



FLORISTS
AESME

Inspired by British blooms, sisters Ally Nutting and Jesse Lister create unique whimsical arrangements using home-grown and foraged flowers and foliage

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Siblings Ally Nutting and Jesse Lister grew up in London and Wiltshire. Both studied at The Open University, while working full time in retail, event planning and fundraising. In 2015, they combined their life-long love of flowers and illustration and set up their own business producing bespoke flower arrangements and one-of-a-kind prints. Their striking designs, partly inspired by florist and author Constance Spry, have featured at weddings, events at Charleston house, private parties and photoshoots. Ally tells us more.

Foraging is in our nature. A lot of the foliage, vines, grasses and branches that we use are foraged, especially the wild, wispy, sculptural elements that characterise our designs. But we also have a cutting garden in Hampshire which accommodates several varieties of tulips, ranunculi, anemones and narcissi, which are followed by old-fashioned garden roses, sweet peas, bearded irises, cosmos, foxgloves and Japanese anemones in the summer. We also buy from a variety of British growers and add seasonal blooms from Holland.

We're sisters but also very close friends. We're very different, with contrasting characters and temperaments. In the beginning, this was frustrating because we both tried to do everything. Now, we play to each other's strengths. I communicate with clients, source flowers and write the blog, while Jesse photographs, illustrates and prepares design boards. Our arrangements are an artistic collaboration.

Looking back, we've been styling from an early age. As children, we were outdoorsy, climbing trees and making dens all day. Our mother would ring a bell that could be heard fields away to call us in at mealtimes. Our cottage had a tiered garden running down to the River Avon with sweet peas and an apple tunnel.

Our business came about over a coffee in Oxford. I had taken up flower arranging as a pastime a few years earlier, with the aid of a few old Constance Spry books. An internship at Saipua, a floral design studio in Brooklyn, New York, opened my eyes to a way of treating flowers as an artistic medium outside of the traditional realm of floristry. When I came back, we decided the time was right for us to combine our skills.

The juxtaposition of living and working in the city but sourcing and growing in the countryside is endlessly inspiring. The city provides us with the metropolitan buzz of commerce and an endless source of cultural inspiration, including museums, galleries and fashion. The countryside is somewhere we feel equally at home. It's a place to breathe, put our hands in the earth and watch the seasons change.

We chose the name Aesme because we love the way it looks and feels. Esme is a family name, as well as being the name of the protagonist in a couple of our favourite books - *Rules of the Wild: A Novel of Africa* by Francesca Marciano and *For Esmé - with Love & Squalor* by JD Salinger. We added an 'A' to make it look graphically pleasing and modern, while the pronunciation remains feminine.

Our style of arranging is natural, loose and somewhat old-school. We have a great love of old-fashioned varieties of garden roses, nuanced colours and intricate vine elements. We lean towards different styles - Jesse loves Scandinavian design and mid-century furniture, while I'm into English country-house interiors and eclectic Bloomsbury prints." *Aesme, 020 8741 3543, aesme.co.uk.*



PREVIOUS PAGE Ally (left) and Jesse work together on arrangements of spring blooms. **OPPOSITE PAGE** Ally's home studio in London. **THIS PAGE** They use a variety of antique vessels (above) in their displays and flowers, such as 'Golden Mustard' roses (left) and 'Paperwhite' narcissi (above top). Tools of the trade include flower frogs (below centre).