

Slow Flowers: Four Seasons of Locally Grown Bouquets from the Garden, Meadow and Farm

By Debra Prinzing

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The slow food movement (with its hundreds of thousands of members and supporters) has changed our relationship with the foods in our lives. Now the slow flower movement is changing the way we think about cut flowers: Yes, we'd all prefer fresh, fragrant flowers in our bouquets, not the chemical-laden lifeless blooms flown in from afar - but what to do in those seasons when not much is growing locally? Acclaimed garden writer Debra Prinzing challenged herself to create a beautiful, locally-grown bouquet for each of 52 weeks of one year (going beyond flowers to include ornamental twigs, foliage, greenhouse plants, dried pods, and more), to demonstrate that all four seasons have their own botanical character to be celebrated. She provides extensive design tips, bouquet "recipes" and region-by-region floral ingredient lists that can be found in all climate zones through the year. *Slow Flowers* is written from a DIY floral designer's point of view, to inspire anyone to go green and make a beautiful bouquet with what's at hand, no matter the season.

The Garden Writers Association has recognized Slow Flowers with a 2014 Silver Award of Achievement 


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Slow Flowers: Four Seasons of Locally Grown Bouquets from the Garden, Meadow and Farm By Debra Prinzing **Bibliography**

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Editorial Review

Review

From Debbie Arrington of the Sacramento Bee:

""The mother of the Slow Flower movement, Prinzing is making a personal crusade to encourage people to think about floral purchases the same way they may approach what they eat: Buy locally grown flowers or grow them yourself.""

From Ballamy Pailthorp, KPLU-FM (NPR affiliate):

""...an impassioned advocate for a more sustainable flower industry.""

""Debra Prinzing inspires us to slow down and smell the flowers, especially those grown in our own backyards or by local flower farmers.

--Lara Spencer, ABC's Good Morning America lifestyle anchor and New York Times best-selling author of *I Brake For Yard Sales*.

From Craig Nakano, LA Times, February 25, 2013:

""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 and so logical 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 or where did they come from? You might find those kinds of sourcing questions answered on menus but rarely on store-bought bouquets.""

From the Author

From the INTRODUCTION to Debra Prinzing's "*Slow Flowers*"

My 52 Weeks of Local Flowers

One of the joys of gardening is to step out my back door and clip a few sprigs to bring inside. The day's prettiest blooms and just-unfurled leaves -- gathered simply into a bunch and displayed in a jar of water -- provide everything I need to start the day. The tiny arrangement graces my kitchen counter or brightens a spot by the keyboard, connecting me with the natural world even when I'm "stuck" indoors, away from my beloved garden.

Is this floral design?

I guess it is, but like many avid gardeners, I certainly never considered myself a florist. After all, despite hundreds of hours of horticulture training, I never once studied the art of flowers, other than one weekend class on liturgical arrangements that I took with my friend Britt Olson, who is an Episcopal priest. Floral design was an entirely different sort of activity for which I wasn't qualified (I thought). I'm a writer and a lover of plants, but not an artist.

I have written about floral design for years, interviewing top florists around the country for articles in magazines like *Seattle Bride*, *Romantic Homes* and *Sunset*. I loved reporting those stories, and I have to admit feeling a twinge of jealousy as I listened to flower artists answer questions about their style and technique, their use of botanicals and vessels - and especially their inspiration.

I have spent my life observing and writing about creative people. But I didn't really believe that I was one of them! I was the classic journalist: a detached outsider documenting what she heard and saw.

Yet writers are sponges, and we are driven by an insatiable, need-to-know curiosity. In pursuit of our stories, we can't help but absorb knowledge about myriad topics, taught to us by generous subjects whose own passion is infectious. That's exactly what happened to me while story-gathering for my most recent project, *The 50 Mile Bouquet*. I loved shaping the narrative about the many talented individuals who are part of the local flower movement.

While working on that book with photographer David Perry, my own bouquet-making activity was on the rise. I was beginning to see the gardens around me in a new way -- in all four seasons rather than only during July when the perennials peaked. The palette of possibilities expanded greatly, thanks to my interviews with the gifted flower farmers and designers profiled in *The 50 Mile Bouquet*.

My spontaneous bouquet-making gestures soon became a weekly ritual. I discovered that just like designing a container garden or a display border, there is great satisfaction in choosing flowers and companion elements and assembling them into a beautiful composition in just the right vase.

I often photographed my design process. Documenting each step seemed like a good idea, either for my own reference, for a blog post or to illustrate a future lecture.

One day in the fall of 2011, I had a brainstorm that led to the creation of this book, *Slow Flowers*. I jotted down some ideas, including this one:

There's a common misconception that it's impossible, or at least tricky, to find enough beautiful ingredients in one's own garden or region during certain times of the year for creating interesting seasonal floral arrangements. Taking the Do-it-Yourself designer's point of view, I want to disprove that notion by making bouquet-a-week -- all year long.

My goal was to inspire others to create personal bouquets with what's at hand, if only they begin to see what's around them with new eyes.

I launched the project in 2011 and continued it for 52 weeks. As each season unfolded, so, too, did my passion for floral design. My experiment turned into a month-by-month book of ideas and inspiration for gardeners and DIY floral designers.

WHY SLOW FLOWERS?

The idea for the title of this book emerged organically. We had used the term "Slow Flowers" as part of the marketing for *The 50 Mile Bouquet*, and to our surprise, nearly every major newspaper and magazine that reviewed the book picked up on it as a reference to a cultural shift in consumer attitudes toward local, seasonal and sustainably-grown flowers.

So when editor Cathy Dees and publisher Paul Kelly and I got serious about a book title, *Slow Flowers* seemed like the "just-right" description of my one-year floral design experiment. Thanks to the culinary pioneers who popularized the Slow Food movement, it now seems like you can put "Slow" in front of any term to convey a different philosophy or approach to that subject. When I say the phrase, there are those who immediately understand Slow Flowers to mean: I have made a conscious choice.

My blooms, buds, leaves and vines are definitely in season; not, for example, grown elsewhere in the world during the wet, cold winter months in my hometown of Seattle. So come December and January, my commitment to sourcing locally-grown floral materials sends me to the conifer boughs, colored twigs, berry-producing evergreens and the occasional greenhouse-grown rose, lily or tulip just to satisfy my hunger for a bloom.

Slow Flowers reflects life lived in the slower lane. My family, friends and professional colleagues know that it's almost impossible for me to do anything slowly. I'm the queen of multitasking; I just can't help myself. There are too many exciting opportunities (or bright, shiny objects) that command my interest. But this "year in flowers" was altogether different. I can only compare it to the practice of praying or meditating. I didn't realize that those few hours I spent each week, gathering and choosing petals and stems, arranging them in a special vessel, and then figuring out where and how to capture the finished design through my camera lens, would be so personally enriching.

I used all my senses. Unplugged, away from electronic distractions, I studied the form, line, texture, subtle color and utter uniqueness of each stem. What a gift to slow down and experience the moment. I don't know

much about Ikebana, but I understand that silence and contemplation of nature are part of its practice. I experienced something similar. *Slow Flowers* forced me to work at a decidedly different pace as I embraced creativity, fearlessly.

I learned about my own preferences, design style and ability to look at the world of floral ingredients in an unconventional way. I learned that I really am a floral designer. Like me, you don't have to earn a certificate from the London School of Floral Design to create seasonally-inspired bouquets. You can find local blooms in your or your friends' garden, or from the fields, meadows and farm stands of local flower growers. Each bouquet tells a story about one moment in time, about Grandmother's cherished flower vase or the fleeting memory that returns with a whiff of lavender or lilac. That's one of the intangible gifts of bringing flowers into our lives.

I love the old-fashioned definition of a Florist, appropriately portrayed in a flower shop sign I noticed on a visit to Chicago: "One in the business of raising or selling flowers and ornamental plants."

That description underscores my new-found belief that if you grow flowers and ornamental plants, you can also arrange them.

Gardeners are especially qualified in the art of floral design. After all, we have an intimate relationship with our plants, their bloom cycle, their natural form and character - and their seasonality. We also know what colors and textures we like when combined in the landscape. A vase can be just a little garden, its contents gathered and arranged to please the eye.

So give it a try. Design a bouquet. Channel your inner floral designer and begin your own year with *Slow Flowers*.

From the Back Cover

52 Weeks of Fresh Flowers First there was "slow food." Now there's "slow flowers," local and fresh: no chemical-laden, lifeless blooms flown in from afar. Acclaimed garden writer Debra Prinzing wants to show us the rich, floral bounty closer to home. In "Slow Flowers," she takes us through the seasons to create 52 vibrant, sensual bouquets using "only" locally sourced materials - even in winter.

In this lushly photographed book, the DIY floral designer will find expert tips, bouquet recipes, eco-friendly arranging techniques... and a comprehensive index with climate zone information for each botanical ingredient.

"Debra Prinzing inspires us to slow down and smell the flowers, especially those grown in our own backyards or by local flower farmers." -Lara Spencer, ABC's Good Morning America lifestyle anchor and author of "I Brake for Yard Sales"

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Margaret Burton:

The book *Slow Flowers: Four Seasons of Locally Grown Bouquets from the Garden, Meadow and Farm* can give more knowledge and information about everything you want. So just why must we leave the great thing like a book *Slow Flowers: Four Seasons of Locally Grown Bouquets from the Garden, Meadow and Farm*? Some of you have a different opinion about reserve. But one aim in which book can give many information for us. It is absolutely appropriate. Right now, try to closer with your book. Knowledge or facts that you take for that, you could give for each other; you could share all of these. Book *Slow Flowers: Four Seasons of Locally Grown Bouquets from the Garden, Meadow and Farm* has simple shape nevertheless, you know: it has great and big function for you. You can appear the enormous world by open and read a book. So it is very wonderful.

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Jonathan Zahn:

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Tina Alley:

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