

THE SUSTAINABLE FLORIST CLUB



# SUSTAINABILITY IN FLORAL DESIGN

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BEST PRACTICES, RESOURCES, ACTION PLAN

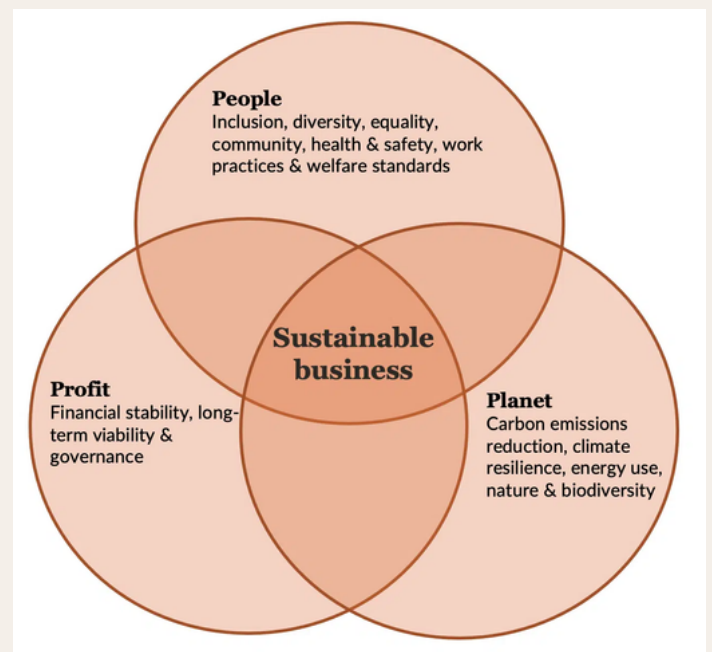
# A SUSTAINABLE APPROACH



The Sustainable Floristry Network defines  
"Sustainable Floristry" as:

Engaging in floral design and running a cut flower business in a way that supports the environmental, social, and economic requirements of present and future generations.

Sustainability requires balance between planet, people, and profit (The Triple Bottom Line). With human consumption being the driving force behind climate change, a sustainable future for floristry requires that we (the current generation) adjust the way that we place value on nature and our relationship to it.



This relationship to nature is especially important for florists because we are at a critical point in the supply chain. We and our product play a role in connecting the consumer to nature. If we make sustainable choices and educate our consumers we can make a significant impact on changing the way the floral industry operates to ensure the next generation has the opportunity as well.

# A SUSTAINABLE APPROACH



With so many factors contributing to the damaging environmental footprint of both the Flower and Wedding Industries, a perfectly sustainable business is far off. Instead, we must make tradeoffs and consider our impact across all of our choices as a whole.

One common tradeoff is designing outside of the local growing season

Our businesses need income in order to survive. When we aren't able to source locally grown flowers, these are examples of practices we can employ year-round to operate as sustainably as possible:

Prioritize US grown flowers

Design with reusable or recyclable mechanics (Never toxic foam)

Maintain a routine of sorting and managing waste by reusing, composting, recycling, and avoiding the landfill as often as possible.

Maintaining safe, inclusive, and equitable business practices

Educating your community on how they can make the most sustainable choices when shopping for flowers

# INDUSTRY FOOTPRINT



The United States is the biggest consumer of cut flowers globally, spending \$1.83 billion annually. 80% of flowers consumed in the U.S. are imported (primarily from South America).

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"Stems may be transported up to 6,000 miles in refrigerated airplane holds. In 2018, Valentine's Day flowers grown in Colombia and flown to US airports produced some 360,000 metric tons of CO2. To put that into perspective, that's roughly equivalent to 78,000 cars driven for one year."

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Approximately 45% of the flowers managed by the floral industry die before they are sold.

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Floriculture workers are exposed to toxins in fertilizers and insecticides, as well as preservatives used to extend the life of blooms. As many as a fifth of the pesticides used to grow cut flowers are actually untested or banned in America.

# LOCALLY GROWN FLOWERS



## Where to source local flowers

### [Colorado Flower Collective](#)

A marketplace connecting florists with growers from across the front range. Flowers can be ordered online every week or shop in-person at the market every Wednesday & Friday during the months of April -October. Preorder is available for events.

Click the link below for an indepth look at the benefits of local flowers and insights into sharing them with consumers

### [The Power Of Local Flowers](#)

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Shop with individual farms directly. [A Google search](#) will provide lots of great information, or you can use the following directories to find farmers in your area.

[Slow Flowers Directory](#)

[Floret Flower Directory](#)

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Denver area wholesalers like Bill Doran-Amato's and Stevens and Son offer some locally grown blooms when available. Stevens offers greenhouse grown flowers like lily and freesia.

# AMERICAN GROWN FLOWERS



## How Do I Source American Grown Flowers?

### Your Local Wholesalers

Ask your local wholesale representative what flowers are available from US growers throughout the year

Check the packaging! Many labels will tell you where the flowers are coming from and if not, ask your rep.

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The Floral Source is a nationwide wholesaler that sources 100% US grown floral product.

[The Floral Source](#)

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Florabundance ships nationwide and allows you to easily choose from a selection of US grown flowers

[Florabundance](#)

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Source directly from farms that provide nationwide shipping

[Harmony Harvest Farm](#)

[Three Porch Farm](#)

# OASIS FLORAL FOAM



Floral foam contains two chemicals considered toxic to humans: Phenol and formaldehyde.

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Floral foam is a single-use plastic product that is not compostable and does not biodegrade. Floral foam must be disposed of in a landfill.

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[Follow this link for a more in depth discussion about floral foam](#)

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Microplastic pollution from floral foam infiltrates our soil and our water systems (think of all those times you poured green water down the drain).

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There is evidence of floral foam microplastics in marine life. [This study substantiates the claim that animals will ingest microplastics.](#)

# SUSTAINABLE DESIGN MECHANICS



## CHICKEN WIRE

Chicken wire is a great reusable mechanic that can be combined with other reusable items like water tubes, curly willow, moss, Agrawool, and Oshun Pouch, etc.

Perfect for supporting stems in containers, creating armature for large bouquets or as a mechanic for designing installations.

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## HOLLY CHAPPEL MECHANICS

Reusable plastic cages to be used as armatures in bouquets, stem support in compote/bowl designs, and cages for installations. Available through [Holly Chappel's website](#), many floral wholesalers, or directly through [Floral Supply Syndicate](#)





# SUSTAINABLE DESIGN MECHANICS



## FLOWER FROGS

Frogs are a reusable mechanic that come in a variety of sizes and styles. Varieties include pin, hairpin, and ceramic. Pin/Hairpin frogs require tack or glue to be fixed to the container they are in.

Perfect for creating airy garden style or Ikebana-style floral arrangements.



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## WATER TUBES

Water tubes are a reusable mechanic that allows for direct hydration of single stems that can be added into installations or arrangements. Great for directly hydrating delicate stems or short stems in a design. Ideal for event work and short-term installations.



# SUSTAINABLE DESIGN MECHANICS



## OSHUN POUCH

100% biodegradable and compostable design mechanic. This can be used in containers to stabilize and hydrate stems, or it can be used in large scale installation design.

Carefully wrapping hydrated pouches with chicken wire or netting improves their durability and potential to hold more stems.

\*Reuse of this item is limited but possible. It is best reused in a container. This product can be dried and rehydrated.

Reusing design mechanics always runs the risk of mold and bacteria buildup so be conscious of when and how you are reusing the product.



[Botanical Brouhaha Blog Post](#)

# SUSTAINABLE DESIGN MECHANICS



## AGRAWOOL

A non-toxic design mechanic made from 97% basalt mineral rock fibers.

Powdered basalt rock is spun into fibers and bound with a patented, sugar based binding agent. Agrawool is reusable and biodegradable.

Can be used in containers or for use in large scale design. Wrapping Agrawool in chicken wire or netting aids in durability, reusability.

\*This item can be dried out and rehydrated for reuse. Used Agrawool can be easily compacted and wrapped in chicken wire to create useful foam cages. Reusing design mechanics always runs the risk of mold and bacteria buildup so be conscious of when and how you are reusing the product.



[Botanical Brouhaha Blog Post](#)

# SUSTAINABLE DESIGN MECHANICS



## PHOAM LABS FLORAL FOAM

A nontoxic and compostable foam mechanic created with renewable, plantbased materials. Phoam is created with PLA (polylactic acid), which is created through the fermentation of organic materials like corn and cane sugar. The process of creating PLA requires 25-55% less energy to produce than petroleum based polymers

Phoam is intended to be used wet or dry and has the potential to be reused.

This mechanic is not yet available for sale but will hopefully be released in 2024



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[Phoam Labs Website](#)

# COMPOST & RECYCLING



Properly managing and directing waste is a crucial element of any sustainable business. Building sustainable habits into your routine can make a huge difference in the overall waste generated.

## RECYCLING

- Recycle all paper and cardboard
- Return Flower boxes to your wholesaler for them to reuse or use them as a means of transporting arrangements.
- Establish a recycle bin in your workspace for yourself and employees to use
- Do not cut rubberbands! Save them to reuse yourself, or bring them to the Colorado Flower Collective for local growers to use.

## COMPOSTING

- Create a separate bin for all "green" waste- watch for contaminants!
- Use a compost service like [Compost Colorado](#) or take advantage of municipal composting in your area.
- If you compost at home be sure to use "[Active](#)" or "[Hot](#)" composting methods so that the chemicals on the flowers sufficiently break down in the process.

# ALTERED FLORAL PRODUCTS



## BLEACHED BOTANICALS

Trends are often harmful to efforts in sustainability because they are driven by consumption as a force pushing to constantly change what is "current." Bleached product is a perfect example of this. The product itself is laden with toxic chemicals and cannot be composted, making a once natural product into garbage that must be added to the landfill.

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"Here's a quick breakdown of the processes that are required to achieve this look:

- Bleaching using hypochlorites, sodium chlorite, hydrogen peroxide, hydrosulphites or borohydride
- Control of yellowing using barium hydroxide, calcium hydroxide, or aluminium sulphate
  - Removal of the bleachy smell with sulphur dioxide
- Plasticizing the product to strengthen it and make it less brittle"

-Becky Feasby, *Prairie Girl Flowers*

# ALTERED FLORAL PRODUCTS



## DYED & PAINTED FLORALS

Painted/spray painted floral products cannot be composted and also contribute to the global problem of microplastic contamination.

"1.9 million tonnes of paint end up in the oceans and waterways every year, which represents 58% of all the microplastics in the water"

[Read the full article here](#)

Dyed flowers are more deceiving because manufacturers and wholesalers frequently claim the dyes used are "natural," but this is typically Greenwashing that goes unchecked.

Many dyes are known carcinogens that harm microbial communities and contaminate the environment. Any flower dyed with synthetic dyes should never be composted.

# RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL LEARNING



Sustainable Floristry Network

Slow Flowers

Mayesh Sustainable Floral Design Panel  
Discussion

The Sustainable Cut -Flowers Project

[Click here for their helpful guide](#)

Debra Prinzing's Slow Flowers Podcast

SLOW FLOWERS SOCIETY + BLOOM IMPRINT release the  
2024 Floral Insights & Industry Forecast

Prairie Girl Flowers

on instagram [@prairiegirlflowers](#)



# ACTION PLAN



Stop designing with toxic floral foam



Start composting!



Establish a recycling routine in your workspace



Reach out to a local flower farmer or the Colorado Flower Collective to source local flowers for your next event



Ask your local wholesaler for US and locally grown flowers

# SOURCES



[Floristry and Floriculture Industry Statistics & Trends \(2023\)](#)

[The environmental impact of cut flowers? Not so rosy.](#)

[Sustainable Floristry Network- Floral Foam, The Facts](#)

[Compostable, fully biobased foams using PLA and micro cellulose for zero energy buildings](#)

[Paint Is The Largest Source Of Microplastics In The Ocean, Study Finds](#)

[Slow Flowers Floral Insights & Industry Forecast for 2021](#)

[Foaming at the mouth: Ingestion of floral foam microplastics by aquatic animals](#)