

ISSUE No. 20

Slow Flowers
JOURNAL

By Debra Prinzing

FLOWERS & COMMUNITY

Artistic, educational or promotional, floral collaborations reflect a new model in the marketplace.

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In the imaginations of many floral designers, the medium of flowers is so much more than a “product.” Rather flowers are a vehicle to bring people together – for exhibition, instruction and to illustrate a greater good.

This month, the “Slow Flowers Journal” focuses on three inclusive, community-minded projects. Yes, they are beautiful, but they also have changed perceptions and deepened connections in the floral marketplace.

In Maine, a design workshop allows all participants

to teach and learn with visually enticing florals. In Pennsylvania, flower farming and floral design come together to embellish an urban cultural district and engage the public to see art in a new way. In Minnesota, a florist gives back to flower farmers by teaching them valuable design skills to benefit their growing practices for future seasons.

Each event is a reflection of time, place, people and flowers. We hope each will ignite your imagination to use flowers to build a community in your backyard.



Tour de Fleurs

Philadelphia-area florists and flower farmers team up to produce Fishtown Floral Crawl during arts and design celebration.

Photography © **Janine Feeney, Vow2Vow**

Inspired by Lewis Miller's "Flower Flash" installations that pop up around New York City and by Flower House Detroit, Lisa Waud's magnificent 2015 project, a group of Philadelphia-area flower farmers and florists are bringing similarly spontaneous florals to their hometown. Called **Fishtown Floral Crawl**, the project highlights beauty and seasonal availability of local botanicals and talents of the floral design community in the City of Brotherly Love.

Cassie Plummer of **Jig-Bee Flower Farm** and Maura Feeney of **Maura Rose Events** created the event as part of **DesignPhiladelphia**, a citywide weeklong celebration that focuses on thoughtful design,

collaborative business practices and community engagement.

The women wanted to showcase flowers and floral design as a relevant art form within the larger discussion of Philadelphia's public art, architecture, fashion and the artisan-maker movement. They recruited 11 volunteer florists to participate and paired them with the prolific end-of-summer bounty harvested from nine area flower farms. Jig-Bee Flower Farm and Maura Rose Events partially fund the Floral Crawl, offsetting costs of photography, a website and promotion through \$10 ticket sales to the public.

Initiated in October 2017, the Floral Crawl continued for a second time last October in the hip Philadelphia neighborhood of Fishtown. Florists transformed façades and interiors of a wide array of businesses, including restaurants, clothing stores and an indoor playground, with beautiful and seasonal installations to showcase their art and shine a light on locally grown flowers.

During the opening night tour, each guest was encouraged to “make a bouquet,” giving him or her a newfound appreciation for floral design and local flowers.

The project got its start when Plummer, who grows flowers on once-vacant lots in the heart of Philadelphia, learned about DesignPhiladelphia. She saw the arts-oriented campaign as an ideal vehicle for promoting local flowers and design and reached out to Feeney, a floral customer of Jig-Bee Flower Farm.

“I knew together we were a perfect team to head this up,” Plummer says. “We want to increase the visibility of locally grown flowers, promote the entire floral design community to a wider audience and give florists and our flowers an opportunity to shine as part of the larger design and arts community.”

For Feeney, who says she strives to “source flowers as locally as possible,” the collaboration achieves a number of objectives. “This lit a spark for us to try and get the movement to gain momentum in our area. The farmers and floral designers who are coming together through this event are super supportive and encouraging of one another.”

Fishtown Floral Crawl’s website invites participating florists to register for \$75, which partially compensates farms providing buckets of just-picked flowers. Each designer selected about 40 bunches of flowers and foliage with which to create a three-dimensional installation. The installations and opening tours took place over the Columbus Day holiday to allow the public to witness the design process. Plummer and Feeney scheduled the Floral Crawl for three days, although DesignPhiladelphia runs for a longer period.

Measuring the Floral Crawl’s success isn’t always obvious, Feeney says. “As far as increasing bookings for future weddings, I wouldn’t say this event has had a direct impact on my business,



1) Page 47: The public gathered around the first stop of Fishtown Floral Crawl along Philadelphia’s Frankford Avenue, taking advantage of an Instagram-worthy moment.

2) Jennifer Designs Events decorated Suraya Restaurant as a whimsical tea party, much to the delight of children and their parents.

3) Fishtown Floral Crawl creators, Maura Feeney, of Maura Rose Floral and Event Design, and Cassie Plummer, of Jig-Bee Flower Farm.

4) Ashley Powell from Ashn Earth, tidying up her design space at VESTIGE Fishtown.



5) The engaging tea party vignette by Jennifer Designs Events, on display at Suraya Restaurant.

6) Lana Tang from Junebug Flowers and Designs installs her floral art at La Colombe Coffee Roasters headquarters.

7) Erika Davis, putting the finishing touches on her design at Good Spoon Soupery.

8) Fete Urbane styling their design at Lululemon in Fishtown.



but I didn't really expect that," she explains. "However, my past wedding clients are now attending Floral Crawl, and they're excited to discuss the event with friends, which is really great."

Floral Crawl meets a personal objective for Plummer. "One of the biggest goals of this event is to help florists experience the variety of what we are able to grow, as well as have the creative freedom to design with it, based on whatever's available that season. I think that creative process sometimes can get lost in the demands of running a business, so everyone was appreciative of the opportunity." ■

DETAILS

Fishtown Floral Crawl: fishtownfloralcrawl.com, @fishtownfloralcrawl

Jig-Bee Flower Farm: jig-bee.com, @jig_bee

Maura Rose Events: mauraroseevents.com, @mauraroseevents

Participating designers: Maura Rose Events; Jig-Bee Flower Farm; Erika Davis; Levone Floral; Junebug Flowers; Vault + Vine; Ash and Earth; Jennifer Designs Events; Shannon Toal, AIFD; Botaniq Blooms; and Fete Urbane

Participating farmers: Jig-Bee Flower Farm, The Farm at Oxford, Seven Stems, Cultivating Joy Flowers, Marsh Gibbon Gardens, Laughing Lady Flower Farm, Tooth of the Lion and The Bloom Farm.



The Thankful Bouquet

A floral designer gives back to growers by teaching them how to design with their own flowers.

Photography © **Amanda Nippoldt**, @amandanippoldt

Ashley Fox is a Woodbury, Minn.-based floral artist with deep roots in the garden, including a degree in plant and earth science from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, and an early position as an educator at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum. She's worked in floristry for nearly 20 years, and in 2008 formed **Ashley Fox Designs** – a full-service floral studio specializing in styling and designs for events, editorials and installations.

Admittedly, Fox's desire to source locally grown blooms has verged on obsessive. "I was always seeking out the weird, the unusual, the off-beat. I would drive around sometimes for six or seven hours for a single event, stopping at different flower farmers around Minneapolis and St. Paul and even Wisconsin," she confides. "I would go out and forage. I would go to my Dad's garden, my friends' properties. I knew who had mock orange growing in their gardens in June. I knew who had the peonies. My brain was a map of a 100-mile radius, and I knew exactly when the florescence of grasses would bloom in a certain location so I could go and harvest. It was crazy."

Fox believed extreme flower hunting was necessary in order to make her mark as a florist who sourced fresh, local blooms for her nature-inspired designs.

Then, in 2016, the hunt got easier. Fellow St. Paul-Minneapolis-area florist **Christine Hoffman** of **Foxglove Market & Studio** shifted away from retail and opened a farmer-to-florist wholesale hub called **Twin Cities Flower Exchange (TCFE)**.

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This model just makes sense to me.”

Last spring, Hoffman asked Fox to teach a design workshop at TCFE to help others in the floral community gain appreciation for locally grown blooms. More than 35 florists learned as Fox walked them through her ordering and seasonal design

“It was a dream come true,” Fox says of the new venture, which satisfies her desire to source from multiple growers but saves hours each week formerly spent driving from farm to farm.

“My business could not do what it’s doing right now without the Twin Cities Flower Exchange,” she continues. “As much as I love buying from individual farms, I really like seeing everything in one place, so I can coordinate my design plan in one purchase.

process. “It was really fun and very well received, we heard,” Fox says.

Requests from flower farmers led to a follow-up class later in the year. “I realized they were also hungry for design instruction,” she recalls. “I said, ‘Tell me where and when, and I’ll show up.’ The farmers brought their own buckets of flowers, and I taught bouquet and centerpiece design.”

Lady Fern Flowers, a cut flower farm and design studio based at **Two Pony Gardens**, a *Dahlia* and tomato farm in Long Lake, Minn., hosted the July gathering, and 12 flower farmers attended. Fox brought along a model and photographer to document the festive and creative event.

“It was a marvelous experience,” Fox recounts. “I showed them how I design with locally grown product. Then the farmers designed with their own-grown stems, so every bouquet that they created that day was from their own fields,” the designer says. “It was so touching.”

Fox had a personal motive for donating her time to this community of flower farmers. “I wanted them to understand how I use their product so they will grow more of it for me and for other designers. I wanted them to see how I put things together, especially because I ask them to grow these weird things.”

Minnesota flower farmer **Barbara Pumper**, of **Gullywash**



1) Page 51: Hiring a model for the event allowed each farmer to capture professional photography of their Minnesota-grown seasonal bouquets.

2) For floral designer Ashley Fox (front row, second from right in blue), spending a day teaching techniques to local flower farmers was a rewarding experience that also deepens her ties with her key vendors.

3) Ashley demonstrated a centerpiece using sunflowers and accents.

4) Here are the happy faces of each farmer in whose hands are flowers each has grown and designed with:

Top row, from left: Michael Pursell of Late Bloom Farm, Susan Rockwood of Arcola Trail Flower Farm, Jennifer Nelson of Humble Pie Farm and Barbara Pumper of Gullywash Gardens.

Middle row, from left: Sarah Watts, Rachel Sannerud of Pluck Flower Farm, Sanna Beek of Ladyfern Flowers and Randi Greiner of Beezie's Blooms.

Bottom row, from left: Molly Gaeckle of Northerly Flora, Summer Badawi of Ladyfern Flowers, Jolea Gress of Green Earth Growers and Allison DeRungs of Flower Child Farm.



Gardens, says the day was a rewarding one. “Ashley’s comfortable yet intimate instruction intertwined seamlessly under a midsummer canopy of greens and dappled shade at the lovely Two Pony Gardens. As she designed a bridal bouquet with a selection of our finest blooms, she shared the art and the science of her subject. We then were able to confidently take those skills to heart and create our beautiful bouquets.”

The workshop symbolizes what community can truly mean when the growers of flowers and the designers of flowers collaborate, Fox points out. “It was one of the most heart-warming and moving experiences of my career. To be able to look into the faces of the people who make my job so exciting and say, “Thank you for all you do.”” ■

DETAILS

Ashley Fox Designs

ashleyfoxdesigns.com, @ashleyfoxdesigns

Lady Fern Flowers

ladyferflowers.com, @ladyferfloral

Two Pony Gardens

twoponygardens.com, @twoponygardens

Model

Cait Doty, @cdotyyy, @arquetteagency

Hair/Makeup

heathertrachsel.com, @heathertrachsel

Silk Ribbon

shastabell.com, @shastabellcalligraphy

Field to Vase, Farm to Table & Forage to Art

A group of Maine floral creatives learn from one another during a collaborative and inclusive workshop.

Photography © **Patricia Takacs, Kivalo Photography**



Rayne Grace Hoke spent months planning a two-day design workshop with countless elements and participants. Six weeks before the event, her former employer pulled the plug and withdrew her funding. “I was very defeated,” admits Hoke, now owner of Maine-based **Flora’s Muse**. “This was something I’d been planning since last January, and when it fell apart, I was devastated. But all the people who were involved with the workshop, all the teachers and suppliers, said, ‘No, we need to do this.’ My friends put on their thinking caps, and together, we brainstormed a new event.”

They rebranded as the **Slow Flowers Maine Meet-Up**, with the invitation: “*Come celebrate a bountiful season with some much-needed play time. Recharge and regroup in a supportive setting of sharing knowledge and discovery.*”

Hoke’s dream team of designers demonstrated that creativity can go hand-in-glove with collaboration. They found a new venue, **Jordan’s Farm**, a working farm on 122 acres of land on Maine’s Cape Elizabeth, which is home to a vegetable and flower farm and a resident farm-to-table restaurant called **The Well**. Design instructors donated their time to produce a comprehensive workshop for themselves and a small handful of students. A photographer stepped forward, props were donated and invitations to forage arrived.

Newly reimagined, the October 2018 workshop began with a harvesting session at Jordan’s Farm in



which participants cut field flowers and foraged from the farm’s wilder places. Design sessions moved inside the farm’s working hoop house, where **Brianne Emhiser**, of **Stem and Vine**, led a centerpiece design class along with florist **Emilee Burgess**. Hoke presented two hands-on components: floral jewelry and large-scale installations.

“I learned from **Susan McLeary**, whose techniques bring together all my loves, including jewelry-making and fashion,” Hoke explains. “Creating large, free-form, foam-free installations are completely opposite, in scale, to making botanical jewelry.”

Many of the participants had never before worked on such an ambitious installation. The result was a 15-foot-tall botanical garland suspended from the rafters and draped to the ground. “It was wonderful working out the mechanics together and simply giving guidance and a little structure,” Hoke says of the piece. “My goal with the big installation was to make it viable, practical, safe and beautiful.”

Farmer-florist **Laura W. Tibbetts**, of **WestWind Florals**, who contributed her collection of vintage dishes, stemware, linens and flatware from the 1920s, ’30s and ’40s, shared her tablescaping and styling philosophy with the participants. Once the table was styled, the second day ended with an intimate meal for seven, catered by chef **Jason Williams** of **The Well** at Jordan Farm.

“We wanted the menu to be all Maine, all local,” Hoke explains. “The delicious harvest feast allowed us to showcase our tablescaping, the arrangements from the centerpiece part of the workshop featured all the flowers from the farm, and Laura’s beautiful vintage collection of dishes and stemware provided the finishing details.”

The disastrous cancellation of the original workshop is a distant memory while Hoke and her collaborators are now planning for a 2019 sequel to attract more students.

“I’m just grateful for the community here,” Hoke says. “It represents a huge change from where the industry was when I was a full-time florist in the 1990s. I can’t believe the difference. Back then, everything was a competition, and no one shared information.”

Tibbetts, who has just established a new flower farm in Waldoboro, Maine, also raves about the power of collaboration. “We came to this workshop with our individual talents, and everything we did together over two and a half days turned out to be much more than the sum of its individual parts. That’s the true spirit of collaboration – bringing people together to learn from and share with one another.” ■





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DETAILS

Flora's Muse: florasmuse.com, @florasmuse

WestWind Florals: westwindflorals.com, @westwindflorals

Stem and Vine: stemandvinefloral.com, @stem_and_vine

Jordan's Farm: jordansfarm.com

The Well at Jordan's Farm: thewellatjordansfarm.com, @thewellatjordansfarm

1) A botanical palette reflects the late-summer/early-fall floral palette from Maine's Jordan's Farm, and the tablescaping became part of the collaborative workshop.

2) The Slow Flowers Maine Meet-Up was the brainchild of Rayne Grace Hoke of Flora's Muse.

3) Farmer-florist Laura W. Tibbetts, of WestWind Florals, taught table styling and design as part of the collaborative workshop.

4 & 5) Hoke taught everyone how to create botanical jewelry and wearables, captured in detail as charming flat-lay images.

6) The second day concluded with a farm-to-table meal prepared by chef Jason Williams of The Well.

7) Organic form meets foraged materials in the large-scale installation created by participants.

8) Wild-gathered on the grounds of workshop venue, Jordan's Farm, the seasonal arrangement reflects the best of Maine's flora.