

# Florist profile

# 20 steps to success



The founder of London's most cutting-edge florist, **Kally Ellis** from McQueens, is currently celebrating 20 years at the forefront of the floral industry. Here, she reveals the secrets to her achievements

**1 I BEGAN WITH ONLY ONE AIM...** When I first set up McQueens back in 1991, I just wanted to sell simple, stylish and beautifully presented flowers to the people of London.

**2 I HAVE A BRILLIANT TEAM OF TALENTED FLORISTS...** I tend to employ people who have some sort of creative background, so a lot of the team members have been to art school. We also have our own flower school, based in London, and offer students work experience. It's a great way to talent spot and I've found a few real gems this way.

**3 WE ALWAYS TRY TO WORK WITH SEASONAL FLOWERS...** Not only are they much 'greener', they also tend to be of a much higher quality and are better value than blooms flown in from abroad.

**4 WE ARE KNOWN FOR OUR UNDERSTATED AND STYLISH DESIGNS...** Our preference is to use one type of flower or colour and to create landscapes that enhance or open up a space. Our signature style is clean and crisp – with an element of control.

**5 I LIKE TO MAKE A STATEMENT AND STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD...** by thinking outside of the box. With such a highly creative team, we find inspiration in everything around us.

**6 WE WORK IN THE MOST LUXURIOUS OF VENUES...** Beautiful five-star hotels, including The Berkeley, The Connaught and The Grove

are all stunning wedding venues and loyal clients, as are Blenheim Palace and Lancaster House in London. We also do lots of work internationally, with the likes of Hotel Du Cap in the south of France.

**7 WE SPECIALISE IN HIGH-PROFILE A-LIST EVENTS...** The most famous being the *Vanity Fair* post-Oscars party every year in LA. We also work on their biennial Cannes Film Festival party and the annual party held as part of Robert De Niro's Tribeca Film Festival in New York. It's thrilling being involved in such glamorous occasions.

**8 WE'RE KNOWN AS ONE OF THE MOST FASHIONABLE FLORISTS...** Thanks to our work with exciting designers and brands, such as Christian Louboutin, Roland Mouret, Celine, Mulberry and ACNE, we're definitely very on-trend. It's great to work with an industry that is so open-minded as it allows us to be as creative as we like.

**9 WE TAKE CARE OF EVERY LITTLE DETAIL...** Design is all about the details so we place great importance on the final touches, such as finishing our designs with a twist of grass or a band of aluminium and always ensuring the flowers work on the table and with the rest of the venue's décor.

**10 WE ALWAYS CONSIDER THE ENVIRONMENT...** Being 'green' is very important to us. We recycle our waste, have a large stock of recycled glass vases and all of our flowers travel by land, not air.

**11 WE LOVE USING SCENT TO ADD IMPACT...** Fragrant flowers are uplifting and can add an element of nostalgia to a wedding. In spring, there are so many beautifully scented flowers to choose from, it's a great time to tie the knot.

**12 WE CATER TO ALL BUDGETS...** You don't need a huge amount of money to get beautiful blooms. Think seasonal and minimal – less really can be more. Using garden plants or potted herbs is a great money-saving solution for an English country-style wedding.

**13 WE'RE ABLE TO WORK IN ANY DESTINATION...** I particularly enjoy working on weddings in Le Marche, a region of Italy that I spent my childhood holidays in. It's one of the most beautiful and romantic destinations for a wedding abroad.

**14 THE SERVICE WE PROVIDE IS COMPLETELY BESPOKE...** We work closely with the bride and have several meetings so she can go through our portfolio. We also offer to provide table settings to their caterer as part of the tasting, so the couple can experience the flowers and the food exactly as they would at the wedding.

**15 OUR FLORISTRY SCHOOL HAS PROVED TO BE VERY POPULAR WITH BRIDES...** We offer a one-day bridal bouquet class, which can be a wonderful bonding experience for mothers and daughters who do the class together, or even a bride-to-be with her future mother-in-law.

**16 WE'VE INTRODUCED A GREAT ONLINE SHOP – WWW.MCQUEENS.CO.UK...** This has also proved really popular and a lot of our brides use it to order their thank-you gifts after the wedding, such as stunning hand-tied bouquets or scented candles from our signature range.

**17 WE'VE MOVED WITH THE TIMES OVER THE YEARS...** I've seen wedding flowers change so much over the last 20 years. I think people have now started to realise what an important element flowers are at weddings, even for those on a tight budget. It's also been great to see old-fashioned blooms like hydrangeas, dahlias and carnations come back into vogue, along with the fashion for all things vintage.

**18 WE WORK ON WEDDINGS OF ALL SHAPES AND SIZES...** For the more extravagant occasions, we can go to town and create flower art with incredible installations and huge floral arches. But we also love creating elegant, understated designs for more intimate celebrations.

**19 OUR SUCCESS IS DOWN TO A LOT OF HARD WORK...** as well as a little luck and a great deal of passion. I wouldn't be here without my exceptional team. We have a strong sense of who we are and we are consistent.

**20 WE'RE ALWAYS LOOKING FORWARD...** I'm looking forward to celebrating the company's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday in 2012, and there are some pretty exciting plans in the pipeline that I am not at liberty to talk about now – but just watch this space! **M**

To find out more or to discuss your own wedding flowers with the experts at McQueens, call 020 7251 5505 or visit [www.mcqueens.co.uk](http://www.mcqueens.co.uk). Alternatively, visit the McQueens bridal team at their stand at The Luxury Wedding Show London on 22 and 23 October 2011, where Wedding Flowers will be joining forces with them to answer all your floral queries. To book tickets, call 0844 581 1386 or visit [www.theluxuryweddingshow.co.uk](http://www.theluxuryweddingshow.co.uk).



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