

THE PUBLICATION OF THE TEXAS STATE FLORISTS' ASSOCIATION

THE BLOOMIN' TEXAN

December 2012

Member
Spotlight

General
Care Tips
for Your
Shop's
Poinsettias

Focus on
Design

How Many
More Days
is It?





floriology
INSTITUTE



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Education is the key to our success

2013 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS & WEBINAR SERIES

Date	Course Name	Date	Course Name
1/15	Valentine's Day Boot Camp 3.0	4/7-4/9	3-Day Modern Twist on Everyday Design with Donald Yim
1/19	Napco Winter Fresh Forum®	4/16	Mother's Day Boot Camp 3.0
1/20-1/24	5-Day Principles & Elements of Design with Jackie Lacey	5/19-5/23	5-Day Competition/Certification and Portfolio Skills with Jackie Lacey
3/5	Corsage Boot Camp: proms, weddings and more	5/21	Fresh, New Design with Judith Blacklock from London
3/10-3/14	5-Day Sympathy of Today with Jackie Lacey	6/17	Marketing 101: drive more business to your store

Jacksonville, FL



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For More Information about the Floriology Institute, contact us at www.mybloomnet.net/floriologyinstitute.html or call 1-800-BloomNet (1-800-256-6663)

The Bloomin' Texan

DECEMBER 2012 ■ VOLUME XXXVIII ■ NUMBER 12

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Bruce Easley AAF TMFA
President

Letter From the President

Tis the season to be jolly! I can't believe that Christmas is just around the corner. I always attend The Dallas Market in January for next year's Christmas decorations and I leave there wondering, "Did I buy the right things for next year? Are my customers going to like the new holiday items we purchased? It's always my assumption that if it gets me excited about the holidays then it should have the same affect on everyone else. Not So Much! I can show you so many Christmas containers and snowmen from holidays past that it would even make Santa snicker. I guess I've become somewhat of a Christmas "hoarder".

I can mark it down once and sometimes twice but the sidewalk sale never gets much of my Christmas decor. I guess I like Christmas a little too much for the wrong reasons. I think its probably OK for us to be "Children At Heart" around the holidays because as children we were so excited to decorate the tree and shake all the presents underneath it. The thing about going to market and purchasing all that glitters is that it is personal for me. I want everyone to like it just as much as I do. However, I am amazed every time the mixed reactions we get. We are lucky that we get it right more often than not.

Fall is in the air and we've had our first frost on the pumpkin. TSFA has been very busy this fall with committee meetings and our first Board meeting on November the 4th at the Renaissance Hotel in Austin. The Renaissance will be the site of our 100th Anniversary Convention celebration a year from this July. Nicola Parker TMFA, our Texas Cup winner represented TSFA at this year's Designer Of The Year Competition in Hartford, Connecticut and at Society Of American Florist Convention in Palm Beach, Florida and did an excellent job! Thanks Nicky!

Our retail florist will have access in January to a new professional Sympathy video which emphasizes the importance of sending memorial flowers. Funds for this project were provided by grant funding through the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant. Retailers will be able to download this video to their website for no charge.

Education members taught 37 students a Beginning Design Class in a Hands-On setting at Southern Floral company the last week of October. This was a record number of students for this class. We should all thank Roy Holt and Southern Floral for allowing us to use their space for classes. A great facility and a great staff!

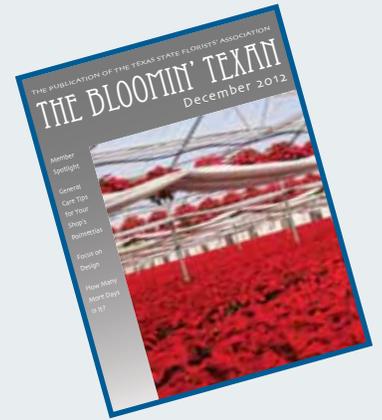
I hope your Thanksgiving turkey was great because here comes the Christmas ham. I hope you all have a very Merry Christmas and A Happy New Year!

THE BLOOMIN' TEXAN
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P.O. Box 170760 • Austin, Texas 78717
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HOW MANY MORE

By Ann Cain, *Bloomin' Texan* Advisory Chair

Sounds like a question that your children or grandchildren ask you at least a thousand times during the days leading up to Christmas?

Seleese Thompson, owner of Precious Memories Florist and Gifts in Temple, Texas, always has the precise answer to the question How Many More Days Is It? "You know I love count downs. It's great fun and great business to be eager to remind customers of the exact number of days until Christmas."

Seleese immediately informed me, "It's 45 days"! By the time the December issue of *The Bloomin Texan* arrives in your mailbox, How Many More Days Is It? Chances are our retail stores are beautifully decorated, Christmas music is filling the air, our design rooms are brimming with fresh evergreens, festive ribbons, poinsettias, and hopefully, phones ringing like the sounds of Christmas bells with plenty of orders to be filled.

Have your plans for this holiday season fallen into place as you envisioned? Did you host a wonderful holiday event for your customers?

Are you and your staff enthusiastic and fully prepared to provide excellent customer service and exceed your holiday goals? Seleese Thompson answers with a resounding yes!

Seleese and her talented and friendly staff at Precious Memories are ready! Their preparations all began this time last year. The tips and timelines that Seleese shares have consistently worked for her highly successful retail business. She is quick to point out that many of the suggestions are universally beneficial and other ideas are easy to adapt and modify to anyone's specific budget, demographic, etc.

The process begins when design room manager Norman Northern TMFA begins collaboration with Seleese in selecting a theme for the season. Believe it or not, Norman and Seleese have already chosen a theme for Christmas 2013! They will go to market in January with their theme in mind and a keen eye toward making floral and giftware purchases to complement the theme.

While the Christmas themes have varied through the years, Norman, Seleese, and the staff seem to find much delight in basing their theme on holiday movies or musicals. "The creativity generated from the great classic holiday films has been endless and really fun for our customers and our staff", explained Norman.

In early September, the Christmas theme is introduced to the public, and special hand-addressed invitations for the much anticipated annual Holiday Open House are in the mail. By the second week in September, from head to toe, top to bottom, inside and out, Precious Memories is set for Christmas and every member of the staff is prepared to answer the question...How Many More Days Is It?

Seleese and her staff mail a VIP invitation which offers a 40% discount on any one item in the store to approximately 150 select customers. "This invitation list is based not only on sales, but on potential sales", said Seleese. "Throughout the year our staff members are well-trained to engage new customers who come into the store for the first time, listening carefully for insight that might help us establish a really excellent new customer."

All forms of social media as well as traditional newspaper and radio advertising are utilized to blast the Holiday Open House information to the general public who are offered a 25% discount on any one item in the store.



DAYS IS IT?

For four hours on a Sunday afternoon in mid-September, customers pour into Precious Memories for their first look at the Christmas theme and all the beautiful decorations. Seleese explained, “They’re used to it; it has become a tradition in our community, they truly look forward to the event and to making their larger holiday purchases in order to utilize the appreciation discount”. “This means that many of our higher dollar holiday décor and gift items are snatched up before Halloween, much less Christmas, making it great for our customers and great for us”!

This year’s theme is based on the holiday movie favorite “White Christmas” starring Bing Crosby, Danny Kaye, Rosemary Clooney and Vera-Ellen. While the movie plays continually on a large-screen TV, thirteen Christmas trees, each decorated to represent a scene from the movie, stand ready to greet customers. Just in case memory fails, Norman has placed attractive signage alongside each tree to help customers identify the specific song or scene from the movie depicted in the decorations on each tree.

Although I have seen “White Christmas” several times, my stroll through the beautifully decorated trees made me want to watch the movie again! One staff member explained that other customers had voiced the same sentiment.

On the day of the event, staff members are identified with a signature apron, special Christmas hat, or flashy pin, etc. Anything that helps make the busy afternoon feel fun and festive for customers and staff. Seleese has created a specific check list to help her staff remember exactly what to ask or offer customers. For example, “Have you tried our new food items?”, “Are you receiving our e-mails?”, “Do you own a local business?”, or “Where do you work?”, “Are you new to our area”, etc.

“The benefits earned from all the preparations required in hosting this type event are well worth it”, assures Seleese:

- Extends appreciation to your customer base
- Builds excitement in your community
- Provides an opportunity to show off your staff and your facilities
- Just like having a party, you have a reason to “get to” all the little things that have needed attention: touch up paint, a drippy faucet, etc.
- Having a timeline and specific dates keeps you accountable

Seleese Thompson and the staff at Precious Memories are prepared to enjoy the countdown to a wonderful Christmas season. Goals set, goals met, happy customers, happy staff equals success! Plus they all know the answer to the question “How Many More Days Is It”?

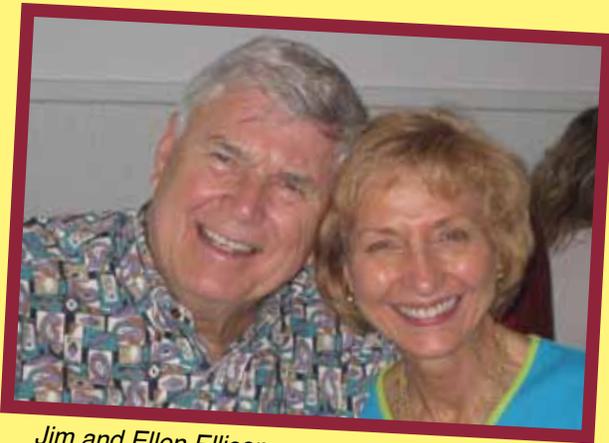
*Please tell us
about your holiday
planning tactics and
the type events your
shops host for the
holidays.*

*Please share
pictures along with
your suggestions
and ideas. We want
to compile several of
your suggestions for
future articles in The
Bloomin’ Texan.*

*We are planning
ahead!*

*“How many more
days is it?”*

Member Spotlight



Jim and Ellen Ellison

Name: Ellen Ellison AAF TMF

Title: Owner

Shop: Ellison's House of Flowers and Gifts, Ellison's Greenhouses, Inc.

Year in Industry: 1969, Retired 2009

Family: Husband — Jim Ellison, Founder of Ellison's Greenhouses, Inc., Son — Chuck Ellison, Daughters — Margie Warren and PJ Ellison Kalil. We also have 5 grandchildren, 2 great grandchildren, and 5 4-legged grandchildren.

College: New Mexico A&M and Texas Tech, but we are dyed in the wool Texas Aggies now! All our children and grandchildren but one are Aggies. She's a Baylor Bear (told her I didn't think I could bleed green!)

Favorite Play: "The Miracle Worker"

Favorite place to go to get away: The Island of Kuaii, Hawaii.

How did you get into the floral industry? Our customer, the Schuberts wanted to retire. I knew nothing about florist operations, but our customers, Wilman and Buckshot Fuqua from Navasota came over and helped us get started. Debbie Woltmann TMFA worked with us in the greenhouses, went to A&M, took a class from Mr. J., the rest is history! She came back from A&M to the shop, became a partner then she and Dystry bought Brenham Floral. When we started the greenhouses in 1969, Jimmy Klepac's dad and Jack Weatherford's dad encouraged Jim and helped him with their knowledge of growing, etc. Wonderful customers and friends — Mabel and Wayne Fisher, Lavon Bankhead, Jim Jensen and Bill Stemme, Sheri White, Tubby Adkisson, Jack Cross, and many more.

Years involved with TSFA: Since 1975. Served as Grower Committee Chairman and was on the Board of Directors.



60th Wedding Anniversary!

Passion(s): In the industry — our Chair in International Floriculture at Texas A&M which TSFA and the Allies helped us get started — Jimmy Klepac, Jack Weatherford, PJ Ellison — are all charter members along with Anna Ball who was very influential in our becoming an International Chair. We now have committee members from all over the nation. (Have had two international members from Columbia and Japan). Dianna Nordman is on our committee representing TSFA. TNLA and TDA have also had representatives on our committee.

Greatest accomplishment: Teaching (Jim says I never stop trying to teach!) our wonderful family — three children, five grandchildren, and two great granddaughters, the floriculture chair and serving on the school board.

Who is your hero? My mother, brother,





Great friends: TSFA Past President Mabel Fisher, Wayne Fisher and Ellen Ellison

Papa Charles, who are all gone now, my husband, Jim, and each of our children.

Biggest thing left on your life “to-do” list? To clean out my house — 43 years of collected stuff! Even have some antiques from the florist shop (1900 era) which is the oldest shop in Washington County.

What constitutes success? He has achieved success who has lived well, laughed often and loved much; who has gained the respect of intelligent men and the love of little children; who has filled his niche and accomplished his task; who left the world better than he found it whether by an improved poppy, a perfect poem or a rescued soul; who has never lacked appreciation of Earth’s beauty, or failed to express it; who has always looked for the best in others and given the best he had; whose life was an inspiration; whose memory is a benediction.

Greatest indulgence? Our grands, and JB, our long haired chihuahua puppy that PJ gave us!

Coveted Item? All the years and special friends in the floral industry — the bracelet Jim gave me when I was 16 years old!

Editor’s Note: 43-year-old business, Ellison’s Greenhouses, are closing its doors, but for the owner, it’s a new beginning. Ellison’s Greenhouses of Brenham, Texas, which grew from a commercial tomato operation into one of the best-known horticultural operations in the state, will be turning its greenhouses over to Color Star Growers beginning Jan. 1, 2013.



L to R: Dr. Tim Davis, Ellen Ellison, Dr. Charles Hall and Texas Agriculture Commissioner Todd Staples.

TSFA Members Approved Bylaws Changes

During the 2012 TSFA Convention, the membership approved the following changes to the TSFA Board Structure:

The Board of Directors will consist of (9) Voting members: a President, and Immediate Past President, a First Vice-President, a Second Vice-President, and five Directors. The five Directors are: three Retail Florist Directors, one Wholesale Director, and one Grower Director.

When you consider your nominations for the TSFA Board, please take into consideration the approved Bylaws change.



It’s Up to You!

Your nominations for TSFA Officers and Directors determine whom you’ll vote for in July!

The Texas State Florists’ Association Nominating Committee will meet in January 2013 and is now accepting recommendations for nomination of persons desiring to run for office at our July 2013 Convention. Candidates will be nominated for the following offices: President, Second Vice President, Retail Director (one to be elected) and Grower Director.

Only those members who have been active in the Association for at least two (2) years prior to the election, whose Association dues are currently paid, and who will have sufficient time to devote to the affairs of the Association, shall be eligible for nomination for the office of Director.

Candidates for the offices of President and Second Vice President shall have been members of the Association for at least three (3) years and shall have served on the Board of Directors for at least two full years prior to the election, with membership dues currently paid. If you wish to be considered for an office, or if you would like to nominate someone else, please forward your recommendations to reach the TSFA office by January 18, 2013.

You may use the form on this page or write a personal letter. The Committee will appreciate your responding to this request to assist them in selecting a slate of officers for 2013-2014.

To: TSFA Nominating Committee
P.O. Box 170760, Austin, Texas 78717
FAX to 512.834.2150
or email: txsfa@sbcglobal.net

I would like to be considered for the following office:

I would like to nominate for the following offices:

President _____

Second Vice President _____

Retail Director _____

Grower Director _____

Recommended by: _____

Name _____

Firm Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____



Introductory Hands-On Floral Design Classes*

January 18-19, 2013

American Agro Products (1800 Regal Row, Dallas, TX 75235)

Individual Class Registration

Registration Questions? Telephone TSFA at (512) 834-0361 • Class size is limited to 30 • Registration deadline: January 9, 2013

Name: _____ School: _____ Telephone: _____ Cell: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Personal Email: _____ TSFA Member ____ Yes ____ No

Friday, January 18, 2013 • 3:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Basic Design Styles & Techniques

Member

\$95

Non-Member

\$135

Saturday, January 19, 2013 • 8:00 am - 1:00 pm

Wedding Design Techniques

\$95

\$135

2:00 pm - 6:00 pm

Funeral Design Techniques

\$95

\$135

TOTAL: \$ _____

If you are a scholarship recipient please check: _____ Scholarship Recipient

If NOT a scholarship recipient, please attach a check payable to TSFA and mail it along with this registration form to:

Texas State Florists' Association • PO Box 170760 • Austin, TX 78717 **OR** Fax:(512) 834-2150 • Email: txsfa@sbcglobal.net

Credit Card Billing: _____ MasterCard _____ Visa _____ Discover _____ American Express

Card #: _____ Exp Date _____ Code _____

***AG SCIENCE TEACHERS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & EDUCATIONAL ADVANCEMENT CEU CERTIFICATE PROGRAM**

Help Grow TSFA (pun intended)!



2013 Membership Recruitment Campaign



Your Reward when you recruit a new member is **Cash**...what you do with that Cash is up to you, maybe a quick getaway, a spa day or dinner out. **You decide.**

Rewards Categories:

Recruiters may earn the following cash:

- \$50 per each Owner/Manager New Member
- \$25 for each Employee New Member

Grand Prize

In addition to the cash incentive for 2013, the first place membership recruiter will win a \$250 gift card from the Florist Federal Credit Union. The winner of the gift card is the person who signs up the most total number of new members (Minimum new member sign up is 5).

A Few Rules:

- Membership Campaign will run from Jan. 1, 2013 – November, 2013.
- Incentives are open to all members/non-members who sign up a new member and the new member pays dues for one year.
- New Member is considered someone who has not paid TSFA membership in the last two years.
- Recruiter's name must be listed in the Recommend By section on the TSFA Membership Application.
- New memberships **MUST** be paid before prizes can be awarded.
- Must be over 18 to be eligible.

Call the TSFA office if you have any questions: 512.834.0361

TSFA Membership Application

Name _____ Firm _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone (____) _____ FAX (____) _____

E-mail: _____

Recommended By: _____

Classification & Annual Dues

(Membership is on an individual basis)

RETAIL FLORIST

- Owner/Manager.....\$189.95
- Freelance Designer.....\$189.95
- Employee.....\$96.00

WHOLESALE FLORIST

- Owner/Manager.....\$189.95
- Employee.....\$96.00

GROWER

- Owner.....\$189.95
- Employee.....\$96.00
- EDUCATOR/TEACHER.....\$96.00
- ASSOCIATE MEMBER.....\$125.00

Total Enclosed \$ _____

My Position With the Firm is: _____

Payment Options: _____ Check is enclosed

Please bill my account as indicated:

Credit Card Billing: _____ MasterCard _____ VISA _____ Discover

Card# _____ Exp. Date _____ Code: _____

Cardholder's Name _____ Signature _____

Wire Service Account Billing: _____ Teleflora _____ FTD _____ BloomNet

Available on wire service billing only: Code# _____

Account Holder's Signature _____

Complete and Return to:

**TSFA • P.O. Box 170760 • Austin, TX 78717
(800) 375-0361 • Fax (512) 834-2150**

DESIGN GALLERY



December Design Gallery Winner – Julie Meador, The Flower-Box, Rockwall, Texas

For over 30 years, Julie has been a part of the floral industry in Texas. Her career began when she landed a job as a delivery driver while she was in high school in Quinlan, TX.

One job responsibility led to the next and once she started designing, she has never stopped. “It’s the opportunity to be creative that keeps me coming back day after day”; expressed Julie, “I absolutely love knowing that my designs bring smiles to a customer’s face!”

As far as a favorite “design season”, Julie readily admits her favorite is Christmas. “It’s fun, festive, and a time that is acceptable to be over the top and gaudy.”

Thank you Julie for your enthusiasm and expertise in our industry.

THE WINNING DESIGN

This trio of oval vases, filled with hydrangea, roses, gerberas, spiders, seasonal berries and an assortment of Christmas greens, all come together to create a natural tablescape that can be adjusted to fit any size table or buffet by adding or removing vases. Convenient for both you and your customers!



TSFA may feature your design in an upcoming issue of the “Bloomin’ Texan” and on TSFA’s FaceBook Page. Email your design photos along with your name and telephone number. You may win a \$50 gift card, sponsored by the Florist Federal Credit Union — www.thefloristffcu.org.



Submit photos along with a brief description for these upcoming issues:

Issue	Subject	Deadline
February 2013	Love	December 30, 2012
March 2013	Spring	January 30, 2013
April	Showers	February 28, 2013
May	Flowers	March 30, 2013

focus on design

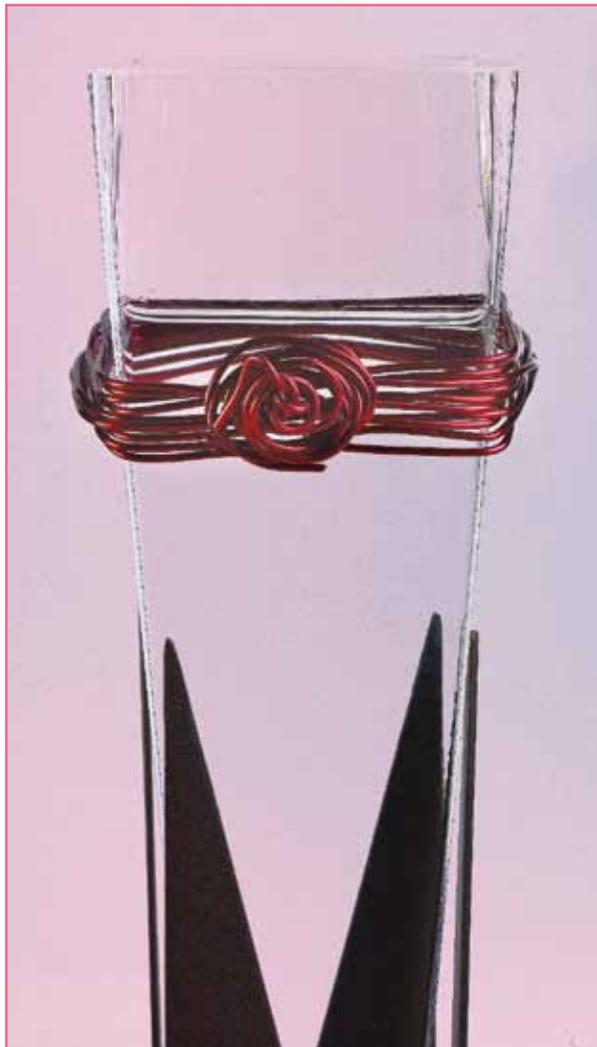
Floral design by Rich Salvaggio AIFD, AAF, PFCI

Reprinted with permission of *Flowers&* magazine

Photography by Ron Derhacopian

Wire trim and a simple foliage accent add flair to Valentine's Day roses.

Romance gets a style upgrade, with slender bundles of Flexigrass in place of other foliage, and chic wire embellishments to a pair of contemporary vases in iron stands.



- Add red aluminum wire trim to the tall glass vase. Take two lengths of the wire and wrap them multiple times tightly around the vase; then twist the four ends into a medallion in front. (It's much easier to get a weighty, attractive medallion shape with four ends than with only two, hence the need to use two lengths of wire.)



- Add beaded wire to the shorter vase. The only trick here is that the wire comes up over one edge to keep it on.
- Fill the vases with roses: here, 'Red Intuition' and pink 'Majolika' spray roses. Bundle a few stems of Flexigrass with decorative wire and use the wire to secure the bundles to one of the rose stems. 🌹





TSFA Education Presents two hands-on workshops. Explore how body flowers have changed dramatically and be a trendsetter with your tropical designs. You will learn and practice hands-on!

January 26, 2013

Hampton Inn & Suites-Longview, Texas

TSFA Member price is \$95.00 and includes both hands on classes all materials and a light lunch. Please bring your personal design tools. Others \$145.00.

Registration is limited to 35. Registration Deadline: **January, 17, 2013**

Registration Information

Name: _____ Shop _____

Address: _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email: _____ Shop telephone: _____ Cell: _____

TSFA Member: Yes No I would like to learn more about TSFA.

Class Times

9:30 am – Noon

**January 26, 2013
"Exquisite Exotics"**

Gregg Hoppe will offer new techniques to turn your tropical arrangements into an exquisite arrangement of beauty. Learn care and handling to help make your tropicals ones your customers will truly enjoy!

Instructor:

12:00 – 12:45 pm

12:45 pm – 1:00 pm

Gregg Hoppe AIFD TMF

Lunch (Included with registration fee)

Participate in a quick discussion on how social media can increase sales in your business.

1:00 – 3:30 pm

"Body Flowers in the iAge"

Instructor: Pat Shirley-Becker AIFD TMFA

See the latest trends in this **Information Age**, learn the importance of design in body flowers, the technique of gluing, packaging and presentation, how to market your designs and make a profit while using trends in decorative wire, bling, bracelets, rings and things!

Check Enclosed

Credit Card information: Number _____ Exp _____ Code _____

Billing Zip: _____ Name on Card _____

Mail registration to:

Texas State Florists' Association, PO Box 170760, Austin, TX 78717

Email to: txsfa@sbcglobal.net • Fax to: 512.834.2150

Questions? 512.834.0361

Flowers&
magazine

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Both
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Formats**

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Scan the QR code with your smartphone or tablet to learn more about digital issues—or go to www.flowersandmagazine.com

Meet the Newest Texas Master Florist Graduates!



Name: Mikaela May TMF

Business/School: Tarleton State University

Position: Pursuing a Horticulture Business Degree

Years in the industry: 4 years

Why did you seek the TMF Credential? My passions for

floriculture design and floriculture compositions lead me to try to be one of the youngest master florist in the state of Texas. I also wanted to be recognized by having a higher certification than the high school floral certification.

For more information on how you can earn your Texas Master Florist designation, telephone the TSFA Office at (512) 834-0361 or go to www.tsfa.org.

General Care Tips For Your Shop's Poinsettias

- ✧ Unsleeve all plants immediately after they arrive.
- ✧ When surface soil is dry to the touch, water thoroughly. Discard excess water trapped in decorative covers or saucers.
- ✧ To prolong color, keep a temperature range of 65 to 75 degrees.
- ✧ Do not store in coolers.
- ✧ Remember, Epinasty is linked to ethylene production; therefore, poinsettias should not be left in sleeves, stored or shipped with bananas or other ethylene producing fruits.

Courtesy of Weatherford Farms, Inc.



The Legend of the Poinsettia

Some Time Ago, I heard a lovely Christmas story about Maria, a young girl who lived on a poor family farm in a small village in Mexico. It was a custom in the village to glorify the Christmas season with special events to celebrate the birth of the Christ Child, Jesus. Everyone took part in the preparations by festively decorating the village church and the piazza in front of it. Even the children helped by making gifts to give to the Baby Jesus on Christmas Eve. Maria wanted to make a very special gift. She had helped her mother before with the loom, so she tried, on her own, to weave a colorful blanket. But Maria was too inexperienced and the yarns became an entangled mess. Maria was heartbroken. She wanted so much to be able to march in procession with the other village children, but she had no gift to give to the Christ Child. Finally it was Christmas Eve! The villagers gathered in the piazza. Some whispered that they thought they could hear angels singing tonight. Everyone was ready. Holding lit candles, all the villagers began to process down the aisle amid joyous music and singing. All except for Maria, who hid in the shadows, watching with tears in her eyes as the procession to the church started. "I don't have a gift for the Baby Jesus," she sniffled softly. "I tried and tried to make something beautiful, but instead I ruined it." Suddenly, Maria heard a voice. She looked up and saw only a bright star in the sky; it seemed to hover and shine over the village church. Was it this star that spoke to her? "Maria," she heard the voice again, "The baby Jesus will love whatever you give because it comes from your heart. Love is what makes any gift special." With that, Maria stepped out from the shadows. Nearby she noticed some tall green weeds. She rushed over and quickly filled her arms with the weeds, covering them with her manto. Then she ran swiftly to the church. By the time she arrived, the candles were ablaze and the children were singing as they walked down the aisle carrying their gifts to the Christ Child. Padre Francesco placed the figure of the baby Jesus in the manger, with the children's gifts all around it. Suddenly, Maria was scared when she saw all those people dressed in such beautiful clothes, and she was dressed so poorly. She tried to slip behind one of the big pillars, but she was too slow. Padre Francesco saw her. "Maria, Maria," he called out. "Hurry girl, come, bring up your gift!" Maria was terrified. She wondered, "Do I run away? Do I go forward?" The Padre saw her apprehension and coaxed her more gently, "Maria, come up here and see the Baby Jesus. There is space left for one more gift." Before she could think, Maria found herself walking down the main aisle of the church. "What is Maria carrying under her manto?" the villagers whispered. "Where's her gift?" Padre Francesco stepped down from the altar and walked with Maria to the Christmas crèche. Maria bowed her head and said a prayer then opened her manto and let the weeds tumble out. Voices gasped, "Look! Look at those glorious flowers!" Startled, Maria opened her eyes. She was stunned. For each weed was now topped with a flaming, bright, red star. And outside, too, every weed now bore a bright red star. Maria's love had created a miracle.

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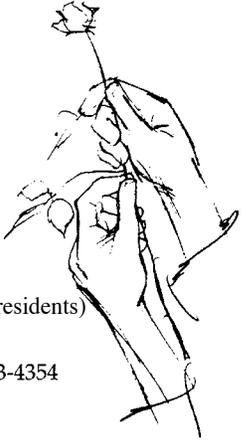
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TSFA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

December 2012

8 Hanukkah Begins (at sundown)

January 2013

1 New Year's Day
 18- TSFA offers introductory Hands-on Floral Design Classes. "Basic Design Styles & Techniques", "Wedding Design Techniques" and Funeral Design Techniques". Held at American Agro Products in Dallas, TX. For more information, see page 8 of this issue or telephone the TSFA office at 512.834.0361.

February 2013

13 Ash Wednesday
 18 President's Day

March 2013

9 Level 1 Testing for High Schools
 College Station High School, College Station, TX, 9am

10 Daylight-Savings Time Begins
 16 Level 1 Testing for High Schools
 • Canutillo High School, El Paso, TX, 9am
 • Region 8 Educational Center, Pittsburg, TX, 9am

17 St. Patrick's Day
 20 First Day of Spring
 Texas Floral Endowment Board Meeting, Hampton Inn & Suites, Austin, TX, 10am

23 Level 1 Testing for High Schools, Skyline High School, Dallas, TX 9am

24 Palm Sunday
 25 Passover Begins (at sundown)
 29 Good Friday
 31 Easter

April 2013

13 Level 1 Testing for High Schools
 James Madison High School, San Antonio, TX 9am
 17 Finance Committee Meeting
 By Conference Call, 3-4pm
 21 Professional Secretaries Week begins

July 12-14, 2013

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