

Fresh Flowers Will Brighten Your Already Beautiful Day

There's nothing like the look of fresh flowers to compliment you on your wedding day. If it weren't for the price, fresh flowers would most certainly be the décor of choice. Before you begin the search for a florist, keep in mind that it's quite easy to spend between 20 and 35 percent of your wedding budget on Mother Nature's beautiful buds.

If you're set on having fresh flowers for your wedding, be prepared to shop around and be open to the types of flowers you'd like to have. Many florists run specials and have packages for weddings that they've already created or can custom create to suit your needs and tastes. Make sure you find a florist that can closely match what you want. A package that's all-inclusive for one low price may sound great, but may not include the type of flowers you want or amount of bouquets you need for your bridesmaids. Additional charges on a package deal can get very costly.

If you're looking for a variety of decoration with a minimal amount of flowers, you may be able to rent arches, lighting and trellises from your florist as well. They may also be able to set the decoration up for you.

Even though you have to book your florist early, you normally don't have to choose your flowers until approximately two months before your wedding. At this time, you'll write up a new contract with the floral specifications; what flowers you want, how you want them arranged, where they'll be delivered, the time they'll be delivered and any other details. Take note so that you can coordinate the flowers with your photographer. Some florists will assume to deliver the flowers at the ceremony site unless you specify. If you're getting ready at home and your photographer is planning on taking pictures there, you may want to have your bouquet in the pictures.

The most common needs of a bride in terms of flowers include the following:

- Bridal bouquet and throwaway bouquet
- Maid of Honor and Bridesmaids' bouquets
- Flower petals for the flower girl to drop
- Corsages for the Mother of the Bride and Groom
- Groom's boutonniere
- Best Man and Groomsmen boutonnieres
- Boutonnieres for the Father of the Bride and Groom
- Single flowers or corsages for honored guests

It's common to decorate the ceremony site, however there are always restrictions on what you can and cannot have in a place of worship. Be sure to check with your site and officiant for the details. You'll want to be sure that your flower girl can drop rose petals along the aisle; altar arrangements can be placed at the altar; the pews can be decorated; and you can take the arrangements with you to the reception.

The following are common for a ceremony site:

- Altar arrangements (usually one on either side of the bride and groom)
- Chuppah flowers
- Pew decorations (to add decoration without adding cost you can use tulling or ribbon instead of flowers)

Main entrance (if you decide to put a flower arrangement at the main entrance, it's not a bad idea to place it by the guest book to direct attention)

Reception sites may provide centerpieces for you and can also offer suggestions for what you'll most likely need to fill the room without having to spend a small fortune. If you're having

your reception at a place like a historical landmark, mansion, or even a golf or country club, you may want to consider not placing too many flowers on the tables or around the site. Picture yourself with all of your guests at the reception. Will your event, and the nature of your guests speak for itself, or will the site's ambience even need any decoration? At many reception sites, less is more. Consider this when choosing your flowers. Floral decorations for a reception often include the following:

Centerpieces for the guest tables (this can get very costly. Consider candles or a framed picture in the middle of the table);

Centerpiece for the cake table (often times this table looks nice with just a sprinkle of flower petals around the cake);

Head table centerpiece, usually called a bridal long and low but can vary in size and shape (a nice piece because it takes up empty space and adds color to the head table without getting in the way);

Buffet table centerpieces (for a nice effect, sprinkle colored flower petals. These will take up less space and cost less);

Place card table centerpiece (consider single flowers set on the table between the card rows or flower petals).

Now that you know where all of your flowers go, you should determine where you'd most like to have them. If you want flowers everywhere, consider using single stems or dropping flower petals on the tables in place of bouquets which will cut the cost greatly. After you've determined where you want your flowers you can figure out what types of flowers to choose.

It's always cheaper to get flowers that are in season at the time of your wedding. Even if a florist tries to sell you a package deal with "any flowers you want" there are always limitations to the flowers they can get. Make sure to discuss the kinds of flowers the florist can get before you sign a contract. For example, the hydrangea is being shown in many bridal magazines as a bridesmaid bouquet. It's beautiful, but it's a plant and some florists don't carry plants. Florists may also substitute flowers that look alike. For example, instead of using Lilly of the Valley, a florist may use a less expensive look alike. "Stock" is a common term for a filler-type flower. It's used most often in place of lilly-of-the-valley, sweet pea, baby's breath, etc. Be aware that your florist may use this and let him or her know specifically if you don't want substitutions such as stock. If you have an idea of what types of flowers you'd like, ask if they're available. Don't assume "any flower you want" is really any flower you want - it's any flower they can get.

Popular wedding flowers include:

Aster: daisy-like small flowers that come in an assortment of colors. Often used as filler.

Calla Lilly: cone-shaped, large flowers that are usually long with thick stalks.

Carnations: come in assorted colors and are a very full flower. Looks great in centerpieces.

Delphinium: long, thin stalks of flowers that come in white, lavender and blue.

Freesia: a heavily scented soft flower, available in lavender, white, yellow, pink and red.

Gardenia: fully bloomed white flower with green leaves. Beautiful, however hard to care for. These may turn color after being out of water for a while.

Gladiolus: these long thick stalks of flowers have blooms from top to bottom ranging in color.

Lilly of the Valley: bell-shaped flowers that are comparable to the size of baby's breath but have a stronger scent.

Orchids: come in a wide variety. Each of which is very popular in wedding bouquets. Some have curly edges, others with colored centers.

Roses: the most popular bridal flower, comes in bright pink, creamy white, yellow, antique ivory, peach, soft pink, red, and lavender.

Stephanotis: small, star-shaped, white flowers that are beautiful with a pearl pin in the center.

There are such a wide variety of flowers to choose from when you're picking out what you like. While you're deciding, think of how your pictures will look with the different color flowers and shapes. Do you want everyone in your wedding party to have a single solid color or do you like a variety? What kinds of flowers and colors will your parents wear? It may be nice to have three or four different types of flowers in your bouquet and then separate each type of flower for the bridesmaids' bouquets and groomsmen boutonnieres. You could even make your groom's boutonniere with the same variety you have. The possibilities are endless. Provide the florist with a swatch of fabric from the bridesmaid dresses if you want him or her to add ribbon into the bouquets. Wrapping the stems with ribbon and looping it in and around the flowers is also a popular look for the bride and bridesmaids. Once you know the types of flowers you want you can begin determining the shape of bouquet. Keep in mind your florist will go through all of these details with you. The most common types of bridal bouquets are:

Arm Bouquet: seen with long-stemmed flowers usually tied with a ribbon and held in the bend of the arm.

Cascade Bouquet: this bouquet is rounded at the top and flows downward, also called the waterfall bouquet because of its shape. Can be quite large.

Nosegay bouquet: a smaller bouquet tied with ribbon. Very simple and taking on a round shape.

Round bouquet: circular bouquet that can hold more flowers than a nosegay but takes on the same shape.

As you can tell, finding a florist is only the beginning when it comes to your wedding flowers. There are so many varieties and colors that it can be hard to choose. Remember to first find out what your florist carries. From there, think about the different types and arrangements and have faith that your florist knows what he or she is talking about. If the florist doesn't think a particular flower would last at your outdoor summer ceremony, then it probably won't. Shop around, and find a florist that you think can best match up with your needs. From there, relax and enjoy picking out the beautiful flowers that will compliment you on your wedding day.