

How To Find Your Niche



...In A Crowded Market

My Talk Today

- Brief intro of B-Side and the California scene
- Key points to consider when trying to find your niche
- Reason for this talk: pitfalls of 'following the crowd'
- The 'Year Five Burnout' and what it looks like
- How I found my best customers (in a crowded market)
- Things I wish I would have done differently

Focus Points In Finding Your Niche

- What's your unique talent / skill?
- What crops can you grow pretty well?
 - Same lesson in both point above!
- What kinds of customers actually exist in your market?
- What is your competition doing, and where are the holes?

Every Beginner Farmer / Florist Website

“No matter who you are, we have something to fit what you’re looking for. From full service weddings, to personal flowers only, to DIY buckets, we’ve got you covered. If you’re looking for a weekly arrangement or even a special occasion order, drop us a line and we’ll chat about it!”

This is a nightmare of a business, in any market (much less a crowded one).

Even worse: “We offer local, affordable flowers for any budget.” **YOU WILL NEVER WIN ON PRICE.**

Why the resistance to specialization?

- Industry with a low barrier to entry, people start without years of planning or saved resources. Flowers are meant to be arranged with other flowers, so people try to grow all the flowers.
- People with little knowledge of the different markets / price tiers, wanting to try everything and see what sticks.
- Thinking that the business models you see in farms you follow are there for a reason. They're NOT. They're ludicrous, or they're not telling the whole truth, OR they're brilliant, well-trained, and have been at it a long, long time.

The Hard Truth Of The Five Year Burnout

You don't have time to waste in figuring out your business specialty. Even if you're not throwing tons of money into your business, only your time, you will burn out after one, two, three, four, or five years and not be well positioned to pivot or specialize at that point. Don't mess around with your health, your precious time, and don't waste the enthusiasm and drive you feel now on puttering around a plan-less farm for three years.

Avoid this now, by being smart from the get-go.

Myths About Specializing

People ask me for X (weddings, subscriptions, etc) so I SHOULD offer them.

There's not a big enough market to sell only one product or service.

I'm still figuring out what my business is good at.

Everyone else is growing all the crops and selling them in all the ways, and they're all happy and thriving and profitable.

How I found My Best Customers

Weddings

- Elevated my website to match 'fancy' designers.
- Laser-sharp focus on customer service.
- Stalked the venues I wanted a piece of.
- Steamlined: I now ONLY do full-service \$6k+ weddings. Margins always the same, and I'm known for luxury weddings

Retail

- Built a farmstand!

Wholesale

- Figured out what florists were buying every week, and grew more of it.
- Honed in on weekly standing orders of specific crops (I'm now the go-to for those crops).

Instances Where I Had To Pivot

Wins

- Selling only two main crops to my main florist
- Dropping DIY weddings
- Raising my minimum (raised my prices, too)
- Dropping weekly accounts
- Building the farmstand

Fails

- Losing at least one potential good weekly client because I was too wide-spread

Businesses That Would Have Worked In My Area

- A half-acre specializing in grasses only.
- A entirely shaded field for late-season ranunculus.
- A hellebore farm.
- A better, bigger farmstand with refrig. and discounts on flower bunches for florists.
- A white flower farm. Growing only white flowers. (Can you imagine?).
- A peony farm in the North Bay.
- One specialty crop per season: Hellebores, columbine, astrantia, Japanese Anemones.

Now Let's Compare...