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Pushing the Picture to Extreme Limits

Offer Long-lasting Choices in Displays with Dried Florals and Permanent Botanicals



By Linda McKendry

Merchandising and displays present a picture to the buying public. A rose by any other name is still a rose. Ah, yes! But a rose by any colour you can name suddenly becomes the means to push the picture of a floral arrangement beyond the real or the natural. And that's okay. There's a time and a place to use dried and permanent floral offerings in unusual ways and expect great results. Three such occasions are:

1. To attract attention: A red rose is never 'boring,' but it can be taken for granted, until you put it into an unusual setting. A red rose the size of a saucepan is going to get some attention. A black rose, or even a blue one, can grab a second look from a shopper passing by. An example is a Thanksgiving/Halloween display

window filled with everything you have that's black and orange, including black roses that might be mixed with orange mums. Use dried or artificial flowers of any colour and any type to fit in with the traditional colours associated with annual calendar events. Add the ribbon or the container as a third or fourth colour if you don't have any floral offerings.

Consider unusual colour schemes and bring together something you've never seen done before. Artificial botanicals allow you to be more bold and brazen because you don't have to worry about the life of the flower and rearranging is also more possible as wires on cut down stems can be extended and re-wrapped for a different arrangement. Remember that whatever brings customers to a

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stand-still at your shop window and, better yet, intrigues them to want to come in and take a closer, has done its job.

Rules to Remember:

- Don't leave it there too long! Three weeks is max – even less if you have a lot of regular traffic walking and driving by daily.
- Bigger is better. Three huge, oversized flowers in a huge container are going to attract a lot of attention to the smaller ones.

2. To target trends: Right now we are seeing a lot of very bright colours emerging. Making a floral arrangement, or a home decor item, is going to get the decorators thinking about using floral services as home decor accents. You have the opportunity to show how wired flowers and leafy stems, or garlands can grace a drapery rod, a narrow hall console, or the desk of a teenager. By taking your cue from a remnant of fabric or wallpaper you can create eye-catching displays that tell your customer you are the one to approach for co-ordinating a home decor accent that will be a lasting investment.

Rules to Remember:

- Pick a variety of trends from styles that are traditional, country and contemporary.
- Connect your choices visually with high-profile decorator magazine covers or articles by laying them open with your displays, or place the image in a picture frame that works with your theme.

- Amuse, don't confuse. Keep your individual themes separate and distinct from each other.

3. To prop your shop: This is cross-merchandising and seeks to use products for props as much as possible. The beauty of the floral industry is that when it comes to finding a physical 'prop' to hold up a bouquet of flowers, you can always use a vase! When it comes to finding a visual 'prop' to bring out the colour, pattern and style of a home decor item, you can always use a flower!

Look around for what's not selling. That's right. The old containers, vases, baskets, ribbons, etc. are just begging to be brought into focus in a neat display with the dried and permanent flowers that also aren't selling. But together they tell a wonderful story. While they beg to be shown together, they also beckon to the creative soul who loves to make up their own arrangements.

Rules to Remember:

- Don't discount, display. Don't sacrifice profits because you're personally tired of something or happen to know how many years it's been in your store.
- There's always some colour, pattern and style that fits in with someone's taste, no matter how weird you may think it is! **CF**

Linda McKendry of VMPC offers on-site consulting and instruction for retailers, wholesalers, distributors and manufacturers. Linda has presented display seminars at the CFTA Gift Show and the Alberta Gift Show. To order her book, VMP & Display, call (905) 813-8725, fax (905) 819-8505 or e-mail lrmcke@attglobal.net.