

ASK THE EXPERTS



Keeping Your Customers Happy

How to keep fresh-cut bouquets fresh

BY WAYNE CASTLEBERRY

Technology in today's floral industry is evolving to meet consumer's demands for cut flower bouquet survival and earth-friendly products. New breeds of flowers from all over the world have a lower stress tolerance. Hydration is a key factor for new breeds of flowers with a lower-stress tolerance. Just handing flowers to the customer wrapped in tissue paper is not good enough to ensure that those flowers will live with the highest quality and performance. The largest complaint from consumers is "flowers do not last long enough." The second complaint is value for the purchase price. These two complaints go hand in hand.

Presentation and lasting impressions are those that begin when the first-time consumers receive your product. Improving the performance and quality of cut flowers is a direct relation to the complaints outlined above. There has been no evidence that hydration is not required in florists' over-the-counter sales, given the variables at consumer level. There is evidence hydration has affected the quality and performance of flowers to the

consumer, and consumer reactions to the flowers are favorable in both over-the-counter and overnight shipping.

The question remains: do you want to turn a customer into a repeat customer?

Arrive Alive® packaging is an innovative way to hydrate flowers for the consumer as they are traveling to their final destination. Did you know that a consumer car has a temperature on average at 70 degrees? A consumer may have as many as two to three stops to make before their final destination for the flowers to be hydrated.

Within an hour at 70 degrees, the stem ends will begin to heal and the flowers will stress. This means the stems will need to be re-cut to open the vascular system to provide water and nourishment to the flowers and allow for the full quality of life for the flowers. Submerging flowers in water gives protection to the flowers in temperatures above 40 degrees. That is why we set our coolers at 38 degrees or below. Give the consumer the same full benefit of their purchase and create a repeat customer.

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Consumers complain about the flowers dying two to three days after purchase and of course you replace the flowers. First question you should have is 'why didn't the flowers survive?' Second question should be 'how can we correct this?' The answers are the conclusion of the results we all want in the flower industry: satisfied customers who are telling other customers about their experience with those beautiful flowers and how well those flowers survived.

Quality assurance measures should be a priority in every florist shop. That would include rotation of cut flower stock, cleanliness, changing hydration solution and educating consumers when they purchase cut flowers on care and handling of their bouquet.

Customers see a perceived value when Arrive Alive® packaging is used on their bouquets; however, there is actually a "scientific value" that protects flowers from stress in temperatures above 40 degrees.

Jeffrey D. Corbin, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, uses Arrive Alive® packaging in his shop.

"I have been excited about the Arrive Alive Packaging sheets since September when I was able to discuss them at the Society of American Florist's Premier Product Showcase," Corbin said. "Since that time, we have utilized them on a daily basis as we get a great deal of walk-in

from the university. Valentine's proved the efficiency as well as the value of the product. In year's past, we have had backed-up lines at the counter as the majority of our walk-ins get wrapped product for their sweeties. We always take this opportunity to up-sell the product and to sell water tubes for their roses so they stay fresh - this year, we were ahead of the game: we had our dozen rose bouquets already wrapped in Arrive Alive Packaging. The customer could pull a bundle of roses, drop them in the green sleeve and we could have them wrapped, registered and out the door within minutes. In addition, those customers getting assorted wrapped bouquets were assisted just as quickly because of the ease of the wrap versus multiple tubes per bouquet."

Arrive Alive® Packaging is an earth friendly product and is helping florists build satisfied consumers by creating repeat business, increasing cash-and-carry sales and loyalty to the point of purchase. It is now time that we put things in perspective: Customer's first. ❁

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