

Wisconsin DATCP: Is that “local” florist rooted somewhere else?

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MADISON - Imagine: Mother’s Day is nearly here, and you still need to buy a gift. A quick online search lands you a handful of flower shops in your mother’s hometown. You pick one, fire off an order and payment, and bask in the satisfying glow of accomplishment.

But wait...was that “local” flower shop really local?

Online listings or phone book ads often claim that a business is local, use a local area code, or list a local address, but you might actually be contacting a business located in another state that just coordinates the purchase and delivery of goods. If you have an issue with an order, you could have difficulty finding out who is behind the operation and getting a refund or exchange.

If you want to hire a local florist from the phone book or from an online search, do some research. Ask the business:

- Where is it specifically located? Can you visit that location to see their selection?
- What are their hours (so you can drop by to make a purchase or see the selection)?
- What time of day do they make deliveries in town and how many trucks do they have?
- What flowers are fresh or in season in the area right now?
- Do they supply flowers to a public place where you could see their arrangements and creativity?

If the salesperson refuses to provide that information, consider calling another florist. Also, if the business answers the phone with a generic phrase like “flower shop” (instead of a specific name), ask for its legal name. Again, you should be able to expect a straight answer.

Other considerations when choosing a florist include:

- Beware of offers for multiple discounts, claims of lowest prices, “A+” self-ratings and other puffery (exaggerated praise in advertising or publicity).
- Get an itemized price quote (written, if possible) for the product and delivery before you make a payment and ask about any additional fees that could potentially arise. Ask for the terms of any satisfaction guarantees that the business may offer.
- Ask specifics about the flowers that will be used in the arrangement: how many roses vs. carnations will be used, how many “filler” flowers vs. focal flowers, etc.
- Understand if a portion of your payment is used to purchase the vase and any accessories with the bouquet. Ask for alternatives if you want to spend less on accessories and more on flowers.

As part of your research, you may also wish to contact the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (Consumer Protection Hotline: 800-422-7128 or datcph hotline@wi.gov) to inquire about complaints that have been filed against a business.

For additional information or to file a complaint, visit the Consumer Protection Bureau at <https://datcp.wi.gov>.

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