
Floral Designers

(O*NET 27-1023.00)

Significant Points

- Despite the projected decline in employment, job opportunities should be good because of relatively high replacement needs.
- Floral design is the only design specialty that does not require formal postsecondary training.
- Many floral designers work long hours on weekends and holidays, filling orders and setting up decorations for weddings and other events.
- About one-third are self-employed.

Nature of the Work

Floral designers, or florists, cut live, dried, or silk flowers and other greenery and arrange them into displays of various sizes and shapes. These workers design these displays by selecting flowers, containers, and ribbons and arranging them into bouquets, corsages, centerpieces of tables, wreaths, and the like for weddings, funerals, holidays, and other special occasions. Some floral designers also use accessories such as balloons, candles, toys, candy, and gift baskets as part of their displays.

Job duties often vary by employment setting. Most floral designers work in small independent floral shops that specialize in custom orders and also handle large orders for weddings, caterers, or interior designers. Floral designers may meet with customers to discuss the arrangement or work from a written order. They note the occasion, the customer's preferences, the price of the order, the time the floral display or plant is to be ready, and the place to which it is to be delivered. For special occasions, floral designers usually will help set up floral decorations. Floral designers also will prearrange a few displays to have available for walk-in customers or last-minute orders. Some floral designers also assist interior designers in creating live or silk displays for hotels, restaurants, and private residences.

A number of floral designers, also known as florists, work in the floral departments of grocery stores or for Internet florists, which specialize in creating prearranged floral decorations and bouquets. These floral retailers also may fill small custom orders for special occasions and funerals, but some grocery store florists do not deliver to clients or handle large custom orders.

Florists who work for wholesale flower distributors assist in the selection of different types of flowers and greenery to purchase and sell to retail florists. Wholesale floral designers also select flowers for displays that they use as examples for retail florists.

Self-employed floral designers must handle the various aspects of running their own businesses, such as selecting and purchasing flowers, hiring and supervising staff, and maintaining financial records. Self-employed designers also may run gift shops or wedding consultation businesses in addition to providing floral design services. Some conduct design workshops for amateur gardeners or others with an interest in floral design.

Work environment. Most floral designers work in comfortable and well-lit spaces in retail outlets or at home, although working outdoors sometimes is required. Designers also may frequently make short trips delivering flowers, setting up arrangements for special events, and procuring flowers and other supplies.

Floral designers have frequent contact with customers and must work to satisfy their demands, including last-minute holiday and funeral orders. Because many flowers are perishable, most orders cannot be completed too far in advance. Consequently, some designers work long hours before and during holidays. Some also work nights and weekends to complete large orders for weddings and other special events.

Floral designers may suffer muscle strain from long periods of standing and from repeated finger and arm movements required to make floral arrangements. They are susceptible to back strain from lifting and carrying heavy flower arrangements. Designers also may suffer allergic reactions to certain types of pollen when working with flowers. In addition, they frequently use sharp objects—scissors, knives, and metal wire—that can cause injuries if handled improperly.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Floral design is the only design occupation that does not require formal postsecondary training; most floral designers learn their



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skills on the job. Employers generally look for high school graduates who have creativity, a flair for arranging flowers, and a desire to learn.

Education and training. Floral design is the only design occupation that does not require formal postsecondary training; most floral designers learn their skills on the job. Private floral schools, vocational schools, and community colleges award certificates in floral design. These programs generally require a high school diploma for admission and last from several weeks to 1 year. Floral design courses teach the basics of arranging flowers, including the different types of flowers, their color and texture, cutting and taping techniques, tying bows and ribbons, proper handling and care of flowers, floral trends, and pricing.

Some floral designers also may earn an associate or bachelor's degree at a community college or university. Some programs offer formal degrees in floral design, while others offer degrees in floriculture, horticulture, or ornamental horticulture. In addition to floral design courses, these programs teach courses in botany, chemistry, hydrology, microbiology, pesticides, and soil management.

Since many floral designers manage their own business, additional courses in business, accounting, marketing, and computer technology can be helpful.

Certification and other qualifications. The American Institute of Floral Designers offers an accreditation examination as an indication of professional achievement in floral design. The exam consists of a written part covering floral terminology and an onsite floral-arranging part in which candidates have 4 hours to complete five floral designs: funeral tributes, table arrangements, wedding arrangements, wearable flowers, and a category of the candidate's choosing.

Floral designers must be creative, service oriented, and able to communicate their ideas visually and verbally. Because trends in floral design change quickly, designers must be open to new ideas and react quickly to changing trends. Problem-solving skills and the ability to work independently and under pressure also are important traits. Individuals in this field need self-discipline to budget their time and meet deadlines.

Advancement. Many florists gain their initial experience working as cashiers or delivery people in retail floral stores. The completion of formal design training, however, is an asset for floral designers, particularly those interested in advancing to chief floral designer or in opening their own businesses.

Advancement in the floral field is limited. After a few years of on-the-job training, designers can either advance to a supervisory position or open their own floral shop.

Employment

Floral designers held about 87,000 jobs in 2006. Approximately 33 percent were self-employed. About 45 percent of

all floral designers worked in florist shops. Another 10 percent worked in the floral departments of grocery stores. Others were employed by miscellaneous nondurable goods merchant wholesalers, other general merchandise stores, and in lawn and garden equipment and supply stores.

Job Outlook

Despite the projected decline in employment, job opportunities are expected to be good because of the need to replace workers who leave the occupation.

Employment change. Employment of floral designers is expected to decline moderately, 9 percent, between 2006 and 2016. The demand for floral decorations will continue to grow as flower sales increase with the population and the lavishness of weddings and other special events that require floral decorations. As disposable incomes rise, more people also will demand fresh flowers in their homes and offices. Increased spending on interior design also is expected to create more demand for stylish artificial arrangements for homes and businesses.

Despite growing demand for floral decorations, few job opportunities are expected in floral wholesalers, primarily because an increasing number of shops are purchasing flowers and supplies directly from growers in order to cut costs. In addition, the growth of electronic commerce in the floral industry will make it easier for retail florists to locate their own suppliers. Discretionary spending on flowers and floral products is highly sensitive to the state of the economy, and during economic downturns employment may fall off as floral expenditures decline.

Job prospects. Job opportunities should be good because of the relatively high replacement needs in retail florists. Many people leave the occupation after a time because of its comparatively low starting pay and limited opportunities for advancement. Opportunities should be good in grocery store and Internet floral shops as sales of floral arrangements from these outlets grow. The prearranged displays and gifts available in these stores appeal to consumers because of the convenience and because of prices that are lower than can be found in independent floral shops.

As mass marketers capture more of the small flower orders, independent floral shops are increasingly finding themselves under pressure to remain profitable. Many independent shops have added online ordering systems in order to compete with Internet florists. Others are trying to distinguish their services by specializing in certain areas of floral design or by combining floral design with event planning and interior design services. Some florists also are adding holiday decorating services in which they will set up decorations for businesses and residences.

Projections data from the National Employment Matrix

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2006	Projected employment, 2016	Change, 2006-2016	
				Number	Percent
Floral designers	27-1023	87,000	79,000	-7,700	-9

NOTE: Data in this table are rounded. See the discussion of the employment projections table in the *Handbook* introductory chapter on *Occupational Information Included in the Handbook*.

Earnings

Median annual earnings for wage and salary floral designers were \$21,700 in May 2006. The middle 50 percent earned between \$17,690 and \$27,330. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$15,040, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$33,650. Median annual earnings were \$23,990 in grocery stores and \$21,210 in florists.

Related Occupations

Other art and design occupations include artists and related workers, commercial and industrial designers, fashion designers, graphic designers, and interior designers. Landscape architects also create designs involving plants and flowers. Other occupations involved directly with plants and flowers include

soil and plant scientists; and farm workers and laborers, crop, nursery, and greenhouse.

Sources of Additional Information

For information about careers in floral design, contact:

- American Institute of Floral Designers, 720 Light St., Baltimore, MD 21230. Internet: <http://www.aifd.org>
- Society of American Florists, 1601 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314. Internet: <http://www.safnow.org>

To learn more about designing flowers for weddings and funerals, see “Jobs in weddings and funerals: Working with the betrothed and the bereaved,” in the winter 2006 Occupational Outlook Quarterly and online at:

<http://www.bls.gov/opub/ooq/2006/winter/art03.pdf>.