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BRIDAL CORNER

Finding a florist Tips to ensure your wedding blooms



By **RONDA ADDY**
 Special to The IFP

Flowers are an important part of a wedding. Finding just the right florist takes some time and effort. Here are some tips.

You should start looking for a florist approximately a year before the wedding, especially if the date of your wedding happens to fall during the busy season from May until August or around holidays like Mother's Day or Valentine's Day. Check with the site where you are having the reception to see if they have any recommendations. Ask friends and family. Compose a list of five florists. Arrange to meet with all of them and bring the groom along.

When you arrive at each florist's shop, take a look around. Are the employees friendly? Is the shop clean? Are the flowers fresh? Bring a fabric sample of your dress and the bridesmaid's dresses, photos of the ceremony and reception areas, and a list of your favorite

flowers and any flowers you don't want included. Be upfront about your budget and describe in detail everything about your wedding from your colors and style to the number of people in the wedding party. Ask to see a portfolio of the florist's work. Find out if they rent any kind of accessories such as runners and candelabras and get a cost estimate. Ask about delivery times, methods of payment and cancellation policies. Most florists require a 50% deposit upfront and the remaining balance two weeks prior to the wedding.

After meeting with each florist, make a list of pros and cons. Compare the lists and make a decision. Contact the florist you have chosen and ask them to draw up a contract. Don't sign on the dotted line until you have read the contract and made sure that it lists everything the florist will be providing. Depending upon what you have agreed upon, the florist may be responsible for:

- Bridal bouquet

- Bouquet to toss
- Bouquets for the maid of honor and bridesmaids
- Boutonnieres for the best man, grooms-men and ushers
- Corsages for the mothers of the bride and groom
- Boutonnieres for the fathers of the bride and groom
- Flowers for the flower girl
- Boutonniere for the ringbearer and flowers for the pillow
- Altar decorations
- Aisle decorations
- Candles for the ceremony
- Table centerpieces
- Decorations for the cake table
- Live flowers for the wedding cake

- Chair covers
- After you have approved and signed the contract, reconfirm the details when you pay the remaining balance. Find out if the florist will be setting up the day of your wedding. If not, get an emergency number that you

can call if anything should go wrong with the flowers on the day of your wedding.

Planning a wedding is stressful, no doubt about it. Choosing the right florist will alleviate some of that stress. Make your choice carefully.



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