

# Q & A

## How I Do It: Q&A with Jessica Douglass

Photography by Virginia Harold

**Who:** Jessica Douglass, owner and lead designer

**What:** Flowers & Weeds

**Where:** St. Louis, Mo.

**Social Media:** flowersandweeds.com, @flowersandweeds (Instagram and Twitter) FlowersandWeeds (Facebook and Pinterest)

**About:** Flowers & Weeds is a vibrant garden center and flower shop designing more than 100 weddings a year. The business maintains a cutting garden, an everyday floral and plant delivery service, a DIY terrarium and potting station and a lush retail greenhouse. There are seven strong and talented women who work on the F&W team.

Flowers & Weeds was started in 2012 when I began designing wedding flowers, selling terrariums and potting containers as a "side gig" at an antique shop on Cherokee St., in St. Louis's South City neighborhood. In 2014, I bought a dilapidated garden center down the street and with a team of friends and co-workers, we got to work rehabbing the building. The shop was originally built in 1963 as an ice cream stand, which explains its unique architectural charm. In 2016, Sarah Trone, dream builder extraordinaire, and Carly Meyer, tech and graphic design wizard, joined me as partners in Flowers & Weeds.

**Square Footage:** The entire site is 8,000 square feet. The former ice cream stand (about 2,000 square feet) houses office space, floral design studio and a sunny retail greenhouse. Outside, a 6,000-square-foot area is dedicated to the garden center, a flower cooler and perennial garden with 10 productive annual beds all built on top of an existing asphalt parking lot. We also just purchased an 8,000-square-foot city lot located a few blocks away, where we will expand the cutting garden with trees, shrubs, perennials and more.

**Services/Specialties:** Our team members wear a lot of hats managing the diverse menu of floral and plant services. Customers are aware that Flowers & Weeds works with seasonal flowers. This allows for creative freedom and the ability to design with whatever is beautiful and blooming each week.

**Sourcing Practices:** The garden produces blooms from April through October. Foraging and a close relationship with local flower farmers is key! **Urban Buds**, **Flower Hill Farm**, **Iris Barn** and **Three Creek Farms** are exceptional cut flower resources in our area. Because Flowers & Weeds does such a high volume of weddings, it is impossible to be 100 percent local in our sourcing, although our future goal is to reach 80 percent local and sustainable in our design practices. Currently, we're probably at 30 percent local and 70 percent sourced from the wholesale market with a focus on American-grown flowers.



Jessica Douglass (center) with her business partners Carly Meyer (left) and Sarah Trone (right).

**Off-season Sourcing:** During the holidays, Flowers & Weeds turns the outdoors into a Christmas tree lot. Wreaths, cut winter greenery and classes help to keep our team busy. Many of the flower farmers we work with throughout the year offer greenery, dried flowers, pods, berries and cut branches during the winter months. We are also lucky to be in the same neighborhood as Urban Buds, whose greenhouses produce Dahlias and Ranunculus in December and January! Their all-year production, coupled with their new weekly "florist subscription" program guarantees Flowers & Weeds at least a few buckets of fresh, locally grown flowers each week.

**Seasonal Varieties:** Astrantia, Ageratum, Amaranthus, Artemisia, artichoke, Aster, Astilbe, Centaurea, Chinese forget-me-not, Cosmos, Didiscus, Dahlia, Eucalyptus, Gomphrena, Lisianthus, Zinnia, Ranunculus, dusty Miller, chocolate queen Anne's lace, strawflower, Celosia, Calendula, feverfew, Nigella, Scabiosa, sunflower, sweet pea, sweet Annie, Craspedia and many more.



Flowers & Weeds' sign is mounted on the original pole from the former St. Louis ice cream shop.



A seasonal bouquet.



Jessica assists a customer at the terrarium bar.  
(Above photo) © Jordan Bauer photography



The outside garden center overflows with plants.

Zinnias and dusty Miller, that still saves the Earth a bit and saves money at the market for you. You can also purchase plug-seedlings if you want to save time. Plant perennials wherever you can, because they are truly the gift that keeps giving.

**Marketing:** The only marketing we pay for is **The Knot**. We receive about six inquiries a month and have found the reviews from our brides helps give other brides insight and confidence about who we are. Everything else we do is social media and word of mouth. Instagram is our largest platform. It's free and our customers are very engaged. I have found that everyone loves pictures of beautiful flowers, as well as a sincere voice. We link all our social media sites to Instagram. ■