

# BLOOMIN' NEWS

A Bi-Monthly Publication of The Los Angeles Flower Market of the American Florists Exchange, Ltd.

January - February 2010 • Volume 19 - Number 1

## Petalos di Pauli:

### Something Special . . . in Her Own Backyard by Heather Roman

Photos by Paula Dulan Estes except where otherwise noted

In 2002, feeling burned out due to her previous, demanding career schedule, Paula Dulan Estes took up gardening as a way to relax. She created a garden sanctuary in her Cypress, California backyard, filling it with beautiful botanicals. Little did Paula know that this would be the turning point in her career. Her company, Petalos di Pauli, had begun to blossom.

"My idea was born from a desire to make holiday gifts for the women in my family using flowers from my garden," says Paula. "I thought about how I might be able to preserve and share the beauty and positive energy that infused the flowers in my garden. So my motivation for embellishing note cards was something spiritual and personal. My mom, my grandmother, my sister, everyone loved them!"

Petalos di Pauli has quickly become a leader in the stationery industry. Paula's specialized service creates botanically embellished invitations for people who want a unique, personalized and handcrafted approach to announcing their special event.

Each design is one-of-a-kind, from the paper to the chosen font to embellishments to materials and flowers. Petalos di Pauli has been featured in magazines including Ceremony, Your Wedding Day and Special Events Magazine and on Lifetime Network's "Get Married with Colin Cowie" in a segment called "The Growing Trend in Bridal of Going Green."

Although Petalos di Pauli began by using botanical elements from Paula's garden, Paula soon found herself needing more fresh products than she could grow herself. She began using "hosted gardens," gardens throughout California and Nevada owned by friends or family members who shipped their botanicals to her. The Desert Bird of Paradise, which comes from desert gardens in Nevada, is very popular with its yellowish-orange hue, which makes them perfect for fall events.



Paula Dulan Estes  
Photo by Organized Light

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*Working with orchids*

As Paula's business grew, she began shopping at the Los Angeles Flower District in order to increase the variety of botanical elements available to her. "Some flowers that are used in my card and invitation designs are not grown in any of my personal gardens," she says. "Orchids are a good example because they are a popular focal bloom. I can count on finding a large supply year 'round at the Los Angeles Flower District. (Flower Salad in the Los Angeles Flower Market is a regular source for orchids and Choice Flowers for poppies.)"

The Flower District has proven to be an invaluable resource to both expand Paula's floral inventory and her knowledge of seasonal availability of botanical products that can be used to create her designs. She now creates cards and invitations for events throughout the country. These orders can number 300 or more of a particular design, something that was not possible by sourcing only from her home garden.

Paula has found a unique niche in the floral marketplace and her products are the result of the utilization of many businesses in the floral and stationery industries. However,



*Daisy invitation*

before she can market a design using new botanicals, she needs to be familiar with them. That again is where the Los Angeles Flower District is useful to her. "I also go there to look for flowers to experiment with," Paula says. "I buy a few to see how they are to work with and how they hold their color over time."

The key to Petalos di Pauli's success has been Paula's one-of-a-kind designs, from the classical simplicity of an understated rose that announces a black tie event, to a contemporary twist of pairing orchids with matching leather envelopes. One of her most admired designs centers on Gerbera daisies, which she buys at the Flower District and accents with pearls.

Paula designs invitations for "special life events," too, from intimate garden luncheons to receptions and galas. Many of her clients are couples planning their weddings, who need a range of stationery beginning with the save-the-date



*Fountain grass placecards*

card and invitation that sets the tone of what's to come. Other coordinated pieces can include programs, menus and place cards that can carry a botanical theme. With so many products, it is easy to see why the Flower District is an important part of Paula's work.

Paula still spends many mornings at the Flower Market and in the District, but she also shops with several floral wholesalers and growers throughout the country. The need for other suppliers came from her desire to create a "green" line of products. For this line, Paula uses organic flowers from eco-friendly vendors who produce their products using wind power and who grow flowers using eco-friendly practices.

"My business has always been about the personal touch," Paula says. "So it is natural that I would have eco-friendly op-

**Continued next page**

tions for my customers.”

Paula’s eco-friendly line goes beyond just using organically grown botanical elements and recycled paper. She also utilizes every part of a particular botanical element. “I don’t throw away the stems and just use the blossom,” Paula says. “The stem can make a beautiful clasp for an envelope or box. When you start thinking of the elements as more than just the blossoms, the possibilities are endless.”

Incorporating this new line of products has made clear what Paula hopes will be the legacy of Petalos di Pauli. “I want to be greener,” Paula says, “and incorporate more and more sustainable practices and design elements into my business.” She envisions a five acre garden sanctuary where her family members can retire and create products in the business they contributed to when Paula began. This would be a truly utopian ideal with eco-friendly production. To that end, she has a Sustainable Development Specialist on staff to assist her.

With all of the success of Petalos di Pauli, Paula is on her way to making her vision a reality. Only something this wonderful could be a fitting next step to Petalos di Pauli and Paula’s next backyard.

Heather Roman is a freelance writer based in Los Angeles, CA.

## Youth Inspired by Paula’s Presentations

*“Recently, I was invited to speak to students at Hosler Middle School for Career Awareness Day. I visited several classrooms and shared about how I started my business, what it entails and about the joy of being self-employed. That day I made a pre-dawn visit to Flower Salad and purchased 100 Dendrobium Orchid stems. This was the gift I gave to each student to thank them for inviting me to their school. At the end of each presentation you could see their faces light up as I passed out the foot long stems dripping with beautiful blossoms. I believe I may have inspired a few future floral designers! I love to witness the smiles flowers bring.”*



This newsmagazine is published bi-monthly by The Los Angeles Flower Market of The American Florists’ Exchange, Ltd. Location: 754 Wall Street, Los Angeles, CA 90014 • Internet: [www.bloominnews.com](http://www.bloominnews.com). Subscription and advertising details at [BloominNews.com](http://BloominNews.com).

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