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Artificial flowers by Silkflowers

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Artificial flowers are quite handy in modern day society. Most people donâ€™t exactly favor them over the real thing, but they turn to them when the real thing is impractical. Examples are winter weddings, permanent floral displays, and crafts, to name just a few. Typically made of polyester and plastic materials, the bulk of the worldâ€™s supply of artificial flowers are mass produced in Chinaâ€™s Guangdong Province where manufacturers create a constant supply of silk flowers of all shapes, sizes, colors and species. It is fitting that much of the worldâ€™s artificial flowers come from China, because according to historians, China is where they originated.

Of course, the first silk flower-making processes were far different than those of today. Three thousand years ago, silkworm rearing was invented as a way to produce its soft silk. Silkworms, the larva of silkmoths, do not survive on their own in nature and are dependent on humans for reproduction and survival. It really is a marvel that the ancient Chinese cultivated such a complex system for silk production. Once produced, silk was woven into luxurious garments, or used for medicinal purposes. About 1,500 years ago, the Chinese began using silk to craft artificial flowers, too. Such finery was not enjoyed by the masses. Early on, the ladies of the Imperial Palace ordered silk flowers to be worn in their hair. The trend spread to the well-off outside the palace, and when trade routes to Japan and Korea opened, it gained popularity in those countries and beyond.

Fast forward to the 12th century when Italian merchants also began crafting artificial flowers using silkworm cocoons. Though the Italians were the originators on the European continent, their French neighbors soon followed suit. The French mastered the art of making artificial flowers, and quickly surpassed the flower-making abilities of the Italians. By the 15th century, French-made faux flowers were considered the best. Following the French Revolution, many artisans fled to England, spreading their craft to the British. Eventually, English settlers brought silk flowers to America.

The silk flower business simmered for a couple of centuries until the Victorian Era was born in the late 19th century. With the opulence of this era came lavish floral arrangements of both faux and live flowers. Many were made of silk, but craftsmen used a number of other materials to make them too, including satin, velvet, muslin, cambric, crepe and gauze. By 1920, florists were supplementing live blooms with silk flowers to make up for shortages when flowers were out of season.

Today, the polyester and plastic materials used to make silk flowers give them durability and vibrancy that was unheard of in bygone eras. Modern silk flowers, instead of being an artistic rendition of the real thing, so closely mirror live blooms that many canâ€™t tell the difference without a very close look. If youâ€™d like flowers with a little staying power, donâ€™t be afraid to give silk varieties a try!

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