

episode 97 show notes and advice

Episode description

This week Sarah is joined by returning guest Shane Conolly, about the art of sustainable floristry and great ideas for making your own Christmas wreath. Committed to taking an environment-first approach to floral design, Shane offers his most helpful hints and tips for how to embrace the festive period with seasonality and originality in mind.

In this episode, discover:

- ❖ Shane's pillars for sustainable floristry
- ❖ Top tips for creating a beautiful and biodegradable wreath
- ❖ Environmental takes on Christmas décor

episode 97 advice sheet

Shane's pillars for sustainable floristry (4:44)

Shane provides the building blocks on how to be a sustainable florist:

- ❖ Shane explains that it's impossible to be perfect when it comes to the environment – even picking your own flowers and bringing them into the house will probably have its own carbon footprint. But taking small steps every day is definitely the key to becoming more sustainable.
- ❖ Shane defines sustainability as finding resources that don't take away from the needs of the future. Focus your attention on 'compostable' alternatives, as the term 'biodegradable' is used incorrectly and too frequently.
- ❖ Floral foam isn't biodegradable and full of microplastics. There are many alternatives available, and the internet is a great place to find inspiration.

Shane and Sarah share their top tips on creating a sustainable wreath for Christmas (6:48)

The base

- ❖ Sarah likes to use a wood base which can be used time and time again.
- ❖ Shane uses a willow base, which looks really natural yet stylish. Although Shane agrees that willow doesn't allow you to have the same control, it's the organic quality

that makes it unique, and once the festive period is finished, it can go straight onto the compost heap.

Padding out your wreath

- ❖ Next, add pliable stems to give the wreath body and depth – Sarah suggests dogwood and silver birch.
- ❖ Fastening the stems with twine is a more sustainable alternative to relying on classic floristry wire, just make sure it's compostable. Shane's twine of choice is always 'jute twine'.
- ❖ Choosing to incorporate moss into your wreath should be handled with care. If you're lucky enough to have a garden of your own, you may be able to collect loose moss that has fallen from items as they have been moved around - but don't be tempted to pick your own moss in the wild.
- ❖ Giving newspaper a second life is a great idea. Ripped up and soaked in water, this will work as a suitable alternative to moss. It's also a good base for flowers which you might want to attach.

The finishing touches

- ❖ Seasonality is key – Shane suggests looking to the quirky and the odd for ultimate inspiration – mushrooms, fruits, and nuts, for instance, are readily available and add originality in abundance.
- ❖ Winter-flowering viburnum and wintersweet also look breathtaking.
- ❖ Consider hips and berries, evergreen foliage can look gorgeous too.
- ❖ Vibrant herbs like Rosemary and thyme add a beautiful fragrance as they gradually dry out, they are readily available too.

Other top tips from Shane

- ❖ Shane explains that the scale of the wreath very much depends on the door, so bear this in mind when creating your own.
- ❖ Don't be afraid to let things go – your wreath can look slightly scruffier and less neat. This is all part of the charm!
- ❖ Shane says his friend and previous guest, Tania Compton, has inspired him when it comes to table décor. Little vases filled with autumn cyclamen look gorgeous over the festive period. You can listen to Sarah and Tania's podcast episode [here](#).

- ❖ Don't be afraid to ask questions about the origins of plants and flowers – if it doesn't feel right, don't commit to purchasing.

Inspiration for decorating the home over Christmas (16:00)

- ❖ Shane loves to decorate the mantelpiece with branches of whatever has been cut off the bottom of the Christmas tree. It always looks amazing with warm glowing candles – although do be careful with the open flame.
- ❖ Worcestershire and Herefordshire, where Shane is based, are mistletoe central. Adding mistletoe always creates a Christmas feel and can be readily foraged. The translucent berries look wonderful on the mantle.
- ❖ Shane doesn't go for a super curated Christmas tree, instead, he decorates with sentimental items that he's collected over the years. Shane says he loves chandelier droplets on his tree which add a touch of glamour and can be kept for years to come.

Shane's perfect Christmas table (18:00)

- ❖ For Shane, it's all about the personal touches that make the most glorious Christmas table.
- ❖ Pots of micro-cherry tomatoes look sensational in Venetian blown vases.
- ❖ Shane chooses not to plan the Christmas table but says that you can't beat a Christmas rose in a pot, a few stems of wintersweet, potted hyacinths, and candles too.