

## Take Care Before Cashing In

By Gay Smith

EVERY TIME I VISIT HOLLAND, I MAKE A POINT TO peruse flower shops, kiosks or open-air markets to discern what makes their displays so enticing. No doubt, sheer abundance and variety is commonly the drawing card. Color effectively grabs shoppers' attention, and I am always struck by the emphasis on seasonal rather than year-round products.

With a little planning, it's easy to establish a successful cash-and-carry program. But before you start one in your shop, here are some care-and-handling dos and don'ts:

**Don't make an impulse purchase** based on low price. As the adage often goes: You get what you pay for. And you don't want to mess up what could be your one chance to win over a customer — after all, a disappointed first-time customer likely won't return.

**Do establish a rotation system** (see Info to Go) and divide flowers into several groups according to their display longevity, usually five, four and three days. Carnations, chrysanthemums and Oriental lilies are examples of items that you can display for five days. Snaps, sunflowers and roses fit a four-day rotation. Freesia, stock and peonies are in the three-day rotation category. Of course, you can extend your rotation much longer, but since customers equate quality with vase life, every day you hold the flowers means at least two days less that customers can enjoy them. Careless rotation is a sure way to underwhelm clients. Keep a vigilant eye on blooms and move old blooms out.

**Do use a low-sugar processing flower food** in display buckets, such as Chrysal Professional No. 2 T-bags or Floralife Professional. Both solutions hold pollution in check, acidify the water into the "flower zone" (pH level around 4) and provide just enough food to keep the blooms turgid and looking great without popping open. Using low-sugar display solutions helps you save labor hours, too. You can forget about dumping buckets every other day, because a properly mixed commercial display

### Staff Training Tools

**S**AF offers a comprehensive suite of care-and-handling training tools. If you prefer a print or CD-ROM format, SAF's Flower and Plant Care Manual is an industry standard. SAF also offers online training on everything from temperature management to ethylene control. To find out more about these resources, go to [www.safnow.org](http://www.safnow.org), click on Products and Services, and look for care-and-handling resources. Or call SAF member services, (800) 336-4743.

— K. P.

solution is "active" for five to seven days (brands differ, so compare to see which brand works best for you).

**Do mix display food with cold water** so stems hydrate, but flowers don't pop too fast. No cold water at your shop? Set up buckets a day ahead and roll the cart into the cooler to pre-chill.

**Don't display botrytis (fungi) sensitive flowers** — like roses, freesia and gerbera — where they'll get dripped on as customers pull stems. If you have a tiered display, place these types higher up and put "bullet-proof" flowers like limonium, hypericum, protea and decorative foliage down low.

**Do use a plastic liner** if you're using metal buckets, and wash the buckets with a floral detergent — not just a swish of Clorox water — as you consolidate the display. Clorox is useful as a final rinse, but, unlike floral detergents, it doesn't provide residual effect. You can skip the rinse altogether by using a floral detergent initially.

**Do help customers feel like they've made a smart purchase** by providing a packet of flower food and letting them know why they should use it at home. Remind customers to start with a clean vase — you'd be surprised how many people dump a vase and put it in the cabinet without washing it first. Make sure employees have the tools and training (see Info to Go) to give informative details on caring for the product, as well as proper flower names.

Cash-and-carry sales are the spark and energy of everyday flower purchases. Today's consumer wants simple choices and good value (read: longevity) for her purchase. All are possible with a well-structured, cash-and-carry program. 🌿

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### Info To Go

#### Rotation Guidance

Not sure how to rotate product? Get guidance in a previously published article from Floral Management, by clicking on the Info to Go logo on the home page of SAF's member Web site, [www.safnow.org](http://www.safnow.org). Or get it via SAF's Fast Fax, by calling (888) 723-2000 and requesting document #859.