

BANISH BLOOM BLOOPERS

> Most of us need at least one compelling reason in addition to the New Year to make changes and implement new protocols. Here are several, designed to shake you out of your care and handling ruts. If the bloopers look familiar, consider this your “looking yourself in the mirror” moment and commit to clean up your act.

Fight the Flop

Nothing chases away customers faster than a display featuring moldy roses or flopped hydrangeas. It's not only a buzz kill, but also a not-so-subtle signal that

practically starving. Consider how much information is provided in restaurants, coffee shops and bookstores, for example, where the customer inherently likes the product but needs help embracing the vibe. Your quixotic footprint is not that different. Any help you provide breaks down purchase intimidation.

More Than a Drop in the Bucket

There are reams of research on best practices for handling flowers, yet strange urban myths and “we've always done it this way” handling methods prevail. One blooper, happening at all levels of our trade, is placing flowers in tap water “for faster pickup.” (“We sell our flowers so fast, we don't need to put them in a solution,” one wholesaler argues.)

This action makes no sense: Flowers bleed organic juices with every stem cut. Bacteria explode in this jambalaya of enzymes, carbohydrates and stem cells. It doesn't take long for water to become a bacteria soup that obstructs stem flow, causing the aforementioned rose-droop and hydrangea-flop. Everything we do from first drink to sale ensures longevity for the end consumer.

Always place flowers in a commercial hydration and/or flower solution — they contain the clarifiers to keep pollution in check, plus the acidifier, flow stimulator and nutrients the flower needs.

Break Lazy Habits

A best-practices mindset requires a realistic evaluation of daily activities. Do any of these happen at your business: one pump food per vase regardless of its size; roses stripped naked, guard petals rigorously removed as design prep SOP, bucket solutions combined when consolidating displays, or drivers who light up a cigarette the minute they hit the road.

Reduce waste by making easy, procedural changes, like the following.

- Correct dosing is so simple. Just do it. It is a proven fact: flower food maximizes vase life, but *only* if it is mixed correctly. It is also a proven fact that under-dosing is a waste of time and money. Don't design or sell flowers until stems have ample time to fill completely with flower food (four hours at room temp, 12 hours at 36F).
- Cool it on the striptease. Rose foliage contains specialized cells that pull the solution up the stem. Only strip foliage falling below the solution level.
- Remove thorns only on the part of the stem that goes into the solution. Open wounds become entry ports for bacteria and Botrytis spores.
- Let guard petals guard. Only peel petals that are blemished or show evidence of Botrytis. Peeling loosens the bud structure and triggers ethylene production, speeding up the aging process.
- Never pour old solutions into fresh ones; just get rid of them.
- Prohibit smoking around the flowers. Cigarette smoke gives off ethylene, which kills flowers fast.

Stop Swishing Around

When it comes to cleaning buckets, a quick swish is not adequate. Imagine a bartender simply swishing dirty beer glasses in a tub of water before refilling — gross, right? The same concept applies when cleaning buckets and vases. Scrub, don't dip. Start clean: clean buckets, clean tools, clean work surfaces, clean sink drains. The No. 1 cause of bloom flop is bacteria, followed by Botrytis. The resistant nature of fungi and bacteria means they hunker down and wait for optimal conditions. Set a protocol of spraying surfaces and tools two to three times daily. Chrysal Cleaner and Floralife's DCD are better than bleach, because they provide residual effect, have little odor and don't stain clothes.

Efficiency is a rich resource. Working smart makes good business sense and keeps customers happy! 🌸

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KICK THE BUCKET If your buckets look like this, your days of customer satisfaction are numbered. Consumers demand value and vase-life threatening bacteria aren't part of the deal.

everything on display is bad. You must rigorously cull displays throughout the day. Make employees eagle-eyed quality fanatics. Impress how important it is for flowers to look clean, crisp and appealing. Trend watchers confirm the new normal for consumers is a laser-like focus on value, and dead blooms don't fit the value equation.

Tell a Story

Be creative about conveying a message. Regardless of whether your story is a cultural commentary on the hipness of flowers or an information-packed digest about vase life and sustainability, consumers are hungry for information. And when it comes to all things floral, they're