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Dahlia Talk *from tubers to blooms*



Photo and flower arrangement by Lucy Hunter

My Kind of Arrangement

by Dianne Reitan

We all have our idiosyncrasies and I'm known amongst my close family and friends as a neat freak. Always cleaning and organizing, I try not to follow people in my house to put their glass in the dishwasher before they are done drinking their soda or wine. I try not to fluff up the pillows on the couch when they get up and leave the room. I try not to multitask with housework instead of giving them my undivided attention. I'm grateful they extend me grace and chuckle under their breath when I get caught indulging my need to have visual order.

This trait of mine, of course, carries over into my dahlia obsession. When I first started growing dahlias, I only had a few blush color varieties. When I would make a bouquet of Cafe au Lait or Sweet Loves, I was so enamored with the dreamy petals, I wanted nothing else to distract from what I thought were some of the most beautiful flowers I had ever seen. For several years, I would give these pastel bunches to my fellow gardeners at the community garden and people would be just as taken with the one-variety arrangement as I was. It seemed to us that the diva of the garden, the dahlia, did not need anything to enhance her beauty.

When I started my business, my customers were thrilled to be buying dahlia bouquets - some arrangements were all one variety like Otto's Thrill and sometimes I would mix up forms together like balls, cactus and pompons. My aunt Kathy and I had great success selling the formal decoratives called, *All That Jazz* and *Diva* and she came up with the arrangement name - All That Diva Jazz! These two varieties would be paired together with no other flower fillers and would even be a part of a wedding at the renowned Garden of the Gods Park. Never once did a customer ask why I didn't have other flower fillers (Sweet Peas, Snapdragons, Lisianthus, Lily of the Valley, Bells of Ireland, etc.) and I suspect it is because they were all so smitten with the dahlias.

While I and my customers were happy about the simplicity and boldness of what I was offering, I couldn't help but feel that I was a bit of a contrarian. You see, most of the flower farmers I know and follow do these elaborate bouquets with all kinds of flowers and greenery in them. I would also see flower arrangements done by professional florists, and I usually struggled deciding where I'm suppose to focus if there are multiple types of flowers along with greenery or leaves in the arrangement. My mind wonders if the foliage trailing the vase or bowl was intentional and if there are lots of colors, textures and sizes - well sometimes it just seems to me to be a hot mess.



Photo and flower arrangement by Kristen Griffith-Vanderyacht

I don't usually look for validation from others on what I like or don't like but I have been elated with a couple of books I am currently reading from the library that helped me to see that I was not the only one who values a simpler way to showcase stunning flowers. Lucy Hunter's book [**The Flower Hunter**](#), is a gorgeous publication that shows step-by-step how to make an arrangement without the usual greenery filler. She has some beautiful photos on how she uses dahlias, too. While her style is definitely more involved and sometimes more chaotic than what I usually do with my dahlias, I'm glad that I am taking the time to learn a different perspective.

I'm usually reading rather than watching shows but lately I've come across a fun production on Netflix called [**The Big Flower Fight**](#), and it has received favorable reviews. Ten teams of florists, sculptors and garden designers compete to create extravagant floral installations for a chance to display at London's Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. One of the judges is Kristen Griffith-Vanderyacht and I checked out his new book called [**Flower Love**](#). I was delighted to discover Kristen's simpler arrangements that are fun and memorable, often monochromatic and with fewer flowers being the focus. Kristen also uses a lot of dahlias in his book.

Homes & Gardens tells us that some of the [**floral design trends in 2024**](#) will include bold, exuberant color palettes and it is refreshing to see a lot of examples of flowers being shown off by themselves. I'm by no means a trend predictor but it is nice to know that my instinct and preference will resonate with some others, too. My biggest takeaway as I ponder this subject is that we all have a place in the flower world, no matter what our style. Trends come and go and many of us will

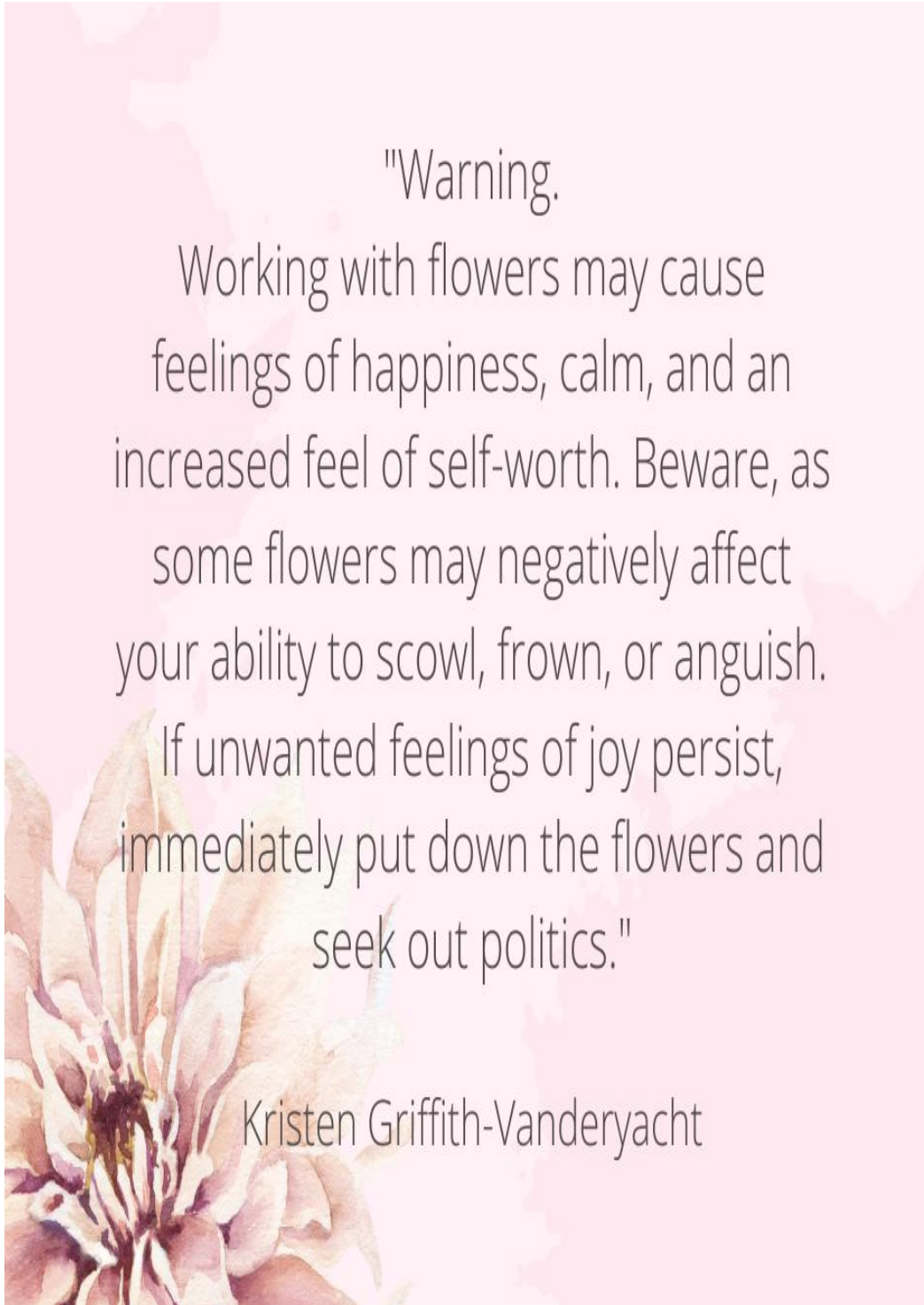
notice our personal expressions will evolve over time. So, for who I am and what I like right now, I don't need to feel insecure that I want to display my Islander informative decorative, with her coif-like petals, all by herself so she can be the center of attention. Now that's an arrangement I like.

"Warning.

Working with flowers may cause feelings of happiness, calm, and an increased feel of self-worth. Beware, as some flowers may negatively affect your ability to scowl, frown, or anguish.

If unwanted feelings of joy persist, immediately put down the flowers and seek out politics."

Kristen Griffith-Vanderyacht





Dahlia Talk Co-Authors Martin Kral and Dianne Reitan
at the 2023 ADS Show in Portland

American Dahlia Society

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