



Essential décor tips!

By Erna Swart – Oakfield Farm

Erna Swart has worked with Café Fleur for five years, and has recently joined Oakfield Farm as a dedicated in-house décor consultant for clients. She also shares her husband's passion for gardening. Their garden was selected as one of the Gardens of The Golden City in 1998. She simply bubbles with practical enthusiasm, in her belief that lovely décor is within the reach of all brides.

Photo: Ryan Graham



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Photo Patrick Furter

Photo Irene Quist

Photo Adam Hilton

Photo Patrick Furter

Photo Dror Eyal

After many years of consultation with clients, I find myself giving the same advice to many couples, and thought it would be helpful to outline some essential do's and don'ts.

Do's

Book your décor specialist or florist well in advance. Before any consultation, identify the colours you like as these influence the style of your wedding – whether classical, earthy, modern or traditional. If you are uncertain, open your wardrobe and find the dominant



Photo Irene Quist



Photo Adam Hilton



Photo Patrick Furtter



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colour. You will probably find these colours elsewhere in your curtains, furniture, and décor. The same applies to your choice of flowers. Look in magazines or flower shops for flowers that appeal to you. Take samples or photos with you, so that the florist can integrate these into the look and feel you require, and advise you as to cost and seasonal availability. Red flowers are always a good choice, but they do not stand out as clearly as the other colours unless the lighting is good. If lighting is not good, candles can be added for a dramatic effect.

Every professional décor specialist will agree that you absolutely must do a mock up or sample table. This is normally done at the venue, and should be set up with the linen, glasses and cutlery offered by the venue. Bring samples of the name cards, order of service, menus, etc, as these are a part of the picture. With the florist you can explore different décor options until you are completely happy with the picture you see. It is also reassuring to know what to expect on your wedding day. Photos must be taken to ensure that there can be no misunderstandings. The additional cost of R200 to R500 for this mock-up is money well spent.

If you choose to do the flowers yourself, you need arrangements that can be prepared the day before and can be easily transported. Again, a sample table is a must! Without the experience of an expert, this is the only way to know what will be involved, how many flowers to buy, what the cost will be, how long the flowers take to open and how long they will stay fresh. (Remember that flowers take longer to open in winter). Check that the flowers are readily available in the month of your wedding. Involve a few close friends in the décor project. This is great fun and their help on the day will allow you to focus on yourself. Again, a photograph of your sample table is vital and will ensure that your loyal helpers remember what you want.

In the church, four to six candelabras on two to three different levels are spectacular. It is also good value as the venue can be asked to move these, and your other flowers, back to the venue whilst the guests enjoy cocktails.

Don'ts

There is no fixed rule with high or low arrangements. There is a common misconception that high arrangements are intrusive or obscure the view of fellow guests

at the table. In fact, most centrepieces and candelabras are designed to prevent this. High arrangements are much more dramatic, but require high ceilings. When low arrangements are used the effect on the guests, when they enter, is less breathtaking but the flowers then remain the focal point throughout the evening.

Be very careful when using red and white as your wedding theme, as it can easily end up looking like Valentine's Day gone wrong. Use either white flowers and red runners, red flowers on plain white linen, or alternate one table with red flowers and the other table with white flowers – avoid combining red and white flowers.

Décor specialists or florists usually arrange flowers in green or white plastic bowls. Enough greenery should be used to cover it – it is not acceptable to see the bowl.

With regards to wine, mineral water, and fruit juices on the table, there is nothing worse than walking into the reception to see water and liquor bottles competing with the flowers for attention. These beverages should only be served after the guests are seated.

Table runners should be flat on the tables – the "scrunched" look has been out of fashion for at least four years.

Take care with sunflowers – they should be used in a modern and simple way. Mixing these with wheat or a mix of other flowers is risky and old-fashioned.

Unless you have prepared special menus that complement your décor, place no more than two, flat, on either end of the table. Even if the menus are special, never use the salt and pepper pots as menu stands!

If your budget is tight don't be led to believe that you have to use hundreds of flowers. Runners, tiebacks and petals create a beautiful effect especially when used with multi-candle candelabra, which always create an atmosphere of romance and grandeur. A single flower on each guest's serviette and petals will complete the picture. This will cost you approximately R175 per table.

Finally, remember that the décor is only a part of the big day. You guests have not come to a flower show. They have come to share a great day filled with celebration and blessings.