

Flowers as Fashion

By Sherry Winkinhofer, Northwest Missouri Model A Ford Club

In the modern world, we think of corsages and boutonnieres as fresh flowers worn for formal occasions such as weddings or proms. But in the Model A days, they were a much more common sight. Fresh floral arrangements were still the thing for those formal occasions, but artificial flowers were very visible in day-to-day life.

Please note that in this article, we are going to focus only on the use of flowers for fashions other than hats. Flowers as ornamentation on hats was extensive and as such, should be the subject of an article all on its own.

Imitation flowers were quite popular for home interior decoration in the Victorian era, and quickly made the transition to wearable art. Flowers were worn on hats, dresses, and coats. Both single blossoms and clusters of flowers were popular. These bouquets could be made from a vast variety of materials. Common textiles used were silk, cotton, organza, organdy, rayon, velvet, and even leather. Ribbon blossoms were also utilized.

Corsages were a staple of the well-dressed woman. The word "corsage" is French and in the 19th-century it was a common term for a woman's bodice or jacket. Flowers pinned to the bodice were often referred to as "bouquet de corsage," and over time this phrase was shortened to just "corsage."



-Sears Spring and Summer 1928



Style	Description	Price
78L6002	Colored Orchid rose, pink or lavender. Size, wt., 5 oz.	47¢
78L6004	Colored Tea yellow, pink, blue, red, bright blue. Size, wt., 6 oz.	49¢
78L6008	Colored Natural Rose, pink, white. Size, wt., 6 oz.	28¢
78L6012	Colored Rose, orchid or Canna lily. Size, wt., 5 oz. Flat sections. Sheet organza and rayon plastic. Great value!	38¢

- Montgomery Ward Fall and Winter 1928-29



Style	Description	Price
10-179	Apple Blossoms Dainty cluster of apple blossoms with leaves. Natural shades. Very popular for wear on dress or coat. Note how little it costs. Postpaid.....	39¢
10-180	A Trailing Bouquet Cluster of flowers and buds on fine stems. One of the newest and most attractive styles. Rose, red, peach, pink. Postpaid.....	50¢

- Robert Simpson Fall and Winter 1928-29



10-877 Large double orchid, among the newest and most beautiful corsage flowers. Looks well on dress or coat. Orchid, lavender, red. Price delivered..... 50¢

"Looks well on dress or coat" says the text.



10-876 Metal ribbon flower. Gold or silver color. Very pretty on dresses. Price del'd 45¢

This one is of metallic ribbon.



10-872 Velvet camelia flower for corsage bouquet. Attractive and popular. Old rose, pink, white, red. Price delivered.. 29¢

Colorful flowers made of velvet.



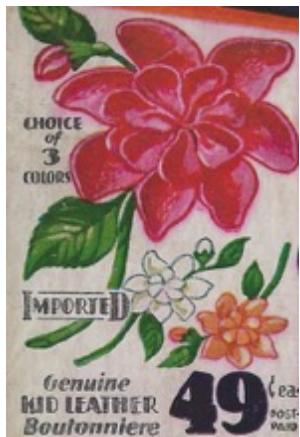
10-878 Dainty silk flower and a silk crepe handkerchief to match. Maise, rose, pink, red. Price delivered in box... 75¢

A set with a handkerchief to match the silk flower.

- Items directly above are from The Robert Simpson Co. Catalog Fall and Winter 1928-29.

"Boutonniere" is also a French word, meaning buttonhole, and in most references, it is indicating a flower worn in the buttonhole on the lapel of a man's suit. But I found floral women's accessories titled boutonnieres.

The text for the boutonnieres to the right clearly indicates that these are meant for ladies' fashion. The first says "...made for coat or dress" and the one to the far right is "...flowers for coats, furs or dresses." And I can't imagine the below boutonnieres being worn by a gentleman.



A unique boutonniere made from "Genuine Kid Leather".
- The Chicago Mail Order Company Winter 1929-30

New! CRYSTAL FLOWERS

Make Large Bouquet for 50c
Crystal bead flowers—new—artistic—beautiful colors. Latest Paris style. Worn by social leaders and stage beauties. Easily made at home. Material for 3 flowers, one bud and 5 leaves with instructions for making Boutonnieres like illustration, all for 50¢. Materials for 3 bouquets and sample card of over 200 heads, \$1.00. Good profit making them to sell. 3 interesting ideas on back cover, inc.
N. E. JOHNS & CO.
74 Bankhardt Bldg., Cincinnati, Ohio.

For a more unusual type of flower, you could buy this kit for a crystal beaded boutonniere.

- January 1929 edition of Modern Priscilla magazine

CHARMINGLY·CHIC.

Boutonniere
A group of five very popular natural flowers neatly made for coat or dress. Natural pansies, violets, morning glories, double American beauty rose or white gardenia. State choice. Neatly boxed.

Boutonniere
A popular and dressy group of flowers for coats, furs or dresses. Can be had in red geranium, orchid or apple blossom. State choice. Neatly boxed.

75¢	25V4045 Each, Postpaid.....	30¢
25V4049 Each, Postpaid.....	59¢	

- Sears Spring and Summer 1930.

**IMPORTED
Boutonniere
with Box**

M 29¢ POST PAID

- The Chicago Mail Order Company Winter 1929-30



These accessories were not always small; for example, this velvet and organdy bunch measures about 6 x 8 inches.

- Montgomery Ward Spring and Summer 1931

Crescent Bouquet Pastel Colors 49¢

20 E 1111 —
Silk georgette, satin and rayon rosebuds, assorted colors in bunch. Velvet leaves. 3½ inches at widest part, 10 in. long. Postpaid.

Gardenia Spray 45¢

20 E 1142 —
Wax like cotton fabric. Orchid; bright red; lt. green; white; peach; Copen; tan. State color. Length about 9 inches. We Pay Postage.

Spray 20 E 1139—35¢

Orchid; bright red; tan; pink; rose; peach. State color. We Pay Postage. Rayon flowers 12 in. long. Bell shape.

Other styles of bouquets include "crescents" and "sprays."

- Montgomery Ward Fall and Winter 1929-30

One new reference I ran across was for "Trails" or "Trailers." This apparently refers to the loose, flowing style of these attachments.

The Gorringe's catalog page to the right has an illustration of a young lady wearing a long floral trail. It seems to be attached at the shoulder and then lays loose the remainder of its length.

Shorter versions of this style were also used, as illustrated in the below catalog picture.



- Gorringe's Catalog Autumn 1928

Coats were a common place to find flowers elegantly displayed on the collar. The examples below illustrate the usual placement on the left side. A single large flower or a bouquet of smaller blooms were both common options.



-The Robert Simpson Catalog Fall & Winter 1928-29



-The Robert Simpson Co. Catalog Spring French Canadian Edition 1928



-Chicago Mail Order Company Winter 1929-30



-Montgomery Ward Fall & Winter 1929-30



-The Robert Simpson Co. Catalog Spring & Summer 1931

Dresses were another item that could often be found with flowers providing the final touch, on a shoulder, a neckline, or even on the dress sash. Here are a few examples from era catalogs:

Lapel corsages or boutonnieres, worn on the left side of the collar.



-Chicago Mail Order Co. Winter 1929-30



- Montgomery Ward Spring and Summer 1930

Corsages worn at the shoulder could be a little larger. The colors could compliment or match the dress.



- National Bellas Hess Catalog Spring and Summer 1931



-The Robert Simpson Catalog Fall & Winter 1928-29



-Chicago Mail Order Co. Winter 1929-30

Flowers worn at the neckline tended to be smaller corsages or single blooms with minimal or no additional trimmings.



- Simpson Spring and Summer 1931



- National Bellas Hess Spring Summer 1931



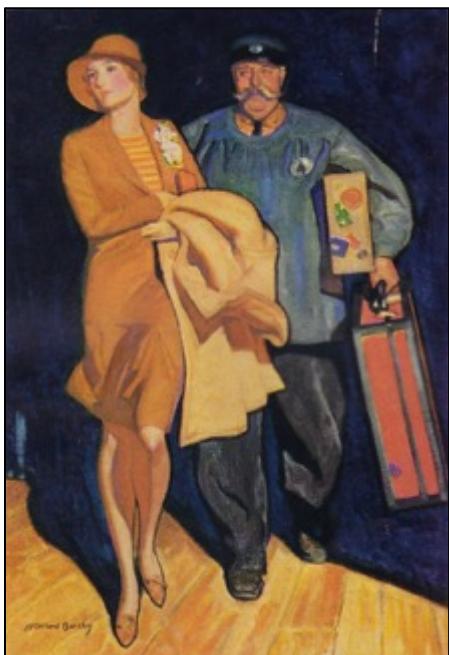
Last, but not least, here are a few examples drawn from advertisements found in magazines throughout the era. They illustrate the use of flowers in different social settings. It's apparent they were not worn just for formal occasions such as dances and parties, but instead were a part of everyday life.



- August 1928 Good Housekeeping ad for linens.



- August 1928 Good Housekeeping ad for a dentist.



- October 1929 Cosmopolitan Body by Fisher ad



- June 1928 Farm and Fireside article on gardening.



- June 1929 Good Housekeeping luggage ad

I hope this article brings new understanding and new inspiration in the use of flowers in recreating that era image. Feel free to add big and bold or small and delicate floral touches to your next Model A fashion outing!

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