

People & Places

# This farm blooms year around

By JULIA HOLLISTER  
For the Capital Press

ROYAL OAKS, Calif. — David Medrano started on the bottom rung of the agricultural ladder, but he has arrived at the top. He operates his own family farm.

“I landed a job washing buckets for a flower wholesaler,” he said. “I started at the very bottom and gradually learned more and more about the flower industry.”

He was eventually promoted to wholesale manager. As he learned more about flowers and the process of growing and cutting them for market, he started taking charge of the wholesaler’s flower inventory and became fully immersed in the flower world.

In 2001, he began growing his own flower business — Medrano’s Flowers — with a small variety of flowers and an extensive knowledge of flowers he had gathered over 15 years.

Today, his 5-acre farm grows more than 60 varieties of flowers year-round. His wife, Rosa, and their daughter and two sons help.

To keep the flowers continuously fresh and blooming, Medrano covers each flower bed with plastic sheets and drills each sheet with holes for weed and humidity control.



David Medrano sells more than 60 varieties of flowers at the Mission Community Market in San Francisco.

It also allows him to control water usage. This keeps most of the moisture in the soil. Drip irrigation is used.

Timing is a key part of his effort to sustain flower growth and variety. Medrano and his family plan which flowers to grow for each season months in advance.

He readily acknowledges that he has a favorite flower.

“Out of the large variety of flowers that I grow, my favorite is the Canterbury Bells, but the most popular flowers among my custom-

ers are dahlias and tulips,” he said.

He also has a flower that’s particularly hard to grow.

“The flower that I’ve had the most difficulty to grow would probably be Tweedia, because it wilts too quickly,” he said.

Pests are not a problem because his main focus is on maintaining a clean and organized growing area.

Farmers markets are where most of his sales take place.

“Even though I sold flowers to wholesalers, I also felt

that it was important to also sell them at the farmers markets,” Medrano said. “It is a small business, and it was about keeping my family’s wishes of staying as a family business.”

Brie Mazurek, the communications director of Foodwise — formerly CUESA — concurs. The nonprofit operates the Mission Community Market and the Ferry Plaza Market in San Francisco.

“Throughout the seasons, David and Rosa Medrano

**Western Innovator**

**DAVID MEDRANO**

**Occupation:** Farmer.

**Operation:** Medrano’s Flowers.

**Residence:** Royal Oaks, Calif.

**Family:** Wife Rosa, daughter Carla, and sons Saul and Mauricio.

**Quote:** “I always treat my customers as a family,” says David. “I treat them like family because knowing that if I take care of them, they’ll take care of the farmers.”

bring a variety of beautiful locally grown flowers and fresh herbs to our Mission neighbors,” she said. “We love seeing their stand brimming with tulips in the spring, dahlias in the summer, and marigolds in the fall. The Medranos embody the spirit of family farming and community.”

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**To Reach Us**

Circulation.....800-781-3214  
Email.....Circulation@capitalpress.com  
Main line.....503-364-4431

**News Staff**

**Idaho**

Carol Ryan Dumas .....208-860-3898

**Boise**

Brad Carlson .....208-914-8264

**Western Washington**

Don Jenkins.....360-722-6975

**Eastern Washington**

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**Oregon**

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**Designer**

Randy Wriughthouse.....800-882-6789

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We want to publish corrections to set the record straight.

# Four growers specialize in Easter lilies

By CRAIG REED  
For the Capital Press

BROOKINGS, Ore. — The Easter lily industry that straddles the southwestern Oregon and northwestern California border has experienced declining production over recent decades.

There are now only four growers, down from 26 in the late 1960s and 9 in 2000. Lily bulb production by the growers peaked at 13.5 million in the 1990s, but has gradually declined to 6.5 million to 7 million today.

The sale of flowering Easter lilies is tied to the Christian tradition of celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The market for the lilies is across both the U.S. and Canada.

“There are a lot of factors (for the decline), but one of the most significant is that the millennial population (ages 25 to 40) is not as religious and church going as past generations,” said Rob Miller, co-owner of Dahlstrom and Watt Bulb Farms. “They don’t see the significance of lilies and Easter Sunday. It’s not rocket science.”

Zeke Harms, the general manager of Hastings Bulb Growers, said the lily market has been declining for the past 20 years.

“The younger generations aren’t buying lilies,” Harms



Craig Reed/For the Capital Press

**Zeke Harms, general manager of Hastings Bulb Growers, checks on the growth of lilies in the farm’s greenhouses in early March. The flowers are scheduled to be shipped to West Coast stores around April 1 so they’re available to customers prior to Easter on April 17.**

said. “Some of the older traditional values maybe aren’t so valued anymore by the younger generations.

“Easter lilies are tied to a religious holiday and conventional religion doesn’t seem to be as popular as it used to be,” he explained. “New contemporary churches are less traditional in my view. You look at the holidays we celebrate — Thanksgiving, Christmas, Memorial Day, Labor Day — and Easter seems to have become a kind of a back burner holiday.”

The four remaining lily growers are Hastings, Dahlstrom and Watt, Palmer

Westbrook and Crockett United Lilies. Hastings has lily fields in Oregon’s Curry County and California’s Del Norte County. The other three growers are in Del Norte County.

“Basically all the flowering potted Easter lilies originate from here,” said Harms, adding that a few farms in Europe have started growing lilies in recent years.

The four growers all produce bulbs that are harvested in October and sold to greenhouses throughout the U.S. and Canada. The bulbs grow into potted, flowering plants and are shipped to retail

stores in late March and early April depending on the date of Easter.

This year, Easter is on April 17.

Miller explained that lilies are grown over a three- to four-year period and it’s been hard in recent years to predict the market in advance and to plant accordingly.

“Lilies are very expensive to grow and maintain,” he said. “Nobody could tell me three years ago how many bulbs will sell this year.”

Harms admitted that despite cutting his production from the previous year, his farm over produced for both the 2020 and 2021 Easter seasons. The COVID pandemic that closed churches and limited gatherings was also a huge factor.

“We threw a bunch (of bulbs) away,” Harms said. “It’s a high value, high reward, high risk business. Lately it’s been high risk, lose big.”

In addition to the difficulty of predicting the future market, the lily growers have also dealt with labor and transportation issues. Miller said the migrant workers that used to work up the California and Oregon coasts don’t exist anymore.

Miller’s farm finds local residents to do the field maintenance and harvest work. Harms works directly with

a source in Mexico to send workers to his farm.

In addition to selling bulbs, the Hastings and Dahlstrom and Watt farms have greenhouses and grow several thousand plants in pots for direct sales to West Coast stores. The Palmer Westbrook and Crockett farms sell only bulbs.

Because of the decline in lily sales, the four farms have taken some of their land out of lily production and either expanded their production in hay, cattle and sheep or diversified to other products such as other types of nursery flowers, cranberries, quinoa, broccoli and hemp.

“I’ve been in the lily business since I was 15 and now I’m 67,” said Miller. “This location is the best place and only place to grow Easter lily bulbs so I hope to be able to maintain what I’m doing. We’re surviving.”

Harms said he’s unsure of the future for the lily growers.

“I think there’ll always be a market for lily bulbs and lily flowers, but like any other agricultural product, there are going to have to be production caps to make your equipment and labor most efficient,” he said.

“But I still like to play in the dirt, walk around in the field and work outside in the sun,” he said of continuing to grow lilies.

## CALENDAR

Submit upcoming ag-related events on [www.capitalpress.com](http://www.capitalpress.com) or by email to [newsroom@capitalpress.com](mailto:newsroom@capitalpress.com).

**THROUGH SUNDAY MAY 1**

**2022 Wooden Shoe Tulip Festival:** Wooden Shoe Tulip Farm, 33814 S. Meridian Road, Woodburn, Ore. Experience the beauty of 40 acres of tulips and over 200 acres of outdoor space and activities this spring. We are again offering tickets online only this year to minimize crowds and allow for more time to enjoy our fields. Hours: 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Friday; 8 a.m.-7 p.m. Saturday-Sunday. Website: <https://bit.ly/36o2wMD>

**SATURDAY APRIL 2**

**Free Waste Pesticide Collection Event in Pendleton:** Pendleton Convention Center, 1601 Westgate, Pendleton, Ore. The Oregon Department of Agriculture through the Pesticide Stewardship Partnership is sponsoring a Free Waste Pesticide Collection Event. This event is an opportunity for landowners, farmers and other commercial pesticide users to rid storage facilities of unwanted or unused pesticide products. Registration for this event is required by March 23. Contact: Kathryn Rifenburg, 971-600-5073, [kathryn.rifenburg@oda.oregon.gov](mailto:kathryn.rifenburg@oda.oregon.gov)

Website: <https://oda.direct/PSP>

**SATURDAY-SUNDAY APRIL 2-3**

**Spring Farming Days at Pomeroy:** 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Garfield County Fairgrounds, 99 Fairgrounds Road, Pomeroy, Wash. Horse farming and antique equipment displays. No entry fee. Fun for the whole family. Contact: 509-566-7027

**WEDNESDAY-SATURDAY APRIL 6-9**

**2022 Idaho FFA State Convention:** College of Southern Idaho, 315 Falls Ave., Twin Falls, Idaho. More than 1,400 FFA members from around Idaho will gather for this year’s convention. Website: <https://bit.ly/3J2JAB1>

**TUESDAY APRIL 12**

**Southern Idaho Livestock Hall of Fame Induction:** 6:30 p.m. Turf Club, 734 Falls Ave. Twin Falls, Idaho. The Southern Idaho Livestock Hall of Fame will honor its newest inductees on April 12 at the Turf Club during the organization’s 61st annual banquet. Those inductees to be honored this year are: cattle producers Guy and Sherry Colyer of Bruneau, sheep producers Don and Patricia Pickett of Oakley, former Idaho State Brand Inspector Larry Hayhurst of Nampa and dairyman John Reitsma (posthumously)

of Jerome. The banquet will open with social time at 6:30 p.m. followed by dinner at 7 p.m. Tickets for the prime rib dinner are \$30 and can be reserved by calling Eric Bennett at (208) 320-5769.

**THURSDAY-SATURDAY APRIL 14-16**

**Spring Fair:** Washington State Fairgrounds, 110 9th Ave. SW, Puyallup, Wash. Celebrate spring at the fair and all things agriculture. Website: <https://www.thefair.com>

**SATURDAY APRIL 16**

**Oregon Women for Agriculture Auction and Dinner:** 5:30 p.m. Linn County Expo Center, 3700 Knox Butte Road E, Albany, Ore. Oregon Women for Agriculture is excited to host our annual Auction and Dinner returning in-person this year! Make plans to attend for a fun-filled evening of socializing, sharing delicious food and bidding on an assortment of high-quality oral and silent auction items. Website: <http://www.owaonline.org/auction>

**Free Waste Pesticide Collection Event in Roseburg:** Douglas County Fairgrounds, 2110 Frear St., Roseburg, Ore. The Oregon Department of Agriculture through the Pesticide Stewardship Partnership is sponsoring a Free Waste Pesticide Collection Event. This event is an opportunity for landowners,

farmers and other commercial pesticide users to rid storage facilities of unwanted or unused pesticide products. Registration for this event is required by April 1. Contact: Kathryn Rifenburg, 971-600-5073, [kathryn.rifenburg@oda.oregon.gov](mailto:kathryn.rifenburg@oda.oregon.gov) Website: <https://bit.ly/3AdxFgp>

**THURSDAY-SUNDAY APRIL 21-24**

**Spring Fair:** Washington State Fairgrounds, 110 9th Ave. SW, Puyallup, Wash. Celebrate spring at the fair and all things agriculture. Website: <https://www.thefair.com>

**SATURDAY-SUNDAY APRIL 23-24**

**California Antique Equipment Show:** 10 a.m. International Agri-Center, 4500 Laspina St., Tulare, Calif. The show will showcase antique tractors, trucks and engines and will include vendors and activities such as a tractor pull, hay-buckling contest and tractor driving. Website: <https://www.antiquefarmshow.com>

**SATURDAY-SUNDAY APRIL 23-24**

**Oregon Ag Fest:** 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday; 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday. Oregon State Fairgrounds, 2330 17th St. NE, Salem, Ore. 97301. The goal of Oregon Ag Fest is to provide an experience for the whole family that is educational

and fun. And, we keep it affordable! Kids age 12 and under are free; others are \$9. Parking is free.

**TUESDAY APRIL 26**

**Variable Density Thinning Workshop:** 6-8 p.m. Seaquest State Park, 3030 Spirit Lake Highway, Castle Rock, Wash. This practice dovetails with common small forest landowner management objectives like developing wildlife habitat and enhancing recreation and aesthetic value of a forest. It can also be a low-impact form of harvest that landowners can utilize to meet tax-based county harvest requirements. Website: <https://forestry.wsu.edu/sw/events/vdt2022/>

**THURSDAY APRIL 28**

**Variable Density Thinning Workshop:** 6-8 p.m. Nisqually State Park, Mashel Prairie Road, Eatonville, Wash. This practice dovetails with common small forest landowner management objectives like developing wildlife habitat and enhancing recreation and aesthetic value of a forest. It can also be a low-impact form of harvest that landowners can utilize to meet tax-based county harvest requirements. Website: <https://forestry.wsu.edu/sw/events/vdt2022/>