

# CRAIN'S

CHICAGO BUSINESS.



## MY CLOSET

### 'Flower girl' grows into business side

BY LISA BERTAGNOLI

**P**RINCIPAL OF CHICAGO-BASED BOTANICALS Inc., Casey Cooper, 36 designs flowers for high-profile events, including one of Oprah Winfrey's televised 50th birthday celebrations. The clothes, in the long, low closet of her Evanston bungalow, however, are mostly dark, and while she does sometimes buy brights, she often winds up not wearing them. "Black is my comfort zone, psychologically."

**CRAIN'S: What's that red?**

MS. COOPER: "A mistake." She pulls out a wool Ann Taylor jacket. "I've never worn it, but it fits great." She models a long, slim cream coat, a more successful departure. "The salesclerk made me buy this, and I love it. That's my key. I need a good salesperson. And I love Banana Republic. I wear size 2 and 4 there."

**Most of your clothes look pretty classic.** "I'd like to be more hip, but I don't pay that much attention. And I don't like to shop."

**Do you have a uniform?** "Jeans, boots and a black turtleneck. I'm happy in that. I'm not a dressy person. It's been a challenge as the business has grown, turning into a

businessperson as opposed to a girl who makes pretty arrangements."

**What do you wear to see clients?** "It's my Russian look," she says, showing a charcoal-gray suit with a button-up jacket and long, fitted skirt. Part of the closet is filled with black skirts. "I love skirts," she says. "I have one leather skirt, but I never wear it because it's not black." (It's caramel-brown.)

**What did you wear when you called on Oprah?** "I met with Stedman (Graham, Ms. Winfrey's significant other). I wore a shorter, black wool skirt with a cream cable-knit sweater and black boots."

**What about shoes?** "My overriding rule is comfort, except for shoes. They are key to an outfit." The closet floor is covered with black shoes, patent-leather May Janes, thick-soled sandals, funky platform sandals, sophisticated mid-heeled sandals. "I have a gazillion sandals," she says. "I love them in summer, with painted toes, always."

**Black or gray polish?** "A berry or wine color. I haven't found a red yet that I like." ■