



Evening
Standard

Just the job

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FREE
WITH TODAY'S EVENING STANDARD

English rose

Flowers for the
Royals: page 4

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Samantha Davis, freelance florist (left), travels the world designing floral displays. Works out of a small warehouse in South London

In Samantha's hands, flower-arranging becomes a branch of rock'n'roll. Forget the £5 bunch of carnations — when you book her for a gig, you could be spending anything from £500 up to £50,000. "I've even worked at events where the flower budget has been £100,000, says Samantha. "These days, flowers come second only to food as the most important ingredient of an event."

She got started by doing two years at horticultural college, then worked for five years as a manageress at society florists Moyses Stevens, in Mayfair. When she went freelance, her career blossomed, and her work started to take her abroad.

"I've done events in Palm Beach, Monte Carlo, Athens and all over Europe," she says. "And I've just done one of my biggest jobs — the royal

wedding of Sophie and Edward at Windsor."

"Work comes either through my own contacts or else via catering or lighting companies who have been hired for a big event and need someone to do the flowers.

"I buy all the flowers myself at New Covent Garden (anyone can go, you just pay £3 for a ticket). It's an odd place at the best of times — all men doing the selling, and mostly women doing the buying, but at five o'clock in the morning, it's even stranger. Good breakfasts though — an incredible, thick scent of bacon and flowers.

"Sometimes when I'm doing a big event, I'll get up at 4am, work all day, right through the night and then all through the next day as well. The thing is, if a wedding's on a Saturday, you can't do much before the Friday, or else the flowers will start to wilt. So you've got to work fast, and you've got to concentrate, sometimes you're so busy, you don't even notice when you tear your hands on rose thorns. But it doesn't last all year. June and July are the busiest months — January and February are when you take it easy and don't get up till midday".