

How to Prepare for Your Floral Design Consultation

Planning your wedding can be an overwhelming experience due to issues of size, complexity, and cost. And let's not forget the emotional aspects of joining two families together! However, your planning process doesn't have to be an emotional roller coaster ride into debt. We can help by offering crucial advice on how to get ready for your consultation with your floral designer.

This Should Not Be "The Running of the Brides"

First and foremost, keep in mind that the relationship that you will have with your selected floral designer is just that... a relationship. Typically, nearly-weds will correspond with their designer multiple times over a period of six months to a year to plan their floral décor, so learn to relax and develop this relationship over time. Don't rush it just make a check on your 'To Do' list; address various issues in their due time. You are not simply walking into a shop to buy a purse or shoes off the shelf, never to return. Nor are you selecting services from a limousine, photography, or DJ company, who often have just a few cut-and-dried packages to choose from.

Wedding flowers and décor should reflect personal aspects about the two people getting married, celebrating their unique chemistry while communicating their tastes and personalities to the guests. Ideally, all the aspects of a wedding, from the invitations through to the wedding cake, entertainment, and décor will tell a story about the couple's intermingled lives. Crucial to achieving this goal is selecting a theme for the flowers and décor. The possibilities here are endless, especially when multiple aspects are usually combined, as both partners' styles are fused together. Examples of décor themes include autumn vineyard, rock-n-roll vintage, red roses and crystal 'Bling', French country, blue & white at the beach, enchanted garden, Asian soiree, etc., etc. Don't be intimidated by all the choices, after all, you won't be pursuing all of them – just the one that's right for you as a couple!

"Don't Put the Cart before the Horse"

Looking at the big picture of your wedding plan, selecting the perfect floral designer should *not* be the first step of your process. Designers need information about your wedding day before they can start doing their job

effectively...lots of information! We recommend that you commit to a wedding date, venue, and preliminary dress selection before moving on to décor.

When the time comes to consider floral décor, do your homework before investing the time and energy to travel to a face-to-face consultation. Company web sites are an invaluable resource. Do trusted friends & family or other vendors you are working with recommend a particular floral designer? If so, you should at least visit the web sites of these referrals. In general, vendors who are unwilling to fully explain details about their services or pressure clients to make a financial commitment at their first meeting are sending up a big red warning flag!

Paint a Picture of Your Lives

Of all the core principles and elements of floral design, color is the one we deem most important for planning décor. We feel this way because of the significant *visual weight* that color imparts on any design, and because colors are known to invoke strong emotional responses in people. Let's face it, regardless of technical knowledge, everyone has opinions about colors. With this being said, another 'homework assignment' is to carefully consider color in your design. What are your favorite colors, and why? What things come in your favorite colors – sunsets, foods, makeup, fabric? Don't worry about combining the ideal combinations of colors into a *color palette* – that's not needed just yet.

The goal of 'painting a picture' of your lives, actually extends beyond color and is very easy to do. Just be on the lookout for anything that catches your eye in the weeks before your consultation, and I mean *anything*! Pictures of dresses, cars, furniture, vacation spots, hair styles, lampshades - whatever peaks your interest, for any reason, should be sampled and put into a folder. If you have pictures of flowers, that's good, but not necessary at this stage. Keep in mind that these examples can be cut out from magazines, or gathered electronically. Creating an inspiration page on Pinterest is a great new tool for planning. Actually, swatches of fabric, jewelry, paint swatches, a peacock feather, seashell, or other items could be useful. Just be sure you can carry your collection of samples to your consultation! Your designer will help you identify why you like certain items, and use these key characteristics in your proposal. Note that you aren't trying to find a picture of your exact bridal bouquet. We strongly discourage copying flower arrangements, preferring to create original works that

match your uniqueness as a couple. Also, showing pictures of things that you strongly *dislike* will keep those elements out of your designs.

Pinch A Penny

Now to tackle the most stressful part of planning any aspect of your wedding...the dreaded budget! To relieve some of the pressure, keep in mind that as designers, we are not here to judge you based on how much money you bring to the table. Our goal is to provide you with the personalized floral décor that you need, while staying within your budget. We do this on a regular basis for a wide range of prices. That being said, a designer can not stay within a budget if he/she doesn't know what it is – only the clients can know their true budget. We have close relationships with several experienced & successful event planning companies. We agree with these professionals, who suggest your flower budget be a minimum of 10% of your entire wedding budget. This percentage will vary depending how important flowers are to you. Also, flowers need to be distinguished from overall décor, which may include linens, chairs, chargers, lighting, tableware, props, etc. Couples who emphasize flowers and various décor elements can allocate up to 25% of their total budget. A frustrating scenario that designers go through time and again, is the need to completely rescale elaborate proposals down to a tiny fraction of the original content simply because the clients did not know or communicate a realistic budget. Don't put yourself in this category because it just wastes everyone's time, and can lead to disappointment when reality sets in.

To summarize: Research floral designers before meeting with them. Meet your floral designers after locking in your date, venue, and dress. Bring pictures of your likes and dislikes to your consults. Communicate a realistic budget. By trusting the professionals to guide you along the planning process, you can participate in and enjoy each step of the way until you walk down that aisle, knowing you have floral décor that does your wedding justice!