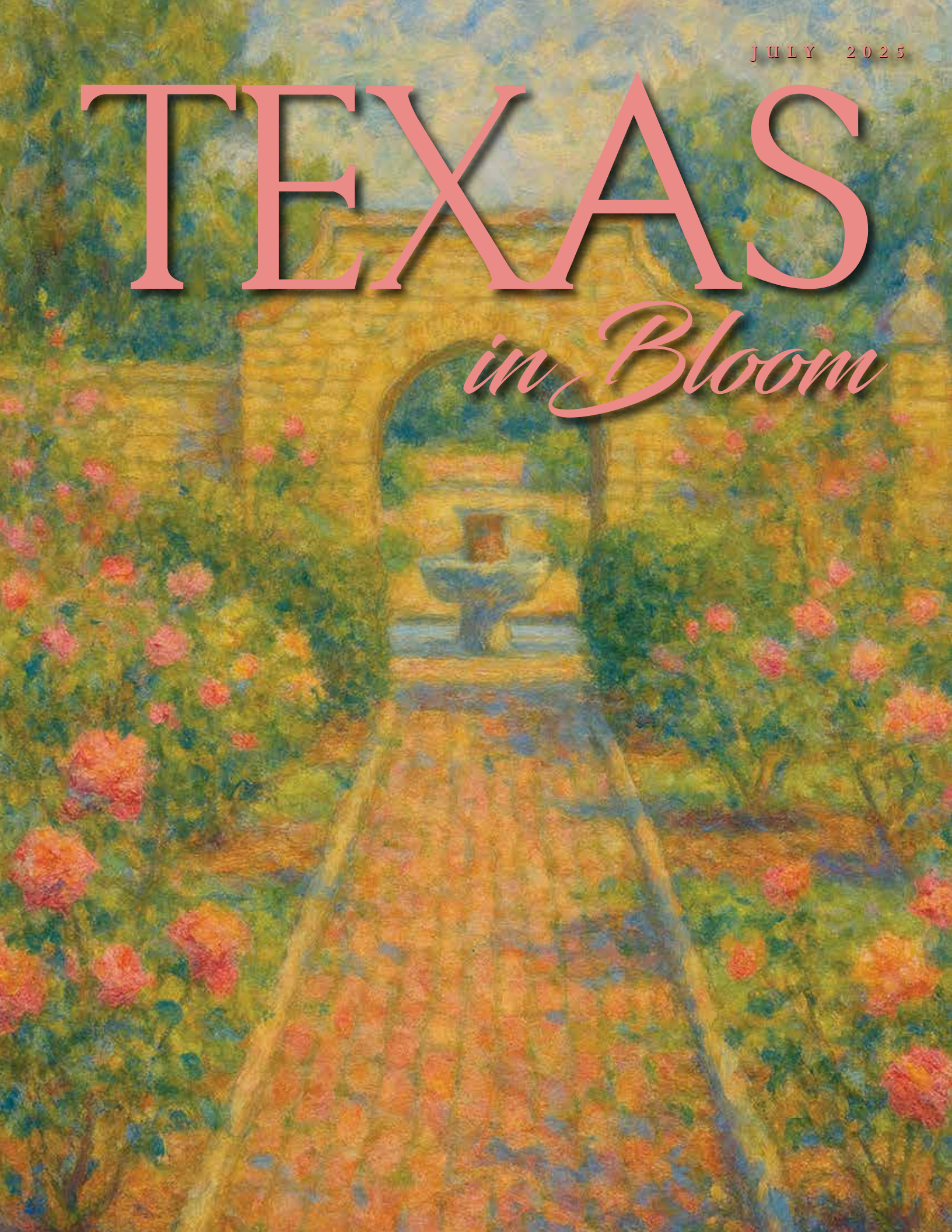


JULY 2025

# TEXAS

*in Bloom*





TEXAS STATE FLORISTS' ASSOCIATION PRESENTS A TEXAS FLORAL SHOWCASE  
WHERE, THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS, EVERYTHING'S COMING UP ROSES!



**JOIN DEBORAH DE LA FLOR  
IN THIS FLORAL WONDERLAND!**

September 24, 2025

Tyler Rose Garden Center  
420 South Rose Park Drive  
Tyler, Texas

To Learn More, Go Down the Rabbit Hole to  
Pages 4 and 5 in this issue of *TEXAS in Bloom*



TO REGISTER AND  
BOOK HOUSING  
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[tsfa.org/roses](https://tsfa.org/roses)

# Texas in Bloom

JULY 2025 | VOLUME LI | NUMBER 6

## FROM THE *President*



TSFA President  
Ed Fimbel  
CFD TMFA

WOW, WOW, WOW!!! That's the best way I can describe the EXPO! How many SECRETS did you hear that will help you better yourself in the floral industry?

There were numerous subjects taught during the hands-on classes, stage presentations and business sessions, which are all so very important to ensure success in whatever area of the industry you find yourself to be! The presenters and instructors are known for their world-class design skills and floral industry knowledge. A TEXAS size THANK YOU goes to Marisa Guerrero AIFD CFD TMF for chairing the event. Many hours, phone calls, emails, texts, meetings and conversations were held over this past 18 months. She and her team did an outstanding job! More about the EXPO ... SECRETS will be shared in future issues of *TEXAS in Bloom*.

An extravaganza like this cannot be presented without the help of our Texas Floral Education Underwriters. Their continued support in educating the floral industry is beyond compare. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Your support made an incredible difference!

To the many volunteers ... you are the backbone of this great association. Hours upon hours of your time is greatly appreciated. From procuring fresh products and hard goods to workroom personnel, design assistants, lobby décor, VIP flowers, presidential suite décor and décor for the breakfast, luncheons and dinner. THANK YOU!!!

EXPO ... SECRETS has come and gone and so we are on to what's next!

What's on the agenda now for TSFA? I encourage you to visit our new website at [tsfa.org](https://tsfa.org) for updates! Here is a little peek at all that awaits! There are SEVERAL classes scheduled at the TSFA School of Floral Design. Teacher training and certification for Level 1 and Level 2 will take place in Lubbock and Huntsville. Members of the TSFA Education Committee will present classes at the Agriculture Teachers Association of Texas (ATAT) Conference in Corpus Christi. TSFA will also host a dinner program for teachers the night before the conference, featuring Donald Yim AIFD CFD PFCI, who is sponsored by Bronze Level Texas Floral Education Underwriter Smithers-Oasis. A special announcement for all floral design teachers: TSFA will produce a newsletter once a month, with floral education-related information curated just for you. Watch your inbox for Elements, in early August.

Save the date to attend the Texas Floral Showcase in Tyler, Texas, at the beautiful Tyler Rose Garden on September 24! Deborah De La Flor AIFD CFD PFCI will present a design program and hold a hands-on class during this interactive event, with a format designed to elevate your rose garden experience! Visit [tsfa.org/roses](https://tsfa.org/roses) for the most current and complete information!

To make the most of your TSFA membership, I urge you to volunteer and take part in the programs TSFA brings to members. Participating in the workroom, being a design assistant, taking a hands-on class, you will receive personalized instruction by being involved. Contact the TSFA office for more information or indicate your interest at [tsfa.org/volunteer](https://tsfa.org/volunteer) and then just say YES!

Speaking of the office, we have several of the hardest-working, dedicated, confident employees any association could have. Thank you, Michelle Karns CAE, Carole Sayegh, Cassie Sanders AIFD CFD TMF and Alyssa Russell. I would be remiss if I did not mention Texas Floral Events Coordinator and Editor of TEXAS in Bloom Lynn Lary McLean AAF AIFD PFCI TMF, works tirelessly to put a spotlight on the industry's talent and the many partners who support our success. Thank you!

"Let's band together for TSFA!"  
Ed Fimbel CFD TMFA

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE TEXAS STATE FLORISTS' ASSOCIATION  
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### About the Cover:

In the style of Monet, the cover replicates the world-famous rose garden comprised of over 600 different rose varieties in Tyler, Texas. The garden was constructed in 1938 and registered on the National Register of Historic Places in 2019. The Texas State Florists' Association will host the Texas Floral Showcase at the Tyler Rose Garden Center with an array of events on Sept. 24.



# The Texas State Florists' Association is excited to bring a one-of-a-kind floral showcase to East Texas this fall.

Everything's coming up roses through the looking glass in a floral themed wonderland, featuring a skill-building floral design workshop, Alice in Wonderland-inspired tea, admission to the enchanting Tyler Rose Garden and Museum and a presentation by world-renowned floral designer Deborah De La Flor AIFD CFD PFCI. Join your floral friends at the Tyler Rose Garden Center on Wednesday, Sept. 24, for an experience you won't want to miss!

## REGISTRATION IS OPEN AND THERE ARE OPTIONS!

Each feature is designed to inspire and educate, offering a unique blend of professional education and community engagement!

Stroll the Tyler Rose Garden Center, Museum and Rose Garden, enjoy a delightful tea-time boxed supper, and experience a Product Gallery with either the Wonderland Pass for TSFA members or the Curious Guest Pass for non-members. TSFA members save on registration for all TSFA classes and events! Be sure to Escape Down the Rabbit Hole with a hands-on design workshop add-on!



TO REGISTER AND  
BOOK HOUSING  
Scan QR code or visit  
[tsfa.org/roses](https://tsfa.org/roses)



### 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**



### The Playing Cards Group Tickets

Special rates are available for student groups.

Email [tsfaadmin@tsfa.org](mailto:tsfaadmin@tsfa.org) for details.

TSFA has secured a special conference rate of \$116 (single/double) plus tax and applicable fees for those attending the Texas Floral Showcase. Rooms are in the TSFA room block Sept. 22-25, based on availability. To secure this rate, register before the Sept. 8 deadline or before the block sells out.

Hilton Garden Inn

220 East Grande Boulevard • Tyler, Texas 75703



## Wonderland at a Glance

- 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.** • Escape down the Rabbit Hole to study hands-on with Deborah De La Flor.
- 3:30 p.m.** • The Key opens the Garden Gate to Experience all that awaits!
- 3:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.** • **Experience one or all!**
- March Hare's Elegant Tea Party.
  - White Rabbit's Marketplace.
  - Floral Wonders and Whimsy Bar.
  - Madly Marvelous Tablescapes.
  - Curiouser and Curiouser Floral Artistry.
- 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.** • Everything's Coming Up Roses With Deborah De La Flor.
- The White Rabbit's Marketplace.
- 7:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.** • Twilight in the Rose Garden.
- 8:30 p.m.** • The Key closes the Garden Gate in exchange for Memories and Moments.



# Blooming with Brandy



## FLORAL FUTURES: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN SHOPS AND SCHOOLS GROW TOGETHER

Step into any flower shop and you'll find color, energy and someone who once fell in love with design. Now, picture a classroom full of teens feeling that same spark – just waiting for direction.

Across Texas, high school floral programs are shaping future professionals. These students aren't just learning how to place a rose – they're mastering the principles and elements of floral design, plant identification and even business basics, all while preparing for industry certifications and real career paths.

But, here's the truth – they need you, your experience, your encouragement, your shop!



*High school students stop by the shop to learn how to arrange a classic dozen roses!*

### WHY IT MATTERS

High school floral design classes aren't just an elective – they're a launchpad. Students gain real-world skills in design, plant care and customer service, with many earning TSFA certifications, validating their professionalism and readiness to work in the real world.

These programs are thriving – but they are also hungry for connection with the floral community. Students benefit from working with fresh product, professional-grade tools and guidance from industry professionals.

### BUILDING THE BRIDGE

The first step is simple: Reach out. Find the ag science teacher or Career and Technical Education Director at your local high school. Introduce yourself. Express your interest in supporting their floral design program.

From there, the possibilities bloom.

- **Give students a behind-the-scenes peek.** Invite them into your shop to identify flowers, strip stems or shadow you during event prep. These hands-on moments build confidence no textbook – or YouTube tutorial – can match.
- **Host a floral lab day.** Have students bring arrangements for feedback. Share tips on symmetry, mechanics and thinking like a real-world designer – budgets, timelines, and all.
- **Support the teachers.** Offer to co-teach a class or share a day in the life of a florist with students. A little mentorship goes a long way.



*Nominated by amazing teachers like Cati Heikkinen, the Honorary Lonestar Degree was bestowed on Brandy Ferrer AIFD CFD TMF. What a special moment!*

## FROM CLASSROOM TO CAREER: KAILEY'S STORY

At Simply Beautiful Floral Company, one of our brightest stars didn't come from a résumé – she came from a high school classroom.

Kailey Dixon first discovered floral design during her sophomore year at Gilmer High School under the guidance of teacher Cati Heikkinen. What began as an elective quickly blossomed into a passion. She not only completed Level 1 and 2 floral design classes, but also passed both TSFA Level 1 and Level 2 certifications and competed in local student competitions.

Heikkinen, a young and eager teacher determined to give her students more than just textbook knowledge, often spent her evenings by my side in the shop – soaking up every bit of real-world floral design she could. Her dedication to learning translated directly into how she taught, and her students flourished because of it.

Because of the relationship I had built with Heikkinen and her students, Dixon and I found each other. She had a portfolio. She had skills. But most of all, she had heart. When she saw an opening at my shop after graduation, she applied – and the rest is history.

Today, Dixon is a full-time designer at Simply Beautiful. She has apprenticed under me for two years, and now designs with a confidence and artistry that rivals professionals twice her age. Her growth is a living, blooming example of what's possible when the floral industry invests in its youth.

Dixon isn't just an employee – she's the future. Through her journey, it's clear: When florists connect with high school programs, everyone wins.

*Kailey began her career right out of high school and now shines as a full-time designer. Watching her grow has been such a joy! Together, we designed the Presidential Suite during the Texas Floral Forum in San Antonio last year.*

## A WIN-WIN RELATIONSHIP

Supporting your local floral program doesn't just help students – it helps you, too.

Florists who partner with schools often find a steady stream of motivated, certified students ready to contribute. These young designers already understand processing, pricing and client service – and they're eager to learn more.

It also boosts your brand. Customers notice when you invest in youth and education. Your shop becomes known not just for gorgeous flowers, but for leadership, mentorship and heart.

Most importantly, it renews your own passion. There's something invigorating about watching a student light up when they get their first arrangement just right. Their curiosity reminds you why you fell in love with this work in the first place.

## START TODAY

You don't need a big budget or fancy setup to make an impact. All it takes is a phone call, an open door and a bit of heart.

Let's grow the future together. Let's build a bridge between your flower shop and that high school classroom down the road. Let's make sure the art, the business and the joy of floristry continue to thrive in Texas.

The next great floral designer might be sitting in class right now – just waiting for someone like you to see their potential!







## Remembering Judy Rutledge TMFA

Judy Rutledge TMFA served the Texas State Florists' Association as a TSFA Education Chair and, in 2008, as TSFA President. During her service, high school floral certification was established. She loved her TSFA experiences and excelled in leadership. TSFA awarded Rutledge the TSFA Lifetime Achievement Award in 2009. She passed away on May 14, 2025, after a long illness. TSFA members, who worked with her on association projects over the years share their memories of a thoughtful and inspiring leader.

"What I remember most fondly about Judy Rutledge was a petite lady with red hair who drove a bright red Honda CRV. She was a kind, fun-loving person who gave of her time generously to the floral industry. As a member of the Allied Florists' of Houston, I had some contact with her, but most of our working duties came from our membership in the Texas State Florists' Association. As a member of the Education Committee, we worked together with several TSFA members to see the PCF project continue to grow into a state and nationally recognized program. She led the way to what is known today as Level 1 and Level 2 High School Floral Certification. I continue to serve on the Education Committee to help the new and upcoming florists be better equipped to operate a successful floral business. It was an honor to call Judy Rutledge 'my friend.'

— Texas State Florists' Association  
President Ed Fimbel CFD TMFA

— From "My Teleflora" article in 2009  
Judy Rutledge TMFA and Teleflora  
Chairman Tom Butler AAF

"How do you keep a successful retail florist business going for 35 years? 'Keep learning'", says Judy Rutledge of Loki Florist in Houston. I had the pleasure of visiting with Judy this summer during the Texas State Florists' Association convention, where she was honored with the association's Outstanding Lifetime Achievement Award. Like many successful florists, Judy is one who also gives back generously to the floral industry. For many years she has sat on the association's education committee — in a state that has become famous for its floral design certification program, with comprehensive classes at all different levels of florist expertise. 'At Texas State we emphasize' says Judy: 'how to keep your business profitable. You can make the prettiest arrangement in the world, but if you lose money at it, you'll end up closing your doors.'"

"What stood out the most to me about Judy is not even 'TSFA related' but worth a mention She wore the most stylish clothes and was always the sharpest dressed person in the room. The "funny" that I will always remember was that she called herself a mole. The reason was that her flower shop was in downtown Houston in the tunnel system at 1600 Smith Tower. Some days she would go to work in the dark and come home in the dark not knowing whether the sun had shown that day or what the weather had been."

— Jimmy Klepac





"Judy is one of the main reasons we have our high school program. It was her determined spirit and unfailing resolve that helped forge uncharted territory and create a floral program for high school students, which was unheard of at the time. She mentored so many coming up behind her, sharing her ferocity and passion for education. It was my honor and pleasure to catch just a glimpse of who she was and to be inspired by her as she helped grow a program that she also began."

— Cheryl Vaughan CFD PFCI TMF

"I recall the constants in her that led to accomplishments. Her passion for education, her leadership, that beautiful smile, kindness, gorgeous deep red hair and immaculate appearance even when we were working in the trenches."

— Debbie Woltmann AIFD CFD TMFA

I first met Judy Rutledge at the TSFA Convention in Arlington. She administered my Texas Master Florist (TMF) exam that weekend and I was pretty nervous. She always greeted me with her smile and reassured me that I would be just fine. She would pass by my design table and she whispered, "You've Got This"! She was instrumental in moving forward all of TSFA's educational goals. When I was president in 2013, we established the "Judy Rutledge Education Scholarship" in her honor. It was an honor and privilege to work with her and I will always remember her kindness and her smile.

— Bruce Easley AAF AIFD CFD TMFA

## TSFA School of Floral Design offers an **ABUNDANCE OF EDUCATION** throughout the summer at TSFA Headquarters

### LEVEL 1 AND 2 INDUSTRY TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION

**AUGUST 6-7, 2025**

TSFA's Level 1 and 2 Floral Certification classes for industry professionals provide floral enthusiasts, students and professionals with the skills and experience needed to succeed in the floral industry. By attending each one-day, hands-on design workshop, you will gain valuable insight into the floral industry and obtain the skills needed to achieve certification. Designed with the needs of floral enthusiasts in mind, these workshops offer 9 CEU credits each, which may be applied toward your professional development. TSFA Knowledge-based Floral Certification is required to earn Level 1 certification. The Level 2 class requires approval of your portfolio, submitted during the registration process, and cannot be taken until you have earned Level 1 certification.

### FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENTS

**AUGUST 8-10, 2025**

Taught by expert faculty with years of experience in the floral industry, these comprehensive courses will increase your knowledge, hone your skills and help you advance your career. Select from one or more of the following classes:

Basic Floral Design and Care and Handling on Friday, August 8

Sympathy Design on Saturday, August 9

Floral Management on Saturday, August 9

Wedding Design on Sunday, August 10

**AUGUST 22 - 25, 2025**

### TEXAS MASTER FLORIST® (TMF) CERTIFICATION

It is recommended that applicants have three to five years of floral experience. After completion of the TMF Application, a TSFA Education Committee member will administer the TMF qualifying exam, which is given to ensure your goal of becoming a successful florist.



**TO LEARN MORE**

**Scan the QR code**

**or visit [tsfa.org/school](https://tsfa.org/school)**



It is in her honor that the TSFA Education Committee established the TSFA Education Committee Scholarship honoring Judy Rutledge. Any floral industry person may apply for the scholarship to attend the Texas State Florists' Association Texas Master Florist Program they meet providing he/she the criteria established by the Texas Master Florist Program. Scholarship recipients must utilize the scholarship within two years of the award. There are no other restrictions.

## Meet Ellie Grande AIFD CFD EMC

TSFA member Ellie Grande AIFD CFD EMC is the owner of GranDesigns in Tomball, Texas. Grande brings a wealth of experience to all she does! TSFA shares her story in this Member Spotlight!

### What is your first memory of flowers?

The beauty of nature and flowers has always intrigued me. My floral design journey began with cherished memories of nature walks in the cotton fields and orange groves of South Texas.

### What experience led to your interest in the floral industry?

I owned an antique shop, which was a perfect setting for my permanent botanical and dried floral centerpieces. The shop soon thrived with increased sales. Inspired by the demand of floral decorations, my career was soon secured with research found in floral books, attending floral workshops and registering for floral design classes at a nearby college.

### What experiences stand out in your early years in the floral industry?

Many opportunities were provided for me to explore my artistic talents and connect with other creative individuals. My clients' emotional responses and me finding fulfillment in satisfying the clients' needs are what motivated me to seek a formal floral education.



### What does your family bring to these experiences?

My husband, Bob; two children, Jackie and Steve; and five grandchildren, Richie, Alexandra, James, Wesley and Zachery, all support one another and me in every aspect. I am proud of my family and their career choices. Bob is a Senior Research Scientist in the water technology industry. Jackie is a Chief Marketing Officer for an oil and gas company. Steve is the Director of Communication for a professional baseball team. The grandchildren are full of energy and bring joy to our lives!



Back row from left to right: Daughter-in-law Ginny Grande, husband Bob Grande, Ellie, grandson Richie Wilkerson, daughter Jackie Herrera and son Steve Grande.  
Front row from left to right: Grandchildren Wesley and James Grande and Alexandra Wilkerson.

### How do you spend your time outside of the industry?

Reading expands my learning as well as the enjoyment I find in floral workshops. The art of making paper and woodworking are of significant interest. I especially enjoy nature walks and traveling. Some call me a history buff.

### What brings you the most joy?

It's quite simple ... I enjoy spending time with my family and friends, traveling, early morning and sunset walks, and spending time at the beach!

### Relaxation is important! How do you relax?

The best practices for relaxation are exercise and connecting with nature. I have found that taking long walks and using deep breathing techniques encourage a peaceful state of mind.



### What's your favorite color and why?

This one is easy! Yellow is my favorite color in that it is one of joy, happiness and optimism. I like to think that these characteristics are exhibited both in my personal life and in my career.



### What's been your favorite trip to date?

Manchester, England, for the 2023 Interflora World Cup certainly comes to mind. I attended the Gala Design Finale and dinner event where Germany's Nicolaus Peters was awarded champion. This event is the world's largest floristry competition and brings together the most talented floral artists from around the globe. I experienced the passion, the highest level of creativity and the most beautiful blooms. A highlight was to assist 2019 World Cup Champion Bart Hassam from Australia, who was presenting. I also took time to attend a workshop with Frédéric Dupré, a Master florist and international teacher from France.

### Is there a "dream trip" in your future and, if so, where does it take you?

The Republic of Singapore was my dream trip in 2024! I was invited to present a stage program at the Singapore Garden Festival and asked to be a floral design judge for the students' competition. The Singapore National Parks Board is the official organizer that brings award winning international and local designers, gardeners and flowers shows together. I attended a workshop with 2023 World Cup Champion Nicolaus Peters and added extra days to tour Singapore at a slower pace. I had the pleasure of visiting the iconic skyline, the Gardens by the Bay and the Marina Bay Sands. Singapore is multicultural and

diverse, influenced by Malay, Chinese, Indian and European traditions. I marveled at the famous European High Tea with delicious tea cakes and delicacies. I joined other master designers to attend a formal dinner hosted by Harijanto Setiawan, an International Master Florist from Singapore. Setiawan will present at the 2025 AIFD Symposium. Overall, Singapore is a wondrous place with the most gracious people.



### Do you have a favorite food?

I am a simple person when it comes to food. Serve me a crispy green salad and a bowl of soup of any kind and I am happy!

### Do you prefer to cook or dine out?

Cooking at home with family is the best! I enjoy a small herb garden, home grown tomatoes, peppers, radish, figs and leafy lettuce. I try to save dining out for special occasions and when traveling.

### What's your favorite movie of all time?

I would have to say *Pride and Prejudice*, released in 2005, with the most beautiful Keira Knightley and Matthew Macfadyen. A Jane Austen novel, *Pride and Prejudice* is a historical and romantic drama and timeless masterwork.

### What is your favorite flower?

My absolute favorite flower is the yellow rose, especially the David Austin Golden Celebration.

### What is your favorite design style?

The European styles have influenced endless possibilities to create artistic designs to include parallel, vegetative, formal linear, graphic, new convention and the famous European hand tied. The European design style produces a balance of sophistication and functionality, and it features natural materials and clean lines with dynamic and evolving features that celebrate tradition and beauty.

### What are your thoughts on design?

Floral Design is an Art Form. It is about creating an aesthetically pleasing design. Creativity and ability to deliver a masterpiece

are fueled by mastering the elements and principles of floral design. Texas State Florists' Association offers many opportunities for professionals, at all levels, to take classes. It is essential to develop a clear understanding of the fundamentals of design to elevate your design skills in this fast-paced environment.

**If you could design for anyone in the world, who would it be and what would you create?**

Designing for Prince William, currently the Prince of Wales, and Kate Middleton, currently Princess of Wales, would be my dream. They are admired by millions.

The Prince and Princess of Wales are loved for undertaking royal duties and commitments in support of the British Monarch. Time magazine listed Princess Kate Middleton as one of the most influential people in the world.

I would design a candlelight evening to perfection at Buckingham Palace Ballroom in the Windsor Castle.

The design style would capture a timeless elegance with long, flowing centerpieces for the center of each table.

The color palette would feature soft, muted tones, avoiding anything bright. Flower selections would be reflective of the finest gardens, including roses, hydrangea, lisianthus and delicate lilies-of-the-valley to name a few. Natural elements such as ivy and branches would complete.

I envision tables that are 175 feet long taking three days to detail with the finest of the royal china, crystal and flatware. A lush garden would fill the center.

**How do flowers make a difference in people's lives?**

Flowers can improve people's well-being. They are found to reduce stress, boost positive mood and create a pleasant environment. Flowers are a thing of beauty that enhance feelings of joy and happiness. Most importantly, flowers are often used to express our deepest emotions. They signify love, new beginnings and personal expression. Finally, flowers can help connect us with nature. So, take that long walk and immerse yourself in the wondrous outdoors.

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

My most gratifying job is being a floral designer. It is important to understand that floral designers convey a powerful message with flowers. Arranging flowers is incredibly special and personal, awakening the inner self. I constantly expand my floral repertoire by attending association conventions, including Texas State Florists' Association events that offer workshops, business sessions and presentations annually.

**What do you like best about your present employment?**

With 30 years' experience and today as owner and chief

creative designer of GranDesigns in Tomball, Texas, I am free to continue my journey as an international presenter and floral instructor.

A powerful motivator is having the opportunity to plan and execute a project from start to the finish. Collaborations with presidential dignitaries, celebrities and entertainers have created memorable experiences. Communicating with individuals oftentimes leads to lifelong bonds of mutual respect and commitment.

**What accreditations confirm a strong sense of accomplishment?**

Achieving the designation from the American Institute of Floral Designers (AIFD) in 2020 was the highlight of my career. This organization is dedicated to recognizing the highest standards of professional floral design. Earning the AIFD designation levels your career to gain greater access to opportunities in the floral industry. I am proud and honored to be an AIFD member.



European Master Certification Graduation Day 2022  
From left to right: Belgium Official, EMC Founder Tomas Bruyne,  
Ellie Grande AIFD CFD EMC and Christy Lopez AIFD CFD EMC

In 2021, I embarked on an international floral journey to expand my creativity and broaden my floral community by entering the European Master Certification (EMC) program. EMC is an educational platform that exposes designers to new design styles, shapes, color combinations and techniques. EMC graduates are worldwide, recognized as floral leaders in the international floral industry. I completed practicum in the U.S. and traveled to Belgium for the advanced courses that are offered by invitation only. I successfully passed the advanced examinations and received the EMC certification issued by the Belgium Chamber of Commerce and the Royal Belgium Florist Association.

The Texas State Florists' Association became my connection to grow and develop into a professional floral expert. TSFA invests in the future of its members by providing access to training, classes and workshops. TSFA inspires members to



thrive and flourish at the Texas Floral Expo and other events. TSFA gathers top industry leaders, suppliers and educators who exhibit current trends in product development, business and design. I attribute my success to the TSFA organization for providing multiple opportunities to network within the floral industry. I offer my sincerest gratitude to TSFA for their commitment to members and investing in their growth toward becoming a professional floral expert.

### **What are your goals?**

I aspire to enhance my existing floral design approaches as a presenter and instructor and to acquire new skills, including improving communication and technical skills, earning advanced industry certifications and increasing digital proficiency.

### **What else would you like the world to know?**

A learned lesson in life is to believe in yourself, have confidence in your own abilities and reach for the stars. Flood your mind with positive thoughts and focus on your goals. There will be setbacks along the way. Stay true to yourself. Surround yourself with family and friends that provide encouragement and support. This is where my journey begins and ends ... a loving family and trustworthy friends who believe in me.



AIFD Main Stage Presentation during 2022 AIFD Symposium  
Surrounding J. Keith White AIFD are Ellie Grande AIFD CFD EMC,  
Kari Gaudet AIFD, Karen Baudat Goza AIFD, Amy Ferguson AIFD  
and Jiseon Yum AIFD

### **Overall Education**

- North Harris Community College – Business Administration.
- Sam Houston University – Accounting.
- University of Houston – Accounting.
- Manpower Business College Computers and Data Processing.

### **Advanced Design Education**

- Houston School of Flowers.
- Floriology Institute.
- Floral Design Institute.
- Hitomi Creative Edge Masterclass.
- Benz School of Floral Design A&M University.

### **Professional Designations**

- American Institute of Floral Designers (AIFD).
- Certified Floral Designer (CFD).
- European Master Designer Certification (EMC) issued by the Belgium Government and the Royal Belgium Floral Association.

### **Association Affiliations**

- Texas State Florists' Association (TSFA).
- American Institute of Floral Designers (AIFD).
- Florida State Florists' Association (FSFA).

### **Association Achievements and Leadership**

- American Institute of Floral Designers (AIFD).
- 2024 Singapore Garden Festival-Floral Designer Demonstrator.
- 2024 Singapore Garden Festival-Floral Art Judge.
- First Place Foraged and Found Contest by Northwest AIFD 2025.
- First Place Bridal Bouquet by Florida State Florists' Association (FSFA) 2023.
- Top Placed Winner Frankie Shelton Cup 2025.
- Top 20 in the 2023 FSFA Design Challenge International.
- Designer for 10 years for the Pennsylvania Horticulture Society at the PHS Philadelphia Flower Show.
- AIFD Floral Assistant – American Floral Trends in 2022 and 2024.
- Assisted 2019 and 2023 World Cup Champion Bart Hassam in the U.S. and the United Kingdom.
- 2021-2025 AIFD South Central Director – SCAIFD Social Media Committee Member 2021-2024.
- Garden Club of America – Presenter 2008-present in Houston.
- European Master Workshop – Presenter 2022-2023 in Austin.



# Elements.

*Texas State Florists'*  
ASSOCIATION

## NEW NEWSLETTER COMING TO TEACHERS' INBOXES SOON – ELEMENTS.

With a new school year on the horizon, TSFA is pleased to announce the launch of a new, monthly electronic newsletter for floral design teachers. Elements. will introduce innovative floral design resources, keep you up to date on certification timelines and answer the most frequently asked questions to help teachers one step ahead in the classroom. Watch for the first edition in early August!

## DONALD YIM AIFD PFCI HEADLINES TSFA DINNER AND DESIGN PRESENTATION



TSFA is excited to participate in the Agriculture Teachers Association of Texas (ATAT) Professional Development Conference again this year. Held in Corpus Christi on July 21-25, this event brings together floral design and other agriculture teachers from across the state for continuing education and connection.

TSFA will again host a dinner and floral design presentation for conference attendees who have an interest in floristry. This year, Donald Yim AIFD CFD PFCI will be the featured presenter, with a program entitled "Cherry on Top." There is no better speaker to convey the joy experienced when passion and career align!

With the generous support of Bronze Level Floral Education Underwriter Smithers-Oasis, who is sponsoring Yim's presentation, TSFA looks forward to an enjoyable evening of floral education and fun with nearly 100 floral design teachers! Yim's warm, humorous presentation style is sure to uplift and energize everyone present.

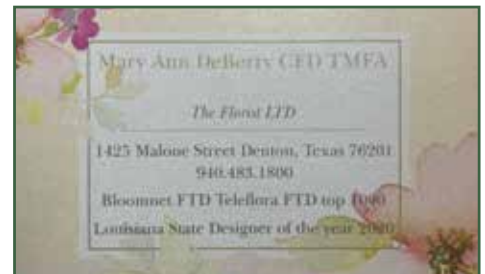
Members of the TSFA Education Committee and TSFA Projects and Partnerships Specialist Cassie Sanders AIFD CFD TMF will present several floral design workshops and classes at this conference. Silver Level Texas Floral Education Underwriter Southern Floral Company has kindly offered their space and services to assist TSFA in preparation for this event. TSFA is grateful for the continued support of these dedicated committee members, Smithers Oasis and Southern Floral Company and looks forward to seeing teachers in Corpus!



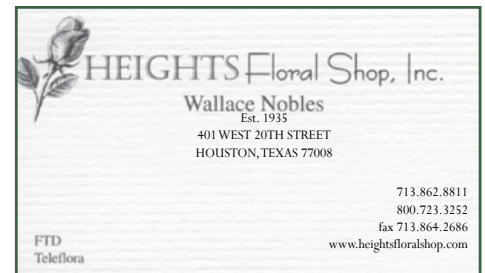
MIAMI



AUSTIN



DENTON



HOUSTON



RICHARDSON



# TSFA Calendar of Events

Designer Credit | Ellie Grande AIFD CFD EMC



## JULY

- 4 Independence Day
- 20-25 TSFA Presents at ATAT Conference
- 27 Take Your Houseplants for a Walk Day
- 30 International Day of Friendship

## AUGUST

- 3 National Friendship Day
- 6-7 Industry Training – Level 1 and 2 Certification in Leander
- 8-9 Fundamental Elements and Principles in Leander
- 22-25 Texas Master Florist Certification Classes in Leander
- 27 National Just Because Day

## 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

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 8 Heights Floral Shop | 713.862.8811 | 800.723.3252 | heightsfloralshop.com  
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 8 Rio Roses | 866.746.7673 | rioroses.com  
 8 The Florist, LTD | 940.483.1800 | thefloristltd.net  
 Back Cover Texas Floral Education Underwriters



## Level 1 and 2 Teacher Training and Certification in 2 Locations



### September 30 - October 1

Region 17 Education Service Center  
 111 W. Loop 289  
 Lubbock, Texas 79416

### October 7-8

Region 6 Education Service Center  
 3332 Montgomery Road  
 Huntsville, Texas 77340

The Level 1 and 2 Texas Teacher Floral Certification classes are designed to equip floral design teachers with the skills and experience needed to guide students through the Texas State Florists' Association High School Student Certification process. By attending each one-day, hands-on design workshop, you will gain valuable insight into the certification process and the skills students need to achieve certification. Designed with the needs of ag teachers in mind, these workshops offer 9 CEU credits each, which may be applied toward your professional development.

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DALLAS

**INTRODUCING  
 TSFA'S NEW BLOG!**

Read More [tsfa.org/blog](http://tsfa.org/blog)





*Making Texas Floral Education Possible*

## PLATINUM



## GOLD



## SILVER



## BRONZE



please visit [tsfa.org](http://tsfa.org) for the most up-to-date list of underwriters and their links