

SEPTEMBER 2025

TEXAS

in Bloom



SECRETS

ABOUT THE COVER

Former Texas Designer of the Year Fabian Salcedo shares his design process.

- Since I was using the Smithers-Oasis gold mesh on one of the tables, I wanted to include it somewhere else to unify the space.
- The wire mesh was folded like an accordion. It kind of reminds me of a slinky and the way you see it when it is unfurled. I liked curving it in this way, because it visually softens the inherent square edges.
- After attaching the wire mesh to the top of the Accent Decor Harlow stand, the mesh essentially becomes decorative chicken wire.
- The stems are simply woven in and through the levels of the accordion.
- This weaving of stems also ends up strengthening the stability of the design.
- A little secret hack used to keep things exactly where I wanted them was to impale the end of the anthurium stems onto the mesh to lock the flower in place and keep the blooms from spinning.
- The hand was added to give the illusion that it was holding the entire design up.
- I wanted to create as much visual volume as I could without using a great deal of product or covering up those speaking at the podium.

The floral decor for the Stars of Texas event is featured in this issue of TEXAS in Bloom on pages 14 and 15.



Texas in Bloom

OCTOBER 2025 | VOLUME LI | NUMBER 9

FROM THE *President*



TSFA President
Marisa Guerrero
AIFD CFD TMF

One of the greatest strengths of the Texas State Florists' Association is our collective commitment to education. Each year, TSFA tests tens of thousands of Texas high school students on their knowledge of flowers and floral design. This is no small undertaking. It requires an extraordinary amount of coordination, dedication and passion, and it would not be possible without the highly committed TSFA members who volunteer their time and talent to travel across the state, making this program a success. To each of you who serves in this way: thank you. Your efforts are shaping the next generation of floral professionals and elevating our industry as a whole.

To succeed with this program, we must also invest in the educators who guide these students every day. This fall, TSFA is proud to present Level 1 and Level 2 Floral Certification classes to Texas teachers at the Region 17 Education Service Center in Lubbock and the Region 6 Education Service Center in Huntsville. These

classes are designed to provide floral design teachers with the knowledge, skills and confidence to prepare their students for TSFA certification. By supporting teachers, TSFA multiplies the impact of its efforts and ensures students across Texas are receiving the very best instruction.

Recently, the TSFA Education Committee Cochairs met to thoughtfully plan and refine programs that serve every level of our industry. From high school students to floral teachers to designers in retail flower shops, our goal is simple: to educate designers so they can perform at their very best. These educational opportunities are one of the many benefits of TSFA membership, and while these particular sessions are geared toward agriculture teachers, they are open to anyone in the floral industry who wishes to strengthen their skills.

In addition to knowledge-based, Level 1 and Level 2 certifications, TSFA is also proud to offer the Texas Master Florist (TMF) certification. It is one of the most comprehensive educational programs in the floral industry. The TMF program was developed to benefit all floral professionals, from sales staff to designers to shop owners, and it provides a respected standard of professional excellence recognized throughout our industry.

September marked the start of the new TSFA Board of Directors' term. I am thrilled to welcome this talented group of leaders, who are already eager to engage with members and work alongside you in the year ahead. Together, with your input and participation, we look forward to continuing TSFA's tradition of excellence while also embracing new opportunities for growth and innovation.

As we move into October, I know many of you are already preparing for the upcoming holiday season. This is one of the busiest and most rewarding times of the year in many shops. My hope is that as you begin planning and designing for the months ahead, you feel the strength of this community behind you. TSFA is here to support you, to celebrate your successes and to provide the resources you need to thrive during the holidays and beyond.

With gratitude,
Marisa Guerrero AIFD, CFD, TMF

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EDUCATION UNDERWRITER
CELEBRATES 80 YEARS

EXTRAORDINARY TECHNIQUES
PROVIDE UNLIMITED
POSSIBILITIES

CREATING EVENT FLORALS THAT
CELEBRATE LIFE'S STORIES

TSFA MEMBER SPOTLIGHT
ASHLYN CHILDRESS, CFD, TMF

TEXAS FLORAL EXPO LOBBY DECOR EXPANDS OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN



"I've learned, while studying and working with Ace, that groupings are your best friend! Groupings work well in all types of designs, large or small, because the style allows our eyes to rest when following line and color. Groupings add tremendous impact in a design."

— Erica Morgan, CFD

Floral designer extraordinaire Richard “Ace” Berry AIFD, CFD, TMF, was invited to design the lobby decor for the Texas Floral Expo, and this invitation opened an opportunity to mentor and expand possibilities for a young designer.

“It was my first time ever attending a TSFA event, and so it was extra exciting being a part of the behind-the-scenes activities!” said Erica Morgan, CFD. “Prior to the event, Ace and I had discussed color palette, design style and flower selections that we thought would work best. Ace made the sketches for the overall concept and placement, and we were ready. Being on-site, in the moment and designing such grand arrangements was so spectacular for me because I love to learn mechanics and how designs are built – especially ones with GIANT driftwood!”

The approach to mentoring was simple. Berry loves to share the techniques he has practiced over the years and genuinely wants to help others learn. These lessons allow growth in others. Morgan developed even more trust in the process as a designer and a better understanding of the importance of teamwork!



The designs to the right and left of the Crystal Ballroom entrance were mirrored images. One might ask why this is important. A design with directional elements or asymmetrical images needs to be mirrored to ensure the image appears correctly once transferred. Morgan shared a pro tip: “Design the two designs at the same time. Move from one to another, making your placements of each flower type at the same time. For example, if you decide to start with snapdragons, make your placements in the first design, then mirror your placements in the other design. Then, move on to the next flower type, and so forth.”

Foliage is apparent at the base of the design rather than throughout. Draping foliage, in this way, helps draw one's eye through the design while creating a softer edge.



Photography Credit | Shy Laurel Photography

The less expensive China mum offers a different texture to support the sleek appearance of the anthurium. These placements expand rhythm for one's eye to travel from the anthurium through the overall design to the Playa Blanca roses.



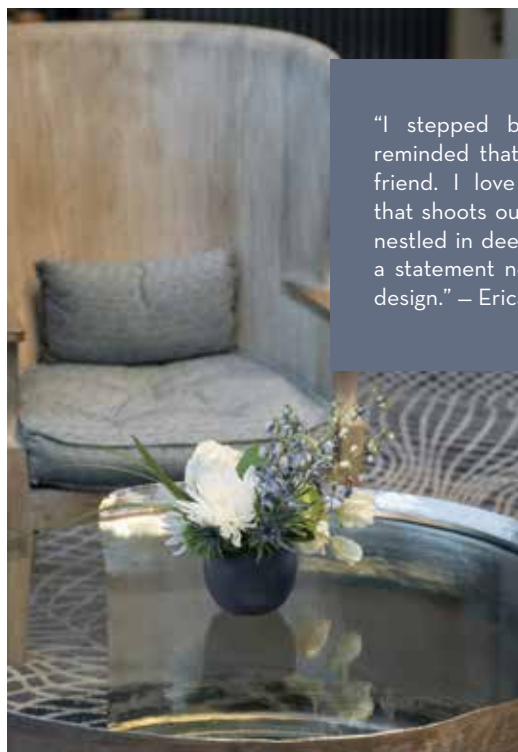
"It has often been said that a truly good designer can adapt to change – it definitely happens, and one must be open to it," Morgan said. "For instance, Ace and I were planning on using agapanthus, but switched to allium due to availability. Knowing which flowers are best suited is key, because it helps avoid compromising an overall look and oftentimes ends up elevating a design."

A selection of gold containers added to the overall statement. Driftwood provided contrast and added interest. There's no doubt that mechanics to secure a design element like driftwood can be challenging, unless you are a pro and understand mechanics and physical balance.

"The driftwood was all Ace!" said Morgan. "We have several different types at Ace's flower shop in Fulshear, but he also sought certain ones specifically for the TSFA event." The driftwood was featured in the



Photography Credit | Shy Laurel Photography



"I stepped back to view and was reminded that groupings are our best friend. I love the hybrid delphinium that shoots out on one side with roses nestled in deep. Grouping florals make a statement no matter the size of the design." — Erica Morgan, CFD

Crystal Ballroom center design. Placing it first and driving the selection down into the wet foam helped secure the wood in place. It was also important to decide which one to place horizontally and which would stand vertically, to visually and physically balance the weight.

An understanding of elements and principles is most important. The most

predominant elements in the designs were texture and color – from smooth, sleek anthurium to feathery delphinium, to ruffled roses and spiked China mums, with the soft wave of colors fading from hues of purple to blues, whites and back again. The most significant principle was rhythm providing a clear repetition through the use of grouping flowers to establish patterns. The focal was strengthened with the use of the driftwood.

Berry's teachings expanded the world of a designer seeking an opportunity to make a difference. Is there someone who you can mentor?



The console arrangement was designed using satellite placements around the driftwood to create a unified design.



Adding the color purple expanded the SECRETS color palette of blue, white and gold, in that blue agapanthus was not available. Allium took its place, which then led the decor team to add deep purple moon carnations. These changes complemented the overall look and deepened the color to make it pop!

Erica Morgan CFD joined Fulshear Floral Designs in May 2024 to work with owner and former Texas Designer of the Year Ace Berry. The Texas Floral Expo presented an extraordinary opportunity, for which she is most grateful. TSFA has long been a springboard for hands-on education and this mentorship expanded possibilities.



Mentor Ace Berry teaches mechanics to ensure the success of the center design for the resort lobby. Accomplishing balance and a secure placement is critical prior to adding florals and foliage.

The floor designs were created using large satellite dishes and two blocks of wet midnight foam. They were then placed on sturdy event stands. Flowers were placed radially to provide movement. The flowers flowed outward with foliage draping down the stand to guide the eye throughout the well-balanced designs.



CREATING SPATIAL STRUCTURES TO ENHANCE EVENTS

A master designer and former Texas Designer of the Year, Alan Masters AIFD, CFD, PFCI, TMF, eased the process of large-scale design as part of the Texas Floral Expo. "I wanted the attendees to have a place to capture a beautiful photo surrounded by flowers, and I knew just who would create that space, beautifully!" shared Texas Floral Expo Chair, Marisa Guerrero AIFD, CFD, TMF. Let's take a look at just how Masters created this masterpiece!

Color frequently leads decisions in event design. Numerous places of inspiration are often available to establish the palette or provide options. In the case of the Texas Floral Expo, the color palette was established in the SECRETS logo as well as throughout the public space at South Shore Harbour Resort and Conference Center.

Masters' design choices were guided by simplicity. When creating arrangements for floral-related events, expensive flowers are most often requested. Masters took a different path, selecting roses, hydrangea and delphinium – flowers that are easily accessible and used every day. This approach reminded attendees that beauty may be created with what is available.

The creative thought process behind painting the monstera foliage with Design Master 24KT Pure Gold paint aligned with a trend and also brought metallic into the design. The juxtaposition of the shiny metallic against the rustic vine arch created a contrast in texture that elevated and added appeal.

In selecting materials to highlight the fresh botanicals, Masters chose feathers to complement the fresh botanicals. "Peacocks are my favorite animal," said Masters. "I chose feathers to further develop the gold and blue color tones, in that these colors are limited in floral choices. I thought the



peacock feathers were a natural choice! I was excited about the design detail that peacock feathers added. The eye of the feathers closely mimicked the Art Deco design that was the background in the SECRETS logo. Do you get excited discovering the perfect design detail?! I certainly do," shared Masters.

When asked to create a floral backdrop, many designers today would create a flower wall of only fresh flowers and perhaps foliages. In this case, Masters selected an arched frame. "Utilizing an arch was my immediate thought. I initially intended to use an old-school brass wedding arch, but plans changed. Many thanks to my friend Renee Johnson at Lush Flowers in Clear Lake for providing the perfect selection! It seemed an obvious choice, because when

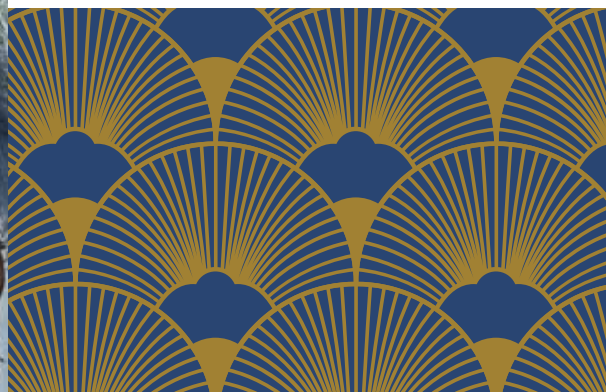
I think of the Art Deco style, curved lines and arched designs pop into my head. Arches also allow attendees to be immersed in florals for their photos, rather than simply standing in front of a wall of flowers. This style also uses less product to achieve the desired effect. This is often a necessity!"

As for the mechanics, the designs were created in Smithers-Oasis floral cages and event saddles. The cages were zip-tied to the arch, and the saddles were simply placed on the floor. All contained midnight foam. A most important detail to emphasize is that sandbags or weights must be used when working with an arch that contains this amount of product. Securing the base is of the utmost importance.

Alan Masters is and has always been an encourager. It is only appropriate that when asked if there was anything else to share, his message was one of encouragement. "I think we all get a bit nervous when creating for an event our peers will attend," said Masters. "I know I do. We wonder if everybody will like it, if the design is correct, and if we have incorporated all the details needed to make a difference. I think a lot of us do the same when creating for brides or event clients. We just want all to be perfect. During this project, I came to the conclusion that I've got this! Let's have fun! Think about it, we know how to design, we know the Es and Ps, but we overthink it. I would challenge you to grab some flowers, create a design for you and have fun. Turn your brain off and just enjoy the process!"



Photography Credit | Shy Laurel Photography



A VARIETY OF EUROPEAN STYLES GRACE THE TEXAS FLORAL EXPO



Natural ideas that adapt Art Deco highlighted a glamorous, geometric style, reflecting the avant-garde influence of ancient cultures. Patterns introduced bold, geometric shapes and rich colors. Flowers showcased clean, streamlined forms. Dramatic styles featured textural materials and metallic finishes. Extraordinary designers, from left to right, Tricia Won AIFD, CFD, EMC, IMF, and

Ellie Grande AIFD, CFD, EMC, designed three styles of presentation bouquets for the Texas Floral Expo.

The presentation bouquet style was based on six key characteristics of the Art Deco period:

- 1. Geometric Shapes.** A rounded shape was selected for the three bouquet concepts to honor the design dignitaries, honorees and award recipients.
- 2. Focus on Line.** A focus on clean lines rather than flowing curves was seen in these Art Deco statements.
- 3. Bold Designs.** The larger concept was a rounded style with exotic blooms. A medium-sized concept featured a flat, rounded style with unique orchid blooms. The stained-glass concept was a rounded style with yellow roses and metallic elements.
- 4. Luxurious Colors.** A color palette of rich jewel tones was integrated into the bouquet concepts.
- 5. Exotic and Tropical Flowers.** Bouquets displayed unique blooms with striking colors and shapes. Birds of paradise were excellent for adding an unexpected form. Roses added contrast for a modern twist. Orchids were unique in shape and perfect for this bouquet concept.
- 6. Glamorous Accents.** Metallics and mirrored surfaces added a touch of sophistication. Dazzling reflections were seen as luxurious. Sapphire blue provided a glimpse of elegance.

Interestingly enough, the same technique was used to create the frames, but employed different mechanical applications. For example, in the stained glass technique, Smithers-Oasis Aluminum gold wire was used to create a decorative wire frame that not only served as the underlying structure, but was an integral part of the overall aesthetics of the bouquet.

Photography Credit | Shy Laurel Photography

A hand-tied bouquet was designed in an armature reminiscent of Art Deco. The armature frame was created with Smithers-Oasis Gold Floral Mesh covered in tulle. Skeleton leaves, in a variety of colors, were secured to create a pattern.

TO CREATE THE ARMATURE:

- A stained-glass frame was designed using white wrapped floral wire.
- Floral Mesh was measured with a width of about 5-7 squares and bound to fit the stained-glass frame.
- One end of the floral mesh was closed to create the circular armature.
- Cream colored tulle was wrapped around the inside of the frame to complete the structure.
- Hot glue was used to adhere the skeleton leaves to the outside of the floral mesh.
- The same technique with different mechanical applications, using wrapped wire and binding wire, created a different effect.

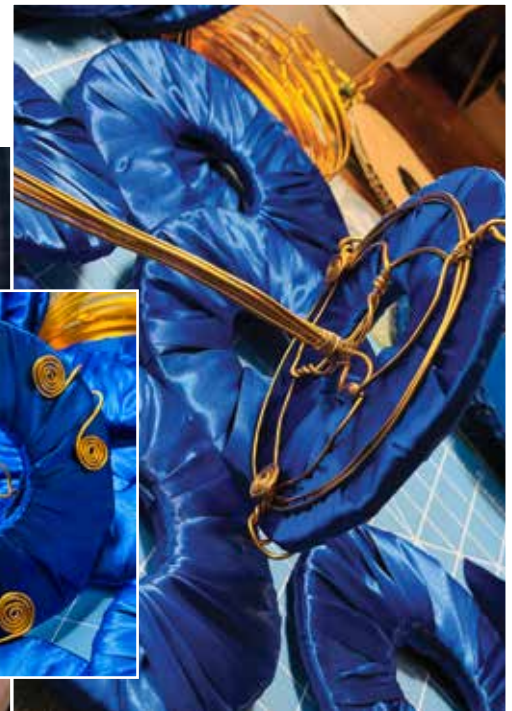


Photography Credit | Shy Laurel Photography

A plate bouquet features botanicals glued onto a surface and is commonly used in bridal and event work.

TO CREATE THE BASE FOR THE PLATE DESIGN:

- Wrap 10 16-gauge floral wires with Smithers-Oasis bind wire to create a spider web frame.
- Spiral gold cord and glue to the center of the frame.
- Finish the center with gold aluminum wire in a circular pattern.
- Use hot glue to secure angel wings to the spider web frame.
- Begin at the base of the gold spiraled cord to cover the frame and create a surface area the size of a small plate.



This hand-tied bouquet is designed in a decorative wired armature, inspired by the Art Deco style. The contemporary European stained-glass technique is used, with a modern wire wrapping to create a wearable art frame. This technique is called stained-glass because of the visual exposure of the craftsmanship. A plate is wrapped with ribbon and placed in the center of the frame. This frame was designed to be used as a single design, with or without adding the plate. This design concept allows the artist to create many variations of wearable art.

TO CREATE THE STAINED-GLASS FRAME:

- The stained-glass technique is designed with Smithers-Oasis aluminum wire.
- Cut six pieces of wire 24" long.
- Secure the wires together with floral tape or binding wire at the binding point to create a handle.
- Above the binding point, bend the wires to create spokes of a wheel, and twist the wires to form a stained-glass effect.
- Cut a disc made of corrugated cardboard that is 6" in diameter, with a 3" hole.
- Cover it with ribbon, using double-sided tape to secure the ribbon.



PETALS IN PROGRESS: HONORING 80 YEARS AND A NEW ERA OF FLORAL LEADERSHIP

Bill Doran Company has had the honor of serving the floral community now for 80 years and it has been our absolute pleasure to continue empowering petal and plant professionals since 1945. Furthermore, we are proud of our premium product offerings that go beyond just our petals and plants, as we are truly a one stop shop for not only the widest selection of all your favorite stems, but also supplies, giftware and unmatched customer service.

The Budding of Bill Doran Company

Initially, Bill Doran Company was founded on the principle that "the petals and people come first." The "Passion for Flowers" that we continue to facilitate to plant and floral enthusiasts everywhere began with just one man, with a vision and plan, who planted a seed of success and began selling petals from his basement at 715 S. Main St. many decades ago. Since then, we have continued to grow. From our first tiny warehouse in Rockford, Illinois, to more than 30 locations across the nation. we remain committed to the honorable mission that is rooted in principles instilled as operations began.

(Bill Doran Company's Mission and Founder Bill Doran)

"Bill Doran Company invests in our customer's success by providing exemplary service and knowledge of the floral industry while focusing on improving the quality, cost and timeliness of the products our customers depend on to achieve their success."



Our first priority, above everything, is empowering your floral business with the highest quality products and unparalleled service you need to succeed. We understand that is how we are allowed to be the leading wholesale floral distributor in the industry, and we appreciate every individual who continues to contribute to our success.

Besides our commitment to the floral community to deliver quality products and customer service, one of the pillars of our business that we pride ourselves on is the value of family. Our founder, Bill Doran, embodied what he believed to be the key to success: building strong and supportive relationships, not only in the way of providing customer service but also in his internal practices. By working alongside his loved ones and honoring his professional partnerships along the way, he cemented the value of why the passion for flowers and people should always take precedence. As the Doran family continues to ensure that his vision of empowerment is executed in ways that exceed expectations, we are now celebrating 80 years and counting of community service under the leadership of our esteemed CEO Bill LaFever, the grandson of Mr. Doran.

THE
Business & Pleasure
OF FLOWERS



Vonda LaFever, AIFD, PFCI, & Lori Wilson, PFCI,
Flower Clique

William "Bill" LaFever
Bill Doran Company



Scan the QR Code to listen to one of newest episodes of "The Business and Pleasure of Flowers" Podcast and catch the conversation on all things Bill Doran Company between the lovely ladies of Flower Clique and our CEO Bill LaFever.

Pioneering Change While Preserving Tradition

Today, "The Doran Difference" is more prominent than it ever has been before. In 80 years of development, we currently employ over 1,000 individuals across the globe between all of our branches and farms and we are still actively expanding. Recently, we had the opportunity to welcome the well-respected members of Denver Wholesale Florist (DWF) into our family and we are pleased to note that this strategic acquisition marks a significant step in BDC's mission to enhance its offerings and broaden its reach within the floral community.

"Through early conversations, it became clear that our two organizations share closely aligned management philosophies and company cultures focused on integrity, employee empowerment, and strong customer relationships. Combining our geographic reach, technology expertise, strong vendor relationships, and private label marketing programs, we are better positioned to deliver exceptional value across the floral community."

Statement on Acquiring Denver Wholesale Florist - Bill LaFever, Bill Doran Company CEO

"I've long admired Bill LaFever as a leader and the Bill Doran Company as a trusted organization in our industry. This is an exciting time for our employees and customers as we join a team that has set the standard of excellence and brings the resources and opportunities for a bright future ahead."

Statement on DWF, Bill Doran Company Merger - Dave Legge, Denver Wholesale Florist President



As we continue to embrace this new era of transformation, our network of branches in the Texas region are looking forward to a new unification, as the Dallas locations of Denver Wholesale Florist and Bill Doran Company have officially consolidated their operations as of August 29, 2025.

We invite all customers and members of the floral community to visit the branch and witness the efforts being made during this cultivation of talent and service excellence, or contact your local account manager for more information. Thank you to each individual working to bring the teams from these branches together.

(See Picture) Seated from left to right: Scott Jewett (BDC San Antonio Manager), Monte Butts (BDC Dallas Manager), Kenzie Huber (DWF HR Manager), Kim Ortega (DWF Dallas Manager), and Dave Legge (DWF President)

For more information about Bill Doran Company and its expanded services, please visit any of your local Texas branches or visit www.BillDoran.com to connect with us today.

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EXTRAORDINARY TECHNIQUES PROVIDE UNLIMITED POSSIBILITIES



From left to right Brian Montague joins Fabian Salcedo to bring the very best in floral decor to the Expo!

One may wonder how specifics are finalized to bring a creative vision to life. What leads one along the journey, considering the abundance of available product, to decide on creating this, instead of that?

Salcedo shares his process for this event. “Gold was the initial color and element that I used to link the designs. Because of Accent Decor’s generous involvement, planning started with selecting the hard goods that I felt fit the overall look, then designed the floral. I also went into the design process with the intent of using more available flowers, like ocean poms, salal, callas, alstroemeria and hydrangeas, mixed with a few exotic elements to bring an artful touch to the finished design. Anthuriums and echinops provides that detail.”

“At the end of the day, for me, it’s all about making people happy, exceeding expectations and creating beautiful memories. As florists, hundreds of events will come across our design table. But for guests, these are moments that will potentially take them back in time, or back to a place that’s a part of their life story.”
– Fabian Salcedo



To accomplish the anthurium color in three steps:

- Use Design Master Bright Blue as the base color
- An easy hack to get around spraying the anthurium spadix is to simply pop a water tube over it.
- Add a glossy clear coat over the blue after allowing the bright blue paint to dry. The glossy finish is necessary to get the chrome element to pop.
- Dust with blue chrome powder to enhance the blue after the glossy finish dries.

For the base structure:

- Use a serrated knife to cut simple hard Styrofoam into the desired shape. The cutout arch was inspired by the SECRETS art.
- Use 2” bank pins to secure salal leaves and create texture, mimicking the SECRETS art.
- Pin jade blue ocean poms to the form to appear as if moss is growing on the corner and to bring more texture and interest to the table.
- Insert anthuriums directly into the hard foam, as these will definitely last long enough for the event.

“I often feel that for event work, you have to know what you can and can’t get away with in terms of floral longevity,” said Salcedo. “Sometimes this requires sacrificing a few blooms to test a theory. The funny thing about the hand in this design is that, originally, I wanted to use book-end hand bud vases from Accent Decor, but they were not available. I already had the wooden hands in our inventory and painting them blue was an easy way to bring them into the overall story. This is a reality for florists, because we must always be flexible and willing to pivot a concept or idea.”

Have you ever stopped to think about how the design process begins? What sparks the idea behind designs that complete a visionary statement? The extraordinary Fabian Salcedo shares his creative process for the table decor enjoyed at the 2025 Stars of Texas Awards Dinner! He also offers design tips and techniques that enhanced these elegant arrangements.

“The design process began when Brian and I reviewed the SECRETS art,” said Salcedo. “We knew right away that we wanted to reflect the color palette and capture the Art Deco feel of the graphics. I usually design at least three looks if the table count supports that idea. I love it when guests discover a variety of ideas on the tables. Overall, I wanted to bring artful technique – the kinds of things we learn being in TSFA – and I also wanted to integrate popular event design into the space. It often feels like there is a divide between those who have been trained in the art of floristry and those who have learned the art on their own, mimicking designs seen on social media,” explained Salcedo.

What better way to tell the story than through images of exquisite detailing incorporated into the florals that adorned the tables and accented the podium. Enjoy each image, along with captions that educate and outline technique.



"I have wanted to create something using this displacement technique for quite some time," said Salcedo. "Every time I saw this technique, it was off a singular art piece on display. I wanted to bring that artistic edge and mass produce a design, because I had never seen that done. This displacement was my attempt to elevate the centerpiece, as floral art that was technique based, rather than a mass of flowers." Salcedo shared the following design process:

- The main arm was created with 10 18-gauge wires.
- To accomplish the needed length to create the neck, we added an extra length of 18-gauge wire, so there were essentially 10 extra-long wires.
- These wires were then wrapped in green Smithers-Oasis bind wire, using a drill to speed up the process.
- The connection point was flared out in spokes.
- A little spider web weave at the base was just big enough to fit the opening of the vase.
- The little nubs left over were folded down over the edge of the vase.
- A few Smithers-Oasis UGlu tabs, as well as bind wire, secured it to the top.

"The Smithers-Oasis gold mesh was the base of the design, because it is so delicate, but decorative at the same time," said Salcedo. "The mesh basically became a three-dimensional floral grid where stems were weaved."

Below are Salcedo's steps for creating the mesh cylinders.

- We created the cylinder first and then used the nubs on the other end of the wire neck to hook the mesh onto.
- Our mechanics were then covered using salal leaves and simple UGlu to keep it nice and clean.
- Once the mesh was secured, we began swirling lily grass and calla lilies through the design.
- Anthurium stems were also molded, for an extra curve graced through the mesh.
- The great thing about the mesh is that the curved stems become part of the design, creating more movement.

Floral placements completed the design and were attached in these ways:

- The large blooms and stems were attached using Smithers-Oasis gold bullion, so it disappeared.
- All the lily grass and echinop blooms were simply attached with small pieces of UGlu.



"Painting the product was fun, using chrome powder to create the shimmery ombre effect," said Salcedo. "The key is to add a glossy finish to the paint before the chrome is added to be most effective."

Specifics for the Hand

- Paint with black and then layer with charcoal spray paints.
- Brush chrome powder on top to pop beautifully off the black base.

"As for the hydrangea design, this was my take on a more popular style we are seeing these days," said Salcedo. "Blooms on Top of Blooms is how I describe this look. The recipe has 18 hydrangeas. The base bowl mechanics are covered by the first three stems. After that, you are basically stacking the blooms on top of each other to create an organic form. The great thing about this look is that there really is not a wrong way. If you design it with confidence, it will show."

"When bending the anthurium stem, simply pull the stem through your thumb and forefinger, slowing warming and bending the stem simultaneously," Salcedo suggests.

CREATING EVENT FLORALS THAT CELEBRATE LIFE'S STORIES

Written by Chris Collum-Williams AIFD, CFD, TMF

When I was asked to present at the Texas Floral Expo in League City, I was honored and excited. That was a hard "SECRET" to keep! Developing the presentation, *Innovative Floral Stylings for Weddings and Events*, involved a thought process similar to planning any special event, in that it's always most important to bring your best to each and every function.

With Accent Decor underwriting the presentation, the selected products contributed to the inspiration. The focus led to three types of events, including a wedding, a fundraising event frequently sponsored by nonprofit organizations and a baby shower or gender reveal, both which are very popular today.

To develop the design concepts, I researched the Accent Decor catalogue to establish the foundation for each collection. With the abundance of fabulous, on-trend products, narrowing the options is always difficult.

The specifics were informed by years of experience and influenced by a number of previous events. It was important that each segment showcase ideas that could be carried forward in shops and event studios represented at the Expo. Color was also important, in that most decisions are based on color. It was fun to have full reign to create the unexpected, like the bright yellow with baby blue, or the vivid colors used in the nonprofit event setting.

The looks were based on trend, popularity and uniqueness. Though inspired by the products selected from Accent Decor, it was important that there was an understanding of the mechanics and just how the design was created.

A truly memorable event lingers long after the last guest has departed. The experience becomes part of the story that people tell about life events. Flowers set the mood, spark emotion and add their own signature of color and fragrance to the memory. As florists, we translate feelings into petals and stems to create experiences that comfort, inspire and celebrate. When we design with intention, we do more than fill a space. We transform occasions into memories that will be cherished for years to come.

This arrangement succeeds by combining strong vertical lines, complementary colors and textural contrast, while maintaining proportion and harmony. The design feels both fresh and structured, with a clear focal area and graceful upward movement.



Smithers-Oasis Cylinder Garland — Wrap your finished garland around a pipe and flange, found in the plumbing department of a hardware store, and secure it with zip ties. Set the garland atop a wooden Accent Decor pedestal. This statement is perfect for an entry or buffet arrangement. Create two to flank and altar setting.





The freeform design began with a stem of hydrangeas at the highest point with hydrangea added to achieve the preferred shape. Grouping hydrangea, callas and roses in a 9" Lomey dish developed the impact of color. The lemons were secured with hyacinth stakes because of the weight.

Smaller placements play an important role in floral design, whether they're supporting a grand arrangement or shining on their own. As complements, each adds depth and layers. Smaller arrangements may extend the overall floral impact across the venue. They are like "floral pocket details", whether paired with a statement installation or displayed solo.



The paper flowers, secured to the Accent Decor Harlow stand with Smithers-Oasis bind wire, added whimsy to the arrangement. A collection of designs illustrate ways to expand florals into all areas of the event.



The garland was ordered premade but could certainly be created. The hydrangea were designed in two Smithers-Oasis cages, zip tied to the center pole for stability.



This was my absolute favorite, and here's a how-to!

- The head of the peacock was purchased on Amazon.
- A wood support was created out of a 10" x 10" piece of wood to secure the head of the peacock and support the design that would become the body and tail of this glorious creature.
- Set the wood base on the Accent Decor gold urn.
- Use a 9" Smithers-Oasis Lomey tray to design the body of the bird.
- Cover the foam with chicken wire to easily attach the tail.
- The body was created with Green Matcha and Shocking Blue hydrangea, mini green hydrangea and color-enhanced blue roses.
- A 4' piece of chicken wire was zip tied to the chicken wire that covered the foam in the Lomey tray.
- Painted plumosa, tree fern and peacock feathers were woven into the secondary chicken wire to create the long, flowing tail.
- Touches of painted tree fern were added to the body to create the look of feathers.



- To create this weave, use five to seven blades of lily grass, depending on the desired width.
- Bind the bottom of the stems with metallic or bouillon wire.
- Apply an over-under motion of the grass, back and forth until the end of the lily grass is reached.
- Finish by binding at the end.



Accent Decor Argyle Candleholders, in two sizes, provide unlimited possibilities for floor and table placements. Phalaenopsis, grevillea, hydrangea and Playa Blanca roses in white with accents of Moab roses created the majestic setting, with string smilax to complete the designs. A bouquet of Phalaenopsis for the bride to carry was one of elegant simplicity. To expand possibilities, a third Argyle candelabra and Moab roses, designed for today's bridesmaid, are on page 23 of this issue of TEXAS in Bloom.





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Ashlyn Childress CFD, TMF

What is your first memory of flowers?

My first memory of flowers takes me back to Carolyn's Florist in Lufkin, Texas. At the time, this was my daddy's go-to shop for every occasion. I'll always remember the special bouquets he ordered for me and my stepmother for Valentine's Day or our birthdays, each one making me feel cherished. But one memory stands out above all: ordering my senior prom corsage. Walking into the shop to place my order, I was met with a warm welcome and an undeniable sense of belonging. In that moment, I felt a deep intuition that this was where I wanted to be – a place filled with beauty, love and the magic of flowers.

What event or experience led to your interest in the floral industry?

My interest in the floral industry first sparked during my floral design class at Tarleton State University and through my experience working in the floral department at the Stephenville H.E.B. I initially enrolled in the class knowing it would likely be part of my future as an agricultural science teacher, but it ended up opening my eyes to the floral industry in ways I hadn't expected. I still remember creating my very first arrangements and realizing how much I truly enjoyed the process. That passion became even clearer when I was asked to create a last-minute boutonniere for a young H.E.B. partner. At that moment, I knew this was more than just a skill – it was something I was meant to pursue.



What brings you the most joy?

I can't pinpoint just one thing that brings me joy – my joy comes from the little everyday moments. It's reading my daily Bible verse, singing along to Fleetwood Mac on my drive to work or that first sip of Diet Coke in the morning. There's also joy in that satisfying feeling when a floral arrangement turns out perfectly. It's those rare, lazy weekends spent with my family and fur babies. These are the moments that fill my heart and spark joy for me.

How do you best relax?

My favorite way to relax is to lay out at the pool and read, but when I can't do that, I love a good nap!



2024 and 2025 Best of Lufkin, Best Florist: Alene's Florist and Home Décor. This is my flower shop family! I freelance for Alene's in addition to teaching full-time. In a short amount of time, these wonderful women have become my family! I love every minute I get to work with them, and they have helped me become a stronger designer. From Right to Left: Stephanie Harris, Malory Mandijano, Rita Kromer, Shop Owner – Susie White, Carol Vines, Josey Wilson, Shelia Sanchez and my former student, Anna McKinley.



This is my supportive husband, Tommy, and my bonus son, Gunnar!

What's your favorite color and why?

Purple is my favorite color, because it fondly reminds me of my late mother and aunt. These two women meant everything to me, and so anytime I see the color or utilize it in a design, I feel as though I am honoring them. Plus, I will always bleed purple for Tarleton State University (TSU)!

What's been your favorite trip to date?

It's hard to choose, because I've had so many wonderful trips. If I had to pick just one, it would be my trip to Los Angeles with my late best friend, Hunter. That adventure was filled with unforgettable moments and laughter – the kind of memories that stay with you forever. This was the last trip I got to take with my vacation bestie, so whenever I think back on it, I'm reminded of how vibrant, carefree and full of life we were in our prime.

Is there a dream trip and, if so, where does it take you?

My dream trip would be to go to Greece. I imagine myself stretched out on a sailboat in the Mediterranean, basking in the sunshine with the sea breeze all around me, completely relaxed with a good book in hand. To me, that sounds like pure perfection.

Do you have a favorite food?

I'm a sucker for some Asian cuisine!

Do you prefer to cook or dine out? Tell us a little bit about this!

I definitely prefer dining out! I love the different food experiences, but more importantly, the social aspect of dining out with your family and friends.

What is your favorite flower?

Hydrangeas.

What is your favorite design style?

Formal-linear is my favorite style, because I love the dramatic look. The coolest part of being a designer is pushing flowers to their limit and seeing all the different ways to be creative.

Your thoughts on design ...

Growing up, I never had "a thing" – no sports, dance or anything like that. I was always a creative person, but it wasn't until I discovered floral design that I truly found who I am and what I'm passionate about. I see floral design as a way to express yourself. I love blending traditional techniques with creative, modern ideas, and I enjoy balancing artistry with precision. I also love learning, experimenting and helping others grow in their design skills. Abel Gonzalez-Mencio, AAF, AIFD, CFD, PFCI, TMF, said in his Texas Designer of the Year retirement speech that a florist is part of every aspect of someone's life – from the time they are born until the time they leave this earth. That statement resonated deeply with me and perfectly captures why I am so drawn to this art.

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

Oh, my dream would be to design event pieces for Reese Witherspoon's book club! Maybe she would invite me to join in! But honestly, I just love event work and the thought of going back to Los Angeles and designing for someone famous would be the highlight of my career! Or, I would love to get to design with Julia Rose if she ever does New York Fashion Week again!!

Who are your greatest supporters?

God, my husband, my Daddy and Tonja, and my "Shear Chaos Coordinators".

Describe your overall education.

I have a Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture services and development from Tarleton State University and a Master of Education in education administration from Texas A&M-Commerce.

Where did you hone your design skills?

- Benz School of Floral Design.
- Texas Master Florist courses.
- TSFA School of Floral Design courses.

What floral industry jobs have you enjoyed most?

Hudson High School Floral Design Teacher – The best thing about working at Hudson High School as a floral design teacher is that it's home – it's where I went to high school myself. Being invited back to build and grow the floral design program here was truly meaningful to me. Beyond that, what makes this job so special are the relationships I get to build with my students. Watching them grow – not only in their design skills, but also as young people – makes my work even more rewarding than simply "playing with flowers." Many of my students have left a lasting impact on my career and will always hold a special place in my heart. I love seeing them explore their creativity and express themselves through the beauty of God's creation.

Are you affiliated with any associations?

- Agriculture Teachers Association of Texas (ATAT).
- American Institute of Floral Designers (AIFD).
- Texas State Florists' Association (TSFA).



Maroon Blooms at our first wedding with our newly established in-school flower shop!! The students in this picture will always hold a special place in my heart, and they have left a lasting impression on my career!

Please share any achievements and leadership roles.

- Texas Master Florist (TMF).
- Certified Floral Designer (CFD) through AIFD.
- TSFA Education Committee Member.

What are the highlights of your experience in the floral industry thus far?

I would say that the highlight of my career thus far is winning the 2023 ATAT Floral Teacher Cup and placing third in TSFA's 2025 Texas Designer of the Year competition.



2023 ATAT Floral Teacher Showcase Winner – This event generates funds for the ATAT Scholarship. The scholarships go to children of agriculture science teachers. To participate in this event was more than just winning, it was knowing that I was giving back to the future of agriculture!

What are your goals?

My goal is to continue my studies and become more involved in the professional floral community.

It appears that you truly love the art of competition. What intrigues you about the process?

What intrigues me most about floral competition is the challenge of pushing creativity and skill to new levels. I love the thrill of problem-solving under pressure, experimenting with unique designs and seeing how my ideas translate into a finished arrangement. Competitions also provide an incredible opportunity to learn from other designers, gain inspiration and grow both technically and artistically. Ultimately, it's the combination of artistry, precision and the excitement of showcasing your work that draws me to floral competition. As a floral design teacher, I expect my students to be vulnerable in their contests, so why not show them I can be vulnerable too. Plus, I like to put my skills out there and have fun!

What was your inspiration for the designs you created during the 2025 Texas Designer of the Year competition?

The biggest inspiration for my interpretive design was finding beauty in unexpected places. The theme, The Secret Garden, immediately sparked the idea of creating an urban interpretation. I have a soft spot for urban architecture and the unique beauty it holds. In our busy lives, it's easy to overlook the hidden details around us, and my design was meant to celebrate the unexpected beauty that can be found when we pause and look closely. I was told that my interpretation of that design took people to a place they haven't visited mentally in a long time.



Creating the Secret Garden themed interpretative design during the 2025 Texas Designer of the Year competition.

Describe the thought process that follows inspiration.

I believe that my thought process is KISS – Keep it Simple, Stupid! Every mentor I have ever had has always told me to take care of the “give me” points and the rest will fall into place. I teach that same concept to my students and practice it in my designs as well.

The takeaway must be much more than the win. What did you gain from this experience?

The biggest takeaway from participating in floral competitions is the opportunity for growth – both as a designer and as a person. Competitions push me to think creatively, solve problems under pressure and refine my skills in ways the classroom or studio can't. Beyond technique, I gain confidence, learn from fellow designers and discover new perspectives on design. Each competition reminds me that the journey – filled with challenges, inspiration and personal growth – is just as meaningful as the final arrangement. Like I tell my students, winning is just the icing on the cake!

What else would you like the world to know?

“The only time I set the bar low, is for limbo.” – Michael Scott

TSFA Calendar of Events

Designer Credit | Chris Collum-Williams AIFD, CFD, TMF
Photography Credit | Shy Laurel Photography



Colonial Pave perfectly titles this style of bouquet. An 8.5" Syndicate Sales design tray and a deconstructed bouquet handle glued to the bottom of the tray provide the mechanics. Aspidistra, applied with Tack 2000, covers the mechanics. Moab roses were glued directly into the tray with Smithers-Oasis Floral Adhesive. Ribbon is the finishing touch! The elegance of the design complements the tiered design created in Accent Decor Argyle Candleholder.

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

DECEMBER

- 2 Giving Tuesday
- 12 Poinsettia Day
- 14 Hanukkah (Chanukah) begins
- 25 Christmas Day
- 26 Kwanzaa begins
- 31 New Year's Eve

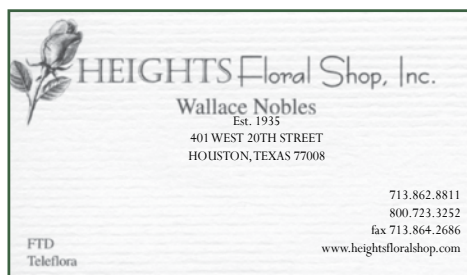
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