

UNEXPECTED BLOOMS

FLOWERS BRING FRESH ELEGANCE
TO OFT-OVERLOOKED RECEPTION
AND CEREMONY AREAS.

Your life is in full bloom: You've found the right person to spend the rest of your life with, and now you're planning the party of a lifetime to celebrate your precious bond. Flowers, almost certainly, will be a big part of that event. To create a cohesive celebration environment that immerses your guests in the beauty and sentiment of your special day, take your blooms beyond standard altar arrangements, centerpieces and bouquets, into hidden corners and private spaces, unadorned surfaces and overlooked places.

writer CHRISTINA CALDWELL ~ *photo* LARRY FAGALA



Quirky floral “gestures” can really add to your guests’ memories of the ceremony, says David Tuter, floral designer to the stars and star, himself, of WETv’s popular “My Fair Wedding with David Tuter.”

“Unexpected flowers add a touch of magic and whimsy to your wedding.

When your guests come across these hidden buds, there is a moment of surprise when they first realize what they’ve found,” Tuter says. “It keeps the decor interesting and invites your guests to explore your wedding further and see what other hidden gems they can find.”

LITTLE TREASURES

It’s all about the details. When you’re really looking to add a “wow” factor to your celebration, you should look everywhere but the expected places, says Sheli Hart, event designer for Houston’s Flora & Eventi.

“Adding flowers to the ceiling or existing lighting fixtures, or surrounding the stage for DJ or band, or even around or under a dance floor, can really be a unique touch,” Hart says. Though the trend is just beginning to take off in Houston, “creating a raised dance floor out of Plexiglas with a full display of flowers and lighting underneath is a real showstopper,” she adds.

Succulents might not be traditional flowers, but they can add volume, texture and luxury to your typical bundle of blooms. Their rich, thick, fleshy leaves have a distinctly modern, architectural feel, so give your event a bit of edge by incorporating aloe into your altar, cacti into your centerpieces or jade plants on the bar, suggests Stacy Mendenhall, owner of Lary’s Florist and Designs in Friendswood.

“Personalize, personalize, personalize,” adds designer Teresa Vencil of Houston’s Haute Flowers & Finds. “For example, if you decide that all your bridesmaids are going to wear cowboy boots with their dresses, and your favorite grandpa, who has passed away, loved wearing his favorite pair of boots, create a centerpiece for the ceremony entry table that includes his boots, filled with a beautiful floral arrangement, to greet your guests.”

CEREMONY SIGHTS

The current trend of rustic, vintage-inspired ceremonies has seen a spike in the popularity of wildflowers and other natural greenery, Tuter says. For outdoor weddings, some of those flowers



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can even be pulled from surrounding areas the day of your ceremony if your wedding planner is feeling ambitious. “It adds an organic touch while still feeling special and upscale,” he says.

You can also punch up your ceremony by decorating reception seat backs or simply scattering small, random bouquets with your favorite florals throughout the pews. Your guests will naturally pick them up and bring them to the reception, carrying over a piece of the ceremony, Tutera says.

“I also love to frame the altar or space where you and your groom will stand to take your vows,” Tutera says. “It evokes an intimate and romantic feeling for the whole ceremony.”

If you want your ceremony to have a professional, out-of-a-magazine look, there are certain blooms that are really popping for 2014. “Some of the must-have flowers are garden roses, peonies and clematises,” says Mendenhall. “Wedding-flower trends for 2014 will be loose and airy, with the addition of foliage, botanicals and succulents.”

Try adding small bunches of full, ruffy flowers to the ends of pews or chair rows, perhaps accented with silky ribbons, or rustic raffia for a country-chic touch. If your ceremony site has a contemporary feel, place succulents in tall hammered-tin canisters or white ceramic pots at the end of every third or fourth row. Or, for a cost-effective and effortlessly romantic touch, create a simple “runner” out of fresh rose petals.

FRESH BLOOMS ON BUDGET

It’s a difficult fact that every bride has to come to terms with when she’s planning her impending nuptials: Flowers are expensive! When you’ve grown accustomed to seeing \$15 bouquets of roses at the grocery store, the cost of

your ideal floral fantasy—especially if it involves exotic or particularly pricey blooms (peonies, for instance, an eternal wedding favorite)—can seem overwhelming.

But there are ways around the heavy cost of fresh-cut blooms. Shonda Cheris, event designer for Washington-based

event-planning company Livewire 99, advises brides to take the local, seasonal approach to get the most bang for their floral bucks.

“A bride should request in-season flowers, and if she must have a particular flower, but it is expensive during the time of year she wants it, consider

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changing the wedding date,” Cheris says. “Seriously, it will be worth it to have the wedding you desire.”

Lower-cost blooms such as chrysanthemums and common roses, as well as lush greenery, can be used to create a look of abundance, particularly in large-scale floral design—think chuppahs, mandaps and altar canopies—and especially in areas that are far away from the guest’s eye. Save pricier blooms for close-up floral features such as centerpieces.

Flowers made by hand from delicate tissue paper also can give the ceremony a sophisticated yet homey feel without venturing into the realm of arts and crafts, notes Darryl & Co.’s Jerri Powell.

But really, the best thing a bride can do when working within the confines of the budget is to keep an open mind, Hart says. Discussing and trusting your budget to a professional will ensure you get the flowers you want, perhaps with cash to spare.

“Focus on the things that are really important to you. Be open minded to non-floral and floral centerpiece options,” Hart says. “Trust your florist to lead you in a direction that is truly going to give you the most bang for your buck. Be open minded to the sizes of your floral arrangements and let us design something that suits your style, as well as the size of the venue.”

Also, Hart adds, “A lot of florists can be flexible with the cost of labor, depending on the scope of the design.” She notes that the cost savings can equate to the same amount a bride might spend if she were to source loose stems and attempt to arrange them herself. “I would highly recommend a bride not take on the added responsibilities of arranging flowers herself or with her bridesmaids the day before the wedding. This creates a lot of added stress and the possibilities of things not working out as planned are likely. Flowers are delicate and floral design is a true art form.”