

# MARNI

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of arrangements look so attainable, I tell her. "I'm so glad you said that," she says. "I took the pictures myself, which was a risk. But I know how I feel when I pick up a cookbook and make the recipe and look at what I've made compared to the photo, and there's this heart-sinking moment."

"Every. Single. Time," I say. "I really wanted the photos to represent just me in the garden picking stuff I'd grown in real time. I didn't want photos taken with a 10-person styling team," says Nolan, who has worked as a writer and stylist for a variety of lifestyle magazines, so would know about that. Still, she tries to keep it real.

Emboldened, I went into my back yard, where I don't have a formal flower garden. I looked around and saw plants I'd never paid much attention to, let alone thought to clip. I snipped a few boughs of flowering bougainvillea, some long grass, a branch loaded with

unripe holly berries and a few hidden peacock orchids. I plunked them in a clay wine chiller, set them on the kitchen table.

I stepped back and enjoyed a TA-DA! moment. The bouquet looked just like I did it myself, and that's a beautiful thing.

Here are more of Nolan's homegrown flower harvesting and arranging tips:

- Harvest early and late. Pick flowers early in the morning or late in the day. Don't cut flowers in the mid-day heat.
- Keep it clean. Cut stems with sharp, clean clippers, and drop them straight into a bucket of water. Let them sit inside in a cool place for a few hours. Prepare your vase. It should be clean enough to drink out of.
- Feed them. Add those little packets of flower food to the water. The potion really does prevent bacteria from forming and feeds the flowers.
- No yard flowers? Because not everyone has an English garden, Nolan says shoot for a more natural look by getting store flowers and mixing them with greenery from your yard

or foraged from a nature walk. "When you mix a bunch of peonies with roses and bring in your own greenery instead of using that rubberized green stuff from the store, it makes all the difference."

- Arrange with flair. To create a hand-tied posy, lay out all your pickings and your clean vase. Strip off any leaves that will fall below the waterline. Lay a few pieces of foliage across the palm of your hand. Add a focal flower, then a few filler flowers. Next – and here's the pro trick – turn the bunch so stems start to spiral out at the bottom, a bit like the spokes on a wire whisk. Keep adding foliage and flowers, rotating the bunch with every third stem. Position flowers a little lower as you go to create a rounded shape.

- Be disruptive. To break the symmetry and "add a little quirk," pull a few smaller flowers so they stick out a bit, and maybe a branch. Aim for imperfection. Once you're happy, tie the bunch with a string where you've been holding it. (The higher the tie, the tighter the arrangement.) Trim stems at an angle, so they're even and fit the vase. Then enjoy

what money can't buy.

Syndicated columnist Marni Jameson is the author of five home and lifestyle books, including "Downsizing the Family Home – What to Save,

What to Let Go" and the forthcoming "Downsizing the Blended Home – When Two Households Become One" (Sterling Publishing, December 2019). Reach her at [www.marnijameson.com](http://www.marnijameson.com).

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