



SYMPATHY

Floral Design Manual





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*Mississippi State
University and
MSU Floristry*

Mississippi State University (MSU) was established on February 28, 1878, as the Agricultural and Mechanical College of the State of Mississippi—one of the national land-grant entities created by Congress through the 1862 Morrill Act.

MSU Extension offers a wide range of floriculture and ornamental horticulture information through publications, programs, newsletters, videos, and classes. Floral courses and certifications are available for both consumers and professional florists. The MSU Extension Professional Florist program, designed for experienced florists, and the Master Floral Designer program, intended for consumers, offer a blend of learning opportunities through both online and in-person classes.

Through the **MSU Department of Plant and Soil Sciences**, the Floral Management concentration is available to students

enrolled in the horticulture degree program. The four-year degree involves sourcing, purchasing, distributing, marketing, designing, and selling floricultural products. The program is also offered as a minor area of study. Students enrolled in Floral Management receive a well-balanced curriculum that combines design, horticultural sciences, and business management courses. Career opportunities for graduates include retailing, wholesaling, special event designing, and display gardening.

The University Florist is a professional flower shop owned and operated by the MSU Department of Plant and Soil Sciences on the Starkville campus since 1934. The shop provides students with opportunities to hone their design, sales, and management skills in a retail florist setting. Student employees procure and process flowers, create floral arrangements, and install designs for weddings and events.





*Introduction
to Sympathy
Floral Design*



Historically, flowers have been an integral part of funeral rituals across various cultures, symbolizing respect, love, and remembrance. The use of specific flowers and arrangements can reflect the personality of the deceased and convey messages of condolence. This personalization helps mourners connect with the memory of their loved ones and supports the healing process.

Sympathy floral design holds a unique and significant place within the art of floristry. Unlike other arrangements, these creations serve as a quiet expression of compassion, remembrance, and support during life's most delicate moments. A key term is *expression*. As a professional florist, you must help your customer "Say it with flowers." Flowers can express emotions that are difficult to put into words.

This manual is designed to guide floristry students through the thoughtful process of crafting sympathy arrangements, from understanding the symbolism of blooms to mastering techniques that convey sensitivity and respect. Through this journey, you'll learn the mechanics of design and the emotional depth that makes sympathy flowers a powerful tribute to lives remembered and loved.





*Care and
Handling of
Cut Flowers*

Care and handling: All procedures are put in place to ensure flowers and foliage last longer.



As the cut flower industry expands, flowers are now grown, harvested, and shipped worldwide for use in floral designs. The process of moving floral products from the greenhouse and field to the retail florist and finally to customers creates a chain of life for flowers. Each link in the chain must do its part to ensure flowers maintain the highest quality from grower to customer.

These are the links in the chain of life for fresh-cut flowers and foliage.

- **Grower** – Harvest flowers and ships to wholesale distributors.
- **Shipper** – Ships by air or truck to wholesalers.
- **Wholesaler** – Receives flowers from growers; sells to retail florists.
- **Florist** – Receives flowers from wholesalers and local growers; sells and delivers to consumers.
- **Customer** – Receives or gives flowers.



Vase Life and Senescence

Once flowers are arranged in a floral design, the length of time they remain alive is often referred to as **vase life**. With proper care and handling throughout the entire chain of life, florists can ensure each floral design sold contains high-quality flowers. Ideally, flowers should have a vase life of about seven days. This is not the case for all flowers (e.g., daffodils, tulips) and most designs (bouquets, corsages, and arrangements delivered to funeral homes). However, it is a general consumer expectation for arrangements delivered to homes, hospitals, and businesses where long-term enjoyment is desired.

All flowers have a natural lifespan. **Senescence** is the final stage of a flower's life. During this final stage, flowering plants break down and reuse their cells, moving remaining nutrients downward to be stored in roots and tubers. This will promote growth in the next season. With cut flowers, the nutrients leak out of the stem into the vase solution.

When a flower is not properly cared for at any point in its life cycle, it will prematurely senesce. There are several reasons a flower may die early. Some causes are:

- inability of the stem to absorb water
- lack of carbohydrates
- excessive transpiration
- bacterial growth and disease
- ethylene gas
- improper surroundings/conditions

All of the above can be overcome through proper care and handling.

Florists need to understand the causes of premature senescence. They must resolve customers' issues; therefore, an in-depth understanding of how plants function is vital in preventing problems in the first place.

Customer Satisfaction

Studying and improving flower longevity helps to ensure **customer satisfaction**. Consumers must find value in their floral purchases, especially funeral and memorial flowers. Long-lasting flowers and arrangements are a key part of providing value to customers. They understand that fresh flowers will fade, but most would like their arrangements to remain fresh and beautiful throughout the memorial service. If they're sending flowers to a bereaved family, they want the arrangement to last at least a week. However, this is not consumers' only demand. They also expect fair prices, timely delivery, vast selection, easy buying, friendly and courteous staff, and excellent design.

If a customer buys flowers and becomes disappointed because the arrangement does not meet their expectations, they are not likely to buy from the same retailer again. In some cases, dissatisfied customers may choose not to send flowers again.

Gaining new customers and keeping them as buyers is challenging. Some people may not consider buying flowers as a gift and may choose other items that can be purchased and shipped easily.

Staff must gain knowledge and follow through on proper care and handling steps. If followed, this will lead to many satisfied customers. One of the best compliments a florist can receive from a customer is: "Your flowers lasted such a long time!"



Customers should feel confident and pleased with their floral purchases.

Receiving

Knowing your transporters' delivery days and times will help your store prepare for flower shipments. Get in the habit of knowing when your perishable materials arrive at your location. Observe the time express shippers make their deliveries. Wholesale florists typically have regular delivery days, and their routes are determined by the number of shops that place orders within the designated delivery area. More delivery stops signal the potential for late delivery to your location; fewer stops mean your delivery may be earlier than expected.

Ensure pretreatments and long-term flower food powders and / or concentrates are stocked. Buckets should be sanitized, dry, and ready for processing. If space permits, pre-fill buckets with flower food solution before the flowers arrive. Remember, cut flowers and foliage only need a few inches of prepared solution in each bucket.

The best scenario is to mix the solution and allow it to cool in the refrigerator before using it for cut-flower hydration. In this way, the carbohydrate is available for stem uptake, and the solution will move slowly into and throughout the flower, providing uniform hydration.

FILL IN THE BLANKS:

When do FedEx/UPS or other carriers arrive daily at your location?

What are the delivery days and times for your local wholesalers?



Holding Temperature

If you can't process your floral shipment immediately after you receive it, keep the boxes and wrapped flowers at a cool temperature. An air-conditioned environment is better than a warm, outside location. It is also beneficial to store the boxes in the cut-flower cooler instead of keeping them at room temperature. The boxes can be kept in the cooler for up to 24 hours before processing, but only if necessary. Remember that dry-packed cut flowers are under water stress, so they need to be hydrated as soon as possible. Place boxes of fresh flowers horizontally in the cooler. Keeping them vertically can place stress on tender stems, breaking many of them and making them unusable.

You can keep some cut flowers in cold, dry refrigerated storage for up to two weeks. This holding technique allows florists to purchase large quantities of flowers, often at a cheaper price, and experience minimal stem losses. Keep cut flowers in their original packaging—whether farm wraps, shop wraps, or newspaper/plain paper used by smaller,

local farms. Gradually remove some of the flowers for hydration processing and then floral design use.

This technique can be very useful for bulb flowers such as daffodils and tulips in the spring and gladiolus in the summer, as well as other crops when growers have an abundant yield ready for market. This method works if the materials are stored between 33°F and 36°F and kept dry. Surface moisture will allow fungal growth, so be sure that no water has accumulated within the packaging.

Security

Keeping incoming floral shipments secure is a top priority for retail florists. Never leave boxes and bundles of cut flowers unattended because they can be stolen or mistaken for trash and discarded. Cut-flower shipments should be delivered securely away from foot and vehicle traffic. When space is available, an indoor drop-off location is recommended.

Worker Safety and Protective Clothing

Avoid rushing around in any area, especially processing areas, within the florist shop. Cutting tools, wet floors, and debris are among the main causes of accidents.

Processing areas should be organized and located away from design benches, doorways, customer service areas, and other high-traffic areas.

Ideally, a store should be designed to facilitate a workflow between:

1. delivery receipt
2. processing
3. design
4. customer service
5. display areas

Keep work zones, especially the floor, clear of boxes and wrapped floral products. Workers can easily trip and fall into areas with multiple obstructions. Cut stems over a garbage can; do not toss stems directly on the floor. Damp stems and leaves can cause slip-and-fall accidents that can be avoided.

Processing areas should be well-equipped with storage for buckets, cleaning agents, post-harvest chemicals, trash bins, and composting bins. The space must be kept clean and well-organized so that necessary products are within reach. Water or liquid chemical spills are unavoidable. It is essential to clean up spills as soon as possible to reduce the risk of employee injuries.

Processing flowers and cut foliage is one of the most critical tasks, and the processing area is potentially the most important part of the store. If perishable materials are not properly cared for upon arrival, they will not perform well in floral designs, resulting in customer dissatisfaction. Repeat customers are vital to the success of a retail store. Word-of-mouth advertising works in both directions; unhappy customers tend to discuss what went wrong with their flowers more than satisfied ones. A store's profitability depends on using the best floral care and handling practices.

Employees who are floral processors should dress for success at work. They should wear closed-toe shoes with sturdy treads. Open-toe shoes do not provide protection from falling tools or other objects. Flip-flops and sandals do not offer adequate protection and can cause tripping and falling injuries on wet floors.



Closed-toe shoes with quality treads make up the attributes of safe footwear in floristry.

Long hair should be pulled away from the face and hands. Slacks made from durable fabric are more suitable than dressy fabric for floral processing. Long pants are preferable and may be mandatory where you work. Remember, you are employed in the floriculture business, which involves chlorophyll, water, and soil. A clean and neat appearance helps you do your best work. Wearing clothing unsuitable for safety and the job at hand suggests a lack of focus, knowledge, and ability.

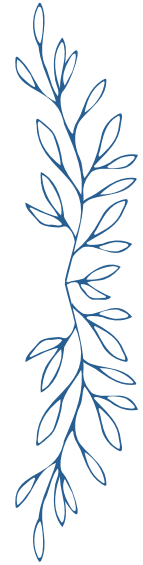
Aprons are made from a variety of materials, including canvas and denim. They can uphold the shop's theme via colors or logos. More frequent processing and sanitizing require more personal protective equipment. Wholesale florists often wear waterproof boots and long lab coats to protect against water splashes and cold temperatures. Rubber gloves are provided to protect hands from frequent contact with cleaners and other chemicals. Often, employers provide protective clothing for workers in the flower shop. If they do not, consider purchasing them yourself to fulfill your work responsibilities.

Proper, Safe Use and Care of Tools

Every florist shop task has a set of associated tools. Using the wrong tool or misusing a tool can cause injury to employees and damage to plant materials.

Table 1. The differences between various types of tools used in retail floristry.

Cutting Task	Tool
flowers	cut flower knife, floral snips, stem cutter
woody stem materials	pruners, stem cutter
wire	wire cutters, multipurpose floral shears
ribbon	ribbon shears
boxes	box cutter



Get in the habit of using the correct tool for the task. The processing area of a retail floral shop runs more efficiently with the proper supply of tools. Begin and continue placing tools in a designated spot, rather than leaving them around the shop. This practice speeds up the processing work time and saves you time from searching for missing tools.

Make sure to oil tools about once per month. Do not wash tools with soap and water to sanitize them, as this can cause the metal to rust. A sanitizing wipe works well. Alternatively, other options include wiping the tools with a cloth dipped in a 10 percent bleach solution or cleaning tools with a cloth dipped in a bucket sanitizer solution. Wear rubber or nitrile gloves to protect your skin from strong sanitizers. Dry the surfaces of the excess solution with a clean cloth, then apply fine oil (such as WD-40 or a similar product) to tools with multiple parts, such as scissors and pruners. Allow the oil to permeate the tool's joints to prevent interior rusting.

Always avoid using tools for purposes other than their intended use. For example, avoid using scissors to open a box. Use a box cutter, also known as a utility knife. Flower knives will quickly become dull when used to cut cardboard. A floral knife will keep its sharpness longer if limited to cutting soft, herbaceous stems only.



Purchasing



Purchasing cut flowers and greenery for a retail operation is an important job. The buyer must always aim to purchase the highest-quality products at the lowest prices. Of course, this is the same goal for every flower buyer, which leads to competition in the overall marketplace. The greater the demand for flowers, the higher the prices. This becomes more intense during holidays and wedding and prom season when flowers are in high demand. Red roses are in high demand and sold at high prices in the weeks leading up to and after Valentine's Day. Orange and gold flowers are in higher demand around Thanksgiving than at any other time of year. You can expect to pay more for red carnations in December and around Valentine's Day than in other months.

It takes time and effort to become an effective flower buyer. In new or small retail operations, the flower buyer may purchase floral materials from a few wholesalers within a few hours' drive from the store. Buying may extend beyond traditional wholesale florists to brokers and farms as the business grows. Finding varying sources of high-quality floral products is an essential task for the buyer; it requires considerable time and effort. Indeed, sourcing is a cost within a successful floral business. Selling the freshest, most unusual flowers is a value-added service offered by a retail shop that most consumers demand.

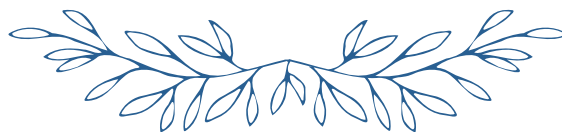
Buyers must consider their budgets before rushing into purchasing. It is easy to get caught up in the beauty of flowers or overbuy what seems to be a

good deal. You must have funds to make purchases. Flower purchases are usually made with credit cards, but some suppliers accept cash or checks. Some wholesalers allow retailers to build credit by purchasing flowers and supplies and then paying a monthly balance. This practice is considered outdated in most markets.

The flower buyer must make informed decisions on inventory needs. This is achieved by keeping accurate records of weekly sales. At the end of each week, calculate and record the number of flowers, the amount of cut foliage, and the types of plants sold. Note the various types of flowers, such as roses, chrysanthemums, and other traditional flowers. Add notes about seasonal crops, bulb flowers in the spring, and the effects of holidays on sales. After one year, buyers will have developed a valuable guide that will eliminate the guesswork from purchasing.

By continuing the recordkeeping process, the buyer will be able to compare the previous year's sales with the current year. This allows the buyer to calculate sales percentages. As the business grows in sales volume, the percentage increase will provide the data for increases in cut flower purchases. This way, the shop will be fully stocked with less risk of overbuying.

It is always best to buy from reputable sources. Once a new source has been discovered, make a few trial orders before you select and depend on them for essential holiday or wedding flower purchases.



Bulk Floral Sources

Wholesale Florists

A wholesale florist is often the most convenient and comprehensive source for cut flowers, cut ornamental foliage, and florist supplies. Wholesalers purchase from numerous sources, including flower farms worldwide. The prices of flowers and supplies from the wholesale florist may be equal to or higher than buying directly from the farm. They may also have cheaper prices! Buyers should understand what they get for their money, including quality, freshness, shipping and delivery costs, and boxing / packing expenses. There is much more to purchasing than just the cost of flower stems.



The local wholesale florist supplier offers products and services critical to the needs of retail florists.



As buyers gain experience, they get better at finding and using the best flower sources for the shop. A buyer may purchase greenery and supplies from one wholesaler, seasonal cut flowers from another on the other side of town, and roses directly from a grower. It is always good practice to buy from a variety of suppliers and to avoid “putting all your eggs in one basket”. A wholesale florist makes it easy to purchase flowers and supplies because they have already sourced a wide variety of products and keep them on hand. Because their inventories are diverse, from seasonal cut flowers to daily standards, they become a one-stop shop, saving the retailer time and effort.

Many wholesale florists deliver their products directly to retailers for a fee, which is an additional benefit. Delivery dates and times vary according on distance and preset schedules.



Brokers

A broker is an entity between farms and retailers. They do not have a brick-and-mortar store like a wholesale florist, but a broker connects their retailer clients to flowers from multiple farms. The broker is a middleman, and as such, tacks on a fee for sourcing products. This fee is acceptable in the marketplace, and is like hiring an experienced, well-connected employee to help with buying. The retailer simply provides an order to the broker who then, in turn, connects with a network of flower farms. Brokers coordinate the flower delivery directly to the retailer, and the retailer pays one concise bill. Brokers can sell unique flowers from distant or remote farms that are not easily found at local wholesalers.

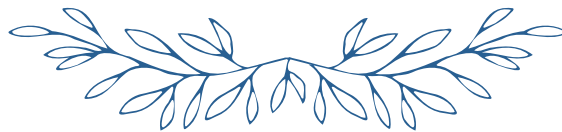
Farms

Farm-direct buying is often optimal due to the best guarantees of freshness and price, in general. There is no middle point, as with the traditional wholesaler, where flowers may be stored dry or in water for days or weeks before they're sold to retailers. Farms sell freshly harvested flowers and greenery that are shipped directly to the retailer. Downsides to purchasing from farms include a narrow variety of available flowers and the necessity of buying in larger quantities. Not every farm grows multiple types of flowers due to growing conditions, climate, and know-how. Remember, growing flowers is challenging, as it is both a science and an art.

If a store purchases too many flowers, shrinkage (flower loss) increases, which cancels out any gains from lower-cost flowers. Due to this pitfall, retailers should anticipate their floral needs based on historical records. For example, how many red roses were sold on Valentine's Day in the previous year? How many cases of evergreens were used during the last Christmas holiday season? Were any of these materials disposed of because they remained unsold?

Large flower farms pack and ship their flowers in shipping boxes, designed to withstand moderate handling. They often use air freight, shipping via refrigerated trucks (e.g., Armellini, Prime), shipping via carriers (e.g., FedEx), and a combination of transportation methods.

Regardless of the entity, it is recommended that buyers establish a business rapport with their suppliers. In this way, the supplier gains a better understanding of the retailer's needs. Knowing more about your store and your clients' desires will help them better meet your needs. It is also recommended that buyers connect with other trustworthy buyers to exchange sourcing information. Membership in state, regional, national, and international florist associations can connect you with like-minded, savvy businesspeople who possess a wealth of buying source information.





Sanitation



It is worth repeating that sanitation techniques and practices are important in floristry. The working environment must be as clean as possible to prevent the spread of pathogens.

Proper sanitation techniques have continually evolved and improved over the years. In today's world, there's no shortage of disinfectants, cleaners, and sanitizing solutions. These products are available for florists to use to keep their workspace, cooler, and overall shop clean.

Cleanliness will not only help keep flowers free of disease and look their best for as long as possible, but it also communicates to your customers that you are a professional florist who takes care of the shop and its products.

Tables and Tools

All worktables and tools should be cleaned and sanitized daily. Spray the tops of workspaces with a sanitizing spray and wipe them clean with a cloth. Tools should be cleaned at the end of each workday to keep them working well for as long as possible.

Floors

The floors in the work area, walk-in cooler, and shop salesroom should be swept daily to remove any stem clippings, petals, and leaves. Decaying materials give off ethylene gas, which speeds up senescence. Once a week, the workroom floors should be mopped with a sanitizing floor cleaner to prevent the spread of bacteria and diseases that can be harmful to cut flowers.

Cooler Interior

The cooler shelves and floors should be swept daily to remove flower petals and leaves that may have fallen from stored flowers and foliage. Once a week, the cooler should be cleared to allow for thorough cleaning. The following steps should be taken to clean and sanitize a walk-in cooler properly:

- Completely clear the cooler of all boxes and buckets. Keep the items out of foot traffic areas.
- Sweep the floor of all loose leaves and stems.
- Wipe down the shelves and walls with a sanitizing solution.
- Mop the floor of the cooler using a sanitizing floor cleaner.



Buckets

Buckets should always be clean and sanitized before fresh-cut flowers are placed in them. Dirty buckets are breeding grounds for bacteria that can attack flowers, causing them to die prematurely in the cooler. Reusing a bucket without proper sanitation is like using a dirty bandage on a wound; it introduces **pathogens** within the cut ends of the stems.

All buckets should be washed using a solution that will disinfect and clean them. Florists use special cleaners called “quats” (quaternary ammonium compounds) for flower buckets. These cleaners have a residual cleaning effect, staying germ-free long after washing and drying. Use these cleaners only as directed and avoid use on utensils and plates.

The drying phase of sanitizing buckets is essential. Their surfaces must be dry before they are stacked; otherwise, pulling them apart is difficult. One way to keep track of dirty and clean buckets is their angle. Buckets that are upright are dirty; buckets turned upside down are clean. Ensure all store employees are aware of this method.

The interior and exterior of the bucket should be scrubbed with a stiff, bristled brush or scouring pad while immersed in the water/cleaning solution mixture. Once washed, the bucket should be rinsed with clean water and turned upside down to air dry. Once dry, buckets can be stacked and stored together. If using a quat product, scrubbing is necessary only if residual soil or plant material adheres to the bucket surfaces. If the buckets appear clean after use, mist them with quat and allow them to air dry.

Sinks

The interior walls of the sink should be scrubbed and cleaned if not daily, at least before buckets are washed.

Leaf and flower debris that collects in buckets tends to clog sink drains when the buckets are emptied. To prevent this, a piece of metal mesh wire can be placed in the bottom of the sink to help catch floral debris. Rolls of wire can be purchased at most local hardware stores. The wire can be lifted out to easily dump debris collected at the bottom of the sink.

It is always a good idea to keep a small plunger dedicated to sink clogs located somewhere in the flower shop.

Garbage Bins

Garbage bins should be emptied at the end of each day. The interior of garbage bins should be cleaned and sanitized at least once a week.

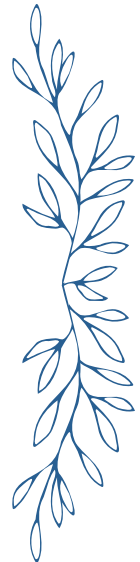
Cleaner Agents

Several cleaners are made specifically for florists to use in retail floral settings. Post-harvest chemical manufacturers often offer a range of cleaners in their product lines, including quats. These agents, which have a prolonged sanitizing effect, are recommended for use in floristry.

A mixture of bleach and water may also be used to clean and disinfect tools and surfaces. The following solution of bleach and water should be used on these surfaces:


1 tablespoon of bleach per 1 quart of water or ¼ cup of bleach per 1 gallon of water.

Either of these ratios will give you a 500–800 ppm disinfecting solution. The solution should be remade daily. Regardless of the chemicals used, always follow the directions on the product labels.





Treatments



Once flowers and cut foliage are checked in, it is time to process them. This set of actions is the most essential to help ensure cut plant materials will have long vase life—the amount of time flowers remain beautiful and usable. Some plant materials respond well to an acidifying pretreatment developed and tested to improve floral longevity.

Acidifiers

One type of pretreatment is a citric acid pulse. Usually, the acidifier is made from citric acid. It is called a *pulse* because the length of treatment is brief, about the same as a heartbeat. These pretreatments help hydrate flowers efficiently. Therefore, pretreatment mixtures containing citric acid concentrations are often referred to as hydrating solutions.

Acidified water tends to flow readily from the solution into the stem. Another primary reason for using citric acid pulses is that this low pH water creates an environment within plant cells that stops bacteria from multiplying. Simply put, bacteria do not reproduce quickly in acidified water. As they grow and multiply, bacteria form a barrier that hinders water uptake in the xylem, the specialized tissue that conducts water upward in a stem.

Once a flower stem or a bunch of stems is cut, the fresh tissue is dipped into a very shallow amount of the solution for one second, then immediately placed in a long-term flower food solution.

Another type of pretreatment consists of high concentrations of carbohydrates. Non-bulb type flowers that are expected to bloom with unfurling petals benefit from a sugar boost for energy. Your shop may use a variety of treatments, so it is best to familiarize yourself with them by reading and following label directions.

Some hydrating solutions contain aluminum sulfate, like powdered alum. This chemical is known to aid water uptake. Many florists follow the practice of dipping cut stems of hydrangea, a wilt-sensitive cut flower, into powdered alum.

Holding Solutions: Cut Flower Food

Fresh flower food solutions contain three main ingredients. They are carbohydrates, citric acid, and a biocide. Carbohydrates, a type of sugar, provide cut flowers with an energy source to aid in blooming. This component helps flowers, such as rose petals, unfurl so that their spectacular beauty can be fully appreciated. Bulb flowers do not benefit from the added carbohydrate because they do not need additional sugar. Flowers such as gerbera are already in full bloom upon harvest, so they do not benefit from the carbohydrate addition. It is important to note that the carbohydrates in fresh flower food solutions do not harm these flowers. They merely do not use the additional food source.

Citric acid helps the flow of water into the stem, from cell to cell. Bacteria do not readily multiply in water with a low pH (acidic) level. These are the reasons why fresh flower food solutions have this component. After about three days, bacterial growth overcomes the acidic water environment in which flowers are stored at room temperature. This is why vase and bucket water should be changed every few days for flowers displayed at room temperature. Flowers stored in refrigeration can remain fresh in flower food solutions for weeks because the low temperatures inhibit bacterial growth.

The third component, biocide, helps to keep bacterial growth in check. Remember that one of the chief problems associated with cut flower longevity is bacterial blockage. Bacteria grow at the cut end of the stem, where water is taken up into the stem, but this shows up itself as wilting in the weaker areas, such as the stem neck and the flower petals. Bent neck is a phenomenon where the part of the stem just underneath the flower head wilts.

Some florists add wire bracing to their cut flowers to counteract the effect of bent neck. This can help the flower head stay upright. It adds extra costs for supply and labor. Bracing wires are not necessary in daily floral design work, but it is helpful to know this technique when extra support is needed.

Recutting plant material stems exposes fresh tissue to water uptake. Some new, fresh flower food solutions on the market do not require stems to be recut. This feature helps shop employees save labor

time in processing fresh flowers. Once flowers arrive from the wholesale source, they can be placed in fresh flower solution once any foliage that may fall below the water line is removed.

Chlorine has been found to limit bacterial growth in bucket solutions. Flowers like gerbera have longer vase life when stored in this chemical. It is primarily used at the grower level versus the retail level.

Once flowers have been pre-treated and placed in flower food solutions, it is recommended that they be kept at room temperature for at least one hour before refrigeration. This period is called “conditioning,” which allows flowers to fully take up the flower food solution, ensuring that the leaves and growth terminals are fully *turgid*, a state where plant cells have taken up the maximum amount of water. A turgid plant cell is puffy, while a *flaccid* plant cell is misshapen and loose. Wilting is the sign of flaccid plant cells.

Post-Design Mists, Sprays, and Dips

When a designer completes an arrangement, there are two categories of post-design treatments that can be used to increase the time designs remain beautiful.

The first type of finishing treatment is an antitranspirant. Transpiration is the movement of water across plant tissues into the open air. In floral designs that are not kept in water, it is essential to retain as much existing water as possible within the cells. Coating leaves and petals with a sealant solution accomplishes this. Antitranspirants are applied as a liquid spray or dip that eventually dries and coats the plant’s stomata, the natural openings found mainly on the undersides of leaves. You can think of antitranspirants as plastic coatings for flowers and foliage.

These products are manufactured to slow down the wilting of flowers to wear and carry floral items, such as corsages and bridal bouquets. These floral designs do not have a water source, so it is essential to seal them to slow down the wilting process.

This effect keeps them fresher-looking for a brief period, depending on environmental conditions like ambient temperature and relative humidity. Still, freshness lasting an extra hour or two longer can make a big difference in wedding or prom flowers.

A second type of post design treatment is used for flowers and foliage displayed in water. These sprays contain plant hormones that promote cell elongation or growth. If plant material is growing, it takes up water, which results in a healthy, fresh appearance. While antitranspirant sprays must coat all petal and leaf surfaces, hormone-containing sprays should be applied as a light mist to vase and floral foam-based arrangements.

Using a hormonal spray on a corsage or an antitranspirant on a vase arrangement does not harm the flowers; however, knowing the difference between the two allows for proper treatment.

MCP: An Anti-Ethylene Compound

Ethylene is an odorless, colorless gas given off by aging plant materials, fruit, cigarette smoke, and other sources. Plant materials produce this gas as a means of transitioning from the flowering phase to the fruiting phase of their life cycle. As part of this process, flowers drop their petals to create seeds within fruit. Unlike cut flowers, where consumers want long-lasting floral displays, this wilts quickly.

A compound, 1-methylcyclopropene (1-MCP), is used at the grower level to offset ethylene synthesis. 1-MCP is released as a gas in greenhouses and large coolers, preventing ethylene production.

DON'T FALL FOR THESE FLORAL MYTHS

The following practices are not scientifically supported.

- ◆ To keep flowers fresh longer, add a penny to the vase.
- ◆ To make lilies open faster, remove and then drop the anthers into the bucket solution.
- ◆ Hammer the stems of woody and/or herbaceous flower stems to help them take up water.





Processing



Proper processing of cut flowers is core to providing customers with the longest-lasting floral products possible. Do not skip any of these steps! They are some of the most critical processes within any floral business.

Note that various treatments are available, as explained in the previous section. Read all label directions and note which treatments are best for the flower varieties stocked in your store.



Flower buckets with fresh flower solution added are ready for cut flower conditioning.

Prepare the Space

You can anticipate flower processing and work ahead of schedule by preparing the processing area, saving time and effort. Keep all buckets, cutters, and floral chemicals organized and clean. Before flowers are unpacked, or even before they arrive in the shop, prepare bucket solutions in sanitized holding containers. By doing this, the buckets will be ready for cut flowers to be placed in them and begin the hydration process.

At this point, staff who are processing the flowers should monitor all incoming cut flowers. Did the shop receive the correct order? Does the delivery match the invoice? Are these fresh, high-quality materials? Do the flowers show any signs of damage during transit?

If the carrier damaged the materials before shop delivery, inform management about the problem. Many wholesalers, brokers, and farms require digital images as proof of damage. If a significant amount of time passes between noting any damage and contacting the wholesaler, broker, or farm, any claims for compensation (discounts, refunds, replacements) may not be honored. Most of the time, your cut flower order will arrive in tip-top shape.

Step by Step

Remove all packaging materials from the cut flowers. This includes paper and cardboard wraps used on roses. Keeping wrappers in place does not help flowers stay fresher longer, but it can help prevent mechanical damage, such as bruising caused by objects bumping into the flower heads, petals, or leaves.

Most packaging used for floral crops is designed to retain moisture during shipping and prevent damage caused by bumps. Since cut flowers will now be placed in water, this packaging is not needed and keeping it on the cut flowers can increase gray mold growth. Air circulation is vastly improved by removing the wrappers. Sometimes, leaving the wrappers on can be a good idea, for example, if they are re-transported to another site soon after being received in the shop.



WHAT IS GRAY MOLD?

It is a fungal disease that blights flowers, leaves, and stems.

Old and wounded tissue is susceptible.

It is common in wet or very humid conditions.



Gray mold growing within *Limonium sinuatum* flowers.

Some florists keep wrappers on their cut roses with the idea that the binding keeps the flowers from opening. Some customers prefer closed rose blossoms and believe that roses in bud are fresher and last longer. Constricting the flower does not halt time, however. Flowers from the same shipment that are kept wrapped are the same age as those that are unwrapped.

Another example of when to keep flowers in their shipping wrappers is found in cut tulip bunches. Tulips will appear full of water and turgid upon arrival, but they are water-stressed. Their plastic or paper sleeves should remain in place during the hydration phase to support stems. Without support, the stems will become turgid while bent, thus keeping a wilted look even when they are very fresh.

Customers would complain about receiving wilted tulips, and floral designers would be frustrated by these flowers appearing to hang over the sides of the containers. If your shop's tulips look wilted while turgid, gently wrap them for vertical support, leave them out of refrigeration, and align them to light sources to aid upright growth.

Take these important factors into consideration. Be sure to understand how the flowers will be used to make informed decisions.

Take care to cut the flower sleeves instead of tearing or pulling them. Be sure to separate plastics from compostable materials.

Before placing flowers in any solution, be sure to remove any loose foliage or any leaves that fall below the water line in the buckets. Be sure to leave all healthy foliage on the stem above the waterline. Every time a leaf or petal is removed from a cut flower, a small wound is made at the surface contact point. Such wounds provide sites for moisture loss and pathogen entry. Further, wounding causes ethylene synthesis (plant hormone gas production). Reduce cut plant material wounding as much as possible.

At this point, it is a good idea to remove the sharp points of rose thorns. They can be a hazard to shop employees and consumers, but not every thorn needs to be removed from the stem. When an entire thorn is removed from a stem, a wound is left behind. The stem creates a waxy layer, like a scab, over the wound. During this process, moisture is lost from the wound. Further, there are water-conducting vessels present at the base of thorns. If the entire thorn is removed, so are these vessels. If most of the vessels are removed, the stem's ability to keep the flower head hydrated is greatly reduced, as well as the flower's longevity.

Keep in mind that all processing and design habits should avoid wounding flower stems, foliage, and flower heads. It is only necessary to remove the sharp tip of the lower 25–50 percent of thorns present on rose stems.

Soft, plastic rose de-thorners gently remove the sharp tips of thorns, leaving most thorn bases intact. Metal rose strippers can also be effective, but if misused, they can remove the bark of the stem, along with the water-conducting vessels. It is better for the overall performance of roses to leave the thorns intact, but for the sake of our hands, take some time to gently remove the sharp points of the thorns.

When working with lilies, it is essential to remove their anthers just as the flower opens before the pollen becomes dry and easily spreads. There are two reasons why you should remove anthers from each lily blossom as soon as it opens. The first reason is that when pollen grains attach to the sticky stigma, each grain germinates a pollen tube carrying genetic

information through the tube down the style to the flower's ovary. The pollen tube causes wounding of the style tissue. Wounding from any source increases ethylene synthesis, which leads to senescence and plant tissue death. Lilies are ethylene-sensitive, so anther removal is crucial.

The second reason to remove anthers is due to pollen shedding. As the flower petals and sepals open, anthers begin to mature and expose their pollen. Pollen is lightweight and easily transfers to surfaces, including textiles.

If pollen reaches fabrics, do not attempt to dust it off with your fingertips. Skin oil and dirt may help set the pollen stain deeper into the fabric. Instead, brush the pollen away with a chenille stem or soft brush. Success with pollen removal may be found by placing stained textiles in strong sunlight, such as on a windowsill. After a few days, brush off the dried pollen with a chenille stem. Often, professional dry cleaners can remove pollen stains. If pollen stains light-colored flower petals, it can be dislodged using a water mister, antitranspirant spray mist (e.g., *Crowning Glory*), or plant hormone mist (e.g., *Hawaiian Floral Mist*).

The next step is to provide all stems with a cut at a sharp angle to expose fresh tissue. By doing this, the cut stem will readily take up the flower solution. Additionally, cutting flowers at a sharp angle prevents individual flower stems from sealing themselves to the bottom of buckets during storage, thus preventing water uptake. When plant material is cut, the stems produce natural waxes that help it to heal. The problem with floral design work is that the waxy scab becomes somewhat waterproof. It must be removed. This is best accomplished with a sharp blade. You can use a cut flower knife, or if you're processing a larger number of stems, use a bunch cutter. When cutting woody stems, it is recommended to use sharp pruning shears.

Professional florists who care about floral longevity use the right tools for the job. Avoid cutting flower stems with wire cutters or scissors that pinch water-conducting vessels closed.



When judging where to recut the flower stem, a florist must weigh both freshness and value. You must cut away any stem part with dried or otherwise damaged vascular tissue, but leave as much of the stem intact as possible. Removing more than this takes away the valuable stem length. All shop employees should be aware that the wholesale cost of roses includes not only the flower head itself, but also the length of the stem. The longer the rose's stem, the higher its wholesale cost. Observe the tissue at the base of the flower; it will often be brown and in decline. You must cut above that point.

Table 2. General guidelines for cutting distance.

Stem Length	Cut Distance
50 cm/20 in	5 cm/2 in
60 cm/24 in	8 cm/3 in
70 cm/28 in	10 cm/4 in

Shorter materials, such as tulips, respond best to a cut of about 2.5 cm (1 inch). If there is any white tissue at the base of the stem, be sure to cut 2.5 cm (1 inch) above it, as it does not conduct water readily. This is a good guideline to keep in mind, not only for tulips but also for Dutch iris and gladiolus.

Note that **some** fresh flower foods **do NOT require stems to be recut**. These fresh flower food solutions are drawn into the stems, past the waxy scab that naturally forms at the cut point. Seek out these products from your floral supplier and use them to reduce labor time and expense significantly.

Once stems are cut, place them into the flower food solution immediately. Do not cut them and then leave them on the counter while you work on other tasks; this only causes scabbing to develop.

It is considered a best practice in floral shops to follow the “first in, first out” (FIFO) method when handling flowers. This means that older flowers should always be used before newly processed ones, helping to reduce waste and ensure that costly, perishable inventory is used instead of discarded. To make this process easier for staff, each bucket of flowers should be labeled with the date the flowers arrived in the shop. Using a strip of adhesive tape and a permanent marker is recommended, since sticky notes often detach during cooler organization and bucket handling.

By dating and properly labeling buckets, staff can quickly identify which flowers should be used first. In addition, regular checks of the cooler should be conducted to make sure older flowers are placed in the most accessible position, with newer arrivals stored behind or beneath them. Adopting this system not only improves shop efficiency but also supports better inventory management.

Leave the flowers in the solution for at least one hour before refrigeration. This gives the flowers time to fully hydrate, allowing the leaves to unfurl from the tight packaging and become turgid. They are now ready for use in floral design or refrigerated storage.

Many types of cut foliage are packed and shipped in waxed cardboard boxes. Within the box, greenery is enveloped in plastic film to keep it hydrated. These cut greenery varieties are long-lasting on their own and do not need additional processing and hydration. Store the box within the cut-flower cooler and keep it closed to avoid moisture loss. Take the time to prepare the box, ensure safe storage, and ease product retrieval. Later in this publication, you will learn how to prepare waxed foliage boxes for refrigerated storage.

One method that helps designers gain quick access to the box is to cut the box lid on three of its four sides. This action creates a hamper lid. Carefully untuck the film surrounding all the foliage bunches, then re-tuck it lightly over the top bunches so that they are covered. Employees can take out foliage one bunch at a time by simply opening the lid, turning



back the plastic film liner, removing a bunch, then replacing the film over the remaining greenery and closing the box's lid. Take care when creating the lid to avoid damaging any of the box's contents.

Some retailers and wholesalers open foliage cases by pulling open the box flaps. This action causes the heavy-duty staples to open, exposing their sharp edges. These open staples are a hazard, causing cuts and scratches on employee hands. They can also catch and damage garments. If this box opening method is used, be sure to use pliers or wire cutters to remove loosened box staples.

Remember that flowers are fragile, and every bloom has monetary value. As flowers are unwrapped or unboxed, take care to avoid breaking any stems or flower heads. Take care that cutting tools (such as knives, scissors, and box cutters) do not cut into plant material within wrappings, whether they are made of wrapping paper, plastic sleeves, or newspaper.

The Cut-Flower Cooler

Floral refrigeration is a tool to keep cut flowers fresh for longer periods compared to storing them at room temperature. Considering the cost of flowers, a cooler is a good investment by preventing premature discard of flowers.

A floral cooler is in itself a simple design, involving a well-insulated box or room, and a refrigeration unit. The unit's components consist of cooling coils filled with refrigerant chemicals, a fan, and a motor. The fan blows cold air from around the coils into the space within the floral cooler, keeping the enclosed area cold.

Professional-grade floral coolers use low-velocity fans that circulate cold air from the cooling coils into the cooler. This helps the cooler

maintain the correct humidity level without liquid moisture accumulation. Surface moisture encourages fungal growth.

Soda pop refrigerators and similar food-grade coolers should not be used to store cut flowers. They have high-velocity fans with fewer cooling coils than professional cut-flower coolers. Cans and bottles do not require high humidity; only cold air is needed. These coolers are less expensive to produce because they have fewer coils. Going further, a high-velocity fan in a soda pop cooler can quickly dry out cut flower tissues, even when they are submerged in water.

Temperature



Most floral crops are best stored at temperatures just above freezing, 33–38°F (1–3°C). The cold environment offers many benefits to lengthen the display life of fresh flowers.

- Bacterial growth in the bucket solution is considerably reduced.
- Plant respiration is significantly slowed.
- Flowers retain carbohydrates rather than use them quickly.
- Transpiration continues but at a slower rate.

Some cut flowers, especially those native to tropical regions, can be damaged when exposed to temperatures near freezing. It is recommended that tropical flowers, such as birds of paradise, anthuriums, and ginger, be stored at temperatures between 50–55°F (10–12°C).



Humidity

Humidity rates within floral coolers should be high, around 90 percent relative humidity. This is generally accomplished by water evaporating from the cut flower buckets into the cooler's air space. Take care to keep flowers and foliage away from the breezes caused by the refrigeration unit fans. It can dry out petals and leaves.

Some florists make their floral coolers by augmenting air conditioner units to operate at lower temperature outputs. Commercially produced microcontrollers can be attached to air conditioners, allowing them to be set at temperatures just above freezing. A floral cooler can be organized with this type of system mounted into a window or wall of a well-insulated room or small building.

Sanitation

Keep the floral refrigerator sanitized. Floors should be swept of plant material debris daily. Each week, remove all buckets and boxes, and wipe down the ceiling, walls, and floor with a sanitizing solution. This activity not only gives the cooler a clean look but also counteracts the effects of ethylene gas and prevents the growth of mildew and mold within the cooler. A weekly or bi-weekly cleaning of the screen covering the fan using a damp cloth aid in maintaining clear air flow and can help the refrigeration unit last longer.

Ethylene

Ethylene is an odorless, colorless gas given off by plant materials and bacteria. It is known as the aging hormone and is detrimental to the life of many types of flowers. Removing sources of ethylene from the cut-flower cooler will help extend the life of ethylene-sensitive cut flowers. Avoid storing fruit and other food in cut-flower coolers. Keep a separate refrigerator for employee food.

ETHYLENE SOURCES:

- ◆ cigarette smoke
- ◆ decaying plant material
- ◆ dying flowers
- ◆ exhaust fumes
- ◆ fading foliage
- ◆ fruit



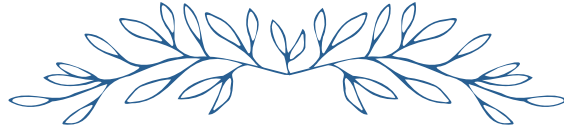
Botrytis

In the section of this publication about processing cut flowers, we mentioned gray mold (*Botrytis cinerea*). This mold is one of the chief complications associated with increasing floral longevity.

Botrytis is in a dormant state, present nearly everywhere, with microscopic, dry spores floating in the air and settling on surfaces. Once it meets moisture, it can grow and develop, wreaking havoc on cut flower petals and leaves. Botrytis flourishes in still environments with moist surfaces. This is the same mold that grows on lettuce and other produce in home refrigerators. It causes plant tissues to become mushy and discolored.

The most effective way to combat botrytis growth is to eliminate surface moisture in still environments. Take care to remove plastic wraps on cut flower bunches in the cooler. Some plastic wraps are necessary to retain freshness, such as those used for corsage bags and plastic boxes. It is fine to design, package, and refrigerate a corsage or boutonniere for a few days, but after a week or two, botrytis will take hold. This is the same theory applied to your edible lettuce in a plastic bag or box in the kitchen refrigerator; be sure to monitor it for freshness.





Reduce the spread of botrytis throughout the shop with good sanitation practices. Clean all tools and tabletops using a quaternary ammonium cleaner or a household cleaning solution and a rag or sponge. Empty trash cans daily. Wash them with a sanitizing solution and allow them to dry completely before use.

Get into the good habit of disposing of leaf and stem debris into a trash can or box, instead of leaving them on the workroom floor. Trampled plant material releases ethylene gas, which helps spread botrytis spores throughout the space. Plant material debris is a slip-and-fall hazard. It harms your brand image.

Tropisms

Plant materials naturally bend (tropism) according to two forces: light and gravity. This ability helps them to orient their roots, shoots, leaves, and flowers to their best advantage. Plant materials that bend toward light sources exhibit phototropism, while those that bend away from gravity are geotropic. These responses are important to recognize because they can have a positive or negative effect on cut flower aesthetics. A curved stem can be beautiful, but if it is facing downward within a floral design, it may appear wilted to the customer, resulting in a complaint or negative review.

Snapdragons and gladiolus are geotropic. It is best to hold, process, and display them upright to maintain the stems' relative straightness. An example of phototropic flowers are tulips. They will bend and turn their flower heads toward strong light sources. Their stems will continue to grow and elongate, creating floral designs that alter the balance and flow of an arrangement.

Alternative Green Waste Disposal

In recent years, there has been a growing awareness in the floral industry of the importance of sustainable practices. Flower growers, wholesalers, retailers, and consumers are more aware of the environmental impacts of growing, shipping, and retailing flowers on the planet.

Composting is one technique used as an alternative waste management method to traditional landfill dumping and has the means to produce a valuable commodity for floriculture. It contributes to reducing waste transportation, treatment costs, and landfill volume.

Composting floral waste is not likely for every flower shop, but for those that do it, composting can serve as branding that highlights their efforts to become more sustainable and environmentally friendly. If composting floral waste for personal use is not an option, it can be managed by collaborating with other organizations such as Master Gardener programs, universities, community gardens, and city composting programs.

Floral waste intended for composting should be sorted and stored separately from non-compostable materials, such as floral foam, plastics, wire, and foods like dairy and meats, until it is added to a composting system. Floral waste intended for composting can be stored in trash cans without using trash bags. The trash cans should be cleaned and sanitized after every use. Floral waste is effective in both mound composting, where the green material is heaped into a pile, and vermicomposting, which involves using earthworms to create compost.





*Packaging
and
Wrapping*



Most retail florists do not wrap or package sympathy floral designs unless the flowers or plants are exposed to extreme temperatures for several minutes or more. Do not expose floral designs or plants to extreme heat in a car or delivery vehicle. Make sure the vehicle is at the appropriate temperature before placing in flowers and plants. Plants and flowers may require wrapping during cold winter months, especially in northern climates. During cold weather, floral tributes placed in delivery vehicles making multiple stops will be exposed to cold drafts and should be protected. Floral arrangements and plants delivered to homes and offices should be wrapped when temperatures dip below 40°F (4°C).

Temperature Extremes

If the instructions in this publication are followed, flowers from their corresponding stores can last a long time. Ignoring outdoor weather and temperatures during deliveries can undo all your hard work and make your good care and handling go to waste. Review the proper storage temperatures for cut flowers. Tropical flowers, such as orchids and anthurium, begin to suffer at temperatures below 40°F. Temperate zone flowers, such as roses, lilies, and hydrangeas, can be damaged at temperatures below freezing. Take time to warm the delivery vehicle on cold days or cool it down when it is unusually warm outdoors.

Please note that a running, unattended vehicle can be stolen in seconds, so be sure to monitor it closely. Keep a spare set of keys (or more) in the store and lock the running vehicle's doors while it reaches the proper interior temperature.

Safe Handling and Packing

Take great care when handling flowers and plants. Hold each design under the base of the container. Ensure that the flowers do not bump into the wall or doorframe as they are being loaded into and unloaded from the delivery vehicle.

Many shops use foam carriers with slots to snugly fit vases and pots. Sandbags are also a popular way to keep floral designs in place during delivery.

It's always better to be safe than sorry. Of course, accidents happen, but toppled floral designs often damage both the flowers and the overall design of the arrangements. In this case, the driver must return to the shop for arrangement repair, costing the store time and money. It is better to secure plants and arrangements before delivery instead of hoping nothing is damaged in transit.





Delivery

Floral product delivery is a valuable portion of a consumer's floral purchase. The safe handling and transport of floral tributes are necessary and parts of valuable service at retail floral shops. The floral delivery vehicle is a satellite unit of the store. As such, it visually represents the goods and services provided by a flower shop. Take care and have pride in your delivery vehicle, both inside and out.

Vehicle Upkeep and Appearance

The delivery vehicle needs more than gasoline to operate. Monitor the vehicle for oil changes and check the tire conditions. An all-point inspection during oil changes can make a difference in delivering funeral flowers on time.

The condition of the delivery vehicle fully reflects on the reputation of the store. Cars and vans should be washed and waxed regularly so that they appear to match the level of quality of the flower shop's work. Consider this: could your shop's delivery van be used in a funeral procession? The products and



services it supports are used at the most important moments of people's lives.

The inside of a delivery van should be ready to accommodate floral deliveries at a moment's notice. First, it should be clean and clear of plant material debris. Take the time to sweep the floor with a broom or vacuum, then sanitize the ceiling, walls, and flooring if they can be cleaned this way. Decaying plant material gives off ethylene gas, which is detrimental to the life of many types of cut flowers.

Caring for Your Deliveries

You must protect plants and flowers from the effects of weather and extreme temperatures. Recall that flowers are stored in refrigeration at temperatures just above freezing. If they are exposed to temperatures below that, even for a few minutes, they can be injured. Proper wrapping and packaging techniques are essential for protecting flowers from the cold. The same is true if temperatures are very warm. Start the vehicle and properly adjust the thermostat before loading the van with delicate flowers and plants.

Carefully pack each design according to management's directions. It may be common to box and wrap each delivery, especially private home deliveries. Some shops use sandbags to anchor containers in place within the van. Others use rigid foam holders or a combination of techniques. Ultimately, it is your responsibility to make sure each arrangement appears the same in the recipient's hands as it did when it left the design bench.

Be sure to lock the van while loading and unloading to deter theft.



Keep the van locked at all times.

Courtesy

When you're on the road, respect other drivers and remember they can see your company logo on the vehicle. Turn down audio when approaching a funeral home. Though no services may be in process while you are delivering flowers, a bereaved family may be in the office making plans for their loved one's funeral.

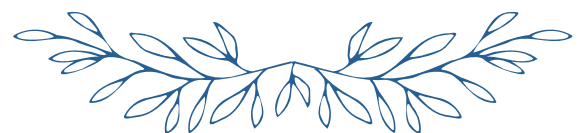
Complete the proper check-ins for funeral home deliveries. Many funeral homes have rooms designated for floral delivery, while others rely on florists to place the flowers in visitation rooms. It is always a good idea to ensure that a funeral home employee is aware that you have made a delivery instead of leaving it unattended. Note the time and location of every sympathy floral delivery. This data can be used to research and certify that a delivery was completed. Many businesses take a photo of the floral design for proof of delivery.

Remember that you are delivering more than just a vase or a plant. As part of your job, you are transporting sensitive information. Flowers as code for emotional messages! Every leaf and petal must be perfect. Before loading the delivery van, ensure that the floral designer has not overlooked any easily missed details, such as a torn leaf or broken stem. Is the card securely attached to the design? Add a "care tag" that provides instructions to the recipient on how to keep the flowers or plants looking their best.

Mapping

Before leaving the shop, become familiar with the delivery route to save time and reduce gasoline expenses. It makes no sense to continually change directions when making multiple stops around the town. Unorganized delivery routes waste fuel and time and are harmful to sustainability.

Use a city map to develop a delivery route. This speeds up delivery to all recipients. Prioritize funeral flowers and deliveries that must reach their destination by a specific time.





*Setting
Goals*



It is essential to set goals! A person without goals is like a ship on the open sea without a sail, a motor, or a rudder. They will merely float about with no assistance, taking on calm weather or inevitable storms with no plans. Without a goal, success can only be achieved by chance. Regardless of the phase your business is in, it is essential to develop goals for 1, 3, 5, and 10 years. Since your personal life is connected to your business, this is a two-fold assignment. You must develop personal and business goals. For both your personal life and business to coexist, the two sets of goals should align.

For a professional florist specializing in sympathy floral design, setting clear and focused goals is essential to create a successful and sustainable business. In the first year, the florist should focus on establishing relationships with funeral homes, hospitals, and other organizations that regularly require sympathy arrangements. Building a reputation for quality, timely service, and emotional sensitivity is crucial.

Goals for the first year may include creating a portfolio of signature sympathy designs, securing repeat clients, and establishing a reliable network of suppliers to ensure the consistent availability of the right flowers. Additionally, the florist should focus on understanding the emotional aspects of their work, as sensitivity and empathy are key when dealing with grieving families.

In the 3- to 5-year range, the florist should expand their offerings and solidify their brand as the go-to expert for sympathy floral design in their community. By this point, the florist could look to add value to their services, such as offering personalized floral arrangements that reflect the deceased's life and personality or providing unique memorial products like plant arrangements or sympathy baskets. The florist might also consider collaborating with grief counselors, chapels, or

ceremony leaders to offer a holistic service. A business goal during this period could involve streamlining operations to handle larger volumes, investing in a more permanent retail location, or growing a team that can manage increased demand during peak funeral seasons. Offering more services to include delivery to homes and cemeteries would also help ensure more customers can access quality sympathy arrangements.

Looking toward the 10-year goal, the florist should aim for long-term recognition as a trusted provider in the sympathy floral design niche. This could involve expanding beyond local by offering services in surrounding cities or regions. Establishing a strong online presence could allow the florist to serve clients nationwide or globally, with an easy-to-navigate website for ordering sympathy flowers. At this point, the florist might also explore partnerships with funeral chains, which would allow for a broader reach and a steady stream of business.

Furthermore, the florist could consider offering training programs for aspiring floral designers, focusing specifically on sympathy arrangements, to share expertise and elevate the craft. By setting these long-term goals, the florist ensures continued growth, a deepened reputation for empathy, and the ability to adapt to changing trends in floral design while staying true to their mission of serving those in mourning.

What are your 1-, 3-, 5-, and 10-year goals? Your first task is to record them in a notebook, a Word file, or a spreadsheet. Review them every six months. Refresh them every year.





*Sympathy
Floral Design*



History

The tradition of sympathy flowers dates back thousands of years, with roots in ancient civilizations. In Egypt, flowers were used in funeral rites as symbols of rebirth and to honor the deceased. The Greeks and Romans placed garlands and floral wreaths at graves to signify respect and the continuity of life. In Asia, particularly in China and Japan, white flowers—especially chrysanthemums—are traditionally associated with mourning and are used in solemn funeral arrangements.

Throughout history, flowers have held symbolic meanings, such as lilies representing purity, roses symbolizing love, and carnations signifying remembrance. During the Victorian era, the language of flowers, or *floriography*, further established the practice of using specific flowers to express emotions and condolences.

Today, these customs influence global funeral practices. Western arrangements often include roses, lilies, and carnations in formal sprays, wreaths, or baskets. In Eastern cultures, subdued colors and specific flowers maintain cultural and spiritual

significance. Globalization and cultural blending have introduced hybrid styles and broader flower selections in sympathy arrangements.

Modern sympathy flowers honor these historical and cultural traditions while offering comfort and expression. Florists now design arrangements that reflect both personal sentiments and traditional symbolism, making meaningful gestures of condolence across diverse communities.

The Importance of Flowers for Funerals and Memorials

Research shows the vital role of flowers in funerals and memorials, highlighting their emotional, psychological, and cultural importance. Studies have shown that flowers can have a deep impact on emotional well-being. Research also shows that the presence of flowers can reduce depression, anxiety, and agitation, and enhance mood and social behaviors. Another study found that being around flowers can encourage positive emotions such as happiness and calmness, contributing to overall well-being.

Flowers serve as a physical gesture of sympathy and support during times of loss. A study revealed that 88 percent of grief therapists believe receiving flowers aids in the grieving process. Additionally, 85 percent of consumers surveyed stated that sympathy flowers are sent to comfort the survivors. Funeral directors also report that floral tributes provide comfort and warmth to bereaved families, with many families choosing to take flowers home after services.

In conclusion, research affirms that flowers play a vital role in funerals and memorials by offering emotional comfort, facilitating the grieving process, and serving as meaningful symbols of remembrance.



Selling Sympathy Flowers: Best Practices

There are two basic types of sympathy flower sales: **sales to the immediate family** and **sales to family, friends, and colleagues**. Family flowers are those purchased by the immediate family, next of kin, or people with close personal ties to the deceased. These flowers often adorn the casket or cremation urn directly and/or are used to frame the setting. Examples of family work include casket sprays, head and foot urns, cremation urn surrounds, and inset pieces.

A quiet space with a table and chairs is necessary for a family flowers sales consultation area. A sympathy floral consultation may take 30–60 minutes, so it is best to offer seating when customers are selecting their flowers. Avoid calls or other interruptions while family members are present.

Many of your customers will shop on your website, particularly those who live a great distance from the funeral service location. Take the time to create sympathy designs and display them on a dedicated page on your website. Customers want to see what your store has to offer, so take images of every design and plant that leaves your store. Post and promote those items that your customers will want the most. You can use AI backdrops to mask busy backgrounds that otherwise distract from your designs. Do not worry if your initial images are not the highest quality. The key is to begin with your best examples and periodically replace them with higher-quality designs and images.

The most important sales technique when selling sympathy flowers is to **sell from existing stock**. This means showing your customers what you have on hand in the cut-flower cooler. Highlight the cut flowers and foliage that may be most appropriate to honor the deceased. If you can create designs from the existing materials, it helps your store sell fresh items more quickly. It also benefits your clients, as they can see exactly what is being used in their orders.

Whether you are selling flowers to the immediate family or others, it is best to sell a *look* rather than specific flowers. For example, use phrases such as “seasonal flowers and greenery,” “outdoorsy and natural,” and “refined and elegant.”

Do not judge what customers want or how much they are willing to spend based on appearance or purchases made by previous customers. A common flaw with sales staff is that they tend to sell what they believe customers can afford. Remember, the family is honoring their deceased loved one, and spending \$500, \$1,000, or even \$1,500 on a casket spray or cremation urn setting may be appropriate. Keep in mind that flowers are an emotional expression, not a commodity.

When taking the family’s order, note their relationships to the deceased. Family work is kept in order of relationship to the deceased. For example, the casket spray is given by the spouse or the closest kin. Children of the deceased often provide coordinating floral designs placed near the head and/or foot of the casket or urn. Small designs, such as wicker basket arrangements or inset pieces, are appropriate tributes from the grandchildren.

When a cremation urn is in place, suggest to the family that it be displayed in a “floral garden,” a “meadow,” or a “forest” design. Fresh flowers and greenery can surround the urn, while larger designs can flank or back the cremated remains container. A selection of foliage or blooming plants can be placed at the base of the table or stand bearing the urn. These flowers provide more than a mixture of tributes. They create an artistic composition that becomes the focal point of the service.

Another good sales technique is to provide add-on sales. Examples of add-on sales for family work include pallbearer boutonnieres, inset designs, flowers to wear or hold by the deceased, or even the addition of plant rentals. Consider offering table centerpieces and buffet arrangements for the celebration of life luncheon or dinner that often follows a funeral.



HOW TO TAKE A SYMPATHY FLORAL ORDER

- ◆ Sender's name, address, phone number, and credit card information.
- ◆ Name of the deceased.
- ◆ Funeral home and/or location of services.
- ◆ Date and time of visitation and services.
- ◆ Personalizing the designs
- ◆ When selling family work:
 - ◇ Casket, cremation, no remains present?
 - ◇ Favorite flowers, colors?
 - ◇ Script: relationship of deceased to sender. If from children, script reads "Mother" or "Father".
- ◆ When selling to family / friend / colleagues:
 - ◇ Card information: front and back, including the sender's name and mailing address for the Thank You card. Add a brief description of the tribute so recipients can identify it among all the enclosed cards. Examples below:
 - » Standing spray with pink roses
 - » Spring season vase arrangement
 - » Tropical plant dish garden
- ◆ Subtotal, tax, total. Credit card payment or cash.





A wreath of pastel flowers softens the funeral home composition.

Pricing Sympathy Flowers

Different floral businesses use varying formulas for the pricing and markup of their sympathy floral designs. When working for a retail florist, be sure to fully understand and apply their pricing guidelines.

A typical pricing structure for sympathy flowers is found in this example.

Table 3. Example of pricing structure for sympathy flowers.

Item for Charge	Pricing Structure
Flowers and foliage	3:1 markup
Hard goods	2:1 markup
Labor	30 percent of the materials
Delivery fee	variable according to distance

Using this pricing structure, a cut flower that wholesales for \$1 is retailed at \$3. A container purchased from a wholesale supplier for \$10 is sold for \$20. After the retail cost of all inputs (flowers, foliage, supplies, container) is summed, that amount should be multiplied by 0.3 (30 percent) to find the labor charge. A sum of \$100 in retail products should have a \$30 labor fee applied. Add sales tax and delivery fee to this figure to find the final charge to the customer.

Compute the cost of this sympathy tribute. Use one of the pricing sheets at the end of this publication to help organize the order. Use the pricing and markups listed above.

Table 4. Example of flower selections for sympathy tribute.

Type	Quantity	Wholesale Price
Snapdragons	1 bunch of 10 stems	\$15.00
Larkspur	0.5 bunch, 5 stems	\$15.00/bunch
Roses	10 stems	\$1.50/stem
Waxflower	1/3 bunch	\$15.00/bunch
Huckleberry foliage	1/3 bunch	\$10.00/bunch
Container	1	\$10.00
Mechanics, supplies	1	\$5.00

It is best practice to communicate the cost of floral tributes to customers. Most people do not purchase many sympathy tributes, so making such purchases raises their awareness about the costs. To streamline this process, provide customers with **three price points**. For example, once the type of expression is determined, you can communicate with the customer the prices of a starting point, mid-range, and finally an opulent tribute. For example, a planter of mixed foliage plants is available at \$50, \$100, and \$150. After delivering this information, immediately ask the customer, “Do you have an amount in mind that you would like to spend?” this puts the ball in the customer’s court, allowing them to choose the amount they want to spend, yet informing them about the popular price points of flowers and plants for funerals and memorials.

Military Funerals

Members of the United States Armed Forces are eligible for military funeral honors. These services include several ceremonial components that recognize the deceased’s service and sacrifice.

When the interment takes place in a military cemetery, the cemetery may have specific regulations regarding floral tributes and other decorations. In some cases, the number of floral arrangements allowed at the gravesite is limited. When this occurs, it is appropriate to suggest that customers send flowers or plants to the family’s home instead.

A U.S. flag is often draped over the casket as part of the military funeral tradition. When the flag is used, no floral arrangements—including casket sprays—should be placed on top of it. However, the placement of a single rose on the flag is permitted as a gesture of respect.





*The Funeral
Director*



A funeral director plays a pivotal role in the use, display, and purchase of sympathy floral designs due to their central position in coordinating all aspects of a funeral or memorial service. Their influence impacts both the practical and emotional effectiveness of floral tributes.

Here's why their role is key:

Funeral directors serve as the liaison between grieving families and vendors, including florists. They coordinate the placement and removal of flowers, ensuring that arrangements are displayed on time and in a visually appealing manner within the funeral home. This logistical role is critical for florists whose work must be seamlessly integrated into the funeral setting.

The funeral director curates the visual and emotional environment of the service. By guiding the display of floral arrangements—casket sprays, standing easels, wreaths, and sympathy baskets—they help create a comforting and respectful atmosphere that honors the deceased and supports mourners.

Many families rely on funeral directors for guidance in selecting appropriate floral tributes. Directors often recommend trusted florists or specific designs based on the family's wishes, cultural traditions, or religious considerations, which directly influence florist sales and design choices.

Some funeral homes direct sales to specific floral shops. This activity may involve a special business arrangement in which the funeral home receives a percentage of the floral sales. Such business arrangements can be profitable for the partnering floral shops. On the other hand, it may funnel funeral orders away from other floral shops. Regardless of the business arrangement, it is best practice to maintain good relationships with all funeral homes and directors in your district.

Funeral directors uphold professional standards for aesthetics, safety, and decorum. They ensure that floral designs do not block pathways, signage, or religious symbols, and that the display aligns with the tone of the service.

In essence, the funeral director's role ensures that floral tributes fulfill their intended emotional and symbolic functions while also supporting florists through coordination, referrals, and design feedback.





*Funeral
Home Visit*



Pay a business visit to the funeral homes you serve in your delivery area. Call the funeral home beforehand because they may be occupied with services and consultations. During the visit, ask the funeral director what tributes they see at their services. Importantly, ask them if there is anything you, as florists, can do or avoid to improve the use of flowers and plants for sympathy tributes. Observe the overall settings for funeral services, including visitation rooms and sales offices. Note the various styles of cremation urns and caskets on display. Take note of the flower receiving room where flowers are accepted for placement. Many funeral homes want florists to deliver to “flower rooms,” designated spaces for holding flowers before funeral visitations. Some funeral homes allow or encourage florists to place flowers directly in the visitation room.

During your personal visit to learn more about funeral home operations, consider asking the following questions:

- Where should we deliver our flowers?
- What can we as florists do to help our funeral directors?
- What can we do to uphold the custom of sending flowers to funerals?
- Would you be willing to recommend my products and services to bereaved families?
- Do you have any suggestions for me to build my sympathy floral business?
- Is there a standard size for caskets?
- Are there standard sizes for cremation urns and boxes?
- What is the clearance between the casket lid and the hearse’s interior ceiling?





*Marketing
Sympathy
Flowers*

Selling sympathy flowers is indeed challenging due to their association with grief and loss. However, florists can strategically promote them by shifting the narrative and focusing on the meaningful, comforting, and personalized role that flowers play in honoring a life.

One of the major hurdles florists have encountered as a barrier to sympathy floral sales is the phrase “In lieu of flowers . . .” This phrase is often included in public obituaries and reflects the wishes of the deceased and/or family survivors. It states a preference of directing floral tribute funds from flowers to charities or other causes. For example, a family may state that they would prefer donations to the American Cancer Society or a local children’s hospital.

While the floral industry cannot—and should not—fully oppose such wishes, it has for decades encouraged funeral homes and news agencies to reword the phrase to “Memorial donations may be made to...” This phrase allows people the opportunity to select how they want to honor the deceased. Before the everyday use of “In lieu of,” funeral flower sales were abundant. Today, many funerals have fewer tributes, and although the custom of displaying flowers at funerals and memorials still endures, sympathy floral sales have declined.



Here are several effective strategies:

1. Reframe the Message

- **Emphasize Comfort and Connection:** Market sympathy flowers as more so expressions of love, remembrance, and support than symbols of death.
- **Focus on Celebration of Life:** Use phrases like “*honoring memories,*” “*a final tribute,*” or “*celebrating a beautiful life*” to create positive associations.

2. Educate Your Customers

- **Content Marketing:** Share blog posts or social media content about the history and meaning of sympathy flowers, their role in healing, and etiquette.
- **Videos or Stories:** Highlight real stories of how floral tributes brought comfort or beauty to memorials.

3. Offer Customization

- Allow customers to personalize arrangements with their favorite colors, flowers, or symbolic elements that represent the deceased’s personality or passions.

4. Partner with Funeral Homes

- Build relationships with local funeral directors and bereavement coordinators to recommend your services directly to families in need.

5. Create Thoughtful Packaging and Messaging

- Include tasteful cards with comforting messages.
- Brand your sympathy product line separately with gentle, uplifting visuals, and language.

6. Promote Pre-Planning

- Encourage customers to consider sympathy flowers in advance through memorial planning packages or consultations.

By repositioning sympathy flowers as meaningful gestures of support and remembrance, florists can make them less intimidating to purchase and more integral to the healing process.



*Sympathy
Flowers Across
Faiths*

The Role of Flowers in Islamic Funeral Rituals

Overview of Islamic Funeral Traditions

An Islamic funeral, known as *Janazah*, is guided by the principles of simplicity, humility, and prompt burial. The process typically begins immediately after death, with family members or close community members performing *Ghusl*, the ritual washing of the deceased's body. The body is washed an odd number of times (usually three), using clean water and sometimes scented oils, then shrouded in plain white cloth known as the *kafan*. This practice emphasizes the equality of all people before God. No decorations or personal items are buried with the deceased, aligning with Islam's focus on modesty and return to the earth in a purified state.

After preparation, a special congregational prayer is performed, typically in a mosque or designated prayer space. This prayer, which is done standing without prostration or bowing, is offered for forgiveness and mercy upon the deceased. The body is then transported to the cemetery and buried as soon as possible, ideally within 24 hours of death. The grave is oriented so that the deceased lies on their right side, facing the Qiblah (the direction of Mecca). At the gravesite, additional prayers and supplications are made, asking for ease during the questioning in the grave and admittance into Paradise. Flowers and decorations are generally avoided, although cultural variations may permit simple acts, such as placing palm branches or fresh greenery. Islamic funerals are characterized more by prayer, community support, and charitable giving than by outward mourning or display. Grief is acknowledged, but excessive lamentation is discouraged.



Core Islamic Principles

- Modesty over display: Islamic tradition highly values simplicity and humility.
- Focus on prayer and charity: Acts like Quran recitation, offering ongoing charity, and prayer are viewed as more beneficial for the deceased's soul than flowers.
- Extravagant floral arrangements are generally discouraged, as they can resemble non-Muslim funeral customs.

When Flowers Are Acceptable

- Cultural context matters: In some Muslim communities such as in Singapore or parts of Southeast Asia families may use flowers for consolation or grave adornment, though it is a cultural, not religious, practice.
- Flowers may be sent during the 40-day mourning period following the burial.
- If flowers are chosen, fragrant varieties like white roses are preferred, symbolizing purity and reverence. Greenery like palm fronds or rosemary may also be added for symbolic remembrance.
- Individual flowers may be placed on the grave.
- Red flowers should be avoided as these are associated with happiness and celebration.

Religious Guidance

- The use of flowers during a funeral and on graves can vary depending on the Islamic sect.
- Sunni scholarly stance: Many scholars consider placing or sending flowers as a cultural innovation, not recommended as religious practice.
- Malaysian Muftis' position: Placing green date-palm leaves or fresh flowers is allowed because they may have symbolic meaning, but attaching religious merit to the act is discouraged.
- Grave adornment debate: Some Muslims leave flowers or water graves as cultural traditions, though Islamic orthodoxy often discourages such practices as imitating non-Muslim rituals.

Visual Examples of Floral Designs

1. Simple White Wreath or Casket Spray

Predominantly white roses and lilies with minimal foliage: understated and respectful.



2. Fragrant Bouquet in a Vase

Soft-scented roses mixed with greenery such as rosemary or palm.



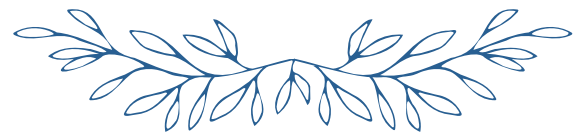
3. Fresh Flower Basket atop a Grave

Mixed white and pastel blossoms, placed personally by family or close friends.



Summary and Best Practices

- ◆ Always prioritize respect for the deceased and their family's wishes; confirm if flowers are culturally or religiously appropriate.
- ◆ Opt for small, fragrant arrangements (white roses, lilies) or a few petals instead of lavish displays.
- ◆ Understand cultural variation: What is acceptable in one community may be discouraged in another. Always check with the family first to see if flowers are acceptable.



The Role of Flowers in Jewish Funeral Rituals

Overview of Jewish Funeral Traditions

A Jewish funeral is traditionally held within 24 hours after death. The process typically begins with the **ritual purification of the body**, known as *taharah*, which is performed by members of a *chevra kadisha* (a sacred burial society). The body is washed, dressed in a simple burial outfit, and placed in a plain wooden casket without metal parts, in keeping with the Jewish emphasis on humility and the belief that all are equal in death.

The funeral service may be held at a synagogue, funeral home, or graveside and usually includes **psalms, eulogies, and prayers**. Afterward, the casket is carried to the burial site for **interment**, where mourners may participate by placing earth onto the casket, signifying a final act of kindness. The **Shiva** period follows burial, a seven-day mourning period where visitors come to offer condolences and prayers at the home of the bereaved. Flowers are traditionally **not part of Jewish funerals**, as acts of charity or prayer are preferred expressions of sympathy.

In Reform or liberal Jewish communities, some customs may be adapted to suit the family's needs or beliefs. This might include music, personalized eulogies, or even floral tributes, though always within a framework of dignity and remembrance. Regardless of denomination, the guiding principle remains **honoring the deceased without excess** and comforting the living through community support and ritual continuity.

Historical and Religious Background

In Orthodox and Conservative Judaism, *halacha* (Jewish law) generally discourages the use of flowers at funerals. This is based on several core beliefs:

- **Simplicity and equality in death:** Jewish tradition teaches that all are equal in death. Lavish displays, including expensive flower arrangements, may be seen as the opposite of the humility expected in mourning.
- **Focus on prayer and *mitzvot*:** Spiritual acts such as reciting Psalms, performing *tahara* (ritual washing of the body), and attending a *minyán* (gathering of individuals to recite prayers) are valued over aesthetic gestures like flowers.

Modern Practices and Cultural Variations

Despite traditional prohibitions, the use of flowers at Jewish funerals has varied based on denomination, region, and family preference.

- **Orthodox Communities**
 - Flowers are typically not present at funerals or burial sites.
 - Acts of kindness such as donations are preferred memorials.
 - Mourners and guests are more likely to engage in practices such as placing small stones on graves as a sign of remembrance.
- **Conservative Communities**
 - Tend to follow traditional practices, though may be slightly more tolerant in accepting modest floral arrangements outside of funeral services.
 - Flowers may be used for memorial services instead of the burial itself.
- **Reform Jewish Communities**
 - More accepting of floral tributes, especially in the U.S. and Western Europe.
 - Families may choose simple, respectful arrangements for viewings, memorials, or gravesites.
 - Flowers may be donated to hospitals and nursing homes after the funerals.



Examples of Acceptable Floral Designs

Below are examples of floral arrangements occasionally used in Reform or modern Jewish funerals:

1. Simple White Sympathy Wreath

White roses, calla lilies, and baby's breath, arranged in a circular wreath symbolizing eternal life. Often used at memorial services.



2. Low Basket Arrangement for Memorial

A low arrangement using blue hydrangeas, white tulips, and greenery, placed near the speaker's podium or urn at a memorial service.



3. Floral Tribute with Star of David

A floral tribute including the Star of David in white carnations, surrounded by greenery. This type is rare and typically reserved for Reform traditions.



Summary and Best Practices

- Flowers are typically not considered acceptable at an Orthodox Jewish funeral.
- Allowing flowers can vary depending on denomination and region.
- Sensitivity to the family's denomination, level of observance, and personal wishes are essential.
- Ask the family or funeral home if unsure about floral gifts.



The Role of Flowers in Buddhist Funeral Rituals

Overview of Buddhist Funeral Traditions

When death occurs in Buddhism, the body is typically left undisturbed for several hours (often around four hours) to allow the soul to begin its transition, a belief that the spirit does not depart immediately upon death. After this, the body is bathed, dressed in simple everyday clothing (not formal attire), and placed in an open casket for a viewing, often the evening before the main ceremony. The viewing space is arranged with an altar featuring a photo of the deceased, a statue or picture of Buddha, incense, candles, fruit, and flowers. Mourners arrive, offer respectful bows, place offerings, and may sit before the casket in silence or join in chanting if they wish.

The funeral service itself is usually held the next morning and is led by Buddhist monks (or lay practitioners, in their absence). The ceremony lasts around 45–75 minutes and includes chanting of *sutras* (scriptures), a sermon on impermanence, and meditative reflection. Family and friends may perform rituals such as burning incense and bringing offerings of fruits and flowers. After the service, the casket is sealed and carried in a procession often with mourners walking behind the hearse to a crematorium or burial ground. Cremation is preferred, though burials are permitted depending on tradition. Family or monks chant again at the graveside or crematorium; mourners may carry the casket as a final act of service.

In Buddhism, funerals are not merely a farewell, but a sacred observance rooted in the cycle of life, death, and rebirth. The rituals aim to honor the deceased, bring merit to their soul, and provide comfort to the living. Among the many symbolic elements used in these rituals, flowers play a central spiritual and aesthetic role. They represent *anicca* (impermanence) a core teaching in Buddhism and offer a gesture of respect, purity, and devotion.



Symbolic Meaning of Flowers in Buddhist Funerals

- **Impermanence (*Anicca*):** Just as flowers bloom and wither, so does life. Their fleeting beauty reminds mourners of the transient nature of existence.
- **Offering and merit:** In Buddhist thought, offerings such as flowers can build up positive karma or merit for the deceased, possibly aiding in a more favorable rebirth.
- **Purity:** White flowers symbolize purity of the soul and spiritual peace.
 - Lilies, chrysanthemums, and lotuses in white, yellow, and cream colors are the most popular to use in Buddhist funeral flower arrangements.
 - Red should be avoided as this color represents joy and happiness in Buddhist culture.

Common Floral Practices in Buddhist Funerals

Altar and Shrine Decorations

A central altar is set up in the home, funeral hall, or temple, often displaying:

- A portrait of the deceased
- An image or statue of Buddha
- Incense burners, candles, and offerings
- Garlands or vases of flowers, particularly white or yellow

These floral displays frame the sacred space and act as offerings to Buddha and the deceased.

Casket Adornment

- The casket is often adorned with a spray using white chrysanthemums, lotuses, and lilies.
- In some traditions, monks sprinkle flower petals on the casket as chants are recited.

Standing Sprays

- Standing sprays made in traditional yellow and white colors are often given by close family friends and coworkers.
- Round wreath forms are traditional in many Buddhist cultures.

Funeral Processions

- Mourners may carry bouquets or single stems as part of the funeral procession.

Floral Offerings during Chanting Ceremonies

- Buddhist monks lead chanting rituals over several days, and mourners may place fresh flower petals and arrangements on the altar each day.
- These repeated offerings generate merit and serve as meditative acts of remembrance.

Example Floral Designs

1. Wreath

A circular wreath made from white lilies and yellow chrysanthemums, representing the soul's return to the cycle of rebirth.



2. Asymmetrical Altar Arrangement

Asymmetrical altar arrangement made with orchids, lilies, and chrysanthemums in white symbolizes spiritual purity and liberation in Buddhist religion.



3. Funeral Offering Altar

An offering altar is a sacred space set up during a Buddhist funeral to honor the deceased and make merit on their behalf. Typically, it includes flowers, incense, and food offerings.



Summary and Best Practices

- Flowers in Buddhist funeral rituals are more than decorative. They are deeply spiritual tools for contemplation, merit-making, and honoring the departed.
- The primary colors used in Buddhist funerals are white and yellow.
- Red colors should be avoided.
- Chrysanthemums, lilies, and lotuses are all popular flower choices in a Buddhist funeral.
- Cultural variation exists within the Buddhist religion. It's always a good idea to check with the family first to understand their flower preferences.



The Role of Flowers in Hindu Funeral Rituals

Overview of Hindu Funeral Rites

A Hindu funeral, known as *Antyesti* or “last rites,” is a sacred ritual that marks the transition of the soul from the physical world to its next stage in the cycle of rebirth. The body of the deceased is typically bathed, anointed with sandalwood or turmeric, and wrapped in a white cloth. It is then placed on a stretcher or bamboo bier, often adorned with garlands of flowers such as jasmine, marigold, and chrysanthemums. Male family members, especially the eldest son or a close male relative, carry the body in a procession to the cremation ground.

At the cremation site, the body is placed on a wood pyre, and the chief mourner circles the pyre before lighting it, often using a sacred flame from the family’s home or a nearby temple. Offerings such as ghee (butterfat), flowers, and rice are added to the fire. The ashes are collected after the cremation and, ideally, immersed in a sacred river like the Ganges, signifying spiritual purification and release from the cycle of rebirth. Mourning typically lasts for 10 to 13 days, during which rituals such as *shraddha* and *pinda daan* are performed to honor the deceased and support their soul’s peaceful journey.

These rituals emphasize the impermanence of life and the Hindu belief in rebirth and liberation. The use of flowers, prayers, and sacred texts helps create a peaceful passage for the soul while offering comfort to the bereaved family and community.

Symbolism of Flowers in Hindu Funerals

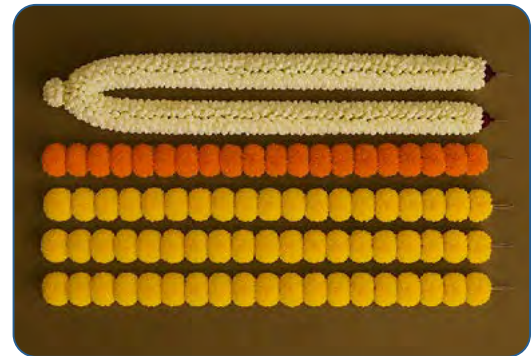
Flowers are integral to Hindu religious life and carry rich symbolic meanings:

- **Purity:** Flowers signify purity, especially white flowers, which are most often used in funerals.
- **Impermanence of life:** Just as flowers bloom and wither, they remind mourners of the brief nature of life.
- **Spiritual offering:** Flowers serve as an offering to the divine and a sign of respect to the departed soul.
- **Fragrance as blessing:** The natural fragrance of flowers is believed to please deities and purify the environment.

Floral Usage During the Funeral Process

1. Garlands

- Garlands are the primary floral arrangement made for Hindu funerals and used throughout the funeral process.
- Garlands of white jasmine flowers, orange marigolds, and/or yellow chrysanthemums, are draped over the body and used to decorate the funeral pyre.
- Loose petals may be scattered over the body as a final tribute.
- Red flowers should be avoided as they are associated with celebration.



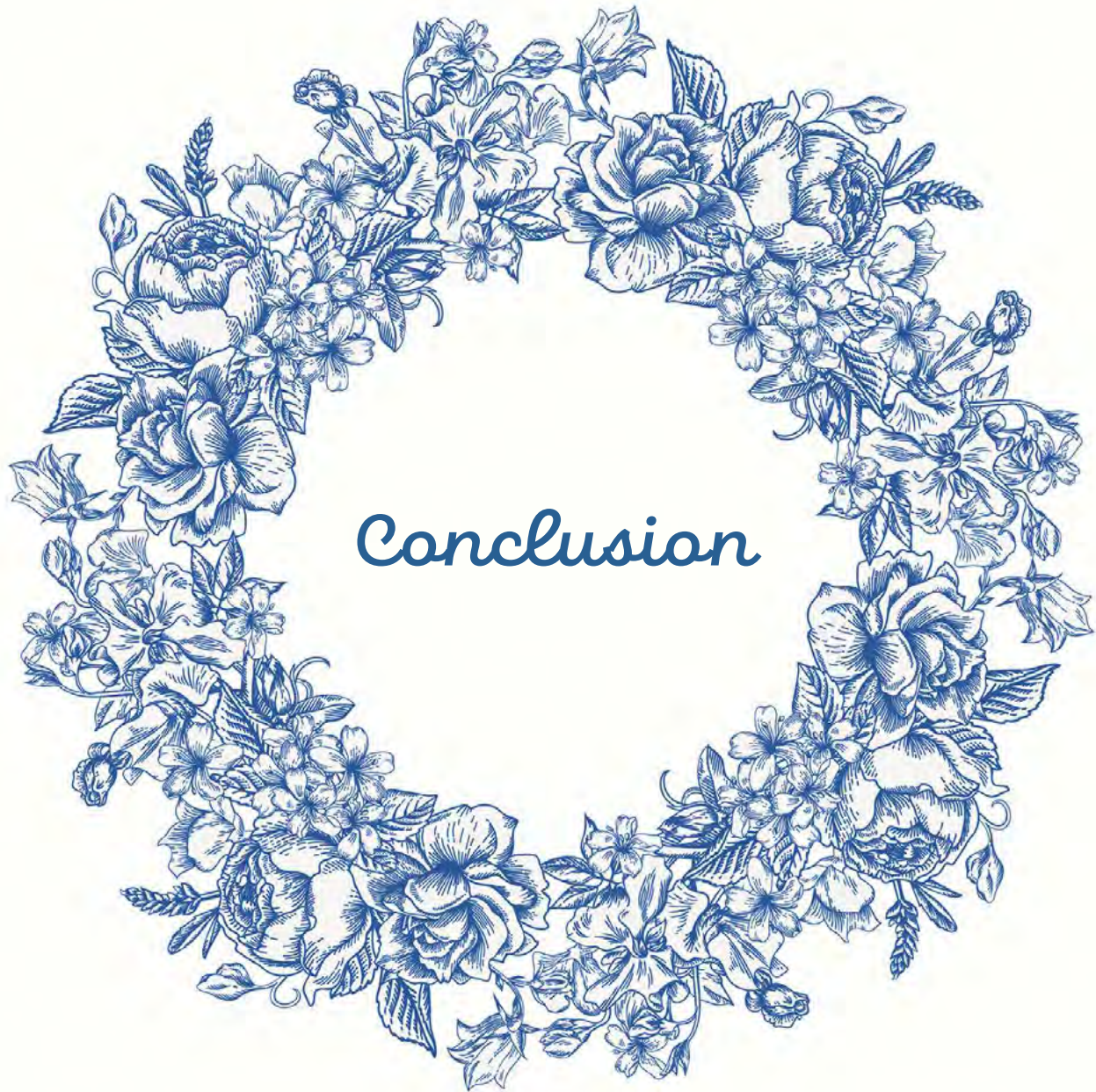
2. Garland Usage

- The body is placed on a bamboo bier and is decorated with garlands.



Summary and Best Practices

- In Hindu funerals, flowers bridge the physical and spiritual realms. They honor the deceased, soothe mourners, and invoke divine blessings for the journey of the soul.
- The fragrance, color, and symbolism of the flowers used carry deep meaning across every stage of the ritual from death to remembrance.
- The main flowers used are garlands of white jasmine flowers, yellow chrysanthemums, and orange marigolds.
- Red flowers should be avoided as this color is associated with happy occasions.



Conclusion



Every employee of a retail florist shop must understand and maintain excellence in sympathy floral design. This involves taking accurate sales orders, processing flowers correctly for freshness, creating secure mechanics, making excellent designs, and providing timely, respectful delivery. Rushing or skipping care and handling steps can significantly reduce the life of a cut flower. Disappointed customers rarely return to a floral shop that has not met their expectations. Customers expect quality flowers. By following the procedures explained in this publication, floral designers can help maintain flower quality as part of the chain of life.

Sympathy floral arrangements are more than decorations—they are visual tributes that honor a life lived and offer comfort to those left behind. Each stem placed with care becomes part of a larger message of remembrance, love, and peace. As a floral designer, your role is significant. Through thoughtful design and an understanding of cultural and emotional contexts, you offer a service that allows people to express what words sometimes cannot. Let this manual serve as your guide as you learn to bring beauty and solace to one of life's most tender moments.





Glossary



Botrytis cinerea – gray mold. A fungus that infects plant materials leading to soft, brown lesions and tissue collapse. The structures of this fungus are gray in color and downy in texture.

casket – a rectangular case or chest used to hold a corpse. Caskets are typically made of wood or metal.

chain of life – a sequence of steps and associated techniques including the grower, transporter, wholesaler, retailer, and consumers to increase vase life.

cremation – the process of incinerating a corpse.

cremation urn – a receptacle for cremated remains.

ethylene – a double-bonded carbon molecule; a naturally-occurring plant hormone that aids plant materials to shift from the flowering phase to the fruiting phase; aids in fruit ripening; hastens senescence.

family flowers – a floral tribute that is sent to a visitation or funeral by people closely related to the deceased.

family work – see “family flowers”.

flaccid – a cell holding water below its capacity.

geotropism – the growth of plant parts in response to the force of gravity.

gray mold – *Botrytis cinerea*.

inset piece – a small floral design displayed within an open casket.

middleman – an entity that purchases goods from producers and sells them to retailers or consumers.

pallbearer – one of several people designated to carry or attend a casket at a funeral.

pathogen – a microorganism that can cause disease.

phototropism – the orientation of plant parts in response to light.

quat – a quaternary ammonium compound.

quaternary ammonium compound – a cleaning agent consisting of a positively-charged surfactant that readily binds to the negatively charged surfaces of microbes. These cleaners remain effective for long periods of time even after drying on surfaces.

sanitation – conditions relating to the good health of plant materials.

senescence – the death of plant tissues.

tropism – the turning of plant parts in response to an external stimulus.

turgid – a puffy cell, at its water holding capacity.

vase life – the amount of time flowers remain beautiful and useable.

visitation – a designated time set aside for friends, family, and acquaintances before a funeral.

wilt – tissues with flaccid cells.

zip tie (cable tie) – a narrow, nylon fastener with ridges that lock into an integrated head, forming a one-way, secure loop. In floral design, zip ties are used to bind stems, secure mechanics, and fasten materials to structures. Excess should be trimmed when visible for neatness, and ties must be cut for removal.





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Helpful Industry Organizations

- [American Institute of Floral Designers \(AIFD\)](#)
- [Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers \(ASCFG\)](#)
- [National Funeral Directors Association \(NFDA\)](#)
- [The Society of American Florists \(SAF\)](#)
- [Wholesale Florist and Florist Supplier Association \(WFFSA\)](#)



Sympathy Floral Design:

Curriculum Designs I
(Mississippi State University,
Main Campus)

Standing Spray

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- ◆ Standard wired or wooden easel
- ◆ Spray case with wet floral foam
- ◆ Zip ties
- ◆ Foliage – mix of leather leaf, salal, tree fern, and eucalyptus varieties (about 15 stems total)
- ◆ Line flowers – mix of snapdragons, bells of Ireland, and stock (about 8 stems total)
- ◆ Primary mass flowers – mix of roses, carnations, and hybrid lilies (about 11 stems total)
- ◆ Secondary mass flowers – daisy chrysanthemums (about 8 stems total)
- ◆ Filler flowers – solidago, aster, or statice (about 7 stems total)
- ◆ Ribbon/bow

Step 1: Preparation of Mechanics

Soak the foam cage in a water-preservative mixture. Allow foam to sink at its own pace to allow maximum water absorption. Next, attach the foam cage to the easel using zip ties.

Step 2: Create Design Outline

To establish height, insert one long foliage stem at the top of the foam and one long foliage stem at the bottom of the foam. To establish width, add two foliage stems on both the right and left sides of the foam. Next, fill in the perimeter of the design with more stems of foliage. Then, spread the stems of foliage to cover the foam lightly.

Step 3: Establish a Line

Add line flowers along the foliage outline. The tallest line flowers should be placed at the top and bottom of the design.

Step 4: Add Mass Flowers

Place the mass flowers in clusters of two or three. The largest blooms should be placed near the center of the design to add focal areas.

Step 5: Fill in Spaces

Spread filler flowers evenly throughout the design. Avoid large clusters of filler flowers, as they can distract from focal areas in the design. Add more foliage where needed to hide any mechanics still visible.

Step 6: Add the Finishing Touch

Wire a ribbon bow and place it off center in the design.



Half-Couch Casket Spray

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- ◆ Casket saddle with wet floral foam
- ◆ Green waterproof vase tape
- ◆ Foliage – leather leaf, salal, pittosporum, and tree fern (about 20 stems total)
- ◆ Line flowers – snapdragons, delphinium, and stock flower (about 10 stems total)
- ◆ Primary mass flowers – roses and sunflowers (about 13 stems total)
- ◆ Secondary mass flowers – cushion mums (about 12 stems total)
- ◆ Filler flowers – waxflower (about 7 stems total)



Step 1: Prepare the Mechanics

Soak foam bricks in a water-preservative mixture. Allow foam to sink at its own pace to allow maximum water absorption. Place the bricks in the casket saddle and secure them with tape.

Step 2: Create Design Outline

**Note: Aim for a low, elongated shape.*

Place long stems of foliage on both left and right sides to establish width. Place shorter stems of foliage at the front and back to establish depth. Next, fill in the perimeter of the design with more stems of foliage. Then, distribute stems of foliage to lightly cover the foam.

Step 3: Establish a Line

Place longer stems of line flowers on both left and right sides to mimic previously placed foliage. Place shorter stems along the other sides of the design, keeping them shorter in the center and longer at the edges of the design.

Step 4: Place Primary Mass Flowers

Place mass flowers in clusters of two or three. The largest blooms should be placed near the center of the design to add focal areas. Angle stems slightly outward to create a dome shape.

Step 5: Fill in Spaces

Spread filler flowers evenly throughout the design. Avoid large clusters of filler flowers, as they can distract from focal areas in the design. Add more foliage where needed to hide any mechanics still visible.

Step 6: Add the Finishing Touch

Wire a ribbon bow and place it off center in the design.

Traditional Glass Vase Design

Traditional glass vase designs are common requests for sympathy work. These requests are most often made from non-immediate relatives, friends, or other associates of the deceased. These types of sympathy arrangements may or may not match the colors/themes of the original family piece.

In traditional vase arranging, the triangular shape (front-facing) or all-around, circular shape is considered. Most traditional vase arrangements are made in a tall glass or plastic vase, leaving the flower stems long. These arrangements usually observe the “rule of threes,” meaning that mass flowers are placed in the arrangement in multiples of three. For example, when using roses, a florist may design arrangements with three, six, or a dozen roses. Additionally, the tallest flower in the arrangement is usually twice the height of the vase.

Grid-Tape Method

To prepare the vase, a florist may consider using the grid-tape method, using clear floral vase tape. This tape looks like Scotch tape and is available in ¼- to ½-inch widths. It can be ordered from most floral wholesalers and often comes in packs of two. The method of vase preparation is most useful when using a clear vase or container.

Beginning on one side of the vase, the florist will tightly attach parallel strips of tape across the entire mouth of the vase, leaving about ¼-inch spaces between each strip. The strips of tape should attach 1–2 inches below the mouth of the vase for extra security. Next, the florist will repeat this step in the opposite direction, creating a grid. Finally, the florist will wrap 1–2 layers of tape around the vase edge to secure the ends of the tape strips.



BASIC GUIDELINES FOR TRADITIONAL ARRANGING:

- ◆ Use the tape-grid method to prepare a vase if the container is larger than a bud vase.
- ◆ Line the vase with greenery, such as leatherleaf.
- ◆ Place all large mass flowers, adding them in threes.
- ◆ Place line flowers.
- ◆ Add smaller mass flowers (if applicable).
- ◆ Add other greenery, such as tree fern or Israeli ruscus.
- ◆ Add filler flowers.



All-Around Dozen Vase Arrangement

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- ◆ Glass or plastic round-mouthed vase (about 6-inch diameter)
- ◆ 18-inch piece of ribbon (optional)
- ◆ 6–7 stems of leatherleaf or salal
- ◆ 12 stems of single-stemmed roses, carnations, or other mass flowers
- ◆ 5–6 stems of other upright greenery such as tree fern, Italian ruscus, or spiral eucalyptus
- ◆ 5–6 stems of filler flowers such as wax flower, solidago, or aster



Step 1: Prepare the Vase

Fill the vase three-fourths full of water. Prepare the vase using the grid-tape method. Line the outer edges of the vase with leather leaf or salal.

Step 2: Place Mass Flowers

**Note: Flowers are numbered based on the order they are placed in the vase.*

The placement order for the all-around shape differs from the front-facing style. To begin, place flower #1 at the center of your vase, pointing directly upward. This flower will be the tallest in your arrangement and should be 30–50 percent taller than the vase itself.

Next, place flowers #2 and #3 to the right and left of Flower #1, respectively angled outward and shorter in height than the center flower.

Flowers #4 and #5 will be placed vertically to flowers #2 and 3, angled outward, and slightly shorter. This now creates the framework of an all-around design.

Flowers #7–12 should be placed in empty spaces between previously placed flowers. These flowers should work to fill in and balance the design. Each section of the vase should have nearly equal amounts of mass flowers.

Step 3: Fill in the Spaces

Just as we did in the previous half-dozen arrangements, add in individual stems and/or pieces of greenery to empty spaces throughout the arrangement. Using a variety of greens during this step is recommended to add texture and color to the design. Evenly place pieces of filler flower, using only one type. Avoid using large individual bunches of filler flowers in a single space. Overuse of filler flowers can distract from the mass flowers.

Step 4: Make the Finishing Touches

Inspect all sides and angles of the design to ensure the design is well-balanced and no empty spaces are revealing the tape grid (if applicable). Finally, using a ribbon, tie a bow or square knot around the outside of the vase.

Dozen Forward-Facing Vase Design

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- ◆ Glass or plastic tall rectangular vase (approximately 6-inch-wide mouth)
- ◆ 18-inch piece of ribbon
- ◆ 5–6 stems of leatherleaf or salal
- ◆ 12 stems of single-stemmed roses, carnations, or other mass flowers
- ◆ 5–6 stems of other upright greenery such as tree fern, Italian ruscus, or spiral eucalyptus
- ◆ 5–6 stems of filler flowers



Step 1: Prepare the Vase

Fill the vase three-fourths full of water. Prepare the vase using the grid-tape method. Line the outer edges of the vase with leatherleaf or salal.

Step 2: Place Primary Mass Flowers

**Note: Flowers are numbered based on the order they are placed in the vase.*

Start building from the bottom up. For the front portion of the vase, place flower #1 angled to the right, and flower #2 to the left, with each sitting about 1–2 inches above the vase line. Place flower #3 directly front and center in the vase, sitting about 1–2 inches taller than the adjacent flowers.

Place flowers #4 and #5 behind the two side-angled flowers, pointing in similar directions, but sitting about 2 inches taller than the center flower #3. Place flower #6 directly behind flower #3 and sit taller than all other flowers.

Repeat this process for the next six flowers. You should have four layers of triangles, all of which are slightly taller than the triangle directly in front of it.

Step 3: Fill in the Spaces

Add individual stems and/or pieces of greenery to empty spaces throughout the arrangement. Using a variety of greens during this step is recommended to add texture and color to the design. Evenly place pieces of filler flower, using only one type. Avoid using large individual bunches of filler flowers in a single space. Overuse of filler flowers can distract from the primary flowers.

Step 4: Add the Finishing Touches

Inspect all sides and angles of your arrangement. Make sure the arrangement is well-balanced and there are no empty spaces revealing grid tape or netting. Using a ribbon, tie a bow or square knot around the outside of the vase.



Gathered Bouquet in Cage, with Stand

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- ◆ Floral cage with wet foam
- ◆ Standard wired or wooden easel
- ◆ Ribbon or moss (optional)
- ◆ Foliage – ruscus and eucalyptus (about 10 stems total)
- ◆ Primary mass flowers – peonies, roses, and hydrangeas (about 6 stems total)
- ◆ Secondary mass flowers – spray roses and daisy chrysanthemums (about 9 stems total)
- ◆ Filler flowers – waxflower or solidago (about 12 stems total)

Step 1: Prepare the Mechanics

Soak foam bricks in water-preservative mixture. Allow foam to sink at its own pace to allow maximum water absorption. Place bricks in floral cage and secure with zip ties or wire if needed.

Step 2: Add Mass Flowers

**Note: Move from the center outward to create symmetry. Allow at least 2 inches of stem to be placed into the foam for stability.*

Begin by placing one primary mass flower at the center of the bouquet. Next, add secondary mass flowers on either side of the center. Continue to work from the center outward, alternating adding primary and secondary mass blooms.

Step 3: Add Filler and Foliage

Evenly place filler and foliage throughout the design, filling empty spaces. Ensure all mechanics are covered after this step is completed.

Step 4: Attach the Bouquet

Using zip ties or wire, secure the bouquet handle to the cage bars, then cover any visible mechanics with ribbon or moss.





Cremation Urn Surround Using Round Foam Product

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- ◆ Round, hollow center foam form
- ◆ Foliage – leatherleaf, salal, and Italian ruscus
- ◆ Line flowers – snapdragons, veronica, and/or hyacinth (about 6–7 stems total)
- ◆ Primary mass flowers – roses, tulips, and hydrangeas (about 10 stems total)
- ◆ Secondary mass flowers – spray carnations and daisy chrysanthemums (about 12 stems total)
- ◆ Filler flowers – aster or solidago



Step 1: Prepare the Mechanics

Soak the foam form in a water-preservative mixture. Allow foam to sink at its own pace to allow maximum water absorption.

Step 2: Build the Base

Line the perimeter of the foam with foliage. Begin by adding the tallest stems of foliage at the back of the design (behind the placement of the urn). Gradually decrease the height of the foliage stems as you work towards the front of the design. Next, lightly cover the remaining foam with stems of foliage.

Step 3: Establish a Line

Insert line flowers at the back, center of the foam (portion behind the urn). Tape line flowers and gradually decrease in height as you work outward. Line flowers should be present only in the back third or half portion of the foam.

Step 4: Add the Flowers

Evenly spread primary mass flowers in clusters of twos or threes, working from one side of the foam to the other. Next, fill in the empty spaces with secondary mass flowers. Finally, distribute pieces of filler flowers throughout the entire design and ensure all remaining mechanics are covered.



Pillow Inset Corsage

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- ◆ 8–12-inch casket pillow
- ◆ Floral foam
- ◆ Plastic saucer or waterproof liner
- ◆ Floral wire (20–26 gauge)
- ◆ Green floral tape / stem wrap
- ◆ Hot glue
- ◆ Tulle or ribbon
- ◆ Floral adhesive
- ◆ Corsage pins
- ◆ Foliage – eucalyptus or Italian ruscus (about 3–4 small pieces)
- ◆ Mass flowers – carnations, spray roses, and / or lisianthus (about 3–4 blooms total)
- ◆ Filler flowers – wax flower or baby’s breath

**Note: If you use silk flowers, use dry floral foam and hot glue.*



Step 1: Prepare Pillow Base

Use hot glue to place the plastic saucer on top of the pillow where you plan to place the inset. Next, wrap the floral foam with plastic wrap and place it in the saucer, ensuring it is snug. Use hot glue to attach tulle or ribbon to hide the edges of the saucer.

Step 2: Prepare Blooms

Strip foliage and filler stems and trim to be 2–3 inches long, then set aside. Trim floral stems to be approximately half inch long. Next, thread a wire through the base of the bloom, or use the *hook method* for more delicate flowers. Bend the wire down to form a “false stem” and wrap the wire with floral tape. After taping, the stem length should be 2–3 inches long.

**Note: For clusters of small blooms, wire individual blooms, then wrap all wire stems together with floral tape.*

Step 3: Assemble the Corsage

Before attaching, visually plan out the design by placing mass flowers at the center with filler and foliage around to create a rounded-dome shape. Start by inserting the largest bloom / cluster into the center of the foam. Insert smaller blooms or clusters around the focal bloom / cluster. Next, insert pieces of filler and foliage, working from the center outward.

**Note: Place all stems at a slight angle to avoid a flattened look.*

Step 4: Make the Finishing Touches

Use tulle / ribbon and additional pieces of foliage to cover any remaining mechanics.

Casket Garland

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- ◆ 6-foot floral wire (16–18 gauge)
- ◆ Thin floral wire (spool)
- ◆ Ribbon
- ◆ Water picks (optional)
- ◆ Foliage – magnolia, eucalyptus, and ruscus (about 50 stems total)
- ◆ Mass flowers – roses, carnations, chrysanthemums (about 15–20 blooms)
- ◆ Filler flowers– hypericum berries, baby’s breath, and/or gomphrena) (about 15 stems total)

Step 1: Prepare the Base

Twist pieces of 16–18-gauge wire together to form a 6-foot-long backbone. Leave 6 inches at both ends of the backbone to make loops for hanging (do not form loops yet).

Step 2: Prepare the Blooms

Trim foliage and filler stems short (2–3 inches long) and remove any lower leaves or thorns. Next, gather clusters of prepared foliage and filler stems. Using floral tape, wrap stems together like “miniature bouquets.”

Trim mass flower stems to be about half inch long. Next, thread a wire through the base of the bloom, or use the *hook method* for more delicate blooms. Bend the wire down to form a “false stem” and wrap the wire with floral tape. Similar to the process above, gather clusters of foliage and wired blooms, then wrap them together like “miniature bouquets.”

**Note: Water picks can be placed on mass flower stems for hydration (if traveling long distances).*

Step 3: Assemble the Garland

Lay the wire backbone straight on the table. Work from one side to the other. Place the first small foliage-filler bundle, stems pointed back, on the backbone. Use floral tape to secure the bundle to the backbone. Add a second bundle, going in the same direction with stems pointed back. Place it so it overlaps with the base of the first bundle. Secure tightly with floral tape. Next, attach a third bundle containing wired blooms, following the same process. Repeat this pattern until you’ve reached the end of the garland.

The pattern should be:

1. foliage-filler bundle
2. foliage-filler bundle
3. wired-bloom bundle
4. foliage-filler bundle
5. foliage-filler bundle
6. wired-bloom bundle

Step 4: Make the Finishing Touches

Wrap both ends (6 inches) with floral tape and create loops by twisting the wire onto itself. Add ribbon by gently weaving it into the garland or tying it at the loop ends.

Step 5: Attaching to the Casket

Using ribbon or twine, tie garland loops to casket handles.





*Sympathy
Floral Design:*

Curriculum Designs II
(Mississippi State University,
Main Campus)

Full-Couch Casket Spray

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- ◆ Casket saddle with wet floral foam
- ◆ Green waterproof vase tape
- ◆ Foliage – leatherleaf, salal, pittosporum, and Italian ruscus (about 30 stems total)
- ◆ Line flowers – snapdragons, delphinium, and stock flower (about 8 stems total)
- ◆ Primary mass flowers – roses, sunflowers, and football mums (about 30 stems total)
- ◆ Secondary mass flowers – carnations and cushion mums (about 20 stems total)
- ◆ Filler flowers – solidago (about 10 stems total)



Step 1: Prepare the Mechanics

Soak foam bricks in a water-preservative mixture. Allow foam to sink at its own pace to allow maximum water absorption. Place bricks in the casket saddle and secure with tape.

Step 2: Create Design Outline

**Note: Aim for a low, elongated shape.*

Place long stems of foliage on both left and right sides to establish width. Place shorter stems of foliage at the front and back to establish depth. Next, fill in the perimeter of the design with more stems of foliage. Then, spread the stems to lightly cover the foam.

Step 3: Establish a Line

Place longer stems of line flowers on both left and right sides to mimic previously placed foliage. Place shorter stems along the other sides of the design, keeping them shorter in the center and longer at the design edges.

Step 4: Place Primary Mass Flowers

Place mass flowers in clusters of twos or threes. The largest blooms should be placed near the center of the design to add focal areas. Angle stems slightly outward to create a dome shape.

Step 5: Fill in Spaces

Spread filler flowers evenly throughout the design. Avoid large clusters of filler flowers, as they can distract from focal areas in the design. Add more foliage where needed to hide any mechanics still visible.

Step 6: Add the Finishing Touch

Wire a ribbon bow and place it off-center in the design.

Floral Grapevine Wreath

(Full Design)

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- ◆ Grapevine wreath base (12–18-inch diameter)
- ◆ Floral wire (24–26 gauge)
- ◆ Hot glue or Oasis tube glue
- ◆ Green floral tape
- ◆ Water picks
- ◆ Twine or ribbon
- ◆ Primary mass flowers – roses, carnations, and sunflowers
- ◆ Secondary mass flowers – spray roses and daisy chrysanthemums
- ◆ Filler flowers – gomphrena, statice, and ornamental grasses
- ◆ Foliage– olive, eucalyptus, and ivy



Step 1: Prepare the Materials

Trim stems to the desired length and remove any unnecessary leaves or thorns. Place water picks at the end of delicate fresh blooms. Lay out all stems in the pattern you plan to use them.

Step 2: Create a Foliage Base

Tuck longer foliage stems into the grapevine so they curve naturally with the shape of the wreath. Secure stems by weaving them under the vine loops or by using a piece of wire.

Step 3: Build Small Bundles

Put together a small bundle of mixed foliage and filler flowers. Wrap the stems tightly with floral tape. Repeat this step 3–4 times to create multiple small bundles.

Step 4: Place Mass Flowers

Space primary mass flowers evenly around the wreath or in small clusters of twos or threes. Add secondary mass flowers by tucking them around primary mass flowers. These flowers should fill in gaps between previously placed flowers or clusters.

**Note: Create dimension and depth by angling some stems slightly outward and others slightly inward.*

Step 5: Add the Filler

Insert filler flowers in gaps where needed. Aim to space filler flowers/grasses evenly throughout the wreath.

Step 6: Make the Finishing Touches

Use a piece of ribbon or twine to hang the wreath.

Sympathy Set Piece: Heart Design

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- ◆ Heart-shaped floral foam form
- ◆ Zip ties
- ◆ Standard wire or wooden easel
- ◆ Foliage – leatherleaf, salal, and pittosporum
- ◆ Primary mass flowers – roses, carnations, and hydrangeas
- ◆ Secondary mass flowers – cushion chrysanthemums
- ◆ Filler flowers – statice
- ◆ Ribbon bow or sash
- ◆ Wooden pick or wire

Step 1: Prepare the Mechanics

Soak the foam form in a water-preservative mixture. Allow foam to sink at its own pace to allow maximum water absorption. Zip-tie the foam form to the easel.

Step 2: Outline the Form

Outline edges of the form with foliage. Cover the outer edges of the form to completely cover the foam. Lightly cover the front of the form with foliage.

Step 3: Add Mass Flowers

**Note: Keep the surface of the design short and low.*

Place primary mass flowers evenly across the foam, starting at the center and moving outward. Stems should be short (roughly 2–3 inches long).

Step 4: Fill in the Spaces

Place secondary mass flowers and filler flowers throughout the design to fill in gaps. Add small pieces of foliage as needed to fill in any additional gaps or cover remaining mechanics.

Step 5: Add the Finishing Touch

Drape a ribbon or sash diagonally across the design and secure it with a wooden pick or wire.





Casket Scarf

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- ◆ Wet floral foam bricks
- ◆ Plastic trays
- ◆ Waterproof floral tape
- ◆ Primary mass flowers – preferably sturdy blooms such as roses, carnations, or single-headed chrysanthemums
- ◆ Secondary mass flowers – small chrysanthemum varieties
- ◆ Foliage – salal, plumosa, and eucalyptus
- ◆ Ribbon

Step 1: Build the Base

**Note: Casket scarves are usually around 6 feet long and 2 feet wide.*

Soak floral foam bricks in a water-preservative mixture. Next, place the bricks close together in trays to create the length of the scarf. Secure the bricks to the tray using strips of waterproof floral tape.

Step 2: Build the Foliage Foundation

Insert foliage stems around the perimeter of the foam to form a draping outline. Next, cover foam bricks completely with overlapping stems of foliage. This will be the base layer.

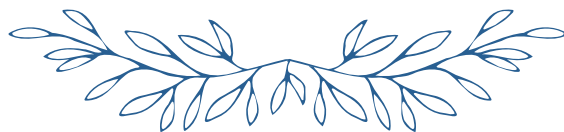
Step 3: Arrange the Flowers

Insert primary mass flowers along the edge of the scarf. Angle the stems slightly outward to keep a natural flow. Next, place secondary mass flowers in empty spaces to build volume. Then, evenly spread stems of filler flowers to fill in the smaller gaps.

**Note: Place flowers symmetrically by moving from the center outward.*

Step 4: Add the Finishing Touch

Weave in ribbon near the center of the scarf.





Casket Blanket

(Rectangle)

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- ◆ Wet floral foam bricks
- ◆ Large plastic tray
- ◆ Waterproof floral tape
- ◆ Foliage – leatherleaf, salal, Italian ruscus, and plumosa (40–50 stems total)
- ◆ Primary mass flowers – roses, carnations, and single-headed chrysanthemums (15 stems total)
- ◆ Secondary mass flowers – small chrysanthemum varieties (30 stems total)
- ◆ Filler flowers – baby’s breath or wax flower (30 stems total)
- ◆ Ribbon

Step 1: Build the Base

**Note: This design plan is for a 4-foot-long casket blanket.*

Soak floral foam bricks in a water-preservative mixture. Next, place the bricks in the tray and secure using strips of waterproof floral tape.

Step 2: Build the Foliage Foundation

Insert foliage stems around the perimeter of the foam to form the blanket outline. Next, cover foam bricks completely with overlapping stems of foliage. This will be the base layer.

Step 3: Arrange the Flowers

Evenly place primary mass flowers along the length of the design. Angle the stems slightly outward to keep a natural, draped flow. Next, place secondary mass flowers in empty spaces to build volume. Then, evenly distribute stems of filler flowers to fill in the smaller gaps.

**Note: Place flowers symmetrically by moving from the center outward.*

Step 4: Add the Finishing Touch

Secure a bow to the design using floral wire.





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Projects for
Sympathy Floral*

Design I: Level III



Lectures

- Care and Handling Review
- Sympathy Flowers Theory

Demonstrations

Day 1

Standing spray symmetrical, variations

Day 2

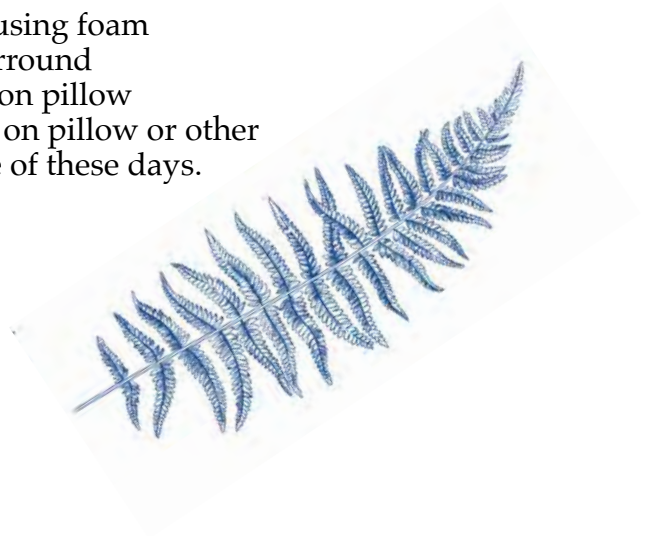
Half couch casket spray, variations

Day 3

- Gathered bouquet
- Mixed arrangement in a vase
- Mixed arrangement in a container and foam
- Design featuring objects such as a lantern, a figurine, or an urn

Day 4

- Cremation urn surround using foam
- Garland for casket urn surround
- Inset piece wired corsage on pillow
- Inset piece: glued corsage on pillow or other
- Funeral home visit on one of these days.



A detailed blue line-art illustration of various flowers and foliage, including tulips, hydrangeas, and ferns, arranged around a central text box. The illustration is rendered in a classic, engraved style with fine lines and cross-hatching for shading.

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Design II: Level IV



Lectures

- Care and Handling Review
- Sympathy Flowers Theory

Demonstrations

Day 1

Full couch casket spray, variations

Day 2

- Grapevine wreath with flowers
- Set pieces: cross, heart, open heart, and wreath

Day 3

- Design variations: casket scarf and casket blanket
- Compostable sprays and designs

Day 4

Plant presentations: dish garden design, plant design, and terrarium design





Pricing Sheets

Course Evaluation

Title: PF Sympathy I Date: _____

Please indicate your response to each item.	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Disagree (D)	Neutral (N)	Agree (A)	Strongly Agree (SA)
The instructor was knowledgeable of the subject matter.					
The instructor related workshop content to real-life situations.					
The content was relevant to my needs.					
The content was at an understandable level.					
The content was well-organized.					
The content was based on credible, up-to-date information.					
Attending this workshop was worth my time.					
I would recommend this workshop to others.					
I increased my knowledge of floral design					
I learned new skills related to floral design					
I will use information I learned in this workshop.					
I plan to make a floral design within the next three months, based on information provided during this workshop.					
I will tell others about what I learned in this workshop.					
I would like to participate in workshops/programs toward a certificate in professional floristry.					

The most important skills I've learned or gained through this workshop were:

What other topics need to be covered in sympathy floral design?

Additional thoughts or comments?

The information given here is for educational purposes only. References to commercial products, trade names, or suppliers are made with the understanding that no endorsement is implied and that no discrimination against other products or suppliers is intended.

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