

# Thelma Weaver Dries the 'Impossible' Flowers

By Mrs. Charles McSparran  
Farm Feature Writer

Flower annuals have finally come into their utmost beauty in Lancaster County. Oh, that we might have them to enjoy all year!

Well, there's one lady who does a real fine job at preserving her flowers to enjoy all year. She is none other than Mrs. E. Mark Weaver of Strasburg, better known to her many friends as Thelma. Of drying flowers, she says, "I was always interested in it. It took several years to learn." She taught herself how to do it.

Mrs. Weaver raises all kinds of beautiful flowers in her back yard. In spite of this being a poor year to get plants to grow, she has a profusion of colorful annuals blooming now. She did not plant flowers on their farm this year as she usually does, due to rainy weather early. To mention a few of the flowers she raises—roses, dahlias, daisies, margolds, three colors of salvia, geraniums, petunias, strawflowers, red and yellow

cockscomb, ageratum, zinnias, calla lilies, tulips, daffodils, ferns, lilacs, mums, holly trees, dogwood trees, forsythia, evergreens such as rhododendron, laurel, boxwoods and arborvitae and several others. Mrs. Weaver's next project is to build a greenhouse onto their garage so she can start her flowers in it.

You say you can't dry all those. Oh yes, Mrs. Weaver does, all except the petunias and geraniums. She also gathers wild flowers such as Queen Ann's lace, brown eyed Susans, violets, Jack-in-the-pulpit, goldenrod, wheat, leaves, many kinds of weeds and grasses and nuts to dry.

She gives these hints for drying flowers. Gather them when they're green and the flowers not quite open. Strip the leaves from the stems. She hangs most of them in bunches upside down in the attic to dry. Some people dry them in closets or some dry place if they do not have an attic. Flowers with petals such as roses, dahlias, tulips and daf-



Mrs. Weaver arranged this bouquet from her dried flowers. Her granddaughter, Beth Bucher, likes it too.

Mrs. Weaver has an herb garden in her back yard. This is the second year for it. She wants to make a brick path through it like they have in Williamsburg, Va. She has sage, basil, rosemary, thyme, parsley, chives, four kinds of mint tea plants and sweet woodruff. She uses little sprigs of sweet woodruff to float on a punch bowl to make it attractive. She freezes the parsley and chives. She dries the others by hanging upside down in paper bags in the attic. When they are dry she just rubs the bags to crush the leaves then the pieces are all in the bags. She uses the herbs for seasoning. Of interest to weight watchers, she says you can get away with less butter if you use herbs.

Mrs. Weaver says "I like to be busy, we all do, the children and even the grandchildren." She has many talents but all have been developed by just trying to do them. She had done over a hundred paintings. She does mostly local scenes, farmhouses and still life. She became interested in high school but started

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Mrs. Weaver's home is made most attractive with paintings such as she is holding and pictures made with dried flowers as can be seen on her living room wall.

odils she dries in sand or Silica Gel. She buries most of them upside down in the Silica Gel or sand, but flowers such as roses and tulips she buries right side up. She says ocean sand is the best but she usually uses three parts builders sand with one part borax. The borax is used to kill any bugs there might be harbored in the flowers. She says Silica Gel will turn pink if it's damp. She dries rose leaves in glycerin. The ferns, arborvitae and leaves stay nice and pliable.

Mrs. Weaver makes lovely flower arrangements with the dried flowers. She also makes pictures with them, using black velvet for a background, then putting them in a pretty picture frame. She gives most of the arrangements away. They make nice gifts. She also makes nut

wreaths and Christmas arrangements.

Mrs. Weaver has given talks on "The Art of Drying Flowers" and put on demonstrations showing how to dry flowers before several Farm Women groups, flower clubs and various women's groups. With them she exhibits 14 or 15 dried arrangements and some pictures. She doesn't put on as many demonstrations as she used to because it is hard on the flowers. She is planning to have a demonstration at the Strasburg Library sometime in September and says anyone is welcome to attend.

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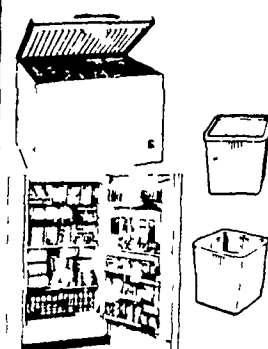
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