

episode 17 show notes and advice

There is great joy in a simple pressed flower, either as a decoration for any setting, or as standalone artwork, and nobody does it quite like Melissa Richardson of JamJar Flowers. Watching Melissa and her team at work to preserve the life of a picked poppy far beyond its normal lifespan, is truly a treat.

Melissa joins Sarah & Arthur this week to discuss her gorgeous arrangements, how she sources her beautiful flowers, and how you can use readily available, environmentally friendly alternatives to oasis or floral foam.

In this episode, discover:

- Melissa's near-accidental discovery of the wonders of flowers
- Environmentally friendly alternatives to oasis, or floral foam
- The incredible experience that only comes from buying flowers in the market
- How to start pressing your own beautiful flowers at home

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Products mentioned:

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Episode 17 advice sheet | Peonies & pressed flowers with Melissa Richardson

Sarah and Arthur's guest this week is the florist to the fashion world, Melissa Richardson, from JamJar Flowers, London.

A former model agent, Melissa took a change of direction 12 years ago to set up JamJar. The heart of her business is all about seasonal flowers sent out in jam jars (in 5 sizes from small to massive), and apart from for funerals, Melissa's flowers are always in water, not oasis, (which is

made from single-use plastic). For huge flower arches, Melissa uses so-called 'rocket launchers' and reusable plastic vials, as well as buckets attached to an arch. She has also become a great expert in flower pressing.

For late-May

Melissa's Favourite flowers for arranging:

- Peonies – 'Coral Charm', 'Command Performance' (Melissa's tip is to buy these on a Tuesday for Saturday's events, so you get them out of tight bud).
- Spiraea
- Dicentra spectabilis (bleeding heart) now officially called Lamprocapnos spectabilis
- Late blossom – e.g. Malus

Melissa's Favourite flowers for pressing

This is one of the things Melissa has become famous for – turning a fusty Victorian craft into something that is now high fashion. Her first huge job (pressing 3000 flowers) was for Mulberry's SS15 show invitations. JamJar later created William Morris inspired pressed flower windows for an ambitious installation at Sketch in London's Mayfair. Melissa is now writing a book about it.

- Poppies, cornflowers, buttercups (which keep their colour for ages), Nigella (love-in-a-mist), herb Robert (easy) many of which are wildflowers or cornfield weeds
- Ammi majus (not Ammi visnaga)
- Violas (Arthur adores 'Tiger Eye Red')
- Hellebores

- Butterfly ranunculus
- Ferns (which are very easy)
- Tulips are great, but more complicated because they're very juicy so there's a need to change the blotting paper every 3-4 days so that they don't rot.

Melissa's Pressing Recipe

1. Ideally get a flower press (but a heavy book will also do)
2. Layers of blotting paper will absorb the moisture from the flowers, whilst the pressure of tightening the press will flatten their form. Build up layers within the press:
 - a. Card
 - b. Blotting paper (the more absorbent the paper you can use, the better)
 - c. The flower
 - d. Blotting paper
 - e. Card

You want to get the moisture out of the flower as quickly as possible before it starts to rot or deteriorate.

3. Continue to build up the layers until your press is full.
4. Screw the press down
5. Resist the temptation to look at it for a week, then check it. Pansies will be already pressed, but with bigger flowers, you will need to change blotting paper at least once.
6. Archive them in black boxes to keep them out of the sun until you want to use them.

7. To use, Melissa recommends Mod Podge as the ideal glue. Work out composition you want, carefully lift the flowers, placing pins or markers so you get it back in the right place after gluing. Brush the glue gently onto the flower and press it down into position. If the petals feel very fragile, apply the glue onto the paper instead of directly onto the flowers as they can easily tear, even with the gentlest of brushstrokes.