



How to Organize a Hands-On Workshop

for the Master Floral Designer



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Floral enthusiasts learn flower arranging most effectively through hands-on practice. The more structure provided to a learning opportunity, the more participants will retain and use what they have learned. Workshop participants fully experience flowers as they array them into geometrical forms. In this publication, we will explore how to plan, execute, and conclude a hands-on floral design workshop.



Before You Teach

If you have not done so already, refer to Mississippi State University Extension Service publications P4070 *How to Book a Floral Design Program for the Master Floral Designer* and P4072 *How to Organize an Educational Demonstration for the Master Floral Designer* online at extension.msstate.edu. These publications will help you ask the right questions and use your contacts to coordinate a hands-on workshop.

Hands-On Workshops: Learning by Doing

Hands-on workshops take more time and have greater overall costs than demonstrations alone, but the outcomes and benefits can easily outweigh the inputs. If you have previously delivered a demonstration to a group and received helpful evaluations, you will know what types of projects are best suited for them. No matter what project you choose, be sure that the participants learn valuable information that will help them continue designing with flowers.

On the Front End

PLANNING

Workshops need careful planning and have higher stakes than demonstrations. You must source the materials that will be used, including flowers, foliage, containers, and transport packaging. Most likely, you will hold a workshop at a non-floral-related venue such as a church hall, a county Extension office, or an event venue. Be sure to order the correct amount; there must be enough stems

and supplies for the participants to use at the event. Slight excess is acceptable, but too much can waste precious funds. Having too little of the needed materials can cause participants to be disappointed.

At this stage of planning, develop learning objectives tailored to participants' needs. For example, it would be valuable for participants to understand the importance of a visually balanced, long-lasting vase of flowers. In a workshop with this objective, participants should learn about proportion, clean vase water, and the chief components of a fresh-flower food solution.

FEES AND FINANCES

Work with the sponsoring group organizer to set the workshop fee. Use the feedback from the sponsoring organization members to gauge how much participants are willing to pay. This can help you narrow down the project. And if you can use other inputs, such as past evaluation data, you are well on your way to creating a successful plan. Set a registration deadline to plan for the correct number of participants.

We recommend that Master Floral Designers (MFDs) do not pay for the workshop expenses out of pocket. The sponsoring organization should collect the workshop fees from the participants and reimburse you for the cost of the materials, or they can buy the materials outright, so you do not handle any money. This is a better scenario because the sponsoring group can control the workshop's cost, and you can concentrate on delivering the educational content.





Sample Workshop Announcement

SEASONAL FRESH FLOWER VASE DESIGN

\$60 per person

Open to Garden Club members, guests, and anyone, 18 and older, who wants to learn.

Do you love flowers but have challenges in making your arrangements proportional to the container or helping the flowers last longer?

In this hands-on workshop, you will learn the steps to creating a vase of fresh flowers and ornamental greenery. You'll also learn about flower food and how to use it properly.

Bring a pair of floral snips, a pen and paper, and a spare dish towel. Be sure to wear closed-toe shoes with good treads and clothing for floral designing.

Our registration deadline is 01/24/2028, and registration is capped at 20.

Sorry, there are no refunds, but if you cannot make it, send a friend! Make your check payable to the Hours of Flowers Garden Club and provide it to the Lafayette Floral Society main office.

Floral design workshop expenses can include:

- cut flowers
- cut ornamental foliage
- potted plants
- containers
- mechanics
- accessories (e.g., candles, figurines, and table linens)
- supplies (e.g., tools, soil, gravel, candles, and drop cloth)
- travel (including fuel/mileage, hotel, and meal costs)

ADVERTISING

Help the sponsor develop a marketing and advertising plan. Some programs will be open only to club members while some are open to the public. The workshop announcement should be made well in advance to allow for participant registration. You should help

the sponsor to write the program announcement and encourage registration. If appropriate, the announcement can be posted and shared on social media.

Some registrants may be first-time participants in a floral workshop and may not know how to properly dress for one. Stress safety before and during the event by asking them to dress properly. Wear closed-toe shoes with treads to discourage slipping and falling on wet floors. Refer to the Sample Workshop Announcement.

PRODUCTS

Hands-on projects can be any combination of fresh, dried, preserved, or permanent flowers, foliage, and accessories. Some teachers like to use packaged market bouquets for their classes. These can be ordered from wholesale florists, online floral sources (Sam's Club or Costco), and local supermarket floral departments. Containers can be purchased online, at wholesale floral suppliers, or from retail floral departments. It is possible to supplement fresh flowers with locally grown cut foliage.



Keep the project streamlined and foundational, limiting or eliminating the need for glues or paints. Plan for receiving and processing the workshop's fresh flowers and foliage. This will require water access, cut flower food, and buckets.

Floral design is best learned in a structured learning environment. To support this, it is often best if every participant has identical or very similar materials to those used by the teacher in the project demonstration. Workshops that use many different types of materials and containers can cause learner confusion and may stray away from the learning objectives.

It is possible to conduct workshops using evergreens and holiday accessories at Christmastime and dried floral designs in the fall season. Both the evergreen foliage and dried flowers are durable, requiring minimal care and handling and low labor inputs. Most floral enthusiasts are happy making just about any type of floral arrangement if the experience and product provide value and the finished project is beautiful and usable.

When planning the workshop supplies, consider how the participants will transport their designs home safely. Participants should not have to hold a design with one hand and a steering wheel with the other. Small boxes or arrangement bags for this purpose can be found through floral distributors.

Locate compost bins, landfill bins, dust rags, brooms, dustpans, and other cleaning items before the workshop begins. Your personal vehicle and home space will be used to haul and prepare materials for transport to the learning venue.

It is challenging for MFDs to maintain floral freshness without refrigerator access, but it is not impossible. If flowers are properly processed, they can remain at room temperature for one or two days prior to a workshop. Indeed, flowers that are purchased in tightly closed buds can take time to unfurl when stored outside of refrigeration. MFDs understand that sanitation, clean buckets, and clean water with no foliage below the water line, along with fresh flower food mixed following the manufacturers' instructions, goes a long way in keeping flowers fresh.

Once you have the project plans in place, your sponsor can advertise the event. Refer to the sample announcement in the Advertising section and use it as a guideline to help you and your contacts to publicize the workshop.



The Event

Hands-on workshops are a valuable way to connect with learners and involve three major phases: a **demonstration**, the hands-on **practice**, and an **evaluation**.

If you are new to the audience, have a designated person introduce you to the group. Use a written introduction that they can read to the audience. Keep this introduction to about one minute long and use it as an opportunity to share that you completed MFD training and are qualified to lead them in an educational program.

THE DEMONSTRATION

You will begin the workshop by telling participants what they will be creating. Instruct them to take notes and make sketches so that they will remember the steps and complete their own model. Let them know you will help them if they get stuck, but odds are they will be successful in creating a beautiful design. Participants should also be encouraged to complete an evaluation and be asked to help clean up the floral studio before they leave.

Once you have discussed the workshop's overall structure, you can begin the demonstration. Foundational floral designs are best learned by clear explanations followed by participants recreating the demonstration example. While you are demonstrating, create the design on a lifted surface such as a wooden crate so that everyone can observe you and the design. The participants should take notes and make sketches, whichever works best for them, to better understand and remember the steps for recreating the design. Make the entire design, from mechanics to final touches,



rather than breaking up the project and allowing participants to catch up. A "start and stop" approach usually causes frustration and wastes time.

Clearly identify each plant material. If you use a special technique, take a few moments to demonstrate it clearly so they can replicate it. If it is an involved technique, demonstrate it twice. If they do not quite understand the processes, let them know you will be by their side to help them.

Complete your design and any finishing touches. Demonstrate the proper use of postharvest treatments, if available. Ask if anyone has any questions. At this point, participants can begin to create their own designs. You can organize a "kit" of materials for each participant, or you may want them to distribute the materials to one another. A kit is helpful and saves workshop time if you have plenty of volunteer help in preparing for the event. If you have limited help, participants are always willing to assist, so assign each person a task when distributing specific flowers, foliage, and supplies.

HANDS-ON PRACTICE

Now is the time for you to cease your commentary and shift the focus to creating an environment where participants can concentrate on their own work. Ask them to move their belongings out of the aisles and away from their feet so that others do not trip on them.

Tables with a height of about 40 inches are best for floral design work when standing, but participants can be seated when

working at tables with average height. Floral arrangements usually turn out better when participants are standing, rather than seated, and working on elevated surfaces; however, their comfort is more important. Participants can use an upturned bucket or a wooden crate to elevate the work surface.

MFDs learn how to cut flowers with a knife. For single-project workshops, it is recommended to skip over this instruction and have participants use floral snips or pruning shears for safety.

Unless you forgot an important detail, there is limited need for further announcements. Take a few moments to rest and take a seat. Scan the participants and identify anyone who might be missing a necessary flower or supply item to complete their design. As they complete the various stages of their arrangements, walk through the aisles and offer brief assurances. Aid anyone who needs help, then return to your post. Repeat this process as needed, but especially near their project's completion. For everyone's safety, mop up spills immediately.

Make it a goal to leave the space looking as good as, or better than, it did when you arrived. Budget time to clean your vehicle of plant material debris after the workshop, if necessary.

LEARNER AND TEACHER EVALUATIONS

Participants gain great value from individualized critiques, and you should build this time into the workshop. One-on-one evaluative discussions, even if they last for just a few minutes, help participants understand what they did correctly and where



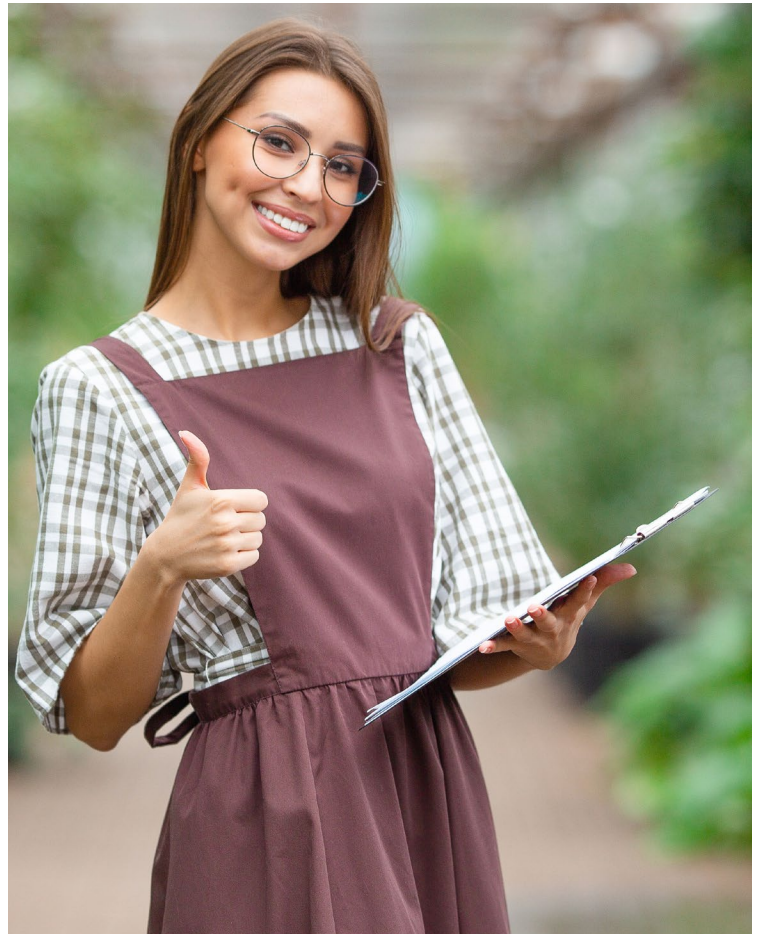


they can improve. A good technique is to find at least one area that needs improvement and another area that was successfully completed.

In public workshops, it is always best to stress positive rather than negative areas; after all, we want people to enjoy the process and products of floral design. Always use the design principles to provide an objective critique. If you are unfamiliar with the principles, you will not be ready to offer a valuable critique. If they seem hazy, consult a reliable source.

It is also possible, if time permits, to conduct a group critique. It is often better to reserve this type of review for participants who have already mastered foundational floral designs and are ready for deeper insights. Using this method, participants bring their designs to the front of the group, one at a time. The entire group (teachers and participants) focuses on the work and shares comments about the strengths and weaknesses of the design, based on the design principles. An informed group of learners will provide a more insightful group critique.

After you have provided feedback, remind the participants to evaluate your teaching and overall workshop. Encourage them to learn more about and join the MFD program. Make sure that there is ample time for them to complete the evaluation.



Your survey should be brief because attendees are often anxious to leave after they have completed the project and critique. Do not ask people for information that will not be used to improve future programs. Do not review the evaluations until you have left the venue to ensure participant anonymity.

Explain how a vase design can be seat-belted in a vehicle. Provide boxes and other packaging materials to participants. Consider building these into the cost of the workshop.

Considerations for Better Hands-On Workshops

If you have helpers assisting you before, during, and after the workshop, provide them with clear, objective tasks. Your helpers may need training; be sure to adequately budget this time. Treat them kindly and thank them by name during your program.

Do not underestimate your participants' floral design knowledge. Be clear about what they need to do to prepare for the workshop. When learners are fully prepared, learning will commence, and the workshop has a better chance of running smoothly. Be clear with your instructions on creating the design, cleaning the space, and completing an evaluation at the end of the program.

It would be helpful if another MFD could assist you with the workshop. Designate who completes each task or designate a workshop lead and an assistant. This will help you identify who accomplishes each task more clearly and effectively.

Hands-On Workshop Checklist

- buckets
- containers
- crate (to raise design demo surface)
- cut flowers
- cut foliage
- drop cloth
- floral supplies
- packaging materials
- pens and paper (for participants' notes)
- student handouts (class content, upcoming demonstration/ workshop dates, and evaluation)
- tools
- towels





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Program Evaluation

Thank you for attending this program. Please complete the following information and turn in this survey before you leave.

Top 3 things I learned:

I would like to learn more about:

Comments:

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