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SOUTH WILTSHIRE

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Milston duo create wedding flowers and so much more

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Early fair

Festive shopping event in aid of soldiers' charity



FLOWER FRIENDS

Christine Stock talks to one half of neighbourly venture Milston Flower Barn, where business is blooming

PICTURES BY **ANGELA WARD BROWN, JOSHUA TUCKER PHOTOGRAPHY & ROB TARREN PHOTOGRAPHY**

When two South Wiltshire neighbours with a shared love of gardening and flower arranging pulled resources to create some informal wedding flowers during the first lockdown, little did they know this would be the start of a blossoming new business.

Susanne Kennedy and Faye Allen launched Milston Flower Barn last year, creating bespoke seasonal floral decorations inspired by the countryside around them and sourced almost entirely from their own gardens.

The creative duo, who live next to each other in the hamlet of Milston, near Durrington, got to know each other after Susanne moved to the UK two years ago, having relocated from Australia.

Susanne's background is in business consultancy but, after having her four children, she gave up that career to look after the family while they travelled the world with her husband's job.

"I love flowers and I've done a lot of flower arranging on a more private level," says Susanne. "During my time abroad, particularly in Asia, I did a lot of event management, fundraising for charity and jewellery design. There was always a lot to do with decorations and flowers and I took a lot of influences from all around the world."



Faye Allen and Susanne Kennedy





Faye had a career in the Army spanning more than 20 years but has always had a passion for flowers. After finishing her military service she studied for a diploma in floristry at Covent Garden Academy and worked in floral designs for several years before deciding it was time to do something by herself.

So, last summer when Faye was asked to create the floral decorations for a lockdown wedding of three events in a row, she turned to her friend and neighbour Susanne to give her a hand.

“The collaboration really kick started after we worked on this first wedding,” says Susanne, who is only too aware that it wasn’t the best time to start a florist business focusing on weddings.

“You have to take a risk sometimes, and neither of us were working during the lockdown, so we had nothing to lose.”

When I spoke to Susanne, her garden was brimming with dahlias, so they were using a lot of these in the arrangements.

“We mainly source the flowers from our own gardens or we go to a local grower. Faye has a huge garden, from which we harvest a lot of foliage.”

Susanne says they draw huge inspiration from the landscape around them. “We live on Salisbury Plain and this is our main source of inspiration. We have a look around at what is in season, at the colours that are currently out there and then we try to incorporate it into our ideas.”



The pair’s preferred style is a little bit Bohemian, explains Susanne: “Our own style is informal – quite floaty, with a lot of green and a lot of eucalyptus.”

“It doesn’t make sense nowadays to ship flowers all around the world, it’s not sustainable. Wherever we can, we try to source native flowers locally. So when we’re talking to the bridal party we’re suggesting native flowers first but, at the end of the day, it’s their wedding so we will listen to them and what they want.”

“This is what we are really good at,” she adds. “We take the time to listen and to figure out what their vision of the big day is. We can help guide them and let them know what is contemporary and what flowers are in season at this time of year.”

“There is a lot to be said about seasonality. A lot of people love flowers but may not know

‘Wherever we can, we try to source native flowers locally’

what is available at the time of year, so we will advise them about this. We really aspire to communicate as well as possible to get to an outcome that really satisfies and delights the couple.”

Susanne and Faye offer the full wedding package – from bridal bouquet to decorating the church and venue.

With the environment in mind, they will encourage couples who are looking for the church to be decorated to take most of the flowers on to the reception venue, which also makes it more cost effective.

The versatile floriculturists are able to decorate pretty much anything that people want them to – from flower crowns for bride and bridesmaids to a corsage for a dog’s collar.

And it’s not just weddings. Faye and Susanne can also create beautiful arrangements for funerals and christenings and other special occasions. They also hold flower arranging workshops at Brushh Artisan Coffee & Co in Netheravon where you can learn a new skill and walk away with a beautiful hand-tied bouquet while enjoying delicious cakes and drinks from the café.

milstonflowerbarn.co.uk