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By Linda McKendry

Did you see the cover of the last CUT&DRIED magazine? Have you noticed how everything's changing in floral design? Did you read the column by publisher Sue Fredericks reporting on the demise of two very long-standing and important organizations that have contributed to the floral industry for many years? It seems that in every industry, there is a sort of pruning and cutting back to produce more and better species—and survival of the fittest still reigns. Stong hybrids are produced by merging two stocks, and I see that happening with CUT&DRIED and CANADIAN FLORIST magazine.

I'm a visual merchandiser, not a florist. But I know enough about plants to know that many varieties of flowers left to themselves to just survive season after season without any cutting back, pruning, or proper feeding and care, become weak and begin to produce fewer and smaller blooms.

Re-invent Yourself

You may be asking what this has to do with visual merchandising. Everything. Florists, and especially the small independent retailers, need to wake up and smell the roses. You need to re-invent yourselves. You may have to prune out a few items that have been selling less and less and graft yourself onto a trend. Do something different. Do something new. Move your fixtures. Paint your walls. Paint your floors. Add lighting. Be outrageous in design and displays to make great first impressions.

In spite of all the available resources, there is nothing interesting or eye-catching in the windows or the exteriors of the flower shops I drive

Wake Up! Smell the Roses!



Illustration by Chris Elliott

by. A small flower shop next to a large supermarket in my neighbourhood closed down in recent months. I wondered how it could survive when the same items were in the window month after month. There was never a single item that attracted my attention or made me feel that I could get product or service as good as, or better, than what I could get in the supermarket's fresh floral department.

I just want to yell, "Get with the program!" A sign that says 'Flowers' on the outside of your shop isn't enough. The trends today are fresh flowers for interior decor, distinctive containers, and all sorts of added details like raffia, exotic grasses, mosses, insects and creature figurines. Open your windows up...but don't show so much in the window that you end up with a confused, unrelated mass.

Displays that Sizzle

Make strong, individual statements. Use strong colours. Give arrangements some space and put them on pedestals, risers, platforms or pieces of furniture. Give them a few spotlights to sit under to beckon buyers. Stack bricks, stones, pots, railway ties or whatever it takes to pull some fresh garden elements into

the picture. Create some backdrops with lattice and vines, or painted backboards, hinged doors or hanging window frames. Paint them in pure white or bright colors, or antique them with various colour combinations raked or splattered in a random pattern to duplicate aged or distressed looks. Rusty, old and poorly-finished objects are, for the most part, very trendy. They make wonderful display pieces and props for your flowers.

Enliven Ceilings and Walls

Paint is by far the cheapest way to make a strong statement, and sky-blue ceilings with sponged white clouds are a wonderful way to bring in the out-of-doors year round. Don't be afraid to paint one wall yellow, another terra cotta and the third one lime green. Don't be afraid to paint your fixtures, risers and platforms different colours and then use them as the basis for the different varieties of flower arrangements. Artificial turf is still a quick, easy and inexpensive way to cover uneven floors or a multitude of structural problems and to create a nice backdrop for fresh flowers and greenery.

Windows, high walls, and the end of aisles are great feature display areas. The middle of aisles are best kept for promotions, seasonal offerings and cross-merchandised presentations. Wake up. Smell the roses and re-invent yourself. Grow your business! ☘

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