

Sarah Pabody, of **Triple Wren Farms**, lives and breathes *Dahlia* at the farm she operates with her husband, **Steve Pabody**, in the northwest corner of Washington State. As a farmer-florist, she also runs **Triple Wren Weddings**, a wedding and event design studio. After seeing how popular the farm's *Dahlia* fields were with local photographers and their portrait clients, Sarah fantasized about what it would look like if the people having their photos taken wore *Dahlia* rather than only standing among the flowers. Her idea took hold, and now Sarah teaches *Dahlia* Dress Master Classes for designers and floral enthusiasts who want to create, wear and be photographed in *Dahlia* couture (details at triplewrenfarms.com). Beyond fantasy, the garments are thoroughly alluring but also accessible, prompting others to imagine themselves wearing *Dahlia* dresses of their own.



Washington Designer Dahlias





Creative Credits

Floral design: Sarah Pabody, Triple Wren Weddings

APRICOT FROCK

Model: Taylour Aarons

Hair and Makeup: Beauty by Elizabeth Marie

Photography: Katherine Buttrey

TRIO OF DAHLIA GOWNS

Models: Simcha Heiser, Aspen DeGolier and Taylor Moncrieff

Hair and Makeup: Beauty by Elizabeth Marie, Crowns of Gold Styling, Kenna Balvanz, Brooklyn Matthyse and Kennedy Lee

Photography: Ashley Hayes and Sarah Joy Fields

GIRL'S DRESS

Model: Chloe Wren Pabody

Photography: Abigail Larsen

About

Founded in 2012, Triple Wren Farms is a 22-acre farm in Ferndale, Washington. It is the second growing site for the Pabodys, who, in 2016, acquired a distressed berry farm with great soil and water rights after previously leasing land. Triple Wren Farms currently grows on about nine acres. The farm supplies cut flowers to wholesale customers and has developed an agritourism focus that includes you-pick blueberry fields, a fall pumpkin patch, flower workshops and open farm events, including a *Dahlia* Festival and a Blueberry Party. The farm also sells *Dahlia* tubers, growing close to 200 varieties selected for superior cut flower performance. Triple Wren Farms' tuber store has the tagline: 'Dahlias for cuts in a modern palette.'

Place

"*Dahlia* grow great here," Sarah points out. "They're a wildflower from central American mountains, so this region replicates the conditions that *Dahlia* love: cooler nights and warm days. We grow our plants with a plastic mulch over their roots in order to get that heat during the day. And it cools off really quick here on summer nights."

The Dress Collection

Sarah has created a number of *Dahlia* garments, collaborating with local models and photographers. We couldn't limit ourselves to showcase just one, so you will see a number of her designer *Dahlia* garments, including the first frock she created – a blush-apricot-peach halter dress photographed at Triple Wren Farms on a dewy Pacific Northwest morning, both in the heart of *Dahlia* fields and inside a greenhouse.

Last season, she designed and produced a trio of floor-length *Dahlia* gowns, fabricated with the help of teams. Sarah also customizes mother-daughter *Dahlia* outfits for clients who want to wear flowers for portrait photography. Due to the farm's end-of-season *Dahlia* bounty, Sarah feels there is no limit to what she can design with *Dahlia*, and she's planning future collections to showcase other blooms, such as peonies and garden roses. "I think my techniques work with any flower that can hold up well out of water or flowers you'd use in a foam-free arbor design."

Ingredients: *Dahlia* selected in a gradient color range or ombré palette, optional greenery and late-summer accent flowers.

Mechanics: When planning for a photoshoot, Sarah asks her model to select a garment that won't be worn again, such as a bridesmaid dress, or to find something at a thrift store that fits



well. She fits the garment on a dress form that is protected by plastic wrap. The "base garment" hangs from the dress form, allowing for flowers to be applied as the fabric falls against its curves. Sometimes there is too much fabric, and excess ruffles or overskirts are cut away, or the lining is used by itself. "If the dress has a very full skirt, I know it will take hundreds more flowers to cover," Sarah explains. "Each of these garments weighs about 20 pounds when finished."

The day prior to production, Sarah harvests *Dahlia* by palette, placing them in buckets of water to be stored overnight in her cooler. "In these conditions, the stems take up water, and the flowers are more turgid, which means they'll last longer once we start working," she says.

She estimates that full-length gowns require about 600 *Dahlia*, depending on the size of the flower head. When she uses design assistants, each team has a work station with tools, supplies, flowers and the dress form. While conventional wisdom might suggest that hot glue is damaging to *Dahlia* heads, Sarah has found it to be the perfect medium for working quickly. "If you use cold glue, you would have to hold each flower in place for 45 seconds, which means you could produce only one dress in an eight-to-10-hour period," she estimates. "We try to use the smallest amount of hot glue possible, but I've found it works really well and doesn't damage the *Dahlia*." ■

Floral Source: Triple Wren Farms
triplewrenfarms.com, [@triplewrenfarms](https://www.instagram.com/triplewrenfarms)

