

The dried floral business finds a niche in Mt. Angel

Area farmers let their flowers die on purpose

By **BEN MOEBIUS**
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Most of the farmers who grow flowers in the Mt. Angel area work to keep them from drying out and dying before they are sold to retailers around the country.

The Hammelmans do just the opposite.

Dan and Bernadette Hammelman are one of a handful of Oregon farmers who grow flowers for the dried floral industry.

They started the business about six years ago, Bernadette Hammelman said. "It started out very small, larger than a hobby but still a small operation," she said.

The operation soon grew in scope and size, she said. "The market is definitely good for us. We sell all over the U.S. and Canada and most everything gets sold by word-of-mouth."

Hammelman said she enjoys the business, even though it can be stressful at times.

"It can get kind of crazy when we are harvesting everything, at about this time of year, but I do enjoy it," she said.

They had just four varieties of flowers in their first year of operation, now they have over 30 different varieties, Hammelman said.

Their main flower variety is Larkspur, which grows in a few different colors and dries easily, she said. Larkspur is a small, delicate flower that is popular in many dried floral arrangements.

The Hammelmans also grow

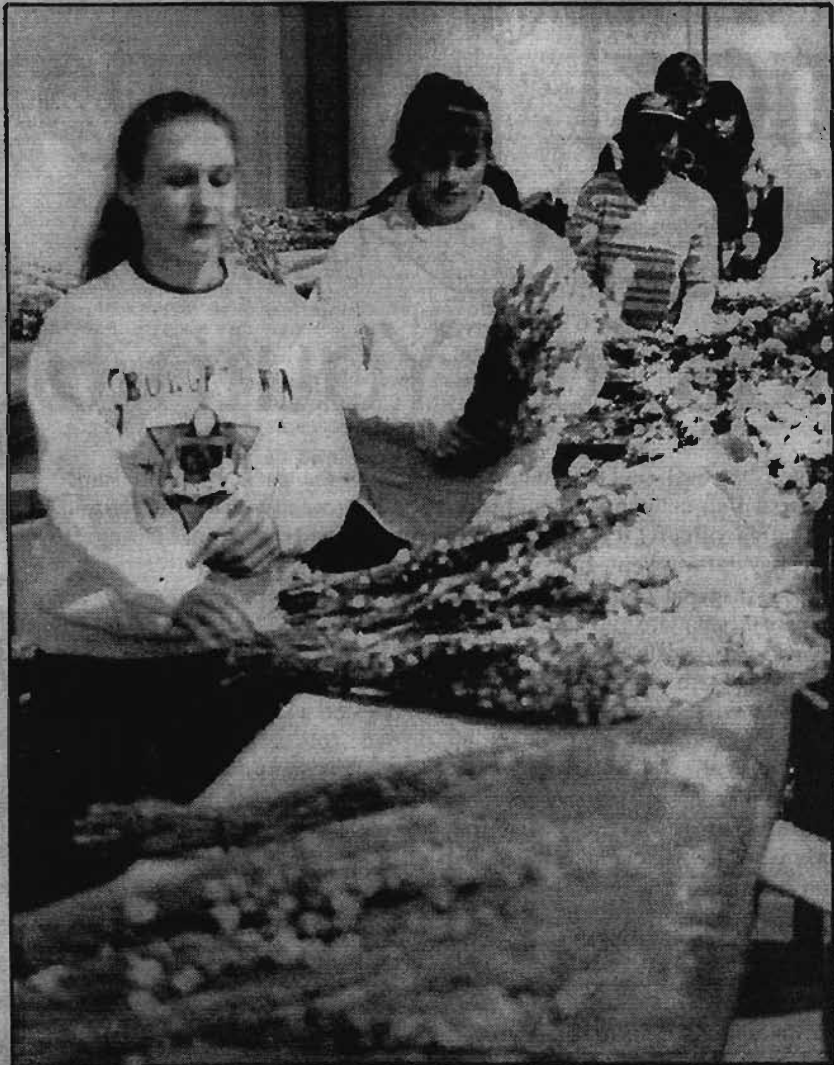


Photo by Ben Moebius

The employees go through the flowers and throw out the discolored and broken ones before packaging.

Lemon Mint, Flax, Safflower and Orientalis flowers and pods.

The flowers are grown on about 15 acres of land, she said. "We have been farming for more than 25 years now in the Mt. Angel area," she said. The Hammelman's also grow vegetables and wheat.

Hammelman said she still tries out new varieties in her garden to see if they will work as dried florals.

"I don't have any in there right now," she said, "but I usually have an experiment or two going."

Another dried floral producer in the Mt. Angel area, the Aman family, produces only one variety of dried flower for sale at Oktoberfest.

"It's funny that there are probably only about a half dozen people in Oregon that do this and two are in the Mt. Angel area," Hammelman said.