

Vibrant color springs forth

By LEN RICHARDSON

SPRING has come early to California, and the color is worth celebrating. One of the best places to immerse yourself in the vibrant waves of color is the sea of flowers that splashes the hillside at The Flower Fields at Carlsbad Ranch.

This annual burst of color begins in March and runs through early May. For 10 weeks only, 50-plus acres of the renowned Giant Tecolote Ranunculus, All-

Key Points

- The Flower Fields houses the world's only ranunculus field that is open to the public.
- The Flower Fields educates more than 100,000 visitors each year.
- Carlsbad residents coined The Flower Fields; the name became official in 1993.

American roses and the world-famous Paul Ecke poinsettias transform the seaside landscape.

Every year, The Flower Fields enter-

tains and educates more than 100,000 visitors from morning to dusk. Guests can walk the fields and explore the abundant floral color or tour the entire ranch via tractor ride. The location has the only commercial ranunculus field in the world that is open to the public.

Roses and sweet peas

Other colorful features include the All-American Rose Selections, Walk of Fame and Miniature Rose gardens. The All-American Rose Selections, or



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SEA OF BLOOMS: Vibrant waves of spring colors come to The Flower Fields at Carlsbad Ranch every year.

AARS, Garden showcases more than 50 different varieties of roses. On display at the Walk of Fame Garden are more than 170 AARS winners since 1940. The Miniature Rose Garden is comprised of American Rose Society award-winning miniature roses.

The Flower Fields is one of four AARS test gardens in California selected for its climate and growing standards. Each year The Flower Fields displays new roses from various rose breeders that are tested for disease resistance, color, fragrance and endurance to guarantee performance in the region.

As though the waves of color are not enough, the fragrant aroma of the Sweet Pea Maze will stimulate your senses. Guests are often truly amazed as they find their way through the maze.

Colorful history

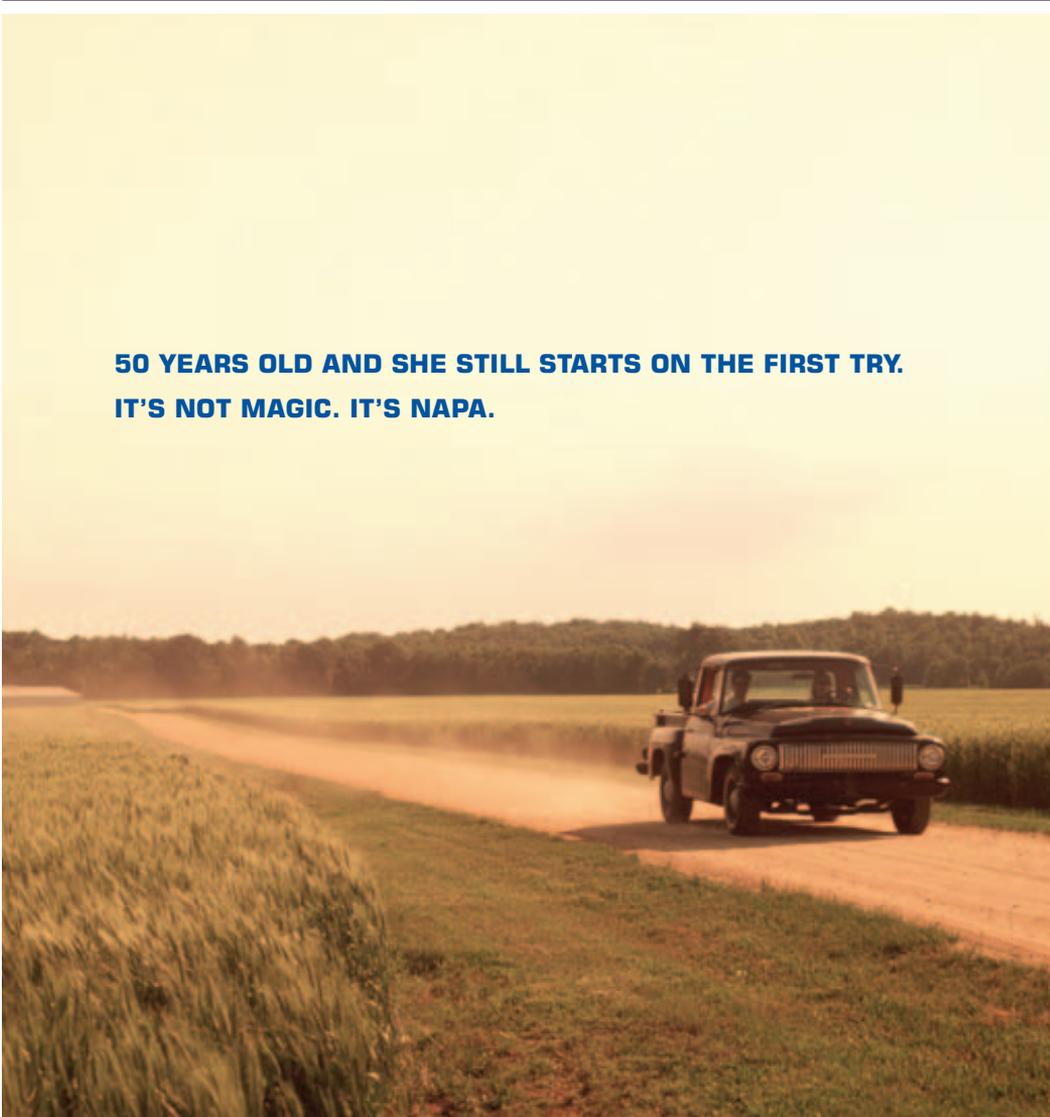
The Flower Fields history is as colorful as its blooms. More than six decades ago, an English horticulturist named Luther Gage left England for Southern California. Prior to his immigration, Gage had taken a special interest in the ranunculus flower, and in particular, the giant strain now known as Giant Tecolote Ranunculus.

Settling in San Diego County, Gage planted the first few acres of ranunculus, which became the Gage Tecolote Ranch. One of the workers, Frank Frazee, helped his father grow the ranunculus for Gage.

The Frazee family started a commercial business growing ranunculus flowers that expanded in 1958 to the Ponto region of Carlsbad. With the increase in traffic between San Diego and Los Angeles and the fields' high visibility, people stopped their cars to walk among the flowers. The blooming hillside was given the name "the flower fields" by Carlsbad residents. The name stuck and became official in 1993.

The Frazee family ended its ownership in 1988, selling to the Paul Ecke Family. The Flower Fields continues to operate as a working ranch. Learn more online at www.theflowerfields.com.

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