

Be your own florist: A great flower arrangement is as close as your yard

Years ago I got my hair professionally done for a wedding, and I remember the stylist saying, "I'm going to make it look like you did it yourself."

At which point I thought, "Then why am I paying you?" Never mind that my hair didn't look at all like I did it myself. It looked like she left a crew of workers inside propping it up with scaffolding. My hair recovered, but the lesson from that bad, big-hair day stuck: The beauty I most admire looks natural and effortless.

This is just one reason I enjoyed Clare Nolan's new book, "In Bloom: Growing, Harvesting, and Arranging Home-grown Flowers All Year Round" (CompanionHouse Books, March 2019). This book is for anyone who is beyond the stiff spray of identical red roses, and who would rather echo the garden a bit more in their homes.

Count me in.

After I picked up Nolan's book, I picked up the phone and called her at her home in England. As in her book, she kicked off the discussion with a compelling pep talk on why we should grow and harvest flowers at home.

"When you buy flowers at the store, the flowers are all at the same stage," she says. "With garden flowers, you can mix buds with open blossoms and replicate what is happening in nature."

And this is why I love what I do. I NEVER THOUGHT OF THAT. "Mixing a bud with a full bloom is the signature of naturalistic style," Nolan says. "Plus, store-bought flowers often have these upright, straight stems, forced to grow in one direction, which isn't what they'd do naturally. Flowers from the yard often have a little crazy wiggle, or a bug-nibbled leaf, giveaways that the bunch is homegrown, which adds a bit of magic."

Snip not only flowers, she encourages, but also fronds, tree branches, stems with seed pods.

I feel a granola craving coming on.

"Plus, it's cheaper," she says. Now I'm really tuned in. "When your friend is coming for lunch, you can go outside and pick a bunch of sweet



AT HOME WITH
Marni Jameson

peas that you would pay \$10 for in the store, but all it cost you was a packet of seeds. And you make a bouquet that isn't symmetrical or perfect, but that is personal to you and your garden, and better than money can buy."

Another reason I like "In Bloom" is because the photos

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Bloomin' Beautiful — Pulling out a few small flowers disrupts this hand-tied posy's shape, and gives this mix of mint and salvia leaves, tulips and weeping birch a naturalist feel. *Photo courtesy of Clare Nolan.*

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