

# HOME GARDEN



DEBRA PRINZING

A simple arrangement of hydrangeas can dress up a space in the summer.



MARY GRACE LONG

Debra Prinzing is the author of "The 50 Mile Bouquet" and "Slow Flowers."



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Anemones and tulips harvested in Prinzing's back yard make up an early-spring bouquet.

## Backyard Bouquets

An author makes a case for buying locally grown flowers.

By CINDY MCNATT  
ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

We've heard about the "slow food" movement: a commitment to old techniques of harvesting and preparation and avoiding all things processed, packaged or refined. Yet with Valentine's Day, weddings and Mother's Day on the horizon, and the bonanza of all flower consumption, the Rose Parade, just over, what about the bouquets?



Debra Prinzing's popular book, "The 50 Mile Bouquet: Seasonal, Local and Sustainable Flowers" (St. Lynn's Press), co-authored with David Perry, explores the idea of using

flowers that are harvested within a 50-mile radius of our homes.

Since 80 percent of the cut flowers from online retailers and floral shops come from South America, Prinzing introduces the idea of locally grown. In California, buying local is especially easy, with hundreds of flower farms across the state.

California-grown flowers are not necessarily organic, Prinzing said. "But because of California's strict environmental laws, few cut flowers can measure up to the state's standards."

The Rose Parade, for example, began as a way to promote California's year-round growing climate.

SEE BOUQUETS • PAGE 11



California-grown orchids can be found at grocery stores.

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Cabbage roses and succulents come together in a backyard summer bouquet.

Joan Ewer Thorndike, a ranunculus and anemone grower at Le Mera Gardens in Oregon, is featured in "The 50 Mile Bouquet."

This abundant bouquet of zinnias, dahlias and grasses celebrates the height of summer.



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DAVID PERRY



DEBRA PRINZING

Orange County Register

FROM THE COVER

Saturday, Jan. 12, 2013 | Life 11

## BOUQUETS: Personal challenge grows into a book

FROM PAGE 1

As if to say, "Look at what we can grow in California in January!" Prinzing said.

Today nearly all of the flowers, seeds and other botanical trimmings that make the more than three dozen floats are imported.

When Prinzing began focusing on locally grown flowers in 2011, her challenge was to create bouquets from her back yard or local farmers markets for each of the 52 weeks of the year.

The project became a book, "Slow Flowers, Four Seasons of Locally Grown Bouquets From the Garden, Meadow and Farm" (St. Lynn's Press, to be released in February).

"I got through the winter and I thought the project would be a blog. But by spring I knew it would be another book," she said.

"Slow Flowers" is the sequel to "The 50 Mile Bouquet." Like a cookbook, it lists the ingredients for four seasons of flower arrangements.

"There is a misperception that at certain times of the year there is a limited selection of plant material for the vase, but that's when people can be the most creative."

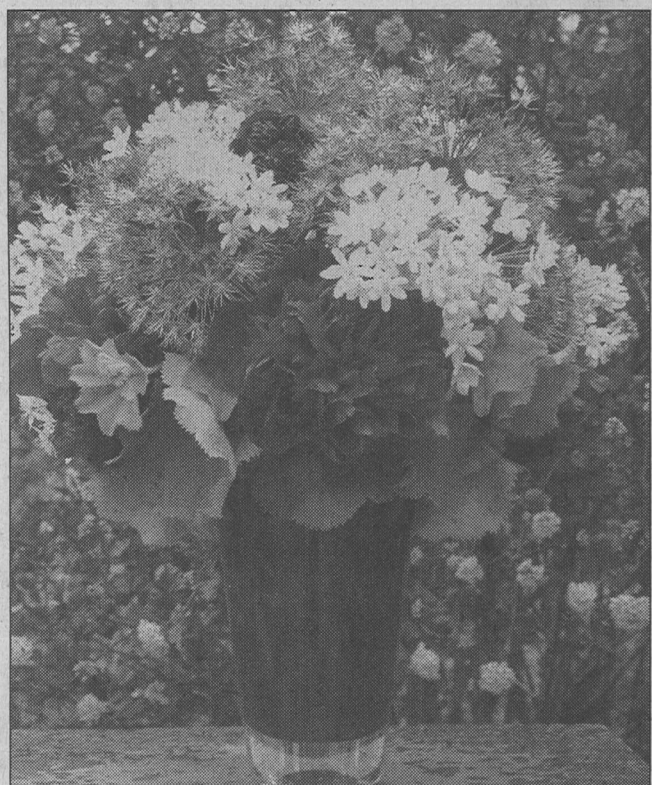
Constance Spry, a British floral arranger in the 1930s, used curly kale and even potatoes in her arrangements. "Way before better living through chemicals occurred," Prinzing said.

Prinzing finds unconventional materials such as seed heads, branches and fruit for her bouquets.

"If you don't have a garden, you can use houseplants," she said.

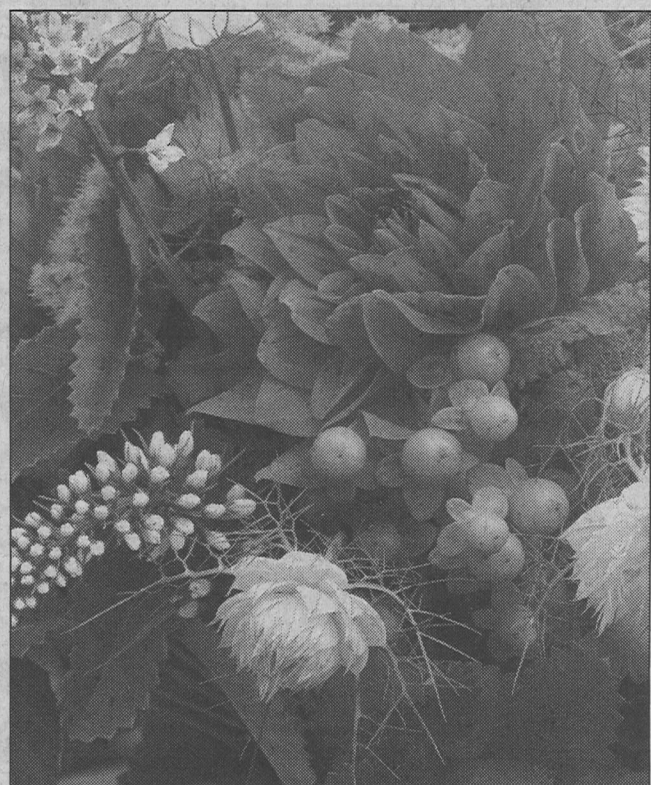
Increasingly, shoppers are also finding the California Grown label on flowers at their local market.

"I've recently come across Alaska grown or

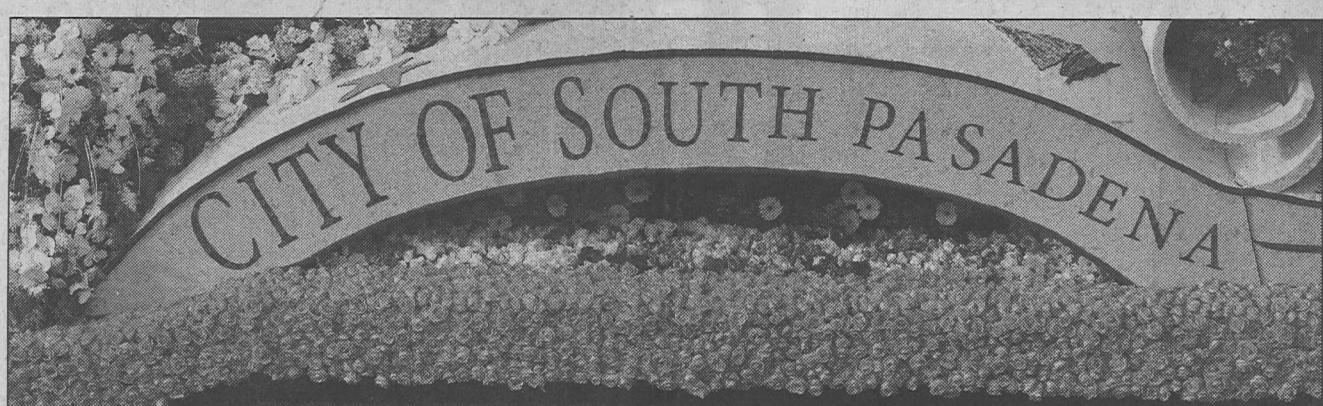


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Shoppers who buy California-grown flowers can help the environment and local economy, advocates say.



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BRUCE CHAMBERS, ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

South Pasadena's Rose Parade float, "Sailing the Sea of Knowledge," was a "California Grown Certified" entry, using California-grown flowers exclusively.

Texas grown, but California is definitely the bulk of it," Prinzing said.

Slow flowers are about more than the environmental toll that cut flowers can take. Choosing locally grown flowers also strengthens the economy.

Kasey Cronquist, CEO of the California Cut Flower Commission, said federal trade policies reward flower farmers from countries like Colombia and Ecuador,

while California farmers are losing their land.

"In 1991, we had over 500 flower farms in California," he said. "Today we have half that."

It's more than sending jobs overseas. Cronquist says we are letting go of generations of knowledge from our farm communities, while shoppers are not aware of where their flowers come from.

You can find California-

grown flowers with the blue "CA GROWN" license-

plate-looking label at Trader Joe's, Vons, Safeway, Bristol Farms and some Whole Foods stores. You can buy farm-grown bouquets online at [floralambiance.com](http://floralambiance.com).

But as far as floats go, it's one float at a time, Cronquist said.

South Pasadena's float is the oldest entry in the parade. This year the float

organizers have cycled back to using California-grown flowers exclusively.

"Their float along with Cal Poly Pomona's were the two certified California-grown this year by the state's food and agriculture secretary," Cronquist said.

Prinzing didn't think she was a floral designer when she began "The 50 Mile Bouquet."

"I am a writer and a gardener," she said. But she

### See for yourself

Most flower farms in the state are commercial businesses growing for the cut-flower trade. But drive north on Highway 101 from Santa Barbara in the spring and summer, and you're bound to see a few farms in full bloom from your car.

Flower growers that are open to the public are few. Here are some:

**Carpinteria Greenhouse and Nursery Tour**

Various greenhouses and fields are open for one day on this self-guided tour. 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. April 13. Free. [Carpinteriafarmtours.com](http://Carpinteriafarmtours.com)

**The Flower Fields of Carlsbad**

Rainbows of ranunculus and greenhouses with poinsettias are highlights here. Spring is the best time to visit. Check the live cam for bloom abundance at [theflowerfields.com](http://theflowerfields.com) to get an idea of how the blooms are developing before you head south.

**Dramm & Echter, Encinitas**

Wholesale grower of calla lilies, gerberas, wax flowers and greenhouse bulbs.

Open for school and group tours by appointment. 800-854-7021

started with fabulous floral material from her own yard, and every time she visited a farm she came home with buckets of amazing stuff.

"Then I'd interview a floral designer and learn some new technique."

Prinzing shares her discoveries and designs in "Slow Flowers," due Feb. 1 and available for preorder at [DebraPrinzing.com](http://DebraPrinzing.com).

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