



WITH FLOWERS AS A GUIDE

FLORAL ARTIST GABRIELA SALAZAR REMINDS
US THAT THE CLOSER WE GET TO NATURE,
THE MORE WE FIND PLACES TO FLOURISH.

as told to ANNA MITCHAEAL
photography by MAGNOLIA DISCOVERY VENTURES, LLC.

Every once in a while life offers a moment where you can see the path forward with clear eyes—when who you are, what you like, and what you are meant to be doing all come together. For me, that moment happened with my hands full of flowers.

I was living in London at the time, doing graduate studies in architectural interiors. While working on a dissertation about how plants affect the spaces we live in, I began taking flowers to people's homes. I wasn't thinking this would be something I would do for the rest of my life—after all, I was working toward a career as an interior designer. It was more of an interest in how plants can transform the spaces we inhabit rather than thoughts of the actual flowers.

But then the most remarkable thing happened. These people would come back to me and talk about how the flowers were calming for them. Some would say they reminded them of a childhood experience. All of them were having these very rich experiences because flowers were part of their lives.

I decided to go to the floral market in London, where all the florists go, more curious now about the flowers than the home. I remember arriving and being so taken by all these flowers. It was summertime and the colors and varieties were so striking. In their presence, I felt at peace. That was the moment I knew that I wanted to always be surrounded by flowers.



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Choosing to take my life in a new direction was not without challenges. My visa was running out in London, and soon it would be time for me to return to Mexico. I was not sure if I should jump right in and begin growing—I felt I was too much of a novice. But when I said to someone I trust, “How will I do it?” she replied, “You will find a way because you must.” And I knew that was true. It was something I had to do.

I found some land in the countryside and brought with me seeds and tubers. I made many mistakes and had so much to learn about weather and soil—about everything, really. Over and over again, there were failures, yet I came to understand that those failures were shaping the process. Just as my friend had said, I slowly found my way. Now I see how wonderful it was that I did not start with lots of knowledge about flowers. This left room for the flowers to teach me what I needed to know.

Now it has been almost a decade, and still this is what I love most about flowers: how they help people find their way. As I teach, I am careful not to give people steps because I don't believe arranging flowers is an A-B-C-D process. Instead, it's watching the flowers and being patient. Learning how they move and grow in the light and how they age. Such observation allows for intimacy, and when there is an intimacy with nature, there is a connection. If people approach with no expectations and they simply seek out the connection, that's when they really create. That's when the flowers guide them.

The flowers teach us to be more patient. To have faith. To be kinder to those around us. They are telling us all of these things—all we have to do is listen.

Gabriela Salazar is an internationally renowned floral artist and the owner of La Muse de las Flores in Valle de Bravo, Mexico. Her workshop Fundamentals of Floral Design is available now on Magnolia Network.

