



SAF

PHOENIX

140th Annual
Convention 2025



Train to Sustain:
Set New Designers Up for Success

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Train to Sustain

Introduction

Eileen L. Weber, AAF, PFCI

**Lake Forest Flowers
Lake Forest, IL**

*Celebrating life's greatest
moments since 1917*





Goals of the Session

- Clarifying Roles: Designer vs. Arranger
- Building a Foundation through Observation & Hands on
- Progressive Design Practice
- Business Awareness & Pricing Education
- Mentorship, Team-based Training & Checkpoints
- Coaching Employees
- Troubleshooting & Retention
- Q&A - Discussion

Designer vs. Arranger

This succinctly captures the distinction—**an arranger** focuses on placement and balance, while **a designer** brings intention, emotion, and artistry into each creation, much like composing a visual narrative.

***“An arranger creates a bouquet.
A designer creates an experience.”***

“Arranging is craft. Designing is art.”



What is your goal with this Hire?

- Define the role and expectations
 - Provide **written guidelines** for design, flower handling, and shop protocols
 - Host a **hands-on orientation**—demonstrate your standards
 - Communicate how success is defined in your shop

**Expect, the
Unexpected**



Building a Foundation through Observation & Hands on

Everyone starts from the beginning

- Care & Handling
 - Cold chain
 - Flower processing
- Seasonality
- Elements and Principles of Design

A background image of a desert landscape with several saguaro cacti of varying heights and colors, ranging from light yellow to dark brown, set against a warm, orange-hued sky.

Importance of Seasonality & Variety of Design

- Midwest experiences 4 distinct seasons
 - Local vs. imported product
 - Textures, colors, holidays
- Wedding vs. Sympathy Designs
 - Takes time to develop
 - Partnership with those selling
 - The more \$ to work with, the easier to design

Progressive Design Practice

- Start with simple, recipe driven arrangements
- Emphasize step-by-step learning with review and coaching
 - Learning appropriate substitutions
 - Product knowledge, seasonal details
 - Build confidence in decision-making
- Watch the clock: speed is important

Shades of Pink

Vase #4042

4 stems white larkspur

3 stems pink oriental lily

3 stems bi-color snapdragons

4 stems pink stock

6 stems pink rose

2 stems lavender limonium

4 stems purple wax

6 stems salal



Business Awareness & Pricing Education

- Time of hire leads to real-time teaching during holidays or rush periods
 - Benefit of repetition
- Introduce price sheets
- Inventory awareness
- Cost-conscious design and eliminate stuffing



What is your most expensive fresh material due to waste?





Mentorship

“A mentor is someone who allows you to see the hope inside yourself.”

-Oprah Winfrey

Mentorship has the power to unlock potential, build resilience, and foster a culture of growth and learning that benefits not just individuals, but the entire organization.

My Mentor



Model and Mentor

- Lead by example—your work is the standard
- Pair new hires with trusted, experienced staff (side-by-side designing)
- Allow time for “watch and learn” sessions
- Attend your floral workshops for more hands on training
 - A great recruitment tool



Team-based Training

- Encourage peer training and shared accountability
- Regular feedback
- Utilize each person's strengths while pushing growth
- Address quality control and consistency among those involved in training





Floral Designer Training – Overview

Goal: Train beginner floral designers across one year using seasonal, skill-based checkpoints

Structure:

- Spring: Foundations
- Summer: Event Basics
- Fall: Advanced Techniques
- Winter: Business & Workflow
- Ongoing: Studio Skills & Development

Spring (Mar–May) : Foundations & Everyday Design

Focus Areas:

- Flower identification (10–15 core types)
- Basic processing & hydration
- Color theory & design form
- Vase arrangements: triangular, round
- Tool introduction: clippers, tape, wire, foam
- Daily shop operations

Milestones:

- Identify and condition spring flowers (tulips, ranunculus, hyacinths)
- Shadow team on flower processing
- Complete 3 basic vase arrangements with guidance



Summer (Jun–Aug) : Event Basics & Techniques

Focus Areas:

- Wedding terminology & timelines
- Boutonnieres & corsages
- Hand-tied bouquets
- Foam-free mechanics
- Ribbon wrapping & bouquet finishes
- Sustainable floristry intro

Milestones:

- Assist with at least 1 wedding install
- Create sample boutonniere and hand-tied bouquet
- Practice ribbon wrapping techniques

A background image of a desert landscape featuring several saguaro cacti of varying heights and colors, ranging from bright yellow to deep orange, set against a light, hazy sky.

Fall (Sep–Nov) : Advanced Composition & Holiday Work

Focus Areas:

- Asymmetrical and line-based designs
- Seasonal pieces: pumpkins, fall foliage
- Long table centerpieces
- Basic installations: garlands, arches
- Grid mechanics, chicken wire, floral structure

Milestones:

- Assist with fall event floral prep
- Create a centerpiece for a mock event
- Learn floral armature techniques

Winter (Dec–Feb) : Business & Workflow

Focus Areas:

- Holiday greens and winter textures
- Sympathy work basics: sprays, easels
- Design speed and efficiency
- Customer service and phone etiquette
- Inventory control and flower costing

Milestones:

- Help prep holiday wreaths and arrangements
- Complete timed floral challenges
- Roleplay client consults



All Year – Ongoing Skills & Studio Development

Year-Round Skills:

- Floral care: vase life, storage, hydration
- Visual merchandising: display and cooler styling
- Design critique: weekly reviews for improvement
- Studio upkeep: cleaning, tool care, recycling

Coaching Employees Addressing those with Bad Habits

Understand the “Why” Behind the Habit

Observe without judgment

Ask:

- Was this a prior training habit?
- A response to time pressure?
- A misunderstanding of your standards?

Understanding leads to effective coaching

Correct Gently—but Quickly

- Don't wait to address bad habits
- Phrase corrections as encouragement:
“Let me show you a more efficient way to do that.”
- Emphasize growth, not criticism

Reinforce Consistently

- Offer positive feedback:
“Beautiful stem spacing—so clean!”
- Hold quick check-ins to review goals and track progress
- Be consistent in language and tone

Create a Culture of Craftsmanship

- Celebrate strong mechanics— not just final looks
- Encourage pride in the process

Remind:

“Floral design is about impact, not just speed...”

but speed is important.”



Troubleshooting & Retention

- Recognize when someone isn't progressing as expected
- Adjust expectations or roles rather than cutting ties immediately
- Flexibility and realism in hiring and training



**Every great designer starts
with great training**



A vertical decorative image on the left side of the slide showing several saguaro cacti in a desert landscape under a warm, orange-hued sky.

Final Thoughts

Set expectations

Reinforce consistently

Celebrate progress

Q&A / Audience Discussion





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Thank you!

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