

## Episode 105 show notes and advice

### Episode description

This week, Sarah is joined by returning guest, florist, and owner of Swallows & Damsons, Anna Potter. The pair take time to talk about Anna's brand-new book 'Flower Philosophy', their favourite flowers for natural-looking arrangements, and some mindful projects to try at home.

### In this episode, discover:

- ❖ Anna's 'Flower Philosophy'
- ❖ Exciting natural projects to try at home
- ❖ Top tips for the most amazing arrangements

## episode 105 advice sheet

### An overview of Anna's new book, 'Flower Philosophy' (02:05)

Documenting Anna's next steps in floristry, 'Flower Philosophy' takes a mindful approach to creating arrangements. As Anna explains, it's less about the end product and more about the creative process behind the meditative projects the book offers.

Bringing in a wealth of different items from nature, not just flower shop flowers and standard blooms, 'Flower Philosophy' encourages readers to lean into seasonality by choosing foliage, branches, and leaves, at different stages of their life cycle.

'Flower Philosophy' is available from all good book shops, or why not visit Anna's Instagram to discover more? You can find her at, @swallowsanddamsons.

### The spring wreath project (8:00)

Inspired by a wreath that Anna had made in lockdown when nothing much was available, the limitations of the pandemic allowed Anna's creativity to truly shine. By safely foraging hedgerows, and overgrown areas, and foliage on walks (once allowed!), Anna quickly

discovered that she had the components she needed to construct an exceptional spring wreath.

Anna sought inspiration by collecting laurel blossom, fluffy yellow willow catkins, forsythia, hellebores from the garden, and blackthorn, which she explains were ideal for forming the bones of a natural spring wreath.

Top tips for making your own spring wreath:

- ❖ Take a copper wreath base and cover it in moss – Seek permission first, or purchase from somewhere sustainable, which uses ethical sourcing.
- ❖ Add little hand-tied bunches of flowers one by one. Try to cover the stems as you move around the base until the structure is totally covered with posies.
- ❖ Once your wreath is covered and packed full of your favourite foraged finds, display the wreath anywhere you like. Kept cool, it should last quite a while.

### **A shared love of narcissus (13:10)**

Sarah explains that daffodils are often overlooked. Their perennial nature also means that there are white and yellow drifts throughout Springtime, which give of tremendous scent.

Anna says that she finds daffodils incredibly reliable, and nostalgic too. Memories can often be marked by the flowers that return year after year, like daffodils, which are evocative of her childhood, the garden, and her grandmother.

Top tip - Anna explains that many daffodils dry out really well and are a great addition to spring wreaths and arrangements.

### **Tulips – the wild-spirited dancers (19:22)**

Tulips are also a recurrent theme in Anna's work, and although she doesn't usually give recommendations (she would rather creators go with the flow of things!), she does mention Tulips 'La belle Epoque', 'Brownie', and 'Brown Sugar' as some of her absolute favourites.

Anna describes tulips as wild-spirited dancers, which are slightly crazy and free, and excellent for use in all types of floristry arrangements. Usually, Anna finds that florists are persistent in trying to keep tulip stems contained and straight, which is tricky as they droop, grow towards the light, and come into bloom.

Top tips - Anna suggests using the playful stems to add intrigue to arrangements. Don't feel as if you have to confine them. Instead, think of your arrangement as something which is always moving and changing. In terms of colour scheme, if you're working to a muted palette, consider stripping back the foliage as the stems and leaves are very bright.

### **Magnificent magnolias and favourite shrubs (24:00)**

Both Sarah and Anna consider *Amelanchier lamarckii* to be amongst their favourite garden shrubs. These look beautiful in almost every season, changing colour as the year progresses.

Top tip - Anna says that magnolia petals are absolutely delicious. Very sweet and almost like floral ginger, nibble straight from the tree, or pickle for a different ingredient to add to cooking.

### **Prolonging peonies (28:50)**

Peony 'Coral charm' is one of Anna's favourite peonies to use. She says that, unlike many less reliable peonies, it opens, holds its shape and petals, and fades to a really beautiful colour.

Top tip – Sarah explains that if you're looking for longer-lasting peonies, soak them for 4 hours minimum in the sink, or in the bath overnight. Due to their complex structures, they can absorb vast amounts of water which really helps to improve their vase life. You can try this helpful hint with hydrangeas too!

### **A summer flower mandala (30:30)**

Unbelievably beautiful, the flower mandala in Anna's book is a flat lay made from the prettiest cut flowers.

Top tip - Try this at home using foraged flowers and petals to make a lovely cartwheel arrangement. A lovely idea for the summertime, which Sarah says she will try with her grandchildren. It's a therapeutic and mindful way to engage with nature. Totally liberating!