

My kind of country

Georgia Miles

THERE'S NOTHING QUITE LIKE LIVING AND WORKING IN BEAUTIFUL EAST SUSSEX FOR THIS HAPPY FLORIST



What do you love most about where you live?

I live in the village of Laughton in East Sussex with my husband, Simon, and our children, Wilf, 13, Mimi, 12, and Evie Bea, 10. We moved here in 2003 because we wanted to belong to a community. We love it – the children can be really free and cycle off in the woods as they know everyone. We moved to Buckle Cottage in 2008 and transformed what was essentially a field into the garden. Once the structure of paths and boundaries was in place I planted all my favourite plants and flowers, with lots of perennials forming the backbone. I also have a cutting garden where I grow annuals such as dahlias and sweet peas along with floristry staples such as euphorbia. When everything is in full bloom you feel lost in flowers – my idea of heaven.

What are your earliest childhood memories of the country?

I was brought up in the country and my earliest memories are all to do with 'The Hut'. This was essentially a shed in our garden that represented freedom. It was here I created parsley soup, mint tea with brown sugar and many other inedible concoctions. My imagination ran free, surrounded by plants and flowers.

Describe your perfect country home.

Secluded, probably down a long track. I love my friends but also feel the need to be private and quiet. It would be a cottage but with lovely big, light rooms with wooden floors and a woodburner. My garden would come right up to the doors so you could take a cup of tea and sit surrounded by flowers. It would have a greenhouse overflowing with seedlings and plants with a comfortable old armchair and a radio to escape to on rainy days.

What inspires you most about where you live?

This area is so beautiful. There are many



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Georgia's flower school is set in her abundantly planted garden; a selection of cut flowers ready for class; Georgia and her students enjoy a spot of lunch outside; with Evie Bea in the cutting garden; Mimi shows off her fruit harvest.

local food producers and small, family-run businesses nearby. We have the sea on our doorstep and the South Downs all around us. There are some wonderful walks, which often end with lunch in a fabulous pub. Brighton, with its arts festival, cosmopolitan lifestyle and shopping, is only 25 minutes away.

What are your favourite flowers? The dahlia – in all its forms. It is the perfect cutting flower as it just keeps on producing until the first frosts. The array of colours is mind-boggling. I love the more complicated, intricate dahlias, such as 'Karma Choc', 'Rip City' and 'Sam Hopkins' – and they have the added benefit of a long vase life. However, they are much less beneficial to bees and other insects than simple varieties like 'Blue Bayou', 'Bishop of Auckland' and 'Juliet', so I try to grow a mix to satisfy both needs. I love flowers in the house and create great urns of blooms for parties. I think there is nothing more beautiful than a simple home-grown arrangement on the kitchen table – scented roses, sweet peas, cerinthe and mint.

Where do you find the inspiration for your business? I read floristry magazines and books, plus lifestyle magazines to see what 'real' people are up to. But just as much inspiration comes from the garden itself, which really is the key to my sense of design. I don't like to mess around with the raw materials by adding beads, decorative wires or pins. I like to use flowers and foliage as nature intended, letting them speak for themselves. I am also inspired by the students who come here. I love meeting new people and helping them rediscover a passion for flowers.

What is your favourite local shop? We are spoilt for choice here. I get local asparagus from South Brockwells Farm in Little Horsted and Laughton Village Stores stocks locally produced ham, eggs, bread, cheese and milk. My husband often drives down to Newhaven or Hastings to buy fresh fish.

What is your favourite seasonal food? Strawberries. I never buy them out of season because they just don't taste the same but once the Kent and Sussex varieties arrive in late May we have them every day. We go to the Pick Your Own farms near here, such as Stonehill Farm in Chiddingly.

What is your favourite food destination? We often go to Brighton and our favourite food in the whole world is the seafood paella at Otello in Hove. If we want good British food, we would go to The Ram Inn in Firle.

Georgia runs intensive, week-long wedding floristry courses. Her one-to-one courses can be tailored to meet individual requirements. She stocks her own brand of candles and reed diffusers, along with a selection of floristry sundries. Find out more at thesussexflowerschool.co.uk.

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I COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT...
'Earl Grey, a good book
and a sunny garden'



FEATURE SARAH WILSON PHOTOGRAPHS SUZIE GIBBONS; (STRAWBERRIES) IPC IMAGES/W&H; (THE RAM INN) DESIGN FORMAT

FROM TOP The perfect spot to enjoy a cuppa; Georgia taking a class; strawberries are her favourite seasonal treat; one of her hand-tied bouquets; The Ram Inn in Firle.

