

Floral Décor

Unit

10

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Flowers and related decorative elements underscore the mood and tone of a wedding. They also represent a significant expense, generally taking up 7 percent or more of the budget.

The Tradition of the Bridal Bouquet

The tradition of the bridal bouquet dates back to ancient times whereby the bride and groom each wore a garland around their neck. The garlands predominantly consisted of strong smelling herbs and spices that were believed to have mystical powers in warding off any evil spirits. In addition to this, the circular shape of the garlands also symbolised new life, hope and fertility for the bride and groom.

Customarily, the bride would gather few of the blooms and some foliage from each garland, creating a small posy to carry down the aisle. The bridal posy, consisting of flowers, later replaced this tradition.

Over time, many variations have been made to the bridal bouquet. From a small posy, to the arm sheaf and long style bouquet in the early 1900's, and later to the princess and teardrop bouquets in the 1980's, flowers have become an important accessory for any bride. Brides of today have kept the floral tradition alive, ensuring that flowers play an important role in modern weddings, including floral displays in various aspects of their wedding.

From bouquets to boutonnieres, posies to pew decorations, corsages to centrepieces, when planning floral decoration for your wedding, you may only be limited by your imagination.

Choosing the Wedding Flowers

Flowers play an important role in any wedding, and a great deal of time and consideration should be given when choosing floral decorations for your special day. Flowers should leave a lasting impression and compliment the theme, colour and style of your wedding. In saying this, these are the three prominent features that should guide you when choosing your wedding flowers.

The bridal bouquet is an excellent place to start when selecting flowers, for it is the most photographed floral element and often informs the choices for the wedding party and other floral décor. When selecting flowers for a wedding, five things to keep in mind are the season, colour, scent, shape, and size.

First, the season will dictate what floral elements are available. Couples on a budget who have creative flair can purchase the majority of their floral décor at a local farmers market. These outdoor bazaars are seasonal but will have the best of what is blooming in the local area at that time of year. Floral designers will use local materials as well, but also work

closely with international distributors from locations such as Colombia, Ecuador, Holland, and Thailand to ensure that they have a broad range of flowers available throughout the calendar year.

Some flowers that are popular for weddings have an extremely short season, with the classic example being lily of the valley, which has a three- to four-week season that falls in May. The small stems are priced as high as £15 each, with even very small bouquets starting at £400.

Lily of the valley stems are so expensive that many florists will not even carry them. Obtaining flowers with a short season or during their off-season can be cost prohibitive, so you will want to work closely with florists in your area to gain a sense of seasonality. In cases where a desired flower is simply not available, many florists will offer silk accents or arrangements.

A second consideration when selecting flowers for a wedding is colour. In terms of bridal bouquets, approximately 70 percent of brides select all white, which is a fresh, elegant look. As important as the flowers are, traditionalists argue that guests should look at the bride first, not her flowers, and dark flowers against a white gown will dominate the view. For the 30 percent of brides who mix colour into the bouquet, the complementary colours tend to stay on the light side such as pink, pale yellow, peach, and lilac. Bold and dark bouquets, which are becoming more popular, can make a very dramatic statement. Randy Christian suggests that elaborate, beaded gowns, such as those worn by many brides from India, should be balanced by simple floral designs, while a simple gown can be complemented by a more dramatic floral statement. He suggests, however, that a tailored gown works best with a tailored bouquet.

With bridesmaids' bouquets, mixing in bright colours is more common. A trend for bridesmaids is that in lieu of a bouquet, they will carry a purse, fan, or muff accented with real or silk flowers. Generally, the chosen ornament will be a gift from the bride, which the bridesmaids carry during the wedding and then have for later use. The scent of the floral décor is a third consideration. This is most relevant when selecting centrepieces, as a heavy floral scent can interfere with the reception meal. Magnolia blossoms, gardenias, and stargazer lilies are three examples of beautiful varieties that should be kept out of the immediate vicinity of food. Gardenias also brown and bruise easily and so are better used in wreaths than in centrepieces where they will be regularly breathed upon or touched.

A fourth consideration is shape. For bridal bouquets, the three primary shapes are hand-tied, round, and cascade. The hand-tied bouquet is natural looking, as if the flowers were just picked from a garden. Handtied bouquets can either be tailored, such as a grouping of six calla lilies with an elegant ribbon, or a mixed arrangement, such as peonies, dendrobium orchids, and freesia stems. Some hand-tied bouquets are held with a single ribbon, while others have the stems wired or taped and then tied to finish the look. A nosegay is a small hand-tied bouquet that is popular for flower girls, junior bridesmaids, mothers, and others receiving smaller sprays. Tussie-Mussie is a Victorian-inspired nosegay that is small, compact, and often in a cone-shaped holder.

Round and cascade bouquets have a more arranged appearance and are generally mounted on a bouquet holder with a handle. A classic round bouquet, whose popularity was revived after Jessica Simpson carried it in her wedding, is made up of hundreds of delicate stephanotis blossoms with each stem hand wrapped and tied. Often a pearl pin is placed in the centre of each flower for a touch of elegance and then the arrangement is brought together in what looks like a large, round ball. Roses are also commonly used to make beautiful round bouquets. Both hand-tied and round bouquets can be collared, which means that the arrangement literally has a collar of greenery creating a border. A cascade bouquet, also referred to as a teardrop or waterfall shape, tends to be the largest and heaviest, incorporating long stems that give the bouquet length and drape.

A final concern when selecting floral décor is size. In terms of bridal bouquets, the adage used to be the bigger, the better. However, a large bouquet can overwhelm the bride, making her look like she is all flowers, and simultaneously is too heavy to carry for extended periods. Now the tendency is to have more compact bouquets. In terms of boutonnieres, the consensus is that smaller is better. Most floral designers will encourage clients to match the boutonnieres with some aspect of the bridal bouquet. Single roses and mini calla lilies are popular options that can be easily coordinated.

Choosing a Theme and Style

The wedding flowers should be in keeping with the overall theme and style of the wedding, and should compliment (not overpower) bride's gown and to those worn by the bridal party.

Generally, a traditional style wedding calls for traditional arrangements, such as those containing masses of beautiful roses; modern wedding arrangements, on the contrary, are most effective with single blooms such as lilies, accompanied by lush greenery. Consider your theme and the advice given by your floral designer along with the ideas below.

Traditional

Traditional, formal arrangements usually consist of masses of one type of flower. Examples include roses or tulips. Roses, to this day remain the most popular choice among brides of today. Just keep in mind that large bouquets may be very heavy to carry.

Sophisticated and Elegant

A sophisticated themed wedding will call for a small posy of elegant blooms that compliment the bride's wedding gown and perhaps incorporate the colours of the bridesmaid's gowns. A wired posy of orchids or frangipanis, finished with ribbon-wrapped stems and perhaps a string of crystals or pearls to harmonise with the bride's gown is sure to look stunning. Oriental lilies surrounded by tropical leaves and foliage is another example of an elegant way to accessorise with flowers.

Romantic

When thinking romantic, think 'fresh from the garden'. Bouquets of perfumed flowers such as freesias, lavender, roses, or hyacinths, finished with sweet smelling strawberry or geranium leaves are sure to create a sense of romantic ambience. Soft pastels are the colour of choice when keeping a romantic theme alive.

Bright and Fun

Although bright blooms are usually seen in summer ceremonies, they create an equally warming effect on a winter wedding. Hot pink lilies, pink and yellow frangipanis, gerberas and tuber roses all provide a bright and dramatic impact. These colourful blooms are perfect for beach or garden weddings and provide a sense of fun and happiness. Exotic blooms and foliage, and the use of berries, seed pods and vines also compliment bright and fun arrangements. Be creative and let your floral designer experiment with lots of colour and daring displays to really leave a lasting impression with the guests.

Modern

Simplicity is generally the key to modern floral arrangements. Single blooms such as lilies or orchids, accompanied by lush greenery, are popular choices for the modern bouquet. Foliage and berries are also fashionable for the modern bride of today. Rose hips, pepper berries (*Schinus molle*), hypericum and cranberry viburnums are common examples being used in modern arrangements. There are so many gorgeous and exotic choices and variations that will set your flowers apart from the rest when it comes to modern choices.

Choosing a Colour

As essential as it is that the wedding blooms follow the overall theme of the wedding, equal importance should be given to their colour. By choosing the right colour combinations, you will ensure that the flowers do not look out of place against the fabrics of the bridal gown (or that of your bridal party), accessories, or other wedding decorations. The flowers should complement, rather than overshadow the overall wedding colour scheme.

When meeting with your floral designer, it is a good idea to take along a swatch of fabric from both the bridal gown and that of your bridesmaid's gown. Discuss with them any ideas that you may have in terms of the colour of your blooms and how they will tie in with the colours of the wedding. It is also an idea to discuss the colour of the bride's jewellery and accessories, as precious metals and gems may also influence the colour of the bouquet.

Flowers for All Seasons

Another factor to consider when deciding upon your wedding flowers, is whether your choice of bloom is in season, and readily available. Although you may desperately desire a beautiful bouquet of tulips for the summer wedding, or sunflowers to add some warmth to your winter bouquet, chances are that such choices may not be practical. Certain factors

such as where you live, the climate and the time of year will possibly have a major impact on the availability of certain blooms.

Whilst the most popular choices in wedding flowers, such as roses and lilies, are practically available all year round, other varieties may not be, and will be subject to seasonality. In many cases, this is not necessarily the end of the world. A good florist may be able to source your desired flowers from other areas such as interstate, or even overseas! Just be mindful however, that although this may be possible, it may not be the best option. As an example, should you desire tulips in the middle of summer, despite the fact that you may be able to have them shipped from a cooler climate, they may not last the day due to the heat. In circumstances such as these, it may be best to stick with the seasonal varieties – no one wants a wilted and bruised bridal bouquet!

Below is a list of some of the most popular wedding flower varieties and the season in which they're at their best.

Summer

Agapanthus, Christmas bells, Christmas bush, Dahlia, Frangipani, Ginger, Hibiscus, Hydrangea, Lilac, Lily-of-the-valley, Marigold, Misty, Poinsettia, Queen Anne's lace, Tuberose, Violet (Jan), Zinnia.

Autumn

Cattleya orchid, Chrysanthemum, Daffodil, Dahlia, Hyacinth, Hydrangea, Misty, Nerine, Tulip, Zinnia

Winter

Apple blossom, Azalea, Blushing bride, Cyclamen, Hyacinth, Jonquil, Love in the mist, Poppy, Rhododendron, Sweet William, Tulip, Violet

Spring

Azalea, Boronia, Cyclamen, Daffodil, Dahlia (late spring), Hyacinth, Jonquil (early spring), Lilac, Peony rose, Phalaenopsis orchid, Poppy, Queen Anne's lace, Ranunculus, Rhododendron, Sweet William, Tulip, Tuberose, Yellow bells, Zinnia.

All Year Round

African violet, Alstromeria, Asiatic lily, Aster, Baby's breath, Begonia, Bird of Paradise (Feb-Oct), Camellia, Carnation, Cornflower, Daisy, Delphinium, Exotic leaves, Forget-Me-Not, Freesia, Gerbera, Gladiolus, Eucalyptus, Iris, Ivy, Jasmine, Lavender, Lisianthus, Maidenhair fern, November Lily, Orchids, Oriental lily, Paper daisy, Peace lily, Peony, Rose, Snapdragons, Sunflower, Sweet Pea.

Floral Décor Categories

Because flowers are such a prominent feature of the ceremony and reception, thoughtful care should be taken when making decisions. Four considerations when selecting floral décor include (1) the recipients and locations that require flowers; (2) selecting flowers; (3) centrepieces and other decorative elements; and (4) installation and removal.

Recipients and locations

- Bridal bouquet
- Toss bouquet
- Other bridal flowers (e.g., hair, dress)
- Number of bridesmaids, including maid of honor
- Number of flower girls (petals/basket)
- Number of mothers (corsages/nosegays)
- Number of grandmothers (corsages/nosegays)
- Other women needing personal flowers
- Groom's boutonniere
- Number of groomsmen, including best man
- Number of ushers
- Ring bearer (boutonniere and pillow)
- Number of fathers
- Number of grandfathers
- Other men needing personal flowers

When considering the “other” category, this may include the officiant, readers, soloists, guestbook attendant, and, in some cases, all of the guests if flowers are used for favours. For example, the company Speaking Roses (2006) custom embosses flowers with personalized messages or photographs, offering a unique type of monogrammed favour.

Ceremony

- Entrance flowers and greenery, decorative wreaths, and bows
- Freestanding arrangements
- Altar arrangements
- Pew/chair décor
- Aisle runner
- Ceremony special elements (e.g., chuppah, arch, gazebo)
- Other ceremony flowers (e.g., unity candle décor, kneeling bench décor)

Reception

- Number of centerpieces for reception tables
- Tent décor
- Sweetheart table or head table
- Buffet table arrangements
- Cake flowers, cake table, cake knife décor

- Ice sculpture décor, punch bowl décor
- Toasting glasses décor
- Escort card table
- Bar and cocktail area
- Ladies restroom
- Banisters
- Other flowers needed (e.g., pool floats, guest rooms, cars)

The entrance to the ceremony site is the first chance to make an impression and tie in the theme of the wedding. Prior to this point, most guests have only seen stationery elements such as save-the date cards and the invitation, so the entrance sets the stage for the rest of the day. When considering the placement of flowers and greenery at the entrance location, it is important to keep in mind that garlands can gently and gracefully welcome guests without enormous expense. Doorway treatments with a hint of colour, such as swags, wreaths or garlands made of leaves, berries, pine, herbs, or artfully arranged twigs and ribbons can have a big impact with minimal investment. Similarly, topiaries are ornamental trees trimmed in unique shapes that are fresh and have an ethereal feel with the addition of tulle or bows.

Trees and large potted plants can be rented for weddings, offering another cost-effective means to make a statement. Floral wreaths can beautifully mark the entrance as well but can be cost prohibitive as a single wreath can include hundreds of flowers. However, the portability of a wreath allows it to be used at the ceremony, reception, and brunch the day after the wedding, and then it can be dried and kept as a beautiful memento that can be used for years. If investing in floral wreaths, keep in mind that they do not have to be round, as square, heart-shaped, and vertical wreaths offer distinctive options. With an outdoor wedding, flowers can create a focal point for the ceremony if one is not apparent. Outside weddings need fewer flowers beyond the focal point and should not be fussy or overly arranged as you will want them to complement the natural outdoor elements.

Outdoor ceremonies also allow for floral décor along an aisle runner and for real petals to be dropped by the flower girl. For indoor ceremonies, these items are generally prohibited because of their ability to stain carpeted or wood floors. Even for outdoor ceremonies, it is best to select pale petals for the flower girl, as dark petals can stain the bride's dress. Dark silk petals are equally problematic because the dyes used can leave marks.

Both indoor and outdoor weddings may have a canopy, arch, or other structure that the couple stands under during the ceremony. As you learned earlier, in Jewish weddings this is known as a chuppah, and for Indian weddings it is called a mandap. Structures such as these are often beautifully accented with flowers. In addition, arrangements are placed close to the couple as they add elegance to the ceremony photographs. Floral accents such as pomanders, which are small balls of flowers, are frequently used to mark the rows or pews.

Centrepieces and other Decorative Elements

Most couples are fairly traditional in their choice of bouquets, boutonnieres and ceremony decor. However, centrepieces and other decorative elements used for the reception allow contemporary statements to be made. When entering the reception site, one of the first

things that guests will see is the escort card table. This table is a key focal point that can set the tone for the rest of the reception and is often lavishly decorated. A beach theme wedding, for example, can include an escort table where the cards are set in sand and surrounded by exotic flowers and conch shells.

Centrepieces are limited only by a couple's budget and their floral designer's creative capacity. Some couples still select classic designs such as candelabras entwined with flowers, while others employ the imagination of the designer to tie elaborate floral décor into their theme. While there can be a distinction in the formality of the floral décor for the ceremony and reception, the difference should not be so radical that an imbalance results.

A current trend in centrepieces is to use large, clear glass vases in modern shapes. On the top of the design, flowers are placed in a removable plastic riser. Beneath this tray, the sky is the limit, and options such as bright fruits, vegetables or berries, coloured glass or lights, buckeyes, live grasses growing in a soil base, pinecones, and live fish represent just a few design ideas.

Centrepiece size should be dictated by table size and should not be so large that the centrepiece inhibits conversation. Marianne Raub explains that once a centrepiece design is selected, most florists will schedule an appointment for a sample showing so that clients can see their selections come together and make changes as necessary. Very large arrangements, such as those using bamboo or rented palm trees for a tropical theme should be prominently displayed, as should expensive arrangements, so that the couple feels they are worth the investment. Some flowers, such as carnations and alstroemeria, are often avoided for weddings because they are perceived as being "grocery store flowers." However, these less expensive varieties can lead to spectacular wreaths and arrangements that otherwise would not be affordable. Furthermore, the use of greenery, unique twigs, and bold ribbon can inexpensively finish the statement.

Installation and Removal

Prior to meeting with the floral designer, it is a good idea to inform your clients of charges for packing, delivery, installation, and removal. Depending on the size of the order, the complexity of the designs, and the distance travelled, these fees can be significant. Basic installation charges will vary by area, but anticipate a minimum charge of £150. Installation charges are based primarily on time, and many large arrangements cannot be transported and must be built on site. A floral chuppah, for example, is raised and decorated at the venue, which usually takes a minimum of an hour. Decorated tents, where each pole is intertwined with greenery and flowers, can take several hours to install. Furthermore, if the ceremony and the reception are at the same site, the floral designer will have to wait through the ceremony to do the changeover, which could increase the charge. However, this charge will probably be no different than the travel charge that will apply if the ceremony and reception are in separate locations.

At most venues, nails and tape will be prohibited, so hanging designs must be installed with ribbons, clips, decorative ropes, and ties. When the designer has finished the install, you should walk through to make sure that all the areas are clean and neat and that no trash or

extra materials were inadvertently left behind. It is your job to make sure that the “curb appeal” is maintained.

The floral designer will also handle removal, and it is common for ceremony arrangements to be transported to the reception site. When bringing floral décor into a house of worship, it is important to know the policies, as some facilities require the arrangements to stay as a donation, others insist that they be removed, and others do not allow floral décor at all. If the flowers are required to stay, many couples will make more modest selections as they will only get to enjoy these arrangements during the ceremony. Because venue policies vary considerably, it is important to familiarize yourself with the regulations before your clients make their floral décor selections.

Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Floral Décor

- Assist your clients by asking them to make a list of all individuals who will be receiving personal flowers prior to meeting with the floral designer.
- Be aware that seasonality dictates availability and price of floral décor.
- Remember that local farmers markets can be an excellent avenue for flowers when working with clients on a budget.
- Recognize that flowers set the stage and create a focal point for the ceremony.
- Keep in mind that dark petals, both live and silk, can stain wood floors, carpets, and clothing.
- Make sure that your client’s budget in packing, delivery, installation, and removal as part of floral décor costs.
- Know the floral décor rules of the ceremony and reception venues in terms of permission, installation, and removal.