



flower café

SECRET

The Victorian Language
of Flowers

Flowers keep our secrets...

Elevate your floral gifts with secret messages.

Everyone who attends a Tussie Mussie workshop at Flower Café is introduced to the Secret Language of Flowers, also called the Victorian Language of Flowers.

It's a lost form of communication that has been brought back into the spotlight, thanks to films like Netflix's *Enola Holmes* and political figures like Bullwer Lytton: "Who that has loved knows not the tender tale which flowers reveal when lips are coy to tell?"

In a time when society prevented women from speaking their minds freely, symbolic flower gifts became a way for them to communicate more directly, while escaping censure from relatives and the upper class.



The different meanings of flowers and plants were widely known during the Victorian Era. It was possible to start or end relationships by the simple - or generous - giving of bouquets, as well as the manner in which they were presented, which had either positive or negative connotations. For example, Tussie Mussies, an old English Nosegay (not an Afrikaans name), were originally created to ward off germs and bad odours.

This wonderful world of floral intrigue can be experienced at the Flower Café (by our parent company, Petals Group, where "The earth laughs in flowers".)

Always remember: If you have two pennies left in the world, spend the first on a loaf of bread to keep you alive, and the second one on a bunch of flowers to give you a purpose for living.

We hope this inspires you and gets you as excited as we are about flowers. See you at Flower Café one day soon!

Flower Walker

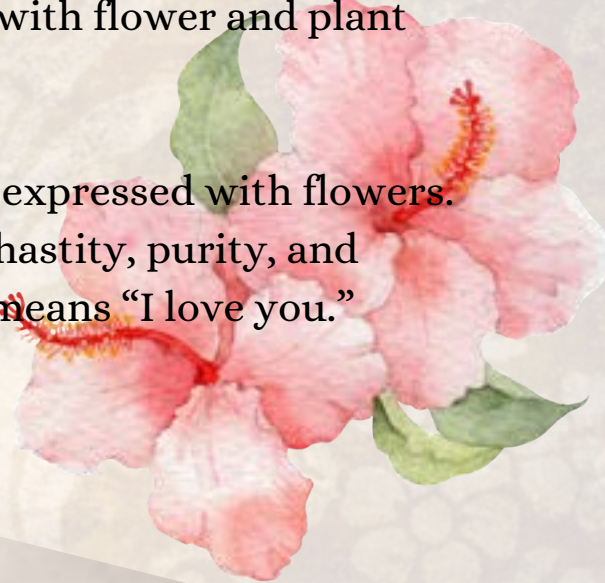
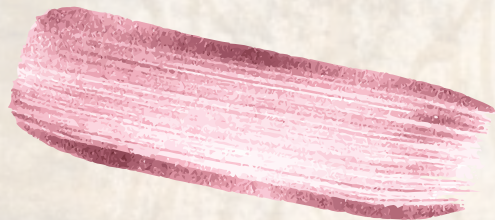


The history of flower meanings

The symbolic meaning of flowers has been recognized for centuries throughout Europe and Asia. They even play a large role in William Shakespeare's works.

Mythologies, folklore, sonnets and plays of the ancient Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, and Chinese are filled with flower and plant symbolism – and for good reason.

Nearly every sentiment imaginable can be expressed with flowers. The orange blossom, for instance, means chastity, purity, and loveliness, while the red chrysanthemum means "I love you."



A rose by any other name...



Flowery language in the Victorian era

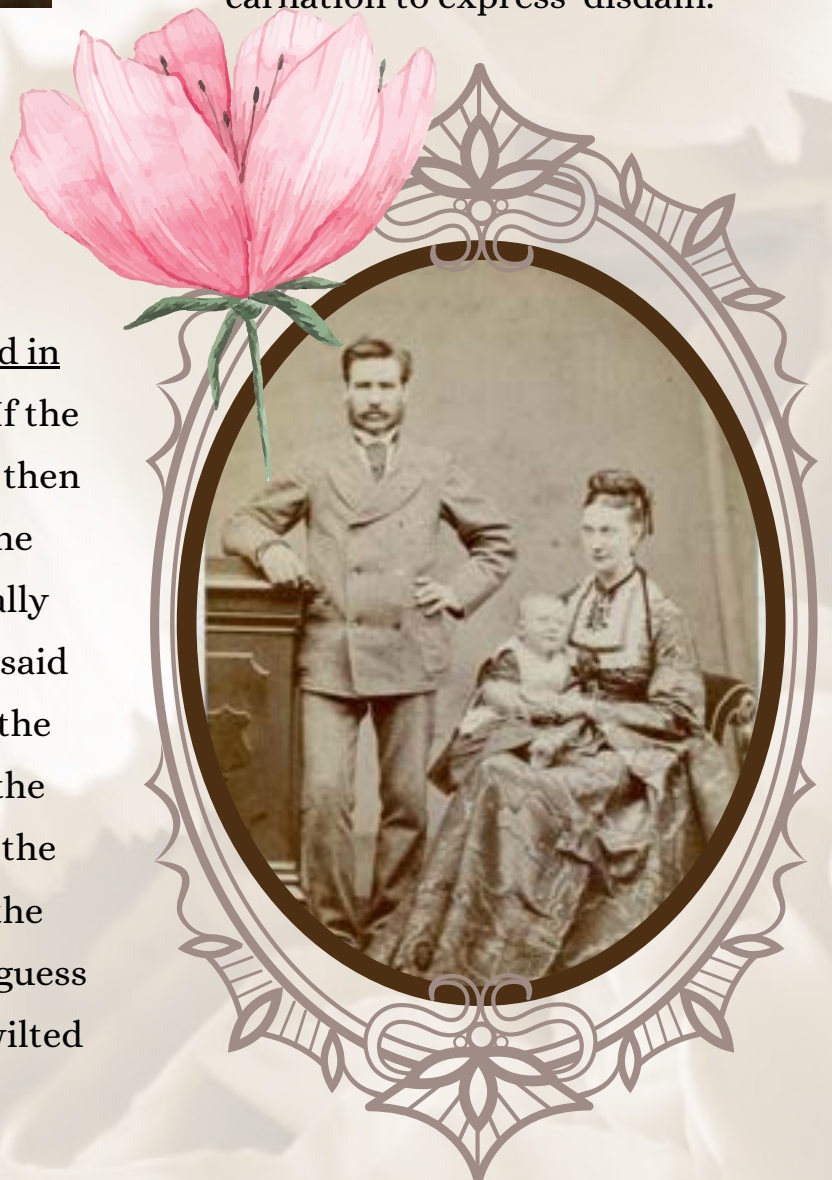
In the Victorian era, flowers were primarily used to deliver messages that couldn't be spoken aloud. In a sort of silent dialogue, flowers could be used to answer 'yes' or 'no' questions. A 'yes' answer came in the form of flowers handed over with the right hand; if the left hand was used, the answer was 'no.' Plants could also express more negative feelings, such as the 'conceit' of pomegranate or the 'bitterness' of aloe. Similarly, if given a rose declaring 'devotion' or an apple blossom showing 'preference,' one might return to the suitor a yellow carnation to express 'disdain.'




How flowers were presented and in what condition were important.


If the

flowers were given upside down, then the idea being conveyed was the opposite of what was traditionally meant. How the ribbon was tied said something, too: tied to the left, the flowers' symbolism applied to the giver, whereas tied to the right, the sentiment was in reference to the recipient. And it's not difficult to guess the meaning behind receiving a wilted bouquet!






More examples of plants and their associated human qualities during the Victorian era include bluebells and kindness, peonies and bashfulness, rosemary and remembrance, and tulips and passion. The meanings and traditions associated with flowers have certainly changed over time, and different cultures assign varying ideas to the same species, but the fascination with 'perfumed words' continues, even today.



Dedicated to the 'language of flowers' were hundreds of guidebooks, with most Victorian homes owning at least one. Often lavishly illustrated, the books used verbal analogies, religious and literary sources, folkloric connections, and botanical attributes to derive the meanings associated with flowers. The appearance or behaviour of plants and flowers often influenced their coded meanings. Plants sensitive to touch represented chastity, whereas the deep red rose symbolized the potency of romantic love.



Pink roses were less intense than red, white suggested virtue, and yellow meant friendship. Colour also had more specific meanings. A white violet meant 'innocence' while a purple violet said that the giver's thoughts were 'occupied with love' for the recipient. Bluebells communicated 'kindness.'



Some plants were used to send negative messages to their unlucky recipients.

Aloe represented 'bitterness,' pomegranate, 'conceit,' and rhododendrons meant 'danger.'

Not surprisingly, sending and receiving flowers was an effective way to fend off or attract suitors for women in the 1800s.

If a suitor declared his devotion by sending a rose, or showed his preference with apple blossoms, the recipient could respond with a yellow carnation to express disdain or straw

to show a request of union. To express adoration, a suitor would send dwarf sunflowers.

Myrtle symbolized good luck and love in a marriage. At her wedding in 1858, Princess Victoria, the eldest child of Queen Victoria, carried a sprig of myrtle taken from a bush planted from a cutting given to the Queen by her mother-in-law. This began a tradition for royal brides to include myrtle in their bouquets. In the royal wedding of 2011, Catherine Middleton included sprigs of myrtle from Victoria's original plant in her own wedding bouquet.

Displaying small 'talking bouquets' or 'posies' of meaningful flowers called nosegays or tussie mussies soon became popular. Every sprig and blossom in each little nosegay conveys a meaning in the old-time language of flowers.

The term 'Tussie mussie' is not an Afrikaans phrase, but a quaint, endearing term from the early 1400s for small, round bouquets of herbs and flowers with symbolic meanings.



Blooming marvellous!

flower café



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experience with us!*

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