

TIPS FROM A FLORIST

Christine Nelson, owner of Designs Etc., has been a wedding florist for 30 years. One saving strategy she employs is repurposing arrangements, such as incorporating bridesmaid bouquets into the table decorations. Thinking creatively and being open-minded help, too. Trusting a florist's recommendation for anchoring designs with in-season varieties, weaving in lower-cost alternatives (like carnations) and using lots of greenery in centerpieces can keep costs manageable.

FLOWERS FOR LESS

Working with a florist, local brides can expect to spend at least \$2,000 on flowers for a traditional wedding, says Christine Nelson, owner of Designs Etc. If that falls outside of your comfort zone, consider forgoing the pro and doing it yourself.

Use these tips to get started:

➔ **Order ahead from a wholesaler and make your own arrangements.** Skip the time commitment by enlisting a friend to help. For a good selection of colors and varieties, try Costco, which sells 50 roses for \$50 (among other varieties) and pre-matched flower bundles starting at \$100. An average bridesmaid bouquet requires about 25 flowers (so about \$25 per bouquet). costco.com

➔ **Ring in a design expert for help.** *Flowers for less* mke.com offers bouquet and centerpiece design workshops to help you achieve your DIY goals. They're also a great resource for pre-ordering flowers in bulk (roses, for instance, run \$2 per stem and come in boxes of 100).

➔ **Pick up fresh bouquets from local farmers markets.** Scout the markets ahead of time and ask the floral vendor if they can create your bouquet. Many area markets take place on Saturday mornings from early summer to late fall, but for more lead time, try a weekday market in Thiensville, West Allis or South Milwaukee.

➔ **Go faux.** To find artificial flowers that look as good as fresh, wedding planner Nilsa Tremaine of Tremaine Weddings recommends My Dream Centerpiece (mydreamcenterpiece.com) for renting bouquets (\$20) and arrangements (\$25-\$100) and Amazon store Ling's Special Moments for buying faux-quets for as low as \$30.

➔ **Get crafty.** Consider a bouquet of sola wood flowers, made from the wood of a marshy plant. Rather than stiff and hard, these flowers are soft and pliable, so they can be stemmed, dyed and fluffed. Bridal bouquet kits start around \$40 and centerpiece kits start as low as \$10-\$12.

solawoodflowers.com

