

Jessica Giovanatto's Twine and Tendril a local success

Written By CONSTANCE SCRAFIELD

Said Jessica (Jess) Giovanatto, owner of her new business, Twine and Tendril, "I took a long time to figure out the name, when my sister suggested twine and honey. Then, I liked tendril because they both help to hold the plant together. So, I was working as a gardener for 10 or more years and I had some friends who needed wedding flowers. I did some weddings and really enjoyed the design aspect of it. It's a bit more creative. Because it was new and exciting, it pushed me to try some different things. So, working plants - what stems work? how long the flowers last? learning something different all the time.

"I like floristry (working with flower arranging)," she went on to comment, "I decided that I would try to do it professionally. I am doing an online course through the New York Institute of Art and Design and trying to go to work shops when I can. In the spring, I went to one of Delia May Flower workshop. Particularly, we learn kind of mixing colours and using different shapes to balance the display. And about flower farming."

Her business, is "All new this year and next, with 10 years experience gardening, this is new, as of last May. I'm taking it incrementally to create new gardens. I couldn't cope with any larger at this time. I planted my annuals close together, so the stems grow longer. When I was doing gardens myself, I was, like, 30% designing and 70% maintenance.

"Currently, I'm doing residential gardening and working for somebody. I'm learning that being self employed is not joke; it is a lot of work but I'm still loving it. I already have a hoop house. Next spring, I'll get the plastic cover. This time last year, I would have been two or three weeks ahead of where I am now, with the weather we have had this year..

The covered hoop house pretty much makes a difference. It blocks the wind. Heats it up puts things two weeks earlier. There are certain plants that we have had hard time growing. I was nervous of planting out because one frost and they're gone.

As to climate change: "I personally try to live as waste free as possible: no plastic bags, water bottles.

"In my business, I try not to use foam for holding stems in a setting. There are alternatives. Chicken wire works well. I can reuse it for multiple weddings. There's no pesticide; all natural growing methods.

"My mother is a real influence. She saw me into gardening. She is a great gardener, with her perennials and vegetables. The family have been living on their property for 30 years. I was born there. I travelled for a long time- went to Europe, Central America? Asia? Australia. To pay for it, I was gardening; worked long hours and I worked hard? I didn't buy a lot? the way I travel is economical, I do volunteer things. People that you meet are interesting. When we in Central America, there were chicken buses. Extremely uncomfortable but it's cheap and you get there.

"I travelled on my own and we've[her fiancé and herself, been together for five years and we travelled for four years. Over night hikes up volcanos? things you can't do later in life.

"Long term plan? right now, I'm as a part time vendor at the Orangeville Farmers' Market. I still do weddings and event flowers. Mainly what I'm focussing on is that? I also do special orders. I don't know if I ever will get a shop and I don't have a website yet, for people to order where I can deliver, so, locally. But I do have social media.

With a wedding, it it's a big order, I can deliver it. I have a wedding in Muskoka coming up. I do supplement for weddings. This way, I am slowly building my business. For June and May, I will have to out source some of my flowers. I am using a couple of wholesalers with Ontario grown flowers.

"In the long term, I hope what will distinguish me will be and is one of the reasons why I wanted to grow my own stuff is - there's so

much out there. Coming from my own garden for a really unique look and not standards from florists. I think my designs stand out; I'm using floral that is something that people don't see every day ? a lot of textures and grass heads and something like that.

?My ambitions are that I eventually want to be able to do an event entirely from my own gardens, using my flowers. Down there [in a small valley on the property] it's perfect light ? enough sun ?last year, I barely had to water 10 acres. There's a lot of wild and native things. Usually, I'll always research and leaving the root, never clear the wild flowers in any patch. You can see trilliums at the nurseries.now..

?I feel like the flower industry is changing now.people are shopping, the closer to home, the better. They like the idea of local. Before, it was the thing to have exotic plants but now, people are starting to appreciate the local. It's really fun and also a lot of hard work Relatively, you have to be very organized. There's definitely a lot of work for someone else, for the first while.?

She admitted, ?Doing wedding work is really stressful. It's a living product but it has to look the best for the day. I love it and I'm always working the gardens, looking at plants to think about what would best in any arrangement.?

In Jess' own opinion, ?The key is to work on this incrementally to avoid debt and slowly invest in my business as I can. To have yearly goals that I am trying to achieve. During the winter, do courses and to travel and do work shops abroad. I still want to be able to travel in the winter. I would have a lot of time to catch up and focus on getting things organized. At Christmas, I did wreaths and arrangements ? I dried things in the summer for displays. It is really only January and February when there's time to get away...?

For more information and to consider ordering, there are Facebook and Instagram: @twineandtendrill. Also an email: twineandtendrill@gmail.com