Sales were brisk from the start of Thursday. Friday we had to suspend one wire service for a few hours. Saturday we suspended all three wire services until Monday. Overall sales were up 35 percent over last year, which was a very good Mother's Day. I think what helped make the difference was that we are open Sundays from 10 to 4. When we arrived to open Sunday, 7 people were waiting at the door.

We give 200 percent in taking care of local customers and wire in orders. We came in much earlier, but we left the shop close to our regular closing time.

We are in a small town of about 9,000 and service area of about 23,000. We are completing our 5th year in business and our reputation continues to grow.

--Diane Bald
Arbour's Flower Shoppe
Penetanguishene, Ontario

I agree with the message that consumers are waiting until the VERY LAST minute to order and demanding specialty products...That is very frustrating to the retail floral industry. I could not find enough help to deliver on Friday, when the bulk of my orders had requested delivery, therefore I lost out on sales. One comment from a customer when I suggested a Saturday or Sunday delivery was: "That isn't good enough!"…. Our industry is such that we need to hire 3 to 4 times the employees for 24-48 hours, yet our facilities, yearly sales, and cost of doing business cannot accommodate this pressure cooker holiday. I cannot even get the hard goods and fresh product fast enough to turn the orders, even if I had the designers and delivery staff. Just my overview.

-- Lynne Moss AAF, AIFD, PFCI
The Flower Shoppe
Pratt, Kansas

We are a new flower shop in Scarborough, Maine (just outside of Portland). With a small amount of marketing, we completed almost 200 arrangements in during the five days surrounding Mother's Day. We were the only florists open on Sunday in this area, which also helped. We are members of FTD and 800 Flowers, and 85% of our sales were from these wire services. However, we doubled our output from Christmas and Valentine's. We were very pleased.

-- Joe and Niki Martin
Maine Floral Creations, LLC
Scarborough, Maine

I am a florist in Norwalk, Conn. My house charges were down 2,000 and some of my loyal customers seem to be going elsewhere, or maybe substituting edible arrangements, which are so popular.

The biggest problem I see with the industry is the order takers are taking our customers then give us back our order. They take 27 percent, when our net profit is about 12 percent. After 37 years as a florist, I have to rethink if I want to be florist anymore. I have tried heavy advertising to keep sales up but they stay the same. This year I am cutting back to see if sales stay stable.

-- Bruce Minoff
Bruce's Flowers
Norwalk, Conn.

Order volume was about the same in our shop, but price points were considerably lower. Overall sales for the Mother's Day holiday in our shop were off by nearly $4000. Since we basically lost Valentine's Day with the weather in the Northeast, and Mother's Day sales were below expectations, I have lost 2 of the big 3 holidays this year. Our shop will be hard pressed to continue in this manner at current levels of employment and wages. The spiraling costs of flowers and supplies, increased delivery charges from wholesalers, and lower sales volumes do not bode well for this industry. I am truly thinking of looking into another line of work after 14 years in my own business.

Our competition here comes from grocery stores and big boxes like WalMart. I bought plants, Gerbera, for $3.83 each -- the grocery store was selling them at 3 for $10.00. I cannot make a profit competing in that arena. I pay $ 0.89 a rose and they sell them for $12.99 a dozen. Quality differs, but customers do not seem to care. I do not see the future improving due to increasing food and gas costs. My customers do not have big money jobs and cannot afford extras.

--Cheryl Reifsnyder
Cherry's Flowers
Boyertown, Pa.