

MAKING FLOWERS GROW ON STAGE

For stems and things, pull them up from above. For blossoms, borrow a trick from magicians and make petals out of silk or similar slippery fabric with very thin piano wire around the edges of the petals. The wire will allow the petals to be collapsed but expand the petals when the tension is released. You could have the petals grow through a hole in the proscenium when pushed slowly from behind.

We bent some thinwall EMT (conduit), buried it in the dirt, and pushed a plumbing snake through the conduit. We then shoved the stem of the flowers (silk flowers from the local Michael's crafts store) into the end of the snake, and pushed them back into the conduit. During the show, when it's time to bloom, a stagehand under or behind the set, pushes the snake out to the preset spike, and Voila!, growing flowers. Our Production Manager later changed the EMT to PVC for sound issues. Excellent choice. The whole gag was pretty cheap, and not too difficult to do or adjust.

I did a production of Walk in the Woods, at LJP a (few) years ago. For each flower, I made an air cylinder out of plastic pipe. The piston was a hunk of ether-foam of the proper caliber, tied off so it would not go past the end of the pipe. The silk flower was planted in the piston, and when retracted, it was hidden from sight. When a SMALL amount of air was introduced into the bottom of cylinder, the flower grew out. The ether-foam held it in place, so the air could be turned off and the flowers did not sink. (remember these ain't precision machines, they did leak a bit. Re-loading at the end of the show was accomplished with a ram-rod. What was REALLY cool (the set was made from A?B foam over an armature) was drilling the holes through the deck to install the flowers. I modified a 1-1/2" hole saw to be about 2 ft long. I then used it as a core drill to get through anywhere from 3-10" of foam, screen, etc. I had put an air fitting at the top of the 'bit' to clear the gun. Some of the pieces would make it from the loading dock to the main road at LJP (over 50 yards)
