



Alberta Martinez holds an armful of white gerbera daisies as she picks them for shipment at Dramm & Echter Inc., longtime flower growers in Encinitas. Below right are close-up views of the blooms of two other gerbera daisy varieties, ready for shipment. CHARLIE NEUMAN • U-T PHOTOS

# Build a bouquet

DEBRA PRINZING • SPECIAL TO THE U-T

**W**hen it comes to buying or giving flowers, most of us have two options: The first is through our fingertips, at the touch of a telephone or computer — far from the fields or greenhouses where cut flowers are typically grown. Many of us send or receive generic bouquets, only to discover that they are missing their souls (or at least their scent). My friend Mary-Kate recently complained about the lackluster Mother's Day bouquet delivered when her son called a 1-800 floral service. "At least he earned a few airline miles with the order," she conceded.

The second, more soulful and satisfying way to acquire cut flowers results in an entirely different sort of bouquet. Let's call it a "slow bouquet," gathered from within our own community, imposing little or no carbon footprint on the environment. There's romance, nostalgia, sensory pleasure and visual beauty in blooms grown and gathered from our own gardens, from friends' backyards and even from local fields. We know where those buds, stems, branches and berries came from — and who grew them. Our relationship with that vase of flowers is a

SEE LOCAL FLOWERS • E5

Join the 'slow flower' movement and discover resources from local growers or your own backyard



**If, indeed, flowers are a luxury, then all the more reason we should care about their impact on the environment.**

## Keeping it local

Here's what you can do to bring more local blooms into your home, celebrations and everyday life:

- Whenever you purchase flowers, ask: Where were these flowers grown? Who grew them? What growing practices were used?
- Support local flower farmers. Meet them at your local farmers market or search Web resources like the Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers ([www.ascfg.org](http://www.ascfg.org)), which lists farms in all 50 states.
- Request that your supermarket buy from local growers. Ask your florist to do the same.
- Appreciate the seasons — in your own garden and vase.

DEBRA PRINZING



Julia Camarillo harvests gerbera daisies at Dramm & Echter Inc.

donation from Lowe's for Olivewood Gardens and Learning Center with her Baja-inspired design for an outdoor room.

The chef's "Colors and Textures of Baja" outdoor room received the most Facebook votes in Lowe's Designer Challenge. She was competing on behalf of National City's Olive-

curriculum and culinary lessons to area children and their families.

Valladolid, who grew up in Baja, is the star of "Mexican Made Easy" on the Food network. She created a room that featured succulent plants in a hanging garden and patio furniture, accents and paint colors that reflected the ocean

## LOCAL FLOWERS • Growers in the county supply the wholesale market; some sell to the public

FROM E1  
personal one.

As witnessed in the culinary world's explosion of farm-to-table restaurants and rock-star local chefs, a growing number of consumers is embracing the notion of field-to-vase flowers.

It's exciting to discover floral resources close to home, rather than settle for imported blooms (which, sadly, account for 80 percent of all cut flowers sold in the U.S.). When the California Cut Flower Commission surveyed consumers, asking: "Do you know where your flowers come from?" 85 percent did not. When asked whether they would buy California-grown flowers if given a choice, 55 percent said "yes."

I believe that the Buy Local quest has rapidly expanded from American-made automobiles or artisanal honey at the farmers market to the flowers we buy for our vases. By supporting passionate flower farmers and eco-conscious florists with our dollars, we make an important connection with nature and the seasons. Brides, party hosts and gift-givers are discovering the pleasure of local, seasonal and sustainable flowers.

In search of the people and stories behind this cultural shift, I sought to put a face on the flowers I loved. With Seattle photographer David E. Perry, I spent nearly four years visiting America's flower farms, touring floral studios and scouring farmers' markets, looking for confirmation that the emerging "green" consumer movement includes flowers.

I've been told that advocating for a healthier (local) alternative to imported flowers is frivolous. "We don't eat flowers, so why should we care how they were grown?" skeptics argue. "Flowers are a luxury good, so what's the big deal?"

Our response: If, indeed, flowers are a luxury, then all the more reason we should care about their impact on the environment.

Fortunately for residents of San Diego County (and much of California, for that matter), local flowers are readily available. California flower farmers produce 75 percent of all cut flowers grown domestically. You can't drive the



ONLINE

To see a gallery of photos from Dramm & Echter flower farm, go to [utsandiego.com/gerberadaisies/](http://utsandiego.com/gerberadaisies/)

## Finding flowers

Fill your vase with the bounty of San Diego area flower farms:

**Dramm & Echter (Encinitas):** [www.drammechter.com](http://www.drammechter.com). Dramm & Echter sells to the public at The Little Italy Mercato and Rancho Santa Fe farmers markets. The flower farm grows a wide variety of blooms, including gerberas, lilies, roses and succulents.

**Rainbow Protea (Fallbrook):** [www.rainbowprotea.com](http://www.rainbowprotea.com). Specializing in proteas, Rainbow Protea sells freshly made bouquets to the public on its website.

back roads of Fallbrook or Encinitas without seeing fields of brilliant bloom color — in almost every month of the year.

After being harvested, many of these ingredients are transported to the wholesale market, including San Diego International Floral Trade Center; the L.A. Flower Market or to supermarkets and florists. Occasionally, it's possible to buy directly from the farmer — and one way to find local flower farms is to visit the California Cut Flower Commission's website ([www.cffc.org](http://www.cffc.org)).

Debra Prinzing is the author of "The 50 Mile Bouquet: Seasonal, Local and Sustainable Flowers," created with photographer David E. Perry.

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