



# Meet California Flower Grower Rene Van Wingerden

*Ocean Breeze, Carpinteria, California*



**Growers:**  
**June and Rene Van Wingerden**

**Industry:**  
**Flowers**  
**Carpinteria,**  
**California**



*"It's important to buy California Grown because California flowers are produced under the most stringent regulations in the world. They are the freshest available and our crops help support California's economy"*

*-Rene Van Wingerden*

*Ocean Breeze was created in 1973 by Rene Van Wingerden and his family, but the Van Wingerden growing tradition started long before that in Holland.*

In Holland in the 1600s, the Van Wingerdens started growing berries and apples for additional income. By the 1700s, the family had switched to growing vegetables. Then in the 1800s, the Van Wingerdens built the first stand-alone greenhouse for growing their vegetables. A matrimonial union between a Van Wingerden son and a blacksmith's daughter made the otherwise expensive and rare materials and skilled labor accessible.

It wasn't until the 1900s, after WWII, that the family started growing flowers – first it was freesias, then in 1965 the Van Wingerdens added carnations to their crops.

Even with all of their success in Holland, the Van Wingerdens felt the need to move to the United States, settling in Carpinteria, the ideal climate, soil and water conditions for growing flowers. So in 1967, four Van Wingerden brothers moved their families to Carpinteria and started Dutch Brother's nursery. They started growing carnations, freesias and mums; and the Van Wingerdens have been successfully growing flowers in the area ever since.

At one point, 10 percent of all chrysanthemums used in the U.S. were grown by the Van Wingerdens of Carpinteria. Now, gerbera daisies are their big crop, accounting for 90 percent of the Gerberas used in the U.S. today.

In 1973, after working for his father for 5 years at Dutch Brother's, Rene started his own business instead of going to college. The money crop of the 1970s was chrysanthemums, so that is what Rene grew. As the years went by, the products Rene grew evolved and his acreage expanded, about an acre per year for 35 years. In the 1980s, roses were added to the program and in the 1990s gerbera daisies. Today, Ocean Breeze grows 100 acres of fresh California flowers, including calla lilies, oriental lilies and hydrangeas.

With 90 employees, Rene's son Ivor, third generation flower grower and UC Berkeley Haas Business School graduate, is next in line to run the thriving Ocean Breeze business. He has worked in several nurseries in countries all over the world and now is heading up the management of one of Ocean Breeze's divisions in Nipomo. This family has successful California agriculture in their genes with Rene's wife and Ivor's mother, June Van Wingerden (maiden name: Clark), bringing her experience farming the family's cotton and corn in Tulare for generations. Together this specialty crop family is highly active in promoting and protecting California's precious agricultural resources.

To learn more about California's flower industry, visit [www.cfc.org](http://www.cfc.org)

