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Create your own white bouquet fit for a bride with greenery, wild flowers and cuttings from the garden. Fat pink blooms radiate sunshine set in a sparkling cut glass vase.

Garden style with a royal touch

For many of us, the highly anticipated royal wedding for Prince Harry and Meghan Markle is an exciting, historic occasion that we look forward to reading about. We know it's going to be quite the event. And you may be planning your own party with friends, maybe to watch the royal nuptials. Why not give your celebration that distinctly British feel, with tips from award-winning florist, designer and author Laura Dowling. She is renowned for creating a new romantic style of flower arranging featuring free-flowing lines of vines and flowers emanating from a classical bouquet. Take a few style points from Downton Abbey to set the stage. Plan a sumptuous High Tea served on vintage English china. Turn to the flowers to add a personal defining touch. Present petite bouquets wrapped in chintz, set in tea cups on a cake stand. Make floral fascinators for the guests or suggest that they create their own, themed around the royal wedding.

Dowling notes that British floral designer Philippa Craddock has been chosen as the florist for the royal wedding. "We can expect to see beautiful blooms arranged stylishly with a fashionable sense of chic," reports Dowling. "Garden style is very much in vogue. Think of garden flowers arranged in monochromatic colours with free-flowing lines and trailing vines."

Dowling imagines how Craddock might style some of the royal florals and tells us how to compose a stunning arrangement that combines sentimental whimsy with a classic bridal colour palette. White, cream and green flowers were reportedly Prince Harry's mother, Princess Diana's favourite. This white bouquet is made in water with an underlying structure of greenery. The white cascading flowers are white statice woven into garlands. Cut the statice into two-inch pieces, bundling a few pieces together and wrapping them with green wire to create lengths of garland which mimic spring blooming branches. The bouquet is then built up with layers of flowers and greenery to get a lush, textured effect.

Wedding flowers will represent the personal preferences and priorities of the royal couple. Look for combinations of both British and American-grown flowers, especially



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peonies, reportedly Meghan Markle's favourite flower. The bride's bouquet will feature sprigs of myrtle, a royal tradition signifying love and happiness.

Garden style floral arrangements are easy to assemble, and if you are lucky enough to have a cutting garden, all the elements are close to hand. Shown here, an elegant cut-glass vase holds a garden bouquet that swells with a profusion of cheerful pastel pink hues. Just picked peonies, garden roses and café-au-lait dahlias capture the essence of a spring day.

Dowling's tips for creating the new garden style are a guide to bringing home this year's royal look. Use a profusion of greenery, ferns and vines to create a lush base. The greenery will keep the bouquet looking natural rather than stiff and formal. Incorporate romantic spring flowers in pretty pastels to evoke a lovely British cottage garden style: ranunculus, sweet peas, garden roses, jasmine and, of course, peonies. Tufts of fresh moss, plumose fern and wild grasses combined with spring violets and clematis vines add a modern woodland vibe. Arrange the flowers in various heights across the table. Include blooms and colours that have personal meaning.

For more of Laura Dowling's inspiration and expert advice see her books *Floral Diplomacy at the White House*, *A White House Christmas*, and her newest book *Wreaths* coming out in October, all published by Stichting Kunstboek.

Written by Debbie Travis and Barbara Dingle. Please email decorating questions to house2home@debbietravis.com. Follow Debbie at [instagram.com/debbie_travis](https://www.instagram.com/debbie_travis), [facebook.com/thedebbietravis](https://www.facebook.com/thedebbietravis), [debbietravis.com](https://www.debbietravis.com).