

Guidelines for Purchasing Flowers

at San Francisco Zen Center

In the spirit of the food purchasing guidelines, the environmental committee of San Francisco Zen Center proposes a set of guidelines for purchasing cut flowers. Recognizing that our choice in purchasing flowers has a far-reaching impact on our health and on the health of the natural world, we commit to purchasing products that are grown sustainably with practices that foster soil health and protect water quality, that promote biological diversity and protect farm-worker health, that conserve energy and natural resources while also supporting a strong, local economy, and that protect future generations. We whole-heartedly support the use of flowers and greenery grown at one of our own temples above any other flower purchasing choice, as it is most aligned with our values: using the products of our own hands, knowing firsthand how the flowers were grown, and in the case of City Center receiving flowers from Green Gulch, fostering a sense of connection between the temples. Innumerable labors bring us our flowers—may we consider how they come to us.

Some facts about the global floral industry¹:

- Most flowers are grown free from many pesticide regulations, leaving low-wage floral industry workers vulnerable to toxic exposures.
- A May 2002 report in *Environmental Health Perspectives* described (flower) farms in Costa Rica where more than half the workers complained of nausea, skin eruptions, headache, dizziness and fainting — all symptoms of pesticide exposure.
- Most U.S. flower production occurs in California, where flowers and other ornamentals ranked sixth among all crops causing pesticide illnesses, according to data compiled by the California Department of Pesticide Regulation. In San Mateo County, 23 percent of all pesticide poisonings occurred in the flower industry.
- About 65 percent of the flowers sold in the United States are imported, primarily from Colombia and Ecuador.
- The pursuit of floral perfection extends from consumers to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which inspects shipments of flowers and plants from other countries. One insect, or a single leaf with a spot of fungus, and an entire shipment can be rejected. This places enormous pressure on flower growers to ensure every plant is flawless, even if tons of agricultural chemicals are needed to achieve that perfection.

¹Mark Lallanilla, *No Bed of Roses*,

<http://abcnews.go.com/Health/Technology/story?id=118255&page=1> (February 2011).

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Whenever feasible:

- Goal 1: Purchase Green Gulch Farm organically grown flowers. City Center and Green Gulch will purchase flowers from Green Gulch Farm rather than another vendor if Green Gulch has the item desired.**
Strategies: Green Gulch Farm is committed to competitive pricing with comparable vendors. City Center will purchase flowers from GGF as seasonability allows (usually May-October).
- Goal 2: Purchase organically grown flowers.**
Strategies: As of summer 2011, there are no certified organic flowers at the SF Flower Mart. Green Gulch and City Center will investigate sources for certified organic flowers and purchase them whenever possible. Flower purchasers are encouraged to ask conventional flower vendors to supply organic flowers.
- Goal 3: Purchase flowers grown seasonally.**
Strategies: The gardener/flower chiden will adapt altar offerings to reflect seasonal flowers. The gardener/flower chiden will utilize dried flowers and fresh greenery during winter months when local fresh flowers are scarce.
- Goal 4: Purchase locally grown flowers (within 100-150 miles).**
- Goal 5: Purchase flowers grown under fair trade conditions.**
Strategy: The garden managers are encouraged to develop a relationship with local farms or suppliers in order to know that labor practices are in accord with fair trade USA standards.
- Goal 6: The garden manager/chiden will take steps to provide education about flowers at their center.**
Strategy: The garden manager/chiden will make periodic announcements regarding current flower purchasing choices and the existence of these guidelines at community events such as work meeting.
- Goal 7: Minimize packaging and reduce energy used for transportation and production.**
Strategies: Buy in bulk through centralized buyer whenever possible. Reduce, reuse, or recycle all packaging materials.

Recommended Vendors of Local Flowers at San Francisco Flower Mart

Florist at Large

Contact: Vicki (415) 777-5342, (408) 315-1489

Large branches. They usually forage for them in wild

Green Valley Growers (Sebastopol)

Contact: Jerry Boldnan

(415) 974-6569

gmgrow@aol.com

Lassen Ranch

Contact: (650) 346-6094

lassenranch@yahoo.com

Lupe Farms (Occidental)

Contact: (650) 346-6094

Neve Brothers

Contact: (415) 348-1548

nevebros@comcast.net

Locally grown roses.

Torchio Nursery

Contact: (415) 543-9035

sales@torchionursery.com

Very healthy plants - have to ask for locally grown.

(Note: Other vendors carry local flowers, but need to be asked. This list represents vendors who have a sizable quantity of local flowers).