

Flowers, Plants and Things
What ever Happened to. . .
By
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What ever happened to those wonderful flowers that Mom and Grandma used to love so much. Life styles change, markets get smaller and growers find they cannot produce them. Until a huge change in the mid-1980's everyone wore a corsage at Easter time, to go along with that new Easter outfit that we used to sport. We adorned our Easter hats with flowers. And, it was a naughty kid who did not provide a corsage for his mom on Mother's Day. Corsages were the big thing. In the 40's and 50's the large lavender orchid was all the rage. They were big and showy, rare and expensive. They were worn to parties and night clubs (dressy places in those days) and it was the flower of choice for the mothers of the brides.

Then, in the 70's and 80's, the cymbidium orchid, or baby orchid, were the in thing. We saw them everywhere. Florists offered them in beautiful corsages. Supermarkets had stacks of them near the check out at Easter time and Mother's Day. Our ladies were still dressing for church and no one ever dared to go to a service without one and the low prices made them very popular. But, alas, gone are the Easter dresses and the Easter parade. Elegance has given way to casual. The corsage just does not fit in,

Good heavens, gardenias. They were beautiful and treasured for their fragrance. They only lasted for a short time, but when they were fresh and alive they were gorgeous. We used them in bridal bouquets and corsages and just to float in a bowl. Yes they are still in the market place from January through May. But, cost of production has put them beyond the reach of us ordinary folks.

And along the same lines we had the camellia. It was available only from January through early March. They were grown out of doors in Alabama and South Carolina and were only available during their natural seasons. I remember visiting the Clarke Florist

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Greenhouses on Clark Street as a youngster. They had a greenhouse full of Camellia bushes in a range of color. They were beautiful.

Violets are another victim of changing lifestyles. In the 40's and 50' there was a greenhouse grower in New Hyde Park New York who specialized in violets. Bench after bench was planted in the fall and when the heat came on in January those delicate little blooms (no more than a half inch across) on slender stems were harvested and bunched into 50's and 100's backed with leaves and sold to florists. They were used as corsages and in nosegays, but most of all they were floated in a brandy snifter filled with water,

Oh how we loved those sweet peas. They were plentiful when every city or town like Auburn had 3 or 4 florists who grew bench after bench of them. One could always find a cool spot in one of their greenhouses to run strings from the bars holding the glass to the bench and there a seed would be planted. Voilla, some 60 days later those vines would reach the top of the string a dozens and dozens of delicate blooms in many pastel shades would come forth, What a show they made. Then the little greenhouses disappeared and production moved to the larger companies in Colorado and California where they are still grown in limited quantities. Saw a wholesale offering on the San Francisco Flower Market recently. Didn't buy them, though. Not at \$15.00 for 10 stems. (plus Fed Ex to Auburn.