

# Q & A

## How We Do It: The Modest Florist

**Who:** Libby Francis Baxter

**What:** The Modest Florist

**Where:** Baltimore, Md.

**Social Media:** [themodestflorist.com](http://themodestflorist.com); @themodestflorist

**About:** The Modest Florist is a retail flower shop in the Hampden neighborhood of Baltimore city offering a full range of floral services. Founded in 2013, The Modest Florist was created with sustainability at its core and is committed to environmentally friendly solutions for the modern floral business. We source only locally grown flowers, greenery and live plants. Containers are vintage/thrifted/reused. We do not use floral foam, hot glue or plastics. Our furniture and fixtures are all repurposed. The Modest Florist is the first florist to be recognized by and listed on the Maryland Department of Energy's "Green Registry," and the owner is a credentialed LEED Green Associate.

**Square Footage:** 450

**Services/specialties:** The Modest Florist is a traditional full-service retail flower shop. We are open six days a week, 51 weeks of the year. We provide fresh-cut flower arrangements, live plants and succulents, dish gardens, orchids, and seasonal specialties. We offer online ordering for delivery to area hospitals and funeral homes as well as businesses and private residences. The Modest Florist also provides weekly florals for neighborhood restaurants, salons and churches. We deliver within Baltimore and offer free delivery within a two-mile radius of the shop. The Modest Florist is also known for unique and affordable weddings and special-event work. We are a preferred vendor for Johns Hopkins University and many wedding and event venues throughout the area.

**Sourcing Practices:** All of our stock (cut flowers, flowering plants, succulents, orchids, etc.) comes from local farms and greenhouses within a 125-mile radius of Baltimore. This includes not only Maryland growers but also those in northern Virginia, central and southeastern Pennsylvania, and southern New Jersey.

**Seasonal sourcing/varieties:** The season for field-grown flowers usually begins in May and runs through October or first frost. For everyday stock, we depend on locally grown flowers through DVFlora, which include Cramers Farm (Mount Joy, Pa.) and Sikking Farms (Vineland, N.J.). Pennock offers flowers from Weavers Cutflowers (Leonardtown, Md.) and Van Dyk Brothers (Millville, N.J.). The Modest Florist also sources directly from Two Boots Farm (Hampstead, Md.), Galena Blooms Farm (Galena, Md.), Belvedere Farm (Fallston, Md.), Locust Point Flowers (Elkton, Md.) and Wollam Gardens (Jeffersonton, Va.).

Our local greenhouse growers provide cut flowers from November through April and often beyond. Hendricks (Litz, Pa.) is our primary source for a wide variety of everyday stock. DVFlora offers bulb flowers including tulips and hyacinths from Bloomia (King George, Va.) as well as local boxwood and coniferous greens.

Local foraging is a year-round enterprise. In spring Forsythia, dogwood, cherry and pear blossoms are abundant and ready to be forced. Summer brings Queen Anne's lace, Solidago (goldenrod) and asters. In fall, we have pampas grass, cattails, sumac, pokeberry, bittersweet and thistles; followed by berried juniper, holly and red twig dogwood in winter.

Seasonal plants including spring/summer annuals, fall-hardy mums, poinsettias, and Easter lilies are sourced from White House Nursery (Upperco, Md.). Tropicals,



mini-terrarium plants, and succulents come from **Gary's Specialty Plants** (Drumore, Pa.), and **Desert Dan and Arizona East** (both N.J.) through DVFlora. We feature orchids from **Matsui Nursery** (Sewell, N.J.) and **Color Orchids** (Stevensville, Va.) also from DVFlora and our own collection from the **Maryland Orchid Society**.

**Advice for others:** Ask your wholesaler(s) to buy from local farmers and greenhouses. The wholesale market model is far more sustainable than having many florists driving around to many farms/greenhouses and vice versa.

**How do we market:** The Modest Florist is a community resource. We proudly support local nonprofits such as the **Hampden Family Center**, where we donate event florals for fundraisers and gift cards for silent auctions, and we participate in the after-school enrichment program. The Modest Florist is an active business (and resident) member of the **Hampden Community Council** and the owner is the secretary of the local chamber of commerce, the **Hampden Village Merchants Association**. Much of the business is through fellow businesses in our community.

We are the first mapped listing when googling "Baltimore florist." We post flower pictures almost daily to Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Our Floranext website provides excellent SEO. The Modest Florist is a member of the *slowflowers.com* community, the *ascfg.com*, listed on *Wedding Wire*, *The Knot*, and other wedding- and event-related sites. ■

(Right) Libby Francis Baxter, The Modest Florist

