

## CALIFORNIA GROWER TURNS TOUR INTO LOCALLY SOURCED PARTY

➤ What could have been a routine operations tour at a flower farm in Lompoc, Calif., became something extraordinary, during the California Association of Flower Growers and Shippers' (NORCAL) 2013 Fun 'N Sun convention in July. More than 200 people were greeted by a bevy of local offerings when they arrived at Ocean View Flowers for a luncheon and tour, including California wine, beer, produce, desserts and, of course, flowers galore.

"(The event) was really to celebrate California-grown flowers," explained John Donati of Ocean View Flowers. "We wanted to create a field-to-vase event in the middle of the flower field."

Attendees enjoyed unmatched views of the surrounding fields, while vintage tractors and old-fashioned photos (complete with costumes) added to the festive atmosphere, as did centerpieces and floral arrangements, designed by René van Rems, AIFD, PFCI, which gave top billing to local flowers and foliage. Area officials, including John Linn, the mayor of Lompoc, joined convention-goers at the luncheon. (Linn even participated in a fun-filled floral design competition, moderated by J Schwanke, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, of uBloom.com and a frequent contributor to SAF's Floral Management magazine.)



**CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'**  
Christina Stembel, of Farmgirl Flowers in San Francisco, Mel Resendez of Resendez Brothers Protea Growers in Fallbrook, Calif., and Jeanne Boes of the California Flower Market in San Francisco enjoy the local production during a farm tour at Ocean View Flowers.

The luncheon coincided with Ocean View's 20th anniversary and tapped into what Kasey Cronquist of the California Cut Flower Commission sees as heightened interest among consumers for local flowers and plants.

"With the growing popularity of farmers markets through out the country, U.S. consumer food safety concerns rising, the Slow Food movement and increasing demand for Made in America products, it now appears that the consumer's desire for their flowers to be as local as their food may have been just a matter of time," explained Cronquist on his blog, Field Position.

Cronquist was one of several experts to make remarks at the Ocean

View event, along with Debra Prinzing, author of "Slow Flowers" and "The 50 Mile Bouquet." (You can read about another recent local flowers-inspired event, at Kitayama Brothers in Watsonville, Calif., on Prinzing's blog.) For Donati, the field-to-vase movement "isn't anything against South American growers — many of whom I'm good friends with — but people are looking to buy local and support local companies," he said. 🌱

— Mary Westbrook

## FLORISTS MOBILIZE TO HONOR ARIZONA'S FALLEN FIREFIGHTERS

➤ Several dozen florists in Arizona gathered prepared flowers for the memorial to honor the 19 members of the Prescott Fire Department who died battling the June 30 wildfire in Yarnell, Ariz.

Florists began preparations over the July 4th weekend, led by Rakini Chinery, owner of Allan's Flowers and Prescott Valley Florist. "I was just overwhelmed by the outpouring of generosity from our community," said Chinery. About 30 volunteers from several shops in Phoenix and Teleflora's sales team came to Prescott to work for hours creating floral tributes and arrangements for the stage and VIP and family rooms, Chinery said. Donations of flowers came from Teleflora, wholesalers (including Mayesh, Roy Houff, which also donated hard goods; and Downs Wholesale) and several growers.

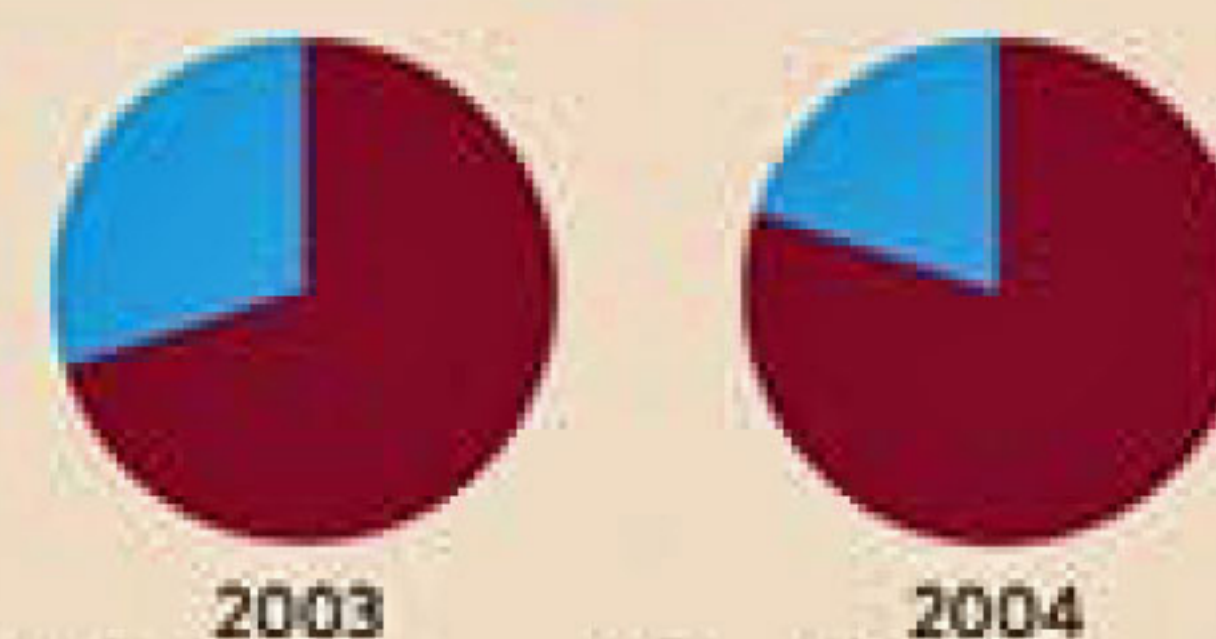
Chinery said Prescott firefighters, who had no budget for flowers, expressed deep gratitude for the floral tributes.

"We were able to do what we do best and provide them with the solace and comfort that flowers provide," Chinery said. 🌱

— Kate Penn

## HELP WANTED? NOT SO MUCH

■ Hold off hiring ■ Plan to hire



SOURCE: SAF Economic Outlook Survey for Q2 2013, July 5, 2013; 223 responses (response rate 6.2%).

Few florists plan to hire new staff in the next six months, according to SAF's Economic Outlook Survey for the second quarter of 2013. The survey found that more than eight out of 10 florists plan to hold off on new hiring — a slight increase from previous survey results, when seven out of 10 said they had no plans to grow their teams. 🌱

— Ira Silvergleit