

# Slow Flowers JOURNAL

PRODUCED AND WRITTEN BY DEBRA PRINZING  
PHOTOS BY ALEX BROOKS, BECCA HENRY, MEGAN SPELMAN,  
JOSHUA VELDSTRA AND LEON VILLAGOMEZ

# Field to Fashion

In its fourth year, American Flowers Week celebrates U.S.-grown (and foraged) botanicals with five fresh, inspiring and handcrafted couture looks.

**A**merican Flowers Week burst onto the floral scene in 2015, and its significance and influence has grown ever since, attracting participation across all channels of domestic flowers – from seeds to bouquets to beautiful floral fashions.

Social media engagement from florists, designers, retailers, wholesalers and flower farms posting on Instagram and Twitter generated more than 5 million impressions during the 2017 campaign, giving the hash tag #americanflowersweek top-of-mind presence, up from 1.2 million impressions the prior year.

Planning for the 2018 American Flowers Week floral fashion collection began almost immediately after the 2017 campaign ended. I was lucky to be on location in Homer, Alaska, last July, when floral designer **Kelly Shore**, of **Petals by the Shore** in Damascus, Md., teamed up with peony farmer **Beth Van Sandt**, co-owner of **Scenic Place Peonies** in Homer. Together, these creative women envisioned a styled shoot that reflected in-season, just-picked peonies and a story line to mirror the character and geography of Homer, which appears on Pages 66 and 67.

Producing this amazing collection of American-grown floral fashions continued through the subsequent months, including an October photo shoot celebrating *Dablias* in Sonoma County; a January woodland narrative reliant upon one designer's penchant for foraging from the forests of the Pacific Northwest; a March session on the Big Island paying homage to tropical flowers and foliages of Hawaii; and later that month, a tribute to the iconic *Iris*, straight from the greenhouses of Arcata, Calif.

It is a privilege and honor to present five compelling looks and the behind-the-scenes stories about the people and floral passions that fill these pages. The inventiveness and creativity expressed by the **Slow Flowers** community – flower farmers and floral designers alike – elevates American-grown botanicals to new levels. To learn more about these designs, the floral artists, the farms and their flowers, you can find bonus content at [americanflowersweek.com](http://americanflowersweek.com) and in the *Florists' Review* digital edition for June at [floristsreview.com](http://floristsreview.com).

## A Celebration of American Flowers

June 28 - July 4, 2018

Launched in 2015, **American Flowers Week** is the advocacy, education and outreach campaign produced by **Slow Flowers** to promote and commemorate domestic flowers, flower farming and floral design. Find free resources and promotional material at [americanflowersweek.com](http://americanflowersweek.com).

## Ode to the Iris

Single-color flower creates impact in stunning final piece for photo shoot.

**Faye Zierer Krause**, of **Flora Organica Designs** in Arcata, Calif., considers the standard *Iris* a bit of an underdog. But having grown up on her parents' organic farm before starting her floral design studio in 2015, she finds appreciation for the best traits of any plant. "I love the saturation of purple and dark blue that *Iris*es have," she says.

Like Faye, flower farmer **Lane DeVries**, CEO of **Sun Valley Floral Farms**, also in Arcata, has a nostalgic affection for *Iris*es. When he first arrived in America in 1984 and began working at the farm that he now runs, *Iris*es were an important field crop. These days, Sun Valley is one of the leading *Iris* growers in the U.S., producing standard *Iris*es 12 months of the year.

"I think *Iris*es are ready for a revival," Lane proclaims. "The *Iris* is one of those old flowers having a comeback."

In 2017, Sun Valley Flower Farm hosted a **Field to Vase Dinner** inside its greenhouses and asked Faye to serve as guest floral designer. In addition to using a rainbow of tulips for the table décor and chandeliers, she created a dramatic *Iris* "curtain" where dinner guests clamored to take selfies. Faye tied hundreds of standard *Iris*es onto agricultural netting typically used to support the flower's slender stalks as they grow. The stunning blue botanical backdrop impressed many attendees, myself included.

So I knew Faye's artistic sensibilities would be compatible with this commission. While planning for the **American Flowers Week** botanical fashion shoot, she says, "I wanted to use a single color *Iris* because I knew it would be more impactful and define the garment's form better than a mix of *Iris* colors."

Sun Valley provided her with 1,500 'Hong Kong' *Iris*es, with slightly ruffled sapphire blue petals and a yellow "blotch." These features are portrayed beautifully on the floor-length *Iris* skirt, which has a soft drape that is reminiscent of regal velvet. To create the garment, Faye allowed hundreds of *Iris* buds to open in her warm studio for about two days. When the flowers were ideal, she moved buckets into her cooler to hold at the right stage.

Construction took place the day before the photo shoot, beginning with a tulle underskirt that supports the flowers, about 600 of which Faye individually stitched to the fabric. She worked upward, from the hem to the waistband, laying each row of blooms over previous rows to hide the cut stems. Two types of native huckleberry finish off the hem, adding flair, depth and contrast. At the waistband, Faye



reversed the *Iris*es so their heads create a finished edge. Because the completed skirt was quite heavy, Faye zip-tied a thin belt to the fabric waistband, cinching it around the model's waist to stay in place.

A mass of open *Iris*es felt too voluminous for the bodice, so Faye dressed her model in a ballet-style jersey top and wove flowers into a botanical stole for the shoulder detail. "The stole has a fabric base and a chicken-wire-like 'sausage,' which I sewed on to build the structure," she explains. "I added greenery and glued on the *Iris*es, hyacinths and tulips – all from Sun Valley, plus some hellebores from my garden."

Faye's own property and an ancient, multi-trunk bay tree serve as the moody setting for this luxe *Iris* garment. She "planted" 400 extra *Iris*es in the ground beneath the tree, using their clustered placement to suggest a naturalized floral meadow. "Now, I really want someone to let me do this for a wedding, because the *Iris*es held up so well," she says.

The yellow eyes of the deep blue *Iris*es resemble flecks of sequins against the richly colored skirt – they seem to have a reflective quality, even on a foggy, wet day in late March.

### CREDITS

**Floral Palette:** 1,500 'Hong Kong' *Iris*es, Sun Valley Floral Farms (Arcata, Calif.) [thesunvalleygroup.com](http://thesunvalleygroup.com) @sunvalleyfloralfarms

**Designer:** Faye Zierer Krause, Flora Organica Designs Arcata, Calif., [floraorganica.com](http://floraorganica.com), @fayekrause

**Model:** Morgan Mireles

**Hair/Makeup:** Angela Cheung, Onyx-Private Holistic Studio, Arcata, Calif., @onyxarcata

**Photography:** Leon Villagomez, [leonvillagomez.com](http://leonvillagomez.com) @leonvillagomez

**Location:** Flora Organica Designs, Arcata, Calif. ■

