

Slow Flowers JOURNAL

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Field to Fashion

In its fourth year, American Flowers Week celebrates U.S.-grown (and foraged) botanicals with five fresh, inspiring and handcrafted couture looks.

American Flowers Week burst onto the floral scene in 2015, and its significance and influence has grown ever since, attracting participation across all channels of domestic flowers – from seeds to bouquets to beautiful floral fashions.

Social media engagement from florists, designers, retailers, wholesalers and flower farms posting on Instagram and Twitter generated more than 5 million impressions during the 2017 campaign, giving the hash tag #americanflowersweek top-of-mind presence, up from 1.2 million impressions the prior year.

Planning for the 2018 American Flowers Week floral fashion collection began almost immediately after the 2017 campaign ended. I was lucky to be on location in Homer, Alaska, last July, when floral designer **Kelly Shore**, of **Petals by the Shore** in Damascus, Md., teamed up with peony farmer **Beth Van Sandt**, co-owner of **Scenic Place Peonies** in Homer. Together, these creative women envisioned a styled shoot that reflected in-season, just-picked peonies and a story line to mirror the character and geography of Homer, which appears on Pages 66 and 67.

Producing this amazing collection of American-grown floral fashions continued through the subsequent months, including an October photo shoot celebrating *Dablias* in Sonoma County; a January woodland narrative reliant upon one designer's penchant for foraging from the forests of the Pacific Northwest; a March session on the Big Island paying homage to tropical flowers and foliages of Hawaii; and later that month, a tribute to the iconic *Iris*, straight from the greenhouses of Arcata, Calif.

It is a privilege and honor to present five compelling looks and the behind-the-scenes stories about the people and floral passions that fill these pages. The inventiveness and creativity expressed by the **Slow Flowers** community – flower farmers and floral designers alike – elevates American-grown botanicals to new levels. To learn more about these designs, the floral artists, the farms and their flowers, you can find bonus content at americanflowersweek.com and in the *Florists' Review* digital edition for June at floristsreview.com.

A Celebration of American Flowers

June 28 - July 4, 2018

Launched in 2015, **American Flowers Week** is the advocacy, education and outreach campaign produced by **Slow Flowers** to promote and commemorate domestic flowers, flower farming and floral design. Find free resources and promotional material at americanflowersweek.com.

Woodland Couture

Farmer-florist uses nature to forage for new design materials and inspiration.

In Montana, flower farmers and florists who adhere to the Slow Flowers mission have learned to broaden their definition of what's seasonal. For **Carly Jenkins**, of **Killing Frost Farm**, a farmer-florist-forager based in Missoula, Mont., that means viewing every single gift from the forest as a design element.

Carly's reliance on foraging was inspiration for her wearable botanical creation, which draws from design materials used to create her wildly popular "Game of Thrones" holiday wreath series. Her favorite ingredients are sheets of moss and patches of lichen in many shades from gray to green. When accented by glossy, chestnut-colored scales of deconstructed ponderosa pine cones, the gown represents a botanical palette unique to much of North America's woodlands – the organic debris found on the forest floor.

Creating a wearable and attractive garment with such humble materials was part of the challenge. "At the same time, I didn't want it to be too literal. I wanted you to look at this dress from a distance and see a beautiful textile rather than thinking, 'Oh, that's lichen in the shape of a dress,'" she says.

Carly began with a floor-length fitted sheath as the first layer and added a three-tiered overskirt to define the shape of her garment. She fashioned elbow-to-wrist "gauntlets" for the forearms and a cropped "shrug" to adorn the shoulders, upper arms and neckline.

"I definitely wanted to create a beautiful gown, but something that also felt strong and fierce," the designer explains. "I was obsessed with how the gauntlets could look like armor. Rather than having beauty and strength be mutually exclusive, I wanted to see them together. To me, this look is a little 'Joan of Arc meets Queen of Hearts.'"

In early January, Carly set out from Missoula, her car packed with foraged woodland materials, a six-foot roll of chicken wire, her tool box, glue gun and the completed gauntlets (look closely, and you'll see how she glued hundreds of scales onto two black tube socks).

She brought along **Katherine Sherba**, of Missoula-based **Mighty Fine Farm**, with whom she co-founded the **Westside Flower Market**, a farmer-to-florist wholesale hub serving Missoula and beyond.

For two days, the women set up shop in space donated



by the **Seattle Wholesale Growers Market**, cutting, tearing and gluing pieces of acid green moss and verdigris-toned lichen, forming textural skirts, bodice and shrug. The lichen-adorned sheath fit close to model **Berkeley Danysh's** body while the overskirt's lovely silhouette was formed by chicken wire shaped with deep darts and twig dogwood "boning" to wrap around her hips.

"We had no idea how to tie on the outer skirt until the morning of the photo shoot," Carly explains. "That's when I grabbed rustic crown wire and wove it through the chicken wire, cinching it tightly around Berkeley's waist."

Embellished in layers of lichen, the shrug-style shoulder piece includes a standing collar that echoes the pine-cone gauntlets and conveys the impression of a female warrior's "armor." Carly finished the look with a dramatic, Medieval-inspired moss wrap to frame the model's face.

The setting at **Old Goat Farm** in Orting, Wash., is as mossy and lichen-clad as Carly's fanciful woodland gown. As on most days during the Pacific Northwest's winter months, it was drizzly and overcast. But through the lens of photographer **Alex Brooks**, the model, garment and setting exude a rich glow, perhaps from the mossy patina unique to time and place.

CREDITS

Floral Palette: Pacific Northwest-foraged moss, lichen and pine cones

Production support: Seattle Wholesale Growers Market (Seattle, Wash.), @seattlewholesalegrowersmarket

Designer: Carly Jenkins, Killing Frost Farm (Missoula, Mont.) @killingfrostfarm

Assistant: Katherine Sherba, Mighty Fine Farm (Missoula, Mont.), @mightyfinefarm

Model: Berkeley Danysh, TCM Models and Talent, tcmodels.com

Hair/Makeup: Carly Jenkins

Photography: Alex Brooks @alex_brks

Location: Old Goat Farm; Orting, Wash.

