

*"An inspiring and beautiful book –
Willow's wild and wayward flowers are simply stunning."*

POPPY DELEIVINGNE

Arranged by season, *Flourish* shows you how to transform even just a handful of fresh cuttings into seriously stylish arrangements that will elevate your home from the ordinary to the extraordinary.

Using both flowers and foliage – from anemones and apple blossom to eucalyptus and poppy-seed heads – Willow Crossley's 38 stunning projects include a gorgeous clematis wreath and dahlias arranged in a vintage tea set, as well as more elaborate displays such as a lysimachia disco ball – a glorious globe of green hydrangeas dotted with larkspur and veronica.

Packed with tips and ideas throughout, this is a definitive, inspirational guide to floral styling your home the modern way.

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With a background in design and fashion, Willow Crossley trained at the Covent Garden Academy of Flowers and is now a successful floral stylist based in West Oxfordshire, England. She creates floral arrangements for events and weddings and her clients include Anthropologie, Jo Malone and Mulberry.

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Willow Crossley

Flourish

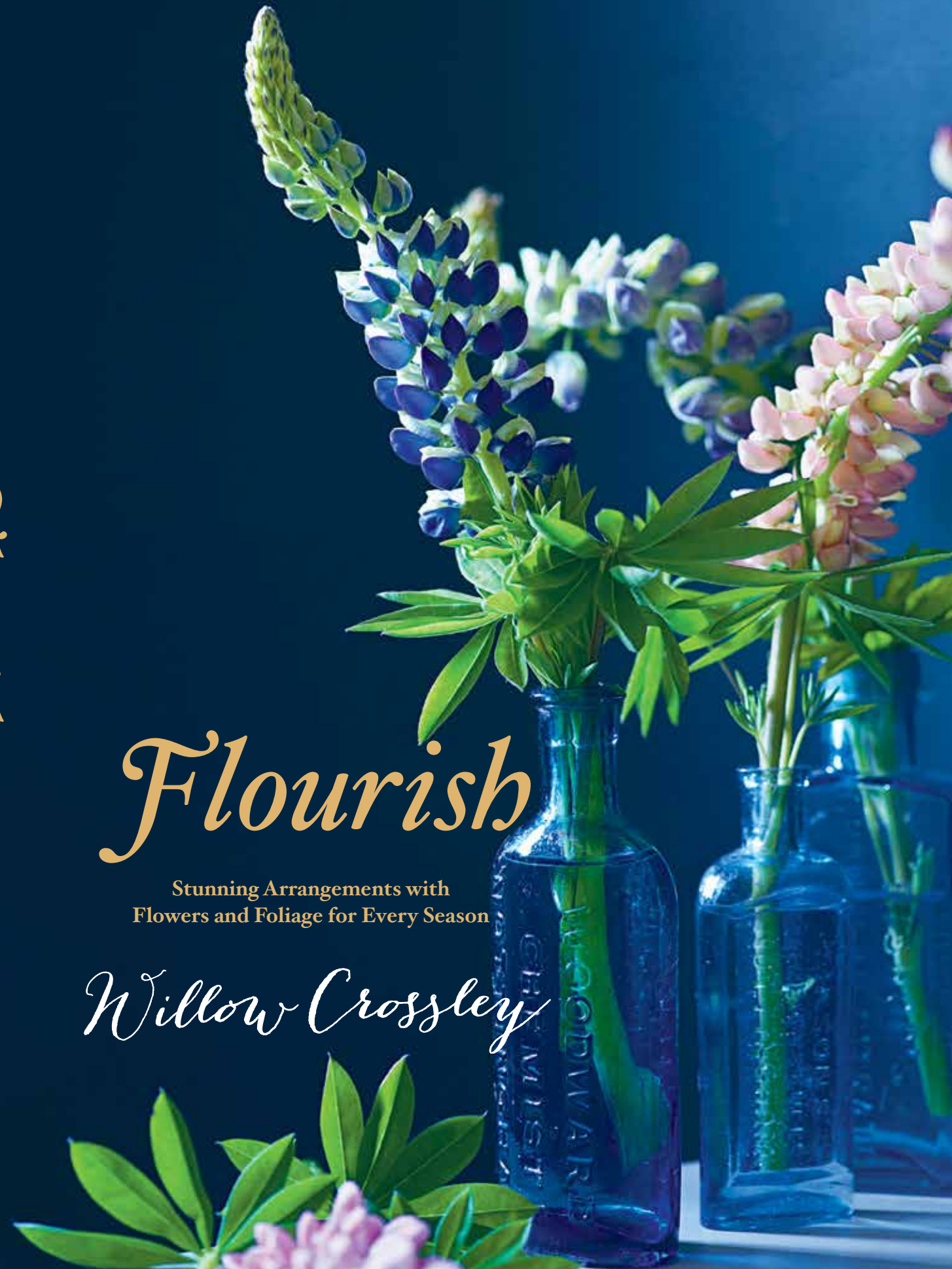


GIBBS
SMITH

Flourish

Stunning Arrangements with
Flowers and Foliage for Every Season

Willow Crossley





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ALSO KNOWN AS

Anemone coronaria

‘De Caen’

Anemone nemorosa

(Windflower)

Vase life 10 days

1

Anemones

Poppy flowering anemones (‘De Caen’ varieties) are an early spring highlight. They are so cheery when you really want some intense color in your life. Part of the same family as buttercups, the wild ones are known as windflowers.

Anemones come in saturated, glossy jewel colors — amethyst purples, garnet and ruby reds and pinks, but my favorites are the white ones with a velvety black middle. Sometimes you find one or two in a “white” batch that look as if their petal tips have been painted with splashes of bright red and these ones make me incredibly happy. Unlike some of the garden-grown varieties, which can have hopelessly short stems, ‘De Caen’ anemones have long stems which makes them very handy for arranging. Once in the water they continue to flex their petals and their stems lean in all directions so an arrangement tends to change its shape overnight. Either enjoy the natural wildness or take this into account when you’re deciding what to put them in and where to place them. Or, just keep your snips handy and cut them down slightly if they get too unruly for your liking.

Colored glasses or Moroccan tea lights make great containers for anemones. Try them dotted down a kitchen table, a mishmash of colors and heights. Anemones are thirsty creatures, so keep water levels topped up and they can last a good ten days.

There are many more varieties of anemones than the bright, single color ones but they’re not readily available. If you can, do try to grow your own. That way you can get your hands on the exciting stripy ones, such as *Anemone coronaria* *bicolor* ‘De Caen’ and *A. coronaria* ‘Hollandia’.

Waxflower

There's never any worry that waxflowers won't perform on the night. These low-key, native Australian wild flowers are a dream for arranging. They can last up to three weeks and wilting is not a word in their dictionary. With their needlelike leaves and tiny hooked flowers they come in a range of pretty pinky, purple, and white tones. They are especially handy in mid-winter when you want a little bit of color and for things to last that little bit longer than usual. They're also an excellent filler.

I've made them into candle bobeches here—basically, candlestick decorations. If you mist them with water and keep them cool they should last at least a couple of days so you can make them in advance of any occasion that you'd like to use them for.

[p. 28]
SPRING

ALSO KNOWN AS

Chamelaucium uncinatum

Geraldton waxflower

Vase life 2–3 weeks





WAXFLOWER

(continued)

ingredients.

Covered wire

Snips/garden scissors

Waxflowers

Chamelaucium uncinatum

Stub wire

Candlesticks with a ledge
for the bobèche to rest on

Candles

1. Make a circle the required size by wrapping the covered wire around itself in a ring until it feels sturdy.
2. Snip off lengths of the waxflower about 3in (8cm) long. Wire a few of the small lengths together and then, with another piece of stub wire, wire this onto the circlet you've made.
3. Continue, making mini little groupings and attaching them to the ring until it's totally covered. You don't want to have any wire on show. I like mine to look quite wild and wayward.
4. If you are making them in advance, keep them alive by misting with water regularly or even better, keep them under damp layers of tissue paper until you are ready to use them.

Aquilegia

It's the daintiness of aquilegias that I love so much. Their delicate bonnet-like petals conjure up notions of magic and fairies. Or of Victorian ladies, as "granny's bonnet" is one of the names they go by, the other two being "aquilegia" and "columbine." *Columbus* in Latin means "dove" while *aquila* means "eagle." Their petals are said to resemble the open wings of the birds and the long, graceful spurs represent their curved heads and necks. They flower in early summer and are a thankful stopgap between the end of the spring flowers and the start of the summery ones.

In this arrangement they are shown off in a mossy table centerpiece with some other spring favorites: foxgloves, *Fritillaria persica*, Solomon's seal, and snake's head fritillaries. These mossy wreaths are incredibly easy to create and can be made with almost any flower, providing the stems are strong enough to be poked into oasis.

[p. 88]
SUMMER

ALSO KNOWN AS

Columbine, Granny's bonnet

Vase life 5 days





AQUILEGIA

(continued)

ingredients.

Oasis wreath—this one has a 12in (30cm) diameter

3 Foxgloves *Digitalis purpurea*

5 Solomon’s seal
Polygonatum multiflorum

5 white Aquilegia

3 purple *Fritillaria persica*

3 Snake’s head fritillaries
Fritillaria meleagris

2 *Thalictrum delavayi*
‘Splendide white’ stems

Sphagnum moss

Mossing pins

1. Make sure you work on a surface that doesn’t mind getting wet—i.e. not your best cloth-covered dining table. Working with floral foam makes a mess.
2. Condition your flowers (see page 174).
3. Start by dropping the ring into a basin of water and wait until it’s fully absorbed the water. Do not push it down to hurry it along.
4. One by one, insert the stems into the foam, turning the wreath as you go. You want them to appear as if they are growing naturally so, for instance, the foxglove is inserted to look poker straight. The Solomon’s seal, on the other hand, grows in a curving habit so is slotted in at an angle.
5. When you have added all your flowers, start introducing the moss, in and around the base of the stems, making sure you cover every bit of foam. Mossing pins will help to secure any unruly bits—to use them, simply push each one down on top of the bit of moss you want to secure into the oasis. They magically disappear in the moss and hold it all together.
6. Water the wreath every day by misting with water or dropping gently into a sink full of water. Just remember to wait for the wreath to stop dripping before putting it back in situ.

Lysimachia Disco Balls

Lysimachia, or loosestrife, isn't an especially exciting flower. It's definitely not a showstopper but a very useful and pretty filler. And it behaves very well at all times which makes it great for using in this disco ball—no wilting or throwing petals on the floor. These giant pom-poms get the most wonderful reaction from people and require relatively little skill to make. The hardest part is stringing up the ball with string and wire at the start.

This ball should feel very natural and wild so keep it quite tonal with lots of greens and whites with a few splashes of burgundy. My lawn is so unkempt, uncut, out-of-control grass covered in little white flowers and clover—this pom-pom looks slightly as if my garden has just exploded and I've rolled it into a ball and hung it up again.

The base is made with green hydrangea. Not big whole ones, you want to break each head up into little florets and then insert them into the wet floral foam. When the whole ball is covered in hydrangea—no floral foam left on show—you then add the rest of your team. I used white larkspur, *Consolida ajacis*, *Sanguisorba officinalis*, *Gaura lindheimeri*, *Ammi majus*, and white veronica.

It's easier to cover the ball with hydrangea before you hang it—do it on a table, resting the ball in a cereal bowl or even perched on top of a tennis ball tube—and then as soon as you've covered the ball, hang it up and then add the remaining ingredients in situ. It does get very heavy so make sure you have tough string and a strong, reliable hook to hang it from. Nothing is worse than finishing your masterpiece then discovering the nail is not strong enough to take the weight as the whole thing smashes to the ground. Or, even worse, all over your beautifully laid dinner table.

The beauty of these disco balls is their chameleon quality—you can make them with almost any flowers in any color to fit any theme or color scheme. Roses, carnations, daisies, gypsophila, and sunflowers would all make good bases. To prolong their life, invest in a water mister as spraying them every day does help them look their best for longer.



ALSO KNOWN AS

Lysimachia clethroides



LYSIMACHIA
DISCO BALL

(continued)

1. Prepare the floral foam ball by dropping it gently into a deep bucket/sink of water. Don't push it down, just leave it to absorb water in its own time and by the time it's fully submerged it'll be ready to use, which will take no more than 10 minutes
2. Meanwhile, remove all the foliage from the stems. Sort the conditioned stems (see page 174) into families and lay them out in front of you. Snip the hydrangeas into small florets, cutting the stems at a sharp angle to enable easy access into the floral foam.
3. Cut the chicken wire so that it will generously wrap around the foam ball. Next, take the binding wire and wrap it through and around the chicken wire-wrapped ball. Twist it together tightly and make a loop—the weight of the ball will hang from here so it needs to be secure.
4. Starting with the hydrangea florets, loosely cover the whole ball. This is your base. Then fill in the spaces with the Ammi. When there is no more floral foam on show, add the rest of the flowers randomly, to cover the whole ball. Finishing up with the lightest, airy wisps of the Gaura.
5. When you have your base covered, if it's accessible and easy for you to work from, hang the ball where it's going to be on display. This will make it much easier in the long run as otherwise you're going to bash the wispiest, long stems that are sticking out of the ball.
6. To keep the flowers looking fresh, spritz with water at least once a day.
7. This disco ball is still hanging in our house, nearly a year after I made it. It's dried beautifully and although it's no longer green and fresh, the faded look is almost as pleasing.

ingredients.

Garden scissors/snips

String or twine—
I use butcher's twine

35in (90cm) length of
2in (5cm) gauge chicken wire

Strong 3mm binding wire,
enough to wrap around
the ball several times.

Mossing pins

Clear fishing wire

Floral foam sphere—
I've used 8in (20cm)
but you can get many sizes

10 Hydrangea heads

20 stems white Larkspur
Consolida ajacis

20 *Gaura lindheimerei* heads

20 stems white Lysimachia—
Veronica would work
just as well

5 Great Burnet
Sanguisorba officinalis stems

15 *Ammi majus* heads

34

Paperwhite Narcissi

Paperwhite narcissi belong to the daffodil family and, in my opinion, reign supreme over their whole kingdom. Their sparkling white, delicate petals and heavenly scent bring huge joy to a quiet time of year on the flower front. As well as using them as potted bulbs as in this arrangement, they are just as gorgeous and easy to source as cut flowers too. Along with muscari (grape hyacinth) and amaryllis, paperwhites are some of the easiest bulbs to grow for indoor displays at home, they usually take six weeks from planting to flower.

I've used an enormous piece of cork tree bark as the container here. When I lived in France I used to find coracle-like shards of it on the ground and would drag them home as woodland treasure. It gives a fantastically wild and rustic look. As well as using them as planters they also make great plates—perfect for substantial crudité platters.

For a stunning festive arrangement with narcissi as cut flowers rather than bulbs, you can mix them with white ranunculus, dusty miller *Centaurea cineraria*, acid green bupleurum, and magnolia buds. Lots of small vases dotted down the table both look and smell incredible.

ALSO KNOWN AS

Narcissi

Vase life 2 weeks in
cool conditions

(p. 160)
WINTER





PAPERWHITE
NARCISSI

(continued)

ingredients.

30 Paperwhite bulbs —
or as many as you can
fit in your container
(don't skimp on quantities)

Potting soil

Gravel/small stones

10 twigs from the garden

Moss

Bark planter — If you can't
get bark like this, think about
using an old wooden wine box,
a huge china cachepot or
an old wicker basket, lined

1. Sprinkle the gravel or stones into the bottom of the container. These will act as drainage.
2. Add a layer of soil about 4in (10cm) deep on top of the gravel and drop the bulbs in, leaving about half an inch between each one. Cover with another inch of soil, not too much, give them a good drink and let them drain.
3. They then want to sit in a cool dark room for 7–10 days to stimulate the roots. As soon as they start sprouting, bring them out into the light. Rotate the container every few days to keep the stalks straight.
4. When they are ready to face their public, cover the soil with moss and stake with some twiggy branches picked from the garden. These will act as supports when the flower stems get taller and more wayward. I love using hazel or, for a real winter wonderland feel, I spray the twigs white.
5. Remember to water them every few days and to ensure the flowers bloom for as long as possible, keep them cool and away from direct sunlight.
6. Think about staggering the planting times to give you a long succession of flowers. It's rather sad when they all bloom and wilt at the same time—although keeping them in the cold does postpone their moment of glory.
7. When daffodils and narcissi stems are first cut, they produce a toxic sap. Unlike some other flowers, they can't be cauterized. To stop the sap flow, stand them in water for an hour by themselves and then arrange in fresh water.





How to make a garland

1. Start by measuring how long you want the garland to be, using some string or ribbon, and then add 8in (20cm) to each end to use as the hanging loops.
2. Lay the string or ribbon out on the floor and then add the foliage on top of it.
3. You basically want to make a foliage sausage, the fatter the better.
4. Next, take the reel wire and starting at one end, carefully wrap the foliage to the string or ribbon, binding up and around the sausage to hold it all together. Don't panic if it looks a bit stiff and solid at this stage.
5. Personally, I prefer to hang the garland in situ at this stage. I find it easier to see what I'm doing and also if you fill it properly and *then* move it, there's likely to be quite a lot of fall while in transit.
6. Either way you choose to do it, add enough foliage until the garland looks full enough that you could happily display it as is. So make it full, and bushy, please. Then start feeding in the flowers. In the eucalyptus garland I've made on page 168 the only flowers I used were dried hydrangeas. This is great to remember if budgets are tight, you really don't need buckets of flowers to create something mega. And you can always add in a few silk flowers.
7. The easiest way to hang a garland is to knock a couple of nails into each end of a fireplace (or wherever you want to hang the garland) and attach the garland to the nails with the wire you've used to wrap it with. Sometimes you won't be able to knock holes in things though, in which case I use removable hooks. Attach several of the removable hooks evenly spaced on top of the mantelpiece (or area you want to hang the garland). Using fishing wire, attach the garland to the hooks. If you can see the wire, disguise it by adding a new piece of eucalyptus or hydrangea.

TOOL KIT

If you are planning on playing around with flowers on a regular basis or even thinking about creating some sort of flowery business, it's a good idea to start building some sort of floral toolbox.

Cutting

When I was on a course at the Covent Garden Academy of Flowers in London, they introduced me to Japanese secateurs. They were completely life-changing. I'm now spoiled and can never use anything else! Other florists prefer long-nosed snips or floral scissors for soft stems and secateurs for woodier material. Try them out in your hand before you buy any snips as you'll be using them a lot. You'll find what works for you.

Scissors

I try not to use my secateurs for anything other than flowers. There's always lots of paper to snip and rubber bands to cut away from huge wraps of flowers.

Knives

A small, sharp knife is useful for removing thorns from roses. You also need a larger knife for cutting floral foam.

Mossing pins

These are U-shaped lengths of wire for holding things in place when making wreaths and working with floral foam. Originally designed for keeping moss in place, they are also very handy for securing foliage, flower heads, fruit, ribbon, flowers with soft stems, fabric, and bark.

Floral tape or anchor tape

An essential florist's tool for anchoring wet floral foam to containers, and for securing chicken wire forms into vases.

Stem tape

Waterproof green plastic covered tape, used to bunch flowers together and to cover and seal in the moisture of individually wired flowers and stems.

Chicken wire/netting wire

For using in containers as a structure and to keep stems in place.

Stub wire

Lengths of stub wire are used for wiring small flowers for boutonnieres and head crowns. There are different gauges to use, depending on the size of the flower. The smaller the gauge, the thicker the wire.

Reel wire

I mostly use this when making garlands. It comes in lots of different colors and thicknesses and comes in one long length on a roll.

Flower frogs/pin holders

These are small disks that can be made from glass, lead, pottery, or bronze. They sit at the bottom of a vase or container to hold flower arrangements in place. There are spiky ones to hold thin and flimsy flowers, ones with holes for thicker stems like tulips and hairpin frogs with wire loops for woody stems and branches. They need to be stuck down to containers with waterproof glue or floral putty. You must make sure that both the container and the pin holders are dry before sticking them together.

