



Top left: Vintage pink and peach roses, Above and below: Calla lilies.

In favour of faux

There's still a lingering snobbery about artificial blooms that Lesley Rowley, owner of Stem Ginger, a faux flowers company, is doing her best to dispel.

"There's still a bit of stigma attached because people have this outdated image of how artificial flowers used to look in the 70s and 80s so they think they are somehow second best," says Lesley.

"But people who see my designs at wedding fairs are amazed and say they really can't tell the difference between my flowers and the real thing."

Lesley, who works from her home in Washington, can even fragrance her bouquets so brides don't miss out on those beautiful floral aromas that are part and parcel of everyone's dream day.

"The perfumes are botanically correct as well," Lesley assures me. "They're not like a room spray or bathroom freshener! They are dedicated artificial flower fragrances."

Most people who go for faux do so because they want to keep their flowers forever, Lesley says. "I recently created a hot pink Calla Lily bouquet and the bride had it placed in a 3D frame so she'll always have it as a memento of her special day."

Others fake it because they want a favourite flower that may not be in season for their

wedding. One bride was delighted to discover she could carry tulips in July thanks to Lesley's creative touch. Some may have allergies or hay fever that prevents them having real flowers while others choose faux blooms because they are



marrying abroad and want a bouquet they can 'recycle' at a party back home. This was the case for Melissa Palmer who married her fiancé Keith in Kenya last October. She says: "I wanted artificial flowers so I could use them again at my reception at home in the UK. Lesley made my bridal bouquet,

bridesmaid flowers, buttonholes and hair pieces. Everybody commented on how beautiful my flowers were." Melissa had roses, cherry blossom, scilla, euphorbia and ivy.

Cost is another big plus for those going faux. The Calla Lily bouquet was expensive at around £100 but a fresh version would have been twice that amount. Lesley's bouquets start at around £25 though, making them a really affordable option and she even hires out arrangements, including extravagant table centres.

Lesley used to be a nurse until she suffered a spinal injury. Then, six years ago, she began making flowers for craft fairs when a friend suggested she take her designs to bridal fairs. In the three years since, she's hardly looked back and is completely booked up until January 2012. "I love what I do," she says simply, and that's something that's plain to see in the beautiful bouquets she creates.

● For more information visit: www.stemginger.com or tel: 0191 4155282 or visit her at the Newcastle Assembly Rooms wedding fair on 25th September or the Sage, Gateshead on 30th October.