

THE HILL

December 12 Issue 338
thehillmag.co.uk

Festive flowers

Wild at Heart is transformed
into a winter wonderland

Quentin Blake
celebrates his
80th birthday

THE CHRISTMAS ISSUE

We have the perfect gifts and
party dresses all wrapped up



Floral fairy tale

Nikki Tibbles is transforming her Turquoise Island into a winter wonderland ready for Christmas, discovers Hannah Ricci

Photos by Chelle Ott

Back in 1964, when Nikki Tibbles anxiously put forward a bid to lease the now iconic Turquoise Island, she had no idea it would become the flagship base of a flourishing floral empire. Now, 48 years later, Nikki Tibbles' Wild at Heart is an international name synonymous with luxury flower design and high-class event styling with a second shop on Pinhoe Road plus concessions in Liberty and Harrod. Yet Nikki still lives locally with her family and maintains an emotional connection to her roots in Westbourne Grove.

"It all started when I did the flowers for a friend's wedding. I really enjoyed it and was unhappy in my advertising job, so decided to change direction," explains Nikki, who took up a lowly paid position in a Botswana florist to learn on the job for six months.

"I was living in Notting Hill at the time the Turquoise Island was being built and put a tender in for it. I used my advertising background and created moodboards to evoke my ideas for the feel and look I had in mind."

When Nikki's bid was accepted the hard work really began, with daily Sun visits to New Covent Garden Flower Market, followed by firm starts and 8pm finishes at the shop, seven days a week. "This went on for quite a long time," explains Nikki. "But it was great because customers from all of the interesting people in the area became its own advertising. I was really lucky – we received a lot of press, because it was such a unique building. The wonderful community vibe of the area helped a lot too."

Team work

Nikki now employs 28 staff across her stores, head office and events team, and is in demand for events throughout the UK and overseas, from St Tropez to Amsterdam. Nikki Tibbles' Wild at Heart is also a favourite with many celebrity clients and fashion houses including Gucci, Burberry, Jenny Packham and Betty Jackson. Her designs can be seen in residential homes and retail premises throughout London, including in M&S stores, Brown's Hotel and Soho House.

"I love every kind of event, whether it is an

intimate dinner party or extravagant burlesque ball for 1,200 guests," she outlines. "I love weddings too, but that special moment in time. Every day is different, which is perfect for me as I have a short attention span and get bored easily."

Nikki's creative talents extend to interior design as well. Her eye for colourful eclectic style is being channelled through a new homeware collection, which is due to launch in the four shops and online in the New Year, with select pieces already available in the Pinhoe store.

Style-savvy customers can expect beautiful Roth lian vases as well as a surprise as yet unnamed up collaboration with textile artist, Karen Nicol.

Nikki also attributes her success to her hard-working team and the creative minds she brings on board. "I'm a strong believer in employing people who are better than you... I see what people are passionate about and encourage them to work to their strengths." –





Home for Christmas

After the busy period in the run-up to Christmas, Nikki enjoys relaxed entertaining at home with her partner Raymond, his two sons and their brood of four rescue dogs. "I look forward to laid-back quality time with loved ones," says Nikki. "We often have friends over for drinks on Christmas eve, while our Christmas day my grandchildren and their parents join us for dinner. Time to cook."

This year Nikki will be decorating her home with gold, bronze and copper and different shades of green. "I can't resist colour too, so I'll be bringing in some teal and burnt orange," she explains. "I think it's nice to use heirloom decorations and pieces the children have made too."

Nikki also favours the natural look – large eags and vases overflowing with long-lasting foliage such as ivy, eucalyptus and Scots pine. "It is lovely to see what is available in the garden or collected on walks like pine cones clustered on the table and ivy draped over chair backs. A naked tree with lots of lights also looks stunning." And does it all have to be the real deal or do faux decorations have a place in Nikki Tibbles's life? "I'm certainly not against fake flowers – they can be great quality and incredibly useful for big events abroad – but I always strive to use fresh first."

Nikki Tibbles' Wild at Heart
Turquoise Island Store
222 Westbourne Grove
W21 2PP • 020 7727 3095
wildatheart.com



How to make your own Christmas wreath

Chris O'Neil, manager at the Turquoise Island branch of Nikki Tibbles' Wild at Heart, shares his top tips for creating a fragrant festive wreath:

1. To start you'll need a 12-inch round wire frame, black reel wire and dense moss. Attach the reel of wire to the frame by looping it around several times and tying securely.
2. Cover the frame with moss by taking a handful at a time and binding it in place with wire. Work your way around the frame until it is evenly covered, and feels solid and dense. Turn the wreath over, trim the wire, tie it to the frame and tuck the end into the moss.
3. Next prepare your material by trimming it into 15cm lengths. We used rosemary, lavender, eucalyptus and blue pine to create a fragrant welcome for guests, but anything goes. Consider using offcuts from your Christmas tree or dried hydrangea heads.
4. Attach the reel wire again and working anti-clockwise or clockwise if you are left-handed, make mini bunches containing one each of your chosen material and bind in place to cover the moss. Cover the wire workings with your next bunch, ensuring that all sprigs point in the same direction. Pay attention to the outside edge to cover all of the moss and use smaller pieces for the inside of the frame, to keep the centre open.
5. Ensure that different materials are evenly spaced throughout the design. The wreath should look generous and full. Turn the wreath over, trim the wire, tie to the frame and tuck the end into the moss.
6. Attach a length of ribbon using a simple cow hitch loop and hung from the top of your door using a flat headed nail.

