



McQueens' striking display for Claridge's last year



McQueens' founder Kally Ellis

## A FLOURISHING FINISH

**Kally Ellis, founder and Managing Director of local florist McQueens, gives Vicky Mayer her tips on how to make the most of your Christmas floral decorations**

### What are the key trends for Christmas flowers this year?

I've been doing flowers for Christmas now for 22 years and each year it's a challenge to come up with something new and exciting, but we always manage to succeed. This year I'm using a lot of natural arrangements that use seasonal flowers and twigs like silver birch and larch. I love the idea of a winter wonderland. That said, traditional reds and golds can also have their place.

### You have a store at Claridge's in Mayfair and are also designing their Christmas tree. What can we expect to see?

For hotels, each of the trees I design is bespoke and I start by sitting down with the client and creating a mood board of

ideas, textures and colours. I love the idea of creating an original, natural work of art from different materials so I often start with a frame of metal work and build the 'tree' from there. This year we are going with a white and gold theme for the Claridge's tree.

### What makes a show-stopping Christmas table decoration?

I always advise my customers not to just put one decoration in the middle of the table. You can really create a theme at Christmas and should decorate the chairs as well as the table. I love seasonal plants, vintage pots and hand-drawn name tags. Berries, dried fruits and nuts always look good too and look out for amaryllis and white hyacinths. Above all, don't feel obliged to create a neat, formal table display. Creative, messy displays can look just as good.

### Do you have any alternative suggestions to a traditional Christmas tree?

I'm a big fan of making displays out of branches, so arranging some branches in a

big, tall vase then adding lights or baubles can be very attractive.

### And what about a stand-out wreath?

At McQueens we love seasonal foliage, so I would suggest decorating your wreath with holly, mistletoe and some gorgeous fur cones. A big velvet red bow will give it a lovely luxury feel.

### How do you celebrate Christmas at home?

My husband always says we have the biggest Christmas tree in London and I think he's got a point! I love to make my own tree with some of the gorgeous material we have in the shop and it often ends up at over 10ft.

### What stores do you like in Islington?

I'm a huge fan of Suzy Harper who makes all her creations on the premises. I also love the Elk in the Woods in Camden Passage and, of course, Frederick's where I recently celebrated my birthday. Angel Flowers is also a great florist and I like the fact that we support one another.

✦ McQueens, 70 Old Street EC1V 9AJ; 020 7251 5505; mcqueens.co.uk