



Blooming strategy

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used in Jewish wedding is a classic testimony to the romance of flowers.

Finding the right florist will make the difference. Here are some tips from the experts:

- Book your florist early. Some florists say that three months in advance isn't too soon.
- Find a florist who specializes in weddings — they will be up on all the latest trends. Also look for one who is familiar with the wedding and reception site.

"Most florists in your area know every site in the area — every hotel, country club, church and synagogue," says Velasquez.

- Bring swatches of fabric from bridesmaids' dresses and a sketch of the bridal gown.

A good florist will create a bouquet in keeping with the bride's proportions and the character of the dress.

Age is also a consideration, Velasquez says.

A 30-year-old bride might want an exotic, sophisticated arrangement whereas a younger bride will opt for something more delicate.

- If you don't know a tiger lily from a lily of the valley, look through the wedding albums that most florists keep to give brides ideas. Also clip pictures from bridal magazines.

- Be specific about your budget. If the sky's the limit, then you have all the exotic, out-of-season blossoms you want. But florists also can wonders on a tighter budget.

In general, big flowing cascades are more expensive than a simple nosegay.

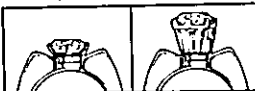
In-season buds reflect the time of year and are less expensive than out-of-season exotics, although Velasquez says that more efficient transportation methods have made exotic flowers more accessible and affordable than ever.

Other cost-cutting ideas include attendants' bouquets that do double duty as centerpieces at the reception or mixing real flowers with silk.

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