

GARDEN

BOOKS

Pushing locally grown petals

By **Sophia Markoulakis**

Grappling with the magnitude of a toxic \$40 billion worldwide floriculture industry is a subculture of flower growers, flower arrangers and studio florists who would much prefer we use our buying power to promote local and sustainable blooms. Journalist and author Debra Prinzing, along with photographer David E. Perry, spent three years documenting the pioneers of the trending “slow-flower” movement in their recently released book “The 50 Mile Bouquet: Seasonal, Local and Sustainable Flowers” (St. Lynn’s Press; 2012).

The book is separated into four chapters, with the first two introducing readers to the farmers and designers that cultivate and work with these seasonal items. The other two chapters offer readers DIY tutorials in seasonal bouquet arranging and ideas for incorporating easily obtainable flowers and foliage into all types and sizes of celebrations. The back of the book offers a seasonal guide, grower and designer resources, and a handy glossary.

Perry does a great job of giving a sense of place to the flowers he photographs, whether they are waiting to be harvested in the fields or bundled and waiting for purchase. Most of us have access to the flowers that fill the pages, and the numerous design tips and suggestions make it a great purchase for those looking to learn more about this new topic that really isn’t that trendy after all.

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Photos by David E. Perry / St. Lynn’s Press

The succulent mixed bouquet

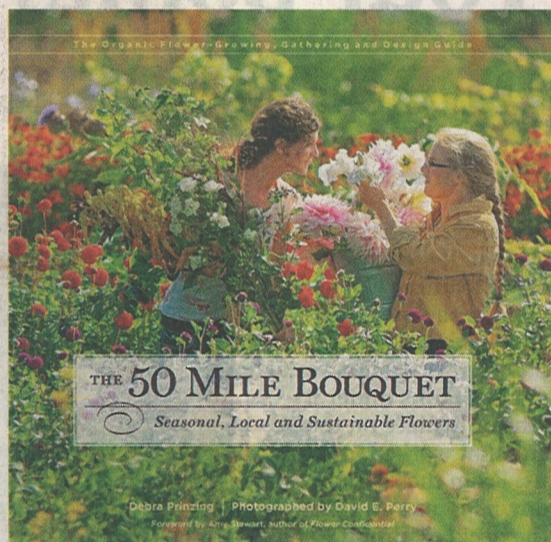
Adapted from “The 50 Mile Bouquet.” Succulent plants like echeveria, aeonium and graptopetalum are the secret ingredients in bouquets made by Susie Nadler for the Cutting Garden in San Francisco. Nadler likes that these plants often last for months out of the ground (some eventually produce their own roots and can be replanted to be enjoyed long after a special event).

Tools

- Floral scissors
- Garden pruners
- 16- to 18-gauge wire and cutters
- Floral tape
- 12- inch high vase with 7-inch opening

Ingredients

- 3 to 5 floral stems from succulent plants and/or tillandsias
- 3 to 5 dahlias and hydrangea blooms in a palette that complements the succulents
- 6 to 10 branches of fluffy foliage from a woody shrub (Nadler selected Abelia, a fragrant shrub with small green leaves and copper-pink sepals.)
- 6 to 10 stems of oregano (as foliage)
- 6 to 10 stems each of accents including dark purple pin-cushion flower and white Queen Anne’s lace



Instructions: Cut a floret from the succulent plant, leaving a 3-inch stem. Strip off lower leaves and rinse with clean water.

Insert a length of 16- to 18-gauge wire into the base. Cut wire so it is as long as the other flowers in your design.

Wrap the stem with green floral tape.

For tillandsias or air plants, use a slightly finer wire, and insert it through the plant’s base without puncturing the root ball. Fold back 2 or 3 of the outer leaves along the wire “stem” and wrap with floral tape as described in Step 3.

Fill vase with water. Begin by placing the largest or most showy succu-

lent so that it hangs over the lip of the vase.

Add other large flowers, including the dahlias and hydrangeas, rotating the vase as you work to achieve balance in form and color. Insert one or two medium-size succulents or tillandsias so they are distributed throughout the bouquet.

Use soft filler, such as abelia and oregano, between the larger flowers. Remove any leaves that are underwater.

Evenly distribute accent flowers.

Fill in empty spots with more floral texture and color. The succulents will last up to a month or more; fresh cut ingredients should last 5 days or more. Change water every 2 days.

Meet the author at SFMade Week

Author Debra Prinzing will be in San Francisco May 12 and 13 for SFMade Week, Monday through May 13.

More than 44 retailers will be participating in factory tours, educational events and shopping adventures throughout the city, with 10 percent of sales going toward programs of SFMade, an organization that supports local manufacturing.

At noon on Saturday, Prinzing will sign copies of her book at Stable Cafe, 2128 Folsom St., along with eco-floral designer Baylor Chapman of Lila B. Design. On May 13, Prinzing will be at Flora Grubb Gardens, 1634 Jerrold Ave., for a 1 p.m. talk and book signing. For more information, go to www.sfmadeweek.org.

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