

# Pick of the bunch

Tunbridge Wells Florist Lara Haynes wants to spread her passion for flowers

Words Melanie Yea Photos Arthur O'Hara

Hand-picking beautiful flowers and creating a bouquet fit for a celebrity's mum is all in a day's work for florist Lara Haynes.

Lara laughs as she searches her desk for a card she recently received from TV personality Nick Knowles thanking her for "saving his bacon" after delivering a Mother's Day bouquet earlier this year.

"I believe in going that extra mile for a customer. That has paid off in customers coming back and using me again and again," she says.

Lara lived in Australia for 18 years and built a career in television advertising, but decided the time had come to pursue her lifelong passion for flowers.

In 2000 she moved back to the UK with a change of direction and took up a four-week intensive floristry course with London-based florist Paula Pryke, famed as one of the most innovative florists in the

world. Stints of work experience and freelance work with numerous florists helped Lara decide that going it alone was how she saw her future. And it was from this that Darling and Wild was born.

"I wanted to be self-employed, working for myself. I wanted a job where I could be flexible. Aside from the creative aspect of floristry I wanted to run my own business and provide a personal level of service to my customers," said Lara.

In 2004 she approached the owner of Flourish on St John's Road, Tunbridge Wells, and enquired about setting up at the back of the shop and it was from here that Darling and Wild was established.

She later moved the operation to a shop on Mount Pleasant, and has now been at her own place on St James' Road for more than a year.

As well as offering the flower side of the business the shop stocks vintage pieces that Lara has personally sourced at antique fairs and markets in the area.

Reclaimed dovescotes, wire work shelves and window boxes sit alongside angels and festive decorations fit for any home.

"Footfall is not high here in St James' but things are going well. The shop is not open full time so I mainly use the space as a workshop for the numerous projects I am working on, from handling all the flowers needed on the production of a reality TV show, to making bouquets for the likes of Danny La Rue, to the lovely job of ensuring brides get the flowers of their dreams on the big day."

As well her day-to-day work Lara has managed to secure a number

of high-profile clients locally including Jaeger, restaurant Le Petit Blanc and Monsoon.

"I am happy to say I reap the rewards, having made some loyal customers and friends through the business," she adds.

In the lead to Christmas, Lara is hosting workshops allowing people to make their own door wreaths, swags, garlands and table centres.

"I now want to share my knowledge and enthusiasm with others, which is why I am launching the workshops.

"I will be showing small groups how to make beautiful arrangements using seasonal blooms and foliage.

"It should be good fun with lots of tips and hands-on practice for the participants, and of course they get to take home what they have made," said Lara, who is

mum to five-year-old Freja and four-year-old Tom.

Prices range from £65 to £95 with a maximum of four people to a group (10 per cent discount for a group of friends) and the workshops run throughout November and the beginning of December.

They are half-day workshops based at Lara's home and a light lunch and all materials are included in the price.

"If people cannot travel to me I am more than happy to travel to people's homes if that is easier," adds Lara.

"Quite simply, I'm passionate about flowers, from the humble

to the exotic. I want to show flowers at their best, and I want to help others get the best from them too," she adds.



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Shop open Wednesday to  
Saturday 10am to 3pm. These hours will  
alter in the Christmas lead up.

**Workshop dates**  
Get a 10 per cent discount  
when you mention Today

Monday December 10 - Make your own garland

Wednesday December 12 - Xmas table centres

Friday December 14 - Wreath making

To book call 07740 721883 or email [enquiries@darlingandwild.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@darlingandwild.co.uk)

See next page for how to create a  
superb Christmas table decoration

