



Hawaii

Orchid Opulence

In 2018, **Alison Grace Higgins**, of **Grace Flowers Hawaii** in Honokaa, Hawaii, and her team created stunning male and female garments for American Flowers Week to highlight the vibrant diversity of Hawaii-grown flowers and foliage. For 2020, the designer chose a quieter botanical palette of all white petals. Her look is highly feminine, reflecting the deep attachment between Hawaii's landscapes and orchid breeding and production.

"We often use *Dendrobium* orchids for lei-making but also for petal scatters instead of roses because they are local," Alison says. "I don't know what I did wrong with the math, but this dress happened because I over-ordered for an event by tens of thousands of stems of *Dendrobium* blossom heads."



About

Founded in 2012, Grace Flowers Hawaii is a full-service retail florist serving the Big Island of Hawaii, specializing in island-style wedding florals and serving the local community's everyday floral needs. Alison was born and raised in Hawaii, and she has an extensive background in floral and horticulture. She has been designing flowers professionally since she was a young teenager, and she is committed to sourcing as many local flowers and foliage as possible.

Place

Alison originally planned to photograph the orchid-clad model on a sandy beach but, through friends, she was invited to bring the shoot to **Birdsong**, a private estate and farm in Hilo, Hawaii. The location has a lush tropical landscape and ocean vistas, as well as a beautiful reflecting pool. Alison and photographer **Sarah Anderson** also took the finished garment (displayed on a dress form) to the orchid farm responsible for growing the garment's blooms. "I'm so glad we could also show the greenhouses where these flowers come from," Alison says.

The Dress

The halter-style sundress was a thrift-store find. As Alison began to attach the blooms to the skirt, **Kamaehu Duldulao**, one of her team members, suggested she create a diagonal swirl pattern with the flowers, and employee **Jade Woolford** helped with the assembly. Although the entire garment reads as white from a distance, the variations in *Dendrobium* orchids allow for contrasting accents that form a beautiful surface pattern.

"For the bodice texture, I removed one petal and the tongue of each orchid," she says. "The belt and the shoulder details are made from those tongues, which have a little bit different shade than the petals. The ruffled look of the skirt comes from the full flower minus the tongue," she says. There is also a draped sleeve detail on each shoulder and a "train" of orchid strands, which floated among thousands of tossed petals that surround the model when she posed in the pool.

Ingredients: 2,000 white *Dendrobium* orchid blossoms

Mechanics: Grace Flowers Hawaii produces volumes of floral leis each season, so Alison and her team are proficient lei makers. She shares ongoing lei content at leialohamagazine.com. "It's actually a lot faster to string blooms than to glue and attach individual ones to the fabric," she points out. The draped sleeves are leis, as well as are the trailing garlands. The rest of the orchids were individually attached with floral glue.

Floral Source: ACK Flowers LLC; Papaikou, Hawaii







Creative Credits

Design: Alison Higgins, Grace Flowers Hawaii,
graceflowershawaii.com, @graceflowershawaii

Dress styling: Kamaehu Duldulao, Grace Flowers Hawaii

Dress construction: Alison Higgins and Jade Woolford,
Grace Flowers Hawaii

Bouquet: Nicole Cordier Wahlquist, Grace Flowers Hawaii

Model: Jasmine Kume Amari

Makeup: Kali Rose

Venue: G.B. Hajim's Farm, Birdsong

Photography: Sarah Anderson