

Sustainable tributes

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The term “sustain” means to provide what is needed for something to exist or continue. We have seen a lot of traditional sympathy trends change and customers wanting new alternatives over the years and a major trend in the funeral industry that calls out for our attention is sustainability.

From biodegradable caskets and water-degradable cremation urns to completely natural burials, the funeral industry has monitored the changing needs of the world and has altered

their services and products to reflect these desires. Likewise, floral industry growers and suppliers have provided designers a means to meet this sustainability awareness trend.

The industry is acknowledging the ‘going green trend’ in many ways. From Western Pulp Products use of pre-consumer recycled paper, along with waste materials created by the grass, seed and forest products industries in the development of their products, to the Veriflora certification program



(which acknowledges the use of botanicals grown by environmentally sound and sustainable methods), the industry is stepping up and working to provide beautiful, high quality materials that meet the sustainability requests.

Floral designs continue to be an important element in the grieving process so it is only natural that florists are keeping pace and promoting their sustainable, eco-friendly design elements as well. One way this is being done is by giving serious thought to what products are being used in a design; it is important to consider the choice of containers and mechanics and then make the necessary adjustments in order to provide a design that fits the sustainability need.

Another way we are seeing florists achieve a sustainability profile is by the services they provide. Offering to pick up the extra floral designs following a funeral service, reassemble the freshest blooms into smaller arrangements, and deliver them to hospitals, retirement communities, or other locations requested by the family is one idea. This service offers good will to the customer and the community and opens the door for some great marketing opportunities. Be sure to include a card with a note saying the flowers were donated in memory of (name of the deceased or family) and your shop's information.

For those customers who are reluctant to send flowers because they "just don't last" or "they just get thrown away": suggest the obvious—lush, lovely and living green plants! The forever eco friendly green plant is regaining the popularity it had in the 70's and 80's and with the heightened awareness of saving the planet, green plants provide both the beauty and heartfelt sentiments expressed by a well designed tribute and the statement "we care about sustainability."

Once you have a sustainable design plan figured out, promote it to your customers, your community, and your funeral home partners. No one will know that you are willing and able to provide sustainable-conscious designs and products if you don't tell them. As trends and consumer needs change, so must we. Sympathy tributes were meant to leave a lasting impression—making it an eco-friendly lasting impressions is a good thing!

