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FOR EVERYDAY DÉCOR

Finding My Voice

by Erin Benzakein



In the Business of Beauty

I own and operate a small organic flower farm in the northwestern corner of Washington state. From a tiny, two-acre plot, my family and I grow more flowers than one can imagine in their wildest dreams. We work insanely long hours, in every type of weather, for a solid nine months out of the year. It is the hardest work I have ever done, but it is also the most rewarding. We are in the business of beauty, and what we grow makes the world a more beautiful place. ✦

Flowers & Their Magic

I never intended to become a farmer. Poverty and hardship were what I equated with the job, and I had my sights set on something much easier. But after seeing tears well up in someone's eyes as I handed them a bundle of sweet peas from my garden, I was a goner. The fact that a tiny bunch of blooms could transport a person back in time to childhood summers in their grandmother's garden was absolutely amazing to me. I fell head over heels in love with flowers, and their magic has since filled my days. Life sure has a crazy way of leading us just where we are meant to be. Now, I can't imagine doing anything else.

Making Mistakes

Along this wild, flower-filled journey, I have made an incredible amount of mistakes. Being completely self-taught in both farming and floristry, it often seems I've learned every lesson the hard way. After a few rocky but extremely educational seasons, I began sharing what I had learned with other growers. Eventually these ramblings found their way into a few articles for trade publications and finally evolved into a monthly column for a small-scale farming magazine. Knowing that so many others were benefiting from my personal successes and failures felt amazing, but the excitement quickly faded as I came down with a crippling case of writer's block.



In Search of My Voice

Each monthly column took days of agonizing work as I struggled to find my voice and flow. Even worse was that my small collection of flower and garden photos was quickly drained and needed refilling desperately. On the other end of the spectrum, business was booming and I found myself with less and less time to spend in areas that were stressful and unproductive. So one evening, in an act of desperation, I sat down and started a blog. While I hadn't a clue what I was doing, the structure of blogging seemed like the perfect way to practice showing up and saying something — anything — just ✦



to keep my voice alive. The night I began, I made a personal pledge to post five days a week for an entire year. It was a daunting commitment, but I wanted to really dig in and give the process a go. Since each entry needed accompanying images, I finally learned to use my digital camera and quickly built up a large flower photo library. Over that year my voice grew stronger and steadier. My photos improved and I slowly found my way around the blogging universe. After a few months of consistent posting, my articles were coming together with a bit more ease. By year's end, I no longer dreaded the deadlines and could write with a level of new-found confidence.

While I began blogging to improve my writing and photography, I soon discovered there were so many other rewards that came with the process as well. If approached with intention, each post became a little meditation in the moment, a short pause in the chaos of a bustling farm where I could reflect on the beauty from the day and share it with others. Soon I began seeking out beautiful and meaningful moments as much as possible. I found myself pausing longer between tasks, scanning for snippets of magic, and picking up my camera more than ever. Having a reason to look more closely and see more deeply has changed me to the core.

Connections, Community, Authenticity

It has been three years since I began my little blog. I have written 30 articles in that time, and now consider photography one of my true loves. I receive emails every week from growers and florists all over the world, sharing their struggles, fears, dreams, questions, and ideas. Our little farm has become a beacon of inspiration for aspiring growers and designers who would like to tie their lives more closely to the seasons. In addition to building connections and community, the blog has also showered our business with an abundance of new bridal clients, floral designers, event planners, and grocery accounts — all hungry for what we do. By establishing a strong personal rapport right out of the gate, new customers feel as if we're already old friends. That trust has made a world of difference.

What started as a simple exercise has ended up becoming a life-altering experience. Through blogging, I have found not only my voice, but a sense of connection and purpose that never existed before. Blogging has helped me grow more authentic as a person and for that I am forever grateful. ✨

Erin Benzakein lives in Washington state where she is the owner of the small floral design company and flower farm Floret. Visit her website at floretoflowers.com, or her blog at floretoflowers.blogspot.com.

