

Ideas, Tips and Advice for Everything Flowers

# Fun with Flowers

*Your Guide  
to Selecting,  
Arranging  
& Enjoying  
Beautiful  
Flowers*

BY J SCHWANKE

Foreward by Debra Prinzing, author of *The 50 Mile Bouquet*





## Fun with Flowers... and J!

**I'm J Schwanke and I LOVE flowers!** My most treasured memories involve flowers in some way or another. From the moment I entered this world, I was destined to love the beauty of flowers. You see, my mom, a 3rd generation florist, delivered me in the middle of a Nebraska Flower Convention during a snowstorm! Yes. It's true.

I grew up in a family of professional florists in Fremont, Nebraska, smack dab in the middle of the USA, so my parents started me early along the flower path. Whether it was running through our family greenhouses, or "putting up flowers" when they arrived in big boxes from California or picking *Cattails* with my Grandpa and Grandma, "Carnation Joe Green" and his Lily... for me, life has always been "all about the flowers."

My parents are quite famous when it comes to flowers... you may even say that they have "gone viral." My dad is a past president of the Society of American Florists and in the Floriculture Hall of Fame and my mom is a respected Floral Commentator. The world, however, knows them as the "Famous Matching Couple." They were interviewed on the *Today Show*, amongst many other news outlets for dressing in matching flower themed outfits during their 63 years plus of marriage. Also, my dad never starts a day without his signature red *Carnation* in his suit coat pocket.

When I decided on a career in flowers, it was no surprise to anyone. My favorite part about flowers, is "arranging them." I learned so much from my flower arranging parents, grandparents, aunt and sister as well as "famous" flower







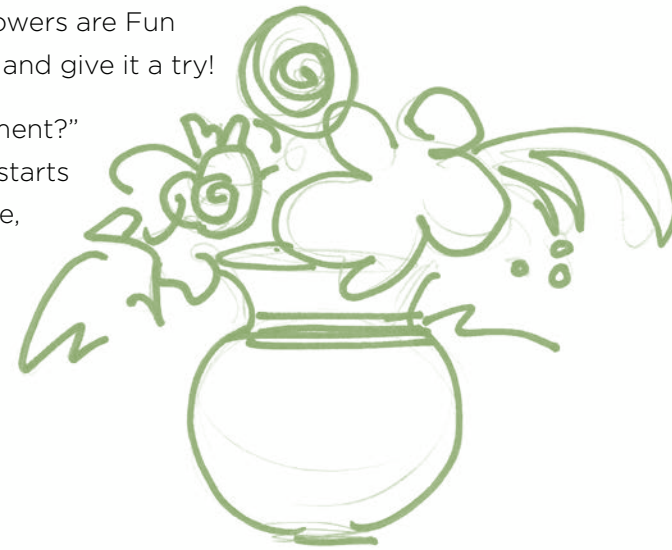
artists and friends I've had the privilege to meet along the way.

Sharing the flowers I've arranged, is why I love what I do. I became an expert at "sharing flowers" on the delivery truck in the family business. You realize quickly it's virtually impossible to "ruin" someone's day with flowers. It's an emotional experience; the way their eyes light up, the smile that floods their face... **flowers are simply... Powerful.**

Sharing is a passion... whether it's on my show *Fun with Flowers and J* on uBloom.com, at my hands on workshops or public presentations. People have a natural fondness for flowers and I enjoy sharing the magical things flowers can offer. Flowers are Fun and arranging flowers is easy...you just have to jump in and give it a try!

People often ask, "How do you start an arrangement?" Well for me, it's all about inspiration... and that usually starts with pretty flowers! When you pick up your flower knife, fresh flowers and foliage, something magical happens. Your body actually releases endorphins that create a sense of calm and wellbeing. You find joy mixing colors, textures, and creating your very own personal flower arrangement. This process repeats each and every time you "arrange flowers."

A single blossom, or collection of blooms, a combination of colors... and then nearly always... I head for a piece of paper... and throw down a quick sketch... it helps me register the 'feeling' I'm heading for solidly into my brain. Then I allow



## FROM A "BUD" TO A BLOOM

I was welcomed into this world literally surrounded by flowers; I was born at a flower convention! I'm a 4th generation Florist; I grew up in the greenhouses of the family flower business, I played in coolers, bulb caves and flower fields my whole life. I also happen to LOVE arranging flowers.

Being born into an iconic flower family does have its advantages. I owe an abundance of gratitude to my parents, grandparents and great grandparents; together they shared a daily dose of their passion for flowers.

My career in flowers began as a young boy promoting our family flower business. Thanks to my resourceful parents, I starred as "the pitchman" for Greens Greenhouses for the local paper and radio station. This early career path paved the way for a lifetime of amazing flowers, while giving me the foundation needed to express emotion through flower arranging and design.

"Turning people's feelings into flowers" just came naturally and I've been having "Fun with Flowers" ever since.



*Photos of a youngster J when he served as Greens Greenhouses pitchman in local advertisements.*





my hands and brain to connect through the flowers... it's definitely NOT a "science"... it's the "FUN" of translating my inspiration, feelings and emotion with the flowers. It's as simple, and intricate, as that.

Join me, as we discover the "Fun with Flowers". I hope it will enrich your life as much as it has mine. I was blessed to be "raised" by inspiring storytellers like my Grandpa, my Aunt Rose and my "babysitter and other mom" Dorothy! I share this because you're about to discover that *Fun with Flowers* is an incredible "collection" of favorite flowers and friends, creative tips and ideas, fun flower projects and best of all; stories from my flower-filled world. Each of the projects in this book has a coordinating "how to arrange flowers" video on my website, [uBloom.com](http://uBloom.com). You'll find that watching a "how to video" communicates the "how-to" much

better than step-by-step photos. I've listed **FREE links to selected projects** throughout the book. You can visit **[uBloom.com](http://uBloom.com)**, learn more about those projects and get in on the action.

So my friend, gather up a bunch of colorful flowers, pick up your floral knife, jot down a quick sketch, share a favorite story and get ready for something magical. When flowers and friends come together... there's **Fun with Flowers**... just waiting to happen!







# Fun with Tulip Tree Blossoms

*Tulip Tree Blossoms* are simply magical. They feature bright chartreuse blossoms that reflex backwards to reveal a tangerine water-mark on each petal; while an explosion of stamens surrounds the center of the flower.

With a *Tulip Tree* right outside my kitchen window, Spring is one of my favorite times of the year. I cut my garden flowers early in the morning, just as the sun is rising, to ensure the blossoms are crisp, fresh and hydrated. **HINT** Never cut flowers from the garden during the heat of the day.

My garden flowers include: *Tulip Tree* branches, *Lilacs* and *Yellow Peonies* (that's why I choose to live in Michigan. We have 4 complete seasons. The variations in temperature allow for a multitude of spring blossoms that work great for flower arranging). I sometimes include additional flowers and foliage purchased from my local flower seller to match my garden flowers.

The amazing fragrance of this arrangement fills the air with scents of *Lilac*, *Peony* and *Stock* to welcome Spring in grand fashion.

Color is my favorite design element. I select a color palette based on the flowers I'm using and it always helps in the creative arranging process.

Lemon

Olive Bright

Basil


Lavender

Violet



- FLOWERS**
- 5 Iris
  - 3 Tulip Tree Branches
  - 5 Yellow Peonies
  - 3 Yellow Pincushion Protea
  - 5 Lilac Stems
  - 2 Stems Craspedia (Globe) Yarrow
  - 5 Yellow Stock
  - 5 Yellow Gerbera Daisies
  - 10 Yellow Ranunculus
  - 3 Bupleurum
  - 5 "Suela" Yellow Roses
- FOLIAGE**
- 5 Variegated Aspidistra Leaves
  - 5 Scented Geraniums

- AND ...**
- Amethyst Glass Footed Bowl
  - 1 Block Floral Foam
  - Clear Anchor Tape

 **HINT** Never crush stems. Flowers have vascular stems (for the most part) and crushing stems creates blockage, increasing bacteria growth. Instead, cut stems at a 45-degree angle to create the best surface for absorbing water.





## Fun with Pin Cushion Protea

The unique ways nature has adapted to its surroundings are part of the fun of flowers. *Pin Cushion Protea* is an example of one of Mother Nature's masterpieces. *Pin Cushions* have an interesting "alien" quality that makes it difficult for some to believe it's actually a flower. (Note: Technically *Pin Cushions* aren't *Protea* but rather "*Leucospermum*," a similar type of species.)

As the *Pin Cushion* flower opens, the pin-like stamens release from the fibrous center. They literally spring out so the flower begins to resemble your grandmother's pincushion she used when sewing.

*Pin Cushions* come in a wide variety of colors and styles; sometimes they resemble sea urchins or coral. This naturally leads us to design a "fish bowl" flower arrangement with an "under the sea" look.

Begin with a metal "pin holder" (also known as flower frog or kenzan). It is a time honored and eco-conscious way to keep flowers in place in an arrangement.

Place the heavy metal pin holder inside the bubble bowl. Secure the holder to the bottom of the bowl with florist clay. Add your flowers. Conceal the pin holder with



**TIP** Be Careful! Pin Holders are very sharp; use caution and supervise children. Cut the woody stem of the *Pin Cushion Protea* at 45-degree angle with your florist knife or by-pass cutter to allow easier insertion into the pin holder.



### FLOWERS

- 2 Red Pin Cushion (Tango)
- 2 Orange Pin Cushion (Succession)
- 3 Yellow Pin Cushion (Erubescens)
- 2 "Pine Cone" Leucadendron (Terenifolia)

### FOLIAGE

- 3 Equisetum (Horse Tail Reed)
- 5 Foxtail Fern
- 2 Monkey Tail (Fiddlehead Fern)

### AND ...

- 20" Bubble Bowl
- Pin Holder (Flower Frog)
- River Rocks
- LED Lighted Disc (Optional)



# FLOWER FRIENDS

## MEL RESENDIZ

*Protea Farmer*

Resendiz Brothers, Fallbrook CA

Mel creates flower magic in the beautiful region of Fallbrook, California. Everyone meeting Mel quickly recognizes that he is an amazing flower farmer. Wander through his fields, amidst butterflies, hummingbirds, gorgeous blooms and you're transported "that much closer to heaven."

Mel has dedicated his life (and flower farm) to growing *Protea*, *Leucospermum*, *Leucodendron*, *Banksia*, *Grevillea*, *Wax Flower* and *Kangaroo Paws*. These flower varieties (none of which are native to California) have been introduced by hand, plant-by-plant by Mel himself to the vertical, mountainous microclimate of Southern California.

Mel's quick wit and passion for flowers are infectious. He's a true joy to be around. You'll see his flowers in this book, at my events and on uBloom.com. Mel's the "Protea Man" and a one-of-kind California flower farmer.



with river rocks. Then place the bubble bowl on a LED lighted disc. This creates a fun effect that looks fabulous in low lighting or nighttime events.

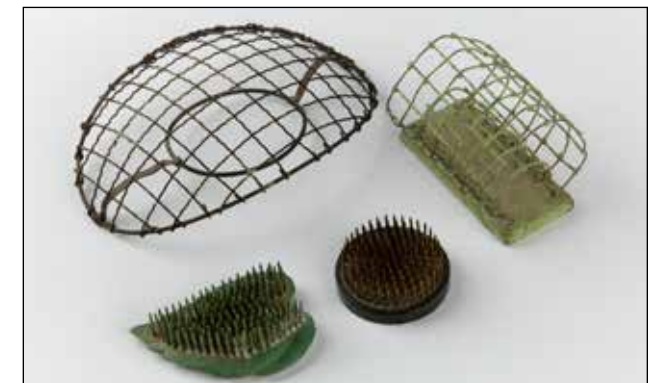
Fun flower designs can transport us to different worlds; use your imagination and Mother Nature's creative blossoms to theme your next arrangement.

**IDEA Fill the bubble bowl to the top with water.** This magnifies the flowers and enhances the "under the sea" theme. Warning: A bubble bowl full of water is very heavy. Use caution and always move bubble bowls with both hands from the bottom. NEVER pick it up from the edge of the bowl.

**IDEA Scale it down.** This arrangement was created in a large 20" bubble bowl; a similar effect can be created with any size bubble bowl and fewer flowers.



**HINT** Look for "flower frogs" at antique stores, swap meets or garage/estate sales. It's a great way to reuse/recycle. Plus many original "flower frogs" were made in the USA.



# THE RIGHT FLOWER ARRANGING TOOLS



Using the right tools... makes every job easier! The same goes for flower arranging. Specific tools make it easier to cut and arrange your flowers; using these tools will also make them last longer. The two go hand in hand.

## THE FLORIST KNIFE & PROPER TECHNIQUE

**Swiss Army® Locking Blade Knife** My favorite flower arranging tool is my Swiss Army Knife. This is not the version packed with all sorts of gadgets and gizmos, but rather a knife designed specifically for flower arranging by Swiss Army. This knife has a blade that can be folded into the handle and when opened “locks” into place (thus the name). This allows you to cut without the worry of the blade folding back; perfect for cutting flowers.

All flowers benefit from being cut with a knife at a 45-degree angle. A sharp knife is your friend and ensures your flowers will last longer. Swiss Army also makes a great sharpener that sharpens your knife with a few quick swipes. For years there were only two choices of handle colors; red and black! Today the colorful handles available are more fashionable.

Cutting flowers with a knife must be perfected, but when perfected it's the fastest, easiest way to cut flowers for arranging. Here's a link to a video on [uBloom.com](http://uBloom.com) that you can watch to show you how to cut flowers with a knife correctly. [uBloom.com/cuttingflowers](http://uBloom.com/cuttingflowers)



## OTHER TOOLS

**Bunch Cutters** This works well for cutting a whole bunch of flowers at one time. Many people use bunch cutters to “process” large quantities of flowers. (By-pass Cutters work too)

**By-pass Cutters** They are wonderful for thick woody stems (i.e. *Protea* or *Lilac*). They cut through large diameter more easily than with a knife.

**Scissors** I use scissors for ribbon; some people like the safety factor of scissors rather than a knife to cut stems. However, scissors can crush the vascular system of the flower and prevent it from taking up water (a bunch cutter can do this too).



**TIP** Keep your tools clean. Flowers hate bacteria and it shortens their life. Keeping your tools clean prevents bacteria from building up on your knife, scissors or bunch cutters. Cutting flowers with dirty tools is definitely not recommended.

**HINT** Cutting flowers with scissors is like cutting a paper straw with scissors. After its cut, it's crushed and compressed, making it harder to take up liquids.

**Chrysal Rose Stripper** I love my soft plastic rose stripper for removing foliage and thorns, its' soft and gently removes the foliage and just the tips of the thorns. It's perfect for removing foliage that would fall below the water level!

## FLOWER BUCKETS & CLEANLINESS

Clean buckets are equally important to longer lasting flowers. I keep a toilet brush around to help scrub my buckets. Anytime a bucket begins to have visible staining, I don't use it for flowers anymore. When you can see the stains, it's no longer a useable bucket.







## FAVORITE FLOWERS

# ROSE LILY

"The *Rose Lily* combines two flowers into one, a *Lily* and a *Rose*. *Rose Lilies* are fragrant, pollen-free, and last incredibly long. Talk about a FUN Flower!"

— J Schwanke

A *Lily* flower with double-petals resembling a *Rose*.

*Rose Lilies* come in a variety of colors: Nearly White (as pictured) and Shades of Pink to Fuchsia with White Striations.

Scientific Name: *Rose lily* is the collective term for the unique series of *Lilium* with double petal flowers.

The *Rose Lily* is pollen-free and lightly scented with a very long-lasting vase life.

*Rose Lilies* are grown in California and part of America's Flowers. Growers include: Green Valley Floral, KB Farms and The Sun Valley Group

For more information visit:  
[www.roselily.com](http://www.roselily.com)





### EUFLORIA FLOWERS

Eufloria Flowers has been a premier grower of varietal roses for over seven generations. Our flowers are of rare quality and performance, and are consistently recognized as the most beautiful roses throughout the industry. We have pioneered and perfected hydroponic growing methods that enable Eufloria Flowers to set a standard for quality and innovation.

**[eufloriaflowers.com.com](http://eufloriaflowers.com.com)**



### FERNTRUST

FernTrust, Inc. of Seville, Florida is a cooperative of quality oriented growers sharing a rich history in agribusiness. Unique to the industry, acting as a cooperative allows the grower-members to do what they do best – grow the highest quality foliage available. Together these growers have decades of experience.

**[feritrust.com](http://feritrust.com)**



### CHRYSLAL AMERICAS

Chrysal takes pride in creating excellence in care for cut flowers. We care for flowers, from harvest until the moment they bloom in a vase. For each phase in the life of a cut flower, Chrysal offers just the right product for long lasting beauty.

**[chrysalusa.com](http://chrysalusa.com)**