


Stories from the Valley

“Flowers are one of those simple pleasure, on the surface delicate, beautiful and romantic. However they have a deep significance too. Here Kally Ellis of McQueens talks us through her love of Lily of the Valley and explains its timeless endurance and meaning.” 

In flowers, as in every other area of design, fashions come and fashions go. But there's one bloom that defies time itself, that remains steadfast in its popularity, their tiny white bell heads bowing modestly, laden with an utterly captivating and heady perfume. It is, of course, the Lily of the Valley.

The French, who know a thing or two about style, even have a special day of the year when they hand their loved ones small pots or pretty little bouquets of muguet des bois. On May 1 – May Day – handing a porte bonheur (literally a bringer of happiness) to your nearest and dearest is a sign of pure love, and all over France, the delicate and irresistible scent of the muguet heralds the beginning of a new season.

For me, these flowers reek of romance. Their creamy white blooms define a purity and grace that makes them a natural choice for a bridal bouquet. They are understated and graceful, they never dare to detract from the bride herself - the undisputed star of the show - but instead they enhance; their spear-shaped dark green leaves providing the perfect frame for a bride's bouquet. Neither grand nor showy, the Lily of the Valley can pass unnoticed (who remarked upon the Duchess of Cambridge's wedding bouquet?) but to the cognoscenti, these flowers are a sign of exquisite taste.

Lily of the Valley are only in season for a few short weeks. Of course nowadays, kindly Dutch growers ensure these classics are available all year

long, but good taste doesn't come cheap out of season. For me, one quick sniff sends my head into a nostalgic spin – it reminds me of the Lily of the Valley my mother grew in our garden when I was a girl – and instantly, I'm transported back to the beautiful little carpet of flowers growing abundantly beneath the walnut tree. And time just fades away...

Kally Ellis is the founder and MD of McQueens who are celebrating their 20th anniversary.

photo by Jeremy Andrew Coleman.

