

GROWERTALKS

Features

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Jacob McCall (AAF AIFD CFD FSMD)

Chris Beytes

That's a lot of letters after a young man's name. But Florida floral designer Jacob McCall has more than 20 years of floral industry experience and has amassed loads of experiences and honors. He's designed for Diana Ross, Martha Stewart and Queen Latifah, worked for the Miss Universe Pageant, and has appeared on "Whose Wedding Is It Anyway" on the Style Network. Currently, he has his own floral design consultancy. We first met Jacob at the annual Florida Flower Trials in May and were captivated by his southern charm and wit.

Green Profit: You got into the flower business when you were how old?

Jacob McCall: I was 11 and I worked after school for extra money. Our family friend owned a large retail florist and greenhouse in North Florida—I worked there washing buckets, learning how to do bud vases and water the plants in the greenhouses. It's crazy to think a little boy from Perry, Florida, who happened to fall in love with flowers would one day go on to represent the USA at the Interflora World Cup!

GP: You also did flowers for the Miss Universe pageant. Highlight of your career?

JM: Well, the Miss Universe pageant was just a cherry on top of the many things I have been able to accomplish throughout my career. I believe that networking takes you everywhere! In my career as a floral artist I had hit a crossroads and was employed as a spokesperson for the largest rose grower in the world. At the time I knew the Miss Universe Organization did not have a flower sponsor. So, needless to say, I actually picked my phone up and called their headquarters and within a week I had the contract. Things like this happen to me ... I'm not sure if it's luck or fate, but I believe if you don't try it may never happen.

GP: Are you a garden center shopper? If so, what's your general opinion of how we do things?

JM: I shop at many locations! I truly enjoy a family owned garden center. I feel like they know my taste and sometimes they keep special things just for me to buy or look at. I also love an enormous garden center or mass market center. When I'm switching beds out in the spring and fall I can do it quickly and the colors are always on point.

GP: We're focused on guys in this issue. Give garden centers some ideas about how they could do a better job appealing to the male customer ... without chasing off the female customer.

JM: Interesting topic, because I think I see more guys when I'm shopping than women! You know, honestly, I do not think a garden center should appeal to just one member of the family, it should appeal to all of the family! With that said, a day at the garden center should include the kids, grandparents and parents! Think of fun activities that the kids could do throughout your center and possibly hold special events for the holidays.

GP: Got any trend forecasts for the coming year that Green Profit's readers should be prepared to take advantage of?

JM: Be prepared for bright colors in the spring! Not neon, which has been trending for a couple of years. Bright colors, such as fuchsia, electric blue and sunflower yellow. Your container [color] should complement your flowers and plants. Have fun accessories—actually, have accessories that your competition doesn't carry. If you have an advertising outlet such as television ads or radio ads, choose a spokesperson from your staff or local celebrity to represent you. Have that person at all of your holiday functions and family activities. **GP**