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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.

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.