

Country Gardens

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**Create
Cottage
Style**
with Raised Beds

Microgreens
Small Leaves,
Big Flavor

**Spring
Favorites**
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• Orchids
• Strawberries

**Cool
Collectibles**
Bulb-Forcing
Vases

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OVER THE GARDEN GATE

Interview by James A. Baggett
Photography by Mary Grace Long

What gives you the most pleasure in the garden?

Long ago, my friend Mary Robson, who has trained thousands of Master Gardeners in our area, taught me the most important way to enjoy the garden. "Be an observer," she said. When I see the changes that occur as the seasons come and go, I take pleasure in just being an observer. There are times when I catch my breath and feel my heart race because a little bud is perfectly backlit at dawn or a tiny bird is perched on the fountain's edge, giving herself a splash. Those fleeting moments of beauty mark the seasons and turn something ordinary into a priceless gift from nature.

When did you first become interested in gardening?

Like many children, I dabbled in the dirt alongside my grandparents. My paternal grandfather was famous for his peonies, and my maternal grandfather was equally famous for his prize dahlias. So I think flower gardening skipped a generation, and now I'm channeling my grandfathers' practices of maintaining a personal cutting garden.

What does being a country gardener mean to you?

Greater Seattle's population is 3.7 million people, so I definitely live in an urban setting. But being a "country gardener" is a state of mind, right? I think it means having a conscious connection to the parcel of land where I garden, no matter if it's on a busy street or under the flight pattern of the airport. My favorite quote explains my "country gardener" philosophy: "...surely, if you are privileged to own a plot of earth, it is your duty, both to God and man, to make it beautiful."—Beverley Nichols, 20th century English writer.

What inspired your newest book, *The 50-Mile Bouquet: Seasonal, Local and Sustainable Flowers*?

Seattle photographer David Perry and I collaborated on a storytelling project to document the groundbreaking changes taking place in the cut-flower industry. It began in 2006 when we met several local flower farmers who were growing gorgeous, uncommon ingredients—and they had to work hard to break through the traditional "wholesale" marketing machine to sell their crops direct to area florists. We soon realized there were similar stories of intrepid flower farmers and nontraditional floral designers all around the country. We wanted to put a face on the flower farmer—and to inspire floral designers and their customers, as well as everyday supermarket shoppers, to start asking, "Where were my flowers grown?"

What lessons has your garden taught you?

I feel like when we pay attention to what's happening in nature, our spirits and souls are enriched. The garden teaches both patience and acceptance. It also teaches that reward comes after work. Having spent all of my childhood listening to my father's sermons and my mother's Sunday school lessons, I learned a bit about giving a benediction—the promise of hope at the end of a church service. I wrote a gardener's benediction in one of my books. I think it describes my relationship with the garden: "I wish you a wonderful journey that will introduce you to many generous and supportive gardening friends ... May your gardens be free of slugs; may your soil be rich and organic; and may you enjoy equal parts of rain and sunshine."

For more information, see Resources on page 109.



Debra Prinzing

Seattle-based outdoor living expert and Country Gardens® contributing editor Debra Prinzing writes and lectures on gardens and home design. Debra is a familiar face to botanical garden, horticultural society, and flower show audiences. Her most recent book, *The 50-Mile Bouquet: Seasonal, Local and Sustainable Flowers* (St. Lynn's Press, 2012) is the first book to spotlight the dramatic transformation in how cut flowers are grown, designed, and used.