

Homegrown Blooms COAST TO COAST

GROCERY PARTICIPATION IN AMERICAN FLOWERS WEEK
DRIVES CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT AND FLORAL SALES.

By Debra Prinzing



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Town & Country Markets, a family-owned chain of six neighborhood grocery stores based in Bainbridge Island, Wash., began selling cut flowers in the mid-1980s after its owners participated in an industry trip to Holland and placed an order for six container loads of Dutch flowers.

As current floral category manager **Melanie Cherry** retells company lore, that one-time bulk purchase launched Town & Country's original floral department, which subsequently transitioned into a regular prac-

tice of buying seasonal flowers from locals, including hobbyists with large cutting gardens. "Local has always been important to us and our customers," she says. With growth and expansion of T&C's Floral Shop, buying from the lady down the street with a gorgeous backyard has given way to established farm-direct programs sourcing from growers in Washington, Oregon and California, she says.

For the past two years, T&C partnered with a number of regional and domestic farms for

its **American Flowers Week** (June 28-July 4) promotion, using the campaign as a vehicle to sell and highlight locally grown flowers during the holiday week leading to Independence Day. In addition to direct-farm purchases, T&C's floral buyers work with the **Seattle Wholesale Growers Market**, a farmer-owned cooperative that represents flower farms in Washington, Oregon and Alaska, to customize a diverse selection of flowers and foliage.

Each T&C floral department uses in-store signage to high-



1. The Bainbridge Island Town & Country Market display for American Flowers Week 2016 was designed by Floral Manager Denise Johnson and her team, using in-house signage to highlight Americana themes during the week.

2. T&C Floral Shop staff created “floral fascinators” to wear during American Flowers Week 2017 as a fun way to stimulate conversations with customers.

3. The 2017 American Flowers Week branding featured sunflowers, including campaign graphics provided by SlowFlowers.com, which provided the T&C Floral Shop on Bainbridge Island a perfect showcase for local sunflowers harvested just miles away.

4. T&C’s popular single stem program is featured below, with a rainbow-array of flowers from farms and growers in the Pacific Northwest and outside states.



light American Flowers Week, and managers “compete” in challenges to design special floral displays for the week.

At T&C’s Bainbridge Island store, Floral Manager **Denise Johnson** created a display with a vintage USA state flowers map and a little red wagon filled with local cuts. At T&C’s **Ballard Market** in Seattle, Floral Manager **Kristen Parris** and her team displayed buckets of bunches and bouquets on a wooden market cart with signage declaring “We Love Our Local Flower Farmers.”

Across the chain, staff florists added American Flowers Week bouquet labels to alert their consumers about the origin of the flowers on display. Customers are also encouraged to assemble their own arrangements from the “single stems” wall of blooms, where all stems are \$1.50 and the selection at the peak of summer is more than 100 choices. The Fourth of



// Sourcing //

July promotion coincides beautifully with eagerly awaited local sunflowers grown at Bainbridge Island’s **MiddleField Farm**, owned by the **Nakata** family, whose patriarch co-founded T&C Markets in 1957.

“Typically, the Fourth of July is not a huge flower week,” Denise Johnson points out. “Instead, people tend to buy potted plants for the patio and outdoor entertaining. So it was fun to be able to promote locally grown flowers as a new holiday. I’m proud of the way we created an interest and huge awareness.”

Johnson describes T&C’s shoppers as “conscious about their global footprint,” consumers who are aware of third-party sustainability labeling programs like ‘Salmon Safe’ and local sourcing.

Last year during American Flowers Week, the staff at T&C’s Bainbridge Island store designed and modeled “floral fascinators” to raise awareness and present locally grown botanicals as fashion. “We have the most creative staff, and for us, it was the joy of creating something to display during American Flowers Week and share with our customers,” Denise adds.

MICRO-LOCAL PROMOTIONS

Last year during American Flowers Week, I shadowed flower farmer **Steve Pabody**, partner



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in **Triple Wren Farms** with his wife **Sarah**. The couple’s Ferndale, Wash., flower farm makes weekly deliveries to **Cone & Steiner**, an innovative new-old neighborhood convenience store with three Seattle locations.

Steve delivered bunches of lovely *Anemones* and mixed bouquets arranged in Mason jars – all labeled American Flowers Week to Seattle-based Cone & Steiner. Owner **Dani Cone** gladly received the blooms, which she says are perfect for “our model as a small local grocery market – the updated corner store.”

Cone & Steiner was inspired by Dani’s great-grandfather’s mercantile, which had the same name and operated in Seattle a century ago. Like the Cone &

5. Last year, Steve Pabody (left), partner in Triple Wren Farms, delivered American Flowers Week-branded bouquets and bunches to Dani Cone (right), owner of Seattle's Cone & Steiner, a modern urban convenience market.

6. Cone & Steiner uses chalkboard signage to highlight a variety of flowers from Triple Wren Farms, including Mason jar bouquets, parchment-wrapped mixed bouquets and a grower's bundle option.

7. A detail of the highly diverse Triple Wren bouquet, labeled for American Flowers Week at Cone & Steiner.

8. Whole Foods' Market Mt. Washington, Md., branch in the Baltimore region adapted the signature American Flowers Week logo for in-store signage during the 2017 campaign, alerting customers to the diversity of selection from nearby flower farms.

Steiner of 1915, today's boutique chain "is where you go for food basics but also where you run into people and hear news," Dani says. "It's a hub of community. And that's what we're trying to bring to these dense urban neighborhoods."

There is an emphasis on local artisan selections, including wine and beer, cheeses, breads, and other specialty items. "Customers want to know where our products are coming from, and they care about local," Dani explains. "Our flowers are right out front because this area is the gateway to the store – the red carpet, if you will. Being able to feature local flowers, especially our favorites from Triple Wren Farms, is the best way we could welcome customers into the store."

Finding locally grown flowers was part of Dani's original planning for Cone & Steiner, which opened in 2014. "I was lucky to find Triple Wren Farms," she says. "We constantly get compliments on these, and they consistently sell out because they're uniquely beautiful and local."



WHOLE FOODS CELEBRATES AMERICAN FLOWERS WEEK

Staff at the Mt. Washington branch of **Whole Foods Market** in Baltimore, Md., have participated in American Flowers Week during the past two years, most recently centering their efforts around an over-the-top floral display embellished with the red-white-and-blue campaign branding.

According to **Diana Westcott**, Whole Foods Market's regional floral buyer for the Mid-Atlantic region (based in Landover, Md.), Whole Foods has always featured local flowers in season. "To us, 'local' means grown within 100 miles of the store."

During the June 28-July 4 campaign week, the staff promoted in-season botanicals sourced from flower farms in Maryland, Virginia and New Jersey. "The Mt. Washington store really supports the American Flowers movement," Diana explains. "The timing for American Flowers Week is perfect, as far as we're concerned. There's such high productivity among the local farms then."

// Sourcing //

As the district's regional floral buyer, Diana supports Whole Foods stores in six states and the District of Columbia. "All our stores have local flowers, and, in fact, we maintain an inventory here at the district warehouse of locally grown flowers. That way, our floral managers can order and receive fresh local product every day," she says. This floral purchasing model allows for targeted in-store messaging and labeling as well as improved staff product knowledge, with the goal of helping inform shoppers about their choices.

With American Flowers Week's alignment with the July 4th holiday, Diana says the timing "absolutely" provides a new opportunity to boost floral sales. "It's a great opportunity to inspire shoppers about the stories behind the flowers they buy." ■



9. T&C's Bainbridge Island store created an eye-catching American Flowers Week display for 2016 with a USA map, flags and a vintage red wagon.

**Details**

Town & Country Markets
townandcountrymarkets.com

Cone & Steiner
coneandsteiner.com, @coneandsteiner

Whole Foods Market
wholefoodsmarket.com, @wholefoods

About American Flowers Week

Created and produced by Slow Flowers (slowflowers.com), American 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 flower farms to florists and grocery floral departments.

Social media engagement on Instagram and Twitter generated more than 5 million impressions during the 2017 campaign, giving the hashtag #americanflowersweek top-of-mind presence, up from 1.2 million impressions the prior year.

For more details and to participate in the grocery signage and labeling program, visit americanflowersweek.com.

Debra Prinzing is a Seattle-based writer, speaker and leading advocate for American Grown Flowers. She is the producer of slowflowers.com. Each Wednesday,



approximately 2,500 listeners tune into her "Slow Flowers Podcast," available for free download at her website, debraprinzing.com, or on iTunes and via other podcast services. In 2016, GWA: The Association for Garden Communicators inducted her into its Hall of Fame. She is the author of 10 books, including *Slow Flowers* and *The 50 Mile Bouquet*.