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Wisconsin FFA Regional Study Guide

Prepared By:

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Hello there!

First and foremost, congratulations on joining a FFA Floriculture team and taking the initial step toward qualifying for the state contest! As a floral educator, I am incredibly proud of you and am here to support your success by providing you with the tools necessary to study, practice, and memorize for your practicum.

Your Regional Superintendents had the opportunity to join a pilot program aimed at creating a cohesive experience across Wisconsin and helping you enhance your floral skills and knowledge before the State competition. If you are involved in the program, we eagerly anticipate your feedback at State.

For optimal results:

- Make sure to read the entire study guide, as all questions on the written exam are derived from it.
- The exam questions are straightforward and not designed to trick you. They are based on my experiences training new students and staff who have no prior floral background.

The content focuses on beginner floral design and greenhouse operations, with the goal of gradually building your knowledge to enhance your floral education and potentially lead to job opportunities in the floral industry.



Let's Start

Floral Identification is a very large portion of your Regional Competition. It is also a large point percentage of the State Competition. However, you should not just memorize for competition sake. If you continue your education and become a floral designer or part of this industry knowing your Floral, Foliage, and Plants is critical.

Some may ask why? Can't I just learn as I go?

Of course, that is always an option to learn as you work. However, let's compare being a florist with being a chef. If you showed up to work at a restaurant as the sous chef and Chef asked you to pull the ingredients for the entre what would you do? Just stare at him or guess and bring all the wrong stuff back to him?

Our profession requires us to know our tools. In Floristry and Greenhouse, our tools are the actual plants and flowers. If you would like to be taken seriously and perfect your craft you must know your floral identification.

Study First - Click to Link



National ID



Gallery



WI ID List

Study Materials

You must know your Floral and Tool Identification well to be proficient in this contest. Please use the following to practice:

- Advisor's Gallery (Available on CDE website) UPDATED
- Floriculture Plant Identification List 2025 – Nationals List
- Wisconsin Floriculture Tool List and Gallery UPDATED
- Instagram page @floral.id.gallery UPDATED
- Prom Handheld Bouquet Rubric
- Men's Classic Boutonniere Rubric
- Book: Florist Review Design School First Edition

What to Expect Day of Regionals

- Live ID and Tool Exam -50Flowers, Foliage, Plants & tools
- Written exam 30 multiple Choice (based on this study guide only)
- Men's Classic Boutonniere - Individual Practicum
- Prom Handheld Bouquet. - Individual Practicum

Please bring with you:

Floral Pruners - O'Hanna or other

Ribbon Shears

Wire Cutter

Jewelry Pliers - Round Nose

Floral Adhesive (we will also provide)

Pencils

Calculator

You may bring a clip board and a bag, apron or small clear tote to carry your items

Page 31 has direct links to Amazon if you need to purchase

Tips to Identification

Floral Identification can be confusing when you are first starting or have no hands on material to touch, see, or smell.

Tip #1

Try to find pictures of all life stages of a flower or plant. This will remove the surprise if a competition uses an immature plant or unopened flower.

Example: Petunia



Tulip



Tip #2

Know your foliage shapes, texture, and patterns.

Marigold



Ranunculus



Peony



Dahlia



Chrysanthemum



Tip #3

Take pictures of live specimens, make a folder or gallery and label each one. Use a notebook to write the name down, specific facts or draw it to lock it in your memory.



What's the Difference?

Besides the obvious that one plant produces a large edible root, the Amazon Elephant plant and the Taro plant look almost identical at certain stages of maturity. Both are tropical plants that you might see in the same person's residential property in Hawaii. But almost every home, building, and city has the Elephant Ear in sub-tropic climates. Here in Wisconsin they are even available to plant outside in the summer. Look at the leaves closely. Taro leaves droop down and Elephant Ears go upward.



Chrysanthemums

There are many different varieties of chrysanthemums. Here is guide to make sure you know all the varieties, however they come in many different color variations.

Daisy



Cushion



Button



Giant Button



Spider



Cremone



Heirloom



Football





NEW

SOUND BITES

Your Fellow FFA Floriculture students, Past and Present have helped prepare small bites of information on their favorite plants or flowers to help you identify them more easily and understand why they like them so much.



SOUND BITES

Marigold



Marigold

Botanical name: Tagetes

Other names: Cempasúchil (sem-pa-SOO-cheel) (spanish name)

Origination and History

Native to the Americas, specifically southwestern USA, Mexico, Central America, and some parts of South America. They were introduced to Europe and North Africa in the early 16th century by Spanish conquistadors, which led to their spread globally. Shortly after they were introduced to different parts of the world, they were adapted into gardens. The Aztecs cultivated them for centuries, using them for medicinal purposes and rituals. Marigolds have great cultural significance in Mexico for Día de los Muertos; They are believed to guide the spirits of the dead back home during this holiday.

Growing & blooming season

Late spring through Autumn

Basic care

Marigolds should get 6 to 8 hours of direct sunlight daily. They love well-draining soil. Water when the first inch of soil is dry.

Deadheading spent blooms encourages continuous blooms.

Fun facts

- Marigolds are great companion plants for repelling certain pests.
- The petals of marigolds are edible and are sometimes used in dishes to add a citrusy and spicy taste.
- Marigolds come in a variety of colors including reds, yellows, and oranges and sometimes a mix of them but the most common color is orange.
- Famously linked to Day of the Dead (Día de los Muertos) in Mexico, where their vibrant color and strong scent guide spirits home, and in Hinduism, where they represent divinity, prosperity, and are used in religious ceremonies and weddings



Thank You: Mitchell Hernandez – Lake Geneva Badgers,
2025 WI Floriculture Nationals Participant



SOUND BITES

Stock

Scientific name: Matthiola

Common name: Stock

Originates from Easter Mediterranean region and is named after Pierre Andrea Gregorio Mattioli, a 16th century Italian botanist

Season: Spring through early summer

How to care for it: Put in a location that receives at least 6 hours of sunlight per day. And plant stock into well draining soil.

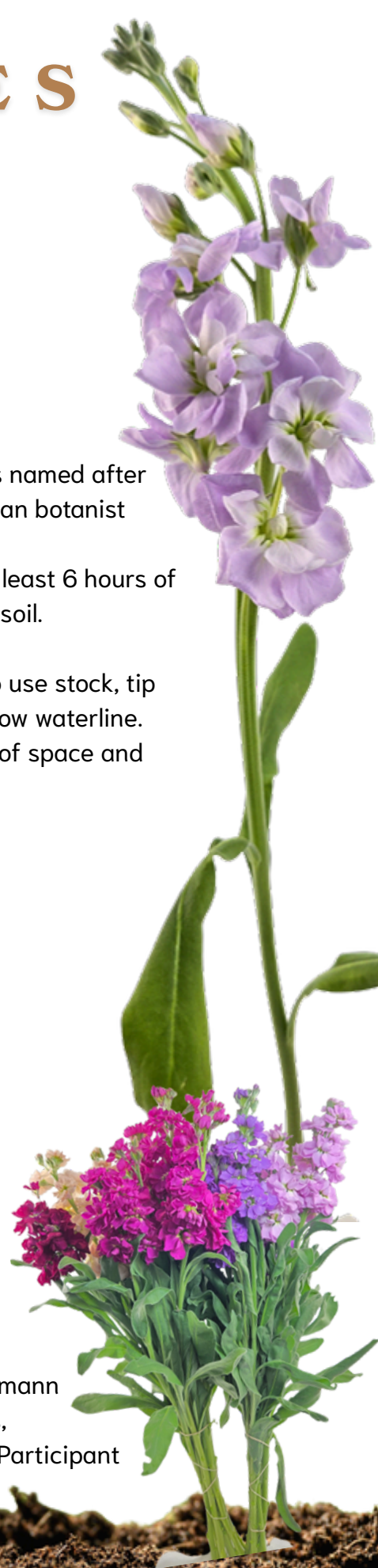
Unique fact: Stock flowers are edible

Personal story: When I make arrangements I love to use stock, tip from me is to always remove foliage that will be below waterline.

Stock is also very "tissue paper like" and loves lots of space and circulating air, so don't over stuff vases or buckets.



Thank You: Addy Scheunemann
Lake Geneva Badgers,
2025 WI Floriculture Nationals Participant



SOUND BITES

Baby's Breath

Gypsophila paniculata, commonly known as baby's breath, may look delicate, but it has a long history of being a dependable and well-loved flower. Originally native to Europe and Asia, it grew naturally in dry, rocky areas where many other plants struggled. Over time, people began cultivating baby's breath because of its soft appearance and ability to complement brighter, more colorful flowers. Its gentle look quickly made it a favorite in gardens and floral arrangements.

During the 1800s, baby's breath was brought to North America through garden planting and the growing floral industry. Gardeners and florists appreciated how easily it adapted to new environments and how reliably it bloomed. As floral design became more popular for weddings, celebrations, and meaningful life events, baby's breath found its place as a go-to filler flower. It didn't demand attention but instead helped highlight the beauty of the flowers around it, making it a quiet but important part of many arrangements.



With its name stemming from the whisper it gives in an arrangement, baby's breath remains popular today because of how easy it is to care for. It thrives in full sun, prefers well-drained soil, and needs very little water once established. Despite its fragile appearance, it is surprisingly hardy and long-lasting. A unique feature of baby's breath is that it dries naturally while holding its shape, allowing people to keep it long after an event has passed. Because of this, many associate baby's breath with lasting memories, simplicity, and innocence, proof that sometimes the smallest flowers can make the biggest impact.



Thank You: Corbyn Weber
Previous: Cochrane-Fountain City School
2025-2026 WI State Reporter



SOUND BITES

Daffodil



Scientific name: Narcissus

Common name: Daffodil

Originates from Europe and Northern Africa

Season: Late January through April

How to care for it: Water regularly in spring and fall, but stop watering in mid to late spring, about three to four weeks after the flowers fade.

Unique fact: A daffodil field can bloom for decades.

New varieties are being bred each year!



Thank You: Addy Scheunemann
Lake Geneva Badgers,
2025 WI Floriculture Nationals Participant





SOUND BITES

Ranunculus

Botanical Name: *Ranunculus asiaticus*

Other Name: Buttercup, Crowfoot and spearwort

Where did it originate?

Ranunculus comes all the way from **central Asia**. When the flower arrived in Europe, it was given the strange-sounding name Ranunculus

Season grown in: **LATE SPRING-EARLY
SUMMER**

How to care for it?

1. Provide bright indirect sunlight (6+ hours)
2. keep soil moist but well drained

If cut:

1. Fill $\frac{3}{4}$ water
2. Change water every 2-3 days
3. Keep away from direct sunlight

Fun Facts:

- Ranunculus is latin for "little frog" because they often grow in wet areas where frogs live
- They close their petals at night and reopen them in the morning, initially "waking up" with the sun
- Ranunculus symbolizes charm
- When it's cold, the flower keeps itself warm by forming its petals into a cup shape to collect sunlight.



Thank You: Alexa
Lake Geneva Badgers,
2025 WI Floriculture Nationals Participant

SOUND BITES

Hydrangea

DESCRIPTION



MACROPHYLLA (BIG LEAFO)

Most common hydrangea used in floriculture. Depending on the PH of the soil grown in, this hydrangea can be dark blue in acidic soil around 4.5 to 5, purple in 5.5 to 6, and pink in 6.5 to 7. This hydrangea does well cut fresh, but can be finicky. When the flowers wilt, best practice is to submerge the bloom, and recut stem after hydration.



ARBORESCENS (SMOOTH)

Commonly known as snowballs, these are generally white blooms, very common heritage breed in the landscape. This stem is occasionally found in wholesale. Mature blooms dry well when cut slightly green.



PANICULATA (PANICLED)

Large inflorescence of blooms that forms a panicle shape. Colors on Panicle Hydrangeas range from white to pink, pink always secondary to white as blooms mature to pink. This bloom wilts immediately if cut fresh, and must be cut when it is dry on the plant.

USES

FRESH

GRID VASES/ARRANGEMENTS

DIRED

FRESH

DRIED

Thank You: Owen Moore
Mishicot FFA
2024 National Floriculture 5th place Finalist



New 2024 Floral ID items

Most of you have seen or used the NEW 2024 National Floriculture Plant Identification List, there have been some additions, some taken away and a few common name changes. We have a link on the State page for Common name first combined with the Wisconsin Tool List to make things easier for you. Your galleries have also been updated to reflect the new National Plant List and Wisconsin Tool List.

New WI Tools and Equipment items

#307- Bullion Wire



#321- U-Glue Dashes and Strips



#329- Jewelry Round Nose Pliers



#322- Bind Wire



#332- Metallic Wire



New WI Tools and Equipment items

#338- Waterproof Container Tape



#343- Glue Gun



#344- Pot Covers



Removed WI Tool items

#327-
Washer



#330-
Nosegay Holder



#336-
Safety Goggles



#330-
Bouquet Sleeve



Florist Tools



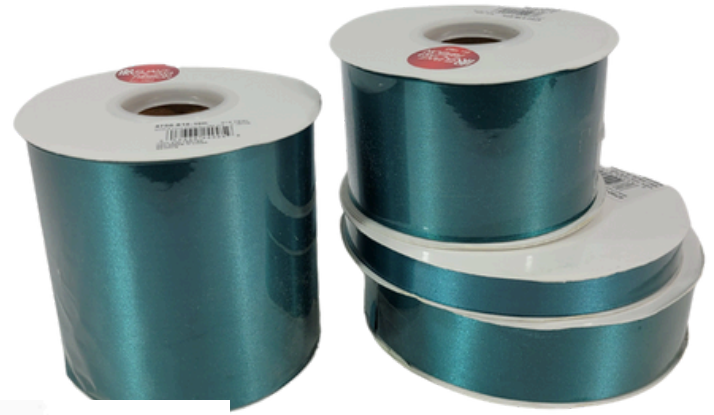
Knowing what tool to use for a specific job can be just as daunting as what flower to use for an arrangement. Luckily most florists rely heavily on only four tools.

- **Knife** – most use a single edge Swiss Army knife that is made specifically for florists. This gives a clean cut, sharp angle and prevents damage to the vascular structure. Good knife skills are something to practice with a mentor or floral teacher because a knife will allow you to use both hands and work more efficiently as you do not need to put the knife down to insert flowers.
- **Bunch Cutter** – this is a double blade tool that might or might not have a spring to release and assist your grip. Unfortunately, there are a lot of poorly made ones out on the market. When purchasing, look for a thin blade edge and double-sided sharpness which will allow you to cut exactly like a knife and not injure any of the stem or vascular structure. A brand like O'Hana is best or ARS both Japanese. Do not cut wire with these as it will damage the blades and leave small notches which results in risking damaging the flower integrity. Clean them weekly to prevent spread of bacteria and longer vase life of the flowers and foliage.
- **Ribbon Sheers** – these are invaluable and should be marked "Ribbon Only" to ensure you have a nice clean cut on your ribbon. Titanium sheers can also be used for cutting U-Glue and preventing it from sticking. DO not cut anything else with these as they will dull the edges, refrain from cutting wired ribbon with these also.
- **Wire Cutter** – use one that is durable enough to cut 18 gauge wire, has heat coated handles to prevent the rubberized coating from wiggling off and a spring.
- **Jewelry Round Nose Pliers** – best for creating precise curves, rounding off the edges to prevent puncture or scratches with aluminum wire.
- **U-Glue Dashes and Strips** – a double sided glue that gives you security of tape and glue combined, while easy to remove.



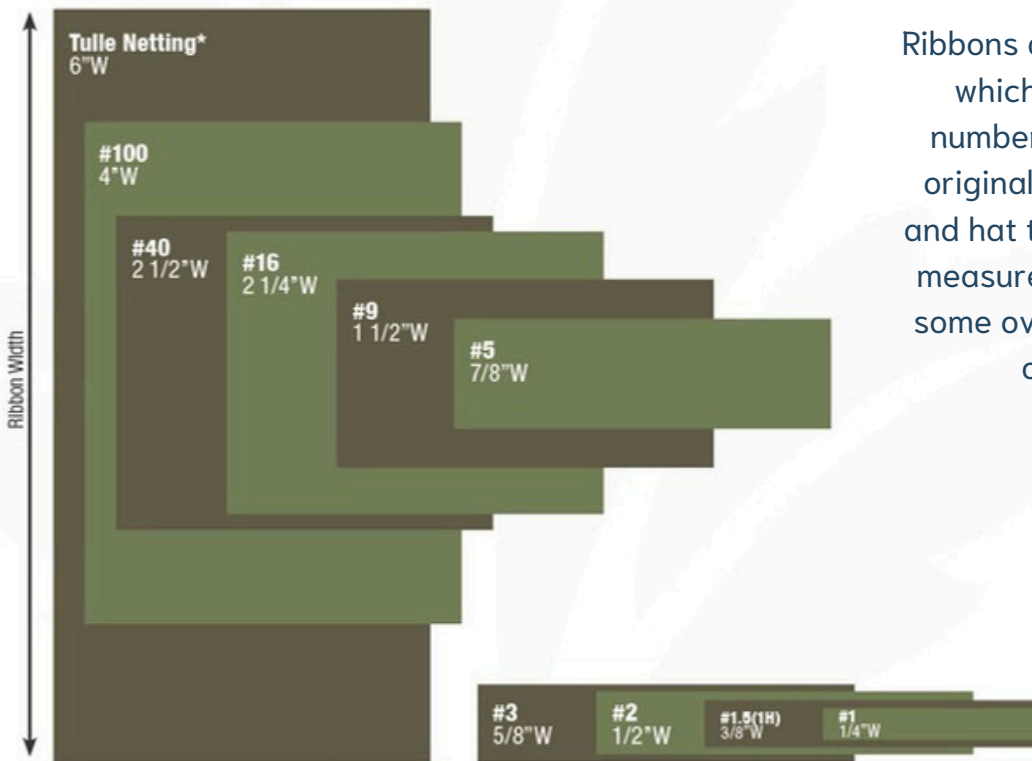
Ribbon Widths

Choosing a ribbon width for your project may be easy when you are looking at stacks or rows of them. However, when it comes time to order new ribbon rolls you will be asked what number the ribbon is. Remember the BIGGER the number the BIGGER width of the ribbon.



Ribbon Size Chart from JACOBSON

Sizes are approximations and may vary from actual ribbon sizes.



*Other Ribbon Sizes include; tulle 12"W, 18"W, 27"W, and 54"W, Mesh 10"W and Misty Sheer 5"W.

Why bolt Numbers?

Ribbons are sold on bolts by size number which indicates their width. These numbers are industry standards that originally came from the millinery (hat and hat trim making) industry. The exact measurements in inches have changed some over the years and recently have officially gotten smaller.

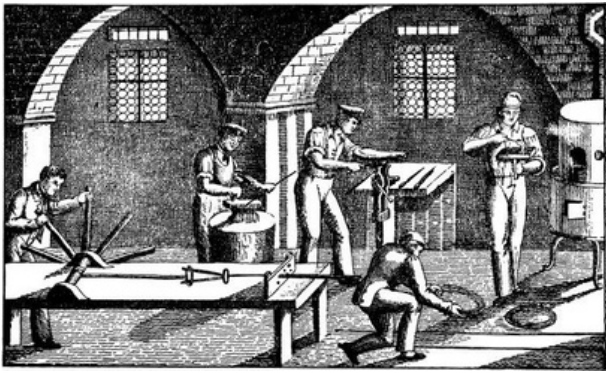
The most common ribbon is #9. You see this used on wedding bouquet handles, bows for plants and vases, and to make a shoe string bow for a European hand tie wrap.

#3 ribbon is used a lot for corsages. You may purchase a sheer, a wired edge which allows it to keep its shape, or other fabric like material.

#40 ribbon is very popular at Christmas for wreaths, tree decoration and bows. Another occasion we use this often is for sympathy work. The letters are stuck to a #40 ribbon to say something like "Loving Grandmother."

Wire Gauges

Gauge is a measure of thickness, meaning diameter today. Originally the British iron wire industry, when there was no universal unit of thickness, needed a unit of measurement. The sizes of the gauge numbers were the result of the process of wire-drawing and the nature of iron as a substance. Wire-drawing was pulling long rods through a plate (now known as a gauge) and stretched. This was repeated through smaller plates until they reached desired gauge needed for an order. the amount of times they wire-drawn was the gauge number. Gauges are now measured and described in fractions of an inch. Remember the BIGGER the number the SMALLER the width.



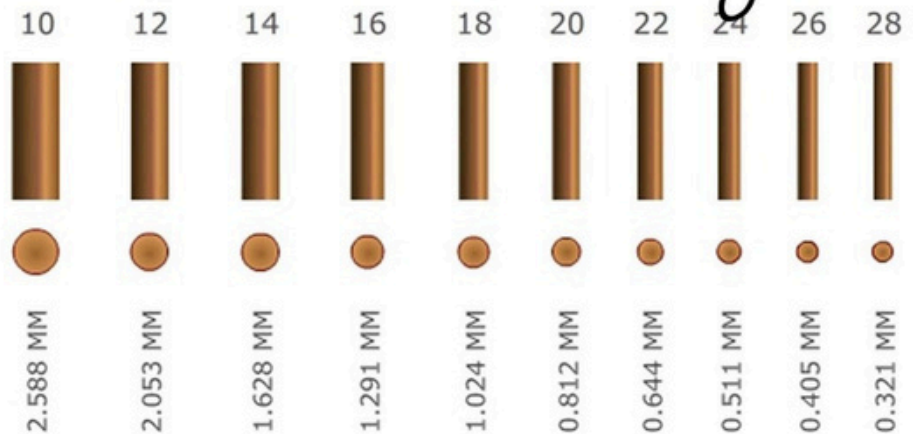
Original iron process of wire-drawing



Electrical Wire

In electrical industry the diameter determines how many amperes (amps) a wire can conduct without overheating. So the smaller the gauge, the larger the wire you see.

What is Wire Gauge?



Every shop has their favorite gauges of wire. It really depends on what you originally learned and your finger/wrist strength and dexterity that shows your favoritism. In competition, the smaller the better to conceal your mechanics.

Some common uses:

#26 & 28 gauge is used a lot for corsages and boutonnieres to wire individual flower heads, foliage leaves, and secure a small bow.

#22 & 24 gauge is very popular for bows, heavier flowers like roses, and carnations.

#20 is typically used for wire and taping droopy necked flowers like Gerbera Daisies

#18 can be used for reinforcement, creating or straightening curved stems, and create armatures.

#16-#10 is only found in decorative metallic wire in the floral industry in aluminum to create body flowers, accessories and adornments, or dynamic lines in designs.

Florist Products

The products that florist use to build an arrangement, use as mechanics are called Hardgoods. This is how they classify them when purchasing and taking inventory. There are too many to list each one, please take a look at a wholesale buyers guide: [Oasis Floral Product Guide](#)

Some hardgoods might not be as recognizable as they are outdated or not commonly used in floral shops. Lets explain some of these.



Cardette - #309

Cardette holders, also known as “forks”, are used for small enclosure cards. Made of plastic and typically not recycled. The new version is a bamboo one that has two options. One is to keep using the small enclosure cards or to use a band to loop around a nice larger sized card with your logo.



Bind Wire - #322

Bind wire is 26 gauge wire covered in paper. It's great for small projects like tying an orchid to a stake, or creating an armature. You can also find it useful when making a smaller hand tie bouquet for a bind.



Dry Foam - #322

There is a big difference between Dry foam and Floral Foam (#330). Dry Foam is literally dry and stays dry. It has a brown color and is very abrasive to touch. Most florist use these for permanent botanical arrangements. Floral Foam can be soaked in water and absorb up to 2 liters of water.



Corsage Box- #314

Most corsage boxes are a clear plastic clam shell that snaps together. Some florists put a paper or cello shred on the bottom and a flowershop sticker on the top or side. More eco-friendly florists use kraft boxes that can be recycled.

Outdated = Vintage

Let's be real, the floral industry is one of the slowest moving industries I can think of. What we did fifty years ago still exists, and some florists are still doing the same exact designs and practices today. I personally find it a bit aggravating how resistant to change most are. If there is a faster, cheaper, more efficient way, why not learn and do it that way?

So, I've now included The Vintage Florist Museum that we can add to each year when we find very outdated and antiquated items that just make life much more inefficient. Some items have been retired, because the majority of the florists did not use them. Oasis has a silent saying that I constantly tell new florists, "If you don't use it, we lose it!" They literally take it off the shelves and out of production if it's not a hot seller or costs them too much to make small batches.

If you ever want to see me boil like a teapot, let's talk about old-school florists who get out the hammer and smash woody stems to process them, claiming that they can then take up the water more easily. I can see the horror on your face right now! LOL There are these wonderful new things called tools, specifically O'Hanna Pruners that slice through like butter and keep the vascular structure intact—how novel.

The consumer level loves to pull out the kitchen scissors. Big sigh... I need a cleansing breath. I have now resorted to smiling and looking them dead in the eye and saying, "Tomorrow you're going into surgery and your surgeon is removing your arm. You get to choose which tool he uses: your kitchen scissors or a scalpel. What's your choice?" Their eyes get huge! Of course, they know which one to choose now. If it's not good enough for you, it's not good enough for the flowers' vascular structure.



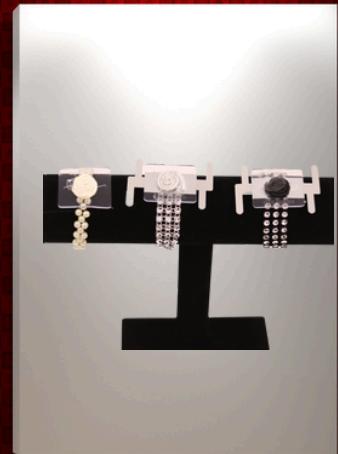
MUSEUM

VINTAGE FLORIST

Canvas one: Wooden Pick - Convenient to quickly make a bow and use the wire attached to hold in place. You would then stick in a blooming or green plant.

Canvas Two: Nosegay Holder - Used in Victorian era to add bold smelling florals and herbs to mask the stench of horse manure and signs of not bathing for days. "Happy Nose"

Canvas Three: Elastic Wrist Corsage Bands - Torture devices for girls on Homecoming and Prom, and also for Mothers for weddings making them itch, scratch and pinch their skin.



MUSEUM

VINTAGE FLORIST

Canvas one: Stephanotis Stems - a tightly rolled cotton that you soak in water and insert inside stephanotis to keep hydrated for wedding bouquets.

Canvas Two: Flora Lock - a liquid glue used to lock stems in place on wedding bouquet oasis holders. (We really miss this)

Canvas Three: Oasis Bridal bouquet holder and lace backing - A HUGE hit in the 80's and 90's as large cascade bridal bouquets were popular.



MUSEUM

VINTAGE FLORIST

Canvas one: Mache Container -a paper mache container used for large side pieces for funerals, very cost effective and compostable.

Canvas Two: Poly Foil - a waterproof foil that was used to wrap grower pots like poinsetia, mums, Easter Lilies for cents, secured with acetate ribbon and a bow.

Canvas Three: Pick Machine - Steel picks wrap around a silk flower stem to secure into dry foam. Many florists have battle wounds from this machine, lol.



Mechanics

Florists throw around a word that is commonly used in a completely different way, which in turn causes confusion for many students. When you hear the word mechanics, you more than likely think of the guy who changes your car's oil or makes repairs, right?

In the floral industry, mechanics are items you use to construct or secure a floral arrangement. On your rubrics, you will notice that mechanics are always weighted very heavily, 10 points or more. The reason is that if you don't have a solid foundation, the risk of it falling apart and having a short life reflects poorly on the business.



Common Mechanics used in Floral Competitions

Wrist Corsage and Boutonniere



- Metallic flat wire
- U-Glue
- Floral glue



Vased Flowers

- Clear tape grid
- Water
- Leaf wrap



Pin on Boutonniere

- Red Cording
- Wire and tape



Flower Arrangement

- Foam
- Wire and tape



Bud Vases

- Water



Spiral Hand Tie

- Bind-It tape
- Satin Ribbon

Floral Foam

One of the most used hardgoods is floral foam. Currently, there are only two brand names on the market. Oasis and AquaFoam. Both serve the same purpose but perform slightly differently. Oasis is continually improving its formula and theirs is biodegradable (18 months, but it does leave microplastics behind) Oasis also includes a floral preservative so you do not need to add this to the water when soaking the foam.

How to use floral foam properly:

- Fill a bucket or waterproof container that is large enough for a brick to freely move in and sink to the bottom without restriction with room temperature water.
- Cut your foam when it is dry to fit inside the container to minimize waste.
- Drop only the brick size you need onto the top of the water. WALK AWAY
- Free-float method: bucket is filled with water double in size of the brick of foam
- Do not touch, push or hold the foam down. This creates air pockets and the foam will have dry spots inside and will cause some flowers to wilt faster. Pushing and denting foam ruins the integrity of the foam by becoming a solid and water can no longer siphon to that spot. It only takes 1.5 minutes for a brick to fully soak.
- Remove from the water gently trying to avoid finger impressions.
- Place inside your container and fill with preservative water to the half waypoint.
- Always leave a gap around one side of your foam so that you can add water
- You may want to remove the corners of the foam to create a mounded shape



Result of pushing foam under water



Floral Foam

Green versus Midnight

One of the current debates in the flower world is sustainability. Unfortunately, we do not have a solution for foam replacement. There are options though to reduce waste and how much foam is being put into landfills. One obvious step is to just use less, only exactly what you need. Next, you can choose Midnight foam, which is a newer foam product from Oasis. Why Midnight or black? Well, black creates shadows and the voids that you leave on the foam are no longer visible. In comparison to the green foam where voids are like a neon light saying "look at me!" In competition not covering green foam could cost you up to 10 points in the mechanics category. Midnight foam has been successful for florists in using less foliage to cover the foam which in turn is cutting expenses and giving customers a cleaner look.



Modern Floral Design and Art

There are a few times as designers we need a clean surface and covering foam with foliage, moss or flatter flowers distracts from the designer's true vision. Midnight foam is excellent to use in this situation. You can also cut, shape and texturize the foam to alter its appearance. If the photo to the side was larger you could see the foam on all sides matches the container's texture and the blocks were cut to create repetition and the minimalism of the design is amplified with all the negative space in the middle and only the craspedia stems to anchor the foam blocks.

**** IF you are ever given Midnight foam in a competition ask what are the judging rules immediately. Some will have you treat it the same as green foam and remove points for exposing it. Others will want you alter it by shape and texture.



Floral Foam and Flowers

Some flowers are very sensitive to floral foam and will wilt within 8–12 hours. Why might this happen to some flowers and not others? That's a great question!

Some flowers have a very woody external stem:

- Roses
- Hydrangea

Some flowers have hollow stems, like a straw:

- Ranunculus
- Anemone
- Dahlia
- Hyacinth

Others just do not like foam at all

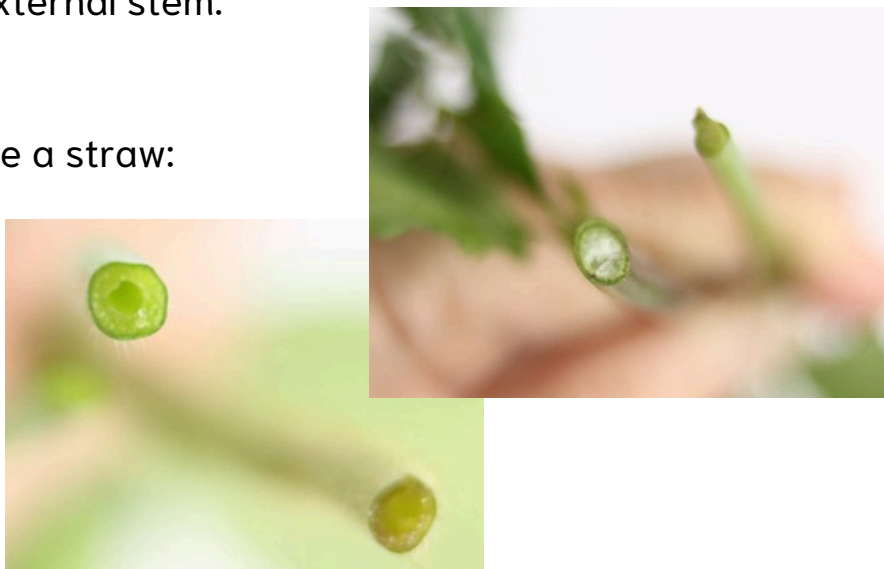
- Tulips
- Gerbera Daisy
- Astilbe
- Snapdragons

The WHY

Flowers and foliage have a vascular system that carries minerals, water, and sugar to the leaves and bud. Remember that floral foam is an open-cell plastic. The particles are very small, but so is the vascular system of a stem. When a stem starts pulling water up the stem it will get foam particles starting to attach to the vascular walls. Eventually, space will fill with foam particles and cut off water, sugar, and minerals, which in turn starts the process of death. Ever see a Gerbera Daisy with her head flopped down like she's taking a nap? This is either from a poor cut and/or being put in foam without a remedy to prevent this.

The solution to flowers lasting longer in foam is actually simple.

- 1) Always remember to fill the container with preservative water
- 2) Send care instructions and remind customers to add water
- 3) Hydrangea and Roses you can dip the stems in Quick Dip right before inserting them into foam. This has worked great for me personally over the years.
- 4) Stems that are hollow or very soft you can insert a chenille at the base of the stem and slowly/carefully inch it up the stem. STOP when you get resistance. Some stems might swallow the entire chennile, that's okay.



Sustainability

The newest buzz word in the floral industry is Sustainability. The Millennial generation has become concerned with the amount of waste and the impact it has on the environment. They have reason to be concerned as the floral industry is one of the biggest producers of waste. It's a bit comical when you think about it actually. How can a business that sells flowers and plants be hurting the environment and be filling the landfills?

- Every bunch of flowers is wrapped in a plastic sleeve
- Boxes are not recycled at most shops
- Flower waste can not be composted because of chemicals and pesticides
- Floral Foam is not 100% biodegradable
- We use a lot of adhesive, plastic, and items that will never decompose
- Transportation – leaving a large carbon foot print with planes, semi trailers and vans
- Card picks and packaging is all plastic or has a wax coating
- Wedding containers are large amounts of foam and plastic

The list is more than likely endless to wasteful ways if we analyzed the operation.

The last Five years most florists have made an effort to be aware and here is how they made changes:

Separate trash from recyclables
Purchase Glass and Ceramic Vases
Switch packaging to kraft paper/no wax
Recycled paper enclosure cards
Buy from local flower farmers
Rent wedding and event containers
Empty buckets in flower beds and trees
Repurpose and donate wedding flowers

Return boxes to wholesalers
Offer a buy back vase program
Bamboo card holders
Minimize foam use
Offer in season flowers only
Use biodegradable mechanics
Keep cooler and buckets clean
Paperless invoices and receipts

REMEMBER: EVERY LITTLE BIT HELPS

Making the transition to a more eco-friendly floral business can seem overwhelming. It is important to keep in mind that change doesn't need to happen overnight.

Try making a list of small, manageable, sustainable goals to start. Once you've mastered these, you can work on more difficult, long term goals.

Over time, you'll be amazed by how much waste you've eliminated and proud of the changes you've made to protect our planet!

Sustainability

Floral foam and the use of it is one way to pick a fight between traditional florists and the No foam florists.



Traditional floral foam is made of carcinogenic materials and is a single-use plastic. Floral foams also further break down into microplastics, which contaminate our water sources and are becoming an increasingly problematic form of pollution.

Alternatives like chicken wire, moss, wood, wool, straw, and other elements help make the transition much easier.

Smithers Oasis has been researching, experimenting, and has come out with new products to keep up with demand for those who are concerned about what happens after the consumer is done with the flowers. Unfortunately the midnight foam still contains micro plastics after it biodegrades. The new Agra Wool is made from basalt, a volcanic rock stone wool. If you know a bit about construction, you will notice the similarities between Agra Wool and a fire resistant insulation called Rockwool. Agra Wool is very absorbent, can be reused and also can be composted. Common complaints have been it's itchy on hands and arms and that during transportation the stems shift.

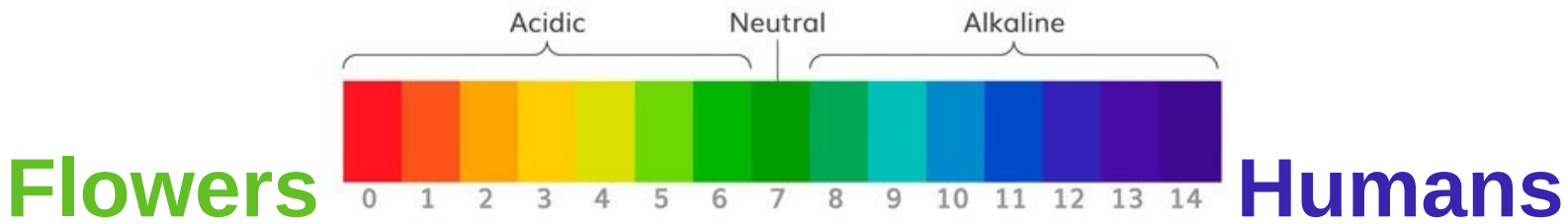
The confusion and why “Old School” Florists are not changing their ways:

One of the biggest reasons most florists have not changed their tune is because there are not practical better options. Once you give the majority the solution that is also cost effective they will gradually change or be forced to because of the wholesalers and what they purchase. The other reason is because what some are claiming to be sustainable actually is not at all.

In my opinion, just use less foam if you really need it for stability or hydration. Your container doesn't need to be crammed full and 2 inches above the rim. Cut it dry to only soak what you need and use only the amount you need to keep your balance and stability in transportation.



Test your water PH



Checking the pH or acidity level of your water supply is critical for flower processing. Water quality is the most overlooked item in a flower shop. Your pH level ideally should be between 3.5 and 4.5 for flowers. Anything under 7 is considered acidic. When we look at a full pH scale human consumption is at the opposite end of the spectrum trying to keep the body alkaline. Flowers like the acidic water to keep the vascular structure open and block microbes from growing. Those microbes can cause a slow of block water uptake and in turn shorten the vase life.

Knowing your water pH will assist you in choosing the best floral preservative to use. For reference, most bottled water and city water is around a 5. This means that it is already acidic and you need minimal floral preservative to reduce the pH level. If your water pH is 6 or higher you might need a reverse Osmosis system installed as the water is alkaline and will reduce the life of the flowers and foliage faster. One of the best indicators is Silver Dollar Eucalyptus, if you do not have a low enough pH, this particular Eucalyptus will look water stained at the top, then turn crispy within days.

The use of floral preservatives can easily double the vase life of cut flowers. Not mixing the nutrient solution accurately could have an adverse effect. All flower foods contain sugar, biocide, and acidifier. Please read each label carefully and follow instructions EXACTLY. Florallife and Crystl have spent millions to perfect their solutions and micro doses, so guessing can accelerate the death process.



Ever heard of adding 7-Up to a vase of flowers for longer-lasting flowers? Well, 7-Up has a pH of 3 and contains a lot of sugar so this is why some people have luck with this method using a one part 7-Up to 3 parts water.

Wive's Tales and Water

Monitoring the pH or acidity level of your water supply is essential for the vitality of your flowers. Water quality is often the most neglected factor in flower longevity. Ideally, the pH level for flowers should range from 3.5 to 4.5, whereas the ideal range for human consumption is between 7.15 and 9.5.

Understanding your water's pH will help you select the most suitable floral preservative. For example, most bottled and municipal water typically has a pH of around 5, while well water usually exceeds 7.

There are countless folk remedies suggesting what to add to your water to prolong the life of flowers, but after extensive testing, the key lies in your initial pH level. Clean, low pH water is the most effective; we've had excellent results with reverse osmosis water. For those using well water, we found that 7-Up works best!

What are some Wive's Tales you have heard or tried?

Asprin
Sugar
Bleech
Pennies
Lemon
????



Pennies actually work for tulips in water. If they arrive with bent necks or are severely dehydrated, add 4 pennies per half gallon of water and face them reverse to the light source you want them to bend to and within an hour, you will have straight stems. Next, day you will have very turgid (sturdy) neck stems.

Flower Delivery - Upon Arrival

Most flowers are packed and transported without any water or hydration after they are harvested. We call this dry-packing. Flowers will lose a small percentage of their water during shipping, but if kept at low temperatures like 32 to 36 degrees Fahrenheit and without light this forces them into sleep state or comma. During heavy demand and harvest times like Valentines and Mother's Day product is cut four to six weeks out and dry-packed and stored in dark coolers at the lowest temperature until ready for ship date. After temperature fluctuations from trucks to planes and trucks again with no water, vitamins, flower food, or light product can appear to look dead and dying.

It's critical to know the difference between neglected and dehydrated versus dead, mold, and botrytis. Processing flowers is usually a beginner job in most shops even though it is one of the most crucial steps to get correct to ensure the shop has fresh flowers.

Some wholesalers leave products dry for sale in their cooler for the week like carnations, roses, mums, liatris, and some fillers. I personally like receiving dry product because then I know it's still fresh from the box and has not sat around in water for an unknown amount of days. The longest it would sit dry in a box at a wholesaler might be 5 days as they turn over product so quickly.

Difference between Dead and Dehydrated



Opening boxes from overseas shipments you might be surprised to see droopy sad flowers. Some are prone to dehydration,



Use the correct flower food or Quickdip to open the vascular system. Wrap with paper, tie loosely and put in warm water. Leave out for 1 hour.



Unwrap and allow the flowers to continue hydrating if the stems are turgid enough to hold the large flower heads. Place in cooler after 1 hour.

Some flowers that are prone to dehydration and “the flop”:

Veronica – I wrap these like above, leave in cooler overnight wrapped

Tulips – Leave out near a window hydrating with 3 pennies to straighten

Ranunculus – keep wrapped in paper over night to hydrate out of cooler

Clematis – place in a glass vase tall enough to support weak stems, put in cooler

Stock – COLD water, lots of extra space in bucket, immediately to cooler



Examples of dead and damaged product

Recognizing some product is beyond resuscitation and why is a great skill. You can quickly communicate to the owner or manager what the underlying problem is, follow steps to get a credit from wholesaler, and throw that product in the garbage. Wasting time on dead or dying product is not an option, because it's life has already been shortened and you should not be selling marginal product. The rule in my shop is "If I can't sell it, I don't pay for it." So this means a credit is in order on my statement. Your salesperson will ask you to photograph for proof and count stems affected.



Hydrangea
Over heated in
the box.



Amaryllis
Day after arrival.
Old product and
has a disease



Roses
Smashed
heads
from poor
packaging
and/or the
box being
dropped very
hard on end



Rotten stems of
Ranunculus



Bells of Ireland
beyond
dehydration.
Will never take
up enough
water.



Protea that was
wet in box
and possibly
heated up

Floral Chemical Solutions



A product call QuickDip is essential when processing these types of flowers. QuickDip means cut, hold the product in the solution for 30 seconds to 1 minute, and put into your water and nutrient solution to hydrate. QuickDip is a vasodilator meaning it expands the vessels to allow the water, sugars, biocide to shoot up the stem immediately and hydrate without air pockets. Compare this to Migraine tablets which contain caffeine and do the same thing, open all the vessels to the brain to allow oxygen to flow smoothly again.

Many, many options are available as "flower food" in liquid or powder form. Each flower shop that work with will have their favorite and why they like to use it. All I ask is that you follow the proper measurements required to ensure you flowers have the maximum life span and check the water pH.



Processing Flowers

- Upon Receiving cut flowers and foliage material you should:
- Open and unpack immediately
- Allow the product to breathe, Remove plastic
- Check the name, quantity, and price against the invoice
- Make a point of remembering the correct flower and variety names
- Check the quality and look for any damaged stems or petals
- Begin cutting and conditioning immediately – Use a clean sharp pruners
- Cut 1/2–1" off each stem, more if given permission
- Use properly sanitized buckets and fill the buckets with 3–5" of clean cold water and proper floral solution mix.

Copied from AIFD Guide to Floral design p.87-90

Know your Measurements

One of the most frustrating concepts that I have dealt with over the years is people not being aware of simple measurements. When you are asked to fill a bucket of water with 3–4 inches of water and come back with 1–2 inches this causes a loss of efficiency. Look at your hand, if you use any of your 3 middle fingers, on average each knuckle is 1". So, put your finger in the bucket when in doubt and if it reaches the knuckle on your hand, golden!



Conditioning Flowers

After placing products into the cold water and nutrient solution, leave it to recover and acclimatize for several hours. This is called Conditioning which allows the product to become fully hydrated and encourages bud development.

Store product at the right temperature and humidity.

- Lower temperatures will slow the aging process dramatically
- For most plant material ideal cooler temperature should be 36 to 38 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Tropical plant materials such as Orchids, anthurium, heliconia, and tropical foliage are an exception. These should be 55 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit.
- The relative humidity of a cooler should be 80% or higher.
- Rotate stock using the "First In, First Out" rule
- Product leftover for more than 5 days should be cut and put in a new bucket with new water and nutrient solution.

Flower Buckets

Choosing a bucket for each flower or foliage type can be the biggest challenge to properly processing flowers. Choose a bucket too small and the length and weight of the flowers can tip the bucket over spilling out the contents. Choose a bucket that is too big and the flower heads get smashed together and/or the air can not circulate which creates waste. Ideally you need a bucket that supports $\frac{3}{4}$ ths of the stem length with enough room for the stems to move, get air, and support the weight of the heads of the flowers.

These are examples of proper buckets for the product chosen.



An average rose bundle is 60cm high which is approximately 24", or just above your knee. To support the height and weight of those stems you need a minimum of 15" height on a bucket. If you have 4 bunches of roses that equals 100 stems which fits perfectly in a large procona (Rectangular bucket named by the Dutch).



Cut flowers in Procona benefit from hydration and ventilation during transport, resulting in less waste. Procona thus combines sustainability with (cost) efficiency!



Smaller stems 40cm = 14" or under can be placed in small buckets or glass vases.

The advantages for smaller stems in glass

- Visibility of stems to ensure they are in water.
- Ensure no foliage is in the water
- Sensitive flowers last longer in glass



Storing Flowers

Not everyone has a flower cooler to store their flowers and foliage in to keep them from aging rapidly. Flower coolers ideally are set at 36 to 38 degrees and have 80% humidity with fans to keep the air moving. Some things you can do to keep your flowers longer without a cooler.

- Find an area that stays much colder than the rest of your home, garage, or school. Ideally under 70 degrees and above 34 degrees Fahrenheit
- Foliage that arrived in boxes will need to be cut, water, and bucketed to stay fresh. Keep a bag over the top to prevent drying out and higher humidity.
- If using a garage, monitor your temperatures constantly as they fluctuate drastically between day and night.
- Check your water level in buckets daily as flowers out of the cooler consume more water. Air conditioned homes and offices have very little moisture in the air.
- During the Summer it's best to use a fan to prevent molding and condensation sitting on the petals and leaves. Excessive heat is just as harmful as frost.
- During the Winter you need to watch for freezing of fresh product. Once frozen it will look okay until it is in the warmer air, then will turn translucent or brown almost immediately. Always cover your product when transporting inside to outside if below 36 degrees Fahrenheit.

Delivered in 7 degrees without a bag



Rested against a fridge wall that froze only some leaves.



Hydrangea left outside in 32 degrees

Low Temperatures are Concerning

When winter rolls in, even the most stunning flowers can become victims of the cold. A few minutes of freezing air, a drafty doorway, or a chilly transport van can turn perky petals into wilted, frostbitten disappointments. It's frustrating, you've done everything right, the design is perfect, and then the weather decides otherwise. But the cold doesn't have to win. With a few smart adjustments, your blooms can stay just as fresh and beautiful as ever, no matter how low the temperature drops.

1. Watch the Temperature Everywhere

Flowers are sensitive to extreme cold and heat alike. Even a few minutes of exposure to freezing air can cause petals to brown or wilt.

- During Transport: Keep vehicles warm and avoid leaving arrangements in the car for extended periods. Use insulated boxes or wraps to protect blooms from frostbite.
- In Storage: Maintain a consistent cool but not cold temperature (ideally between 34–37°F / 1–3°C). Avoid drafts from open doors or vents.
- At Events: Scout the venue beforehand flowers near entrances, windows, or heaters may struggle. Opt for central placements where temps are steadier.



2. Hydration is Key

Cold air is dry air. Flowers need moisture to stay plump and lively.

- Hydrate Before Display: Give stems a fresh diagonal cut and let them drink in clean, room-temperature water for at least an hour before arranging.
- Mist Lightly: A gentle misting keeps petals from drying out, especially in heated indoor spaces. Needs to be dry before delivery.
- Watch Water Temperature: Avoid icy or hot water both can shock the stems and limit absorption.

3. Choose Winter-Resilient Blooms

Some flowers simply handle the cold better than others. Choosing hardy varieties can save you time, stress, and replacements.

Winter warriors include:

- Roses
- Carnations
- Chrysanthemums
- Alstroemeria
- Hypericum berries
- Evergreen accents (cedar, pine, holly)

For delicate blooms (like tulips, hydrangeas, or lilies), extra insulation and temperature control are crucial.

Low Temperatures are Concerning

4. Wrap Smart

When transporting or delivering, wrapping flowers properly can make all the difference.

- Use insulated floral sleeves or bubble wrap over tissue to retain warmth.
- Avoid plastic-only wrapping, it can trap moisture and cause condensation damage.
- For longer hauls, consider thermal boxes or liners used by floral shippers in cold regions.



5. Timing is Everything

- Schedule deliveries strategically.
- If possible, avoid early mornings and late nights when temperatures are lowest.
- Never leave arrangements unattended on a doorstep. Always ensure someone is available to receive the flowers in person to keep them protected from the cold.
- For events, coordinate setup times so flowers spend minimal time exposed to the cold before guests arrive.

6. Keep an Eye on Humidity

Winter air indoors is often dry due to heating systems. If you store flowers in a design studio or cooler, use a humidifier to maintain around 80–85% humidity, ideal for preventing petal dehydration and wilting.

7. Educate Your Client

Whether it's a bride taking her bouquet home or a corporate client displaying arrangements in a lobby, or the everyday customer, share quick cold-care tips:

- Keep flowers away from vents, fans, and doorways.
- Refresh vase water every two days.
- Avoid placing arrangements near fireplaces, windows, or radiators.

A little education goes a long way in preserving your work's beauty and longevity. Consider adding a little care guide card to every arrangement to help your customers keep their blooms looking their best.



Badge of Honor or Shame?

Even though everyone thinks a florist's job is so fabulous and fun, the reality is... it's dirty work! Between all the water we move around all day, the processing of flowers, picking up after ourselves, and taking extra foliage off stems, your hands can start looking very tired and worn. Some may think that after a hard day's work, a grimy hand, some cracks, and even a wound is a badge of honor. I hope your generation is smart enough to recognize it as a badge of shame.

Flowers and foliage are covered in chemicals today, and they wreak havoc on your entire body. You may be very fortunate to have a great immune system and be able to detox most of this on a daily basis as you are so young. Some are far less fortunate, like myself, who from childhood had a compromised immune system and sensitivity to all chemicals. You might be able to tell if you quickly smell things like smoke, cleaners, perfumes, laundry soap, and candles that bother you and maybe have a runny nose or headache. The largest concern is getting them into your bloodstream. The skin is the largest human organ and is openly exposed at your hands and sometimes up to your shoulders, depending on the season. After processing flowers, if you rub your arm, shoulder, or face, you are spreading any residual chemicals that transferred to your hands. It could be one or many forms of chemicals. When your body is warm, that is when your pores are open the widest and can easily absorb anything on the surface and immediately pull it through the bloodstream without going through a filter like your kidneys or liver.

A sensitive person will develop a rash or small blister-like spots within the hour if they forget to wash with soap and water. Medical professionals might label this as contact dermatitis, but technically it's chemicals eating your soft skin layers and getting angry like a burn. A person who doesn't have a reaction, barely has allergies, and is never sick a day in their life is blessed, but they could also just be waiting for a storm.

It's always better to be preventative than reactive. So you have a couple of choices. One, you can wear non-latex gloves like Nitrile (I say non-latex because 90% of us who are sensitive are allergic to latex also, as it's a petroleum-based product). Your second option is to go gloveless, but always keep in mind not to touch your face, phones, or anything else you would put near your skin while processing and designing, then wash your hands well, soak in hydrogen peroxide, and put a very good hand balm or cream on when dry. I highly recommend Burt's Bees as it has always worked well for multiple people.



This particular person had a long time occurrence of chemical burns. It was creating a scenario of dried skin, would peel, crack, sometimes bleed... and repeat. How we got rid of it:
2 X a day - Wash hands, soak in hydrogen peroxide. Let air dry. Slather or big glob of Burt's Bees Cuticle Cream, then put Band aid over, wear gloves while working. Do this till skin is no longer sensitive. MUST Wear Gloves all the time!!!!



A Good Floral Assistant would never...

In my 25 years plus I have seen some really crazy things and to this day probably can't even answer why most people thought the things they did were a great idea. I can't give you the guidelines to be the best floral assistant or apprentice as each shop has their own set of what they see as acceptable. We all know the best apprentice is one who is eager to learn, asks questions, practices, and communicates well.

Over the years I have seen the most insane things done by people of all ages which have lead to contracts, agreements, immediate terminations, and hospital trips. Luckily, I have only been the observer and medic in all my years as florist, but some very close calls when you get tired and working long holiday hours. Here are my top six that I don't ever want to hear a story about or see you do. I actually have all my students who attend programs in my studio sign contracts of zero liability, meaning that if you do any of the following things, you are responsible for your own hospital bill... I might drive you there.



Work Stations

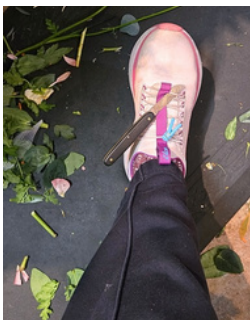
Always to be kept swept, neat and tidy, no obstructions for passer-by people. Leaves/petals are like banana peels. Standing on a heap of foliage can also have long term effects to your hips n spine.

Jumping or legs in Garbage Bins



Jumping in a garbage can, even just using your foot is extremely dangerous. You can fall over, cut yourself, and cause a ripple effect of damage. You also never know what's in there, like glass.

Wearing Sandals in a shop



Absolutely no open toed shoes in a flower shop! Knives, scissors, pruners, pins, wire cutters have all gone flying off tables and tried to take a toe. Be safe, wear good shoes.



All containers, especially cylinders should be carried by side and bottom. If you hold by top, the glass can pop or shatter and you might need many surgeries to repair hand. (Top vase, I hit the top of racking and the entire bottom of vase fell out and shattered.)

Plastic and boxes in walkways



Not sure if it's in every driver and designers DNA, but they ALL leave boxes and and garbage bins in the middle of every space. They are very slippery stacked flat and plastic wrap on the floor is lethal!

Leaving Empty Buckets in Coolers



If you are putting fresh procured product away, condense older product and remove the empty bucket, pour water out, and wash it. Flip upside down to dry. Clean up any spilled water.

Competition Success tips

- Clean all your product, remove leaves, debris, broken, chewed leaves and petals
- Edit your foliage – If it's too big...start cutting. Too fluffy...cut pieces out.
- Don't over do it, read your sheets to what we are asking for, save the more for State.
- Remember "The more you give a judge, the more they have to judge". Keep your design simple, clean lines, and hit all the required points.

**This is your Regional study guide.
Your written exam will only be on
contents in this study guide above and
your Advisor galleries for ID.**

**Best of Luck. Please email me if you have ANY
questions**

lisa@floraelements.com

Lisa's Public Service Announcement:

There is a difference between designing orders for a flower shop and competition designs. What you are learning though all your FFA Study Guide packets is geared for competition and succeeding at keeping all your points. If you practice, attend workshops, watch the FFA videos you will learn a very neat and meticulous way to design. If you choose to pursue a career as a designer you will quickly find out that every shop owner has a different way to complete an order. When you design for competition your goal is to please the judges. It is not about art, showing off, or trying new ideas. To get higher points you do only what is asked and add creative flair IF they give you the supplies to do so.

Men's Classic Boutonniere

This year for Regionals, you will be asked to make a Men's Pin On Boutonniere. This is an old school classic, but still used daily in our floral industry. The reasoning behind wire and taping is to extend stem length, but to also make it flexible. So remember this when cutting your stems, most people leave too much original stem, as a result it becomes very thick and bulky. The trick is to keep them narrow, smaller and use fun and unusual filler and foliage.

For your Regional Practicum we are going with Prom theme. Keep in mind the judges are looking for cleanliness, no wire showing, slim stems, and for some creativity. We know this is the first time doing this, working with new materials and outside most people's comfort zones so here is a step by step.

Find your Product



Pick 2-3 nice heads of smaller spray roses, no bite marks, clean the gaurd petals off, removing sepils is a personal choice.

Supplies

- 20 gauge wire
- Floral Tape
- Wire Cutters

Cut your stems

Cut the length of you spray roses about 3 finger widths long.



20 Guage Wire

Pierce the caylex with the 20g wire and go through about 4" on each side .



Use your left hand to gently hold the bottom of the rose while using your right hand to gently pull the wire down like a hair pin next to the stem snugly.



Floral Tape

Pull your floral tape with your right hand to activate the parafin wax and use your right pointer finger and roll the stem with your thumb while holding the tape tightly and pulling downward.



Tear off the tape and stick it to itself on the stem.

Men's Classic Boutonniere

Add Foliage and Filler



Place foliage on the backside of the rose and a small piece of your filler on the front side covering the area you removed sepals and pierced the calyx.



Cut the proper length

Put 2 fingers below your last flower and cut your stem with a wire cutter. Do not use your O'Hanna or Scissors as this will put notches in the metal.

If you have very small fingers give a lil extra space, then clip.



Use your floral tape to secure in place. You do not have to go to bottom of wire, just around 3-4 times.



Pinch the bottom of your stem and turn clockwise a couple times to seal the bottom and prevent any rough edges.

Repeat and add Filler

If you have the option to add a fun filler like hypericum berries, remove all of their foliage, and place a couple in to get some better depth and movement.



Use your floral tape to secure your second spray rose. You might have to gently bend the head forward, then tape. Add your two types of fillers and foliage. Tape to the bottom of the wire this time.



The pink one would score very high, great depth, line, color, and mechanics.

The Yellow one would score poorly because the gerbera looks ready to fall out and the entire shape is square with that one leaf flopping out.

Men's Classic Boutonniere - How to Pin On a Jacket



Pin ONLY on the left hand side.
Some jackets have hints. Pocket
Some have a Button Hole, A small
little stitch below the point of the
collar.

Line the Boutonniere up straight on
the body, not with the lapel. It looks
very odd in photos on diagonal.



This part is tricky. Hold the bout with
your left hand. I put my left 4 fingers
behind the lapel and pinch down the
bout with my thumb.

Use your right hand to take the
pin from the backside, pierce the
material and a small portion of the
bout and grab a small portion of
material from the left side. Push the
pin slightly downward while pulling
up on the lapel to prevent injury to
the person. The end of the pin
should remain upward and on the
backside.

There is a second pinning technique
that will be allowed. Many use this
with great success. Start the Holding
process the same.

However, this time take your pin and
insert into the fabric directly
downward aiming to the middle of
the bout till you feel you really got a
good sturdy spot and inset the pin
snuggly.

Repeat the same process, but start
midway up the stem from the back,
piece upward and again stay to the
middle trying to only get inside the
mid section of the bout. Give it a
wiggle from the front to see if it's
secure enough.



Repeat this with higher in the bout to
secure and make sure it does not
fall forward or start moving left or
right.

Give it a wiggle from the front to see
if it's secure enough.

For Regionals you will be asked to
pin your boutonniere on to a men's
suit jacket. Possible 15 points



**Wrong
Side!**

Men's Classic Pin Boutonniere Rubric

Regional Wisconsin Floriculture 2026

Name _____ School _____ Team Number _____

Judges Name _____

	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement	Member Score
Mechanical Application	7-10 points Techniques used to keep floral material secure and stable are hidden or done neatly	4-6 points Techniques used to keep floral material secure and stable are somewhat done neatly	0-3 points Techniques used to keep floral material secure and stable are not hidden or done neatly	
Material Selection	7-10 points Chose healthy & pristine flowers and foliage	4-6 points Some damage, chew marks, wrinkles, or evidence of being rough with materials	0-3 points Materials are damaged, dehydrated, handled improperly and/ or beyond recognition	
Color	7-10 points Color is used evenly/ harmoniously throughout	4-6 points Color is used somewhat correctly	0-3 points Color is not used correctly	
Creativity	7-10 points Design expresses a high level of creative ability and advanced design techniques	4-6 points Design expresses some creative ability and minimal advanced design techniques	0-3 points Design lacks creative ability and demonstrated limited design techniques	
Balance	7-10 points Design is physically and visually balanced	4-6 points Design is slightly off balance	0-3 points Design does not follow the principles of design regarding balance	
Design & Category Interpretation	4-5 points Design follows scenario given for an overall cohesive design	2-3 points Design somewhat follows scenario given and overall design is somewhat cohesive	0-1 point Design does not follow given scenario	
Notes				
TOTAL DESIGN SCORE (55 POINTS POSSIBLE)				

Pinning on Demo	15 Points Pinned using 1 or 2 techniques allowed Stable & Straight	10 Points Attempted correct technique, but NOT complete, or straight. Unstable	5 Points Used a different technique. Falling forward, sideways. Pin is showing on top	
TOTAL PINNING ON SCORE (15 POINTS POSSIBLE)				

Design Total	
Pinning on Total	
OVER ALL TOTAL:	

Prom Hand Held Bouquet

This year we will be asking you to make a Prom Bouquet using a European Spiral technique. It is one of the oldest techniques in the floral industry and most likely one of the versatile and useful ones you will use daily as a floral designer. Judging something Round with round flowers can be a bit tricky, so we need to make sure the judges are very aware of your intentions and all the elements of your Rubric stand out so much it nearly bites them on the nose!



Step One - Material Selection

- Pick your Floral, Fillers, and Foliage
- It's best to use in numbers of 3's and 5's (if the budget allows).
- CLEAN your product. This means removing all foliage, thorns, guard petals, and bitten, chewed marks.
- A good rule "If it doesn't add beauty, get rid of it!"
- Make nice small stacks in front of you.

Step Two - European Spiral

- Hold your first flower in your left hand straight up at 12 o'clock
- Bring your next flower around, open your pointer finger, and cross your stem at 10 o'clock.
- Your right pinchers take the 2 at the bind point and spin it around to 2 o'clock. (trust me)
- Take your 3rd stem, open your pointer finger and cross your stem at 10 o'clock.
- Your right pinchers take the 3 at the bind point and spin it around to 2 o'clock. (trust me)
- Keep repeating this until you have a full round bouquet.



Prom Hand Held Bouquet



Step Three - Fluff and Tuck

- Pull your focal and \$\$ premium flowers up to the top to be seen.
- Fluff out the foliage and fillers.
- Tuck the more staple basic flowers down to build up depth and texture.
- Look for flaws, blemishes.
- Hold down so you can see the top. Is it balanced? Do I have holes? Did my roses roll together and are hugging each other?



Step Four - Tape your Bind Point

- Using Green Waterproof tape, Bind-It, Or Athletic tape 1"
- Start at the top of your bind, don't death grip it..tight enough, About 3 fingers width.
- Cut or rip the tape and seal to itself
- Your bouquet should still have that corsset shape.

Step Five - Ribbon Wrap

- Using #9 Double Face Satin ribbon, from the bottom of your tape, hold down end with your thumb.
- Wrap upwards, covering the raw edge of your ribbon.
- Stop when you have concealed your tape and are on your backside.
- Cut your ribbon about 1" extra.
- Fold the raw edge under the ribbon.
- Use Pixie Pins and push upward into the bouquet to secure.
- IF you don't have Pixie Pins and practising with corsage pins, please be careful, aim at middle and go up and into bouquet to avoid going through and stabbing yourself.



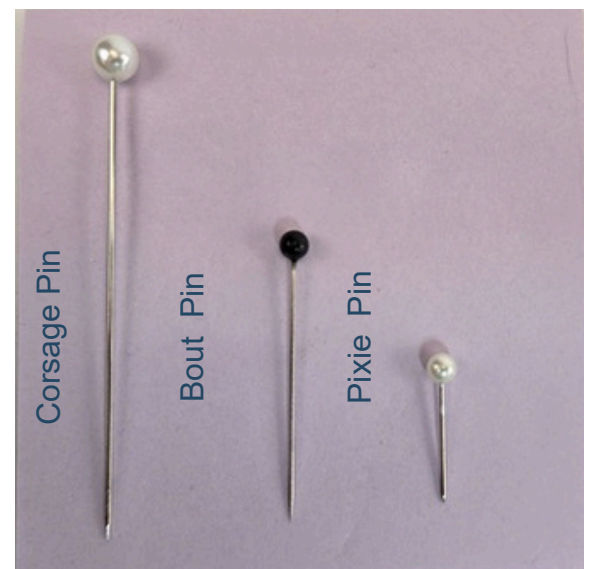


Step Six - Cut for presentation

- Your entire stem length should not exceed 7" (9" at absolute max if big bouquet)
- 2-3 Finger widths after your ribbon is plenty, make your cut straight.

Step Seven - Water and Vase

- Find a vase where the bottom rests gently, not too wide. 3" wide x 6" tall works well.
- Fill water 1/2" shy of ribbon. If it touches ribbon, it will completely soak it.
- Put in fridge or Cooler 38-42 Degrees is best, keep away from your blower fan.



Prom Hand Held Bouquet Rubric

Regional Wisconsin Floriculture 2026

Name

School

Team Number

Judges Name

	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement	Member Score
Category interpretation	4-5 points Design follows given scenario within provided parameters and correlates to the appropriate style, shape and design	2-3 points Design slightly followed given scenario but is somewhat lacking in appropriate style, shape, or design	0-1 points Design does not follow given scenario and/or lacks in following the given style, shape, or design	
Material Selection	7-10 points Chose healthy & pristine flowers and foliage	4-6 points Some damage, chew marks, wrinkles, or evidence of being rough with materials	0-3 points Materials are damaged, dehydrated, handled improperly and/ or beyond recognition	
Color	7-10 points Color is used evenly/ harmoniously throughout	4-6 points Color is used somewhat correctly	0-3 points Color is not used correctly	
Creativity & Techniques	7-10 points Design expresses a high level of creative ability and advanced design techniques	4-6 points Design expresses some creative ability and minimal advanced design techniques	0-3 points Design lacks creative ability and demonstrated limited design techniques	
Balance	7-10 points Design is physically and visually balanced. Stems are cut to 6-9".	4-6 points Design is slightly off balance. Longer than 9"	0-3 points Design does not follow the principles of design regarding balance	
Depth	7-10 points Placement of materials at different levels is evenly distributed throughout	4-6 points Placement of materials are somewhat distributed evenly	0-3 point Placement of items are not distributed evenly Color	
Line / Rhythm	7-10 points Design has a clear sense of movement created visually by the placement of floral materials. Using Triangles	4-6 points Design has a somewhat clear sense of movement created visually by the placement of floral materials. Using Triangles	0-3 point Design has no clear sense of movement created visually by the placement of floral materials. Using Triangles	
Mechanics	7-10 points Spiral technique used to keep floral material secure and tape is hidden or done neatly, ribbon & accessories are neat and won't injure or snag.	4-6 points Techniques used to keep floral material secure and stable are somewhat hidden or done neatly. Too much ribbon	0-3 point Techniques used to keep floral material secure and stable are not hidden or done neatly Too much or no ribbon/accessories	
Notes				
TOTAL SCORE (75 POINTS POSSIBLE)				

Get to know Lisa

For those of you who are new this year, maybe just curious about Floriculture and what the competitions are all about, or maybe you have been at an event I was helping at I'd just like you to get to know me a bit better. This will be my fifth year as your Wisconsin Floriculture Superintendent and I take my leadership role very seriously because I want you to learn all the proper steps, see our industry through many lenses, and open your minds to the opportunities available to you in the future. I truly believe your generation can make BIG changes in our industry and build the bridge between grower and florist that we so desperately need.

If you go backwards through study guides, two years ago I introduced you to some great people and different jobs available in the floral industry. There are many careers available to you, being a floral designer is only one.

I stood behind a bench for over 20 years and have had multiple jobs in multiple countries and to this day, still love flowers. My true passion is teaching and watching each and everyone of you blossom into your own person. Always keep learning.

Lisa

Want to know more?

Lisa is the owner of Flora Elements, a design school and retail shop in Delafield

www.floraelements.com



If you need to purchase supplies



O'hana Pruners – Why? Double-sided blade acts just like a knife, no pinching of the stems. [Click here to redirect](#)

Pixie Pins [Click here to redirect](#)



Wire Cutters – I like the ones with springs to help with hand cramps.
[Click here to redirect](#)



Jewelry Pliers - Round Nose Pliers Jewelry Making
[Click here to redirect](#)



Athletic Tape
[Click here to redirect](#)

Please practice with grocery store florals, and ask local flower shops for assistance.

Workshops specific to your Regional and State Competitions are scheduled for:

UW River Falls - January 28th 2-5:30pm

\$20 per person fee (as we don't have a full sponsorship)

Limit 40 students. Advisors can participate if workshop is does not fill.

[Registration Link HERE](#)

Lake Geneva - February 21st 10am-1pm

\$20 per person fee (as we don't have a full sponsorship)

Contact – Jay jack.deweese@badger.k12.wi.us

[Registration Link HERE](#)

Mishicot High School - March 1st 10am-1pm

Contact – Jamiejpropson@mishicot.k12.wi.us

Workshop is FULL

Krueger Wholesale - February 25th 1-4:30pm

Contact – Glen at Thorp FFA – gschraufnagel@thorp.k12.wi.us

Workshop is FULL

You may also attend WUMFA Convention

March 21-23rd in Green Bay

Scholarships Available!!! –

Please Redirect here

Thank You to all the Individuals and Companies



California Association of
Flower Growers & Shippers