

This Sunday is Mother's Day. Like many holidays, Mother's Day has an iconic gift – flowers.

What better way to pay homage and express your appreciation to someone in your life who is a mother – either your own mom, the mother of your children, or just any mother who means a lot to you – than to send her flowers or a plant?

Flowers have the instant ability to lift one's spirits, to bring color into darkness, and joy to the recipient. In these times of edgy uncertainty, the timeless gesture of delivering a collage of color to someone is so warm and personal.

This act has prevailed for centuries, spans generations, and has been an integral part of Mother's Day since the holiday was created in 1908. Love and respect are professed with the daintiest of greenery. When someone receives a flower, they intuitively know the meaning and intention of the giver.

This year, coronavirus brought new realities to the nursery and flower industry. The world of floriculture normally anticipates Easter as a time when a sizeable chunk of their annual revenue can be made. This year, that did not happen because of the inability to shift logistics in a rapidly changing environment where every day brought new challenges.

Flowers were waiting at the door to be shipped, with the goal of spreading beauty, gracing church altars, beautifying homes and businesses. Many growers gave away their nurtured products, delivering them to nursing homes or hospitals for nothing, knowing the power of nature's palette. It was truly an inspirational act by the growers.

But there has been some time now for nurserymen and flower growers to adjust to the “new marketplace.” They are finding ways – through online ordering, scheduled pickups and deliveries – to get their beautiful plant life to consumers to give to all mothers on their special day.

And now you consumers can do two things at once – send flowers ***and*** help a New Jersey farmer who had to plant with optimism in order to survive, not knowing, but hoping for a good season. In some cases, that planting and tending began before the full impact of the coronavirus in our lives was known.

Now, more than ever, “local” means New Jersey. We urge you to visit your local garden center, supermarket, or farm stand to buy your flowers, secure in the knowledge that you are helping your neighbor farmers stay in business.

Just as fervently, we are asking the essential businesses that remain open to stock up on these items grown in ***our*** Garden State. By doing so, you'll be offering the opportunity for your customers to make Mother's Day special for their loved ones and you'll be helping the members of a valuable sector of our agricultural economy.

Douglas H. Fisher, New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture