Local Colors
Flower-buying tips for the footprint-conscious

Buying local has become an overarching mind-set, not just a way to shop for groceries. In her book, *The 50 Mile Bouquet: Seasonal, Local and Sustainable Flowers* (St. Lynn's Press), outdoor living expert Debra Prinzing, with photographer David Perry, documents farmers and “eco-designers” around the United States who work with local, sustainable flowers. We asked Prinzing to preview some of the book’s big ideas.

**What is the slow flower movement?**
While the culinary world is exploding with farm-to-table chefs, similarly, there is an exciting revolution among floral designers who care about the field-to-vase journey. When florists make the important connection with a flower farmer, the resulting designs are highly seasonal and incredibly beautiful—and, of course, sustainable.

Are you seeing a rise in green techniques among florists? Yes. Most eco-designers refuse to work with floral foam since it’s not biodegradable. Instead, these designers stabilize flower stems with greener methods, like intricate twig armatures or bunched-up chicken wire. Recycled vases are popular, too.

**How can consumers make better decisions when purchasing flowers?**
Ask where the flowers were grown. Seek out growers at farmers’ markets. In the off-season, learn to identify floral ingredients in your own backyard!—Anna Watson Carl

For *The 50 Mile Bouquet*, Debra Prinzing and David Perry sport three years touring the country documenting the true allure of green floral design: small flower farmers.