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HOME & DESIGN

BOOKS

A bouquet of ideas for the best blooms

When Debra Prinzing talks about “Slow Flowers,” the title of her new book, what’s most striking is the extent to which concepts that sound so familiar also can seem so foreign. After all, how many times have we picked up flowers at Trader Joe’s without asking ourselves: Are the blooms in season? Were they grown locally? Who produced them, and where did they come from?

You might find those kinds of sourcing questions answered on menus but rarely on store-bought bouquets.

Prinzing’s book, subtitled “Four Seasons of Locally Grown Bouquets From the Garden, Meadow and Farm” (\$16.95, St. Lynn’s Press), started as something of a challenge to herself: Could she create 52 flower arrangements — one for each week of the year — using botanical materials from her own garden supplemented by flowers from friends and other local sources? The goal was to see flowers not as a commodity but rather as a connection to local growers — and to her own garden.

For those inclined to try their hand at flower arranging, the author, also a Times contributor, walks readers through page after page of how-to advice. A sampling of the book’s tips:



Photographs by DEBRA PRINZING

1 Worried about using florist’s foam, which often is manufactured with formaldehyde? Use twigs for a handmade grid that can hold stems in place. Cut the twigs 2 inches wider than the top of a square or rectangular glass vase and lash them with twine-wrapped wire available at craft stores.



2 Want to hide stems in a glass vase? Stuff it with excelsior, the wood fiber used to ship wine bottles. It acts as an anchor and has a neutral, organic look that complements, and does not compete, with the arrangement.



3 Want to maximize the life span of cut flowers? Tailor their care. Some hydrangeas have a tendency to wilt fast in a vase but can be brought back to life with a cool, 15-minute bath in the kitchen sink. Peonies stay fresh longer if chilled in the refrigerator at least 24 hours before going into a container. Prinzing’s book gives other species-specific advice.



4 When flowers do start to die, snip rather than pull. If you yank out the whole stem, you risk ruining an artful arrangement. Instead, simply snip the expired flower. Leave the base of the stem in place, and the rest of the arrangement won’t shift.

— CRAIG NAKANO