

Have you noticed how many weeds put forth flowers, how dying flowers are rich in color, or how bugs on flowers are fascinating to watch? As an artist, I use the medium of photography to express thoughts and emotions. Since August 2nd, I have taken a photograph of a single flower every day, and in doing so, have begun to notice and appreciate those very things. This budding new series is called *Flowers for Mom* and is my artistic response to being the daughter of one with Alzheimers. There are days of feeling lost in the weeds, of grieving over what is no longer blooming, and of being bothered by pests in the garden of life. Even so, when I pause and pay attention, what I see are new buds showing promise, beautiful flowers to be enjoyed exactly as they are, and butterflies pollinating the garden to ensure future blooms.

A person with brain change is still very much alive, yet parts of their brain have ceased to bloom. As evident in this floral odyssey, even as things fade and their previous beauty is changed, they remain appealing and very much present and within our view. So, too, is our journey caring for a loved one with Alzheimers. Even amidst concern for infection, dehydration, and appetite, we get to hold Mom's hand, see a spark of recognition when a friend comes to visit, and hear her say "thank you." What joy there is in such tiny flower petals!

When I began this *Camera Journey* challenge it was summertime and flowers were abundant. My concern was that finding a flower a day in the fall would be increasingly difficult, yet each day naturally leads me to new beauty to be appreciated whether it be a fading bloom, a single stem in an arrangement, a vegetable garden blossom, or a roadside wildflower. Now, in the midst of winter, my camera has found faded flowers touched with snow, purple arrangements at an event benefitting an Alzheimers disease research center, and outdoor blooms when temperatures remain above freezing long enough for a bud to produce a flower. Bugs and other pests remain among the flowers just as regular frustrations persist with care partners. Yet friends continue to surround us with their kindness as they deliver bouquets of flowers when they share their precious time to visit with Mom, which sometimes means simply sitting beside her. No matter what the season, flowers continue to grow.

Receiving the initial diagnosis of mild cognitive impairment was difficult, and the shift to Alzheimers was even more painful, especially when it was later confirmed that vascular dementia is also a part of the equation. We remain able to celebrate the good days because of an overwhelming support network. Each component of assistance is key and touches us in different ways on different days – much like flowers. Gorgeous bouquets of aid reach us in the form of training videos, e-mail subscriptions, doctors specializing in cognitive impairment research, loving care partners, a church respite program, and so much more. Just as there are always new varieties of flowers to discover, there are countless other forms of support that reach my mother – as well as every one of us in the circle caring for her.

When nurturing someone with Alzheimers, flowers remind us we can discover beauty in the most unexpected ways. Flowers give us tangible proof that as blossoms fade, life goes on, and seed pods provide the promise of the sons and daughters of future blooms. May we choose to celebrate the good days and know that as the seasons change we can continue to find hope and cherish the flowers just as they are.

Passionate about getting people outdoors, Elmore DeMott is known as a fine art photographer with award winning work featured in numerous publications in addition to private and corporate art collections, galleries, and juried art exhibits. On her Camera Journey, in pursuit of images that offer a unique perspective, Elmore ventures throughout her home state of Alabama and beyond. On the six month anniversary of the first “Flowers for Mom” photograph, the collection of images will be shown in San Francisco when her work is featured in a Soundings collaboration with the Del Sol Quartet. Until then, there are photographs to be taken, and life with dementia to be lived – complete with struggle and beauty. To see more flowers and to join her Camera Journey, visit www.elmoredemott.com and follow her on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

