Beautiful British Blooms

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The notion of being a flower farmer sounds idyllic, doesn't it? I have an image of the good life in my head, dancing amongst the rows of flowers, all bursting into bloom under the heat of the sun on a glorious summer's afternoon. Now imagine donning your wellies and a wet weather coat on an overcast drizzly spring morning, trudging through the mud, with not a green shoot in sight and you'll see the reality of being a Flower Farmer.

This was exactly the sight that greeted me as I head to meet up with Roz Chandler, down on her flower farm that is Field Gate Flowers.

For Roz, flower farming is her life and one which she lives whatever the weather. Of course, being a flower farmer wasn't the career she discussed with the school careers officer – her degree is in Environmental Science – but since graduating she has had a massively varied career doing things like working as a Club 18-30s rep, running an international events management business, and digital marketing.

Then one day it all changed.

"I stumbled upon a one-day course that covered the basics of growing flowers and the rest, as they say, is history."

Her journey into flower farming began almost 15 years ago when Roz and her husband bought a family home with five acres of land.

"I always knew that I wanted to do something with the land," Roz tells me. "We went through the usual; veg, chicken, and pigs, but it didn't feel right. After about five years, I stumbled across the course I mentioned earlier and now, here we are."

A decade on, Roz's initial project of three one metre beds has grown into rows upon

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rows of flower beds and a small collection of polytunnels.

"My first beds were actually a surprise success," Roz explained. "They made be think 'I can do this, I'm quite good', and it grew from there. Excuse the pun."

Combining her marketing skills with flower farming became a winning combination for Roz and word quickly spread about Field Gate Flowers. Starting off by making bouquets and wedding arrangements for local delivery from the beautiful seasonal flowers, Field Gate Flowers soon picked up a reputation for creating very natural, boho-style arrangements, while offering something altogether more sustainable and eco-friendlier.

When the pandemic hit in the spring of 2020 the wedding business stopped overnight. Roz also found that her freelance marketing role was paused, giving her a small window of headspace and time, which Roz, being Roz, quickly filled.

Within a couple of weeks, she launched Seed to Vase - an online course whereby participants could find out how to grow cut flowers and learn with the business skills of how to make a profit from growing seasonal British flowers. Never in a million years did Roz anticipate what would come next: the participants of the course grew into a community, supporting each other, drawing inspiration and confidence from each other. "As the course went on, people came out of their shells, shared their experiences and their own stories. It was like growing flowers provided some kind of therapy. Over time I started to receive letters in the post to say the course we offer has changed lives. One of the ladies on the course had recently lost her twenty-one-year-old daughter in a horrific accident. I saw her a few weeks ago and she told me how I'd changed her life, how her allotment and our course had been her saviour – it's things like that that make me proud."

What started off as a passion project has turned into a business and an extraordinarily successful one at that, with 11.5k followers on Instagram, several Facebook groups, online courses (including the Seed to Vase cohort two), and a number one best-selling book; Seed to Vase.

And let's not forget, there's still a flower farm that needs tending to. As I sit here listening to Roz talk so passionately, I begin to understand that Roz's passion for British flowers runs far deeper than producing beautiful arrangements. Roz is a woman on a mission: "I want everyone to grow their own cutting patch - we must stop importing flowers," she says. "There is the carbon footprint to consider and don't even get me started on the lack of smell, pesticides, and chemicals used in some flower farms or the conditions that some of the workers work in. Alongside this, we must be more mindful about the standard materials that most florists use – thinks like oasis foam need to go - it doesn't degrade for hundreds of years. I just don't understand how we take something as natural and beautiful as flowers and arrange it in something totally opposite," explains Roz.

It may be raining outside, but it is clear to see that Roz is bringing sunshine and warmth to many others. From her beautiful arrangements and bouquets, to the joy her courses, social media, and the podcast bring, I have a sneaky suspicion that this isn't the last we will hear from Roz and the team at Field Gate Flowers.

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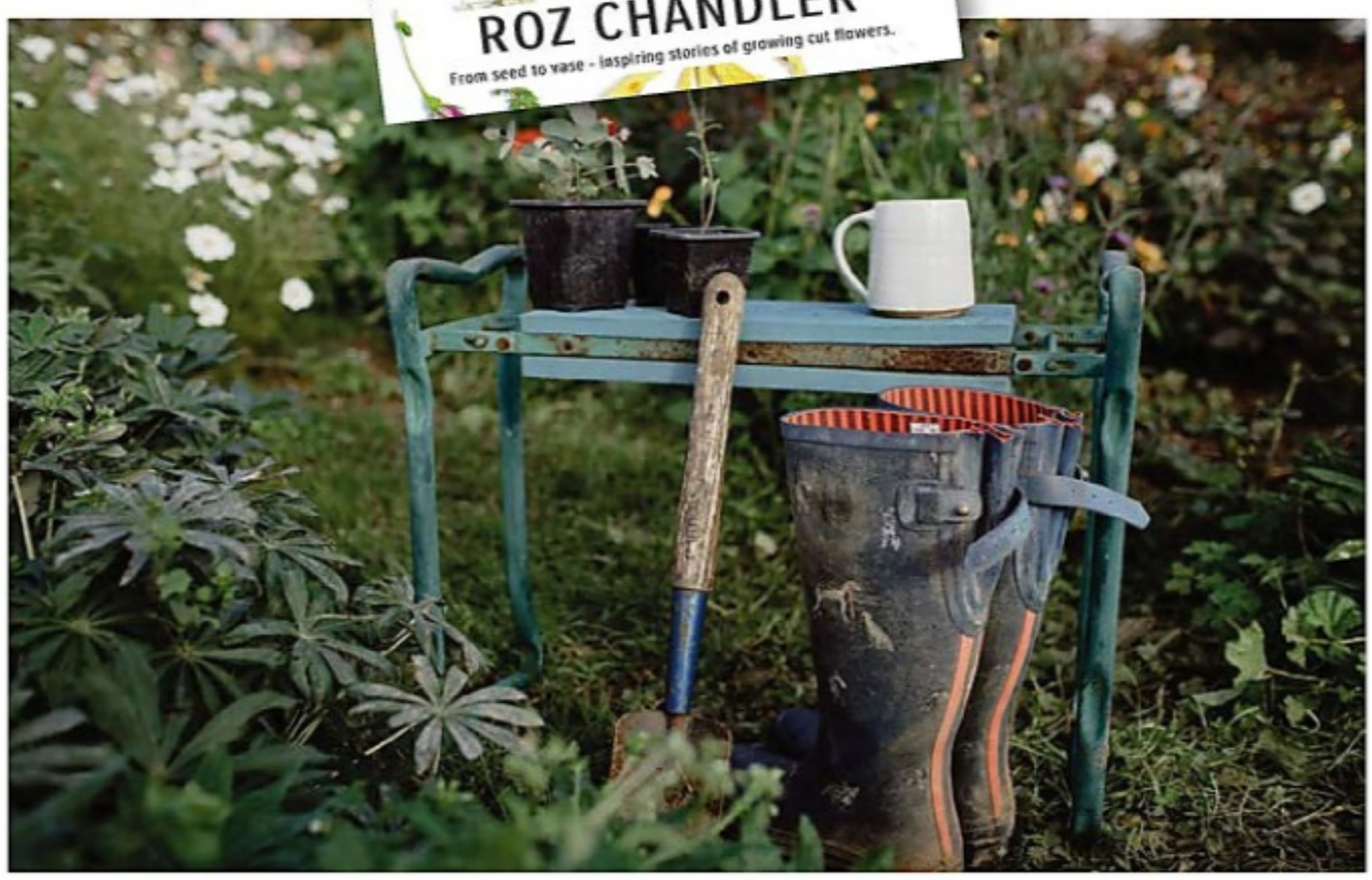
Seed to Vase: How growing Cut Flowers Inspired Lives to Bloom (2022) by Roz Chandler is available on Amazon