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# DEFINING MOMENT

PHOTOGRAPHED  
BY JOSHUA LUTZ  
PRODUCED BY  
CHARLOTTE M. FRIEZE

## His last bouquet

After more than 30 years of wowing the public with his floral arrangements for the Great Hall of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Chris Giftos is retiring

New Yorkers think big—especially philanthropic ones like the late Lila Acheson Wallace, cofounder of *Reader's Digest*. When she endowed the city's grandest museum with enough money to have a bouquet of fresh flowers every week until the end of time, she didn't have a nosegay in mind. Luckily, her bequest was met with a talent large enough to do it justice—Chris Giftos (on ladder). The man behind those beloved big-bang arrangements in the Great Hall is also a New Yorker, which may explain his fearlessness around all that art. The flowers stand their ground and will continue to do so under his successor, Remco Van Vliet (standing), and helpers Pablo Perez and Ferida Coughlan. □





## ▪ pink & orange ▪

Just because you prefer a modern look doesn't mean your tables need to be minimal or, for that matter, monochromatic. Opt for a burst of bright colors (make sure to check with your florist before committing to a palette; out-of-season flowers can cost up to three times as much as in-season blooms).

"People equate modernism with stark surfaces and spaces," says florist Remco van Vliet, of Van Vliet and Trap in New York City. "Orange immediately melts the coldness and adds intimacy." For this tabletop, Van Vliet chose orange as the primary color and electrifying pink as an accent. To offset such a lively combination he kept the remaining touches simple: neutral chairs, white dinner plates atop orange chargers and clean-line Tivoli silverware (all rentals). From there add your own flair—like stamped postcards at each place setting pre-addressed to the bride and groom for guests to fill out and send later. Not only are they a clever variation on the standard guest book, but they also let the couple return from their honeymoon to a mailbox full of warm wishes. ■



1. Love-style glass chargers (\$3.25 each), plates (\$20 each) and bowls (\$10-\$22 each) rented from European Sources Direct, 800-535-0378. Silverware (\$1.80 per setting); Triserve Party Rental, 212-752-7661. Custom-made pink linen napkins; Chelsea Marketplace, 212-594-8289.
2. Pick a signature drink—like this Pamplemousse Champagne Cocktail topped with a marigold stem by Callahan Catering (212-327-1144)—that's in keeping with your color scheme.
3. Custom-made escort cards (\$3 each) and table number cards (\$5 each); Intergraphics Litho, 212-631-7565. For additional sources see page 476.



Bold colors allow for more freedom with shapes. Note the varying floral arrangements of tulips, dahlias and hyacinths. (All photographs were taken at Ohoka Castle; ohokacastle.com.)

IN STYLE  
WEDDINGS



# Dutch Treat



"IF YOU FLY OVER HOLLAND AT night, the country is still visible because it is lit by the spectral glow of hundreds of 24-hour greenhouses," says floral designer Remco van Vliet, the coolest Dutch import to hit Manhattan since architect Rem Koolhaas and his flagship Prada store. The third-generation master florist, whose grandfather owned a flower shop, grew up creating bouquets for his father's event-design firm, which counts the Dutch royal family among its clients. In 1997 he and his brother, Cas Trap, established their own event-design firm, Van Vliet & Trap, in New York. As expected, van Vliet's designs reflect his dual background: courtly, old-world elegance hybridized with edgy, urban glamour.

Three years ago van Vliet became the exclusive event designer at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Besides inventing grand, architectural floral arrangements for the Great Hall (in two-tier urns on eight-foot ladders), he also masterminds most of the

Remco van Vliet's arrangements, such as this one (below) with a 'Flaming Parrot' tulip at its center joined by grevillea and sandersonia, recall the fantasy blooms of 17th-century Dutch still lifes.



southeast



museum's galas. For the opening of the Egyptian wing, the designer brought in papyrus plants, lotus seedpods, date palm leaves, and votive candles. The flickering candlelight gave way to leafy shadows and contributed to the atmosphere of primeval mystery that surrounds the Temple of Dendur. For a rooftop party honoring the art of Roy Lichtenstein, he employed cartoon-bold arrangements of sunflowers, blue thistle, and other primary colored flowers and linens to mimic the pop artist's oeuvre.

Van Vliet's background in art history and graphic design informs his arrangements, and he is known for his striking, worldly combinations of blooms. "Dutch still lifes of

the 17th century depicted fantasy flower arrangements with blooms from different seasons and continents compressed into one vase," he says. "But today this kind of arrangement is truly possible—a bouquet could easily be composed of stems from Holland, Mozambique, and New Zealand."

On a recent visit to the Birmingham Botanical Gardens in Alabama, the leather-jacket-clad designer covered a handmade wooden box in orange dupioni silk, lined it with plastic, and filled it to the brim with a lush arrangement in citrus hues, all within a matter of minutes. The combination of Dutch hydrangea, variegated coral 'Circus' roses from Ecuador, 'Super Green Giant' roses,



ABOVE: A silk-covered box houses an arrangement of bright citrus-toned roses, drumsticks, and kangaroo-paw, balanced by the pale greens of Dutch hydrangea and 'Super Green Giant' roses. LEFT: A Biedermeier-style bouquet combines 'Abracadabra' roses with fringed Dutch tulips, grevillea, and snowball viburnum.

## SOUTHERN ACCENTS



A large glass bowl filled with a few colorful blooms creates a surprisingly sophisticated and otherworldly arrangement.

and yellow 'Sim Salabim' roses (a new Dutch variety with striations of deep burgundy) made for a complex counterpoint of colors. He added yellow craspedia drumsticks "for their interesting texture," and delicate, branchlike blossoms of yellow kangaroo-paw, which kept the arrangement from being too round.

Van Vliet's second demonstration marshaled modern-day Zen principles of minimalism and restraint. In fact, the designer likened his fishbowl arrangement of yellow drumsticks, kangaroo-paw, and trimmed lady's-slipper orchids to something aquatic. "It belongs under the ocean," he says.

Of course, this native Dutchman could not resist throwing Holland's ubiquitous national flower, the tulip, into some of his arrangements. 'Flaming Parrot' tulips with canary-yellow and scarlet striations flare out like spitfire from a loose, airy bouquet of sandersonia and grevillea—the latter a spiky, unusual looking protea that sums up his trademark taste for incorporating interesting flowers into otherwise conventionally pretty bouquets.

Van Vliet & Trap, 212/352-3385, [www.xanvlietandtrap.com](http://www.xanvlietandtrap.com).

A third-generation master florist and the exclusive event designer at the Met, **Remco van Vliet** brings his artful arrangements to the Birmingham Botanical Gardens

BY NANCY STAAB  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY ROBBIE CAPONETTO



ART

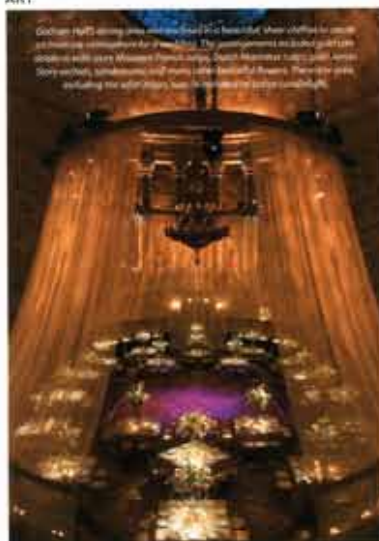
## DUTCH MASTER

FLORAL ILLUSTRATIONS BY VAN VLIET'S MARIE TOULH  
MARION LAFFEY FOX | PHOTOGRAPHY BY BBE WILLIAMS  
ADDITIONAL IMAGES COURTESY OF VAN VLIET & TRAP

A bit of magic occurs every Monday morning in the Great Hall of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It begins a little after six, with the earliest delivery of a selection of potted plant material, and continues full force as Dutch master florists come, consider here a virtual Romeo van Vliet, to take on the challenging task of creating the breathtaking and colorful floral arrangements that will eventually grace the four riches and central information desk of the museum's lobby.

van Vliet, 40, is a Dutch-born florist who moved to the United States from the Life Academy in Amsterdam. He was the cofounder of The Flower Project, a remarkable nonprofit that has since that the seating entrance to the Met always comes with a floral display.

ART



"I love to make these big arrangements," he says from his left perch. "It takes a lot of time and material and is not easy to do, balancing it at the top of a ladder as high up, but that's the best of it. I am happy that people from everywhere come to one of the world's finest institutions, where they enjoy my flowers from the moment they enter the threshold."

If van Vliet and his brother and partner, Cas Trap, enjoy the mobile reputation as one of Manhattan's hottest event design teams, their mission didn't happen overnight. Born into a family of florists outside Amsterdam, the brothers earned their spurs by dogged study and practice.

"My grandfather had a flower shop in the city of Den Haag [40 minutes from Amsterdam] from the early 1900s, and he definitely continued to sell flowers through World War II, when Holland was occupied. Interestingly, he only stocked red, white, blue and orange flowers—never yellow roses—because they [the roses] were always requested by the German officials."

His father, Evert Jan Trap, continued the tradition as a master florist, explains van Vliet. He not only had a shop but also was known for the imaginative floral fantasies he consistently created for the Dutch royal family. As a result of that high-ranking commission, van Vliet recalls the thrill of composing a bouquet for the queen when he was only 16 years old. "Can you imagine how proud I was when she said 'thou loved it? I never forget it.'"

Reporting that he and his brother worked in his father's flower shop every weekend to earn extra money and learn the nuances of the profession,

van Vliet emphasizes the importance of flowers to the Dutch sensibility. In Holland, people buy flowers every week—usually on Saturday—as flowers and clients get to know each other very well. In addition, the Dutch invariably give a bouquet to their hosts if they are going to a party, so we would often make 40 to 50 different custom, hand-bred bouquets in a single day. You can't imagine how tired our hands would be, but you also have to admit after all that work, we gained lots of valuable experience."

Fractious as seeds, when both young men decided to become master florists, they embarked on a seven-year study path that involved learning everything about plant material (including memorizing the common names in German, French, English, Dutch and Latin, of course), as well as design styles, growing regions and sophisticated horticultural considerations like climatic conditions, propagation and grafting techniques. "Did you know?" he asks. "If you graft a pear branch to an apple tree, it would produce pears!" So if you apply that to flower design, you can graft like branches to great hedge and get a great effect."

During his years of study, van Vliet was a frequent visitor to the Aalsmeer Flower Auction, not far from his home. "It is the largest flower auction in the world," he says, "so it's not surprising that I would go there to buy flowers. I loved the whole atmosphere and was always fascinated with seeing species from everywhere. As a result, I got familiar with many of the players, and we export from there for our US clients. At the moment, I need about 100,000 flowers for the Top of the Year Awards, and I found it in Aalsmeer."

Romeo van Vliet was 13 when he first came to Manhattan to visit his 21-year-old brother, who was working for the Dutch Flower Line. New York's most reputable flower importing company, "they had looked to me from the moment I arrived," he says. "The sheer energy of the city appealed to me, and I knew instantly I would come back as soon as I completed my art history and graphic arts studies in Holland."

Due to his work, he arrived three years later, on a hot August afternoon in 1984. By four o'clock the next morning, the young master florist was at work with Cas Trap at Flower Line. Hired as a packer, he quickly advanced to sales, which is where he stayed for the next five years. "Many of my customers didn't have much knowledge," he recalls. "They didn't know any of the proper flower names, botanical designations or much else because most were technically untrained."

A glaring occasion to test overwrought agreement was van Vliet's most important client, master designer and renowned event planner, Chris Gifford, who was also the manager for special events at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, so that high profile role he was responsible for all opening receptions and corporate events, as well as arrangements for the Great Hall and special initiatives. "I never recommended anything to him because I respected him so much, and I felt I had to keep my place," van Vliet says. "Then one day I learned he was thinking about leaving and had been looking for a protégé. It seemed a lot of people told him about me."

Gifford, who is presently a special events consultant, recalls the veragance of events. He had begun compiling his usual book about flower arrangements in the Great Hall and period rooms. A Request for the Met and needed help with horticultural names. "Romeo van Vliet's knowledge was terrific, and we hit it off. Soon, he started working with me, and it was just wonderful."

ONE OF MY STRENGTHS IS THAT I'M NOT STUCK ON ANY PARTICULAR DESIGN. I TAKE THE ENVIRONMENT AND SEASON INTO CONSIDERATION. FOR INSTANCE, I DON'T LIKE TO SEE SPRING FLOWERS IN THE FALL OR SWEET PEAS IN WINTER.

In 1996, two years after he arrived in Manhattan, van Vliet was invited to work side by side with Gifford, creating his first arrangements in the Met's iconic Great Hall. "It was amazing," he says. "Chris would do one, then I would do one. Our styles were so similar, people couldn't tell them apart." Over the next six years, the two worked closely together, and when Gifford retired van Vliet stepped into his role at the Museum.

"One of my strengths is that I'm not stuck on any particular design. I take the environment and season into consideration. For instance, I don't like to see spring flowers in the fall or sweet peas in winter. You will never see tulips in the Great Hall in the winter because they just don't feel right. Today, though, I am really trying to force spring into this space. Winter is already too long, and I want our visitors to feel spring is actually on its way."

Explaining that any bouquet should be in harmony with its environment, van Vliet says, although he considers green to be neutral in all schemes, he prefers to feature a single color group. When that scenario, warm colors include shades of orange, burgundy and ochre, while the cold color family is composed of mauve, purple, lavender, blue and white. As for blue? "It is an entirely different beast," he says. "It is the prominent cold color, but as many people like purple and touches of blue in their art to make it come alive, I sometimes add a lot of blue to do the same thing."

All in all, within his work both at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and at the Museum of Modern Art, it's all about art complementing flowers. Guests at the Met's opening reception of van Gogh drawings revel about the variety of minimalist sunflowers, French lavender, clematis and meadow that resembled Provencal feel, while those who celebrated the reopening of the Egyptian wing were treated to an ancient scene dominated by red and orange poppies and burnt orange poppies in glowing copper pots. At the party for the Redon exhibit at MoMA, it was apparent that van Vliet's repertoire of deep blue anemones was directly inspired by those featured in one of Redon's drawings. In another vein, the May 10th reception on the roof of the Met was vibrant with floral eye candy: animated sunflowers and thistles in blue pots that underscored the artist's use of primary colors. At the end of the day, van Vliet says, "my unwavering goal is to have the flowers evoke both the feeling and period of the art."

As he spoke from the top of his ladder, van Vliet urged the red gerbera from Tennessee and bright carnations from Alabama into a classic European arrangement, laced with red willow from Virginia and crimson-edged lilacs from Holland. When the riches and sense arrangement were considered perfect, he hurried off to a private client who prefers hot color colors (big white or pink) to render his signature brand of beauty.

The next day van Vliet would create a totally different mood for a corporate event at MoMA, decorating with a robust blue, burgundy and dark green palette. To achieve maximum impact, his take-your-breath-away floral arrangements were composed of blue hellebores from New Zealand, anemones from upstate New York, super green and dark beauty roses and Dutch winterbells from Holland and old roses from Idaho. "I am basically having the whole world represented in each bouquet," he jokes.

As the weeks unfold, the emergent designer and his brother, who are principals in the event planning firm of van Vliet & Trap, seem to be all over Manhattan. In addition to in-house events at the Met and MoMA, they are creating enchanting settings for private and corporate clients, including the New York Philharmonic and Lincoln Center, as well as the city's wealthiest weddings, parties and fundraisers.

Whether lecturing in different parts of the country or planning an event, Romeo van Vliet exudes unabashed enthusiasm, promising that success in his adopted city is just an American dream.

van Vliet & Trap at 200 West New York St., 10014-1001, www.vanvliettrap.com

INFORMATION

THE ELEMENTS



cook•book | thanksgiving

## simply thankful

"There's a moment I revel in every Thanksgiving," says Nancy Soriano, reflecting on the meal she prepares with her husband, Sidney, each year. "It's when everyone has finished eating, but we're still gathered at the table and kids are running in and out of the room. That moment is what Thanksgiving means to me. It's about coming together and giving thanks for the simple things." A decade has passed since the couple first began hosting the holiday, but little has changed. The emphasis is on tradition. Cornbread & Apple Dressing and Fresh Green Bean Casserole are served every year, perfect companions to a glorious herb-butter turkey. But each year, a new dish, such as roasted beets, is introduced. As a table set with silverware and dishes passed down from both of their families, gratitude finds expression in laughter.



We want our son, Asher, to grow up with memories of his childhood home as the place where everyone gathered for good fun and good food at Thanksgiving.

cook•book | thanksgiving



"Seasonal color quickens the heart and draws everyone to the table," says Nancy. Her centerpiece serves as a hub for goblets she purchased on a trip to Prague, glasses that belonged to her grandmother, and her mother's silverware.

cook•book | word of mouth

## Get Ready for Thanksgiving

Entertaining tips, holiday toasts, and tabletop ideas to help make this year's celebration your most memorable

### flowers getting the look



New York City floral designer Remco van Vliet chose roses, lady's slipper orchids, and ranunculus in autumn hues to create this Thanksgiving centerpiece (right). To get the look, consider a pumpkin or a faux gourd, such as Furlim, instead of a vase. For more of Remco's ideas, see below or visit [remcoflorist.com](http://remcoflorist.com).



### techniques from a pro

- 1. quick color** Fill vases with cranberries or pumpkins, then add water and flowers in complementary shades.
- 2. nice & easy** If you're on a budget, Remco recommends arranging inexpensive poppies, dahlias, or daisies in old milk bottles or funnels down the center of your table.
- 3. eye-to-eye** To ensure guests can converse freely, flowers should sit no taller than 34 inches, says Remco.

### cheers!



**raise a glass** entreat your friends and loved ones this Thanksgiving. For doses of cozies and toasts appropriate for the occasion, visit [Bartleby.com](http://Bartleby.com). And **count your blessings** by sharing a copy of *The Thanksgiving Canons* (Crown, \$15), which includes a short story about America's early settlers that was written to be read aloud by your guests at the dinner table.

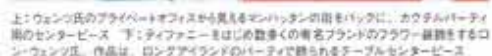
"When you create an arrangement, start with thick-stemmed flowers, then fill in using blooms with more delicate stems," says Remco van Vliet, whose floral displays delight millions of visitors at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.





友に今週ベストアーティストを獲めてくれた郡内さん。 郡内さんは日本でもコンテストで数多く受賞。 ウエディングプロデューサーとしても活躍。 まさに全盛期の親友といえよう。

世界各国でフラワーデザイナーとの技術提携やコラボレーションを数多く成功させ活躍している。華道家でありフラワーデザイナーの立川重矢子さんが、三人の子どもたちと共に向かったアメリカ・ニューヨーク。愉快で楽しいスタッフと共に繰り広げる珍道中。そこで出会った第一線で活躍するトップフラワーアーティストたちや、ニューヨークスタイルのフラワーデザインについて6回シリーズでご紹介していきます。



上段：メトロポリタン美術館展覧会デザイナー、レンコ・パンビレット氏を中央に、イベントマネージャー・タニアさん(右)と立川さん(左)。上段下：ニューヨークフィルハーモニックオーケストラのイベントパーティ(ブッシュ大統領夫人も参加された)のためにパンビレット氏が装飾したナール・コーディネート

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下: Ron Weems氏作品。会長と私の意見は一致した。やはり、Weems氏の作品は美しい。ゴビーやターペウら魚の花をナチュラルに演出。動物も色鮮やかに表現したい。







Remco's design for the entrance to the Nashville Antiques and Garden Show

**G**OOGLE EVENT DESIGNER REMCO VAN VLIET and dozens of sites with his highlighted name pop up, punctuated with words such as "incredible Dutch event planner," "magnificent," and "a floral genius." His client list reads like a \$100,000 Pyramid category: "things associated with luxury and wealth," with names like Morgan Stanley, Chanel, Ralph Lauren, The Whitney Museum, Oscar de la Renta, New York Philharmonic, Bloomberg and perhaps the most prestigious of all: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, for which he serves as "Floral Master." Within the flower and event set, to have Remco at the helm of an occasion is akin to studying photography under Ansel Adams, who, along with countryman de Kooning, is one of Remco's favorites. Fortunately, he is able to view those virtuoso's pieces frequently at the celebrated museum where he works.

After apprenticing under the illustrious Chris Gilfos (who's now retired) for six years, van Vliet is currently responsible for designing all the in-house events and creating



master class

the baronial arrangements in the Great Hall for the Met. As an event design pioneer Gilfos spearheaded the design of such memorable occasions as one of Liz Taylor's weddings and President Reagan inauguration, and Remco considers his mentor to be one of his greatest inspirations. Gilfos named his protégé in the Great Hall, where they worked in tandem to implement the bouquets in the enormous niches. Remco recalls that he would get up on the ladder and Gilfos would advise him on where to place each particular bloom. Remco hardly needed much instruction though, considering he is a third generation Master Florist.

At the tender age of six he began working under his father's direction at the family-owned flower shop, helping him produce spectacular events for the Dutch royal family and varied other extravaganzas throughout Europe. When asked if the patriarch ever pressured him to pursue "blossom and bash building," Remco shakes his head, "absolutely not." However, the family tradition was destined to be carried on; Remco's brother and business partner, Cas Trap, is just as heavily entrenched in the industry. Cas and Remco share a flourishing business, Van Vliet & Trap Event Design, located in the heart of the flower district in New York, with warehouses

**remco-mania**  
Remco van Vliet tops the A-list of both floral and event designers from Europe to New York

BY ELIZABETH BRENNEN  
PHOTOS BY FREYTON ROGGE AND  
COURTESY OF VAN VLIET & TRAP



master class

van Vliet in flower

in New Jersey housing a bounty of event-type furniture. As their collaboration is considered "king" within event design ranking, the company's logo is appropriately made in coat of arms fashion, with their initials emblazoned upon a shield flanked by two lions, a nod to the motherland.

This Floral Master's work is comparable to the Old Masters' paintings and drawings he complements: grand, classic, and exactly right. If anyone ever needed decorative inspiration, one could find it in the Met, surrounded by centuries of artistic brilliance. In fact, at the writing of this article, Remco's aptness was in full bloom, so to speak, in preparation for one of the most monumental events in the museum's history—a dinner for 1,000 heralding the opening of the new Greek and Roman galleries. An expert event puppeteer, Remco pulls and balances the strings on every detail from the flowers and decor to the furniture, the table setting and the menu. He sometimes will coordinate the color scheme with the cuisine, pairing orange blossoms and extensive greenery in a vase, atop

a lime-green tablecloth, where verdigris plates present a salad dribbled with tangerine fused vinaigrette.

**Within the flower and event set, to have Remco at the helm of an occasion is akin to studying photography under Ansel Adams**

No doubt Remco's a champion in the event arena. In fact, his popularity is a bit reminiscent of the flower of his beloved home country: the tulip, whose bulbs rapidly morphed into the ultimate status symbol in 17th century Holland, at one time fetching small fortunes on the trading market. The only difference is that Remco's stock is far less likely to plummet, contrary to the misfortune that befell that flower. Remco is viscerally enthusiastic when he talks about tulips; it is clear that they are close to his heart. He prefers them alone, not too arranged, en masse.

Though he is classically trained, he can create within any mode, be it modern or romantic, choosing not to limit himself



TOP AND LEFT: Oscar at the Metropolitan Museum of Art; BOTTOM: Cafe Two at Museum of Modern Art



artificially to any one branch. The flowers end up doing most of the work for him, he claims, since they are so beautiful anyway; he just puts them together and makes them come alive. Remco once thought he'd be an architect, having studied art history and graphic design in his native Netherlands. He then realized that with his propensity and love for nature he would just have to "build" with flowers and plant material.

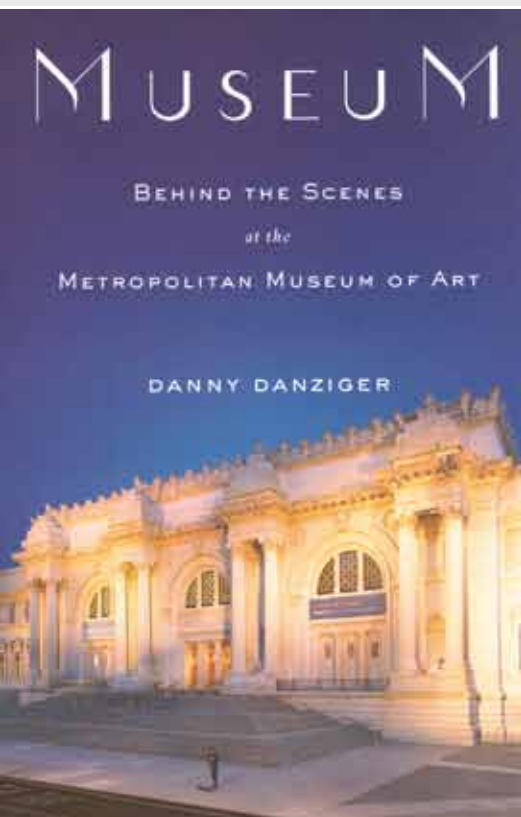
His talents for arranging have resulted in many invitations to lead various seminars. Remco frequently gives lectures and performs demonstrations at cultural institutions all over the country; most recently at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and the Nashville Antiques and Garden Show. He often teaches at Flower School New York where Charles Masson, (our Spring 2007 issue's "Artist in Bloom") also educates interested parties in floral creativity. Ironically Van Vliet & Trap now operate from Masson's former studio on 28th Street. Remco purchased the space from the La Grenouille proprietor just after 9/11, seven years after arriving in New York.

At the 2007 Nashville Antiques and Garden Show, Remco provided the floral fairy-tale garden, smack dab in the middle of the exhibitors' booths, enclosing it in giant frames through which patrons could view the verdant scene. It was an entirely whimsical experience. Prior to giving a demonstration at the show, he took a few moments to describe his anticipated, hands-on lecture.

While "backstage," in a conference room where his flowers are drinking, waiting to "go on," Remco says that he decided to utilize blues, bright citrus yellows and greens, interspersed with mimosa and song of India. When asked if he always conjures up such massive, elaborate arrangements, he chuckles and responds that he is just as prone to fill an odd assortment of milk bottles with colored water and a single poppy or anemone.

It is fascinating to watch this creative mastermind at work; his hands, almost like those of a magician, nimbly position stems higher and yep—blink, and you might re-open your eyes to a bouquet you could swear wasn't there seconds ago. Remco begins with the foliage, which he loves for good reason. His creations could be comprised of greenery alone and one would assume they were completed. His seeming youth, characterized by striking, European good looks (he's one of those men who just looks like he's from Europe, and that's a good thing), somewhat belies the creative wisdom he humbly exudes. Primarily, he doesn't want people to be intimidated by flowers, assuring the most novice arranger that as long as one knows the basics, one can create something very beautiful. Yet one cannot help but wonder if something has been lost in translation, that his version of "knowing the basics" is just a bit different than ours. Regardless of the potential miscommunication, we sit back, mesmerized, and watch as van Vliet waves his magic wand over the flowers, bringing them to life, letting them do the talking. ■





## Remco van Vliet

"Looks like it comes from outer space . . ."

*I met Remco in his shop in Maastricht's flower district. There is nothing so plain as bunches of flowers around this showroom; instead there are artful arrangements that use wild flowers and fragrant berries. He still has a strong Dutch accent, but his English is perfect.*

I was born in a city called Den Helder, which is all the way up in the north of Holland, and I basically grew up in the flower business. My grandfather was a florist, and my father is a master florist, and he taught my brother and me floral design, and we worked on large events with him for the Dutch royal family and throughout Europe. My father has a great eye: instead of just a flower arrangement, he uses organic materials in decorative ways, pieces of driftwood, for example, half pieces of burnt wood, an eclectic mix of textures that creates a very nice environment.

Twelve years ago, when I was fifteen, I came to America for the first time, and walking around the streets, I made the decision I was going to come here after I finished my education because I had a feeling this city could give me opportunities. In America there is no proper education to become a floral designer, but in Holland I was trained as a master florist, so I had to know every single flower:

REMCO VAN VLIET

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where it comes from, what time of the year it grows, and in what type of climate, how long it lasts, plus all the proper techniques to handle it.

For seven years I worked for a flower importing company, making bouquets and flower arrangements, doing displays in stores, and arranging events. And then I had a huge opportunity. Chris Giffon, who had been the special events manager of the Met for thirty-two years, was looking for a protégé because he was about to retire. He asked several of his friends in the flower industry for likely candidates, and my name came up, and he asked me if I would be interested in giving him a hand in the Great Hall.

Some things you never forget. The first arrangement I did with him was a variety of Dutch lilies, flowering branches, some palm leaves, and five or six other varieties. Fairly soon, Chris had taught me all he could teach me, and I couldn't wait until he finally got off the ladder and let me go up and show what I could do myself. Eventually the time came, and of course my first solo arrangement I wanted to put my stamp on it, so I'd been exploring dozens of different color combinations, textures, and flowers, and the arrangement I made was spectacular.

Everybody likes to see something new and different, particularly in this city, and there are so many interesting flowers coming from all over the world. For instance, there's *albiflora*, which looks like it comes from outer space but actually grows in the African desert, or the *lotia*, which is a seedpod from which seeds are used for dyeing cloth Sierra red. I love using fruit and berries and flowers that are not yet developed, or flowers that have bloomed out, where you're left with just the center of the flower. And all these different things combine very well with the more classic flowers, like roses. I also like to use green roses, and they have now brought a virus into the

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RECEIVED

rose that creates a mutation, so there are several striped varieties, which are the result of cross-pollination between different varieties, like *hina pook*, *abnashahna*, *sim salabin*. They come up all the time with new hybrids and varieties, there's really no limit to it.

With so much variety, I always want to create something different. I never do the same flowers two weeks in a row. People look forward to walking into the Great Hall. Many people come just to see the flower arrangements, so I owe it to them to make it interesting.

I have two assistants, Gary and Albert, who come in to the Met at about seven o'clock on Monday, when the Museum is not open to the public. They take out all the old flowers from the previous week, clean out the steel containers, disinfect them, then fill each one up with fresh water, add flower food to it, and by that time it's around eight o'clock, which is when the Great Hall opens for deliveries, and all the flowers I've ordered from the flower markets in the past week are brought in by the different vendors. It takes me on average five hours to do all the flowers in the Great Hall, although the more flower varieties I use, the longer it takes.

I am constantly aware of the Dutch influence in New York, because so many of the place-names are of Dutch origin. Harlem, for example, is named after a city in Holland, Haarlem; Flushing comes from Vlissingen, which is a fishing town; and Brooklyn is Breukelen. So all these names daily remind me of home when I am not at home.

At this point in my life I wouldn't want to be anywhere else than New York City; I feel I'm part of the American dream, and I love the energy of this city. But I miss Holland, particularly after a visit home, when you fly over the tulip fields, and you see all these big color palettes, millions and millions of tulips of all different colors, and hyacinths and daffodils too, and the whole country looks like a

REMCO VAN VLIET

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Mondrian painting. It's so impressive. I miss my friends, of course, and wonderful Dutch food, like *kroketten*, which is like ragout rolled in bread crumbs and deep fried, which you eat with mustard. Oh, and raw herring with onions, that's hard to find here, and *fröskadelles*, which is basically leftover meat, with plenty of sodium and herbs to make it tasty.



# FLOWERS

## REARRANGED

Two of New York City's most acclaimed floral designers share their secrets for beguiling bouquets that anyone can make at home.



**WHEN REMCO VAN VLIET AND HIS HALF BROTHER, CAS TRAP,** moved to New York from the Netherlands 19 years ago, one custom that they brought with them was that dinner guests were expected to bring a bottle of wine. "In Holland, we come with a bouquet, something gorgeous and natural," says van Vliet, 34. "Here you bring wine—and then drink half of it yourself."

If the Dutch duo have their way, that's one American habit that they hope will change. The brothers' dream is to spread a northern European floral sensibility the way French couturiers revolutionized fashion in the 1940s. "We want to show people that they shouldn't be intimidated by flowers, that having living things in your house isn't just a luxury. It's crucial," says Trap, 40.

Such aspirations are more than just talk. Their company, Van Vliet & Trap, which has the contract to create event designs for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, and the New York Philharmonic, creates cascading arrangements that often attract nearly as much attention as the art or music. The brothers' influence is everywhere in Manhattan, from the floral displays that dominate stylish downtown restaurants to the striking arrangements in the lobbies of Park Avenue apartment buildings.

While they admire Americans' natural exuberance, they note a tendency here to overload arrangements with garishly colored flowers. (As for grouping a single type of flower, they advise against it, except for tulips, which are naturally massed in the meadows of the Netherlands.) Instead they suggest a more monochromatic palette with an emphasis on contrasting textures that can be brought in with elements such as seedpods, bold foliage, herbs, berries, and even twisted vines. These, they say, set off treats such

**FLOWERS TO HAND** Opposite: Cas Trap, left, and Remco van Vliet practice the European technique of creating bouquets directly in their hands.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DITTE ISAGER  
TEXT BY NANCY HASS



### HANDHELD BOUQUET

with roses, peonies, viburnum, trachelium, asclepias, and sea thistle

**STRIP** all stems of excess foliage, leaving one or two leaves at the top, and lay them on a table. **GATHER** a base of five or so sturdy stems, such as roses, in your hand, angling them so they form a spiral. Make sure any leaves face outward. **LAYER** in more delicate stems, always at an angle, threading them through the foliage. If you use rosebuds, leave room for them to open. **TURN** the bouquet frequently in your hand to make sure it's balanced. **PUSH** or pull on stems from the bottom to achieve the proper height for each. **BIND** with a rubber band, looping it around the stems tightly enough to hold the bouquet. Choose a vessel, and cut stems to fit.





## OVERSIZE URN ARRANGEMENT

with Kousa dogwood, mock orange, viburnum, mountain laurel, and garden roses

**SET** a plastic container within the urn. **STABILIZE** it, using rolled-up wads of newspaper around the edges. **FILL** container with water. **CUT** thick branches of dogwood to various heights, using floral shears. **PLACE** dogwood branches within the container to create an armature. **WEAVE IN** thinner-stemmed branches of mock orange, viburnum, and mountain laurel, using dogwood branches for support. **STEP BACK** frequently to judge the effect and check the balance of the composition. **FINISH** by inserting roses.



CUT THICK BRANCHES



WEAVE IN BRANCHES



“We want to show people that they shouldn’t be intimidated by flowers,” Cas Trap says. “Having living things in your house isn’t just a luxury. It’s crucial.”

FOR INFORMATION ON FORCING BRANCHES GO TO [marthastewart.com/branches](http://marthastewart.com/branches)

CREATE A BASE



TRIM STEMS



PLACE BLOOMS



## LOW CENTERPIECE

with hydrangeas, dusty miller, sea thistle, roses, echinops, astrantia, mountain laurel, clematis, lady’s mantle, and blueberries

**LINE** a low, wide glass bowl with hydrangea foliage. **CREATE** a base with blocks of soaked floral foam, covering as much surface area as possible. **PLACE** large hydrangea blooms evenly to create a balanced structure that can support the rest of the flowers. **ADD** dusty miller and sea thistle along the lower edges. **FILL IN** with roses, echinops, astrantia, and mountain laurel, distributing colors evenly. **TURN** the bowl frequently as you work to keep arrangement balanced. **FINISH** by placing stems of clematis and lady’s mantle and branches of blueberries, using their color and texture as accents.



as pale-green roses or burgundy peonies. While they have the luxury of using some of the best stems flown in from exotic locales for their clients, they insist that their look can be achieved easily by anyone. "If you have imagination, your best resources can be the local market, nursery, or Home Depot," Trap says. For spring, they mix sprigs of mint and rosemary with branches of unripe, green blackberries. For small centerpieces, they pierce a fresh orange and stick in a few Creamsicle-colored poppies. "Flowers love the sugar, and the smell is fantastic," Trap says.

Foliage is key, especially in spring, they advise. "To us, the color of the season is yellow-green, so fresh and new," Trap says. The brothers love the leaves of lemon geraniums, available at virtually any garden center. "And one of our favorite tricks is to use black basil we get from the farmers' market," he says. "It looks fantastic with soft-colored flowers, and it adds a scent as well."

Third-generation floral designers (until recently, their father, an acclaimed artist, ran the shop outside Amsterdam that their grandfather opened), the brothers want to move beyond arranging flowers in a vase. They recommend hand-tying, a classic European technique that involves building a bouquet in your palm and then tying the bunch with a rubber band. The band can be hidden by wrapping it with a single leaf or snipped, if the bouquet is put in a glass vessel. "After you get the hang of it, you never go back to arranging flowers in a vase," Trap says. "It gives you far more control. You can readjust the height of everything to get balance, and then, when you're done, you just cut off the ends all at once." Van Vliet agrees: "Worry about what vessel you're going to use later. What's important is learning to feel, really feel, what is going into it."



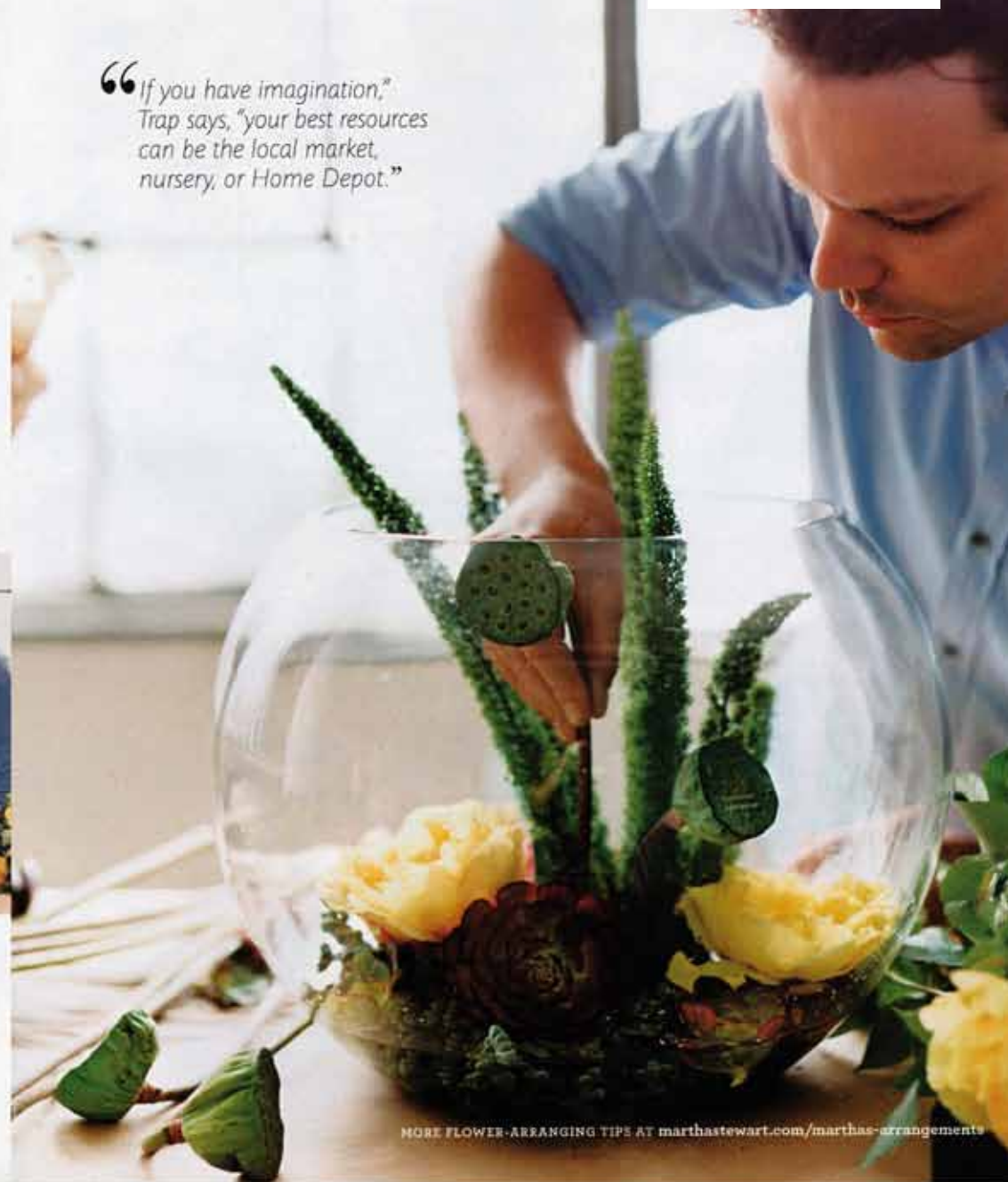
### FISHBOWL GARDEN

with echeveria, aeonium, tree peonies, paphiopedilum, asparagus ferns, lotus pods, scabiosa seed heads, and pitcher plant flowers.

**FIT** the bottom of a fishbowl with a large round floral frog, and surround it with a base of echeveria. **ADD** aeonium rosettes. **POUR IN** water to a depth of 2 inches. **PLACE** 2 or 3 short tree-peony and paphiopedilum blossoms around the perimeter. **CUT** ferns and stems of lotus pods to varying lengths, and insert them in the frog, rotating bowl to check balance. **ADD** scabiosa seed heads and pitcher plant flowers. **FINISH** with one tall tree peony.

Produced by Stephen Johnson and Lindsey Taylor

"If you have imagination," Trap says, "your best resources can be the local market, nursery, or Home Depot."



MORE FLOWER-ARRANGING TIPS AT [marthastewart.com/marthas-arrangements](http://marthastewart.com/marthas-arrangements)





## Embellished Ambiance

Weddings are about creating a mood: casual or elegant, ornate or eclectic, subdued or boisterous. And when it comes to the decor for your reception, the same objective holds true. Popular design styles include round or rectangular tables with tall, linear centerpieces or snaking arrangements that run the length of the table. Also set the multi-tiered, superchromatic beams and bundles of candles in various size and shape containers. Don't forget about other important details like lounge areas. Amidst cocktails, dinner and dancing, your guests will appreciate an area where they can take a break without having to go back to their place sitting. To create a lounge-type setting, select ottomans and throw pillows, low-slung sofas and coffee tables, or high-top tables with bar stools. Regardless of what your final decisions end up being, when you work together with your planner, you will surely find the harmonious balance between your taste and style and their experience and expertise.

GRACE  
ORMONDE

WEDDING  
STYLE



PREVIOUS SPREAD AND ABOVE: Stained mahogany tables featuring baroque candelabras with ivy and grape garlands, set on oatmeal table runners.

Location: [The Metropolitan Museum of Art](#) New York, NY; Table and Floral Design, Décor: [Van Vliet & Trap](#) New York, NY; Linen and Tables: [Ruth Fischl](#) New York, NY; Table Setting and Chairs: [Party Rental Ltd.](#) New York, NY; Photography: [Kevin Sturman](#)



## autumnal array

New York City's Remco van Vliet designs a quartet of artful arrangements, marrying the look of fall with this Floral Master's European technique.

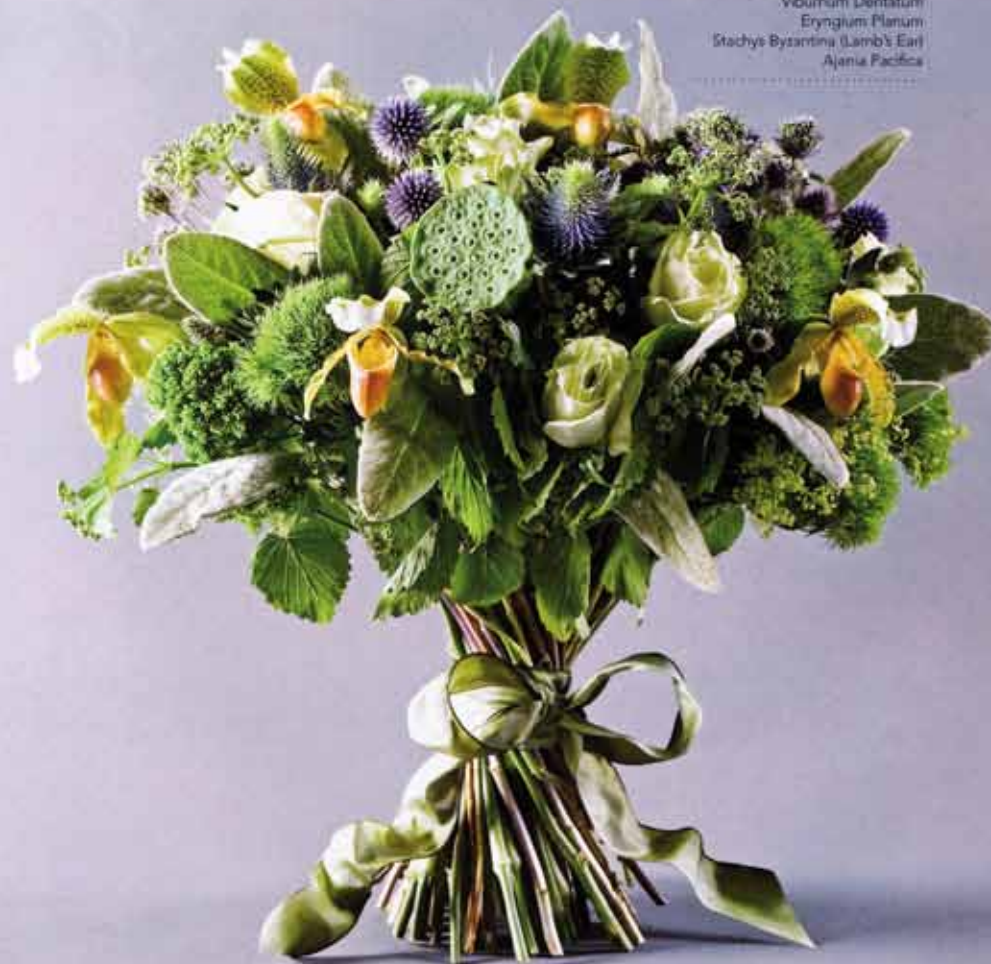
PHOTOS BY UDOM SURANGSOPHON



These burnt orange and yellow-toned low mounds on their square wooden bases set a more formal fall mood.

FLOWER LIST:  
*Asclepias tuberosa*  
 Spray Roses "Mambo"  
 Rose "Papagayo"  
 Orange Dahlias  
*Crespedia*  
*Gaillardia*  
 Tulip "Holland Happening"

*Maudslayi* (Lady's Slipper Orchids)  
 Rose "Green Tea"  
*Echinops* Thistle  
*Eryngium* Supernova  
*Nelumbo* (Lotus Pods)  
*Alchemilla* Mollis (Lady's Mantle)  
 Carnation "Green Trick"  
*Viburnum* Dentatum  
*Eryngium* Planum  
*Stachys* Byzantina (Lamb's Ear)  
*Ajania* Pacifica







A rustic decorative screen provides the perfect canvas for this exotic mélange. (Screen, \$47.50, available at Dutch Flower Line West, New York City, 646-714-3700)

FLOWER LIST:  
Scabiosa Seed Pods  
Begonia masoniana Leaves from Peru  
Sandersonia  
Maudsley



This floral composition reflects the abundance of the harvest with a combination of richness and whimsy. (Open wreath, \$14.75, available at Dutch Flower Line West)

Flower List:  
Lilium  
Silver Succulent (Gibbanum)  
Sarracenia  
Scabiosa atropurpurea  
Chocolate Cosmos  
Hellebore Fern  
Single Japanese Peony "Mahogany"  
Zantedeschia Schwanenherz (Calla Lily)





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Single Japanese Peony "Mahogany"  
Zantedeschia Schwanenröschen (Calla Lily)





a magic garden



## ELEGANT BRIDE

### FLORAL TABLEAU

*This page, clockwise from left:* Abundant flowers give the feeling of dining in a botanical wonderland. Centerpieces of orange princess tulips, duchess peonies, sandersonia, white sweet pea, white hyacinths, white nerines and poppies. Menus, \$410 for 100, from Linda & Harriet. "Rialto" Limoges porcelain charger, \$95 each; dinner plate, \$46 each; salad plate, \$38 each, all from Vellum. "Festival" dinner napkins in butter, \$39 for set of four, from Sierra Linens. "Weston" flatware, \$58 for five-piece place setting, from Reed & Barton.

*Achieve a garden reception in any setting, any season, by bringing the outdoors in*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDRE BARANOWSKI  
STYLED BY ERIN SWIFT FLORAL DESIGN BY VAN VLIET & TRAP EVENT DESIGN





**CHAMPAGNE AND FLOWERS** *This page, from left:* Details like fine champagne and elegantly wrapped favors of tulip bulbs add to the sophisticated atmosphere. Faux potted plants from Aldi. "Grace" champagne flute, \$36 for set of two, from Martha Stewart Collection for Wedgwood. "Tulip tree-to-be," \$23 each, from Potting Shed Creations.

**FRESH PICKED** *Opposite:* A bright, sunny bridal bouquet of orange princess tulips, peach Parrot tulips, cyrthanthus and lady's mantle looks like it's been plucked straight from the garden, yet delicately arranged. Pale yellow satin ribbon, \$18 per yard, from Mokuba.







**WATER WORKS** *Opposite:* A lucite box filled with water creates a tranquil pool in the center of the table containing vases of flowers as well as single floating blossoms. "Grace" champagne flutes, \$36 for set of two; "Grace" white wineglasses, \$36 for set of two, both from Martha Stewart Collection for Wedgwood.

**GARDEN CARDS** *This page:* Elegant stationery gets a stylish look thanks to beautiful yet informal script; a floral pattern in the envelope's lining sets the tone for the garden-party wedding. Signature letterpressed invitation, response card (not shown), and envelope lined with vintage wallpaper, \$1,965 for 100 sets; hand-lettered escort cards, \$375 for 100, both from Linda & Harriet. Wall of flowers includes Super Green roses, cherry brandy roses, mambo spray roses, miha roses, euphoria roses, Madeline roses, poppies, orchids and tangerine Gloriosa lilies.





**IDEAS IN BLOOM** *This page, from left:* Lush foliage and chic furnishings combine to create an inviting lounge for wedding guests. Apple wood cubes (four shown together as coffee table), \$175 each, from Dutch Flower Line West. Custom pillowcases, price upon request, from The Furniture Joint. "Hot House Flowers" fabric (on pillowcases), \$160 per yard, from Celerie Kemble for Schumacher. Flower-covered boxes are a unique alternative to traditional ring-bearer pillows. Ribbon-tied custom boxes covered in ranunculus, roses, poppies and orchids.

**GARDEN GATEAU** *Opposite:* A pastel yellow cake gives a sunny look indoors. Chocolate-fudge cake filled with praline-crunch and vanilla buttercreams and covered in fondant, finished with royal-icing swags and adorned with gumpaste flowers and bow. Serves 40, \$660, from The Cake-girls, Chicago. "Hampton" cake set in sterling silver (knife not shown), \$375, from Tiffany & Co.





# orange & yellow

As joyful as the occasion, this sunny group spreads smiles. From **cheerful lemon** to retro tangerine, it's a palette that creates its own hot spot.



CHARGER: ZODAX; ZODAX.COM; PLATE: SALLY RUSSELL; SALLYRUSSELLSTUDIO.COM; NAPKIN: SBRDESIGNS; SBR-DESIGN.COM

BRIDES  
MAGAZINE



THIS PAGE: Ranunculus is edged with craspedia in a bouquet tied with variegated leaves and affixed with tulip petals. OPPOSITE: Dress your napkins with sandersons and solid or narcissus cinched with raffia. All orange and yellow flower designs are by Van Vliet & Trap, a New York design studio whose clients include the Dutch royal family and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Turn to Shopping Guide.



**mass appeal** Anyone who's ever passed a flower farm or a **pasture of posies** can attest to the breathtaking impact one type of flower can have when it's multiplied a thousandfold as a single-color carpet. No one's suggesting you plunk down your reception in the middle of a field, but you can achieve a **similar effect**—and save money, too—with simple, densely packed, monochromatic arrangements, whether they're cut tulips in clear glass cylinders, **boxes of daffodils**, or towering sunflowers packed in galvanized tin buckets. Whatever your personal style, use local, seasonal flowers—usually a thriftier option than imports. Sometimes less is more, but here, more is better!



Irene tulip bulbs stand in a glass bowl wrapped with grapevines; well-hydrated flowers are also tucked into the vines.

## savvy saves

How to be frugal yet fabulous:

- >> Recycle ceremony arrangements at your reception.
- >> Bouquets are big budget-busters. Consider having only one or two bridesmaids, or give all the girls just a few showy flowers (calla lily, hydrangea).
- >> Swap elaborate high arrangements for simpler low ones—the fewer flowers that are used, the lower the cost.
- >> Use candles lavishly and flowers sparingly. And by supplementing your vases with inexpensive ornaments (glass orbs, shells), you can stretch the stems you do use.
- >> Instead of cut flowers, use small potted plants and foliage on tables.
- >> Avoid dates around Valentine's Day and Mother's Day, when prices soar.
- >> If you're doing your own flowers, lower your costs by purchasing them from bulk suppliers like flowerbud.com. Have them arrive several days before—you'll have more time to clean and prep them. (Store in a cool place.)
- >> Superaffordable in season: marigolds, daffodils, dahlias, zinnias, lavender, sunflowers, hydrangeas, lilacs.

**stylish survivors** Among the best long-lasting blossoms: [1] ranunculus, with closely packed layers that open slowly, [2] echinacea pod, so dry it can last indefinitely, [3] craspedia, which has a vase life of 10 to 14 days, [4] star of Bethlehem, a boutonniere favorite because it can be cut and arranged days in advance, [5] gerbera daisy, with a head that's practically indestructible, and [6] sweet pea, an early spring bloomer that's deceptively hardy.





## glossary

**crispella**  
Warm up to this pretty flower available year-round. For hits of sun-infused color, dot arrangements with these "billy buttons," but watch out for pollen (it'll stain). Vase, Nine Iron Studios; nineironstudios.com.

## ranunculus

This spectacular tri-color version boasts a moderate price, a sturdy constitution, and exquisite, dense petals, making it a bouquet favorite. Warning: Tight blossoms may never open, so choose half-open flowers. Pot, Zodax; zodax.com.

## double late tulip

This variety (known as double late tulip or peony tulip) is considered very long-lasting, with huge blossoms up to four inches across when fully open. Use these apricot-tinted beauties to create lush, showy arrangements.

## sanderella

With a shelf life of 10 to 20 days when cut, this half-inch blossom, known as the Chinese lantern, supplies high wattage to any corsage or flower-girl basket. Vase, Kkooll; kkooll.com.

## ballerina tulip

This graceful flower has pointed petals the shape of a dancer's toe shoe. Grabbing the spotlight like a Russian diva, it adds a spiky texture and mild fragrance to bouquets. Vase, Kkooll; kkooll.com.

## parrot tulip

With its deep red, flame-like markings, this variety makes a splash in a bouquet or massed in an arrangement. Look for dark green leaves, which are a sign of vitality. Pot, Zodax; zodax.com.

## gloriosa lily

This wavy-petaled flower—typically sold as individual blooms—lends a Far East air to arrangements. With a stiff stem and the ability to hold its form out of water, it's ideal for bouquets, but keep these lovelies off your cake—they're poisonous.

## anemone

Available September through March, this flower is the go-to bloom when brilliant colors are scarce. Suitable for bouquets and centerpieces, it can morph from formal to casual in a flash. Vases, Kkooll; kkooll.com.

## daffodil

A symbol of spring, this low-cost flower that comes in numerous varieties makes a radiant bouquet when clustered en masse. Buy them three days ahead; they'll open fully by the wedding.

## oncidium orchid

Squint at these blossoms and you could swear you're seeing butterfly wings instead of petals. They grow 15 to a stem and can be wired for bouquets and boutonnieres.

## sweet pea

"Delicate" is a misnomer for this hardy specimen. Its skinny stems mean you can mass these lush flowers in a bouquet, and it will still be featherlight. Bowl, Torre Tagus; torretagus.com.

## star of Bethlehem

This star-shaped, small flower works nicely in boutonnieres and as filler in bouquets and centerpieces. It can last up to a month in a vase.



## TOP FLOWER TRENDS

### COLOR

>> **Purple is hot right now**, says floral designer Jerry Sibal of Design Fusion, in New York. To add depth to the centerpiece at right, Sibal mixed peonies, lilacs, hydrangeas, anemones, cymbidium orchids, and lisianthus with burgundy tulips. Surprise ingredient: purple artichokes.

>> **Black and white is back on top**, proof that opposites (still) attract. To underscore the drama, Sibal likes placing ebony and ivory anemones in jet-black ceramic vases.

>> **Green ranks high on the list** of celebrated shades. Whether you want to make a we-love-the-earth statement or you simply like the color's freshness and vitality, you're good to go if you choose verdant varieties of hydrangeas, viburnum, button mums, and cymbidium orchids.

>> **Monochromatic palettes**—white-on-white, all-red, or variations of yellow—are also starring in floral arrangements. Choose your favorite shade and start layering flower on flower for an organic, gardeny feel.



Purple centerpiece, Jerry Sibal, Design Fusion; designfusionnyc.com

### HERBS

>> **Rosemary gives flowers a rustic touch.** Dutch-born Remco van Vliet, of Van Vliet & Trap Event Design, in New York, brought the idea from Europe, where branches of the herb are often incorporated into country-chic centerpieces.

>> **Mint brings a fresh scent** to any table. Pair sprigs of this subtly aromatic plant with flowers in citrus colors, like yellow, orange, and acid-green.

>> **Oregano, verbena, thyme**, and other flowering herbs can be bunched in pots to give table arrangements an organic look. Mix and match herbs to create the look of a garden landscape.

>> **Lavender is like a whiff of aromatherapy** tucked into your bouquet. The flower is known for its soothing abilities—making it the perfect choice for calming those wedding nerves. —Yolanda Crous

Black Beauty rose boutonniere accented with rosemary and wrapped in lamb's ear, Remco van Vliet, Van Vliet & Trap; vanvlietandtrap.com



### EMBELLISHMENTS

>> **Gemstones in glorious colors** give flowers razzle-dazzle (they're glued or attached with wire). For formal weddings, the floral designers at Bardin Palomo, in New York, use faceted stones like amethysts and peridots; For a casual look, they use polished or tumbled stones like rose quartz and green garnets.

>> **Feathers are fun** and frilly and add opulence to bouquets and centerpieces while maintaining an airy look. A colorful favorite: pheasant plumes.

>> **Gilded nuts give boutonnières** some bling for the buck, as do topaz stones wired into stalks of golden wheat.



Parrot tulip and ranunculus bouquet with green garnets and angel skin coral branches, Bardin Palomo; bardinpalomo.com





## The Event Designer

*"Choose seasonal, locally-grown flowers to avoid the markup due to a strong euro and rising fuel prices."*

REMCO VAN VLIET

**Y**ou're a third-generation flower guy from Holland. The real deal! My father did work for the Dutch royal family, and when I was 13, I made the queen a bouquet. At 18, I moved here to work at a flower importing company. After that, I was hired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art to do arrangements for the Great Hall. **And now you're a high-society event designer. What does your job entail?** We design every aspect of the event—from the flowers, tablecloths, and glasses, to the chairs, floor plans, and lighting. We like working with Bentley Meeker Lighting and Frost Lighting.

**Do you get brides who make impossible demands?** I had one who had 40 people in her wedding party and wanted all of them to stand under the *chuppa*. We did that, for a price. I have to say, once a groom's involved he's worse than a bridezilla. Sometimes I learn that the bride and groom are realizing for the first time that they have very different interpretations of what's beautiful. **Which venues do you love working in?** The Mandarin Oriental and the Rainbow Room have amazing views. I also like the Puck Building and Skylight. **What would you advise couples to put in their venue contract?** That there isn't an



TIP

### TABLE ACCESSORY

*"I like tinted water goblets. They break up the monotony when you have 30 glasses on one table." Green goblet, \$2.35 at Party Rental.*

early function on the day of your wedding. They'll double-book, especially if it's a hotel, and then your vendors will have less time to set up. Personally, I like to come in the night before for setup.

**A large part of your job is obviously the floral design. Which flowers do you love?** Thistles are masculine and nice to add to arrangements of roses or peonies. Sandersonia is an elegant, bell-shaped flower. I love fiddlehead ferns, begonia leaves from Peru, and craspedia—little yellow balls that add texture. For fall, I like seeds, pods, and berries. My brother is a partner at a flower importing company, so I get first pick. I can find flowers that aren't in season when you want them, and I can usually get a good deal—though these days, with the price of fuel, it's sometimes irrelevant. I have clients who don't understand why their sister's wedding that I worked on four years ago cost so much less!

**How can couples cut costs?** You can do something special with common flowers, such as sunflowers, or certain roses from South America. Fill several small vases with one kind of bloom. It's monochromatic, very peaceful, and a lot less money. Don't spend time decorating the cocktail hour; the reception is the most important. And the ceremony is not the place to show off with décor.

**What would you do for a couple who wants a winter-themed wedding?** All white: white velvet, white-flocked branches, glass icicles, frosted chargers. Or, silver branches with white orchids and hanging crystals, ice-blue silk dupioni linens, cracked-glass votives. No red-and-green, no primary colors.

**What do you find cheesy?** Anything that floats in water—submerged flowers, floating candles. Or, anything that involves hanging flowers upside down. Huge bouquets and strewn rose petals make me cringe.

K.H.

212-352-3385; [vanvlietandtrap.com](http://vanvlietandtrap.com)