

THE MEANINGFUL MOTHER'S DAY Planter



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As far back as the 1600s, flowers were used as beautiful but silent messengers, containing deeper meanings and portraying hidden emotions that, during those precarious times, dare not be spoken aloud. In fact, flowers, blooms and other botanicals make up an entire coded language of their own. A bountiful botanical language of blooms.

The world speaks to us through the seasons and all the botanical gifts each season brings. That is, if we slow down long enough to listen. As spring whispers to us through her buds of hope and possibility, we turn our attention to the mothers and/or mother figures in our lives. They are the ones who love us unconditionally. They share our dreams, feel our pain, and cheer the loudest. They are who we turn to when we need comfort. They know the depths of our hearts, sometimes better than we know them ourselves. They have, through their unfaltering faithfulness, given us the support and confidence to be the trailblazers we've become. They represent motherhood to us in the most genuine and heartfelt sense of the word.

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ABOUT JESS

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Jess Buttermore, her husband, Adam, and their three children live in a small town nestled in the mountains outside of Seattle, Washington. Their homestead, Cedar House Farm, is Buttermore's sanctuary where she enjoys gardening, herbalism, farming, baking, and photography. Buttermore is most at peace with her hands in the dirt and her camera within arm's reach.

I created The Meaningful Mother's Day Planter and accompanying tutorial as a tribute to all those who fill a motherhood role as well as to you, who feel called to give something meaningful to a mother or mother figure. As the creator of this planter, you will customize it to create a seasonal gift, inspired by the mother or mother figure in your life, that is overflowing with sentiment and usefulness. As the designer of this planter, let the creative process be therapy for your tired soul. Let it slow you down a bit and help you find that much-needed balance.

Let Mother Nature guide you. Let the finished product be a gift to mom, but the creative process be a gift of self-love to yourself.



made with love

Choose Meaningful Botanicals

When choosing fresh potted (rooted in soil) botanicals for this planter, I invite you to first consider what words you would use to describe the recipient, your connection to her, and what she means to you. Consider, also, what type of botanical she would appreciate most. Is she drawn to bright colors or pastels? Textures or beautiful scents? Native plants rich in culture or perhaps the timelessness of a perennial that will come up year after year? In the pages that follow, I've included a variety of plants alongside their symbolism as a resource to you. By incorporating floriography unique to the recipient, this handcrafted botanical planter becomes not only a beautiful, seasonal eco-friendly gift but a message rich in meaning.

TO BEGIN, I recommend using a perennial as the focal plant in the arrangement, with the intention that she will be able to lift and transplant it into her own garden or landscape later this spring. Some of my favorite ornamental blooming bulbs and tubers that may be available at your local nursery or market, and would make lovely sentiments to a mother, include:

- **ALSTROEMERIA** symbolizing a powerful bond
- **COLUMBINE** symbolizing wisdom
- **CONEFLOWER** (purple) symbolizing strength, health
- **CYCLAMEN** symbolizing happiness, hidden hope, devotion, sincere heart, empathy, maternal love for our ancestors, prosperity, fertility
- **DAHLIA** symbolizing dignity, eternal love, commitment
- **DAFFODIL** symbolizing admiration
- **FREESIA** symbolizing lasting friendship
- **GERANIUM** (scarlet) symbolizing comfort or (white) symbolizing protection
- **HYACINTH** (blue) symbolizing constancy or (white) symbolizing beauty, loveliness
- **HYDRANGEA** symbolizing calmness
- **TULIP** symbolizing joy, perfect love

If you would rather incorporate an adolescent vine, shrub, or sapling as the focal plant, consider one of these for their beautiful meanings:

- **ALMOND** symbolizing hope
- **APPLE** symbolizing preference
- **BOUGAINVILLEA** symbolizing passion
- **CANARY** grass symbolizing perseverance
- **CEDAR** symbolizing strength, I live for thee
- **CLEMATIS** symbolizing mental beauty
- **DOGWOOD** symbolizing perseverance, undiminished love
- **EDELWEISS** symbolizing courage
- **ELDER** symbolizing compassion
- **ELM** symbolizing dignity
- **FERN** symbolizing sincerity
- **HONEYSUCKLE** symbolizing bonds of love, devotion
- **PEONY** symbolizing bravery
- **ROSE** symbolizing love
- **SUCCULENT** symbolizing tenacity, strength, selflessness

Note - your focal botanical should be the tallest plant in the arrangement but should not be so tall that it is awkward in the vessel you've chosen or that it will obstruct the view of people sitting around the table or mingling around the kitchen island where it may be placed.

NEXT, choose herbs to incorporate into the planter. Culinary herbs are my favorite for their usefulness in the kitchen, however, if your recipient suffers from a health condition, perhaps a medicinal herb would be more appreciated and useful. Here are a few questions to consider when choosing herbs: Does your mother (or mother figure) have a favorite herb that she often uses when preparing meals or baked goods for her loved ones? Does she have a signature herb she adds to a family favorite dish or to garnish her favorite summer cocktail? Is there a particular herbal scent that brings to mind a childhood memory of your own that you share with her? Or perhaps you discover an herb in the list below that you feel called to introduce to her? Choose at least one herb that is fragrant so that your arrangement ignites all the senses. Thoughtfully choosing herbs that she uses regularly, reflect a memory, or have a medicinal purpose that could help aid in healing or ease her discomfort, along with conveying a meaning or emotion that describes her will show that you pay attention to the details and that you appreciate her.

Some relatively easy-to-find potted herbs that have lovely meanings for a Mother's Day arrangement include:

- **BASIL*** symbolizing royalty
- **BEE balm*** symbolizing comfort
- **BORAGE** symbolizing courage, strength, perseverance, resilience
- **CALENDULA** symbolizing thinking of you, joy, health, healing, thankfulness
- **CATMINT** symbolizing love, happiness, luck and love to women
- **CHAMOMILE*** symbolizing comfort
- **DILL** symbolizing good spirits
- **ECHINACEA** symbolizing strength, health
- **EUCALYPTUS*** symbolizing protection
- **FENNEL** symbolizing strength, worthy of praise
- **FEVERFEW** symbolizing warmth, good health, you light up my life
- **HONEYMELON SAGE*** symbolizing sweet virtue
- **JUNIPER*** symbolizing affection
- **LAVENDER*** symbolizing renewal, devotion, loyalty
- **MINT*** symbolizing virtue (peppermint* for warmth and friendship, spearmint* for warmth of sentiment)
- **OREGANO** symbolizing joy in love and life

- **ROSEMARY*** symbolizing remembrance, constancy, fertility, loyalty, friendship, vitality
- **SAGE*** symbolizing virtue
- **THYME*** symbolizing love and beauty
- **ST. JOHN'S WORT** (celandine) symbolizing protection, joys to come
- **YARROW** symbolizing bravery

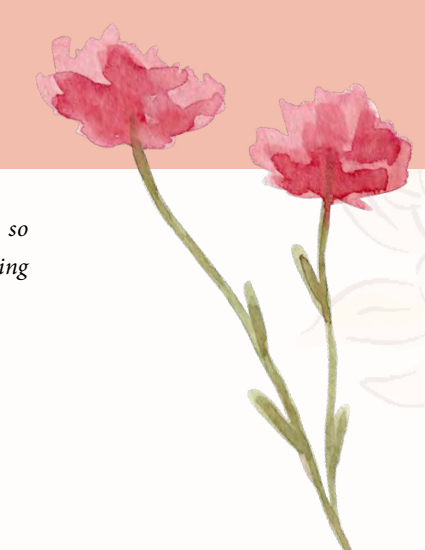
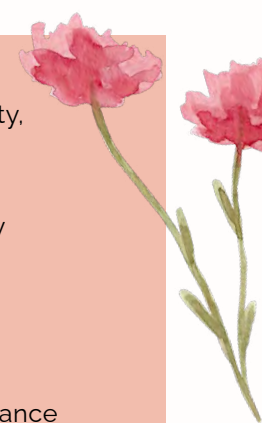
* indicates herbs that have a lovely fragrance appropriate for this project.

Note - many of these herbs (lavender, sage, rosemary, and juniper come first to mind) are perennial shrubs and could also act as the primary focal plant in your arrangement.

For a splash of color and additional sentiment, consider adding a few small, low-maintenance spring-blooming border annuals to the arrangement. My favorite easy-to-find, inexpensive options that have meanings often used to describe mother figures and come in an abundance of colors include:

- **HELIOTROPE** symbolizing devotion, devoted affection
- **IMPATIENS** symbolizing motherly love
- **PRIMROSE** symbolizing optimism
- **ERBENA** symbolizing prayer, healing, creativity, happiness
- **VIOLA** (including violet) symbolizing modesty, filled with love

One of the best parts of botanical design is the endless ways one can mix and match the various elements of color, texture, positioning, form, and meaning within an arrangement. My hope is that the lists above act as a foundation to inspire you to elevate your Mother's Day gift using the love language of flowers. Be curious about botanicals I've listed above that may be new to you. Through this creative process, find what is most pleasing to your eye (if it brings you joy or stirs a powerful emotion in you, it will likely do so in your mama too) while allowing the process of creating with seasonal botanicals to develop your own personal style.



Choose a Vessel

To choose a meaningful vessel, think outside the box. Go beyond your traditional terracotta planter or galvanized bucket and consider nontraditional options that would be useful and specific to your recipient. For example, does your mother collect a particular type of glassware (milk glass, jadeite, hobnail, moonstone, etc.)? Does she have a favorite home décor store you could visit to find a serving bowl, wide-mouthed tea pot, or even a birdbath that could double as a vessel for this project? Perhaps you enjoy antiquing together and want to find a vintage piece that would call to her? What colors and finishes would best fit the decor of her home? The vessel is an important part of the gift, so choose something that can be displayed but that can be repurposed after the flowers have faded or the plants have been transplanted. A vessel that has a wide mouth and sits low, such as an urn, large bowl, or basin would be ideal so it can be displayed on a tabletop without obstructing views at eye level. For this project, I chose a vintage enamel basin that I found at our local antique store.

meaningful vessel

Now that you've chosen your botanical ingredients and vessel, you're ready to build the arrangement. Collect the following tools and supplies:

- **GARDEN TROWEL** or scoop
- **WATERING CAN** filled with fresh water
- **GIFT TAG AND TWINE** for which to detail the meaning of your botanical message (or print one of the cards I've created for this purpose; see below)
- **BRANCH TIP(S)** approximate 12" tall, bamboo floral card holder, wooden chopstick, or wooden skewer for tucking into your arrangement and attaching your botanical message

If you'd like to source a branch tip to present your botanical message card on, two fresh meaningful options available in spring are French willow symbolizing motherhood or blossoming orange tips symbolizing purity and loveliness. Additionally, dogwood branch blossoms are beautiful and also bloom in the spring and symbolize undiminished love. Lastly, you can never go wrong with foraging a branch tip decorated with moss from your property or nearby forest, symbolizing maternal love.

Note - To help you relay your botanical message, I've created two Meaningful Mother's Day notecards that can be printed on kraft paper or cardstock, filled in by your own hand, and signed with love. You can access via this QR code.



Next, gather your ingredients:

- **PEBBLES** (enough to cover the bottom of your vessel)
- **POTTING SOIL**
- **A SMALL POTTED PERENNIAL**, adolescent shrub, sapling, or a set of potted blooming bulbs or tubers
- **VARIETY OF POTTED HERBS**
- **LOW BORDER ANNUALS** for a splash of color and additional sentiment
- **FRESH OR PRESERVED NATURAL MOSS** (foraged forest, Spanish, and Sphagnum moss are great options)

When collecting your ingredients, consider elements that may be available right in your backyard garden or foraged from around your homestead. For example, here in the Pacific Northwest, several types of moss and lichen grow throughout our property, so I foraged some for this project. Do you have peony roots or dahlia bulbs that have multiplied over the years that can be divided and gifted as the focal perennial for this arrangement? Perhaps you have a large patch of tulips that your mama admires every spring and you'd like to dig up and pass a few along to her. Incorporating a small piece of your land that she can transplant to her own will speak volumes of sentiment and love.

Gather Tools, Supplies, and Ingredients



Build the Arrangement



A complete glossary of flowers, herbs and other botanicals and their meanings can be found in a book I co-authored with my incredibly talented friend, Lisa McGuinness, called *The Love Language of Flowers*, that will be available for sale later this spring. In it, you will find a visual glossary of flowers and their Victorian meanings organized both alphabetically and by meaning, so you can find the perfect botanical combination in every season. It also includes instructions and floral concepts as a foundation for creating sustainable focal arrangements like the one shown here, along with how to incorporate unexpected botanicals and other interesting elements to bring a fresh look to your arrangements. Perhaps most importantly, it includes 30 slow botanical designs with meaning that have a wild yet elegant edge accompanied by strategies that honor the seasonal rhythms of nature, build confidence, and provide flexibility to let your own creative voice develop along the way. It is truly an excellent resource for those seeking to grow their botanical creativity in a meaningful way. You can preorder *The Love Language of Flowers* via this QR code.



Resource for this article: Buttermore, Jess and McGuinness Lisa, *The Love Language of Flowers*, Mango Publishing, June 2023

Now that you've gathered everything you'll need; you are ready to build the arrangement:

1. Fill the bottom of your vessel with a layer of pebbles to act as drainage. Then add a layer of potting soil, filling your vessel about 1/2 full.
2. Add the focal botanical. If the vessel you've chosen is round, arrange the botanical in the center of the vessel. If your vessel is square or rectangular and will sit flush against a wall, the focal botanical should be positioned in the back. If the botanical has an established root system, carefully loosen the roots and nestle them into the soil layer in the vessel.
3. Incorporate your herbs, loosening the roots and interspersing them between and/or around the primary botanical. If you are incorporating small annuals, alternate these with the herbs, spacing them evenly around the focal plant.
4. Fill the rest of the vessel with potting soil up to the lip of the vessel.
5. Add a layer of moss to blanket the soil, help retain moisture, and add a beautiful velvety texture to your arrangement. Symbolizing maternal love, moss is an ideal finishing touch. Give your arrangement a good drink of water.
6. Lastly, share the meaning by including a handwritten tag, notecard, or greeting card explaining the sentiment behind each botanical element and why you chose it for her. This is a good place to reference which botanicals are perennials that she can plant out; which are herbs intended for use in her kitchen; and which are annuals that are happiest in containers, window boxes, or planters. Attach your message to the branch, bamboo card holder, chopstick, or skewer you've chosen and nestle it into your arrangement off to one side so it peeks out above the botanicals.

The arrangement in this tutorial uses the following botanicals:

- **CYCLAMEN** for the whimsicality of its fluttering petals, religious symbolism, and heartfelt meaning. It prefers cooler temps and is often considered a winter flower, however it grows well into spring here in the Pacific Northwest. With its nodding stem, it is distinct yet easy to care for, making it a perfect gift.
- **LEMON THYME, SPEARMINT, AND ROSEMARY**, which all have heavenly scents that do not compete with each other
- **PRIMROSE STARTS** (4) for a gorgeous vintage vibe
- **FRESH FOREST MOSS** foraged from my property
- **FRENCH WILLOW TIPS** for their significant meaning: motherhood.

And with that, you've created a meaningful Mother's Day gift that is heartfelt, purposeful and filled with customized sentiment, just like the recipient. You've written a bit of her botanical story, if you will. Each ingredient thoughtfully chosen for its symbolism and beneficial properties to construct a beautiful botanical piece you can be proud to gift this Mother's Day.