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Fair Trade Flowers for Mother's Day

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You may not be aware, but the type of cut flowers you purchase have implications that go far beyond the decision of choosing which bouquet is best. From the labor issues surrounding the workers to the pesticides and other chemicals sprayed on the flowers, to the fossil fuels used in transporting the flowers to market, cut flowers have an enormous impact on the environment, workers' health, and fairness of trade.

Flowers are one of the most beautiful expressions of the earth's bounty, so Hearts wants to help you make your flower giving as Eco friendly and ethical as possible. This purchase-with-a-purpose guide to **Fair Trade**, Eco flowers should help.

Quick Facts: Mother's Day & the Eco Impact of Cut Flowers

- **85.4 million mothers in the US:** The average mother had 2.3 children. ^[i]
- **1/3 of all cut flowers for Mother's Day:** 35% of Americans bought fresh plants and flowers for Mother's Day in 2011. ^[ii] The industry is worth \$8.7 billion, with the average expenditure \$29. ^[iii] About 63% of those were fresh flowers, 35% outdoor garden and bedding plants, and 22% flowering houseplants. ^[iv]
- **42% of cut flowers are roses:** The top-selling fresh-cut flower is the rose. Chrysanthemum, Carnation, Alstroemeria, and Lily make up the remainder of the top five. ^[v]
- **80%+ cut flowers from South America:** Forty years ago, the majority of cut flowers were grown in the US, but as of 2009, over 80% came from Colombia or Ecuador. ^[vi]
- **Unfairly traded flowers:** In preparation for the busy flower-giving holidays, workers in Latin America and Africa may work 18-hour days on very low wages, and are exposed to harmful pesticides and other chemicals. ^[vii]



Ethical Living Actions for Sustainable Flower Purchases

1. **How to identify Fair Trade Certified flowers:** Look for a label on the sleeve or individual stems that says they're **Fair Trade certified**. Some brands that are Fair Trade certified are **Gardenia Organic** and **Florverde** (available through Whole Foods Market and other retailers). Other certifications to look for that will indicate the flowers are fair-trade are **Fair Trade International**, **Rainforest Alliance**, and **USDA Organic**.
2. **What does Fair Trade mean?** For Fair Trade International, it means that no child labor is used, that each worker gets 21 days off a year, and that production foregoes certain agrochemicals. Rainforest Alliance standards focus more on environmental impact: flower growers have to make steps to reduce the impact on flowers and animals living near operations; there are bans on some agrochemicals; and growers must follow protocols for water treatment and composting. There are also norms to deal with the well-being of workers, such as limiting exposure to toxic substances, and access to education and training.
3. **Ordering Fair Trade flowers online:** You can order Fair Trade flowers at **Organic Boutique**, **Sam's Club**, **FTD**, **One World Flowers**, **1-800 Flowers**, and **California Organic Flowers**.
4. **Pick flowers from your own garden:** Of course, there's nothing more Fair Trade than presenting a bouquet of flowers picked from your own garden! It shows that you took the time to plant, grow, tend, clip, and arrange a bouquet especially for that special someone! **Martha Stewart** has some tips on how to create an artful arrangement.
5. **Purchase an organic living plant:** Not all flower purchases on Mother's Day (or any other day) have to be fresh-cut flowers. You can also buy an organic living plant. If you can get it from a small, locally-owned greenhouse or farm, so much the better. Check out your local farmer's market, road-side stands, and speak to local farmers to find out where you can find sustainably-grown living plants to give as gifts. Buy Local Think Global has a **database** where you can search for farmers markets near you.
6. **Political actions to support Fair Trade flowers:** Tell your **local congressional rep** in writing that you want flowers imported to be Fair Trade and to support bills that place an emphasis on Fair Trade practices. To find out more about how to campaign for fair trade in your region, check out the **Fair Trade International** list of Fair Trade organizations in your country.



Dig Deeper: the Fair Trade Process

- Learn more about Fair Trade practices at [Fair Trade USA](#).

- Read about Fair Trade producers and what it takes to be recognized by [Fair Trade International](#). Here you will have access to case studies and stories from producers all over the world, and learn how to become a producer.

Images By: [nikontino](#)

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