

# SLOW FLOWERS

*Journal*

AMERICAN FLOWERS WEEK | SUMMER 2023



## BOTANICAL COUTURE





**BOTANICAL COUTURE 2023**

DESIGN BY JENNIFER REED

PHOTOGRAPHY BY HALEY RICHTER

# THE ROMANCE OF PEONIES

**A LONG-FORGOTTEN HISTORIC GARDEN IGNITED**

Jennifer Reed's imagination for her contribution to this year's American Flowers Week collection. Owner of Jennifer Designs, based in Mullica Hill, New Jersey, the floral artist told how the Crowninshield Garden at Hagley Museum in Wilmington, Delaware, inspired her. "I envisioned a sculptural and statuesque botanical couture design to emulate the feel of the 1920s neoclassical garden," she explained. "I drew from the story of this garden's original owner, Louise Evelina Dupont Crowninshield, an American heiress, historic preservationist, and philanthropist. Louisa was influenced by her travels to Rome, and she established her garden with replicas of the architectural features she saw there."

**DESIGN + CONCEPT:** Jennifer Reed, Jennifer Designs Events, [jenniferdesignsevents.com](https://jenniferdesignsevents.com); [@jenniferdesignsevents](https://www.instagram.com/jenniferdesignsevents)

**FLOWER SOURCES:** Owlet Farms, Pilesgrove, New Jersey, [@owletfarms](https://www.instagram.com/owletfarms); CamFlor Inc., Watsonville, California, [@camfloring](https://www.instagram.com/camfloring); Muth Family Farm, Williamstown, New Jersey, [@muthfamilyfarm](https://www.instagram.com/muthfamilyfarm) **MODEL:** BrookeG. [@brookeitlist](https://www.instagram.com/brookeitlist) **PHOTOGRAPHY:** Haley Richter, Haley Richter Photo, [@haleyrichterphoto](https://www.instagram.com/haleyrichterphoto)

**HAIR + MAKEUP:** Jessica Saint Beauty [@jessicasaintbeauty](https://www.instagram.com/jessicasaintbeauty) and Toni Burke [@toniburke\\_muah](https://www.instagram.com/toniburke_muah)

**VENUE:** Hagley Museum, Wilmington, Delaware, [@hagleymuseum](https://www.instagram.com/hagleymuseum)

**TABLE STYLING:** Shannon Wellington [@shannonwellingtonweddings](https://www.instagram.com/shannonwellingtonweddings)

**DESIGN ASSISTANCE:** Jennifer Bender [@thisholidayhouse](https://www.instagram.com/thisholidayhouse)









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Created as an intentional "ruin," the garden includes cascading layers of Italianate pools, columns, statuary, and colonnades, built in the early 20th century, but crafted to appear weathered by time. Through local horticulture contacts, Jennifer received permission to photograph her botanical look in the gardens, even though they are still being restored and not open to the public. "I thought this was the perfect location for my wearable floral creation, worn by a model who looked like an ancient sculpture dressed in all-white florals," she said. "We painted her hair and body to match the white flowers, creating the illusion of a statue."

Using 330 stems of 'Bowl of Cream' and 'Gardenia' peonies and 40 stems of sweet peas, all grown by Owllet Farms of Pilesgrove, New Jersey, Jennifer fashioned her garment to emulate the fluid drape of a silk gown.

Other ingredients included peppergrass, larkspur, snapdragons, delphiniums, dusty miller, and ornamental wheat, all of which added textural details to the monochromatic white palette.

Due to the garden's hills and multiple levels, this floral look had to be more than pretty. "I've learned that if you want a model to walk in a floral garment, it needs to be comfortable," she added. "This dress is actually made with four different panels, and each is attached to a belt at the waist. When we moved locations, there were four of us who walked with







**THE CROWNINSHIELD  
GARDEN AT HAGLEY  
MUSEUM AND LIBRARY**

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The Garden is named for its designers: Louise du Pont Crowninshield and her husband, Francis ("Frank") Boardman Crowninshield. The Crowninshields were the last residents of the Dupont family home at Eleutherian Mills—part of Hagley Museum since 1958.

The Crowninshields began designing the garden in the 1920s, after Louise's father, Henry Algernon du Pont, bought Eleutherian Mills (the area encompassing the historic home and garden) from the Dupont Company in 1923. In their garden, they attempted to recreate replicas of architectural features they had seen on their travels in Rome. It was intentionally designed to appear aged and worn by time.

The Crowninshield Garden is unique among American garden landscapes. In its current form, it is a maintained ruin of a 1920s ruin garden, built on top of the industrial ruins of a 19th century gun powder factory. It is a ruin within a ruin with a ruin.

Brooke, our model, by holding onto the panels."

Sections of lightweight plastic mesh form each of the skirt sections, "flowered" by Jennifer and a design assistant. They inserted hundreds of peonies into small openings in the mesh material, taping individual stems in place on the back side of the skirt panels. Larkspur covers a contrasting section in the skirt, creating the look of lace, while a braided cord crosses the model's bare back adding feminine detailing.

Jennifer made a separate peony-and-sweet-pea shawl to wrap around the shoulders, and also attached peonies and sweet peas to a metal headband for the model's crown.

Jennifer and photographer Haley Richter posed their peony-garbed model in many places throughout the extensive garden landscape to reflect its unique architectural vignettes and destinations. Their visual story honors the alluring garden's original owner, an heiress to the Dupont fortune. Shannon Wellington brought the faux ruins to life, creating a table laden with flowers, candles, and platters of food. "She styled it in the spirit of a roaring twenties party that might have originally taken place here," Jennifer said.

These images, photographed at an iconic American garden, narrate the best of American Flowers Week. The story is told via a classical garment that celebrates quintessential American-grown peonies, designed and made by a gifted floral artist.