

Make One Change

ITOLD MY HUSBAND years ago never to buy me flowers. They aren't practical, I argued—they cost too much and wilt too quickly. But when my friend Lori walked into my hospital room with a dozen pink roses while I was recovering from a difficult labor with my second child, my ideas about flowers changed.

Those roses transformed everything: My room seemed fresher and brighter, and I felt calmer and happier. At first I thought it was just me—until I heard that researchers at the University of Kansas found that patients recovering from an appendectomy in rooms with live plants took significantly less pain medication and had lower blood pressure than those without plants.

Now I love flowers. In fact, I can't wait for Mother's Day. This year, however, I'm doing something different: I'm sending local, organic flowers. Why? Because roughly 80 percent of flowers purchased in the U.S. are imported and may have been treated with chemicals and pesticides, according to Amy Stewart, author of *Flower Confidential: The Good, the Bad and the Beautiful in the Business of Flowers* (Algonquin Books, 2007). But with some forethought, we can all give flowers with Mother Earth in mind.

► **Support green growers.** Buy flowers at farmers' markets or choose florists who buy from growers who have Veriflora certification, which ensures high standards in environmental and labor practices. Or purchase from



Blooms day

Give a beautiful bouquet to Mom with Mother Earth in mind.

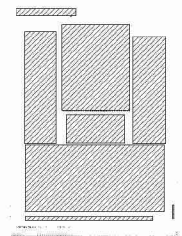
By ELIZABETH CASEY


online suppliers such as Organic Bouquet (organicbouquet.com) or Organic Style (organicstyle.com). They source from eco-conscious growers, use environmentally friendly packaging, and donate a percentage of proceeds to an environmental cause.

► **Plant a flower garden.** Your own garden may not have many varieties in time for Mother's Day, but all summer long it will yield flowers you can give away. Consider Shasta daisies, suggests Stewart. "They're easy to grow and incredibly cheerful." So are fragrant Sweet Peas. "And who can resist garden roses?" Stewart asks. To avoid using pesticides, grow varieties suited to your climate, she advises.

► **Use eco packaging.** Tie your homegrown flowers or those bought in bulk with biodegradable vegetable-dyed ribbon from Of the Earth (custompaper.com). Instead of buying a vase, look in your cupboards for alternatives or use a recycled paper vase (arbitareshop.com) which not only holds water but can be folded and reused. And write your message on a "plantable note card" with wildflower seeds implanted in biodegradable paper (flowerseedpaper.com).

► **Give anonymously.** Call your local hospital, hospice, or nursing home and ask the chaplain or social worker to deliver a bouquet to someone who doesn't get a lot of company. And in honor of Mother's Day, secretly choose a mother who has gone above and beyond the call of duty—she shouldn't be difficult to find. ✂



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