

by Evan Grossman

# Fashion Forward

*Françoise Weeks* masters the style, grace and artistry of botanical couture

## “How the heck do you make this?”

That’s the first thing Françoise Weeks asks when she sees a unique design that she’s never seen before. “How can I make it work?” she wonders before reverse-engineering the piece and teaching herself how to turn the idea into her own masterpiece.

This was the series of events that took place three years ago when she was flipping through a book of French flower arrangements and she discovered floral-infused headpieces, shoes, purses, and jewelry. “I have no clue how to make this,” she recalls saying. “But I’ll figure it out.”

Françoise grew up in Belgium and moved to Oregon in 1977. For more than 30 years, she had no intention of being a floral designer because she felt there was a limited selection of flowers in the United States. “I put the idea of working with flowers on the back burner,” she says. But

in 1996, she got back to what she does best. She converted a space in her basement into a studio, taught evening classes, and business remained modest until, in 2007, she was hit by a bolt of lightning in the form of a childhood memory.

Françoise spent much of her childhood outdoors and during a family hike, she remembers stopping to look for pieces of bark and wildflowers. “I have no idea what made me think about that, 45 years later,” she says. “But I ran with it.” Inspiration comes from many places for many people. Françoise gets her ideas from books, from photos, and from the furthest reaches of her own imagination. Her style is defined by what she calls Urban Woodlands, which are her unique stylings of mosses, bark, and textured elements similar to what you find on the forest floor. The detailed Woodlands style found its way into her portfolio and “it kind of took off from there,” she says.

Three years ago, she was hit by another flash of inspiration when she saw images of botanical couture—wearable floral arrangements in the form of headpieces, shoes, and jewelry. “Never in my wildest dreams did I think these headpieces would become popular,” she says, “because they’re a little bit far out.”

Françoise travels the world sharing her signature style in a series of couture workshops. On Sept. 16-17, she is offering a two-day class to explain the mechanics behind wearable floral arrangements in Montebello, N.Y., and participants will get to make their own pieces and learn from a pioneer in this cutting-edge style of design.

“I think it’s nice to learn how to do new things,” she says. “I’ve always been motivated to learn by myself, but I think a lot of people tend to do the same thing over and over because it’s in their comfort zone. Maybe it’s because it’s what they like to do. But like everything in life, I think learning new things is what helps us grow.”

For more, visit [francoiseweeks.com](http://francoiseweeks.com). And for further information about the workshop she will present in Montebello, go to [atelierfrancoise.com/francoise-is-coming-to-montebello-ny](http://atelierfrancoise.com/francoise-is-coming-to-montebello-ny).



**Designer:** Françoise Weeks

**Experience:** 37 years

**Exposure/Achievements:** Françoise has been the subject of numerous magazine articles in the United States and Europe. She shares her knowledge of floral design and mechanics with professionals and students from around the world in an intimate studio class and workshop setting.