

NO MORE EXCUSES: TREAT YOUR FLOWERS RIGHT

THE PATIENT Your Shop

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THE SYMPTOMS Flowers that die too soon, customers who are unhappy too often

so they can conserve their energy to last as intended for customers. Keep a thermometer in your cooler, and check it daily.

Excuse: "Water Is Good Enough"

Floral care products are designed to extend flower life and improve quality. Flower foods contain biocides to control microbial activity in the solution and stem, provide a buffer to lower pH and supply a wetting agent to accelerate uptake. They also have sugar to provide a food source to keep flowers alive longer. Water just provides a bacterial soup that will kill flowers prematurely. An often neglected step is sending flower food

home with your customers. Using flower food easily doubles vase life for the consumer. Why keep that a secret?

Excuse: "I Can't Afford It"

You can't afford *not* to put in the extra effort to follow basic flower care. Invest in specialized floral products for specific flowers. If you sell lots of lilies and alstroemeria, control leaf yellowing with products designed specifically to treat this. Specialized rose foods are better than all-in-one flower foods. Make sure ethylene-sensitive flowers such as roses, carnations and delphinium are pretreated for ethylene protection. Invest in display coolers so customers can see and buy product in cold conditions. This demonstrates your commitment to high-quality flower care.

Excuse: "I'll Clean Up Tomorrow"

Leaving dead flowers and leaves on benches, coolers, floors and in waste baskets is asking for trouble. Decaying plant material is a breeding ground for diseases such as *Botrytis* that prey on clean flowers and surfaces. Make it part of your daily routine to clean up immediately after processing. Disinfect work areas, buckets and cutting tools. Sweep shop and

cooler floors. Don't forget cooler shelves and walls. A thorough cleaning monthly is necessary in these often-neglected areas. And don't forget to empty the trash daily, as decaying plant material can also generate ethylene.

Excuse: "I'm Too Busy"

You cannot cut corners in floral care no matter how busy you are. You must make solutions fresh and follow the directions. It's easy to drop stems in old solutions when rushed. The solution may look clean, but don't be fooled. Bacteria accumulate in solutions, plugging flower stems and preventing solution uptake. If that happens, you'll be spending the same amount of time throwing away flowers that you would have spent making fresh solution. Always process flowers upon arrival, but if you can't, store them in the cooler immediately until they are able to get processed.

It is worth every second to properly train your employees. You also need to invest time in keeping abreast of developments in floral care, crops and products through industry events, trade magazines and the Web.

If you are not following these steps, it may be the reason why your sales are unhealthy and repeat customers seem to avoid you like the plague. 🦠

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COOLER HEADS PREVAIL Keeping your flowers in a walk-in cooler gives customers access without sacrificing vase life.

> You sit in the doctor's office, nodding your head dutifully, vowing to eat better, sleep more or get back to the gym. And then before you make one healthy meal or one trip to the gym, the excuses mount, time dwindles and old habits return. The same dynamic plays out in the flower shop. You read the plant doc's advice about proper handling and care protocols, share it with your staff and vow to start dramatically increasing quality and vase life.

Then, your head designer gets sick, a wedding leaves everyone exhausted, dirty buckets start to pile up and you start making excuses.

It's time to nip those excuses in the bud.

Excuse: "It's Plenty Cold"

Do you check your cooler temperature? It should be at 33-35 degrees for all non-tropical flowers. Every degree above this range increases flower respiration and robs valuable vase life from your customer. Your flowers had a long journey just to get to your shop, so keep them cold while hydrating and during display

Doctor's Orders

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