

# April 2007: 30 Days of Green

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

April is National Garden Month® — When you garden, you GROW!

[home](#) [index of activities](#)

April 29

## The Language of Flowers



Just what are you saying when you "say it with flowers?"

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## background

"Say it with flowers" is a popular slogan of florists around the globe that encourages us to express our feelings to others through the beauty and fragrance of flowers. We give bouquets to pass along sentiments of congratulations, thanks, apologies, "happy birthday," "get well soon," and of course, "I love you." We also weave floral arrangements into important cultural rituals such as weddings and funerals, and use them to decorate during holidays.

As important as flowers are to us today, they were even more significant for Europeans of the Victorian era (loosely defined by the reign of Queen Victoria in England from 1837-1901). Flowers had been used for adornment and decoration throughout history, but a special "Language of Flowers" was created during the 18th and 19th centuries assigning specific meanings to different flowers. Often the flowers were used to express affectionate messages thought too racy to verbalize or put in a letter. There were even dictionaries to standardize the meanings of flowers, such as Madame de la Tour's book, *Le Langage des Fleurs*. Ironically, meanings varied among the dictionaries, which could lead to misunderstandings!

In addition to meanings attached to each type of blossom, other characteristics had significance, too: flower color, how the flowers were delivered, the size of the bouquet, and the flower combinations could also be used to code messages. The meaning could change depending on whether it was presented in the right or left hand or if presented upside down. Also, little details such as the location of the knot of a ribbon could be important.

Here are a few sample flower meanings from the [Victorian Bazaar Web site](#):

- Apple Blossom — Preference, Better Things to Come, Good Fortune
- Baby's Breath — Innocence, Pure of Heart
- Cactus — Endurance, My Heart Burns with Love
- Calla Lily — Magnificent Beauty
- Carnation — Fascination, Devoted Love
- Carnation (solid color) — Yes
- Carnation (striped) — No, Refusal, Sorry I can't be with you, Wish I could be with you
- Cherry Blossom — Education
- Chrysanthemum — Abundance & Wealth, Cheerfulness, You're a Wonderful Friend

## activity

Introduce your students to the Language of Flowers used during the Victorian Era. Brainstorm some of the benefits and challenges of communicating in code.

Using seed and nursery catalogs, create your own classroom flower language. Assign different meanings to common flowers and create a classroom dictionary. Then ask students to write a story or poem using your new language.



- Daffodil — Regard, Unrequited Love, Sunshine, Respect, The Sun Shines when I'm With You
- Daisy — Innocence, Loyal Love, I'll Never Tell, Purity, Beauty
- Dandelion — Faithfulness, Happiness, Love's Oracle
- Fern — Magic, Fascination, Confidence, Shelter
- Gardenia — You're lovely, Secret Love, Purity, Refinement
- Gladioli — Generosity, I'm Sincere, Flower of the Gladiators
- Goldenrod — Be Cautious, Encouragement
- Hydrangea — Thank You for Understanding, Frigidity, Heartlessness
- Iris — Faith, Wisdom, Promise in Love, Hope, Wisdom & Valor
- Ivy — Wedded Love, Fidelity, Friendship, Affection
- Lavender — Love, Devotion
- Lily — Majesty & Honor, Purity of Heart
- Lily (orange) — Hatred, Dislike
- Marigold — Pretty Love, Sacred, Affection, Caress, Sorrow
- Oak Leaves — Bravery
- Olive Branch — Peace
- Pansy — Merriment, Thoughts (You Occupy My Thoughts)
- Petunia — Your Presence Soothes Me
- Rose (lavender) — Enchantment
- Rose (pink) — Perfect Happiness, Secret Love, Grace & Sweetness, Indecision
- Rose (dark pink) — Thankfulness
- Rose (pale pink) — Grace, Joy
- Rose (red) — Love, I love you, Respect, Beauty
- Rose (yellow)) — Joy, Jealousy, Friendship
- Rosebud — Beauty & Youth, A Heart Innocent of Love
- Rosemary — Remembrance
- Snapdragon — Gracious Lady, Strength
- Solidago — Success
- Sunflower (tall) — False riches, Pride
- Sunflower (dwarf) — Adoration
- Tulip (red) -Believe me, Declaration of Love
- Tulip (yellow) — There's Sunshine In Your Smile
- Zinnia (mixed) — Thinking (or in memory) of an Absent Friend
- Zinnia (yellow) — Daily Remembrance



For more information, visit

[Origin and History of Flowers](#) from FTD

[History of Say it With Flowers](#)

[The Language of Flowers](#)

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