



**OUTSIDE  
THE Vines**

INSPIRATION FROM BEYOND THE POTTING BENCH

# Going Mobile

By Ana Olvera

**T**he Yarover Truck and The Flower Truck are two retailers that have opted for wheels instead of brick-and-mortar stores, proving the mobile concept is no longer just for food businesses.

Whether these trucks have become your competition, or you're thinking about investing in one for your garden center, the mobile trend is growing.

The Yarover Truck, co-owned by Maridee Nelson and Barbra Pushies, cruises throughout Southern California, setting up shop at street fairs, farmers markets and major fiber festivals. With 107 square feet of space, the mobile yarn boutique is set up with yarns including wool, cashmere, silk and bamboo.

"Going mobile was an inexpensive way to get into the retail business," Nelson says. "Plus it enabled us to bring the local yarn store to areas that can't typically support a store on a daily basis. We can bring the truck to areas that don't have access to the specialty types of yarns that we carry."

Those specialty types are hand-dyed yarns created in partnership with local dyers. The Yarover Truck currently features four colors dyed exclusively for the boutique.

"Since we move all the time and typically are not open in one place for more than a day or afternoon ... we wanted to make it worthwhile for our customers to work a bit harder to try and find us in all of our different locations," Nelson says.

When they're on the road, Nelson and Pushies use a weekly e-newsletter and social media to share upcoming stops. The latest addition to their social media marketing is weekly live videos on Facebook to highlight new products.

## Outfitting the Truck

The simplest marketing tool for mobile businesses is the truck itself, says Ann Douglas, owner of The Flower Truck SC. The mobile flower shop stops at art festivals, farmers markets and seasonal events in upstate South Carolina.

"The truck itself is a rolling billboard," Douglas says. "I love seeing the second looks people give as I drive by and the attention I get when parked and open for business is fantastic."

Douglas uses Facebook and Instagram to share The Flower Truck's next location, which she says is dictated by demand.

Selections vary seasonally, and Douglas strives to offer unusual flowers and plants. She also sells her own artwork and handmade flower crowns.

Upon arriving to each location, Douglas says, "Setting up shop is quite simple, and again, the truck and the blooms themselves garnish all the attention."

The interior of The Flower Truck has been outfitted with a custom rack that holds 18 floral cones and a worktable with kraft paper and raffia for the signature Flower Truck method of wrapping bunches, Douglas says.

The exterior has been retrofitted with a side window that opens up to create an awning. A wooden countertop flips out creating a display surface and lends to ease in making transactions. Douglas uses market baskets to hold pre-made mixed bunches of flowers and chalkboards to display pricing.

Douglas says the mobile flower shop has helped her fulfill her dream of becoming an "urban farm girl" by allowing her to set up shop at local farmers markets. But diving into the mobile business took time and research.

"I studied the idea of food trucks and eventually the notion of mobile business for about a year before rolling onto the scene in my Flower Truck," she says.

"My sage advice would be to research local city and county regulations and requirements for mobile business and street vending in addition to those in place for food trucks. While there are differences — I don't sell food being the big one — many rules are still the same."

Nelson and Pushies both say time must also be invested into the truck itself.

"We spent a lot of time and money converting the truck into a beautiful boutique," Nelson says. "To anyone who is thinking of going mobile, my suggestion is to buy the newest truck you can afford. Our truck is a 1993, and it does limit us on some of the locations we can go to; she does not do well on hills."

The mobile business model is growing, Douglas says.

"[It] will continue to expand with more innovative concepts being put into action. To that, I say, start your engine and be open to where the road takes you!"

**LGR**

