

SEPTEMBER 2025

# TEXAS

*in Bloom*



*Rebecca Sullivan*  
AIFD CFD TMF

2025 Texas Designer of the Year



# Experience a Floral Wonderland



**Sept. 24**  
1:30-8:30 p.m.

## ATTEND THE TEXAS FLORAL SHOWCASE

The Texas State Florists' Association is excited to bring a one-of-a-kind floral event to Tyler, featuring world-renown floral design expert Deborah De La Flor AIFD CFD PFCI!

## REGISTRATION INCLUDES

Entry to the Tyler Rose Garden Center and Museum, a Madhatter's Elegant Tea Party, the White Rabbit's Floral Marketplace and a Floral Wonders and Whimsy Bar.

Local floral artists may contact TSFA to showcase their Curiouser and Curiouser Floral Artistry.



**Wonderland  
Members Pass**  
(TSFA Member Rate)  
**\$55**



**Curious  
Guest Pass**  
(Non-member Rate)  
**\$85**



Add-on

**Escape Down the Rabbit Hole**

Floral Design Workshop

**\$95 TSFA Member • \$125 Non-member**



LEARN MORE:  
**[tsfa.org/roes](https://tsfa.org/roes)**

Tyler Rose Garden Center  
420 Rose Park Drive  
Tyler, TX 75702

# Texas in Bloom

SEPTEMBER 2025 | VOLUME LI | NUMBER 8

## FROM THE *President*



TSFA President  
Marisa Guerrero  
AIFD CFD TMF

It is both an honor and a privilege to serve as President of the Texas State Florists' Association. TSFA has been a cornerstone of my professional journey, and I am humbled by the opportunity to lead an organization that represents the heart, artistry and innovation of Texas floristry. I am grateful for the confidence you have placed in me, and I look forward to working alongside each of you as we continue to strengthen and grow our industry.

First, I would like to extend warm congratulations to our newly elected board members, Dawson Clark TMF, Jeff Floyd, Tom Wolfe, Jr., and Tricia Won AIFD EMC IMF. Your willingness to serve and contribute your talents ensures that TSFA remains strong, relevant and forward-thinking. Your fresh perspectives and energy will help guide us through an exciting year ahead. At the same time, I want to express deep gratitude to those whose terms have come to an end, Yolanda Amos TMFA, Susan

Piland AIFD CFD TMF, John Priest and Iuliia Prokhorova AIFD CFD TMF. Your dedication, time and passion for TSFA have left a lasting impact.

A special note of appreciation must also be extended to our Immediate Past President, Ed Fimble CFD TMFA. Leadership at this level requires commitment and heart, and we have been fortunate to benefit from your passion. I also want to recognize and share my enthusiasm for working closely with our outstanding Executive Director, Michelle Karns CAE. Her leadership and tireless work on behalf of our members makes all the difference, and I am eager for the collaboration that lies ahead.

Please join me in congratulating Rebecca Sullivan AIFD CFD TMF, the newly named Texas Designer of the Year. This achievement represents the very best of Texas floral artistry, and we are so proud to see such creativity and talent recognized. We also celebrate the remarkable honor bestowed upon our former Executive Director, Dianna Nordman AAF, who received the Paul Ecke Jr. Award from the Society of American Florists for service to the industry. This recognition is one of the highest honors in our industry, and it reflects Dianna's lifelong contributions to advancing floristry. Texas could not be prouder.

As we look ahead, I encourage each of you to go down the rabbit hole with us at the Texas Floral Showcase featuring Deborah De La Flor AIFD CFD PFCI at the Rose Garden in Tyler on Sept. 24. This event is more than just a gathering — it is an opportunity to connect with peers, discover new ideas and be inspired by the artistry that makes our industry thrive. I truly believe that when we come together, we elevate the profession as a whole.

I am excited about the year ahead. Together, with creativity, collaboration and a shared passion for flowers, we will continue to build upon the legacy of TSFA and lead the industry to a vibrant future. Thank you for allowing me the honor of serving you.

With gratitude,  
Marisa Guerrero AIFD CFD TMF

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TYLER, TEXAS

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TOM COLLUM-WILLIAMS TMF



*It's always fun to know a little more than what the bio of TSFA's incredible presenters reveals. Throughout 2025, we will take you beyond the bio and share just a little bit more about each of those who will add layers of learning throughout the year!*

## Beyond THE BIO

with

Deborah De La Flor

AIFD CFD PFCI



### WHAT IS YOUR FIRST MEMORY OF FLOWERS?

My granny's flower and vegetable gardens in Kentucky were surely heaven on earth for me as a child! I would save seeds from flowers as we stopped during our travels to and from Kentucky and Florida each summer, drying them and planting everything!

### WHAT EXPERIENCES LED TO YOUR INTEREST IN THE FLORAL INDUSTRY?

My grandfather passed away, so I went with my mother to order the flowers for his service at a flower shop. My mother declared, "Honey, this is right up your alley." I wasn't even aware I had an alley!



### WHAT CONTRIBUTED MOST TO YOUR DESIGN EDUCATION?

My husband, Gus, saw a talent in me and would give me suggestions to slightly change a design for the better. He taught me the business end very well! He would enter me in monthly floral competitions – without my knowledge! He wouldn't tell me until the day of the competition, so I was winging it, but it worked. I either won or placed second in a couple! After all, creativity is spontaneous. I never expected to win or even place, but it was certainly fun!

### WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FAVORITE JOB IN THE FLORAL INDUSTRY?

I always loved doing floral photo shoots for numerous companies in the industry. Now, my love is simply being in my flower shop creating designs for my clients, no matter how big or small. I just love selling flowers! Everyone leaves with a big smile, or if a sad occasion, they get hugs along with flowers.



### WHERE HAVE YOU RECEIVED YOUR GREATEST INDUSTRY SUPPORT?

Florida State Florists' Association International (FSFAI) and every state association for which I have ever presented! The American Institute of Floral Designers and Society of American Florists have also been very supportive!



## **YOU HAVE COMPETED AND JUDGED AT A WORLD CUP LEVEL. WHAT INTRIGUES YOU ABOUT THE COMPETITION PROCESS?**

I love everything about it – even though it scares me to death! The stress level is crazy, because you want to be the very best you can be on that given day! That part is not so fun. The prop planning process is always difficult for me. I would much rather have all surprise designs with no previous planning at all. I love the judging process, I know how every competitor feels and what it took for them to get to where they are. I want to give as many points as possible to the very best design. As a judge, I know how important my job is and want to get the results to the most deserving competitor.

## **WHAT IS YOUR THOUGHT PROCESS THAT LEADS TO A WINNING DESIGN?**

My thought process includes choosing a color that will command a judge's attention, very clean design, excellent professional mechanics, amazing line, the element of surprise and wonder.



Did you ever think roses could be designed in so many ways! These photos are a small sampling of the many ideas that De La Flor will share when you join her in the Tyler Rose Garden! Make a day of it and learn more than you can imagine!



## **HOW DID YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF ELEMENTS AND PRINCIPLES CONTRIBUTE TO THESE EXPERIENCES?**

I'm not sure I should admit this ... yikes! Prior to competing, I never formally learned the elements and principles ... I simply placed the flowers where they belonged. I heard Frankie Shelton in a crowd saying, "Everyone should know and learn the elements and principles of floral design." I think I hid behind someone in the crowd. I thought that if I learned them, it would change my designs or style, and I was winning!

That all changed when I was asked to teach the elements and principles in Canada for a franchise. I was in absolute panic and beside myself! I was trying to create rhymes to help me remember, then I typed index cards to help me study. It turns out that I was using the elements and principles all along! I just never knew what they were called or that you needed any guidelines.

Now, I can definitely see why designers need a sound understanding of the elements and principles in order to create visually appealing designs.



## DEBBIE WOLTMANN AIFD CFD TMFA CELEBRATES THE PRESIDENCY OF LONGTIME FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE ED FIMBEL CFD TMFA WITH THE BEAUTY OF FLOWERS

When asked to create something as important as flowers for the Presidential Suite for a dear friend of many years, where does one begin? How in the world does one take the first step to develop the style of design for something so important? We asked former TSFA President Debbie Woltmann AIFD CFD TMFA just that and more to reveal her behind the scenes approach to the floral statements designed for the Presidential Suite during the Texas Floral Expo.

Florist Advanced credential and has a wealth of floriculture experience and wisdom to share.

“As I gave it more thought,” Woltmann explained, “I realized that capturing the collective stylings from these prestigious designers to develop the designs for this suite was as much a part of my style as Ed’s. Organic, nature-inspired, vegetative and colorful, with plant accents and trimmings from the garden, would certainly lead the way to completing the task!” She went on to share, “I tend to design feminine, so I had to think masculine, hence, twigs and sticks, deer horns, baskets, wood boxes, mushrooms and pods became part of the mix. There had to be some tropics since we were at a bay resort and Ed’s absolute favorite way to travel is a cruise.”

Photography Credit | Shy Laurel Photography



Ed’s favorite orchid, the yellow oncidium, expanded the visual space of the design for the dining table. The reflective qualities of the mirror played off the reflective qualities of the glass bubble bowl that provided the perfect space for florals to extend in groupings from the center point. The perfectly presented color palette brought beauty to the overall design.

“The style had to reflect Ed, so I went to the source and asked, Who are your favorite designers? Who inspired you the most? He responded Charlie Groppetti AIFD, Hitomi Gilliam AIFD and Jenny T. Ingram AIFD PFCI EMC, and I thought, YIKES!” shared Woltmann.

With all that Woltmann brings to the design table, no one would doubt that she would make it all happen! A former president of TSFA and current TSFA Education Committee Co-chair, Woltmann holds the prestigious Texas Master



Knowing people would be seated up close and personal, this design required attention to detail.

A variety of textures are seen in the banksia and pincushion protea, the sleek tropics and the velvet-like sunflowers. This variety carried the eye through the design.

Tillandsia was nestled at the top of the design and played off the color of the silver dollar eucalyptus at the base. The layering of materials caused one to delve deep into each detail within the design.





The design that accented the table in the Master bedroom was inspired by Ed's wife, Cheryl! Her favorite flower, the tulip, was featured among yellow callas and white garden roses that were added for fragrance. The fern expanded the visual of the tightly grouped emphasis seen in the florals, sharing a unique way to bring focus to a design.



The upstairs sitting area was one of Ed's private areas. With yellow roses and sunflowers as the focal, craspedia's spherical blooms, atop slender stems, enhanced the center. Curly willow circled the overall design emphasizing the similarity in color of the pincushion protea.



Furnishings often contribute to design decisions, but in the determination of these placements, it was all about the flowers! The suite was very white and grey to mimic the view of the harbour that was seen as a serene painting just outside multiple windows in the gathering room. Woltmann's perspective was that florals be placed where TSFA would gather to catch up and network. These areas to connect were the most important for floral placements.

When designing for a specific decor, the setting usually dictates the color palette. "With this opportunity, the decor complemented Ed's favorite colors," shared Woltmann. "He likes shades of blue and green. The yellow rose has always been a TSFA featured flower thus this selection led me to adding more flowers in yellow and some orange to round out the palette. I incorporated his favorite colors and favorite flowers, to include blue iris, bells of Ireland and a selection of orchids."



In addition to the wall of windows that showcased the marina, this wall was another focal of the room. Attaching a floral accent or placing a broken arch at the windows was considered, but realization quickly came to the forefront that it would be quite a job to compete with the view. Instead, designs were added to this feature to include masculine appeal with the wood box and horns that extended the vertical line at the base. Monstera added importance with cymbidium orchids to enhance the color palette.



There has long been a saying, “What came first, the chicken or the egg?” In the case of floral design, the decision process might question, “What came first, the container selection or the flowers?” In Woltmann’s case, it was all about the flowers, where size, materials and texture dictated the vision of what the containers should be.

“Not having specific containers in mind led to calls with the procurement team, and so I found it best to load the car with all I thought might work, plus a little extra! When I received a call that none of my wishes were realized, I assured the procurement team that designs would be created with whatever was available!”

Being a small town florist for 45 years, without easy access to flowers and a preferred inventory, taught Woltmann to be creative and get the work done, and that is just what she did! She shared an experience that may certainly help others! “This was my process at PFDE that led to membership in AIFD. As I took the long walk down the corridor in Las Vegas in 2022, I told myself to treat the day like any other day in the flower shop. The phone starts ringing, and the orders come in, and I complete all that’s needed with what I have! I did just that in response to the PFDE five-design surprise package and was inducted into AIFD in 2023!”

Events were being held in the suite that would expand those viewing the floral designs far past Ed and his family. Woltmann shared that she knew her peers were going to view her work, so she felt it even more important to concentrate on areas that those gathering would occupy. As designs exquisitely developed and took their place, it was obvious that designing for her longtime friend and colleague was like designing for a longtime client, one who you know their likes, dislikes and even their quirks!

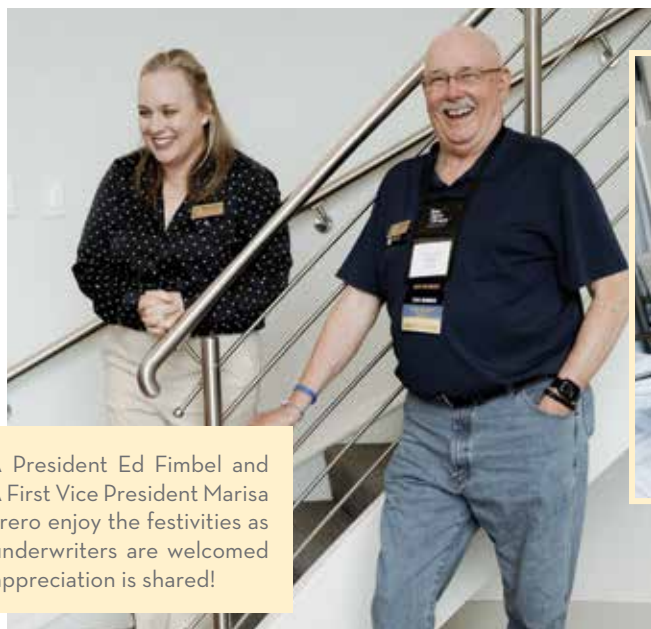
Bird of Paradise and Eremurus took center stage in this design for the bar – an area we knew most would visit! The extension of the willow added visual interest and mimicked the vertical placements. The weight at the base is strengthened in the round forms and strong accents of color.



Photography Credit | Shy Laurel Photography



Floral favorites are important when designing for a suite so blue iris were featured in a tall vertical placement. Curly willow provided rhythm to carry the eye through the design to the levels of florals and foliage placed to ensure each was appreciated.



TSFA President Ed Fimbel and TSFA First Vice President Marisa Guerrero enjoy the festivities as the underwriters are welcomed and appreciation is shared!



TSFA hosted an appreciation luncheon for the Texas Floral Education Underwriters during the Expo. Simply said, TSFA could not achieve all it does without the support of these companies and their representatives!



## TSFA EXPRESSES APPRECIATION TO TSFA PRESIDENT ED FIMBEL CFD TMFA



TSFA expresses appreciation during the Sunday luncheon for his years of dedicated service to the association.



AIFD President Laurie Lemek AIFD is named a "Star of Texas" during her attendance at the Texas Floral Expo.

Fimbel personally congratulates 2025 Hall of Fame Recipient Mark Knox AAF TMF. Having served as Education Co-chair for decades provided much in common with Knox, who was Education Chair when Texas Master Florist program was developed. Fimbel will return to serving TSFA as an Education Co-chair in 2025-2026.



The TSFA Annual Meeting is called to order on Saturday morning of the Expo to acknowledge success, appreciate TSFA members for jobs well done and to hear from those seeking office in order that the strength of TSFA leadership remain in place for years to come.



*Texas State Florists'*  
ASSOCIATION

**2025-2026**

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The 2025-2026 TSFA Board of Directors was elected during the Texas Floral Expo and announced during the Sunday afternoon luncheon. The Board takes leadership on Sept. 1.

Seated from left to right: Immediate Past President Ed Fimbel CFD TMFA, President Marisa Guerrero AIFD CFD TMF, First Vice President Amy Neugebauer AIFD CFD PFCI TMFA, Tom Wolfe, Jr.  
Standing from left to right : Grower Director Jimmy Klepac, Retail Directors Brandy Ferrer AIFD CFD TMF, Tricia Won AIFD EMC IMF and Dawson Clark TMF. Wholesale Director Jeff Floyd is not pictured.



# MEET TSFA PRESIDENT *Marisa Guerrero* AIFD CFD TMF

## PLEASE SHARE A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.

My husband, Adam, is the most wonderful father to our two boys. After a career with the railroad, he has spent the last year and a half dedicated to educating our children and supporting my aspirations in the floral industry. Our boys, Addison and Andrew, are excelling in school and enjoying their time on the soccer field. My mom, Sandy, co-owns Debbie's Bloomers in El Paso with me, and I could not have asked for a more loving mother to spend each day with.



Marisa and her husband Adam.

Marisa's sons, Addison and Andrew enjoy the outdoors! Playing soccer is a favorite! Camping is all about spending time with the family and brings great joy!



## WHAT BRINGS YOU THE MOST JOY?

The most joyful time I can have is spent looking at the stars when camping with my boys. While camping may not be my favorite pastime, the quiet depths of night and the vastness of the stars bring a stillness to even the most energetic of people. That tangible stillness brings with it an immense sense of joy.

## WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE COLOR AND WHY?

Joy is also the reason I love the color yellow. From the soft warmth of a candlelight rose to the dancing vibrance of an oncidium orchid, all the shades of yellow bring joy to people's hearts.

## WHAT'S BEEN YOUR FAVORITE TRIP TO DATE?

Many years ago, before we had kids and real responsibilities, Adam and I traveled to Cancun, where we enjoyed so much of the wildlife and the natural theme parks. We swam through the rivers and in the ocean, and we have stories and memories of this trip that we still laugh about. We even got to feed the fish at the reef.

## IS THERE A DREAM TRIP, AND IF SO, WHERE DOES IT TAKE YOU?

Thinking about all the trips that we've been on for the last question made me want to do them all again! Right now, we are dreaming of traveling to Scotland to visit Loch Ness (and try to find Nessie). The time hasn't been quite right, but we are hoping to make it happen soon.

## DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE FOOD?

Pizza is my absolute favorite food. Classic pepperoni is the best, but Hawaiian comes in a strong second. Dessert is my favorite food group, and crème brûlée wins out in that category.

## DO YOU PREFER TO COOK OR DINE OUT?

Given the choice, I would prefer to have someone cook for me. I enjoy baking far more than cooking, but a home-cooked meal on a Sunday evening is a cherished time.

## WHAT IS YOUR FIRST MEMORY OF FLOWERS?

Growing up in a flower shop meant that flowers were always around. My first real memory of the experience of flowers was sitting with my friend, Korri, outside the back door of the shop, stripping and wiring roses for Valentine's Day while getting fussed at by the ladies in the shop for giggling too loudly. We had too much fun and were nearly impossible to put up with!

## WHAT EVENT OR EXPERIENCE LED TO YOUR INTEREST IN THE FLORAL INDUSTRY?

My mom encouraged me to pursue AIFD accreditation early in my career. That experience solidified my desire to take this seriously, focus on learning all that I could, and then give back to others through education.

## HOW HAVE YOU BENEFITED FROM INDUSTRY EDUCATION?

Educational opportunities are everywhere you look in the floral industry. I started attending Teleflora unit programs soon after my mom purchased our shop in the late 1980's. Of course, I did more showing off the flowers than learning when I was little, but it showed me that you can always find someone willing to share their knowledge and talent with their industry peers. Marie Ackerman AIFD was a strong leader at the Teleflora Education Center, where I took a number of classes, from a test prep course to a floral



commentating class. Industry education has led me to build strong friendships and opened doors to opportunities I couldn't have dreamt of.



Marisa takes a moment for a picture with Lynn Lary McLean during the 60th anniversary of AIFD in Palm Springs. Marisa serves as AIFD Foundation Grant and Scholarship Co-chair and was the overall coordinator of AIFD Foundation events during the the 2025 AIFD Symposium.

Longtime friends, Marisa and Renee Tucci actually met at the Teleflora Education Center while taking classes years ago. Guerrero and Tucci both take significant leadership roles in 2025 with Marisa serving as TSFA President and Renee serving as president of AIFD.



### DESCRIBE YOUR ENTREPRENEURIAL AND EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES.

Though I've had wonderful opportunities to design for friends and colleagues at industry events, workshops and on stage, my only floral industry job has been at our flower shop. I've never needed to look beyond my own front doors for work that is challenging and meaningful.

### SHARE YOUR AFFILIATIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

In the past, I have served as a Teleflora Unit President and on the board of the West Texas New Mexico Florist Association. After being inducted in 2013 into the American Institute of Floral Designers and earning certification as a Certified Judge Evaluator, I worked my way through the board up to president of the South Central Regional Chapter of AIFD. For the last few years, I have enjoyed being a trustee for the AIFD Foundation, where I currently sit as the grant and scholarship co-chair. It's wonderful to be a member, but it's

so much more rewarding to give back to the organizations you are a part of.

### WHAT ROLE IN TSFA HAS BEST PREPARED YOU FOR THE OFFICE OF PRESIDENT?

It takes years to work into the role of TSFA President, with each position you fill on the board helping you understand the scope of what TSFA does. No one role is enough to give you the whole picture. While each of these roles is important, the most valuable knowledge I've gained has been through conversations with Past Presidents about their time in office and their views on the future of the association and the industry.

### WHAT ARE THE HIGHLIGHTS OF YOUR LIFE IN THE FLORAL INDUSTRY THUS FAR?

There are so many exciting things to reflect on from the last 20 years in the industry – from the first “big” wedding, to all the times someone has trusted me to take on a role I didn't think I had any business filling, to the first time I was featured in a magazine. My career is all highlights, thanks to the generous people around me who trust me to take on new responsibilities. The best part, though, is working every day with my mom. It's a blessing that not many people get to enjoy.

### WHERE DO YOU SEE THE INDUSTRY TODAY?

The floral industry is as strong as ever. We seem to be in a period of change, with longstanding businesses under new ownership and the consolidation of some of the major names, like wholesalers and farms. While shifts like these can pose challenges, I'm hopeful that these changes will continue to strengthen our ability to serve the end consumers in the most reliable and beautiful ways.

### WHERE DO YOU SEE THE INDUSTRY IN 10 YEARS?

I'm hopeful that the floral industry will continue to be loved and appreciated as it is right now, and that TSFA will continue to lead the way!







## 2025 TEXAS DESIGNER OF THE YEAR COMPETITION HIGHLIGHTS TEXAS TALENT DURING THE TEXAS FLORAL EXPO

1<sup>ST</sup>

Photography Credit | Shy Laurel Photography



**REBECCA SULLIVAN AIFD CFD TMF**

The Texas Designer of the Year Competition was a great success. Six designers from throughout the state of Texas competed for the title of Texas Designer of the Year. Each designer brought their absolute best as each shared their incredible talent during the Texas Floral Expo at South Shore Harbour Resort and Conference Center in League City.

The 2024 Texas Designer of the Year, Brandy Ferrer AIFD CFD TMF, chaired the competition with “The Secret Garden” as the 2025 theme. The theme provided unlimited possibilities!

The competition took place on Friday afternoon, surrounded by a gallery featuring the Texas Floral Education Underwriters, who were highlighting the absolute best in products and services. Two categories were held on that Friday, with each competitor having the same mechanics, flowers and foliages. The first category was to create a floral design. Each competitor was given a container and 30 minutes to complete the design. The second category was the Interpretive Design. Each competitor provided a prop, reflecting the theme, for this category. The same flowers and foliages were available, as well as 45 minutes to complete. The final category was revealed on Sunday morning with a Surprise Situation. Ferrer asked the competitors to create a floral crown, which they had 45 minutes to complete. Those who experienced the competition were inspired by the talent of these Texas designers!

Attendees were thrilled when Rebecca Sullivan AIFD CFD TMF from Robstown, Texas, won first place and was named the 2025 Texas Designer of the Year. She received the official silver Texas Cup, First Place Ribbon, \$1,000 cash prize and a \$1,000 scholarship to represent TSFA in the Sylvia Cup during the Society of American Florists Convention. She was also named a Star of Texas. Sullivan owns Fancy Pants Floral in Robstown, where she has a passion for designing and providing flowers for every occasion. She enjoys crafting arrangements for daily life, important milestones, weddings and events. For Sullivan, the most rewarding parts of her business are connecting with her customers, being an active part of her small-town community and creating the perfect floral design to fit each special moment.

2<sup>ND</sup>

**KARI GAUDET AIFD CFD**

Kari Gaudet AIFD CFD, from Beaumont, placed second. She owns The Flower Place in Beaumont. Gaudet received the second place ribbon and a \$300 cash prize. Congratulations Kari!

3<sup>RD</sup>

**ASHLYN CHILDRESS CFD TMF**

Ashlyn Childress CFD TMF, from Lufkin, placed third. She teaches high school floral design at Hudson High School; owns AC Floristry, a floral design studio; and freelances for Alene's Florist in Lufkin. Childress received the third place ribbon and \$200 cash prize. Congratulations Ashlyn!

## MEET TEXAS DESIGNER OF THE YEAR REBECCA SULLIVAN AIFD CFD TMF

### THE EARLY YEARS

#### *What is your first memory of flowers?*

My earliest memories of flowers include picking lantana blooms from nearby fields and using them for bridal bouquets for my Barbie dolls. They were colorful, the perfect size and always beautifully arranged.



#### *What event or experience led to your interest in floral design?*

My passion for flowers blossomed in my final year of high school, thanks to my involvement with the Future Farmers of America (FFA) Floriculture Judging Team. I carried this passion to Texas A&M University, where I majored in horticulture. Learning from Mr. Jim Johnson was a pivotal experience; he taught me to see and appreciate the true beauty and power of floral design.

#### *What experience stands out in your early years of teaching floral design?*

I loved teaching floral design and had the opportunity to offer courses that provided a fully immersive and intense experience for my students.

Over the years, I enjoyed sharing the therapeutic powers of floral design. Students were able to "decompress" and unwind when involved in design. In my first year of teaching floral design, I had the entire varsity football team in my class. These young men blossomed ... literally. WE had so much fun! The pride these boys had when they delivered their designs to their moms and girlfriends was so fulfilling! Even though I am retired from public education, I will always consider myself a teacher!

### EDUCATION

#### *Describe your educational background.*

I hold a Bachelor of Science in Horticulture from Texas A&M University and a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction from Walden University.

#### *What design education has been most valuable to you?*

My journey in floral design began with a strong foundation, thanks to courses I took in college with Mr. Jim Johnson and at the TSFA School of Floral Design. I've since expanded my skills by training with leading professionals, including Bill McKinley AIFD at the Benz School of Floral Design and Keith White AIFD at the Houston School of Floral Design. Each of these steps has been crucial in my pursuit of becoming



a professional florist and earning my Texas Master Florist (TMF), Certified Floral Designer (CFD) and accredited member of the American Institute of Floral Designers (AIFD) credentials.

***What is your present employment and what do you like best about it?***

I am the owner, head designer and sole employee of Fancy Pants Floral, which means I handle everything from design to delivery. The most rewarding part of my work is creating the ideal floral design for each special moment, especially for funerals. I've found that listening to my clients' stories and building personal connections with them is an essential part of my creative process.

***What experience led you from teaching floral design to where you are today?***

I opened my floral business while still teaching high school. My days were a whirlwind! I'd take orders during lunch and then rush home to design and deliver after the final bell. To grow my client base, I also taught "wine and design" classes at a local brewery. I loved seeing the creative progress of my returning students, and those experiences were key to building my business.

***What has been your favorite job in the floral industry?***

While my current business is a great success, teaching high school students was also incredibly rewarding. During my time as an educator, I helped more than 300 students earn their TSFA Level 1 floral certification.

**AFFILIATIONS**

***What experience or individual has provided your greatest industry support?***

I've been fortunate to receive incredible support from many sources, including TSFA, industry colleagues and my friends and students. My family, in particular, has been instrumental in my business's success. My husband handles emergency flower runs to the wholesaler, my son assists with installations, my daughter – who holds a TSFA High School Level 2 Certification – lends her expertise, and my sister serves as the business brain behind the operation.

***What are your association affiliations?***

I have been a member of TSFA for several years and became an accredited member of AIFD this year.

**CAREER PATH AND HIGHLIGHTS**

***In what ways did teaching floral design contribute to your overall journey?***

When I was teaching, I was also learning. It's where I gained a true understanding of the elements and principles of floral design, along with invaluable skills in organization and time

management. All this experience helped make the move into my own business a natural one. Because I was so involved in the community through school events, I already had a great client base ready to support me when I opened my studio.

***What has been the greatest highlight of your career?***

The year 2025 has been the most incredible year of my career. It kicked off with a bang; I won Texas Designer of the Year and was inducted into AIFD just two weeks later! It was also a fantastic experience to be a chair of TSFA's dinner and design presentation at the Agriculture Teachers Association of Texas Professional Development Conference, where I got to create alongside some of the best designers in the state. To top it all off, I had the chance to compete for the Society of American Florists Sylvia Cup in Arizona. I was awarded the AIFD S.H.I.N.E. scholarship and will be working and learning with Chris Norwood AAF AIFD CFD PFCI in September. What a year!!!

**INTEREST IN COMPETITION**

***What most interests you in competitive design?***

I love competing because it forces me to grow and get out of my comfort zone. It challenges me to create unique designs I wouldn't normally make, pushing me to be my best! I highly recommend everyone give competition a shot!

***What do you take away from these experiences?***

Some of my most cherished friendships were made behind the competitive design table. I've connected with amazing designers from across the state, country and the world. Beyond the awards, the boost in confidence that comes from competing is an irreplaceable benefit.

**WHAT'S NEXT?**

***Is there anything else you want to share?***

Even though I'm in the early stages of my professional floral design career, I've already gained a wealth of knowledge from my mentors, competitors and friends. I'm excited to continue growing and look forward to gaining new insights on floral techniques, business applications and travel, while cultivating and supporting new friendships within the industry.

The presentation of the silver Texas Cup is a time honored tradition and one that is treasured by each recipient.





## THOUGHT PROCESS AND INSPIRATION FOR THE TABLE DESIGN

The provided floral design embodies 2025 American Floral Trends "Rejuvenate" through its vibrant color palette and thoughtful structural elements. The color scheme is a dynamic mix of raspberry Pink Floyd roses, robin's egg blue hydrangea, cranberry carnations, coral gladiolus and perfect pink ranunculus. A unique touch of lemon yellow is added



via a garland crafted from fresh lemon slices. For balance and visual interest, a contrasting garland of gold wire orbs is placed opposite the lemon garland. The design's overall form and texture are enhanced by the use of techniques like sheltering, shadowing and pillowing, which create depth and a sense of fullness within the arrangement.



## THOUGHT PROCESS AND INSPIRATION FOR THE INTERPRETIVE DESIGN

"The Secret Garden" theme was a dream to work with. The composition was a blend of natural elements and intentional design techniques, resulting in a wild, unkempt aesthetic. Having read the book, I knew I wanted to create a prop that felt rustic. I deconstructed a grapevine wreath to build a custom armature, hiding small treasures like a tiny bird's nest, moss, rocks and even pools of water.

The color palette was a refreshing mix of serene and bold hues. The selections included light blue delphinium blossoms, light pink and raspberry miniature carnations and buttery yellow stock. These softer shades are contrasted with the rich, deep burgundy Safari Sunset, Pink Floyd rose and raspberry spray roses.

Several key techniques helped bring the theme to life. Groupings of Safari Sunset and delphinium were used to create a strong visual impact and establish a clear line. The deconstructed grapevine and carefully placed water tubes helped achieve the appearance of an overgrown garden. The flow of the design was reinforced by adding a variety of blossoms. Finally, a basing technique was applied to skillfully conceal all of the floral mechanics, ensuring a seamless and natural appearance.





## THOUGHT PROCESS AND INSPIRATION FOR THE SURPRISE SITUATION

The crown's base was a flat wire wrapped in corrugated cardboard and aspidistra. Green moss was used to hide the mechanics and provide a foundation for the flowers. Pink florals were added to the front to create a focal point, complemented by floating aluminum swirls that completed the princess-inspired design. These included light pink scabiosa, pastel pink spray roses and pink statice. For an ethereal and dynamic effect, spirals of silver aluminum wire were installed and adorned with scabiosa blossoms to create movement.



# Presidential Address

PRESENTED BY TOM COLLUM-WILLIAMS TMF



TSFA member Tom Collum-Williams TMF presents his President's remarks during the recent WTNM Convention.

The following speech was presented at the WestTexas New Mexico Florist Association (WTNM) convention in August. It is shared here as part of TSFA's ongoing effort to highlight the exceptional leadership, talent and business successes of members. Tom Collum-Williams TMF serves as WTNM President and is a longstanding member of TSFA. His theme echoes the valuable connections made through associations and throughout the floral industry.

Good evening, everyone,

As I stand before you today, I am filled with immense gratitude – for your dedication, your creativity and your passion for flowers and the people they touch. In unity, we find strength, and in working together, we discovered the power of community.

Today, we take a step forward, not away from unity, but deeper into its essence. Our new theme for the coming year, The Art of Connection, is not a departure but a natural evolution. It invites us to explore the beauty that blooms when we connect – truly connect – with each other, with our clients, with our cultures and with the natural world that inspires our work.

In our hands, flowers become more than arrangements. They become messages. They say, "I love you," "I'm sorry," "Welcome" and "Farewell." They are how we connect with emotions that words alone often can't express.

The Art of Connection is also about us – floral designers and growers, event planners and clients, wholesalers and educators – each playing a role in weaving this rich tapestry. Every bouquet tells a story, and behind that story is a collaboration of hearts and hands.



A highlight for the WTNM President is to receive their red coat! Tom is honored to follow in the footsteps of two of his most talented mentors! He will join Mark Knox AAF TMF and Chris Collum-Williams AIFD CFD TMF in not only receiving his red coat but also serving as WTNM President for a second term! Congratulations, Tom!

As we move into this next chapter, let us celebrate those connections. Let's learn from one another. Let's bridge gaps between generations, between cultures, between traditional and modern design. Let's build relationships that are rooted in respect, trust and shared purpose.

Nature remains our greatest teacher in this art. Flowers do not bloom alone; they grow in ecosystems, in harmony with their environment. So too should we continue to grow – together – in balance with our planet and with one another. In closing, I invite you to approach this year with open hands, open minds and open hearts. Let's not just arrange flowers. Let's arrange moments of meaning, bridges of understanding and lasting bonds that reflect the true beauty of our craft.

Thank you for being part of this journey. Here's to the Art of Connection.

# TSFA Calendar of Events

Designer Credit | Deborah De La Flor AIFD CFD PFCI



## SEPTEMBER

- 1 Labor Day  
New Board of Directors Welcomed
- 7 Grandparents' Day
- 10 Suicide Prevention Day
- 10 Patriot Day
- 22-24  
Rosh Hashanah
- 24 Texas Floral Showcase in Tyler
- 30-10/1  
Teacher Training – Level 1 and 2  
Certification in Lubbock

## OCTOBER

- 1-2 Yom Kippur
- 7 Level 1 and 2 Teacher Certification  
in Huntsville
- 13 Columbus Day  
Indigenous Peoples' Day
- 25 Holiday Design Class in Leander
- 31 Halloween

## NOVEMBER

- 1 All Saints Day
- 2 Board of Directors Meeting  
Daylight Savings Time Ends
- 4 Election Day
- 11 Veterans Day
- 13 World Kindness Day
- 27 Thanksgiving


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