

# Tips for Finding the Right Wedding Day Florist

One of the more aesthetically appealing and, as a result, noticeable parts of a wedding are the floral arrangements. The right choice of flowers can add that much more to an already special day, while the wrong choice can become an irritating distraction from the bride and groom. To make sure your arrangements are a perfect addition, instead of an eyesore, consider the following tips.

- Ask around: Recently married friends who live nearby should be able to recommend a good florist or at least keep you from making the same mistakes they made. Ask about particular arrangements and what styles they chose. If you attended their wedding try and remember the type of event it was, be it a formal party or a more casual gathering. Oftentimes, the

nature of the wedding can dictate what arrangement might be most appropriate.

If none of your friends in the area have recently walked down the aisle, ask the staff at the reception hall or where the ceremony itself will be taking place. Chances are, they've been exposed to numerous arrangements and seen them in action, so they could prove to be a valuable resource.

- View a portfolio: If a florist is worth hiring, he should have a portfolio of past weddings he's worked on. This can be your best way to gauge how the image in your head might match up with what the florist will provide come the big day. Some florists can also put together a sample bouquet. If a florist has no portfolio, seriously consider going elsewhere.

- Go prepared: When

going to visit or interview a florist, bring as much as information as possible. If you can bring along a picture of both the bride's dress and at least the color of the bridesmaids' gowns, this can be a big help in making sure you select flowers that coordinate. Also, know exactly what you'll be needing, such as how many arrangements, bouquets, boutonnieres and corsages, and ask for an itemized estimate. This will ensure that you won't be surprised when it comes time to pay the bill and can pick only those items that fit within your budget.

- Ask about using flowers that are in-season: This can be a good way to save money. Using out-of-season flowers will cost more, while in-season flowers and those specific to your region of the country can considerably lessen the blow on your budget. Filler materi-

al, such as leaves and berries, can also save money but be pleasing to the eye.

- Get delivery service information before signing on the dotted line: Make sure you know if the florist moves the arrangements between loca-

tions and rearranges at the reception or wherever you go once the ceremony is over. No couple wants to worry about moving the flowers themselves, so make sure these arrangements are listed in the final agreement.



## Honeymoon Packing Made Easy

Honeymoons are big business in the United States. With more than 2.4 million weddings occurring each year, those happy couples spend \$8 billion a year on their honeymoon (according to About.com.)

With that kind of serious money going into a dream (hopefully!) honeymoon, it's no wonder that brides spend a considerable amount of time and effort planning what to pack. After all, not every honeymoon destination includes a place to pick up a pair of jeans, especially if a couple chooses an increasingly popular honeymoon destination like a safari, hiking trip, mountain climbing, or a boat trip down an exotic river.

According to Jocelyn Leiser Herndon of The Art Institute of California - San Francisco, the key to successful honeymoon packing is "finding pieces that do double duty." That way, she says,

"you're almost sure to have what you need no matter where you go."

For her own honeymoon, Herndon went to Greece which, she says, "is not exactly an exotic location." Herndon honed her considerable packing skills growing up in a family whose average vacation included canoeing and bike trips. "My family used to have a contest to see which of us could bring the smallest suitcase, but if you got to the destination and were missing something, you were disqualified. Needless to say, I was taught to be a light packer," Herndon adds.

Weather watching on the Internet also makes a honeymoon less of a risk. For Lindsay Rapp, a Career Services Advisor in the Media Arts & Animation and Digital Media Production department at The Art Institute of Washington, packing for a honeymoon trip to the North

Shore of Oahu meant daily weather checks to make sure she and her husband were packing smartly. "With the Internet, it's much easier to plan around the weather, and to know if you need to pack that raincoat, or if you can leave it at home," says Rapp. Of course, for Rapp's husband, packing is a no-brainer, no matter what the weather conditions.

"My husband packs a few short-sleeve polos, khakis, bathing suits and voila! He's good to go. For me, not so much," she says. After packing seven bathing suits (one per day, she explains), lingerie (also one per day), cover ups, golf clothes, sundresses, skirts and tank tops, along with wraps for the evening, comfortable clothes, and not including toiletries, Rapp ended up with "a suitcase that weighed more than I did, and I didn't wear half of what I packed."

"Double-duty pieces are key," says Herndon. Whether you're going to a domestic or international location, remote or in the heart of the city, find items that can work in a number of different ways. "I always bring a shirt or blouse that is casual enough for the day, but that I can throw a cami under or a sweater over and dress it up for the evening." A pretty shawl is a must too. Not only are they a great cover up during the day if it gets cold, but also are wonderful to curl up in on a plane, especially since fewer airlines are providing blankets.

For shoes, Herndon recommends sandals for warmer destinations, comfortable but nice-looking sneakers, and hiking boots if you plan to climb a mountain or two, or even take an invigorating walk through the woods. A great pair of knit black slacks can be dressed up at night, or worn casually for shopping or

museum-going. Knits are a good choice because they don't wrinkle, and are comfortable enough to stretch with you after a great meal.

A student accountant at The Art Institute of New York City, Elizabeth Kennel recently returned from a honeymoon in Cancun. While Cancun isn't exactly an exotic or remote location, Kennel did keep an eye on packing versatile pieces. "I was able to wear a fun sun dress casually during the day and translate it into a killer night-on-the-town dress by throwing on a pair of stilettos for my usual flip flops," she says. Fit and comfort were at the top of her list of priorities. Says Kennel, "It's your honeymoon -- the last thing you want to be worried about are shoes that hurt your feet, or clothes that don't fit. Nobody wants to spend their honeymoon shopping for a new wardrobe."