



Kirsten Bosnak and Bob Gent of Blue Morning Glory Studio embrace the farming lifestyle by growing and designing local flowers in Lawrence, Kansas. © Chelsea Donoho

Growing Her Own

Lawrence, Kansas-based designer plants flowers as future art supplies.

BY DEBRA PRINZING

PHOTOS BY CHRISTIAN GIDEON, JANA MARIE PHOTOGRAPY, KIRSTEN BOSNAK, AND CHELSEA DONOHO

In the early 1990s, **Kirsten Bosnak** was editor of a magazine called *Supermarket Floral*, traveling to far-off places like Holland and Colombia where cut flowers were grown for export to the U.S. She later worked in Europe for two years before returning to Lawrence, Kan., in 1996 to work as an editor at the University of Kansas. Little did Kirsten know that 25 years later she would return to flowers, albeit in a decidedly local way, with the launch of **Blue Morning Glory**, a boutique floral design studio and farm.

While it may seem like she has started a second life chapter by pivoting to flowers, Kirsten thinks differently. “My work with flowers as a business is not a change but rather a surrender to lifelong loves and practices,” she writes on her website (bluemorningglory.com).

Kirsten continues to work as communications manager for an environmental research center at KU while building Blue Morning Glory into a wedding and event-focused studio and farm. In addition to ceremonies, she designs for events at the local art museum.



Kirsten used a mix of vintage cream pottery for a wedding reception, filling a Haeger bowl with Blue Morning Glory Studio-grown 'Cafe au Lait' dahlias, lisianthus, dusty Miller, lavender, cosmos, Japanese anemones, scented geranium and native little bluestem, as well as garden roses and maidenhair fern from Oregon-based Peterkort. © Jana Marie Photography

Lawrence is a Midwestern university town located about halfway between Kansas City and Topeka, two metro markets filled with couples who often return to Lawrence to be wed. They are drawn to Kirsten, her seasonal flowers and her floral aesthetic, described as both wild and elegant. Designing for clients using botanical ingredients she grows fills a special niche and appeals to several types of customers.

“There are people who really want a florist who is growing local, sustainable flowers. Another group includes people who really want something unique; they’re artistic and they want flowers that don’t look canned, that say something about who they are.”

Kirsten inched closer to flower farming and floristry in 2015, after helping design flowers with **Erin Loganbill**, her Kansas City-based twin sister who owns **Yellow House Flowers**. “I had this sudden epiphany. I just kind of woke up and connected with the knowledge of something that I had ignored for a long, long time,” she recalls feeling the first time she assisted Erin with a wedding. “I found myself thinking, ‘What am I doing here? I love this!’”

Eventually, Kirsten realized that her MFA in creative writing and work as an editor could co-exist with a boutique floral enterprise. “This business requires so much more than putting flowers in a vase,” she points out. “It is a business. It’s counseling. It’s storytelling. It’s having the courage to be honest about what you love. It’s marketing with a soul. So I can use all of the reading and writing and study and put that into practice with images and words about my flowers.”

Also in 2015, she and her husband, **Bob Gent**, bought 16 acres of land located about 10 miles northwest of Lawrence, complete with water, a pole shed and an old tractor. Kirsten com-



Field-grown 'Potomac' lavender snapdragons. © Christian Gideon



A seasonal bridal bouquet designed by Kirsten Bosnak in which the Queen Anne's lace echoes the finely detailed lace gown. © Chelsea Donoho



A spectrum of Blue Morning Glory Studio cut flowers includes '1812' roses; several *Dahlias* ('Rip City', 'Black Satin', 'Deborah Renae' and 'Cafe au Lait'); and three *Zinnias*, including 'Benary's Giant', 'Cupcake' and 'Queen Red Lime'. © Kirsten Bosnak

moved there to farm, growing a wide variety of flowers as well as herbs, berries and native perennial wildflowers, while she and Bob oversaw construction of a new farmhouse. They moved from the city to the farm earlier this year. Having acreage for fields of flowers is a leap beyond Kirsten's former flower patch – a 50-foot by 75-foot parcel in a Lawrence community garden.

"Bob and I both had the farm dream since we were teenagers," she says. "I actually go back five generations in Kansas, and I'm pretty entrenched in the prairie ecosystem."

Kirsten often collaborates with her sister, an arrangement they both value. "We are emailing and texting each other every day," she says. "If one of us books a client, the other one is involved somehow. We really want to support one another, so we run plans and proposals by each other and test ideas on each other." The women's design businesses are interwoven, allowing them to frequently act as a team while remaining focused on their distinct client bases and styles.

Kirsten's daydreaming about living a sustainable rural life has come

to fruition. She recalls writing several notes to herself about 12 years ago, jotting down these words: *I don't want to be a grant writer. I want to be a farmer and a poet. I want to have my own business, and I wish I could work with my sister.*

Writing phrases on paper has become self-fulfilling prophecy. "I have a compulsion. I can't live without flowers," she says, adding, "I'm about 90 percent closer to my dream than when I first wrote on that scrap of paper."

Being profiled now, in *Florists' Review*, brings Kirsten's story full circle in a serendipitous way. In 2000, *Florists' Review* magazine acquired the trade magazine she once edited and renamed it *Super Floral*.

DETAILS

Blue Morning Glory

bluemorningglory.com, @bluemorningglorystudio