

All about Bear Creek Blossoms: Growing bouquet-worthy flowers

The Accidental GARDENER

By Felicity Nullim

"Flowers always make people better, happier, and more helpful; they are sunshine, food and medicine for the soul."

— Luther Burbank, American botanist, horticulturist and pioneer in agricultural science

Whether carried by a bride, arranged in a mason jar, tucked in a buttonhole or growing wild in Lostine Canyon, flowers make us smile. The Accidental Gardener has always felt that growing flowers is a celebration of life — grow flowers, and more flowers. Cram them into every nook in your yard.

If you love fresh flowers and love having them near you at home or at work, you will be delighted to learn of Bear Creek Blossoms — a flower farm in Wallowa that will deliver flowers (through the growing season) every week, right to your door. That's pretty exciting, right? Or, if you fancy a little flower arranging yourself, you can purchase them at locations around the valley — Lower Valley Farmer's Market, Bee Charmed, and Dollar Stretcher.

Not everyone has the time, the know-



Flowers make us happy. Dawn Highberger of Bear Creek Blossoms is full of good cheer.

how, or the space to grow a flower garden. But Dawn Highberger has all three in abundance (well, maybe not the time part). She also has a couple other important ingredients: a passion for flowers and for spreading the flower love. She, and her husband Mark, have created an oasis of particular beauty here in the valley.

You can take a virtual tour at their website: www.bearcreekblossoms.com. While you're there, you can let them know you'd like some fabulous flowers delivered...next

summer, of course.

The Accidental Gardener sat down with Dawn (Mark was knee-deep in finishing his book detailing the history of the town of Wallowa) and asked about the challenges of growing bouquet-worthy flowers, the ideal bouquet, and expansion.

AG: Besides dealing with unpredictable weather, what has to happen to produce flowers that will look amazing in a bouquet?

DH: They need to have long stems so they can actually be arranged — that means lots of netting and staking. I need to get out to pick them early in the morning, before 6 in the summer. It helps to pick them just as they're opening. They haven't been pollinated, which means they'll last longer in a bouquet. Another aspect is sheer quantity — I will start at least 70 of one kind of snapdragon, for example. And variety is key, lots of different colors, shapes, and textures.

AG: How are your bouquets special?

DH: I want drama, beautiful colors, and so important is the presence of scents. One of the great pleasures of having flowers in the house is the way they make the space smell. I use lots of "scent-ful" foliage as well, like mint, bee balm, hyssop, basil. They add a great deal to the finished bouquet. Usually florist bouquets have no fragrance, the flowers don't have a lovely smell, nor does the filler material. Because my flowers are grown organically and are not hot-house flowers, they retain their natural perfume.

AG: Would you share with us some ideas for the future, for the farm's expansion?

DH: Oh, I have lots and lots of plans, projects I'd like to see happen in the next year. This winter I'm going to dry flowers for cold season bouquets. Next summer I'd like to offer flower arranging workshops, particularly for bridal parties. Another idea is to have bouquets available for pick-up here at the farm for "floral emergencies" like birthdays and anniversaries. And of course, more flowers. I've just ordered 75 peonies, which is quite an investment, not only financial but the time it will take for them to be making flowers. I'm always looking to increase the number and variety of blossoms! You should see my seed order!

AG: What is the best way for new customers to contact you?

DH: Our website of course. It has links for ordering bouquets, setting up subscriptions or just asking questions. It also has links to our Facebook and Instagram pages — lots of great photos of the farm, bouquets, and us, naturally. I hope your readers will 'visit' us soon!

The Accidental Gardener took one of the flower arranging workshops this past summer — it was incredible. Dawn's instructions were clear and the finished arrangement was very beautiful. Highly recommend this experience, especially if you've got a wedding coming up. Get the bridesmaids together and create the perfect bridal bouquet, boutonnieres and centerpieces. What fun!

Jeffrey Parker of Highview Ranch honored for Angus production

By Bill Bradshaw
Wallowa County Chieftain

Jeffrey D. Parker, of Highview Angus Ranch just west of Enterprise, has ranked as the seventh-largest Angus beef cattle producer in Oregon. His newly-registered 160 Angus calves put him into the top-ten spot.

"We only registered the good ones," Parker said. "You're going to keep the others for replacement heifers and sale bulls."

Angus breeders across the nation in 2019 registered 304,577 head of Angus cattle, the association reported.

"Despite a challenging year, our Angus breeders continue to see a strong demand for Angus genetics," McCully said.

Parker said the real difference between registered and commercial beef is that the registered beef cattle are certified with the association. Commercial beef can be sold in whatever manner a rancher wishes.

In registering his beef with the association, Parker is charged to provide their pedigree, genetic data, artificial insemination certificates for bulls and DNA samples showing the animals' genetic profiles.

"I have (a DNA sample) for every cow on the ranch," he said. "It's kind of like when people send in a sample to 23andMe."

He said the extra cost to register is worth it.

"It costs more on my end," he said, but he's tied into a computer net-



Jeffrey Parker, of Highview Angus Ranch near Enterprise, tries to round up a top-quality Angus bull calf Monday, Oct. 14. Parker was recently named the seventh-largest in registering the most Angus beef cattle in Oregon by the American Angus Association.

work with the association to enable him to obtain AI samples with the best DNA to pass on the best traits to

improve his herd.

Highview Angus Ranch, which was named by his grandmother, Ingrid Peters, was run for many years by his parents, Dave and Shirley Parker. He grew up there until going to college at the California Polytechnic Insti-

tute San Luis Obispo. He then spent several years working in corporate agribusiness and managed some of the largest ranches in the Northwest before returning in 1997 when his parents retired and he took over. He now leases the ranch from them.

"I'm the operator," he said.

He now runs a ranch with about 300 Angus mother cows and just one bull.

"Hopefully, he doesn't get much use," Parker said. "That way I don't get barn blind thinking my bull's the best there is. (By using association AI,) this way I get the best in the nation that Angus breeders have to offer."

He said he typically uses semen from six to eight bulls a year but mixes it up to keep the gene pool fresh and for his customers who buy bulls.

"Almost never do I use a bull more than three years," he said.

His peers in the beef industry seem to have recognized the quality of his work. Recently, Parker was named the Oregon delegate to the annual conference of the association, which will be held in early November in Reno.

Parker said he plans to keep running the Highview ranch until he retires.

"It's been a long but rewarding journey," he said. "But it's a lot of hard work."

The association is the nation's largest beef breed organization, serving nearly 25,000 members across the U.S., Canada and several other countries. The association provides programs and services to farmers, ranchers and others who rely on Angus to produce quality genetics for the beef industry and quality beef for consumers.

To learn more about Angus cattle and the association, visit www.ANGUS.org. For more information on Parker's operation, visit www.HighviewAngus-Ranch.com.

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COSTUME CONTEST

Stop by the Wallowa County Chieftain office in your costume on Halloween night for candy between 3 pm and 6:00 pm. We'll take your photo and put it on our website. Readers will vote on their favorite costume until November 16. 1st place \$25, 2nd place \$15

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