



Five years later, he decided to strike out on his own, first opening Floral Fantasy by Edward in Redfern Village. Six years on he started Edward on St. Simons in Hanover Square. In 2006, Cathey Petkash bought the business and Armstrong continues to create his floral masterpieces.

In the time Armstrong has lived in the Golden Isles he says there has been a noticeable evolution in wedding bouquet tastes. When he started designing a typical bouquet might be made mostly of roses and stephanotis (that replaced the traditional orange blossom because it held up better in the Southern climate). Pastel bouquets were popular as were the massive cascade style bouquets such as the one carried by Lady Diana Spencer when she married Prince Charles on July 29th, 1981. Today, bridal bouquets are smaller and with clean-cut lines and are often made up of a single type of flower arranged in a cluster.

Brides ordinarily visit Armstrong three to eight months before their wedding to begin the process of designing a bouquet. Some bring pictures from bridal magazines to show him what they like; others come with nothing more than a color in mind. The color, or colors, is a major factor (along with seasonality) in choosing the flowers, as the color has to match or accent the bridesmaids' dresses (most brides wear white or cream dresses and carry corresponding bouquets).

Recent lifestyle changes have brought about a revolution in the type and color of flower brides are seeking for bouquets, Armstrong says. Very vivid flowers such as large neon bright gerber (painted) daisies are popular as are small curvilinear calla lilies that come in deep/hot purple, scarlet, orange and bright yellow. Another current favorite is the red-hot tropical anthuriums flower with its large heart shaped leaves.

Contemporary brides who prefer subtler color are choosing pale pink or cream color peonies (a huge favorite in the 1940s) and because St. Simons Island is a beach community, many are interested in bouquets that incorporate seashells and coastal plants.

Armstrong says the most unusual bouquet he was ever asked to make was for a bride who was allergic to flowers. He made her a wonderful green bouquet composed of palmettos, beach grasses and varying types of green foliage from a number of local island plants.

What is the most memorable bridal bouquet he has designed? "A traditional southern bouquet dripping with gardenias, magnolia leaves and trails of ivy." Speaking of this wedding in his deep South Georgia drawl he says, "It was magnificent, there were magnolias everywhere!"

If Armstrong had no material or cost restraints in designing a bridal bouquet,

Flowers from left...

"Woodland Bridal Bouquet"

A free-form bouquet composed of oak branches, sugar bush leaves, bittersweet berry vine, cottonseed pods and a natural bird's nest holding an orange rose finished with a large gilded French ribbon.

"Victorian Love Message Bridal Bouquets"

Called tussie mussies when used in courting, these posy type bouquets are examples of the Victorian custom of associating emotions with flowers. The fern, baby's breath and freesia signify love of the intended while the varying colors of the roses send different messages. A red roses means, "I sincerely love and treasure you," while a coral rose means, "I love and (physically) desire you."

"Green Island Bridal Bouquet"

A shield-style bouquet (held in the crook of the arm), made popular at the turn of the 20th Century by French actress Sarah Bernhardt. This bouquet is composed of greenery grown in a St. Simons Island garden: sansevieria, including variegated, yellow edge and rare twisted horizontal and curled long leaf varieties; variegated and green pittosporum; a branch of anise; arching branches of elaeagnus, Monstera deliciosa and Fatsia japonica leaves bound in twine.

"Futuristic Bridal Bouquet"

A unique bouquet combining magnolia leaves, a large white orchid bough with curled copper tubing and a large aluminum mesh ribbon made using everyday materials from a local hardware store.

what would be his greatest design fantasy be? "A bouquet composed of an arrangement of old diamond brooches interspersed with different shaped crystals from old chandeliers," he replies.

Lacking a supply of old diamond brooches, Armstrong offers some less expensive (his bouquets usually run \$200-\$400) but nonetheless highly original bridal bouquets that are unique to the Golden Isles; they are Edward's Fancies. ■