooms. Every flower is priced by the stem and the resulting bouquet — its size, style, and price — is completely in their hands.

“The idea was to make the stem bar a fully interactive flower experience,” says WildFlower owner Christine Guenther about the highly successful concept. “It’s not a temporary feature; it’s the cornerstone of our shop.” Every day at her flagship Glen Burnie location, a large cart filled with dozens of flower varieties invites customers to experience the scents and textures normally reserved for a designer’s table.



DOUBLE DUTY The stem bar at WildFlower Stem + Sundry serves as an impressive display and a way for customers to interact with flowers.

The response? “Most people say, ‘Oh my gosh, I’ve never seen anything like this!’” says Guenther. The entrepreneur’s decision to deconstruct the design process and hand that power to customers was an evolution of her merchandising instincts. When she first purchased her shop five years ago, it had been run for 30 years very successfully, but very traditionally. “Customers explained what they wanted, and the final product came from a design room in the basement,” she explains.

“I was seeing other industries touched by modernization and technology, and I just knew I had to take the mystery away from the purchasing process and get the flowers out of the basement,” says Guenther, who has since opened a second location near Annapolis, Maryland.

Once the flowers were out of the basement and more accessible, Guenther had another revelation. “Our flowers are typically sitting in buckets hydrating, so I thought, why not display them at the same time?” Now customers can see the flowers as soon as they walk in and choose what makes them smile.

The stem bar’s display sign gives customers a simple choice: “Design your own bouquet or let us design it for you.” Vase arrangements are possible, too. Most often, a collaboration between designer and customer ensues.

“My favorite part is that we get to be co-creators,” says Guenther. “Once the customer points out a couple things, we help make it all go together. The result is something completely original. 🌸





stem bar

Weight your own bouquet
or let us design for you.
We'll have your bouquet in 30
and arrange it in minutes!

TEAM BUILDER

Boost Mental Health by Showing You Care

> COVID-19 has shined a bright light on an often overlooked aspect of health: mental health. For some business owners, that aspect of their employees' well-being has become paramount.

Sarah LoBue, AIFD, CFD, co-owner of Main Street Florist in Carlinville, Illinois, found a way to boost the mental health of her employees, all while showing the community that they care.

To give her employees and her community something to feel good about, LoBue placed a sign outside her shop. "If COVID has affected your mental health ... TAKE ONE," the sign read. Complimentary offerings included flowers, small house plants, toys, bubbles, and snacks.

Connecting with the community is also a team building exercise. The staff is proud to give back and enjoys the process of assembling the giveaway table, finding new treats and brainstorming ideas, LoBue says.

Best of all, LoBue is practicing what she preaches. "I want our employees to know that their mental health is a priority, that they can come to us without getting any pushback," she says of the initiative's deeper impact.

"It was such a positive gesture. We love giving back to our community. We want people to think of our business as a neighbor, to know that we look out for each other and genuinely care."

Sarah LoBue, AIFD, CFD

LoBue credits TikTok with the idea. "I watched a video with someone handing out flowers to anyone affected by COVID or who just needed a pick-me-up," says LoBue. "It was such a positive gesture. We love giving back to our community. We want people to think of our business as a neighbor, to know that we look out for each other and genuinely care."

LoBue timed the gesture with #mentalhealthmonday, scheduling the giveaways for Mondays (when the weather cooperates) and encouraging use of the hashtag. "We're right downtown next to a coffee shop and get a lot of foot traffic," she explains. "People will often pop their head in and say, 'Thank you!' One mother thanked us on social media, describing how she brings her son and he grabs a treat. They really look forward to it."

The gesture not only brightens people's outlook but also utilizes blooms that are just past their prime for arrangements. "Our standing order arrives on Mondays. This giveaway helps cut down on waste," LoBue says. "The flowers are still beautiful, and we're happy the giveaway gives them added purpose." Yet another positive: The goodwill on social media doubles as word-of-mouth advertising.

The principal driver is prioritizing mental health. "We want people to know that they're not alone, that everyone is struggling on some level," LoBue says. "If anyone can relate to struggles, it's florists. We're a lot like therapists, listening to what people are going through. Our arrangements are like shared emotions." 🌸



GIVING BACK Spreading joy to the community with flower giveaways has been a good team-building practice for the staff at Main Street Florist in Carlinville, Illinois.

SOCIAL SAVVY

Get Organized with Content Management Tools

> Managing pictures and videos, planning and posting, and questions and comments across multiple social media platforms is time intensive. However, communicating with customers and potential customers on a regular basis is a marketing tool that can't be ignored.

If you're feeling overwhelmed by your various channels, and if you're constantly questioning the effectiveness of your efforts, consider a social media management tool. The major benefit is it handles all aspects of your social media efficiently in one place with one login. It also offers robust analytics and allows for team member participation. Here's a quick rundown of some of the most popular choices to kickstart your research.

Hootsuite

Do a web search for "best social media management tools" and Hootsuite usually lands in the top three choices, and for good reason. Most users agree it's the most complete management tool available, scalable to both small and large businesses. The program works with more than 20 social networks and starts at \$49 per month for one user and 10 social accounts. A free 30-day trial means there's nothing to lose by testing it out.

For starters, it allows users to share and schedule content to various profiles via one united calendar view. You can map out campaigns, fill content gaps, and collaborate with team members. Scheduling multiple posts at one time with the Bulk Composer is a great time saver. (It's a generally accepted standard among experienced social media managers that planning your posts in dedicated time blocks is more productive and cohesive than scrambling day to day.)

Also, Hootsuite's inbox allows you to monitor messages in a single view. Filter out those that require action, bulk dismiss the ones that don't, and respond or assign another team member to the task. Check out the analytics data to better understand key insights, such

as the best times to post. The software can even monitor online conversations (known as listening), zeroing in on essential topics, trends, influencers, competitor activities, and more.

Sprout Social

Sprout offers the same family of tools as Hootsuite organized into five categories: engagement (a unified social inbox), publishing and scheduling, analytics, listening, and employee advocacy (encouraging your employees to become brand ambassadors). Overall, its features are just as robust as Hootsuite's; its analytics and planning tools in particular are very in-depth. A few nuances set Sprout apart. One is that it emphasizes letting you monitor social media engagement in real time. Another is that its customer service is unmatched. One con is its higher startup price: \$99 per user per month with five social accounts.

Buffer

Buffer touts itself succinctly as "the most intuitive, affordable, and authentic way to reach more people on social media." With one simple dashboard, it allows you to plan and publish content for Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and LinkedIn. It's particularly helpful for Instagram, allowing you to preview posts and visually plan Stories. The "Shop Grid" feature can link to multiple products in your bio without a third-party tool. Reminders don't let you forget posts on hectic days.

Besides a free plan with decent features for social media beginners, Buffer offers an Essentials plan, which is \$5 per month per social channel (and \$12 per month per channel for unlimited users). With a unified messaging grid, scheduling tools, analytics, and a family of Instagram scheduling features, it's hard to beat the cost-effectiveness of the Essentials option. 🌸

Jennifer Sperry is a contributing writer for *Floral Management* who focuses on lifestyles, florals and interiors.



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



Jessica Valmas

Floral Designer
Local Color Flowers
Baltimore, MD

> When Jessica Valmas left her career as a retail visual display artist to work as a floral designer, it was a “very natural, easy transition,” she says. “I had a design background, an eye for color and an interest in flower farming.” Local Color

Flowers — known to their fan base as LoCoFlo — was a perfect fit for Valmas.

A sustainable small business, LoCoFlo specializes in using flowers grown within 100 miles of the Baltimore, Maryland shop. The commitment to locally grown wows customers with fresh, seasonal color that can change week to week. “Many customers come back for how rare local flowers can be

in terms of seasonality,” Valmas says. “They also love the freshness and quality, and supporting small farms. As an artist, I love the idea that we make something beautiful from what’s available. Every week it’s new and different.”

What sustainability looks like at our shop:

“The message starts with local flowers, which come in buckets of water. There’s no plastic, cardboard or airplane flights involved. Sometimes bunches are wrapped in kraft paper, which we recycle for packing wedding or event flowers. We don’t use any floral foam. Instead, we rely on flower frogs and chicken wire mechanics, which we can re-use. We compost all plant waste, and welcome customers to return vases to our shop, whether or not they’re ours.”

Where I find inspiration:

“On Instagram, I follow floral artists, people who appreciate nature in a way that they use it to experiment and explore, almost like an art medium. Their work is very sculptural and features foraged things used in a different way. The list includes @hart_floral, @passionflowersue, @joeybutta, @jennchezdesign, @eothn_ — and for wreaths, @chickadeehillflowers.”

My signature work:

“The studio is on a street that features the city’s iconic rowhomes, all colorfully painted. I had inspiration for a storefront mural with local flowers we use all the time: zinnia, dahlia and rudbeckia. It helps the shop cap off a beautiful street. The neighborhood loves it.”

When I’m not designing:

“I’m working on a small cut flower farm I started with my best friend in 2018. Our plan is to grow cut flowers and host small events there. We post on Insta under @BloomHouse___. Of course, LoCoFlo takes some of our cut flowers and is educating us on working with a florist.” 🌸

Julie Martens Forney is a contributing writer to Floral Management.

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MOTIVATE YOUR DESIGN TEAM TO DO MORE IN LESS TIME

> Do you need more work from your design team in less time? It is far more expensive to hire and train a new designer than it is to incentivize your team to be more efficient.

Many shops have implemented a bonus program with great results. The incentive excites designers and motivates them to be more productive. The idea is to set up the design area to be more efficient and teach employees how to produce more in less time.

Bonuses Based on Production

By industry standards, you can afford to pay a floral designer 10 percent of what they produce at retail prices. By measuring their production, you can award a bonus when they exceed that 10 percent benchmark.

The goal is based on the designer's hourly rate, which makes the incentive equal among all designers. They need to create 10 times their hourly rate in retail product to get a bonus. For instance, if they make \$15 per hour, the goal is to average \$150 per hour in arrangements. Once they reach that goal, they earn 10 percent of what they produce over the goal. For example, imagine Susie makes \$15 per hour. This month she worked 30 hours per week, which is 120 hours for the month. Multiply 120 by \$15 and her total payroll is \$1,800.

Her goal is to exceed 10 times what she earned, which is \$18,000 in product at retail price. If she produces \$20,000 worth of product, she has exceeded the goal by \$2,000. The bonus is 10 percent of the amount by which she exceeded her goal, which means she will receive \$200 as a bonus. (If she only produces \$14,000 worth of arrangements during the month, she is not penalized, and she does not receive a bonus.)

NEED HELP FIGURING OUT THE MATH?

Check out [TeamFloral's spreadsheet](#) in the Explore section of [Career Connection](#).



SHUTTERSTOCK/RAWPIXEL.COM

Factoring in Non-Design Activities

Many designers also take sales. To incorporate this into their bonus, allocate 7 percent of what they sell toward their goal. In the previous example, if Susie sells and designs, you would take 7 percent of her sales for the month and 10 percent of what she designs. It might look like this:

Susie designed \$20,000 in product, which was \$2,000 more than her goal. Ten percent of \$2,000 is \$200. Susie also had \$5,000 in sales. Seven percent of \$5,000 is \$350. Based on her sales and her design work, Susie earned a \$550 bonus.

Factoring in Time Away from the Bench

There will be times when a designer must step away from the design bench to make a delivery, create an in-shop display, make a pickup from the wholesaler, or attend to other tasks. You can compensate for the time when a designer cannot be designing or selling in two ways.

If the person has routine activities, allocate only a percentage of their time for design. Let's say Susie also has a management role that takes 20 percent

of her time. You would use 80 percent of her monthly cost to calculate an adjusted monthly pay on which to base her design goal. For example, multiply her monthly pay of \$1,800 by 80 percent and the adjusted monthly pay on which her goal is based is \$1,440.

To compensate for time away from the bench due to other, infrequent tasks, have the employee keep a log of the hours they spend doing non-design activities and account for that time when calculating their monthly goal.

Use Existing Data to Get Started

It is helpful to use payroll records to find the wages paid, the POS system to show how much the person sold and designed, and their log to offset time away from the design bench. It will take a few hours to set up the system, but the result is increased production and happier employees. Maybe the best way to meet rising demand is to grow your team's skills — not grow your team in numbers. 🌱

Dan McManus is the founder of [TeamFloral](#), a marketing and consulting company for florists.



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With its deep green colour, and festive flower shape, Bombellini is your ball mum for Saint Patrick's day! Thanks to its sturdy stem and out-

standing vase life, this green disbud chrysanthemum will stand strong for a very long time. With Bombellini, luck will definitely come your way!



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SELL THE SERENE

> A blend of periwinkle and lavender, *Very Peri*, the Pantone Color Institute's 2022 Color of the Year, resembles an ethereal shade straight out of a Monet painting. It's at once calming, while also displaying "a spritely, joyous attitude," says Leatrice Eiseman, Pantone's executive director. As society enters its third year in a global pandemic, several of the country's top floral designers applauded Pantone's selection for its feel-good connotations and said they look forward to its creative applications in designs.

"It's a very timely and flower-friendly hue," says floral educator Sharon McGukin, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, a design director for Smithers-Oasis and author of "Flowers of the Heart." She rattled off a long list of matching products that include hyacinth, muscari, allium, monkshood, tulips, and carnations. Blue, she explains, inspires confidence, stability, and spirituality, while red "feeds our souls with excitement, courage, and a love of life. These two opposing energies, blending with a sophisticated gray, represent the spirit of change with violet, the highest vibration in the color spectrum."

Deborah De La Flor, AIFD, PFCI, owner of De La Flor Florist & Gardens in Cooper City, Florida, and the founder of the Gateway to the Americas Cup, gushed about the tranquil shade with countless uses. "Blending *Very Peri* with soft peaches, soft pinks, and blues is absolutely lovely," she says. "You can also



'SHANGHAI' IRIS
Sun Valley Floral Farms



'SPRAY SUNSHINE' DELPHINIUM
Golden Flowers



'DINO VIOLET' LIMONIUM
Dümmen Orange

give it a burst of happiness by mixing it with hot pinks, deep peaches, and bright greens. Arrange it with burgundy, red, and dark purple and it's positively delicious."

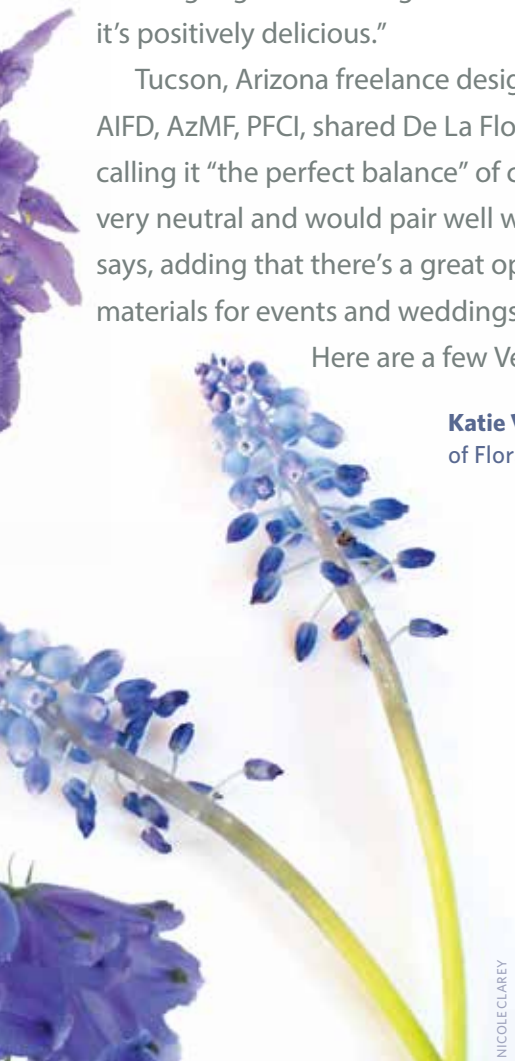
Tucson, Arizona freelance designer Joyce Mason-Monheim, AAF, AIFD, AzMF, PFCI, shared De La Flor's praise of Very Peri's versatility, calling it "the perfect balance" of cool and warm tones. "It comes off very neutral and would pair well with almost any color grouping," she says, adding that there's a great opportunity to tie in dried periwinkle materials for events and weddings.

Here are a few Very Peri-inspired products to try. 🌸

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



'PYTHON' DOUBLE TULIP
Sun Valley Floral Farms



NICOLE CLAREY

MUSCARI
Mayesh Wholesale



BLUE ERYNGIUM
Mayesh Wholesale



'BLUE EYES' HYACINTH
Oregon Flowers



'MISS LOLITA' PHLOX
Dümmen Orange



BLUE TWEEDIA
Mayesh Wholesale

Pump Up the Volume

TOGETHER, WE WIN



*CalFlowers is offering
the entire industry
free marketing materials
to help its message go viral.*

that
flower
feeling™

“Demand has never been higher.” Over and over, that was what Steve Dionne, AAF, heard from his industry peers in the spring of 2021 — a refrain that held true across segments and business locations. As the executive director of the California Association of Flower Growers & Shippers (CalFlowers), Dionne discussed with his board of directors how to capitalize on the unexpected silver lining of a global pandemic. Their thoughts? Get directly in front of consumers to keep their appetite strong.

“Right now, we have a new type of engagement in that people are buying flowers for ‘nontraditional’ reasons,” Dionne says. “They’re looking beyond just holidays and special occasions. It could be they’re trying to beautify their home, brighten up their Zoom background, or cheer up an elderly neighbor. Whatever’s motivating them, it’s momentum we want to build on.”

CalFlowers spent much of last year, the association’s 80th anniversary, working with 180 Amsterdam, an award-winning agency that’s produced ads for well-known companies such as Under Armour, BMW, and PlayStation — and, most important, Flower Council Holland. “They’re talented, professional, and they were already familiar with our product,” Dionne says. “It was a perfect fit right from the start.”

Their collaboration resulted in “That Flower Feeling,” a campaign that promotes the emotional and mental health benefits of flowers. It includes a mix of marketing materials in a range of media, but its highlight is a video depicting a woman’s humorous struggles to unwind. In the end, she discovers the ease of buying flowers and the joy they bring. (Tag line: Flowers. SELF CARE MADE EASY.) The campaign launched in mid-January, then paused the first three weeks of February, so as not to compete with Valentine’s Day messaging.



Pictured from left to right: Joost Bongaerts, Jeanne Boes and Steve Dionne

“The goal is just to get more Americans to buy more flowers more often,” Dionne says. “We don’t care where they shop. We just want flowers to become a regular part of Americans’ lives.”

Heather Lewis, strategy director at 180 Amsterdam, steered CalFlowers to the self-care angle. Her market research found that, while many Europeans treat flowers as staple items like milk or produce, Americans tend to view them as luxuries reserved for holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, and major life events. She also noticed that Americans are desperate for ways to relax, particularly as the pandemic continues to pile on stress. The campaign aims to “crack the culture code and change consumer attitudes,” so Americans come to see flowers not just as a gift purchase for special occasions, but as part of a personal self-care routine, she explains.

The 60-second video strikes a light-hearted, satirical tone, with scenes of a woman accidentally removing her eyebrows when peeling off her face mask, toppling over while practicing yoga, and exploring scream therapy. It’s set to a 1970s soundtrack featuring a Bolivian pan flute. “We wanted to make sure we didn’t disparage the self-care industry, so we went for tongue-in-cheek,” Dionne says.

That Flower Feeling is expected to generate 52.5 million impressions, via paid

ads, sponsored posts, and collaborations with selected influencers on Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Pinterest. Audio versions of the ads will be aired on digital music-streaming platforms and selected podcasts.

The campaign’s assets also include a 6-second video, POS posters, and prepared social media posts, with more assets, such as truck wraps, to be released later this year. None of the materials include the CalFlowers name — an intentional omission so that anyone in the industry can share the campaign with their audience.

“The more eyeballs that see this, the more it succeeds. It’s a win-win for everyone,” Dionne says, adding that he’s eager to see how individuals adapt it to promote their businesses. “We know how many creative and business minds exist in the floral industry. Our hope is that it goes way beyond our imagination.”


Going forward, Dionne intends to shift to voluntary pledges for That Flower Feeling to create an all-industry marketing fund with its own governance structure and board of directors.

“CalFlowers was the catalyst, but we’ve taken it as far as we can on our own,” Dionne says. “The whole industry has to come together to help it reach its potential. And I believe we can do it.”





PART OF THE LANDSCAPE Rosamina, a Colombian flower grower certified by the Rainforest Alliance, uses sustainability practices that support both the environment and the community. In addition to recycling, water conservation, and the preservation and restoration of native plants around the flower fields and greenhouses, Rosamina also provides the community with good jobs that come with benefits.



The benefits of sustainably grown flowers go beyond the environment.

Going Green

BY BRUCE WRIGHT

Wouldn't it be nice to personally visit some of the farms that supply your flowers? That way, you could give customers assurance that the flowers were grown with due respect for the environment and the farm workers.

You might also find that visiting the farms would bring other benefits — among them, an excitement about the materials you work with. “When you go to the farms, it’s a total game changer,” says Cherrie Silverman, AIFD, AAF, owner of Cherry Blossoms Florist in Westminster, Colorado. During her farm visits, she was inspired by “the passion, the dedication, the love that these people have for what they do — and the pride.”



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHERRIE SILVERMAN



HIGH STANDARDS Cherrie Silverman, AIFD, AAF, owner of Cherry Blossoms Florist in Westminster, Colorado, was inspired by the sustainability practices she saw while visiting flower farms in South and Central America.

Over the years, Silverman has participated in farm tours sponsored by FloraLink, a program that facilitates direct buying from flower farms in South and Central America for both wholesale and retail florists. On the FloraLink tours, Silverman was impressed with the high standards of sustainability, in terms of respectful care of both the environment and the farm workers. She visited farms that give generous benefits to employees, from hot meals to dental and medical care and stipends allocated to home buying.

“That’s really important to me,” Silverman says. “It makes me want to do business with that farm.”

Consumers Care

Environmental and social sustainability is increasingly important to consumers, too.

According to an international survey by the data analytics company Nielsen, 81 percent of consumers feel strongly that companies should help to improve the environment. As many as 73 percent say they are ready to change their buying habits if that would reduce their impact on the environment.

Those sentiments are even stronger among Millennials, who outnumber Baby Boomers as the largest segment of the adult population, according to the Pew Research Center. About 85 percent of Millennials say it is important for companies to implement environmentally friendly practices, Nielsen notes.

As the marketing trend gains currency, it’s clear that customers are responding. It’s estimated that U.S. consumers spent \$150 billion on sustainable products last year, according to Nielsen.

That equates to a large marketing opportunity for the floral industry, whose products are already popular with younger generations.

Mass Markets Pave the Way

While sustainability is just beginning to take a higher profile in the supply chain that brings flowers and greens to independent retail florists, it is already well established in the mass market. Walk into any grocery store and you will find a plethora of products labeled as organic, fair trade, or environmentally friendly — from packaged goods to produce and yes, even flowers.

It's not hard to see why. In grocery stores, flowers are considered part of the produce department. Crossover from organic and fair-trade labeling for fruits and vegetables makes the transition to flowers logical and intuitive for customers and managers alike.

Then there is the sheer leverage, the market power, and the resources available to mass marketers to implement a sustainability program. "Some of the mass marketers, Kroger for example, have a whole sustainability team as part of the organization," notes Melissa Nickell, marketing director for Sun Valley Floral Farms in Arcata, California.

A short supply chain also helps. Since mass marketers can buy directly from flower farms, traceability is not an issue. Grocery-store flowers are commonly sold as grower bunches. It's relatively easy, then, to stick a label on the bouquet sleeve that gives customers assurance all the flowers in the bunch come with the same sustainability credentials.

Retail Florists Can Also Go Green

Retail florists, on the other hand, often sell arrangements of flowers that may have been sourced from different farms and even different countries. Florists may not know where their flowers come from.

And in a flower shop, the context and presentation encourage customers to think of flowers not as a commodity, but as an expression. "In a supermarket, you're walking through and buying what catches your eye," says Nickell. "In a flower shop, you walk in and say something like, 'I need to say, 'I'm sorry,' or 'I love you.' Can you help?'"

Under those circumstances, the provenance of the flowers can recede into the background unless the florist promotes it as an added value.

Even if it's not always top of mind, sustainable sourcing could have even greater value when flowers are a social expression, versus a casual everyday purchase, says Jacob Davignon, who leads a global team for key markets and retail at Rainforest Alliance, one of the best-known certifiers of sustainable farm products. For instance, compare flowers with diamonds. In



LUNCH BREAK A subsidized hot lunch (costing workers the equivalent of about 10 cents in U.S. dollars) is one of many benefits designed to attract and retain a skilled, loyal workforce at Colombian rose grower Alexandra Farms, certified by Florverde Sustainable Flowers (FSF).



WORK AND PLAY Many certifying organizations have standards in place that extend benefits to the people who live near certified farms. For example, Florverde Sustainable Flowers' agenda embraces programs that directly benefit children near the farms it certifies. Here, children participate in after-school activities as the result of a joint effort between Florverde and a local municipality.



SUPPORTING WOMEN The workforce on Colombian flower farms includes many women. The culture of sustainability — along with a competitive labor market — has led to benefits for female workers, including daycare for children.



HELLO, GOODBYE At Alexandra Farms, mesh mitts are applied by hand to rose buds. The fine mesh protects the flowers from many types of pests, even spores of botrytis mold, reducing the need for chemical pesticides or fungicides.

the market for diamonds, “conflict free” has become one of the standard criteria for purchases — driven by demand from Millennials and enabled by blockchain technology that enables traceability from mine to store.

Diamonds and flowers are both gifts that you give with love in your heart, says Davignon. “I wouldn’t want to give my girlfriend a bouquet of roses knowing that there were terrible practices going on at the farm where they were grown, and I don’t think she would want to receive them knowing that,” he says. An assurance of sustainability is one way of knowing that your meaningful gift carries with it social compassion and environmental responsibility.

Quality and Sustainability Go Hand in Hand

Silverman believes that when farms embrace sustainability, the result is better product. “It’s a whole cycle,” she says. “When the farmer really cares about all aspects of it, it shows every step of the way.”

There is also a practical reason why growers who embrace social and environmental responsibility produce quality products. Most take part in green certification programs, from Rainforest Alliance to BloomCheck and Florverde Sustainable Flowers (FSF).

These programs require a third-party review of standards and practices, and many are also geared to help with quality and profitability.

To meet the certification standards, growers must keep detailed records and pay close attention to aspects of management that might otherwise have been neglected. They are required to marshal resources such as energy and water more efficiently, slash the cost of pesticides, and also reduce shrink — all of which results in savings that help offset their investment in certification measures.

Notably, implementation of socially conscientious employment policies can make for a committed, responsible, and experienced workforce whose interests coincide with good environmental practices.

Sun Valley, a leader in sustainability in the U.S., has pursued a number of

certifications, among them Veriflora, BloomCheck, and Rainforest Alliance.

They've found that among the benefits of integrating sustainability in their practices is that it attracts — and helps retain — workers, who these days want to feel good about their job and employer.

"Our headquarters are based in a very environmentally conscious community in Northern California, so I think it is inherent to the people who work on our farm," says Nickell.

The bottom line is that care of the environment entails a level of expertise and oversight as well as improved business management practices and an appeal to workers.

Telling the Story

When retail marketers commit to sustainable sourcing, they generally do it

for two reasons, says Davignon. The first is risk mitigation. If a story emerges in the media that links your product to practices that hurt people or the environment, your reputation is protected if your own supply chain is certified.

On the flip side, when you source your product sustainably, you open up a world of possibilities for positive storytelling that links your business to social and environmental benefits. The Kroger Company, for example, created a film in partnership with Rainforest Alliance, called "The Journey of the Roses." It begins on a farm in Colombia and features interviews with happy workers who enjoy benefits including a daycare facility. The film then flashes forward to the making of the rose garland that is traditionally placed on the winning horse at the Kentucky Derby — a job that for

more than 30 years has been accomplished by a Kroger florist.

"That story really resonates with consumers in terms of certified and sustainable sourcing," says Davignon. A typical florist may not have the resources available to Kroger, but for those who are proactive about sustainability, storytelling — whether it's a blog, signage in stores, or a story in the local media — remains a potent marketing tool.

"We ask the retailers that we work with, 'What themes are meaningful to your consumer base?'" Davignon adds. "Is it deforesting, child welfare, gender equality? Because all of those components are included in the [Rainforest Alliance] standard, so it's always possible to craft a story that will resonate with customers."



GOOD BUGS, BAD BUGS You can't see them, but this greenhouse at Dramm Echter in California is alive with tiny wasps that feed on leafminer larvae, a pest that can wreak havoc on gerbera foliage. The wasps are just one part of a system of biological controls, or integrated pest management, that helps protect the flowers from insect damage. "We haven't used a commercial pesticide for years," says company president Bob Echter.



SEAL OF SUSTAINABILITY Sun Valley Floral Farms in Arcata, California, boasts several green certifications. The farm is certified by Veriflora, BloomCheck and the Rainforest Alliance, whose seal is seen on this bouquet of tulips.

PAUL SWENSON PHOTOGRAPHY



GOOD REPUTATION (Left) Teresa Sabankaya, owner of Bonny Doon Garden Co. in Santa Cruz, California, has been selling locally grown flowers since she started her floral design business more than 20 years ago. Her customers come back again and again because they know they are getting sustainably grown flowers, she says.

A NATURAL ARRAY (Right) Nestled at the bottom of a valley in Fallbrook, California, Kendall Farms has a high-tech packing, production and propagation facility where 2,000 solar panels supply all the farm's power needs. The farm cultivates waxflower, proteas, kangaroo paws, and a variety of foliage. It also uses solar power to grow 500 pounds of food a year for local families in need.



How Does Local Fit In?

For many florists, especially in the trend-sensitive wedding market, "local" is an easier idea to promote than "sustainably grown"—and one that customers respond to.

"When I started my business in 1999, I would tell people, 'These sweet peas are grown by a lady just 14 miles down the road,'" says Teresa Sabankaya, owner of Bonny Doon Garden Co., a studio flower shop in Santa Cruz, California.

"Back then, it was a foreign concept," says Sabankaya. "They'd be like, 'Okay, whatever.' But now I believe all of my customers come to me because they know that that's my reputation. They know they are getting good local product, sustainably grown, supporting our local economy here."

California's central coast is an area particularly rich in possibilities for sourcing from local flower farms. But flower farms are popping up all over the country, from Oklahoma to Minnesota, thanks in part to proponents of the Slow Flowers™ movement and its founder Debra Prinzing.

"We're trending up," says Prinzing. The USDA's 2020 Floriculture Crop Summary, published last year, showed that the number of U.S. farms growing

cut flowers and cut greens in 2020 increased about 14 percent from 2019.

The growth was not only in numbers but also in the distribution of those farms throughout the country. "California is still by far the largest source of domestic flowers," says Prinzing. "And they do it well. But, because people want local, they're also looking to small-scale farmer-florists and micro-growers in their region. That is where this explosion is taking place, to the point where we now have commercial-scale flower sources available in virtually all 50 states at certain times of the year.

"The reality is that domestic flowers are never going to be 100 percent of our flower choices," Prinzing says. "Imports are too strong. But I do think people want choice, and more than anything they just want to know where the flowers they're buying are grown. So, that's an opportunity for florists to differentiate themselves with their customers, to tell a different story."

Sustainable with Fringe Benefits

Sustainability was always part of what Sabankaya's customers valued about buying local. In addition to appealing to her customers, the movement has also benefited florists in other ways.

In the current era of supply-chain challenges, the relationships that Silverman has developed with suppliers have positioned her well. “The relationships that I have with the people that I buy from are as important as the flowers,” she says.

She knows her suppliers and they know her — and she has the assurance that they share her passion for quality in every sense of the word. She credits great product and the positive stories about how the flowers are grown with the growth of her business.

“My business is growing so much, I can’t keep up with it,” Silverman says. “It’s because of the product that I offer. It’s beautiful, and I’m able to offer it at a good price.” At the same time, she says, the product is a reflection of how it is grown: with love, pride, and respect for workers and for the environment. 🌿

Bruce Wright is a contributing writer to *Floral Management*.



STUCK UP A method as simple as using sticky tape, seen here winding through a hoop house of lisianthus at Sun Valley Floral Farms’ Oxnard, California, location, offers an environmentally friendly alternative to pesticides. Adding garlic to the water also helps keep bugs off the plants.



HIDDEN HIGH TECH Solidago is among the many crops grown by Mellano & Company at its two locations in northern San Diego County, California, an area where water conservation is a particularly pressing concern. Wireless sensors monitor soil moisture in the field so irrigation needs can be fine-tuned at a moment’s notice. Certified by BloomCheck, Mellano also relies on integrated pest management, and it recycles all cardboard, plastic, and organic waste on the farm. “We’ve been here almost 50 years,” says CEO Mike Mellano. “We intend to stay and continue to farm, and you can’t do that if you abuse the ground.”



INDUSTRY INNOVATIONS FORWARD PEOPLE, PLANET, PROFIT MODEL

From waste reduction to employee welfare, flower growers worldwide strive to make their production processes and products more sustainable.

BY KILEY JACQUES

David Kaplan of Above All Flowers has been in the floral industry since 1978 and has seen a shift in attitudes toward sustainability. “When I was visiting farms in the late ’70s and early ’80s, nobody had even heard of sustainability,” he says. “Back then, nobody cared.”

His company functions as a consultancy, providing market facilitation, product sourcing, and advisory services. It is keyed into sustainable growers. Kaplan recognizes the broad scope of what it means to be a sustainable farm. “Back in the early 2000s, before all these certifications existed... there was awareness of water conservation and pesticide use. Now, sustainability encompasses a large circle — it’s not just about the environment. The health and welfare of employees is garnering more attention ... the whole thing comes down to what we call a responsible grower.”

Much of the movement is owed to the digital age and its capacity to streamline services and goods. Running an ecologically and socially responsible company is also a marketable approach to doing business on an international scale. In short, growers and buyers worldwide are awakening to the people, planet, profit model and taking steps to adopt it.

Waste-Cutting Technology

Among them is Eric Egberts, founder and CEO of Holland-based BloomyPro, a software company he describes as a “horticulture technology provider.” The five-year-old platform, which offers the ability to arrange flowers digitally to create sample bouquets, was designed to respond directly to consumer tastes and trends. “The whole agriculture industry is pushing something from the farm to the consumer, but nobody is considering what the consumer is actually looking for,” Egberts says. “Businesses only know what has sold, and they use those figures to determine future production. Everything they present to you is based on old sales figures, which they use to predict materials they need to buy or plant on the farm.”

This predictive model results in unnecessary product waste, Egberts says. One way to greatly reduce that waste is to use consumer trend data from

Google Analytics and social media. “Our software enables the buyer to get much closer to what is happening in the mind of the consumer,” Egberts says. Knowing online consumer behavior has the potential to focus growers’ decisions pertaining to production in such a way as to meet real-time demand and promote cost savings. “If we can determine, based on consumer trends, that pink roses are not in favor this year ... that’s a product and cost waste reduction,” he says.

The idea for BloomyPro took root as Egberts began talking with farmers who supply large retailers to determine how they might optimize their processes. The standard practice is for growers to assemble and then ship boxed, sample bouquets to retailers. This provides retailers with hundreds of samples from which they make their selections. Then the samples are thrown away, or retailers decide to make slight changes to the flower arrangements and request new samples be sent.

Egberts saw an opportunity in that system. “We presented the idea of all-digital collections from which retailers can select only what they intend to display and sell,” Egberts says. It’s a highly targeted approach to both production and sales that reduces waste. “The plastic sleeves alone are a major reduction,” Egberts says, noting an increasing concern in the industry around carbon emissions. BloomyPro offers a means for limiting physical shipments and the associated carbon penalties.

Responsibly Sourcing Flowers

Claudia Saenz, cofounder of Fresh-o-Fair, speaks energetically about the farmers she works with. She, alongside her brother and father, has launched what they call an online “concierge” service. Clients can choose to buy from more than 30 flower farms located in Ecuador and Colombia that have been fully vetted and deemed socially and ecologically responsible. Fresh-o-Fair is a farm-direct model that taps into the familiarity and ease people feel around online purchasing, as well as a growing desire to support sustainability-minded growers.

Key to the business’s success is its boots-on-the-ground approach. Saenz

relocated from Germany to Ecuador so she could regularly visit the farms, cultivate relationships with farmers, and witness their sustainability practices.

Agrogana is one of their partnering farms. Located south of Quito in Ecuador, the family-owned flower farm spans 50 hectares and is highly regarded for providing excellent wages and benefits to its employees in addition to child care and educational opportunities that include classes in English, math, and computer programming.

We want to take the time to build the structure well.”

Tying It All Together

Like Saenz, Kaplan seeks out growers who show commitment to their surrounding communities. He believes buyers want to work with farmers who are practicing sustainability on all fronts. In practice, this might mean supplying access to clean water, electricity, child care, clothing, and school supplies, among other types of financial support.

“With everything we do, we look at all sides: how to be environmentally friendly, how to maintain quality products, and how to protect worker safety.”

— David Kaplan

“When we visit farms and talk with the growers, we can tell if they are just saying what it takes to sell or if they are truly committed to better practices,” Saenz says. “We look for places like Agrogana, with which we are completely aligned in what we want to achieve.”

Saenz seeks out farms with green certifications. She points out there are also a lot of small farms without certifications — which are expensive to get — that are community-minded and run projects that Fresh-o-Fair wants to support.

On the other end, they encourage florists to visit the farms and see first-hand the business practices. “We want the system to be fair for everybody,” Saenz explains. “We want to help the farmers grow their business and help floral designers understand where the flowers they buy come from and how the farms are being run.” She makes another point that speaks to the deeper value of their approach saying, “It’s not only about selling flowers, it’s about telling the farmers’ stories and building community.”

By providing florists with options for buying from socially equitable and environmentally responsible sources, Fresh-o-Fair bridges the divide between growers and buyers and streamlines their transactions. To date, they work with 25 florists in Germany and 10 in the U.S. who place weekly orders.

“We are just getting started,” Saenz says. “We hope to grow but we want to start with a small and stable base. If you grow too fast, you lose track of things.

With all growers a key message is: Reduce your waste. “The amount of packaging materials that have been used to ensure a quality product needs to change,” Kaplan explains, noting the same quality can be achieved without all the one-time-use plastics. “They use it because of habit, not necessity,” he says. Kaplan encourages waste reduction by shipping direct from the farm to the client versus a conventional model that depends on a midpoint stop, where everything is unpacked, repacked, and shipped a second time. His focus for the next decade will be to get more growers to use biodegradable packaging materials and to use cardboard rather than plastic wrapping.

As sustainability becomes more front of mind in the industry at large, innovation around how to support and promote it will be instrumental to business profitability. As Kaplan puts it, “With everything we do, we look at all sides: how to be environmentally friendly, how to maintain quality products, and how to protect worker safety. I think this is the way of the future and how it must be done. And I think people feel better when they buy that kind of product.” 🌱

Kiley Jacques writes about sustainability issues for a variety of publications, including the *Green Building Advisor* of which she is senior editor.



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EDITORS' NOTE *Paul Goodman, MBA, PFCI, and Derrick Myers, CPA, CFP, PFCI, love a good financial management challenge, however big or small. Send your questions to fmeditor@safnow.org, and we'll challenge the experts to tackle them in an upcoming article.*



SHUTTERSTOCK/ANDREW KRASOVITCKII

Take Credit

It's not too late to take advantage of tax credits aimed at small businesses that weathered pandemic shutdowns and lost revenue.

BY DERRICK MYERS, CPA, CFP, PFCI

Don't leave the Employee Retention Credit (ERC) on the table. Under the 2020 CARES Act and the 2021 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), qualifying businesses are eligible in the form of a refundable credit. Claim the credit by amending your business's quarterly tax return (IRS form 941) for each quarter the business qualified for the credit. Businesses have three years from the original return due date to file the amended return.

This credit is too big to miss out on, but it is also very easy to misunderstand. Here's a breakdown of the basics of the ERC guidelines to help you determine whether your business qualifies for it.

Employee Retention Credit Basics

The ERC was first made available under the CARES Act in March 2020 as an incentive for employers to keep their labor force intact during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the ERC did not receive much attention because businesses did not qualify if they received a Payroll Protection Plan (PPP) loan. The 2021 ARPA expanded eligibility to include businesses that received PPP loans, as long as the same payroll dollars were not used for both calculations. The ARPA also extended the credit for 2021. Originally, the extended credit was available for all four quarters of 2021, but it has since been limited to the first three quarters of 2021.

2020 ERC Guidelines

The ERC for 2020 allows for a credit of up to \$5,000 per employee per quarter for qualified small employers. The credit is calculated by taking 50 percent of the qualifying wages of each qualifying employee up to \$10,000 in each qualifying quarter.

A qualified small employer is a trade or business — including tax-exempt organizations under code section 501(c) — that was in operation during 2020 and experienced either:

1. Full or partial suspension of the operation of their trade or business during any calendar quarter due to government orders limiting commerce, travel, or group meetings (for commercial, social, religious, or other purposes) due to COVID-19, which limit the business's typical operations.

The full or partial suspension test is complicated to analyze. An employer needs to examine the government orders for all locations in which they operate and determine if any significant portion of their business was fully or partially suspended.

Events that would not allow the business to claim the credit include:

- Government order that does not impact the business, such as a business deemed essential
 - A business that is closed by government order, but able to continue operations remotely
 - A business that voluntarily suspends operations or reduces hours
 - A business closes due to any other government action, such as a health code violation unrelated to COVID-19
 - The business suffers a reduction in demand for its products or services because the customers — not the business — are subject to government order
 - The government lifts the restrictions
2. A decline in gross receipts (defined in the Internal Revenue Code, section 448(c)) of 50 percent or more compared to the same quarter in 2019. The decline does not need to be directly related to COVID-19.

Definitions Explained

A qualifying quarter is any quarter in which the company met either of the tests above. If the business qualifies as the result of decline in gross receipts, then the business continues to qualify each subsequent quarter. This goes on until the start of the quarter following a quarter in which the business's gross receipts are more than 80 percent of its gross receipts for the same quarter in 2019.

Qualifying wages include those wages paid between March 12, 2020, and Jan. 1, 2021, for the 2020 credit, and before October 1, 2022, for the 2021 credit. Qualifying wages also include:

- All general payroll
- Group health plan expenses that are properly allocable to wages
- The cash value of certain benefits such as automobile allowances that are included in the employee's taxable income
- More than \$20 a month in cash tips

Qualified wages do not include:

- Salary reductions for dependent care assistance programs
- Transportation benefits
- Wages paid as part of a severance or termination package

This credit is too big to miss out on — and it is not too late to claim it. Businesses have three years from their original tax return due date to file an amended return.

Qualified wages are defined slightly differently for businesses that have, on average, more than 100 employees. If your business meets that threshold, look to the IRS's website for more information.

A qualifying employee is limited to those employees who are not majority owners. A majority owner is anyone who directly or indirectly owns more than 50 percent of the business.

Calculating the Credit

If your business qualifies for the ERC, here is how to calculate the quarterly credit the business can claim. Take the wages of each qualifying employee, up to \$10,000 per employee per quarter, and multiply the wage by 50 percent.

That is the credit that can be claimed for the quarter.

2021 ERC Guidelines

The rules and definitions for the 2021 ERC are about the same as those for 2020, except:

- The gross receipts only need to decline by 20 percent for any quarter compared to the same quarter in 2019
- The credit has been increased to 70 percent of qualifying wages up to \$10,000 per employee per quarter for a maximum credit of \$7,000 per employee per quarter
- The credit is only available for the first three quarters of 2021

Even businesses that opened or were acquired in 2020 or 2021 may qualify for the credit. A newly acquired business can use the 2019 gross receipts of the business they acquired to determine whether the employer experienced a significant decline in gross receipts, even though the employer did not own the business. A business that started after 2019 will use the quarter that the business was established as the period to determine whether there was a significant decline in gross receipts in the subsequent quarters.

Parting Thoughts

The ERC credit is very complicated. It needs to be coordinated with PPP loan forgiveness and requires the exact dates of any government shutdowns. But don't let that stop you from determining whether your business qualifies. Seek help from your accountants, tax preparers and payroll companies. 🌿

Derrick P. Myers, CPA, CFP, PFCI, is vice president of **Crockett, Myers & Associates, Inc.**, a financial management and accounting firm that has been working with florists for more than three decades.

SEED YOUR FUTURE'S LEADER SEEKS TO SOLVE THE LABOR ISSUE

> Jazmin Albarran came to the horticulture industry in May 2021 when she stepped into the role of executive director for Seed Your Future, which works in partnership with the Society of American Florists to create a pipeline of talent by driving interest in careers in horticulture and floriculture. Since its founding 6 years ago, Seed Your Future has reached thousands of students to expose them to the wide array of career paths horticulture has to offer. Albarran recently highlighted the organization's outreach and how it will benefit the plant and flower industry.

What has Seed Your Future done to grow the labor pool for the floriculture and horticulture industries?

So many efforts — the website is the first place to see what we've done. For instance, the website lists more than 100 careers with descriptions and salary expectation showing the depth and breadth of the industry. We provide information about industry scholarships and internships. We recently added an interactive "Where to Study" map with 2- and 4-year plant science degrees across the country and Canada. This month, we plan to launch a job board aggregator that will pull job openings from about 50 boards to help job seekers find current openings in the industry.

Early on, we did focus groups with children and learned that they want their own space to access information about plants and careers, so we created the BLOOM! website just for them. The

website, www.seedyourfuture.org/bloom, includes a quiz that can help students determine the right plant job for them.

We create tools that will help teachers grow the passion of plants and flowers for the next generation. Our WeAreBloom YouTube channel has more than 20 videos that showcase horticulture in action and DIY videos to bring plants into the classroom.

We have been diligently working through paid social to increase our listserv, which is now up to more than 87,000 individuals all looking to learn more about careers in our industry. We have to continue developing new tools and resources to keep them engaged.

That's a lot of progress — who's behind all of that work?

We have an army of volunteers and funders that have been with Seed Your Future since the beginning. The volunteers have dedicated their time to research projects, outreach to schools, testing functionality of tools being developed, and helping establish the annual direction of the organization. The creation and maintenance of the websites, the annual plant mash-up contest and the YouTube videos would not be possible without ongoing financial support. In order to expand our reach, we need to raise \$500,000 this year.

What are your biggest initiatives for this year — and beyond?

In addition to continuing the initiatives mentioned earlier, I'll be working with 15 colleges and universities across the country to develop outreach strategies and initiatives for middle and high schools in their local communities. We will use horticulture students as ambassadors to attend career days and talk to high school students about the potential careers with plants and flowers. Their enthusiasm can impact high school students.

I also want to increase diversity within our volunteers — we need more people with diversity in race, age, ethnicity, background, etc. A mixture of



Jazmin Albarran, executive director for Seed Your Future

experience will bring a mixture of innovation into the work we're doing. I need representation on the board and volunteer committees to help me come into different spaces like HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) to talk about careers in plants and flowers.

I want to find people of color who love the outdoors and have a passion for plants. We need those people educating young people about the work they're doing and having them build that interest in young people.

What can individuals in the industry do to help this movement?

Help us spread the word about Seed Your Future! This industry is the best kept secret. Think about what you can do to help spread the word about all the career opportunities in horticulture and floriculture industries. Flowers and plants impact physical, mental and emotional health — be a part of Seed Your Future's effort to make sure young people know this. Help ensure the long-term success of this industry by partnering with us — as a donor, a volunteer, or better yet, both. 🌱

Amanda Jedlinsky is the senior content strategist for the Society of American Florists and editor in chief of *Floral Management*.



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SOURCING SUSTAINABLY GROWN FLOWERS

> No question about it: For a retail florist, sourcing sustainably grown flowers is a challenge — and one that adds a level of complexity to the business. But several organizations and companies are trying to change that.

The Floriculture Sustainability Initiative, an international nonprofit organization, is leading the way to set standards to compare a dozen green certifications. Their efforts will help florists and consumers alike make sense of the many green certifications and labels on flower sleeves. Meanwhile, a few companies are connecting florists with environmentally conscious growers to expose them first-hand to the practices that FSI and others promote, and to close the gap on sourcing.

Many Labels, One Vision

For anyone concerned about measuring, tracking, and promoting sustainability in the fresh-flower supply chain, green certification programs are an essential tool.

At least a dozen “green labels” are in use by flower buyers and sellers around the world. Some are based in a country of origin; others cover flowers along with other agricultural products. Some are widely known and accepted on the producer end of the supply chain, but not well recognized by retailers and consumers.

With their differing strengths and priorities, each of the major certification programs has something valuable to contribute. For buyers, however, the labels can seem to compete.

To address this problem an international nonprofit, the Floriculture Sustainability Initiative (FSI), is working to create a shared vision for sustainability.

FSI was established in 2013 by 18 stakeholders in the floriculture sector. Today, there are 75 stakeholders representing interests all along the supply chain, including several well-known green labels, along with major U.S.-based companies such as Ball Horticultural Company, Metrolina Greenhouses, and Smithers-Oasis. FSI’s ambitious goal is to have 90 percent of all flowers and plants responsibly produced and traded by the year 2025.

The idea was never that FSI would itself become a label or certification, but that it would define a “basket” of standards — standards that provide benchmarks. The idea is that growers will be able to achieve certifications with fewer expensive audits since the same third-party auditors can verify compliance with the standards for multiple certification schemes.

“At the time we started, the sector was really not good at defining sustainability — especially not in a way that can be applied globally,” says Jeroen Oudheusden, executive officer for FSI. Reaching sustainability goals would require not only clear definitions but also data to support them and data transparency all along the chain.

That is happening, says Oudheusden. “Standards owners have become more open with their data sharing,” he says. “Traceability has increased. The whole supply chain has become more transparent. As a result, the standards have gone up.” FSI leads a global effort to help the green labels become more proactive, cooperative, and data driven, without sacrificing the strength that derives from their diversity.

Meanwhile, tools for comparing different labels are also available to environmentally concerned consumers, who can search the internet and find guides such as Greenerchoices.org (an initiative from Consumer Reports).

Connecting Florists with Growers

As sustainability gains an ever-higher profile as something consumers value, new opportunities to connect florists with quality-conscious, sustainability-oriented growers are on the rise. “We

are optimistic that the floral trade shows in Ecuador will go forward in the fall,” says FloraLink’s Evan Mickelsen, “and we are hoping to take a group down to visit growers.” FloraLink is a program that facilitates direct buying from flower farms in South and Central America for wholesale and retail florists.

Meanwhile, FloraLink is organizing its own show and convention, planned for June near its home office in Utah, where members will be able to meet with as many as 40 growers. A similar service, Tradewinds International — which in the past has likewise sponsored farm tours for wholesalers and retailers in conjunction with the major trade fairs in Colombia and Ecuador — has a conference in March, near San Diego, where buyers can connect directly with growers.

Fresh-o-Fair is an online platform that offers flower buyers a connection to more than 20 farms in Latin America; the platform works exclusively with sustainable and socially conscious producers. It got a boost in December with a new partnership between Fresh-o-Fair, floral marketing advisor New Bloom Solutions, and market facilitator Above All Flowers.

“Most of our farms have certifications, like Rainforest Alliance or Fairtrade, and some even have three or four certifications,” says Claudia Muñoz, who handles design and marketing for Fresh-o-Fair. “We do also work with some smaller farms that don’t yet have the certifications, but they are doing the work — they have amazing projects going, social and environmental — and we want to help them.”

Buyers can use a filter on the Fresh-o-Fair website that allows them to purchase only from farms with certifications, or with a particular certification. Eventually, Muñoz and her father and brother — Fresh-o-Fair is a family business — also plan to organize trips for florists and floral creatives who want to visit the farms, so they can see and understand what sustainability means, on the ground, and go home and share those stories with their customers. 🌿

Bruce Wright is a contributing writer to *Floral Management*.



Jeroen Oudheusden, executive officer for Floriculture Sustainability Initiative

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TAP INTO THE POWER OF EMAIL AUTOMATION

> When working with businesses inside and outside of the floral industry, I always start by asking them to identify their biggest marketing challenge. Almost universally, the response is a lack of time and resources. It is understandable. Those of us in the floral industry are often too busy managing supply chain issues, addressing substitutions, and hiring, training (and trying to retain) workers, that we just don't have time to be strategic and intentional about marketing plans.

That's in stark contrast to the efficient operations happening on the back end of many businesses. Think of all the machines running bouquet operations, increasing efficiency at the farm level. Companies have implemented lean techniques in their warehouses and invested hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars into software that provides load and routing optimization. The opportunity for more automation does not lie in the back-end operational processes but rather on the front end in our sales in marketing processes. You may be asking, "Why should my company tackle marketing automation with everything else we have going on?" The answer is that you can no longer afford to *not* invest in marketing automation. Why?

Nearly 80 percent of marketers acknowledge marketing automation as the No. 1 contributor to their success, according to Lenskold Marketing Group.

Businesses that use marketing automation are 20 percent more productive, according to Nucleus Research.

Businesses that deploy marketing automation were also able to cut down marketing overhead by more than 12 percent, according to Invespro, which specializes in conversion rate optimization.

While these statistics are not floral industry specific, they are very powerful and reinforce that your business cannot afford to ignore the power of marketing automation.

One of the most common marketing automation applications — and the channel in which marketers are seeing the biggest return on investment — is email marketing. Contrary to popular belief, email marketing is not dead, and for every \$1 spent, on average, marketers can expect to earn \$36 in return, according to research done by Litmus, an email marketing company.

Here are the top five "must-have" automated email campaigns:

Welcome Email

A strong, automated welcome email series should not only welcome new subscribers to your list and thank them for joining,

but it should also introduce them to your brand and give them an idea of what they can expect as a subscriber.

Here is an example of what to include in a three-part welcome emails series: In the first email, include a double opt-in to ensure that the subscriber wants to receive emails from you. Follow up in one day with a second email while your brand is still fresh in their mind. Make sure to establish expectations — such as how often you will communicate

SHUTTERSTOCK/MICROONE



and what perks you offer to subscribers. Don't forget to invite them to follow your social channels.

If they have not made a purchase in 24 hours after receiving the first two emails, you may want to send a third email offering a special incentive.

Cart Abandonment Series

According to research from the Baymard Institute, as many as 81.4 percent of online shopping carts are abandoned. Business Insider estimates online retailers will lose as much as \$4 trillion to cart abandonment. The good news is that savvy marketers can recover more than 60 percent of that lost revenue with an effective cart abandonment series.

To maximize effectiveness, take this automated email campaign further than a single reminder email. Use a sequence of emails that you can set up to try and recover the sale. While best practice suggests sending a cart abandonment email 24 hours after the cart has been abandoned, flower purchases are time sensitive, so it is better to send the first email as soon as 30 minutes after the cart has been abandoned.

In this first email, remind the customer what they left in their cart. After three hours, send another reminder, and this time think about how to overcome objections. For example, say, "We know picking the right arrangement can be tough and a timely delivery can be worrisome. We guarantee on-time delivery, and we are rated 4.5 stars on Google with a high returning customer satisfaction rate."

Consumers have been trained that if they abandon their cart, they might get a discount emailed to them if they wait long enough. Wait to send a promotional offer until the third email. Over time, look at your data to determine if you should adjust the timing or number of emails.

Customer Win-Back

To protect your email reputation, make sure your list isn't full of uninterested subscribers. According to Campaign Monitor, existing customers — even if they've been inactive — are often easier to sell to than new prospects. New prospects have a profitability range between 5 and 20 percent — far lower than existing customers.

Personalization is the key to winning back previous customers. If they have purchased before, offer an item similar to their last purchase. The first email should be a deep discount or promotion. Send this email to those who haven't opened or clicked on your emails in more than 60 days. In subsequent emails ask them to confirm that they still want to receive emails from you.

Customer Reviews

For flower shops selling online, Google ratings matter *a lot*, especially when prospective customers are searching in your area. Generate more reviews by automatically sending an email to encourage a review after an order arrives. Make it personal; remind them what they purchased, and don't be shy about offering them links on flower care.

Birthday Email or Anniversary Email

One of the biggest benefits of marketing automation is being able to add a personal touch to customer communication. Take your relationship with your customers a step further and set up birthday emails that provide a special offer at the beginning of the recipient's birthday month. How do you collect this information? Ask at the point of opt-in (in your sign-up form or landing page) and associate the information right then and there. Or you can ask in an email and have them click a link as part of your new automated welcome email series. Another idea is celebrating the anniversary of when your subscriber signed up for your list. Developing a loyal customer that makes it a year with you is important — celebrate your relationship!

Many email service providers offer automated email campaigns. Explore the out-of-the-box solutions your email service provider has available. Just remember, when developing these campaigns, personalization and authenticity are key. Even though these are pre-made automation campaigns, make sure to keep the campaigns true to your brand, and test the campaigns to determine what works best for your audience. 🌿

Melanie Spilbeler is a managing partner of FreshPath Marketing, a floral-focused marketing consultancy and agency. She is also the head of the WF&FSA Marketing Committee and sits on the SAF Wholesale Council.



SPRINGTIME STUNNERS

➤ Although Very Peri, the Pantone Color Institute's 2022 Color of the Year, doesn't allow the plentiful number of fresh cut flowers as, say, shades of pink, red, or yellow, it nonetheless provides floral designers ample opportunities for creative expression. (See p. 20 for product and palette ideas.) For Nicole Palazzo, marketing director of City Line Florist in Trumbull, Connecticut, coral makes a favorite complement. Here, she shares two shop favorites with a nice profit margin. 🌿

Find complete recipes at safnow.org/moreonline.

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

RAY OF SUNSHINE When Pantone announced Very Peri, Palazzo immediately thought of Accent Decor's "Himalayan" pot. "It is one of my absolute favorite containers to work with, and I'm so glad it fits with this color," she says. The soft and sunny design features several consumer favorites, including ranunculus and 'Kahala' roses. "It's small, but with all those premium flowers, it certainly is mighty," she says. For even more visual interest, she inserted a dried fan and two pieces of bunny tails. "I am not even close to being over the dried flower trend," she says. Design time: 15 minutes. Wholesale costs: \$47. Suggested retail price: \$175.



FIT FOR A QUEEN This design is chock full of premium flowers and intriguing textures, with a heavenly fragrance to boot. The effect? A luxurious gift for the senses. Don't be afraid to aim high, says Palazzo of this prized piece, named "Queen Elizabeth," from City Line's 2021 Mother's Day Collection. "Even though it had a hefty price tag, it sold really well," Palazzo noted. Design time: 15 minutes. Wholesale costs: \$70. Suggested retail price: \$270 to \$300.



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Help customers pamper loved ones with this new line of soy wax candles that includes words of affirmation and crystals or stones. The jars are made from recycled glass and the labels are biodegradable. As a bonus, the candle dust cover contains non-invasive wildflower seeds for the recipient to plant. kundalinicandles.com



GINGKO VASE LIGHT

Often the simplest design creations can make the biggest impact and the new Smart Vase Light from Faire is a great example. The paper, oval-shaped table light is made from sustainable wood, creating the perfect centerpiece for any occasion. Cleverly hidden inside is a heatproof and water-safe tube to hold your customers' favorite flowers. faire.com



REUSABLE ORGANIC TOTES

These reusable flower garden totes are designed to hold flowers and herbs. The two straps wrap around and tie in front for easy bundling. Each tote is crafted by Aplat in their San Francisco studio using 100 percent certified organic cotton and zero-waste production principles. Available in two colors: stone and olive. madetrade.com



ZERO WASTE

Huski Home is a family-run company that puts sustainability at the top of the priority list. Its trademark travel cups are made from recycled rice husks. Each cup is handmade, PBA free, and double insulated with a leakproof flip lid and non-slip base. They'll keep coffee hot for 90 minutes and are available in 13 colors. huskihome.com



ECO-FRIENDLY MEETS ECHO CHIC

EverWrap offers a better-for-the-earth alternative to wrapping paper. The company's reusable gift bags, boxes, bows, and charms are available for any occasion. All bags and boxes are self-closing with the closures built in, so no scissors or tape is needed. everwrap.com

Sheila Santiago is the director of publishing for the Society of American Florists.



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GROW YOUR CUSTOMERS' GREEN THUMBS

> A new generation of plant parents are eager to expand their indoor jungles. Capitalize on the houseplant craze by investing in your customers' success. How? By providing top-notch care tips for every plant that goes out the door. That sounds practical and maybe even obvious, but it's not the easiest thing to do. Finding reliable resources to guide best care practices for plants takes time, creativity, and organization. Learn how two florists cater to their houseplant customers to cultivate growing success.

Glean from the Experts

At Blumen Meister's Flower Market in New Braunfels, Texas, Tymonee Wilburn inspires customer success by sharing her own passion for houseplants. She's a self-confessed plant collector whose first love is cacti, but she's added more houseplants over the years. "I wouldn't say I'm an expert, but I do have a good knowledge base of each plant. We always encourage customers to give us a call if something's not working out. We can help walk them through most issues," she says.

When customers are shopping, Wilburn guides their plant selection to find the right houseplant for the type of light they have. She also puts a focus on soil. "Soil is a big part of houseplant success and many of our plants, including succulents and cacti, come from the wholesaler in peat moss, which isn't ideal for those plants," she says. Blumen Meister's offers a planting bar for customers or staff to transplant newly acquired plants. Wilburn creates a custom mix for succulents and cacti containing a lot of inorganic material for drainage. Customers choose from different containers and top dressings for soil.

The shop also gives customers care cards for each different plant species. "Our goal is to help them succeed by giving instructions and tips," Wilburn says. "It might be something like, 'Before watering, check the soil to see if it's dry.' Or 'It's okay to water on a schedule but also check the soil to see what it's like.'"



SHUTTERSTOCK/NATALIA LEBEDINSKAIA

Craft Branded Care Sheets

Lafayette Florist, Gift Shop & Garden Center in Lafayette, Colorado, is a fourth-generation family business. "We pride ourselves on our printed care sheets for houseplants," says Tanner Wheat, garden center manager. Each plant has a specific care sheet that details how to care for the plant in a home in Colorado. The sheet also has the shop's contact information.

With some plant groups, such as cacti and succulents, the care sheets are basic and readily apply to the majority of the shop's inventory. This helps save time and space. "The most important thing with these care sheets is to leave some room for notes," Wheat says. "Maybe when you're selling the plant you'll jot down, 'This plant is for your west window. Bring it inside early in fall.' Or maybe you'll mention it's poisonous to dogs or share some propagation tips."

In the care sheet file cabinet, the shop also keeps a plant toxicity list

from an accredited university. "We like the toxicity list from the University of California. It gives ratings from non-toxic to major toxicity, while including animal toxicity," he says.

Wheat stresses that customizing care sheets to your local environment is important because indoor plant care varies between Colorado and Florida, for instance. Find regional information through your local extension service or local growers and suppliers.

Wheat warns against simply copying and pasting care tips from generic online search results. "You want to keep verbiage similar with all the care sheets you make," he says. "The sheets serve a major purpose for the business — keeping our name out there — and also ensures the customer's success." That's a win all the way around. 🌿

Julie Martens Forney is a contributing writer to *Floral Management*.



CHRIS DRUMMOND, AAF, PFCI
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