

Lauren Barnes

What were your favourite subjects/best memories from school?

My favourite subjects were Art and Graphics, most of my best memories at Dene Magna were spent in the art block! At the time I was taught by Mrs Smythe, she was always very supportive and encouraging of people exploring their creative talent. I also remember having end of year exhibitions which I always enjoyed.

Another of my best memories was going on a trip to Brussles in year 10. My best friends were also on the trip and we had such a great time, eating waffles and ice-cream and attempting to speak some French, poorly on my part!

What are you currently doing and how did you get there?

I now run my own floristry business, Foxglove and Moss. After school, I went to Newent sixth form and completed my A Levels, in 3DStudies, Graphic Design and Geography. I then did a Foundation Diploma in Art and Design at the Royal Forest of Dean College for a year before wanting to train in floristry. Unfortunately, after being accepted to an interview at a college, I was told the course was being cancelled as young people weren't going into floristry - which isn't true! I went on to do a degree in Illustration, but afterwards sent my CV out to local florists and luckily a shop was willing to take me on as an apprentice. I have since gained experience by working in several different shops and also by competing in floristry competitions, winning a Bronze medal in the Young Florist of the Year category at Chelsea Flower Show in 2016. My ambition had always been to start my own business one day, this dream became reality in September 2021.

What is your favourite thing about your career?

I love that I am able to do something creative every day, I have always wanted the opportunity to channel my creativity every day, and I am now able to do so within my dream job. Now I have my own business, I enjoy the freedom it brings me. I think my favourite aspect of my job has to be wedding work, from the initial consultation discussing ideas, right through to making up the designs and delivering on the day - I find the whole process incredibly fulfilling.

What is your least favourite thing about your career?

My least favourite thing about my job (other than bucket cleaning!) is all of the extra admin that comes with having your own business. I'd love to be making up bouquets all day, but unfortunately as with any business, there is a fair amount of paperwork!

What advice would you give to a student wanting a job in your field?

Any creative subject is a good starting point, having a good understanding of colour and how shapes and textures will work together. There are college courses which teach floristry, but personally I found doing an apprenticeship and actually working in a flower shop gives you a really good foundation of what is involved in working in a retail environment. As with any job it's not all fun stuff, there's a lot of bleaching buckets and conditioning stock. There is also the aspect of working with the general public, you need to be aware of how you talk to customers, and be mindful of the occasion they are there for, whether they're excited to be getting married or upset as they're ordering sympathy flowers. I would suggest introducing yourself to your local florists, doing work experience or even getting a Saturday job to really experience what it's like.

If you had to do it all over again what would you do differently?

I honestly wouldn't do anything differently as I think all of my experiences have given me the knowledge and skills I have now to run my own floristry business. My degree taught me a lot about self-promotion and marketing that I wouldn't have had otherwise. I would just say that going to university isn't the only way to get a job - there's lots of different options and learning in a job has many advantages.

What do you know now that you wish you knew when you were at school?

I wish I knew then that it's ok to be different and not really fit in. I am still a quiet person now but I was painfully shy when I was at school and other people were not always kind. I would have had a much better experience if I had more confidence in myself. Most of my time was spent staying as quiet as possible and trying to blend into the background... I wish I had just been myself!