



How We Do It: The London Plane

Community hub appeals with a feast of food and flowers.

Who: Katherine Anderson, owner, and Jeni Nelson, manager

What: **The London Plane** is a multifaceted space with a full-scale flower shop and studio, co-located with a café (serving breakfast, lunch and dinner); a pastry kitchen; a baker of the famous Plane Bread country-style loaf; and retail shelves filled with all sorts of treasures such as aprons, books, soaps, plants, ceramics and kitchen pantry items.

Where: Seattle, Wash., in the historic Pioneer Square gallery/artists' district on the corner of Occidental and Main.

Social Media: thelondonplaneseseattle.com; @thelondonplaneplaneflowershop and @londonplaneseseattle

About: Co-owners Katherine Anderson, an architect-turned

flower grower/designer, and restaurateur **Matt Dillon** dreamed up The London Plane. Both Seattle natives, they wanted to create a community hub in Pioneer Square while reviving a somewhat forgotten neighborhood for which they both feel a fondness. Each of them has an incredible eye for interior design and, together, turned the former Bank of America building into a beautiful gathering space that attracts people from around the world. London plane trees (*Platanus* spp.) line Occidental Ave., hence the name. "Napoleon originally planted the species along boulevards all over Europe to shade his troops," Anderson says.

Square Footage: Around 5,000 square feet, with a soaring ceiling and tall windows through which streams lovely natural light. Approximately 500 square feet is devoted to the floral studio and shop.



Services/specialties: Our flower shop offers everything from single stems selected from the make-your-own-bouquet flower bar to flower arrangements for delivery. We also offer weekly or monthly flower subscriptions, floral classes featuring our favorite blooms, and the floral design of grand events and weddings. Our style is loose and gardenlike, with a particular focus on color palette, line and texture.

Sourcing practices: We strive to support hard-working Washington growers as much as we can and have built friendships with many of them. The **Seattle Wholesale Growers Market (SWGGM)** makes this easy on us, as a cooperative that has brought together talented American flower farmers from the region who grow all sorts of unique varieties. We make at least two weekly runs to SWGGM for the bulk of our floral product and then supplement from there.

Seasonal sourcing/varieties: A handful of growers deliver right to our door including our yearly *Dahlia* and peony growers. Our *Dahlia* grower has even canoe-harvested water lilies for us. We put them in a bowl of water and enjoy watching them open and close each day. It's a wonderful opportunity to get to work directly with growers in our region.

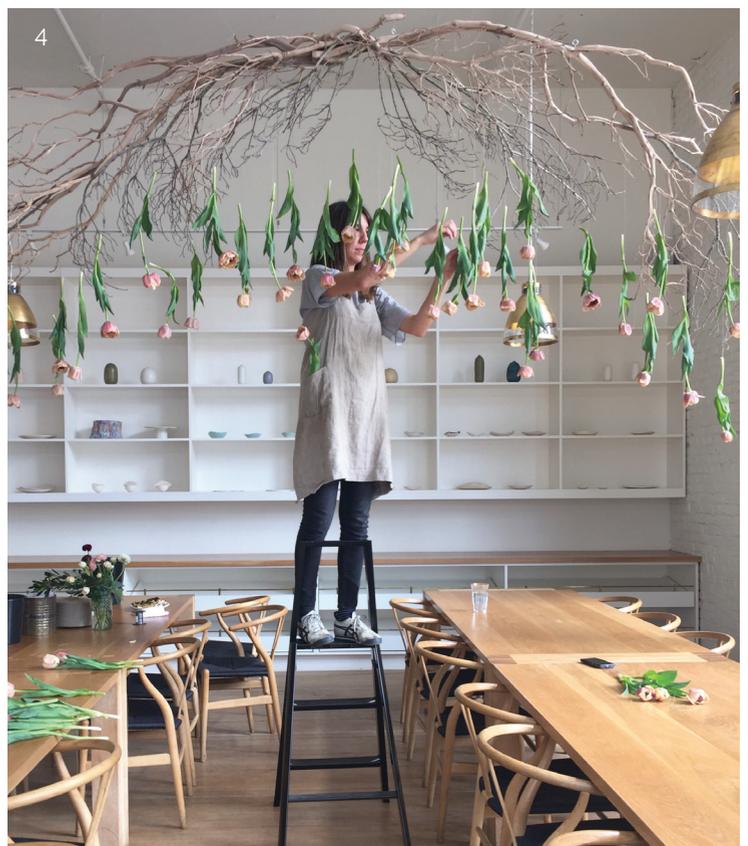
Off-season sourcing practices: We rely heavily on California product in the off-season and receive weekly shipments from **SF Brannan Street Wholesale Florist** in San Francisco. It's like opening a box of California sunshine every week, with all sorts of interesting, textural varieties, such as *Eucalyptus* pods, green almond branches and *Fritillaria*.

Best off-season flowers: Forced-blooming branches, especially quince and *Magnolia*. We like having them cut quite tall for us since we have the vertical space to display it.

Advice for others: The off-season allows for designing with less-expected materials and gives us the chance to think outside the box of the typical flower arrangement with "flowers and filler." In the off-months, we celebrate dried flora and all the magnificent seedpods and grasses. We find ourselves drawn to the soft, muted color palettes that can be composed with such materials. We turn dried stems into little tussie-mussies, bouquets, swags and wreaths. Garlands can be another way to let greens have their spotlight when fresh flowers are less

available. Canyon oak is a variety we are drawn to for its wintry feel; tallow berries give garlands a bit of interest. Installations are outlets for artistic expression, and bare branches often comprise our armatures. One year, we did our signature branch installation with 'Distant Drums' garden roses from California, which was the most magical, romantic canopy to gaze upon.

How do you market: We send out monthly newsletters to announce our floral classes, and we then get to know our customers during our workshops. Referrals and word-of-mouth from happy clients have helped our shop grow the most. Foot traffic certainly helps, given that The London Plane is a bustling place for diners who then take a moment to stop and smell the flowers. ■



1) The abundance of flowers and vessels is on display for all to see and appreciate at The London Plane. Photo © The London Plane

2) The host station at The London Plane bridges the transition between flower shop and popular cafe. © Debra Prinzing

3) A garden-inspired floral arrangement from the designers at The London Plane incorporates botanicals sourced from Washington flower farms. Photo © The London Plane

4) Jeni Nelson, manager, puts the finishing touches on a signature branch installation from The London Plane. Photo © The London Plane