



ABOVE: Plants as seen inside Malin's greenhouse. **RIGHT:** Malin often utilizes locally-foraged plants when possible. **BELOW:** Malin points to the pig topiary in a magazine.

From Saint Helens to LA

Originally from Saint Helens, Malin graduated from the University of Washington before starting her business in Los Angeles.

"Even though I started the business in LA, I was from here. I grew up in Saint Helens, but I worked in advertising in New York, LA and San Francisco," Malin said.

"I was working on a business plan for someone, who later turned out to be Pampered Chef. And I saw a topiary and said 'that's really cool.' So I made myself a pig to put in my extensive herb garden."

Soon people began to notice the topiary pig in her home garden, which Malin seemed to be constantly replacing.

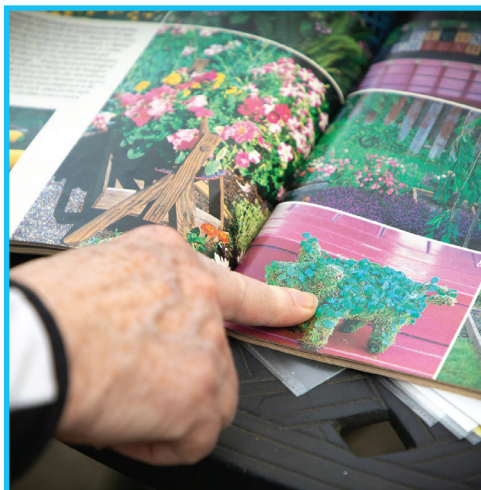
"I sold that pig 24 times. Chefs in LA would come and clip herbs. So I got into topiaries out of herbal plants. I sold out fast," she said.

Soon Martha Stewart and Nordstrom came calling as clients.

It was during the Seattle Flower and Garden Shows where Malin made a more direct impression while converting 1,000-square-foot spaces into lush displays.

"Back in the 80s I used to be a major wholesaler in the gift and garden industry. I had one of the founding gardens for the Seattle Flower and Garden Show. The shows are always a big undertaking. The last one I did two 25-foot swans that made a heart shape. Once I did a Noah's Ark theme with elephants squirting water, and lions out of grasses and snakes out of succulents. I always won whimsy award, they ended up calling it the 'Nan Cup.' I would do large displays and my employees would kick out kissing dolls and little baby birds with ivy over them. We sold it all over the U.S. and shipped frames internationally."

Customers could order smaller versions of



Malin's topiaries from home décor and lifestyle publications like Country Living and Martha Stewart Magazine.

"You could either buy a bunny, goat or duck, different things. We would drop ship them. I had reps in all the design centers throughout the country, this was before internet."

Demand for the topiaries was seemingly endless.

"I did designs for Beverly Hills houses and the Seattle Flower and Garden Show as well as San Francisco and Rhode Island," Malin said.

"We would go and create something crazy. I had one guy call and say he needed 9-foot topiary angels, so I had to learn how to weld. I went from herbals to little welded frames. I got so busy that I had to have onsite employees. I moved the business (from LA) to Portland and always came back to do the Seattle show."

Eventually the travel and the toil took its toll, and Malin "retired" from the wholesale topiary business.



"Eventually, I burnt out and got out of it."

Returning to her roots

After raising a family and spending time away from the floral industry, Malin has since returned, now operating from her home in Seaview.

"When I moved here I did my daughters' weddings and soon a lot of local brides started knocking on my door. I started out word of mouth doing weddings, and pretty soon I got so busy that I got a (nursery) license about three years ago," she said.

Malin's satisfaction comes from arrangements that resonate, leaving a lasting impression.

"I do that 'look' that all these brides want, that beautiful, 'Instagram' photograph. The photographs are the magic. When I hand the bride that bouquet and see her have tears in her eyes, it's worth everything to me," she said.

Affordability is another big consideration, Malin said, adding that she often utilizes locally-foraged plants when possible.

"I'm known for bringing it in on budget. I forage as much as possible. I use sustainable and natural products. I don't use foams and petroleum-based things. I have a beach vibe and my arrangements are English-garden looking. They're definitely not a wire-service look. I don't do roses and baby's breath unless you beg me," she said.

Decades after the topiary craze, Malin has reconnected with former vendors as her floral business continues to flourish.

"As word of mouth grew, I reached out to my old vendors. They all remember me because I have a very unique name and did a very unique thing."

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