

## BAY AREA

### **San Francisco Flower and Garden Show attracts cream of local crop**

By: [Alexis Terrazas](#) 03/23/11 6:00 PM

Special To The Examiner



Green thumb: Ah Sam Florist and Greenhouse and its owner Shawn Leong will display a hydroponic vegetables garden at the San Francisco Flower and Garden Show. (Joseph Schell/Special to The Examiner)

**Shawn Leong was no more than 10 years old when he picked up a broom and began to pay his dues in the family business.**

**In dutifully sweeping his family's dusty flower shop floor, Leong's flower and garden apprenticeship began.**

**"They are all very good memories," Leong, 50, said, also recalling sharpening pencils for the family business before the age of computers. "We all went to school, but being around flowers and the nursery ... it grows on you."**

**Now running the third-generation family-owned Ah Sam Florist and Greenhouse, Leong is one of many garden enthusiasts who will participate in the annual five-day San Francisco Flower and Garden Show at the San Mateo Events Center through Sunday.**

**About 20 full-sized garden installations from various Bay Area developers are scheduled to be showcased at the event. Ah Sam, which specializes in water, air and soil plants, will demonstrate a hydroponic vegetables garden that includes several kinds of lettuce, Chinese vegetables and watercress, Leong said.**

This is the first year the garden festival will incorporate organic and fresh food demonstrations, and six Bay Area celebrity chefs will host seminars, including renowned organic chef Alice Waters.

“Before it was all garden, garden, garden,” said Tom Walton, the events spokesman. “Now, they’ve found a way to tap in to another consumer passion.”

While the garden festival has reinvented itself over the years in an attempt to stay fresh, Leong’s family has done the same.

Leong’s grandfather and uncle first started selling produce via the back of a pickup truck in 1933. The two increased their profits when they added flowers to their San Mateo route, and eventually opened a flower shop.

Entering its 26th year, the garden festival is the largest event of its kind in the western United States and the third largest in the country.

“It’s great to do something grand like this,” said Kay Estey, the show’s producer. “There is so much talent in this area. I’m always very impressed with it.”

Works crews have converted the events center into a Garden of Eden, transporting 500 cubic yards of dirt, 600 tons of stone and thousands of plants, Estey said. Between movers, builders and volunteers, a 500-person crew took five days to assemble the indoor garden festival.

[aterrazas@sfxaminer.com](mailto:aterrazas@sfxaminer.com)

## **San Francisco Flower and Garden Show**

**Open:** Through Sunday

**Location:** San Mateo Events Center, 1346 Saratoga Drive, San Mateo

**Parking:** \$10

**Tickets:** \$20; multiday pass \$25; half-day pass \$15; children under 16 free; online discount \$16; special group rates for 20 or more

*For contest and lineup information, visit [www.sfgardenshow.com](http://www.sfgardenshow.com)*

### **Festival fun facts**

**500** Cubic yards of dirt, which would make a 15-foot-high, 30-foot-wide pile, to be used by exhibits

**200** Stone pallets, weighing 600 tons, to be used by exhibits

**40,000-50,000** Expected paid attendees

Read more at the San Francisco Examiner: <http://www.sfxaminer.com/local/bay-area/2011/03/san-francisco-flower-and-garden-show-attracts-cream-local-crop#ixzz1HdTV9Zqi>