

Stockbridge School of Agriculture Floral Design Program

2023-2024 Summary



About the Program

Stockbridge Floral Design was launched in fall 2023 when Stockbridge School of Agriculture faculty Sarah Berquist redesigned and revived an old course: STOCKSCH 210 Retail Floral Design (3 credits). The course was met with abundant student interest and was filled with a waitlist. Students enrolled included a mix of Sustainable Food & Farming, Sustainable Horticulture, Plant Soil Science majors and a couple of other non-Stockbridge majors. It was clear early on that there was and is a lot of potential for this to be more than just a course; it is an enterprise, more of its own program. Drawing on her relationships with different campus entities, Sarah has been collaborating with campus departments and offices so that her students are designing for real campus events.

After a remarkably successful fall semester, a few students approached Sarah to explore opportunities to intern and support the continued growth of the program in the spring. This internship included 6 students (4 Horticulture and 2 SFF) who earned 1 credit enrolled in STOCKSCH 398B Farmer- Florist Practicum

The course used exclusively fresh flowers grown by faculty Sarah Berquist at [Astarte Farm in Hadley](#) throughout Summer and Fall 2023 and Spring 2024. Sarah has a long standing partnership with this no-till, certified organic, women-run farm, and they graciously offered land to support the establishment of this new program.

What do sustainable practices look like with flowers?

When it comes to sustainability, many florists are opting not to use floral foam and instead commit to reusable materials like chicken wire and reusable water tubes, (and sometimes

sticks and other natural materials). Sourcing flowers locally is probably the most impactful decision a florist can make.

Mission & Curriculum

Mission:

Stockbridge Floral Design provides floral arrangements and installations for events on campus using practices and approaches centered on sustainability. We use primarily local and organically grown florals, grown by Sarah and students on an organic no-till farm in Hadley, MA. We source locally to supplement our own flowers when needed.

Curriculum:

1. Retail Floral Design (STOCKSCH 210, Fall, 3 credits) offered F23 for first time
2. Farmer-Florist Practicum (STOCKSCH 398X, Spring, 1-2 credits) offered Sp 24 for first time

Both are experiential courses that provide interdisciplinary training in floral sourcing, design basics, proposal writing, floral production, marketing/sales, and community/relationship building. Students gain meaningful hands-on experience and practice designing and selling florals for campus events and the campus community through the Campus Farmers' Markets. Students also directly participate in building partnerships and collaborations with campus clients.

3. Stockbridge Floral Design Student Leadership (STOCKSCH 496, Fall) will be offered F24 for first time

Applied opportunity for students who've completed STOCKSCH 210, and 398, these experienced floral design students will help train the incoming group, execute designs for events during student practice hours and support general tasks needed to run Stockbridge Floral Design. This is a unique opportunity for these students to practice leadership and for peer-to-peer learning.

Experiential Learning

Sarah's approach to teaching is student-centered and experiential. The courses' activities and objectives are designed to embody all elements of the Experiential Learning Cycle. The Retail Floral Design course provides students an opportunity to grow their capacity for observation and immediately apply and practice their observations in creating floral designs. Through practice hours, peer feedback, discussions, reflections, proposal writing, and case studies, students practice relevant design and entrepreneurial skills needed in the floral design industry.

The course curriculum also includes a mix of media including a mini podcast series Sarah created interviewing keynote speakers from last year's *Slow Flowers Summit* in Bellevue, Washington. These stories and perspectives of farmers and florists (and their accompanying reflection assignments) provide students a glimpse of contemporary professional opportunities and paths in the floral industry. This series will be continued as Sarah participates in the upcoming 2024 *Slow Flowers Summit* in Banff this June.

Local Florist collaborators

We are grateful for our collaborations with these local florists in supporting our training and supplies:

Emily Brennan of [Mal du Pays](#) in Florence, MA

John LaSalle of [LaSalle Florist](#) in Whately, MA