ForeWord Reviews

CRAFTS & HOBBIES

Wreaths & Bouquets
Paula Pryke
Sarah Cuttle, photographer
Rizzoli
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Whether a lavish wreath is decorating a door for the holidays, or a simple bouquet is used as the centerpiece for a gathering of friends, flowers nearly always evoke emotion in those who see and smell them. With wreaths, there's a sense of welcome, ushering guests into a home as artfully as any host could, and bouquets can spark delight, appreciation, or joy.

But just because flowers are so potent in terms of bringing a bit of beauty to any scene doesn't mean that throwing a few into a vase or stringing them up on the door is an easy feat. Fortunately, this gorgeously illustrated and well-articulated guide can turn any amateur flower arranger into a semi-pro.

Florist Paula Pryke—whose international success caused her to start the Flower School in London more than ten years ago—shares her secrets of using seasonal flowers and other elements to create design-inspired arrangements that are breathtaking rather than fussy.

The seasonal aspect is particularly important, but only partly because of the increased availability of certain types of flowers. In addition to finding plenty of arrangement materials, a seasonal theme also ties the wreaths and bouquets to the larger natural changes happening just outside the door. For example, weaving dried leaves into a Thanksgiving wreath is a nod toward autumn and a celebration of nature in one bright, lovely ring.

Even in winter, there's creativity to be found, Pryke believes. She writes, "I find myself being more inspired by the basic shape of trees and bushes and thinking more deeply about the elements of good design in nature."

In every season, she highlights the type of flowers that work well in bouquets, and shows how to make wreaths of increasing complexity, from a simple ring of evergreen leaves to one covered in a number of elements, like ribbon, dried fruit, twigs, and cinnamon.

Her instructions are straightforward, and she frequently provides tips, like laying out flowers of each variety, holding the central flower of a bouquet and then adding each stem at certain angles, and twisting, so the bouquet keeps its shape.

Also helpful is Sarah Cuttle's photography, since it assists in outlining Pryke's step-by-step instructions, and shows clearly how the finished project might look. Although the photos are instructive, they're also wondrous in terms of color, light, and balanced elements, standing on their own as a kind of valentine to the subject matter.

For anyone who's ever wanted to celebrate a special event, or just bring a touch of flower power into their lives, this handy and gorgeous guide will be helpful, season after season.

Elizabeth Millard