



Delightful festive florals

Georgia Miles teaches the art of floristry from her village studio. Here, she shares the process of two of her favourite seasonal makes

Feature **MELANIE GRIFFITHS** Photographs **POLLY ELTES**

Her hands moving swiftly but steadily in a circular motion, Georgia expertly crafts her latest work of floral artistry, a richly coloured and fragrant wreath, getting ready to demonstrate the skill to a fresh crop of eager students. It is mesmerising to watch, and her natural finesse makes the process look deceptively easy. But Georgia is a passionate teacher, and her pupils leave the class brimming with almost as much enthusiasm as she has. 'I love sharing all of the techniques and helping people; I have met so many inspiring people who have come through these doors,' she says.

Three years ago, Georgia, who previously ran a wedding flowers business, started The Sussex Flower School, teaching out of a studio in the garden of her house before quickly relocating to a larger dedicated studio in the picturesque village of East Hoathly. Here she holds courses for both amateurs and budding professionals year round.

The studio particularly comes to life at this time of year, and she runs a number of wreath, garland and table arrangement workshops. 'Christmas

floral work is a chance to go over the top and use deeper colours, candles and sparkly bits and pieces. I especially like wreaths as they are so satisfying to make and look so festive,' she says.

A keen gardener, Georgia grows as many of the flowers as she can for the school in her cutting garden. Her favourite Christmas plants are 'mostly foliage like skimmia, berried ivy, eucalyptus and spruce, but also humble twigs and moss,' she says. 'Flower wise, I adore the gentle simplicity of hellebores but also the grandeur of amaryllis.'

With her many green-fingered talents, Georgia has found in teaching a creative outlet. Alongside offering an insight into flower arranging, she also imparts to her students a little piece of her design flair, as she instinctively knows which colours and shapes work together, and how they can be used to make awe-inspiring displays. 'I love the process of creating a design, from a spark of an idea through to making the final piece.'

• Turn the page for Georgia's fabulous table centrepiece and wreath-making workshops

ABOVE LEFT A seasonal selection of the foliage and flowers Georgia uses in her arrangements, many of which were grown in her own cutting garden
ABOVE RIGHT The tools of her work are displayed on a beloved distressed cabinet
RIGHT Georgia at work in her studio; here she has laid out all of the ingredients for a festive wreath



Celebration centrepiece

This gorgeous table design, full of rich colour and texture, is surprisingly easy to make, and with its moist foam base should last for several days



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4

YOU WILL NEED

- Foam brick and container
- Rosemary
- *Skimmia japonica*
- Grand Prix roses
- Crab apples
- Cotinus
- *Viburnum tinus*
- Eryngium (sea holly)
- Twigs
- Pot tape
- Dinner candle

How to do it

1 Wet your foam base and bind into the container with pot tape.

2 Create an outline with the foliage and twigs, trimming to length as you go, and insert candle, which can be fixed by taping on wooden sticks.

3 Keep the design rectangular and use a variety of textures. Georgia used red roses and crab apples. Group the roses towards the centre to create a focus.

4 Georgia added *Viburnum tinus* and eryngium to complement the red. Finish it by checking from all angles.



SPECIAL OFFER

Georgia is offering *Period Living* readers a discount of 20% on any of her Flower Courses (excluding Bespoke) until 1 December 2014. Book online at thesussexflower-school.co.uk and enter code PL2013 at the checkout.



STEP 1

Welcoming wreaths

Georgia loves to make these festive door hangings. You can use any seasonal foliage and add colour with berries and oranges

YOU WILL NEED

- Sphagnum moss (available from garden centres)
- *Eucalyptus cinerea*
- *Skimmia japonica*
- Crab apples
- Rosemary
- Dried orange slices
- 10 inch wire wreath frame (available from craft shops and amazon.co.uk)
- Mossing wire

How to do it

1 Bind generous handfuls of moss on to the wire wreath frame with mossing wire. To do this, fasten one end of the reel of the wire to the ring and wrap the wire around the moss in a circular fashion, keeping it taut, and adding handfuls until well covered.

2 Add seasonal foliage (Georgia used *Eucalyptus cinerea* and *Skimmia japonica* but you can use holly or other greenery) by pushing the cut ends deep into the moss base, working to roughly a

45 degree angle. Use a variety of materials to create an interesting and textured wreath; Georgia added crab apples for colour and rosemary for scent and texture.

3 Insert additional items, such as orange slices or pine cones on a wire. Before adding the oranges, Georgia first wired them together into bundles of three.

4 Finish off the wreath with a generous bow. To make this, first tie the ribbon and then affix with wire. ➔



Website project

If Georgia's projects have inspired you to make more, try her topiary tree, available as an exclusive online step-by-step project. Guaranteed to wow guests, it is available at periodliving.co.uk/craft until Christmas.