

HOUSE OF FIFTY

ideas for *inspired* living



*Brighten Your
Days With
Color!*

issue
NINE
winter
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The Pink Peonies



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To Everyone Who Contributed
to this Issue,

THANK YOU FROM
House of Fifty!

Finding Charm at a Shop Named *Quince*



Photography by Tracey Ayton
Interview by Janell Beals



Floral Designer Jessica Clark relishes being surrounded by flowers and has always been drawn to creative endeavors and environments. So it comes as no surprise that her days are now spent at Quince, her floral shop located in Vancouver, BC. "I simply love flowers, they are the unsung heroes in any beautifully designed space. Whether they bring a pop of color to a sleek, all white environment - think coral peonies - or whimsy to a refined kitchen through billowing magnolia branches in bloom, they literally bring life into a room. My favorite thing is to have a small tumbler next to my bed filled with fragrant flowers; a clutch of Lily of the Valley or bundle of Sweet Peas. It's heavenly to fall asleep and wake up to these scents, it always makes me happy!"

When opening the store Jessica was inspired to name it after a Quince bush that stood just outside the window of her very first apartment. "It would bloom in the most gorgeous shade of coral, making me feel hopeful with this first sign of spring. I've loved the name ever since."

Stepping into the store one discovers an atmosphere that is rustic with a European look and feel, with many quaint items for sale in addition to all the beautiful flowers. "Before I opened the shop I went to Europe for three months to find inspiration as I've always been drawn to the fashion, décor and art history of France, England, Sweden and Holland. I spent a great deal of time in Amsterdam and attended the flower auction there; it's the largest in the world. I photographed details from cafes, stores and houses in Paris and London so that I could attempt to create the same look back home in Vancouver."

The store is filled with natural light and antique furniture, creating a charming setting against the pale robin's egg blue walls and wooden floors. There is a relaxing and inspired environment to be enjoyed by customers, with

Jessica lighting scented candles that are available at the store and hosting afternoon tea tastings on particularly dreary days. "It's all in an effort to make the space warm and inviting. Working here is such a dream. I am so fortunate to get to be creative every day, which is an essential ingredient for my happiness as an artistic person."





Potted Lemon Balm Cypress topiaries, perfect for a woodsy look indoors.



Palermo dishware available at Quince suits a simple arrangement of roses.



Jessica's efforts and attention to detail have been rewarded by her clientele, many who have been supportive of her venture since day one. "I've done the flowers for their weddings, made bouquets for their anniversaries, and now their children come rambling into my store for a free blossom while the parents shop or merely pop in to say hello, which is lovely. There is a vibrant community feel to this neighborhood that I love and appreciate, it's a tremendous support for all the eclectic businesses in the area."

Quince fully embraces the belief that design really is in the details. Here the style is to use more flowers and less filler to create monochromatic bouquets which are then wrapped and bound with grosgrain ribbon or arranged in a clear glass vase or vintage vessel.

"We're big on presentation."




The walk-in refrigerator was built by Jessica's father after discovering all the available models looked as if they belonged in a grocery store. Together the pair came up with a design utilizing proper French doors and a lovely shade of gray paint.



To bring the best flowers into the store, many of which are locally grown, Jessica awakes at the crack of dawn twice a week to arrive early at a large flower auction. "I am not naturally a morning person, so in the beginning attending the auction was a shock to the system! I'm up at 5 a.m. to be at the auction by 5:30, ready to inspect the hundred or so carts of flowers and plants. It's a Dutch style auction, which means the prices start at the highest point and go down from there. For example, a large hydrangea bloom may start at \$3.75 each and then go down in increments of ten cents. There may only be four lots (buckets of 15 stems) available, so you may punch in early with a higher price point if you need them for a special event or wedding, or wait and see how low the price will go if you just simply like them."

But beware, Jessica shares, sometimes a buyer will take everything in one fell swoop at a high price and she can be left scrambling to find an alternative. It's all computerized so she brings her laptop, signs into the system along with a couple hundred others in the gallery, and at 6 a.m. the fun begins.



French tea towels are a mainstay of the store. Their vibrant colors are so cheerful, perfect as a hostess gift.



Beyond flowers, Quince carries a beautiful mix of items including Guy Wolff pots. "I've had the pleasure to meet and witness first hand his admirable potting skills at his studio, a colonial red barn located in the countryside of Connecticut. At Quince we pot everything from orchids to amaryllis in his beautiful pots." Other wares include French linens and tea towels in vibrant tones such as raspberry or aubergine, French shea butter soaps, Milk Glass cake plates, votives and compotes from a company in Ohio which are made using the original vintage molds. Beautifully designed note cards, hand-made Linnea's Lights scented candles, along with teas and tisanes from Sloane round out the product mix.

Jessica also is committed to running an environmentally responsible operation and shares how that manifests itself in a floral business. "I really try my very best to be environmentally responsible in every facet of my business. Over 80 percent of our flowers are purchased locally from growers in the lower mainland. We also recycle and reuse all cardboard and paper materials, as well as compost all organic material, which is a lot! I'm always happy at the end of the week if we've only created one bag of garbage after working with hundreds of flowers for an event."



*Placed inside a vintage frame,
living works of art are created each week
featuring a different flower and vase.*



Glass Votives

White 8 10

Pink 8 10





“These are my favorite items right now! Vintage wooden spools with gardener’s twine and miniature scissors - a perfect gift for the horticulturally inclined - and slip cast Mason Jars created by a local artist in Vancouver.”



Quality is very important at Quince. "There are different grades of flowers and I only buy top grade flowers from high-quality growers who I know produce a consistently flawless, long-lasting product. The conditioning of flowers is also key. We clean all our flowers, remove excess leaves, fresh cut the stems before placing them in clean water, after which they are kept in a refrigerator for optimum freshness, rather than have them sit outside where they are apt to die faster if exposed to extreme heat or cold. We also avoid commonly used greens, instead utilizing foliage that is locally sourced and seasonal."



“Once the flowers are home there are a few things you can do to prolong the life and beauty of the stems. You’ve heard it before, but I will say it again, the best way to prolong vase life is to re-cut the stems and change the water. It truly makes such a difference.”



“I’ve had friends report back that they’ve had hydrangea last almost four weeks, by simply re-cutting and changing the water every three days. That, along with avoiding placing the flowers in direct sunlight, especially planted orchids which prefer filtered light.”



More Palermo dishware, this time filled with Snowball Viburnum, with a pavee arrangement of plum colored miniature Chrysanthemums set in a Hobnail Compote.



*Pink Peonies are charmingly displayed in a
Jadeite Hobnail Vase...*



*...filled here with a cluster of heavenly scented
Lily of the Valley.*





Jessica thoroughly enjoys her work and business, but also appreciates the moments she can step away to recharge.

“I love Sundays and a perfect day would include sleeping in! Then I’d meet up with friends for brunch at our favorite spot, Habit. Their biscuits are to die for. The rest of the day would include a lovely walk along the sea wall in Stanley Park with my boyfriend Sam, followed by copious amounts of tea and the Sunday New York Times.”

