



A cut and dried business



Words by Kitty Corrigan

Kitty Corrigan enjoys pottering in her cottage garden/unruly plot in mid-Wales

Say it with flowers – but make sure they're home-grown and seasonal, not flown halfway round the world, urges Herefordshire grower **Rozanne Delamore**, who's proudly flying the flag for local producers. **Kitty Corrigan** finds out more

THE BEES ARE BUSY in the flower fields at Rozanne Delamore's 35-acre smallholding near Ledbury in Herefordshire. At this time of year there's a feast laid out for them, in row upon row of blooms gently swaying in the light summer breeze. Dahlias, sunflowers, cosmos, corncockles and crocosmia present a dazzling display among the 1,000 varieties grown here, at the foot of the Malvern Hills, an idyllic setting for a cut flower business.

The appropriately-named Rozanne, meaning

'graceful rose', of course also grows fragrant roses, and is on a mission to dissuade customers from buying blooms flown in from Colombia or Kenya.

"A bunch of supermarket roses has the same carbon footprint as a seat on a plane from New York to London," she says. "Apart from the issue of 'flower miles', they also lose their scent in transit. I would like people to think differently about celebrations such as Valentine's Day," she continues. "Instead of red roses from abroad, what about a bunch of British-grown tulips, such as the parrot types with bright colours and ruffled

petals or the romantic dusky pink flowers of ‘La Belle Epoque’? Much more imaginative.”

She also wants us to re-imagine Father’s Day. “For most men, the only time they are gifted flowers is at their funeral,” she says. “I invite families to a pick-your-own day on the third Sunday in June when children can choose 12-15 stems for their dad, while he enjoys tea or coffee at the farm, or he can take home a craft beer or local cider. I call it ‘a brew and a bunch’.”

Her business, The Ledbury Flower Farmer, now in its sixth season, is not without its challenges. It took 18 tons of municipal compost to enrich the clay soil of the two-acre plot reserved for flowers (the rest is maize, meadow hay and grazing for sheep). It’s prone to waterlogging in winter and rock-hard dryness in summer. To keep 20 beds, each 15 metres long, in production requires hard work and long hours.

“I think some people imagine the flowers grow on their own and I have a long floaty dress and a wicker basket. It’s definitely muddy hands and work boots all day long.”

There’s also the British weather to consider: “Since I started my business,” says Rozanne, “I have had two droughts and one grey summer.”

And as the growing season in the UK is restricted to April-October, how does she generate income in the winter months? She has two greenhouses – one for seedlings, one for young plants, two polytunnels and an old cider mill for group demos.

A typical week for Rozanne may include a wedding, a funeral, a flower arranging workshop, talks or a farm tour. And from 5-13 September this year she is opening for Herefordshire Art Week (h.Art), an annual event when hundreds of artists across Herefordshire and the Borders exhibit from their studios, homes and gardens, selling handmade ceramics, textiles, printmaking, jewellery, sculpture and more.

It’s a chance to meet the maker and take home a unique piece or discuss a commission for a special occasion. Rozanne is holding floristry workshops, alongside five other exhibitors in different media, one of whom is Nicola Currie, whose oil paintings often feature Rozanne’s flowers.

The wedding season is her busiest time – there are six wedding venues close by, including Eastnor Castle and Homme House – so on two days a week she is assisted by a trainee from WRAGS (Work and Retrain as a Gardener Scheme), which provides paid, part-time, horticultural training

FLORAL DELIGHT:
Rozanne prepares fresh flowers for a bouquet



TOP LEFT: Rozanne picks her flowers fresh each day
ABOVE: Rozanne enjoys the challenge of designing tributes for funerals
LEFT: Customers browse the colourful fields of flowers

“It’s important that people are able to choose a more environmentally-friendly option without having to compromise on quality

(wfga.org.uk). “My brides know I grow all the flowers myself and only use seasonal.”

While wedding flowers bring joy to many people, Rozanne also relishes the challenge of funeral tributes. “Too often the bereaved are handed a catalogue to choose shape A, B or C, and colour 1, 2 or 3. It’s so impersonal. I like to incorporate items that were significant to the loved one – it might be a gardener’s trug, a pair of work boots, or apples for a cider grower.

“I feel it brings more comfort to the bereaved, and they can take home the coffin spray and the posies I attach to the handles.”

The daughter of dairy farmers, who live nearby, Rozanne’s love of growing flowers began as a child in her mother’s garden, and with a degree in Rural and Environmental Protection from Harper

Adams in Shropshire, she is passionate about wildlife-friendly farming (plenty of pollinators), rainwater harvesting, mulching with sheep’s wool to retain moisture in the flowerbeds, and definitely no chemicals. Nor does she ever use oasis foam or single-use plastic in her arrangements or during her courses.

“Flowers in many ways are no different to food. It’s important that people are able to choose a more environmentally-friendly option without having to compromise on quality.

“There is a greater awareness that many flowers travel thousands of miles and are sprayed with chemicals in countries with less rigorous legislation. We need to be sourcing food and flowers much closer to home.”

One such outlet, supplied by Rozanne and



We need to be sourcing food and flowers much closer to home

neighbouring growers, is The Flower Hub at Pauntley in Gloucestershire, a mini New Covent Garden Market where florists can buy locally-grown, seasonal British flowers in any quantity, unlike the major wholesalers that deal in big numbers.

When the growing season ends in autumn, Rozanne still has her hands full, working with the flowers she has dried during the season, which she then uses to create table centrepieces and seasonal wreaths, followed by Christmas creations with foliage and berries.

"There is so much you can dry," she says, "not just straw flowers and statice."

The quieter months have their own pleasures. "I love autumn...the cool mornings, everything is ripening, hedgerows filled with berries. It's the cave woman in me – I can't wait to start harvesting, pickling, storing."

Then there is bulb planting and preparing beds for the following spring. The only quiet time is January and early February

Rozanne is the West Midlands co-ordinator for the association Flowers from the Farm, which promotes seasonal, British cut flowers. It started with one woman's search for help with her new enterprise 15 years ago, and now has 1,000 members, mainly female, and it's a commercial success – average business revenues climbed



h.Art Week

This is a nine-day art trail from 5-13 September through Herefordshire and the Borders, when artists, craftmakers and creative businesses open their homes and studios daily from 11am-5pm. Galleries put on special events and groups get together for pop-up exhibitions, in a wonderful mix of interesting venues.

Visit: h-art.org.uk

to £33,600 in 2025, a 12% year-over-year increase, and average yields jumped from 30,700 to 43,500 stems per hectare in the past year.

Another initiative is Seed to Sales, a year-long mentoring programme Rozanne runs with Jo Thomson, of Wye Valley Flowers, to help those starting a cut flower business, covering topics such as which flower varieties

to choose, how to create a varied palette of colours and textures across the year, the legislation of selling to the public and developing a marketing strategy (seedtosales.co.uk).

Like many gardeners and growers, Rozanne finds the many elements of her work therapeutic and rewarding, which far outweighs the ups and downs of farming in the unpredictable British climate. 🌱

Further information

Visit: theledburyflowerfarmer.co.uk and follow Rozanne on Instagram @the_ledbury_flower_farmer

Make a late summer bouquet

For a spectacular bouquet, Rozanne suggests the rounded shapes of dahlias, sunflowers, chrysanthemums and rudbeckia. Add spires – amaranthus, snap dragons, orach, painted sage. Then flat-headed flowers – choose from achillea, sedum, ammi visnaga. And finally, to give movement floating over the top – grasses such as feather top, bunny tails, frosted explosion, millet, seed heads like nigella, poppy and thlaspi.

