

HOME & DESIGN

Say it with California posies

By DEBRA PRINZING >>> We've got an abundance of flower farms and plant nurseries in Southern California — and designers who creatively use these homegrown elements to fashion stylish florals. Sure, you could grab that bunch of imported roses at the supermarket and call it good for Valentine's Day, but wouldn't you rather give something more inventive with local roots? To help, we've gathered some options for giving or sending flowers.

Orchids and more

Rolling Greens Nursery in the Fairfax district offers potted living plants. Ethereal and long-lasting, phalaenopsis orchids come in a range of colors and sizes, with lots of buds and blooms reminiscent of butterflies (\$70 to \$125 or more, depending on your budget). At Rolling Greens' arrangement bar, Grisel Sierra and other staff "baristas" will help you select orchids, succulents and other plants, plus the right vessel, to appeal to your recipient's style. Planting services and add-ons such as moss and decorative gravel cost extra.

Shown: Phalaenopsis with succulent plants in a contemporary white-glazed pot, \$115. **Also available:** cast stone dish garden with aloe, succulents, moss and decorative pebbles, \$65.

Rolling Greens Nursery, 7505 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles. (323) 934-4500; www.homeandgardenlosangeles.com



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Succulent 'hearts'

The folks at Potted in Atwater Village will carry finished succulent "hearts" in two sizes, available for purchase while supplies last, through Valentine's Day.

Shown: A 7-inch wooden heart planter with succulents, \$69; 12-inch heart, \$150.

Potted, 3158 Los Feliz Blvd., Atwater Village, (323) 665-3801; www.pottedstore.com



SYDNEY MICHAEL

Student bouquets

The students, interns and volunteers at Muir Ranch, a nonprofit farm at John Muir High School in Pasadena, grow and arrange seasonal flowers for their weekly subscribers and farmers market customers. For Valentine's Day, you can order a 100% local bouquet that includes Muir Ranch-grown annuals, perennials, herbs and foliage, as well as flowers from other farms in Southern California. The student bouquets come in two sizes and must be ordered by Feb. 12 for delivery within a 15-mile radius of Pasadena. Pickup is available from 9 a.m. to noon Feb. 14.

Shown: Medium bouquet of ranunculus and kale in a standard glass vase, \$85 delivered. **Also available:** Large bouquet of protea and artichoke foliage in a galvanized pail, \$85 delivered.

Muir Ranch, John Muir High School, 1905 Lincoln Ave., Pasadena, www.muirranch.org; schoolgarden@gmail.com; johnmuirrsa@gmail.com



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Spruce crate

Spruce LA, a flower shop on Fountain Avenue near Sunset Boulevard, has boxed up Valentine's Day flowers in a crate created locally from recycled wood. It's filled with fresh California-grown anemones, tulips, ranunculus, lisianthus and *Callistemon citrinus* 'Little John,' with Washington-grown greenery. "The great thing about this arrangement is that the flowers dry in the crate, and it lasts for a month," says designer Gaige Clark, Spruce LA's founder and creative director. To ensure delivery for Valentine's Day, orders must be placed no later than Feb. 13. The design is also available for purchase Feb. 14 at Spruce LA's retail store.

Shown: A 6- by 7 3/4-inch wooden crate with flowers, \$85 plus delivery.

Spruce LA, 4313 Fountain Ave., Los Feliz, (323) 660-9300; www.sprucela.com.

Tillandsia mini-gardens

Flower Duet owners Kit Wertz and Casey Schwartz in Torrance have created Tillandsia terrariums by sourcing the air plants from Rainforest Flora, a breeder and grower also based in Torrance. The Love Aerium comes in a heart or teardrop shape, suitable for hanging.

Each design features a duet of Tillandsias. Indoors, these plants like bright, indirect light. Flower Duet recommends spraying or misting the air plants weekly, adding a small amount of liquid fertilizer to the water.

Order by Feb. 9 for Valentine's Day delivery in the continental U.S. For optional pickup at Flower Duet's South Bay studio, order by Feb. 11 and plan to pick up your Aerium from 4 to 7 p.m. Feb. 13 or from 9 a.m. to noon Feb. 14.

Shown: The Hanging Heart Aerium fea-



Flower Duet

tures *Tillandsia usneoides* 'El Normal,' a type of Spanish moss, and *Tillandsia tenuifolia* 'Blue Flower,' along with red reindeer moss accents and red twine for hanging. \$30 plus tax. Shipping: \$5. The Dewdrop Aerium features *Tillandsia usneoides* 'El Normal' and *Tillandsia tenuifolia* 'Emerald Forest,' plus a red heart, reindeer moss accents and red twine for hanging. \$25 plus applicable tax. Shipping: \$5.

Flower Duet, 2675 Skypark Drive, Suite 205, Torrance, (310) 792-4968; www.flowerduet.com



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Garden screen

L.A. floral designer Clover Chadwick of Dandelion Ranch offers her signature Garden Screen as a grand Valentine's Day gesture. The creation includes a variety of California coastal botanicals grown from San Diego to Santa Barbara, displayed in a custom wooden box to suggest a translucent floral curtain.

Order by Feb. 11 for greater Los Angeles delivery. Dandelion Ranch will take orders through Valentine's Day for studio pickup, with designer's choice on floral ingredients.

Shown: The box is about 2 feet by 3 inches and contains peach branches, ranunculus, anemones, larkspur, leptospermum, wax flower, ivy and pittosporum, \$400 plus tax and delivery. Other sizes are available from \$185 (pricing is based per foot).

Dandelion Ranch, 4701 W. Jefferson Blvd., No. 3, West Adams, (323) 640-1590; www.dandelionranch.com

About those roses ...

According to the California Cut Flower Commission, only 2% of all roses sold for Valentine's Day are domestic. If you really want to give roses but are looking for a local option, the good news is that most American-grown roses come from flower farms in California. Here are two mail-order sources for the California rose:



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California Blooms offers overnight delivery of one dozen California roses in a variety of petal colors, \$49 plus \$15 shipping and handling. Order by noon Pacific time for next-day delivery, Tuesday through Saturday (additional fee for Saturday delivery).

(888) 600-8865; www.californiablooms.com.

Fabulous Florals offers overnight delivery of fresh greenery with one dozen California roses in white (\$79 plus shipping) or red (\$89 plus shipping).

(805) 456-5914; www.bulkwholesaleflowers.com

home@latimes.com

Local flowers, sweets

Los Angeles flower farmer Tara Kolla of Silver Lake Farms will team up with Valerie Confections to open a two-day Valentine's Day pop-up store in Echo Park, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Feb. 13 and 14.

You can select pre-made arrangements, just picked from Kolla's fields in Glassell Park and Silver Lake, with the option of pairing a fresh bouquet with chocolates from Valerie Confections.

Shown: Two-ring arrangement of white panda and pastel anemones, sweet peas, Queen Anne's lace, statice, wax flower, Australian rosemary, wild cucumber and garden mignonette, \$100, including a custom-made Silver Lake Farms two-ring holder and jars. **Also available:** Small field-grown arrangement of white panda and pastel anemones, Queen Anne's lace, statice, wax flower, Australian rosemary, wild cucumber and garden mignonette, \$75, including the Weck glass jar.

Valerie Confections, 1665 Echo Park Ave., Echo Park, (213) 250-9365, www.valerieconfections.com; Silver Lake Farms, (323) 644-3700; www.silverlakefarms.com



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5 QUESTIONS

Cultivating an edible garden

BY LISA BOONE

Landscape designer and garden writer Rosalind Creasy was an authority on edible gardening long before it became fashionable to rip out your lawn and grow food. The author of the pioneering "Edible Landscaping" will discuss growing, harvesting and preparing food from the garden on Thursday at the Los Angeles County Arboretum & Botanic Garden. Creasy said the lecture was prompted by questions from young gardeners and cooks. "Young people are interested in sustainability and good food," Creasy said. "They don't care about ornamentals."

What is a common mistake gardeners make when growing food?

People don't know when things are ready, so they don't harvest them. I always tell my clients, "I will come back in three months." They think because tomatoes are hard in the store, theirs should be hard too. Tomatoes should feel like a peach. How do you know when a carrot is ready? You feel around the top and look at its crown. I will go over the basics of harvesting during my talk.

Some things are harder to grow than others. Asparagus comes to mind. Can you suggest some easy edibles for California?

I like to call them edible plants

with training wheels. I always advise starting with Mediterranean herbs. If you forget to harvest them, it doesn't matter. If you don't water them, it's fine. They won't die. Why pay \$3 for a bundle of oregano or sage or thyme when you can easily grow it yourself?

How do you choose edibles for your own garden?

I like to plant things I haven't grown before. People think they know a lot about heirlooms? They haven't scratched the surface. We have more than 20,000 varieties at Seed Savers Exchange. Some of my favorite edibles: spotted trout lettuce from Germany. I always have to have red basil. I like a few

different types of basil — Thai, lemon and a standard basil. I always have three different types of thyme, sage, oregano and cilantro, which is good for attracting beneficial insects. If you have onions growing, or peas or beans or peppers or zucchini or chard, you will always have ingredients on hand for a stir fry.

Can you offer some suggestions for a small-space edible garden? A balcony garden perhaps?

You can work wonders with half a day of sun. I love large containers. If it's a very large container, you can put Styrofoam or twigs on the bottom so you don't fill up the whole thing with soil. Plant basil and other culinary herbs right outside your door. If you've done that and you have a few staples from the farmers market and the store, you can change up your meals with herbs. Plant simple things like a bush tomato or bush cherry tomatoes. In Southern California, you can have tomatoes for six months if you fertilize them every few weeks. Plant jalapeño for spicy foods.



From Rosalind Creasy

LANDSCAPE designer, garden writer Rosalind Creasy.

How do you justify growing your own food during a drought?

When in drought, plant edibles. Think about how much water is used commercially. When I drive through the Salinas Valley — almost 80% of our salad greens

'Cooking From the Garden With Rosalind Creasy'

When: 9:30 a.m. to noon Thursday

Where: Los Angeles County Arboretum & Botanic Garden, 301 N. Baldwin Ave., Arcadia

Cost: \$20

Info: (626) 821-4623; www.arboretum.org

come from the Salinas Valley — I see huge plumes of water on sprinklers. The wind is often blowing. During harvest season, they have tanker trucks that are filled with water. Then, at the grocery store, they spray the produce with water. What do you do in your garden? You put it on a drip. You probably use half a gallon of water per pound of lettuce. As a home gardener, especially if you use rain barrels, you can use much less water compared to the average American, even in a dry climate. What is the worst thing you can do in California? Grow a lawn.

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