

ORGANIC BOUQUETS ARE A GIRL'S BEST FRIEND



Eco-entrepreneur, Gerald Prolman has found his way straight into the Dirt Diva's heart! He has founded an innovative new floral company that grows flowers without one iota of nasty, knarly pesticide, fungicide, herbicide or synthetic fertilizer, and distributes them worldwide. I love this idea and wanted to share it with you.

The Dirt Diva's 911-love Alert: Fresh, fragrant organic bouquets could score *some* of you guys nice points with the *ladies*! For the rest of you guys I'm afraid it's too little too late.

The world's first online organic florist, **Organic Bouquet**, is headquartered in Northern California. The company is committed to the highest environmental AND social standards. You may be asking yourself why we need organic flowers if we're not going to be eating them. Good question, but the answer requires a little background.

The fair trade movement is growing fast as more and more concerned citizens worldwide are becoming increasingly interested in the work conditions of farmers and the farming practices that preserve the environment for future generations. **Seventy percent** of all flowers sold in the United States are grown in Colombia and Ecuador, according to the US Department of Agriculture. On average, each rose grower in Ecuador uses **three poisons to kill worms, four to kill insects and six to control fungi**. Many of these chemicals are tightly restricted in the United States because of their threat to human health. **Nearly 60 percent** of the floral workers surveyed experienced symptoms of chemical poisoning such as headaches, dizziness, hand-trembling and blurred vision. (Environmental Health Perspectives 2002) Many of the workers are exposed to these chemicals while working in greenhouses where over 100 different chemicals are regularly used in enclosed spaces. As Prolman says, "Organic flowers are not about us. They are about the health of workers and the planet itself."

Just like organic produce, organic flowers are grown and harvested using sustainable farming, mulch, cover crops, compost, integrated pest management (I.P.M.) and water conservation. Prolman and his crew have helped convert 20,000 acres of farmland in five countries to producing organically. By doing so they have eliminated the use of millions of pounds of chemicals. **(According to the EPA, world pesticide use exceeded 500 billion pounds in 2000 and 2001).**

But it goes well beyond this. The term "organic" tells you something about the conditions under which the product was grown. But, like conventionally grown flowers, it does not promise the crops were grown under fair labor standards or in a healthy work environment.

Prolman's company, **Organic Bouquet**, is certified by Veriflora, the new eco-label certification standard for the floral industry, which was masterminded by Prolman. When you purchase flowers that are both "organic" and "Veriflora" you are not merely supporting sustainable farming but are also reassured the field workers receive overtime pay, health benefits and are working in a safer, chemical-free environment.

See, sometimes it's not all about *ME* . . . but about "other people". And you thought the Dirt Diva was just a transparent, self-absorbed flower Queen. If you scratch the surface there is some substance. *I swear.*

Whenever I find another successful socially responsible company, I have a brief glimmer of hope for the world. In that moment of optimism, I decided to purchase some flowers for my home. I didn't really need them, but I knew I could write a far superior article if I had an actual organic floral bouquet sitting beside me on my desk. I ordered a bouquet of roses online from the "charitable bouquets" section. The cost was competitive- a dozen roses sells for \$39.95. The Versilia roses were a stunning pale peach, looked great for over a week and a percent of my purchase was donated to Heifer International, a humanitarian organization working to end hunger worldwide. **Organic Bouquet** donates proceeds to support many non-profit organizations dedicated to social justice, wildlife conservation, animal rights and environmental protection.

"Organic Bouquet is an excellent example of how the private sector can promote economic development within the carrying capacity of ecosystems by reducing resource degradation, pollution and waste," says Brennan Van Dyke-Regional, Director of the United Nations Environment Programme. "It is the inspiration and leadership that people like Gerald Prolman provide that will hopefully allow humankind to meet the immense environmental challenges of the coming century."

You can go to www.organicbouquet.com to order. **1-877-899-2468**

So, let's recap: Guys, start ordering flowers before you hear those two *cringe & flinch* words dreaded by most men, "couples therapy."
Don't say the Dirt Diva didn't warn you!