

## VALENTINE'S DILEMMA

As people gear up to get their special someone that special something for Valentine's Day next Saturday, the question is: What about the planet? What does it really cost to say it with flowers?

### CARBON FOOTPRINT

Most flowers sold here in February are flown in from Ecuador or Colombia. Using the carbon calculator developed by the Canadian Standards Association, the jet fuel burned in shipping a dozen long-stemmed roses would produce 3.2 kilograms of carbon dioxide. That's the same as idling your car for an hour. Choke.

### LOCALLY GROWN

The blooms may not be as spectacular, but there's something heartwarming about supporting Ontario growers and wholesalers, especially when the economy is in free fall. And the carbon cost of getting them to the GTA — mostly from the Niagara region — is a fraction of the imported blooms.

But that's more than outweighed, ecologically speaking, by how they're grown: in greenhouses, which require huge amounts of energy to heat and light through the winter months. A 2007 British study compared the total life cycle carbon cost of roses imported from a nearby Dutch greenhouse and roses imported into England from Kenya. The former had a carbon footprint six times larger.

### CERTIFICATION

No matter what, buying fresh flowers in Ontario in February is not ecologically sound. However, if buying imports, you can seek out florists that offer blooms certified by organizations such as *VeriFlora* or *Sierra Eco*, which vouch that the flowers are grown "responsibly" on sustainable farms that do not negatively affect the local environment (pesticide use and diversion of water are big issues). They also certify that workers are not underpaid and are paid fairly. Some online sources, such as *FTD.com*, offer an "eco-friendly" section, with the usual claims about sustainability and responsibility. You could even send a tree sapling, which can be planted later in spring. Whole Foods Markets (87 Avenue Rd., Toronto, and 301 Cornwall Rd., Oakville) sell organic USDA certified flowers.

### MODERATION

Earn eco-points by going small. Fewer blooms mean a smaller footprint. An artistic presentation, such as some on this page created by local florists, can more than make up for a reduction in the number of flowers. Or find a florist who will flesh out a few blooms with local dried flowers from last season or found objects like bark or pine cones or recycled goods. (Toronto florist Dayle Crawford of Burst says women over 50 prefer the traditional dozen red roses, while the younger crowd is more open to alternatives.) Or go completely silk or dried — not for everyone, but you know they will last forever.

Catherine Farley

## Love that's gentler on the Earth



### LOCAL LOVELIES

Styled by Rosemary Little, Quince Flowers, 660 Queen St. E. 416-594-1414 quinceflowers.com \$49

**Local:** Greenhouse parrot tulips from Niagara.  
**Canadian:** Galax leaves from B.C.  
**Imported:** Black pussy willow from South Carolina.  
**Reused:** Client's own vase.

AARON VINCENT ELKAIM FOR THE TORONTO STAR

### GREEN BOUQUET

Styled by Dayle Crawford, Burst, 198 Walnut Ave. (Queen West) 647-436-8565 burstflowers.com \$39.95

**Imported:** Roses, lilies, hypericum berries and sage from Ecuador. Aspidistra leaf from Florida.  
**Local:** Greenhouse freesia from Niagara.  
**Fair trade & certified:** Burst says these flowers are from a certified farm in Ecuador and grown in an environmentally friendly way. "No 12-year-old has picked my flowers."

### SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL

Styled by Shastyna, Martin's the Flower People, 3107 Dundas St. W. 416-766-6121 martinflowers.com \$49.95

**Imported:** Roses and hypericum from Ecuador. Galax leaves and lily grass from Florida.  
**Fair trade & certified:** "All grown in certified farms where chemical use is minimal and workers are paid fairly."  
**Returnable:** Vase can be returned for a small flower gift.

COMPILED BY CATHERINE FARLEY TORONTO STAR

### SOLITARY ROSE

Styled by Margaret Corrigan, Wild Thyme, 388 Carlaw Ave. 416-440-2614 wildthyme.ca \$50

**Imported:** Rose from Ecuador.  
**Reusable:** Mokuba silk ribbon "which is totally reusable."  
**Recyclable:** "Box made locally and 100 per cent recyclable, 100 per cent biodegradable and reusable."

### ECO ROSES

Styled by Sathya, Hatcher's Florist, 5455 Yonge St. 416-221-5557 hatcherflorist.com \$50 (sold in clear glass vase)

**Imported:** Pink roses and blue limonium from Ecuador, rusus leaves from Italy.  
**Fair trade & certified:** Roses and limonium from Sierra Eco growers.

