

SLOW FLOWERS

Journal

2024 FLORAL INSIGHTS + INDUSTRY FORECAST



SIMPLICITY

ABOUT THE FORECAST

The ritual of compiling an annual “trend report” is as familiar as listing one’s New Year’s resolutions, but for those of us who watch consumer lifestyle changes, it can be an informative way to evaluate the direction of our individual floral businesses. For Slow Flowers Society and BLOOM Imprint, we happily embrace the exercise. We gather insights, draw from interviews, turn to market research, and scour expert resources to predict cultural shifts on the horizon. Knowing about these cultural shifts assists you in preparing for the year ahead.

We filled our idea folders as the 2023 calendar year progressed. We collected links to articles and interviews, shared screenshots of Instagram posts, read PDFs of books we’ve been sent to review, and discussed our lived experiences, season by season. To this treasure trove of ideas, we draw from first-person conversations. We gather impressions about lifestyle themes that are moving to the forefront of our awareness.

The insights you read here reflect a full year of intelligence gathering, including member surveys and hundreds of interviews for stories and episodes of the Slow Flowers Podcast. Debra Prinzing is inspired by her wide-ranging conversations with florists, growers, experts, influencers, makers, and educators. BLOOM Imprint’s creative director, Robin Avni, contributes her point of view and expertise in cultural and consumer trend-watching, applying timely lifestyle insights to share with you.

BLOOM Imprint is scheduling insight presentations for organizations and businesses. Reach out if you’re interested in taking a deeper dive into these insights and how to leverage for your interests.

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY
DAVID FENTON

From the book



THE FRAGRANT FLOWER GARDEN

Growing, Arranging,
and Preserving
Natural Scents
by Stefani Bittner
and
Alethea Haramopolis

Photography
by David Fenton

Ten Speed Press, 2024

YOU CAN ORDER THE
BOOK [HERE](#)

IT’S SIMPLE

After recently spending time with famed British floral designer Shane Connolly during his stop in Seattle, we can’t stop thinking about a lesson he shared. Shane drew our attention to “The Abundance of Less,” a book by [Andy Couturier](#). As he applied his concept of cherishing the season’s best choices to floral practices, Shane urged us to appreciate the blooms and stems that the garden offers and to design with attention and intention. These ideas seem entirely fitting as guiding principles for this year’s forecast.

We’re calling 2024 The Year of Simplicity.

At the heart of it, this topic is values-driven. Yes, it means making seasonality and sustainability more central to our floral enterprises, but in the larger cultural context, we believe that increasingly, “seeking less” is a reaction to the reality of the times.

As evidenced by the deeply discounted holiday shopping season, many people, including our customers and clients, are having a tough go of it. This emotion can’t help but permeate decisions on how they shop and budget. Following a year of inflation and price pressure, people want to know their dollar is going to go further and that their dollars are doing good for their community and the planet. They are more selective in how and why they spend.

In the following pages we present seven important insights to influence your thinking in the New Year. Each theme has supporting material, including examples from the larger culture and the Slow Flowers community. We share data from the 2024 Slow Flowers Member Survey, and we wrap up the insight by reflecting on “What It Means for Business.”

More than ever, the value of simplicity should inform our approach to consumption, to the methods and materials we use as growers or designers, or to our personal footprint. The Slow Flowers practitioner is uniquely situated to empower their community with a sense of “doing better,” practicing wellness and self-care, and making safer choices.

Simplicity is the antidote to what we otherwise can’t control.

NATIVE FLORA

Paying closer attention to our ecosystems, more of us are recognizing indigenous flora, and valuing its benefits to wildlife, soil health, and providing uncommon beauty in bloom, leaf, and pod. Interest in native plants aligns with an awareness that small actions can help address climate change. As flower farmers add native plant species to their crop mixes, they inspire florists seeking inspiration for naturalistic designs that highlight the native flora.

BY THE NUMBERS

2024 Slow Flowers
Member Survey

Q: Do you grow native plant species (annuals, perennials, woody plants) as part of your crop mix?

87% YES

13% NO

SEELY FARM TRIALS

Top "winners" from
Seeley Farm trials

Northern sea oats
Wooly bulrush
Little bluestem
Mountain mint
Amsonia
Baptisia
Solomon's seal

[WEBSITE](#) | [INSTAGRAM](#)

WHAT IT MEANS FOR BUSINESS

From improving pollinator habitat to shifting toward regenerative growing practices, native perennials, grasses, bulbs, and other botanicals offer myriad environmental benefits to your floral enterprise.

In last year's forecast, we noted the work of flower farmer **Alexandra Cacciari** of Ann Arbor-based Seeley Farm, who spent two years evaluating native perennials as cut flowers. Her work has influenced several Slow Flowers members who are now exploring native plants as potential floral design elements. Flower farms that propagate native varieties may discover potentially new sustainable sources of revenue. Likewise, as florists increase their awareness of native habitats, they will embrace the seasonality of perennial flower crops.

Incorporating native plants into your farm or garden means learning a new floral language. In the following pages, we feature examples from two inspiring Slow Flowers members whose use of native plants engages customers who desire sustainable flowers. **Holly Lukasiewicz** of **District 2 Floral Studio** designed a late-summer wedding with native prairie flowers for clients interested in bees and pollinators. **Deborah Majerus** of **Iron Butterfly Farm**, renovated the landscape at her guesthouse by replacing a grass lawn with native flowers and grasses. Her property is now a demonstration garden that helps combat climate change.

ADDITIONAL READING

[A SHORTAGE OF NATIVE SEEDS IS SLOWING LAND RESTORATION \(NPR\)](#)

[HAVING AN ECOLOGICALLY RESPONSIBLE LANDSCAPE \(NYTIMES\)](#)

[NEW NATURALISM \(BOOK\)](#)



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NATIVE FLORA



A NATURAL WEDDING

Omaha, Nebraska-based florist Holly Lukasiewicz says that within the circle of local farmers from whom she sources design ingredients, many are beginning to offer native perennials that are cultivated specifically for cut flowers. Interest in native prairie plants also extends to couples, like Kellie and James, the Omaha couple who requested all native perennial blooms for their September reception.

"Kellie came to me with a very specific list, complete with the Latin names that she wanted represented," says Holly, owner of District 2 Floral Studio. Many native perennial blooms (or "wildflowers") don't have the same longevity as a specialty cut flower," she notes. "They can behave differently than flowers that are cultivated or bred to be used as a cut flower. I learned a lot through this process!"

Holly sourced from five area flower growers to collect the bride's wish list, creating a floral headpiece and boutonniere, as well as 30 table centerpieces for the couple's event. Local native perennial varieties included:

- Blue pitcher sage
- Bull thistle
- Goldenrod (2 varieties)
- Hoary vervain
- Little bluestem
- Liatris
- Oak leaves
- Sunflower varieties
- Upright coneflower

[WEBSITE](#) | [INSTAGRAM](#)



GROWING NATIVE PLANTS TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE

BY DEBORAH MAJERUS | IRON BUTTERFLY FARM AND LODGING

Minnesota, the land of 10,000 lakes, is getting warmer and wetter, yet we still face water supply issues. In cities and on farms, we are drawing water out of aquifers at a level that is not sustainable.

If it's raining more, doesn't that rain water just recharge the aquifers? Not if it lands on hardscaped cities, where it gets funneled away over concrete, taking contaminants with it that end up in the streams, rivers, and oceans. If rainfall lands on bare ground which has not been tilled and not cover-cropped, with no living roots in the soil, then not only does the rain wash away, but the precious top soil does, as well.

Lawns that are mono-cropped with grass have an unnatural state. The roots of turf lawns are only a few inches deep; think rolls of sod. Soil under that sod is compacted and rainwater runs off of its surface instead of soaking into its roots.

Mother Nature's elegant, original design could be found in Minnesota prairies with plants and roots that grew 5 to 15 feet into the soil, acting like a giant moisture sponge!

I love the image of rain that lands on the prairie's flowers and grasses. It doesn't roll away; rather, it soaks in, because the prairie's deep roots combat compaction, and those roots filter contaminants before the water reaches the aquifer.

Despite Minnesota receiving more overall rainfall each year, excess rain tends to occur during springtime, with more drought-like climate conditions occurring in the summer. Neither scenario is good for farmers or residential landscapes. Traditionally, farmers in Minnesota

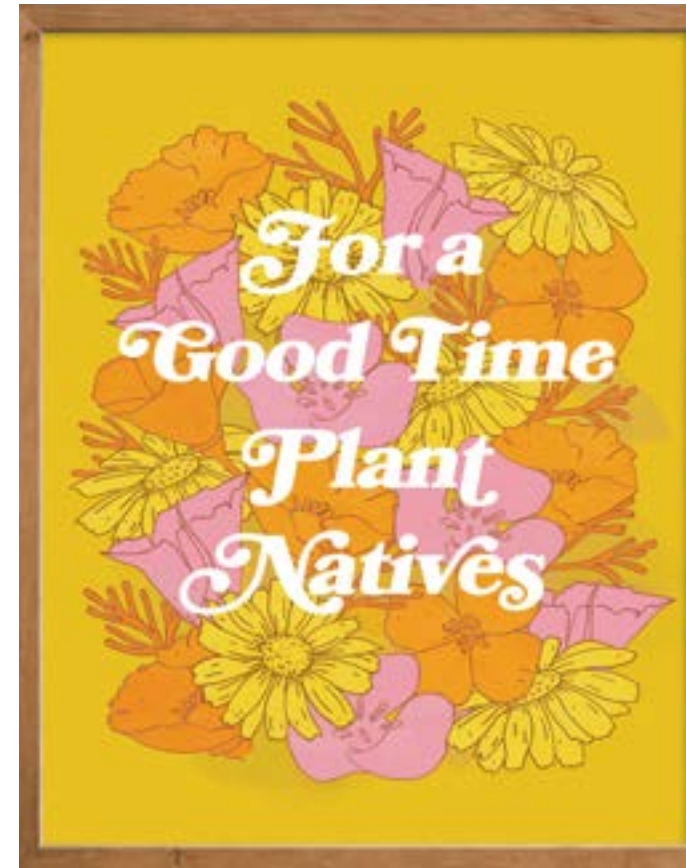
have been concerned about draining excess spring precipitation away from their fields. But now, some farmers are starting to re-contour the land to slow down runoff and help water soak in. They are capturing the runoff in man-made ponds to contain seasonal excess for irrigation during the dry spells. This is a permaculture concept, and can be applied on a large or small scale.

We have started re-contouring our land, and it is a goal of ours at Iron Butterfly Flower Farm to implement water capture systems for resiliency, and continue to plant native prairie plants. Our garden's deep prairie roots also sequester carbon from the atmosphere into the soil, combating climate change.

What can you do? Replace some grass lawn with native flowers and grasses. Lawns are deserts to pollinators. They offer nothing to eat, no habitat for wildlife, use up precious water groundwater, and oftentimes absorb chemical herbicides, which also kills all the good microbes in the soil.

Native plants are more resistant to flooding and drought. Farming with perennial grains or native flowers means you don't have to worry about your fields flooding in the spring; the plants are already established and there's no seed to wash away.

Farmers here are starting to plant strips of prairie plants and hedgerows like the old days. These plantings provide wind breaks, deep roots, and habitat for birds (which can eat pests). Native prairie plants attract beneficial insects that help to manage pests in the garden or farm. Tree and shrub roots and native prairie plants sequester



IT'S A GOOD THING

California artist and illustrator Lesley Goren is interested in "place," be it the woods, the city, or somewhere in between. She creates work depicting the beauty of California's natural environments, as well as informational illustrations explaining plant and fire ecology. Her drawings are contemporary and lively while remaining scientifically accurate. She loves using images and text to make ideas more accessible.

This art print is a super fun way to show your love of natives. The original design features California Poppies, Mariposa Lilies, and Coast Sunflowers. The friendly text reads "For a Good Time Plant Natives." Color and typography inspire the retro 1970s vibe.

\$25 plus shipping. Details: 8 x 10 inches, signed on back, unframed, packaged in a plant-based clear sleeve.

[WEBSITE](#) | [INSTAGRAM](#)

carbon from our atmosphere into the soil, and the flowers provide for our pollinators, add beauty, and can also be used as good cut flowers for a country bouquet.

Farmers love the land. I think farmers are going to be some of the real heroes of climate change as we know better and do better; in many ways, we are going back to the way things were done years ago.

My gardens and fields are my happy places. That's where you'll find me most of the growing season. I'm planting more hedgerows, native prairie plants, and perennial flowers. I keep telling my family, "Once we get these in, then we just become caretakers. We don't have to keep replanting." They shake their heads at me and smile.

At the Iron Butterfly rental property, located just down the street, we installed trenches to capture the many inches of rainfall flowing off the roof, redirecting it to soak into the soil. Then we planted native prairie flowers and grasses.

Now this former lawn no longer needs watering from the aquifers; it captures the rainwater, filters it, creates habitat for pollinators, sequesters carbon into the ground, filters ground water, and doesn't need mowing!

In summary, native prairie plants help combat climate change and decrease our carbon footprint in the following ways:

- The deep roots sequester carbon into the ground
- They also combat compaction of the ground and act like a sponge to soak up rainfall and prevent runoff
- The roots filter contaminants before water reaches streams, oceans, or aquifers

Deborah Majerus is the owner of Iron Butterfly Farm and Lodging in Rochester, Minnesota, an urban flower farm that uses sustainable and regenerative practices, grows a permaculture mini food forest, peonies, woody ornamental shrubs, early spring bulbs, and annuals.

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THE GARDEN ECLECTIC

The cultivated garden environment clearly influences preferences and choices in floral design. We know this because so many of our members refer to “garden inspired,” “nature inspired,” or “cottage-garden style,” among other poetic themes to describe their aesthetics. Translating the garden for a floral customer is entirely subjective, however. And we note that the sensory stimulations – scent, palette, texture, and flavor — are the attributes that connect people with nature. When it comes to color, we’ve long been moving beyond beige and blush (noted in our first Slow Flowers Floral Insights & Industry Forecast in 2015) and when it comes to scent, we celebrate the move away from hybridized, unscented flowers, to the perfume a garden offers.

THE INFLUENCE OF FRAGRANCE

Discernable scent has always given local and seasonal flowers from artisan growers an edge. And yet so much is misunderstood about fragrance, writes perfumer **Mandy Aftel**, author of “The Museum of Scent, Exploring the Curious & Wondrous World of Fragrance” (Abbeville Press, 2023).

“Flowers have always been used as tokens of love, and their gorgeous aromas are the fundamental building blocks of perfume. . . the incredibly complex floral aromas that nature puts together cannot be replaced synthetically.”

In her book, the perfumer identifies nine scent families (think Flower, Woods, Leaves and Grasses, Spices, Citrus, and Herbal, among others), with 18 botanicals in the flower family that are important to the making of natural fragrances – from Boronia to Ylang Ylang. “Nature has built no flower scents around a single note – each is a bouquet, a complex work of art.”

Is flower fragrance important?

Yes, says Slow Flowers member **Stefani Bittner**, owner of **Homestead Design Collective** based in Lafayette, Calif., co-author of the

TOP 12 FRAGRANT FLOWERS

2024 Slow Flowers Member Survey

- Rose (Garden Rose)
- Peony
- Sweet Pea
- Stock
- Lavender
- Lily
- Marigold
- Basil
- Snapdragon
- Tuberose
- Lilac
- Scented Geranium

GARDEN ECLECTIC

forthcoming book, "The Fragrant Flower Garden: Growing, Arranging, and Preserving Natural Scents" (Ten Speed Press, 2024).

"Creating and maintaining a fragrant garden requires no more time or effort than that of any other garden, but the bounty and blessings are multiplied, resulting in a landscape that is both beautiful and wondrously fragrant. When you bring your flower harvests indoors, you are further rewarded with fragrance and beauty inside your home."

Stefani's new book explores the world of scented plants for the garden and home, and beyond how these specimens enhance the landscape or the vase, she introduces floral teas, natural perfumes, flower tinctures, modern potpourris, and more applications. Creating beauty products from the garden appeals to anyone who desires a non-synthetic alternative to the plethora of chemicals used in beauty and bath products. "Keep in mind that scent is subjective, emotive, and personal!"

WHAT IT MEANS FOR BUSINESS

Lead with fragrance to engage customers' emotional memories with the scent of flowers. "You can preserve the scent, perhaps making a flower tincture. You can make perfume, a hydrosol, or an updated potpourri," Stefani suggests several projects included in her new book.

Offering a scented or fragrant bouquet or arrangement is another easy step. "I give my clients full bouquets of 'tea plants.' After they enjoy the arrangement, they cut the bottoms off each stem, hang up and dry, and that's a pot of tea. Take the same idea with medicinal bouquets; everything that's in the bouquet can be used for aromatherapy or bath steams." Floral customers, she explains, are not farmers, but they are inspired by the farm, and they want to translate what they see into their lifestyle. "Just like food, they want to enjoy garden scents, and that's what really speaks to them about those sensory bouquets."

THE OPTIONS OF COLOR

Just when we are celebrating the news that Slow Flowers members cited "Warm and Saturated" petal hues as their top spectrum, along comes a sweet surprise. [Pantone's Color of 2024](#) is "Peach Fuzz," a fitting companion to darker palettes — and we know that

SLOW FLOWERS SOCIETY COLOR PICKS

After years when there was no obvious winning color preference among Slow Flowers Members survey responses, there is a clear top choice emerging for 2024.

33%

Warm and Saturated
(Up 7% from last year)

17%

Organic Neutrals
(Moving up from third last year)

15%

Bright Pastels

12%

Muddy + Moody

10%

Cool and Vibrant

10%

Other





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GARDEN ECLECTIC

flower farmers and florists can deliver. Peach is a perennial player in weddings, fashion and beauty, home interiors, and landscapes. So we're all in! Get your Peach Fuzz mood on.

Here's a sampling of our Members color commentary:

"Deeply saturated jewel tones," wrote one person. "A sample palette would include 'Moab' or 'Earl Grey' roses, black peony poppy, black iris, 'Black Knight' scabiosa, shiso, smoke bush, 'Persica' fritillaria, 'Rosanne Brown' lisianthus, and 'Bordeaux' anemone.

The hunger for more color inspires another respondent, who commented: *"I believe people will be more adventurous with color and start moving from the rusty earth tones. I think light blues, light purples, blush tones, and light apple greens and fun, cheery yellows are going to have their moments."*

This is echoed by a designer who shared: *"I think we are going to see a playful take on color. No more cookie cutter, matching bridesmaids. More room to play with the floral palette."*

And ultimately, our members wish for seasonally-inspired palettes over Pinterest or Instagram-driven palettes. *"Although I'm seeing many couples wanting a classic white-and-green color scheme, I'm seeing others wanting warm tones, even if subtle, with the use of peach and muted pinks." This survey-taker continues, "I'm also seeing couples who want to let the season's blooms dictate their pops of color, which I love!"*

Adds another member: *"I'm seeing more requests for colorful combinations that aren't just following a trend. A lot of my wedding clients are nature lovers, scientists, or artists, and they ask for colors that fit the season and their personalities."*

"I think consumers are getting more interested in the range of colors available in nature's seasonal flowers."

ADDITIONAL READING

[COLOR TRENDS OF 2024 BY VERANDA MAGAZINE](#)

[COOLERS.COM TRENDING COLOR PALETTES](#)

[KHROMA AI COLOR PALETTE GENERATOR](#)



THE FRAGRANT FLOWER GARDEN

Growing, Arranging, and Preserving Natural Scents by Stefani Bittner and Alethea Haramopolis

Photography by David Fenton

Ten Speed Press, 2024

YOU CAN ORDER THE BOOK [HERE](#)

FLORIST HACK ATTACKS

Bottom-up innovation occurs during economic downturns, and while saving money is one motivation for homemade remedies, the other is clearly a desire to avoid using single-use plastics and packaging, and to eliminate chemical- and petroleum-based floral items in the studio. This momentum began with the groundswell of #foamfree sentiments and continued to the use of plant-based dyes to transform ribbons and table linens. There seems to be no limit to florists wanting to formulate non-toxic materials to achieve design solutions.



CREATIVE EXPLORATION

We asked Susan McLeary who designed the arrangement at right with the gourd "frog" pictured above. The "frog" was created by drilling holes into a gourd bowl sourced from amishgourds.com.

"I love experimenting with natural mechanics and armatures. It's a deliberate, creative practice that often yields time saving and waste reducing solutions. My hope is that by sharing these ideas, I encourage others to test their imagination, as well."

[WEBSITE](#) | [INSTAGRAM](#)

THE LARGER FLORAL CULTURE

Anti-consumption is permeating all sectors, yet the floral industry has been lagging in this shift. Sustainably minded creatives have voiced their needs; however, when suppliers and manufacturers are non-responsive to changing attitudes, floral artists step into the void to find solutions. And what's most inspiring is how they generously share the results of their efforts.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR BUSINESS

These floral artists are innovating, seeking new approaches to their work via the DIY or "hack" approach. In recent months, the always-experimental **Susan McLeary** introduced her followers to dried gourds that she uses as raw materials for stem mechanics and natural water vessels.

We are also fascinated with **Susanne Law's** rice glue, a recipe she generously shared on social media recently. The Vancouver, B.C.-based freelance designer posted about her all-natural botanic adhesive - a homemade product that replaces (synthetic) cold glue and could likely be a safe substitute for spray adhesives.

It began in 2022, when Susanne participated in a FREESIA Challenge series with Hitomi Gilliam and Gregor Lersch. For the Eco-Sustainable



FLORIST HACK ATTACKS



PHOTOGRAPHY BY SUSANNE LAW

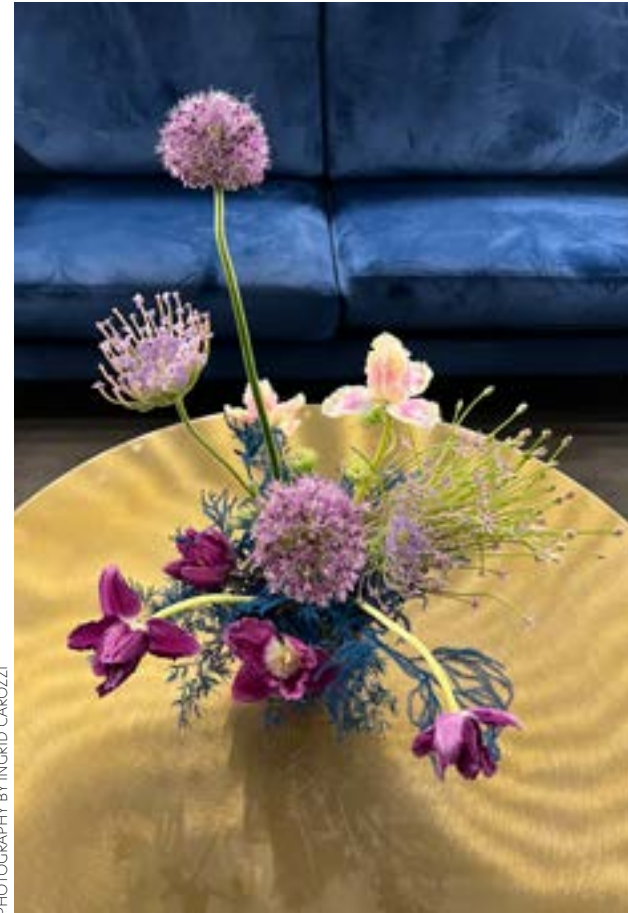
SUSANNE LAW'S RICE GLUE RECIPE

3T rice, unwashed
6T white vinegar
1 2/3 cup tap water
1 large pinch sea salt

Combine ingredients in sauce pan and boil over low-medium heat until most of the rice grains are dissolved. Stir occasionally to avoid rice sticking to the pot. Adjust heat as needed. Cook approximately 30 minutes. The glue will thicken as it cools. Press cooled glue through a fine strainer to remove any lumps.

You can use the glue after it has cooled approximately 20-30 minutes. Suzanne notes that while rice glue may take longer to dry once applied, it dries almost clear.

[INSTAGRAM](#)



PHOTOGRAPHY BY INGRID CAROZZI

EXPERIMENTATION

Concern over the environmental harm of aerosol paint and chemical propellants means Ingrid Carozzi, of Tin Can Studios, won't use off-the-shelf floral paint spray. "I've been experimenting with [milk paint](#), which is completely natural, dispensed in a spray gun. The only propellant is air."

Water-based paint from [Liquitex](#) is another option, Ingrid says, adding that the company is transparent about listing paint ingredients. "It can look really beautiful, but if it gets wet, for instance, the color will start to come off. We just make sure anything painted stays out of water."

Even when water-based, some pigments are harmful for the environment, such as cadmium red, she notes. "Every time I use a paint, I have to educate myself and read labels. What is in it? Is it compostable? The best solution, honestly, is to educate clients and dissuade them from using painted botanicals in the first place."

[WEBSITE](#) | [INSTAGRAM](#)

Sympathy Design assignment, Susanne wanted an option not found in the toolbox of a tradition flower shop. "My glue recipe started with a flashback, a childhood memory, of something my mother used to do. She used to seal those red money envelopes you give out for Chinese New Year with a cooked grain of rice. I remember her smashing the rice on the envelope flap to seal it."

The designer experimented with what she had on hand, pantry items like rice, vinegar, salt, and water, and boiled up a soupy concoction to achieve the consistency (and stickiness) for gluing botanicals. "I started applying it to flower petals, leaves, the surface of cardboard, and even a medallion of chenille. I have had great success using the glue on spray roses, hellebores, and lunaria, as well as coconut fiber and paper," she raves.

The resulting recipe (see sidebar) can be applied by fingertip or with a small paintbrush. It can be stored in an airtight container and refrigerated for months. "It has inspired me to do more research for my Chinese genealogy," Susanne continues. "This was a small tribute to my mother, who was an amazing cook. It's so interesting how things have come full circle, thanks to my memories of a grain of rice. Food is very much how we tell our stories."

SUSTAINABLE COLOR

The use of aerosol paint for altering botanical colors has been a concern for years, but we keep asking: Why hasn't the industry come up with a water-based alternative that is less environmentally harmful? Ingrid Carozzi, of Tin Can Studios in Brooklyn, asked the same question. She has been researching whether there is a safe way to paint foliage.

"I prefer not to paint anything, but there are times, every now and then, when we find that it might be necessary to use a small amount of painted material," she explains. "For example, I might have a client that I've signed off with and then the design direction changes and they need teal-colored accents."

ADDITIONAL READING

[BEING KINDER TO NATURE WITH SHANE CONNOLLY](#)

[HOW TO DYE WITH INDIGO: NATURAL HOMEGROWN COLOR](#)

INVASIVE PLANT ALTERNATIVES

As native plants and their benefits move to the foreground, the problems surrounding aggressive or invasive plants is undeniable. From headlines about how invasive grasses fueled [Maui's devastating fires](#) in 2023 to a [Geico Insurance commercial](#) that spoofs "invasive weeds" taking over a family's yard, awareness of the harm caused by plants classified as invasive is moving into the mainstream.

BY THE NUMBERS

2024 Slow Flowers
Member Survey

Q: How are you reducing or eliminating invasive species in your work or on your farm?

51%

I educated myself about plants that are listed on my state or province "Invasive Species List"

21%

I do not grow invasive species but I forage items that I may or may not know to be invasive

18%

I am actively replacing invasive plant varieties with non-invasive or native plants as alternatives

3%

I use invasive species in my work and/or grow them on my farm and I do not see that it is an issue

6%

I need more information on how to do this

THE LARGER FLORAL CULTURE

Nurseries play an essential role in reducing the spread of invasive species, according to recent research from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. "When people think of how invasive plant species spread, they might assume species are moving because of birds or the wind dispersing seeds," says Evelyn M. Beaury, lead author of the paper on horticulture and invasive species. "But commercial nurseries that sell hundreds of different invasives are actually the primary pathway of invasive plant introduction."

Becky Feasby of **Prairie Girl Flowers** in Calgary, Alberta, is advocating for more education to help florists and growers understand invasive or "problem" species. "Florists can play an important role in protecting their environment, the economy, and community by avoiding the use of invasive species in their designs," she advocates.

While the nursery trade and cut-flower growers have far to go in terms of self-education and self-regulation, it's up to proactive consumers and floral professionals to raise the alarm. In the coming year, we'll see more flower farmers and florists address invasives and seek non-invasive and native plants as alternative design elements to replace previous options.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR BUSINESS

In her white paper, "Florists, Invasive Species, and Protecting the Natural World," Becky notes the floral industry's challenge around preferred botanicals that are, in fact, invasive or environmentally harmful.



© PHOTOGRAPHY BLUE SKY FLOWER FARM

INVASIVE PLANTS

“What is considered a problem in one region may not be the same somewhere else. Some problematic species can cause a lot of harm if they escape into the environment and spread. When they do cause problems, they’re called ‘invasive’ species,” she explains.

In the hope of defining what invasives are and noting the problems they cause, Becky wants her research to inspire flower farmers and florists to understand their role in reducing the harm. “Preventing the introduction of invasive plants is the most cost-effective method of controlling these species. Ensuring that we do not harvest or use any invasive species is one of the best things we can do as members of the floral industry.”

ADDITIONAL READING

[STUDY FINDS NURSERIES EXACERBATE INVASIVE SPECIES](#)

[INVASIVE PLANTS INFORMATION \(US FOREST SERVICE\)](#)

[INVASIVE PLANTS STATE-BY-STATE \(USDA\)](#)

[HOW TO GET RID OF INVASIVE PLANTS \(THE SPRUCE\)](#)



© PHOTOGRAPHY BLUE SKY FLOWER FARM

AMERICAN BITTERSWEET V. ORIENTAL BITTERSWEET

The recent post by **Rachael Ackerman** of Minnesota’s **Blue Sky Flower Farm** caught our eye as she shared boxes of freshly harvested bittersweet heading to a local garden center. “Don’t worry, we only responsibly grow non-invasive American bittersweet.”

Rachael proceeded to educate her followers on how to tell the difference between American bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*), shown opposite, and the invasive Oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*):

Look for the following:

1. Fruit placement: American bittersweet has fruit on terminal clusters (at the end of the “branch”) versus the Oriental form which has fruit along the leaf axils (all along the “branch”).

2. Capsule color: American bittersweet has an orange capsule (the little shell around the ripened berry) versus the Oriental form, which has a yellow capsule.

With her experience in horticulture and working in the nursery industry, she is aware of properly identifying, working with, and promoting only non-invasive plant species.

Rachael knows what she’s talking about. “We grow a cultivar of the native American bittersweet, called ‘Autumn Revolution.’ It doesn’t reproduce easily via seed,” she explains.

Blue Sky Flower Farm only distributes bunches and vines of its Autumn Revolution native cultivar in the state of Minnesota. The invasive Oriental bittersweet is banned in the state. “We don’t ship out of the state. All of what we grow is consumed by our local customers, nurseries and florists.”

She recommends growers in other states check with Bailey Nursery, the wholesale supplier, to see if ‘Autumn Revolution’ can be supplied to them. “I think it’s so much prettier because it has a larger berry,” she says of the native form. “People love using it for swags or wreaths, or to wrap around pumpkins for centerpieces.”

[WEBSITE](#) | [INSTAGRAM](#)

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

1. Learn about locally and regionally invasive species

2. Avoid the use and promotion of invasive species

3. Destroy all invasive plant material that can grow into new plants. This might include flowers, fruits, seeds, roots, and underground tubers or rhizomes, as well as cuttings that could potentially take root

4. Get an app for your phone to help with plant identification. iNaturalist and WildSpotter are two recommended tools.

5. Share your newfound knowledge with other growers and florists who may not know what they’re selling has a harmful impact.

From [Understanding Invasive Species](#), by Becky Feasby

[WEBSITE](#) | [INSTAGRAM](#)



HOMEMADE SOLUTIONS

Most farmers are used to being resourceful, using ingenuity and innovation to solve problems on a shoestring. Progressive flower growers are embracing biodynamic and regenerative methods, reducing external inputs and shrinking farm outputs. Whether the motivation is budget savings or reducing reliance on conventional agricultural practices, we note that a gradual, simpler, more sustainable and circular approach to farming is under way. From traditional compost and fertilizer recipes that use vegetative material and manure already present on the farm to amendments that utilize natural ingredients, our Slow Flowers community seeks homemade solutions rather than bagged products and other off-the-shelf options.

WHAT IT MEANS

Slow Flowers members can begin by making small or larger steps toward climate-conscious growing practices, says **Briana Bosch** of **Blossom and Branch Farm** in Lakewood, Colorado. She is the author of a forthcoming book about regenerative gardening practices and often shares sustainable techniques on her farm's [YouTube channel](#), such as making plant-based fertilizers for seed starting.

"It's all about switching the mindset to lessen outside inputs and asking how can I use what I have and making it more affordable," she explains. Briana urges flower farmers and home-based gardeners to reduce plastic use. "Eliminating landscape fabric is the number one thing people should be doing; it's not really recyclable yet. It breaks down and contributes microplastics to the soil. Plus, burning holes into landscape fabric goes into the atmosphere."

At Blossom and Branch Farm, Briana has switched to mulching, which she also covers on her YouTube channel. She figures the

BY THE NUMBERS

2024 Slow Flowers
Member Survey

(Respondents were asked to choose
all that apply)

**Q: What biodiversity
practices do you use on your
farm?**

91%

Reduced or eliminated
use of systemic pesticides and/
or herbicides

82%

Pollinator-friendly
planting program(s)

71%

On-farm compost production

62%

No-till practices

53%

Cover cropping

27%

On-farm amendment
production

HOMEMADE SOLUTIONS

labor required to manage landscape fabric is comparable to applying organic mulch like leaves, pine needles, straw, or hay, which eventually decompose.

"There are some big names who are telling us to use landscape fabric, and at the same time there is a lack of voices talking about its long-term detrimental effects. All those microplastics become an issue for our water supply and soil microorganisms."

Plastic packaging, such as in bagged soils, compost or mulch, and even jugs of fish fertilizer, are also a concern because plastics can break down or contain harmful chemicals, she says.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR BUSINESS

Encouraging and teaching your community about making mindful choices and using safer practices is an easy way to express the values of your floral enterprise. "A lot of people are following flower farmers now because flower farming is having a moment," Briana says. "It's wise to help people learn to use what's available to them; what's in proximity to their garden. At the end of the day, it's all about soil microbes — feeding the soil and not the plant. I'm teaching very basic things like mulching, adding organic matter, keeping living roots in the soil, relying on cover crops as the basis for adding nutrients, and keeping the soil alive for as long as possible in your season."

[WEBSITE](#) | [INSTAGRAM](#)

ADDITIONAL READING

[THE NEW GARDENING STATUS SYMBOL: UPSCALE COMPOST \(WSJ\)](#)

BIODYNAMIC

Of or relating to a system of farming that follows a sustainable, holistic approach which uses only organic, usually locally sourced materials for fertilizing and soil conditioning, views the farm as a closed, diversified ecosystem, and often bases farming activities on lunar cycles.

SOURCE: MERRIAM-WEBSTER

REGENERATIVE

Farming and grazing practices that, among other benefits, reverse climate change by rebuilding soil organic matter and restoring degraded soil biodiversity, resulting in both carbon drawdown and improving the water cycle.

SOURCE: REGENERATIONINTERNATIONAL.ORG

COMFREY TEA

At **Crowley House Flower Farm** in Rickreall, Oregon, **Beth Syphers** brews compost tea from all the parts of the comfrey plant, a member of the borage family (*Symphytum spp.*). Comfrey has deep tap roots that draw nutrients and minerals from the soil. Beth uses the farm-brewed solution as a liquid plant feed for drenching roots or as a foliar spray for plantings and seedlings.

Beth cuts up the leaves, stems and roots and submerges them in a large bucket or storage tub of water, covering the botanical stew as it decomposes and stirring the brew over the course of a few weeks. "You want the mixture to look like a dark tea," she advises. It's also possible to use an electric compost tea brewer, which speeds up the process due to aeration. Strain the leaf bits through a sieve in order to use the liquid in a backpack sprayer, diluting the comfrey tea in water with a 1:10 ratio.

WATCH BETH'S DEMONSTRATION

ON YOUTUBE (18:25 START)

[WEBSITE](#) | [INSTAGRAM](#)



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© CHERLYN WAGNER

RETAIL EXPANSION

We've tracked several recent openings or expansions, including [Roadside Blooms](#) in North Charleston, S.C., [Hometown Flower Co.](#) on Long Island, [Flowers by Garvey's Gardens](#) in Grand Junction, Colorado, and [The Shop at bloominCouture](#) in San Francisco (shown above). Contradicting the story that floral retail is declining, these destinations attract "floral literate" shoppers. "Our storefront allows us to support additional local growers and to get more local flowers into the community," says **Sydney Garvey** of Flowers by Garvey's Gardens. **Susan Chambers** says **The Shop at bloominCouture** expands floral design to include bespoke gifting. "We have chosen the most perfect gifts, wrapped beautifully, and we focus on small brands that we personally love," she says.



© LACIE RZ PORTA

PASSION FOR PRESSED FLOWERS

Pressed flowers are having a moment and we're noticing a revival of old-fashioned pressed flowers made modern by designers, florists, and visual artists. We love the work of author and garden designer [Sue Goetz](#) of [Creative Gardener](#), who combines pressed flowers and herbs with ephemera (prior page). **Sarah Daken and Tom Precht** of [Grateful Gardeners](#) in Poolesville, Maryland, recently hosted a pressed flowers workshop and say that the floral crafting practice is accessible to all ages, incomes, and skill levels. "I love to think about dried and pressed flowers as a mechanism to freeze time — it's a lost art rediscovered," Sarah says. Brooklyn artist **Lacie Porta** of [Framed Florals](#) is known for one-of-a-kind wedding flower preservation. Now people can experience her art for \$1, thanks to a pressed flowers vending machine, on display at [Stems Brooklyn](#). "I like to think of it as a 'fortune machine' because you put four quarters into the slots and receive a little floral inspiration in return," Lacie says.



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FLORAL EXPERIENCES

We first identified the new concept of "floral tourism" in our 2017 forecast. For 2024, we believe flower-focused experiences have shifted to widespread cultural popularity. At [All Dahlia'd Up Flower Farm](#) in a Palmer, Alaska, **Misty VanderWeele** offers on-farm experiences and events that invite customers to engage with the natural beauty of the 49th state. "When I started flower farming commercially and hosting the first of our Dinner Tours and events, I knew my flower farm had something unique to offer Alaska and my surrounding community. Having it reach a broader audience of both in state and out-of-state consumers and professionals alike fills me with so much gratitude," she says.



WHAT WE SOW

On the Personal, Ecological, and Cultural Significance of Seeds

by Jennifer Jewell

Timber Press, 2023

Beyond "floral literacy," there's "seed literacy," and we have author Jennifer Jewell to thank for drawing our attention to the essential role of seeds for humans and the planet.

Jennifer explores the natural history of seeds, the seed supply chain, the role of agribusiness in patenting genomes of staple foods, and the efforts of activists working to regain legal access to heirloom seeds that were stolen from Indigenous peoples and people of color. It's a delightful love letter to the tiny seed.

YOU CAN ORDER THE BOOK [HERE](#)

CREATIVE SISTERHOOD

You've seen it, heard it or, perhaps, participated in it — thanks goes to the three female economic forces who permeated our collective consciousness in the Summer of 2023: Beyonce, Taylor, and Barbie. Their box-office breaking and life-affirming cultural events became a must-be-at-experience for women of all ages and backgrounds; and their girl magic continues to inspire. As the boundaries break down, all kinds of new friendships are being made. Sisterhoods are truly empowering and the reality that women together can change the conversation of our time is inspiring. We all want to be part of it.

BY THE NUMBERS

2024 Slow Flowers
Member Survey

Q: What are the key ways in which you have found value in the Slow Flowers member benefits?

68%

Connecting with like-minded floral professionals

THE LARGER CULTURE

Women want to want to move beyond sip-and-clip parties and transcend deeper connections. Through the pandemic, ongoing social unrest, and the need to provide care to our families, women are shouldering a lot these days. Finding a way to “fill up” with a community of women, with one’s own sisterhood, is essential and energizing.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR BUSINESS

Let’s be honest, more than ever, new farmers entering floral agriculture are most likely female solopreneurs. They naturally find one another, even others who might have once been considered competition.

We believe in the model of collaboration and collective energy — a model that makes the world a better place and can be highly compatible with floral activities and events. Forming collectives and cooperatives, the efforts of female floral entrepreneurs reflect new opportunities to market local flowers. Flower people may be competitors, but the vast majority are supportive of one another. Which is why we are witnessing the explosion of regional wholesale flower hubs as (mostly) female growers and designers seek to make an economic impact for themselves. We can’t help but celebrate the



© PHOTOGRAPHY DEBRA PRINZING

CREATIVE SISTERHOOD

community builders who step forward to lead in their regions. A recent pie-and-coffee gathering (previous page) at [Moss and Madder Farm](#) in Olalla, Washington, hosted by Slow Flowers member **Jodie Logue**, illustrated the economic and creative sisterhood. The simple act of hosting strangers so that they might become new friends, the steps to begin a dialogue around the possibilities of women banding together to create [West Sound Floral Exchange](#), a new flower collective . . . it was a powerful experience filled with optimism.

When we break down the barriers through shared interests, there can be authentic connection and business opportunity!

ADDITIONAL READING

[TAYLOR SWIFT, 'BARBIE' AND BEYONCÉ ARE UNLEASHING THE SPENDING POWER OF WOMEN \(CNN\)](#)

[HOW THREE FEMALE ARTISTS LEAD THIS SUMMER'S BILLION-DOLLAR POP CULTURE REVIVAL \(NPR\)](#)

[TAYLOR SWIFT: PERSON ON THE YEAR \(TIME\)](#)

[WOMEN LEADING CHANGE: THE LOCAL FLOWER COLLECTIVE \(OPEN FOOD NETWORK CANADA\)](#)



FLOWERS + FRIENDS

Krisanna Rose Barbernell of [Rosewoods Flora!](#) (San Clemente, Calif.), **Mimi Dougherty** of [Wildrose & Thyme](#) (Morgan Hill, Calif.), and **Teresa Rao** of [Belle Pétale](#) (Tukwila, Wash.) first met at the 2021 Slow Flowers Summit held at Filoli Historic Home & Garden in Woodside, Calif.

The women united in subsequent years and as flower friends, all attended the 2023 Slow Flowers Summit in Bellevue, Wash. According to Krisanna, when the three learned that [Megumi Ogawa](#) had traveled from Tokyo to attend the Summit, they invited her to join them for a day together.

"We were so excited to learn we had an international flower traveler," Krisanna says. "Mimi, Teresa, and I had plans and we were glad to include Megumi in our afternoon tea party. We went exploring in Seattle early in the morning, first to the Space Needle and then to Chihuly Gardens before joining Teresa for tea."

Teresa adds: "We were asked by our server what we were celebrating . . . and our collective response was flowers and friendship!"

The Slow Flowers community nurtures such personal connections, Mimi points out. "We shared stories of flowers and what brought us together, including a shared sisterhood of flowers and Slow Flowers, Debra's beautiful yearly summits. These Summits are more than learning; they are about creating friendships that last a lifetime. When we aren't sure what to do for our designs, we often call each other. We also call each about life's changes."

Connecting over a shared love of flowers and tea. The gesture of three women to include a newcomer — the story is so affirming.

OTHER SISTERHOOD MODELS

We applaud our friends who have formed their own sisterhoods:

VALERIE CRISOSTOMO
of Black Girl Florists

[WEBSITE](#) | [INSTAGRAM](#)

JOANIE PARSONS
of RevelEleven

[WEBSITE](#) | [INSTAGRAM](#)

HOLLY HEIDER CHAPPLE
of Chapel Designers

[WEBSITE](#) | [INSTAGRAM](#)

TRACY YANG
of SnoCo. Flower Collective

[WEBSITE](#) | [INSTAGRAM](#)

JAIMIE REEVES
of The Local Flower Collective

[WEBSITE](#) | [INSTAGRAM](#)



about BLOOM Imprint

BLOOM identifies and develops projects that shine a light on the floral lifestyle, showcasing the stories of floral personalities, creatives, entrepreneurs, farmers, and artisans.

OUR BOOKS FEATURED IN



BOOK + EZINE PUBLISHING

Founded in 2020, BLOOM engages readers to experience a new relationship with flowers, inspiring them to embrace local, seasonal, and sustainable practices. The publications reveal the authentic voice and vision of our authors and writers, pairing their written narratives with beautiful imagery and strong graphic design concepts. Located in the Pacific Northwest, the independent boutique publishing company works with a variety of creatives from the beginning of a great concept to the final product, including marketing and worldwide distribution with Two Rivers Distribution, a division of Ingram.



CUSTOM PUBLISHING

We provide custom publishing solutions for companies, organizations, and artisans. As content developers, we design specialty packages that align with your needs, goals, and initiatives. Our creative content services include the development and production of books, magazines, ebooks, newsletters, and annual reports. We offer a menu of content and design services including writing, editing, graphic design, informational charts and graphics, image editing, and production for printed and digital collateral.



CONSUMER INSIGHTS + CULTURAL ANALYSIS

In addition to our yearly floral lifestyle forecast and twice-a-year topical white papers, we offer custom research, position papers, and primary and secondary research on specific floral and garden lifestyle topics.

BLOOM Imprint, along with their sister company Slow Flowers, leverages their extensive professional experiences and relationships to support a portfolio of industry-leading clients through research, cultural analysis, market insights, and advisory services that focuses on the garden and floral industry, as well the floral and garden consumer.

Co-founders Debra Prinzing and Robin Avni have provided industry research and analysis to leading home and lifestyle companies, including Johnny's Seeds, Longfield Gardens, Scripps Network, Home Depot, MASCO, Moen Corporation, allrecipes.com, Kohler, Microsoft Home, PepsiCo, and General Mills, as well as major shelter and trade media outlets.

DEBRA PRINZING

BLOOM Co-founder
Slow Flowers Society Founder

A Seattle-based writer, speaker, and leading advocate for domestic and sustainable floral practices, Debra convenes a national conversation on locally grown flowers. She is the author of 12 books including *Where We Bloom*. In addition to BLOOM, Debra is the producer of SlowFlowers.com, the online directory of American & Canadian flower farms, florists, shops and studios who supply domestic and local flowers. She is also the creator of American Flowers Week (June 28-July 4), launched in 2015, and is the founder of the *Slow Flowers Journal* and the Slow Flowers Summit, dubbed the TED Talk for floral professionals.

ROBIN AVNI

BLOOM Co-founder

A creative veteran in the media + high-tech industries, including nine years at Microsoft in design and creative management. She has successfully managed innovative, award-winning design teams and high-profile projects, as well as receiving numerous national design awards and honors for her own work. Robin is also an experienced qualitative strategist and ethnographer. In 2003, she founded a consultancy specializing in creative strategy, content development, and trend analysis for home + garden. She has worked with Fortune 500 companies, national advertising agencies, and award-winning media properties, applying timely actionable insights to their businesses.





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