

Meet Mimi Arnold: The Farmer Florist of Block Island

Mimi Arnold creates floral arrangements and flower crowns that make statements without ostentation. Her crowns are the epitome of feminine energy: they are bold and wild, they are self-contained and magical, they fill their space in the strongest yet most delicate way. She calls people who wear her flower crowns “goddesses.”

“Each person making a crown,” says Arnold, “makes a reflection of their personality, you can tell; it’s just like painting.”

Lead florist of Block Island’s **The Farmer Florist**, Mimi Arnold holds flower pop-ups and flower crown workshops for celebrations such as birthday parties, weddings and island getaways; yet, she dreams of one day holding workshops in celebration of the moon.

“I would *love* to hold full moon workshops,” says Arnold. “But experiences and activities take time to gain momentum. So right now I do that for myself. I create flower crowns based on the moon cycle; it’s a ritual I enjoy.”

A graduate of UCLA’s School of Art and Architecture, Arnold focused her studies on mixed-media – combining painting, collaging and multipurpose forms. After graduating, she moved back home to Connecticut, where she came into flowers by chance.

“Garden design, it wasn’t on my radar at all, I didn’t even know it was a thing. Then one day I was flipping through a magazine and it caught my attention, it just really struck home, I was like, ‘I think this is it.’”

She moved back to California, to San Francisco, where she got work at a garden design company. In time, her work in San Francisco evolved to a farm-to-table management role on the Mendocino coast, an idyllic stretch of California coastline that has picturesque everything – beaches, Redwoods, trails, you name it, all of which make it a desirable wedding destination. It was there in Mendocino that Arnold began working on weddings – doing florals, arranging flowers and creating wearable floral pieces.

“The flower crown is something that’s super creative and means a lot to me, but I also really enjoy gifting experiences,” says Arnold. “I was just thinking a few weeks ago I was never someone who’d give a material item gift. I was always like, ‘Let me take you to a concert’ or ‘Let me take you to dinner.’ Flower crown workshops are like that, so I think there’s a parallel there.”

Five years ago, Arnold and her husband moved from California to Block Island, where the two first met. “We wanted to relocate back east, so we thought, ‘What if we could make Block Island work?’” And they did. Arnold leased land zoned for agriculture and began The Farmer Florist on the site of Block Island’s long-time garden center Goose and Garden, which, incidentally, is where Arnold had her first island job.

“When I was a little teeny bopper I would water all the plants and help out with the nursery; it’s funny that it’s come full circle.”

Now, Arnold uses Goose and Garden's former greenhouse to start seed and a large fenced-in field that used to house geese as her flower production space.

"It's tucked away, in the middle of the island. There's no foot traffic. It's not in town. Most people don't know how to locate it. There's rarely any service. It's really a sacred space."

Although Arnold still arranges florals for intimate weddings and island elopements, she doesn't want to be known as a wedding florist.

"I don't know what I want to be known as, but I like exploring different ways to distribute flowers and I love the energy of pop-ups; there's something to be said when it's fleeting ... For the vendor it's a refreshing approach to distribution and for the consumer it's like, 'Look at this cool thing we stumbled on!'"

Pop-ups and seasonality are central to Arnold's work. In the fall, she forages Block Island for seed pods and rose hips to incorporate into floral designs. She adheres to the slow flower movement, a movement she describes as "like the local food movement but with flowers." She believes that the ephemerality of flower blooms influences us more than we realize.

"I think it's the cyclical aspect," she says. "It's the cycles of the natural world, whether you're super in-tune with it or not, we all participate in our own way. Seed pods, fresh cut flowers, dried flowers, they're all a record of time."

In addition to holding pop-ups and workshops, Arnold has run a flower CSA for the past three years. Starting at the end of June, she delivers floral bouquets that incorporate the flowers of the season. First there are the early summer blooms—the poppies, the larkspur, the foxgloves—and by summer's end the bouquets are teeming with dahlias and zinnias and sunflowers.

"It's just another way to observe availability, to observe seasonality," she says.

The CSA is on pause this year, as Arnold is expecting her first child any minute now, but she will continue to host flower pop-ups and crown workshops throughout 2022.

"A lot of people overlook what the island has to offer," she says. "There are so many amazing vendors and creators on the island. It's not just a place to day drink."

Through her pop-ups and workshops, Arnold hopes to offer visitors a unique island experience, to provide them with an opportunity to play and be creative, and to see a reflection of themselves in the unique personalities of the seasonal flowers growing around them.

"Flower crown workshops are very specific to the island, to Block Island summers and to the seasons... Everyone is always so pleased with themselves by the end. They walk away with these amazing creations that they can wear and frolic around in. It's super playful. Sometimes I wonder, is this a little too far out? So it's nice to know that people are understanding what I have to offer."

To book a flower crown workshop for your special gathering, visit MimiFArnold.com, and follow The Farmer Florist on Instagram @TheFarmerFlorist_BI to learn the locations of this year's Farmer Florist pop-ups.