



Our attention turns to sustainable materials for wrapping bouquets.

BEYOND PLASTIC

By **Debra Prinzing, PFCI**

The term "sustainability" has moved into every channel of mass-market floristry – from products used by commercial growers to floral departments and their customers. Recyclable or compostable product options have been available for much of the past decade and even earlier, say some manufacturers who supply the marketplace. It's just that now, with consumer awareness on the rise, there is more demand for "green packaging" and, thus, the options are becoming more affordable.

"Right now, it's a fair playing field, and the pricing between conventional and sustainable is about the same," says **Pieter Sluiter**, general manager at **Koen Pack USA**, based in Miami. "That makes it an easier conversation with supermarkets."

Changes range from symbolic gestures to radical shifts. For **Peterkort Roses**, a commercial rose and cut-flower grower in Hillsboro, Ore., the switch in 2019 to wrapping rose bunches in brown butcher paper was important, says **Sandra Peterkort Laubenthal**, who manages the company's stall at the **Portland Flower Market**. "I kept hearing from florists about the waste in the floral industry, and it was starting to get to people," she explains.

Peterkort had been wrapping its 25-stem bunches

of hybrid tea roses and 10-stem bunches of spray and garden roses in "sheets of precut plastic," Laubenthal says. "Now, we use plain brown butcher paper and add a label with our logo. We continue to tie our bunches with cotton string rather than rubber bands – and the cotton string breaks down, too."

The feedback has been positive. "I think it gives the feeling that we are trying to reduce some of the trash and plastic that florists have to deal with," Laubenthal says.

At **Town & Country Markets** in Poulsbo, Wash., Lead Floral Category Manager **Melanie Cherry** has eliminated cellophane and plastic in a number of ways. First, the "flower wall" that's featured across the chain's three stores is merchandised around single-stem options. "Once customers choose the stems they want, our staff wraps flowers in brown paper," Cherry says.

Town & Country Markets recently introduced a multilayer bouquet wrap that she orders from **Decowraps**. "It comes with a sheet of paper, a tissue and a raffia tie, all in one," she explains. "It has everything we need. All you do is take out a sheet, wrap the flowers and tie the raffia in a bow. It's awesome."

Like many of the bouquet wraps gaining popularity



“Every year, global plastic production steadily increases. By 2050, scientists predict that the world will be producing more than 1 billion tons of plastic per year, representing a staggering 15 percent of our total global carbon emissions. Choosing a more climate-friendly solution such as plant-based packaging is, consequently, a great solution, because its carbon footprint is significantly lower than that of traditional plastics. In fact, by utilizing certain bioplastics, carbon emissions end up being negative, meaning that the emission is less than the uptake.”

– Decowraps.com

Features: differences and similarities

	OIL-BASED										PLANT-BASED		
	MOPP	Non-woven	BOPP	BOPE	CPP	LDPE	rLDPE	HDPE	rHDPE	Oxo folie	Kraft-paper	Hydro-paper	PLA
Not biodegradable	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳				
Biodegradable										✳	✳	✳	✳
Compostable											✳	✳	✳
Recyclable			✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳		✳	✳	
Transparent			✳	✳	✳	✳	✳		✳	✳			✳
Coloured (printed possible)	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳
Translucent (milky possible)	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳		✳	✳
Printable	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳
Hard material	✳		✳	✳						✳	✳	✳	✳
Soft material		✳			✳	✳	✳	✳	✳				
Stretchable					✳	✳	✳	✳	✳				
Water resistant	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳		✳	✳
High processing noise													✳
Medium processing noise	✳		✳	✳				✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	
Soft processing noise		✳			✳	✳	✳						

non-recyclable



recyclable



recyclable



compostable





at the retail level, the challenge is customer education, says **Aileen Flicki**, product manager at **Decowraps**, based in Miami. For example, the multilayer bouquet wrap used by Town & Country Markets has three components, so customers need to separate them for recycling or composting.

"Our customers, from growers and suppliers to supermarkets, have never been really educated about what are sustainable options and what the differences are among them," Flicki says. "We want to play a part in going green and changing the status quo in our industry."

She urges retailers to treat sustainability as a branding decision. "It's a marketing question on how you want to position your brand. And based on that, you want to decide which packaging material is best for you and then educate the consumer."

To that end, Decowraps classifies "sustainability" into three categories:

1. Start of Life: Understanding the source from which the product is created. For example, "bio-based" products originate from nature and are, therefore, considered renewable resources.

2. End of Life: Understanding what happens to packaging once it leaves the store. These products are dependent on consumer behavior. In order for packaging to be disposed of in a sustainable manner, consumers must place the packaging in their recycling bins or take them to composting facilities.

3. Carbon Footprint: Understanding the carbon footprint of your current packaging, including a focus on the production of carbon emissions emitted into the atmosphere.

PLANT-BASED OPTIONS

Interest in plant-based products is on the rise across all

consumer categories from fashion to home décor. In floral packaging, the most innovative plant-based products are derived from corn or sugar cane.

PLA (Polylactic Acid) is a bio-based thermoplastic and aliphatic polyester derived from renewable and organic sources such as corn starch and sugar cane. According to Koen Pack, PLA is a good first step in replacing new plastic that is often used in disposable dishes or garbage bags. PLA is similar in appearance to ordinary plastic, but it is more sensitive to heat and light, which speeds up the composting process. "It's a plastic alternative, and it's biodegradable," Sluiter points out. Koen Pack also offers "BioBasics" packaging options, which combine PLA sheeting with kraft paper.

Bio LDPE (Biodegradable Low-density Polyethylene), which is a sugar-cane-based material, is also available from several manufacturers. "Bio LDPE is a product that has negative carbon footprint, which means you're taking carbon out of the environment to be able to produce it," says Flicki of DecoWraps. "If you are using Bio LDPE in a sleeve or as a film for your packaging, you should do some marketing behind it to tell the positive story to consumers."

Kraft paper is made from wood pulp and, obviously, also plant based. Many manufacturers use the FSC-Certified (Forest Stewardship Council) designation for their kraft-paper products. NOTE: Butcher paper and kraft paper are made with the same raw materials, but butcher paper is treated with coatings to strengthen it for food-grade use – specifically to withstand moisture and to provide containment of oils, bloods and other meat-related moistures.

Sluiter encourages supermarkets to do their homework. "Plastic is not necessarily a bad thing, as long as it gets properly recycled," he says. "I always recommend the message of recycling, which means educating customers with the use of logos on the sleeve design." ■



<https://qrs.ly/z4b37os>