

# Lokale Blumen + The transformative art of foraging



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## The transformative art of foraging

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*“The earth laughs in flowers.” Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

There is something transcendental about flowers. The way they lift a room. The scent. The pleasantness they bring to spaces and celebrations. The moments of pause that they create and the way they reconnect us to nature. Ali Shillington, founder of **Lokale Blumen** (meaning: local flowers), has always immersed herself in nature and flowers but it was when she sought to turn her passion into a business that she was confronted with the huge environmental toll of conventional floristry. Bunches of blooms wrapped in single use plastic, to be unwrapped and re-wrapped in more plastic. Imported flowers carrying nasty air miles and a lack of labelling in the industry to show a given blooms country of origin. Curiosity and a desire to do things differently led Ali to Tasmania where she worked in local farms, getting her hands dirty learning the ins and outs

of growing flowers. She did everything from weeding, to harvesting, to selling in the markets and was impacted by the high regard for locally produced goods that exists within the Tassie community. Prior to this, Ali also completed the Sustainability Leadership Development Program at the Centre for

Sustainability. This program allows participants to learn from some of Australia's best business, political, social and environmental leaders and challenged Ali to go deep and define her personal sustainability values. It also connected her with a strong community of creative alumni who are approaching business differently.

When SLOW spoke to Ali she had just returned from the Global Climate Strike in Sydney, alongside 7.6 million people globally who took to the streets. “We are all worried about our planet and that the beauty we enjoy in nature won't be there for future generations. Is it is so important to act now and make changes”.

My favourite flower is the banksia cone, the seed pod/follicles that are left after the blooms fade. They fascinate me and have taught me so much about the delicate balance of Australia's natural eco systems.

“Most Banksia's need fire to regenerate vigorously, but just enough and at the right intervals. When we are losing these vital ecosystems it is really concerning.”

### Foraging

Lokale Blumen has a unique approach to floristry that keeps sustainability front and centre. Foraging, finding new uses for green waste and working with local flower

farmers is a big part of what Ali does, along with educating her clients. “I spend a lot of time on pedestrian strips finding interesting grasses, twigs and branches to incorporate into displays and I spend a lot of time educating and teaching people about what is in season, the true cost of flowers and what is available locally. The clients I work with all know exactly where their flowers are coming from and the mileage from farm to event.”

“People want to do better and so that's why this education is so important. When we know better, we are equipped to do better.” Ali's infectious enthusiasm, love for nature and the Lokale Blumen approach to projects sparks conversations and community wherever she goes.

“Everyone loves flowers and I meet the most incredible people in the process. People keep an eye out on verges for me and start to notice nature around them. Bringing nature back into spaces is a huge passion of mine.” Working in a way that is aligned to the seasons and incorporates the local community requires mindfulness and is sometimes a slower road.

*“When we slow down it always enhances our lives. We become aware of everything around us and how it changes...”*

“It pushes me to be more creative. To stay grounded. To keep my purpose in mind. When we slow down it always enhances our lives. We become aware of everything around us and how it changes and we encourage others to also be aware. This is the ripple effect of being a nature lover”.

### Transcending tradition.

Ali's unique approach has led to beautiful outcomes. Recently she changed a long standing tradition at a corporate awards evening where attendees in the running for awards are given yellow rose buttonholes. As roses were not in season in Sydney at the time and would have to be flown in from overseas a more sustainable choice was made. Luminous Inca Gold Yellow Leucadendrons were used instead. Hailing from the Proteaceae family they are locally grown and at their peak at the time of the event. These were the shining feature alongside foraged and found thistles and gumnuts, with fresh and fragrant yellow buddelia. For The Sustainable Wardrobe – Winter pop-up in Bronte the branch which featured in the main window display and the wild grasses that accented the garments were all found on a verge just a short stroll from the shop itself. As she continues to weave ethical and sustainable beauty into spaces and events Ali's biggest advice to fresh flower lovers is to “always ask where your flowers are grown.”