

BLOOMIN' NEWS



Floristry Certification Raises Professional Credentials

By Belinda Sanders

Retail florists and their employees, event and floral designers, floristry students and others will be pleased to know of the opportunity to add professional credibility to their services by earning the California Certified Florist designation.

The five-year CCF certification program results in accreditation and ranking among California's most knowledgeable and respected florists. It is based upon practical experience and required reading materials and can be earned by self study or participating in a floristry program. Participants can renew their certification by attending three continuing education programs and maintaining dual membership in California State Floral Association and the Master Florists Association. (The National Alliance of Floral Associations is also developing a florist certification program, creating uniform standards that will transfer from state to state using the best practices from current state certification programs.)

Ann Quinn, executive director of CSFA, says the program has "raised the level of quality and professionalism among retail florists" throughout California. CSFA partnered with the Master Florists Association to develop the program, which originally was the idea of Wilton Lee, MFA president. Lee had the idea about six years ago, to serve the San Francisco Bay area. During weekly meetings in 2006, he and the

accreditation team worked diligently to develop the concept.

"As the idea grew, we felt (it) would be great as a statewide program," Lee says, "so we partnered with CSFA and shifted the focus to the entire state." Together, MFA and CSFA developed the criteria and curriculum to demonstrate candidates' creativity and expertise as California Certified Florists.

Quinn sees the program as educating and developing professional and outstanding California floral industry design standards. California Certified Florists will be instrumental in developing and maintaining standards to promote professionalism, credibility and confidence in the floral design industry. They can proudly display the CCF logo and accreditation on their promotional materials as they participate in continuing education programs and ensure quality floral services and designs with integrity. Both Lee and Quinn also believe the accreditations will enhance the professional profiles of their organizations.

How to Become a California Certified Florist

Individual applications may be made and employers may sponsor a student's application. (When a sponsored student attains certification, the employer earns certification as well.)

The candidate must pass a one-day examination. Pansy Tom, of the Master Florists Association support team, attended the very first CCF examination, held in October 2006 in San Francisco. Tom was "enthused to see the (number) of people applying." (The next testing date is July 29, 2007 in Camarillo. Testing locations alternate between north and south.)

Required study materials include:

- California Cut Flower Commission's Flower and Color Guide
- The Society of American Florists' Flower and Plant Care and Handling Manual
- The book, A Master Guide to the Art of Floral Design, by Alisa de Jong-Stout, AIFD, and Hannah Sigur

The CCF examination fee of \$480 includes all study materials, registration, fees and required one-year dual student membership with the Master Florists Association and the California State Floral Association. Applicants provide the tools and supplies recommended for the examination.

The one-day examination includes written and hands-on demonstration of knowledge, skill and expertise in multiple areas. The written exam focuses on visual identification, care and handling of flowers and plants and floral design.

In advance of the examination, applicants receive information and instructions detailing design pieces to create and submit upon arrival. Materials are provided so applicants can properly execute specific hands-on designs and "surprise package" assignments.

Three teams of judges evaluate the applicant's hands-on techniques, judging completed arrangements according to: design elements and principles, color and light in floral design; floral design concepts and styles, consideration of the container, techniques and mechanics.

Examination results are available within three weeks. Arrangements that are part of the hands-on design may be retained for the judges' convenience and later donated to local hospitals, convalescent homes or senior centers.

Want more California Certified Florist details?

Call the California State Floral Association at 916 448-5266 or the Master Florists Association at 415 298-1943; or visit CalStateFloral.com or MasterFloristAssn.org.

Belinda Sanders is a free lance writer based in Orange County, California. Visit her website at www.belindasanders.com. This article is reprinted courtesy of The Bloomin' News, the bi-monthly newsmagazine of The Los Angeles Flower Market of the American Florists Exchange, Ltd., March-April 2007.