

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



Grace Winters

Floral Designer/Lead Wedding Designer
George's Flowers
Roanoke, Virginia

> Designing a bridal bouquet is Grace Winters' Zen mode. "That's not work to me," she says. "Creating a bouquet a bride will carry down the aisle and remember for the rest of her life — that's when I'm in my space."

She "fell into flowers," as she puts it, while working for The Fresh Market grocery chain. "The floral specialist quit on Mother's Day, and they asked me, the candy manager, to take over in a pinch." That trial by fire on one of floral's biggest days sparked Grace's passion for floral design. When she spotted a job posting

at George's, she jumped at the chance. "George hired me on the spot. Looking back, I see that flowers saved me. I needed that stability in my life, and this is definitely where I want to be," she says.

Favorite part of the job:

"The bigger the better is my thing. Anything that's over the top — I love doing that kind of floral design. We have one beloved client who sends flowers to his girlfriend every other week, spending on average \$400. Those are some of my favorite days when I see his order coming through. I've become familiar with what the recipient loves: hand-tied bouquets. So I do massive ones, and she loves it."

Where I get inspired:

"Leanne Kessler's Flower Lover's Club, part of the Floral Design Institute. It's very inexpensive, and the tutorials have super short videos — how to do different style bouquets, flower processing and conditioning tips, design techniques, etc. She's the Bob Ross of floral design. I put her on in the morning when I'm doing my hair and getting ready for the day. On Instagram, I watch how-to videos from Abigail Decorte (@cot-tagegardenflorals), who creates with a whimsical, garden-fresh style. I'm also a fan of Sarah Campbell at Intrigue Floral Designs (@intrigue_designs), who does luxury weddings."

Top training advice:

"When I started here, another employee taught me 'The Rule of 70 percent,' which basically says strive to do good work all of the time, but even if you at least hit your goal 70 percent of the time, you're doing great. That really helped me because I'm a perfectionist. I could spend hours tweaking something. But if the majority of the time I get the design right and the customer loves it, I know I'm doing great."

What I do for fun:

"I love to travel, exploring other countries. In France I saw such amazing flowers, and my second trip to Mexico was around Day of the Dead — the mari-golds and celosia were glorious. I also collect, make and wear vintage clothing. This year I'm planning a 900-square-foot garden for vegetables and a lot of flowers. I share my adventures and creations on Instagram @thatvintageflorist." 🌿

Julie Martens Forney is a contributing writer for *Floral Management*.