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## You need a wedding planner ab

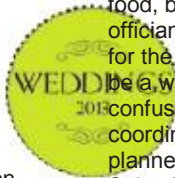
BY CLAIRE HURD  
Special to The Citizen

Planning a wedding is complicated. Selecting invitations, buying a dress, picking the venue, lodgings, the menu, the cake and photos all offer wonderful opportunities to work with friends and families toward a great celebration. However, not everyone has hundreds, or thousands, of hours to keep up with every detail of the big day — especially if you are planning a destination wedding.

A great wedding planner will save you time and stress during the planning process, providing advice and referrals about everything from the budget and schedule to planning a menu and negotiating with vendors. Kate Bentley, of Kate Bentley Events advises, “They will serve as your creative

partner — not just overseeing logistical matters — but also providing a wealth of ideas, insights, opinions, and more.”

When considering a venue for your destination wedding in the Florida Keys, you will notice that many locations offer a comprehensive package including food, beverages, rentals, photography, officiant, and an ‘on-site coordinator’ for the event. These packages can be a wonderful deal, but do not confuse the role of a venue’s ‘on-site coordinator’ with your personal wedding planner. Bentley explains, “The Catering Sales Manager or on-site coordinator’s main focus is to create revenue for the venue. It is important to also understand that they may have more than one reception going on at the same time, which may take the personalized service you need on your wedding day away.” An on-site coordinator has a lot of valuable information to help your planning process,



but a wedding planner's loyalty lies with you.

Lynda Dandeneau, a designer/florist based in Vermont, has provided floral designs for events as far away from her home base as Islamorada. She says that choosing a local wedding planner is very important. It is also vital that the duties of the wedding planner are spelled out very clearly in a contract. Starting out with clear expectations, for both the bride and the planner, will make your event run as smooth as possible. A good wedding planner will be hands-on with staff on duty for the duration of the wedding day from set-up to clean-up after the reception.

Especially when planning an event during hurricane season (May-November), talk to the wedding planner about how best to handle situations like a mandatory tourist evacuation – it happens more often than any local cares to contemplate.

Only a Florida Keys wedding planner has the contacts and experience necessary to manage events this far from the mainland. Lynn D'Ascanio of D'Asigner Events recommends that you look for a Planner with a membership in the Association of Bridal Consultants (ABC), or another reputable professional association. Professional memberships assure that the planner you choose follows professional standards, and that they have expertise that comes only from with networking with vendors and planners nationwide. D'Ascanio is based in Marathon, and is especially familiar with establishments in that area. She said many planners are willing to travel throughout the Keys, but keep in mind that a wedding planner in Key West or Key Largo will have the most expertise in their own backyard.

Wedding planners generally work for a set fee, plus an hourly rate for additional duties. There are planners willing to provide



pre-planning consultation for a fee, to give prospective brides advice about local vendors and venues. During the course of a consultation, couples often realize that contracting with an expert wedding planner may actually save money in the long run.

Planners can work with the bride and groom, and their families, for a year or more before the wedding, coordinating plans between vendors and venues, and providing advice on things like when to send out invitations and when to shop for a dress. For weddings with a smaller budget and/or a short planning time frame, most wedding planners

offer "Day of Coordination" services, as well.

Many couples have siblings, parents, friends, or even smart phones (check out 'Brides Wedding Genius,' or 'Wedding Plan-It' for iPhone or Android respectively) that purport to have the knowledge of a wedding planner. However, on your actual wedding day, that sister of yours will not have time to double-check the caterers, because she is a bridesmaid. And do you really want to spend your wedding day checking the phone for reminders that the cake needs to be cut by 4 p.m., to avoid a hefty overtime charge on the open bar?

Hire a wedding planner.

Wedding planners can coordinate all the details with vendors so you are free to enjoy special moments with family and friends.

# Feathers, fronds & shells lend wild beauty to Keys wedding flowers

## ab

BY LAUREL TUOHY  
Special to The Citizen

Imagine sweet  
bunches of  
brush-hued tea  
roses with ivory feathers  
poking through their ruffled  
petals, delicate orchids juxtaposed



with broad, strong palm  
fronds or a Keys wildflower  
bouquet of tropical sage  
and purslane with the  
rough edges of tamarind  
pods woven throughout.

What's hot now in the  
Keys and across the country is  
incorporating unexpected natural

and even unruly elements into  
your floral and decorative decor.  
In the north, that might mean  
using logs and branches from a  
parents' treasured property, as  
photographer Nick Doll recently  
saw a couple do - slices of branch  
can be used as coasters while hunks  
of the trunk can be repurposed as  
impromptu seating; twigs can add  
an unexpected element to bouquets  
and centerpieces.

In the Keys this means driftwood,  
feathers, seashells and palm fronds.  
Conch centerpieces are always a  
popular choice in Key West as well,  
since the island is also known as  
"the conch republic." Wedding  
Planner Kate Bentley recently  
teamed up with Mama Flowers  
to create driftwood centerpieces  
dotted with tealights and orchids  
that had guests oohing and ahhhing.

Kristin Artz, Event Planner at The  
Swivel Group, encourages brides to  
think "green" and environmentally  
friendly when choosing flora for  
weddings. They recommend live  
plants to be used and replanted  
after the ceremony as well as  
incorporating other natural  
elements such as moss and stones.  
Dayna Brooks, of Mama Flowers,  
noted that brides coming to the  
Keys in search of the perfect  
Island wedding often choose wild,  
tropical, sunset-colored blooms  
like Birds of Paradise set off with  
natural but architectural elements  
like wild bamboo. She also often  
works little starfish and shells into  
arrangements for her island brides.

Glitzier girls and DIY couples;  
who search Pinterest, flea markets



Photos by ROB O'NEAL/The Citizen

Peacock feathers accent this Key West  
bride's colorful bouquet.





Palm leaves paired with Jessica's favorite flowers add a tropical touch to her elegant bouquet.

and craft stores for the most interesting and offbeat ideas; are incorporating beads, wire, gems and swatches of their dress into bouquets and other florals.

Flowers don't even have to be flowers anymore. Planner Bentley and photographer Doll recently collaborated on an unusual wedding where the bride's bouquet was crafted entirely of vintage brooches!

Kristy Geary, co-owner of Key West's Love In Bloom florist, offers practical advice for brides planning a Keys wedding: Because most people get married outdoors, there are no church floral arrangements like those that would typically adorn the alter and row ends. Instead, she guides out-of-town brides toward pieces that can adorn beach or boat such as floral arches or rose petals forming hearts or initials in the sand.

Tropically-themed flowers will always be big sellers for beachy weddings. Luckily, the flowers that flourish in the Keys are those that grow here. Ginger orchids and other tropically grown blooms lend an island vibe to wedding festivities. Geary even sells young decorative pink pineapple for an extra tropical, outdoorsy look.

Whatever choice a bride makes regarding flowers, the true bloom will be on the couple's love.



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# It's all about the dress

## ab



Contributed photos by Sheelman Photography

Vintage looks for the bride, such as those available at Grace Boutique, are a welcome contrast when paired with new dresses for the bridesmaids.

BY LAUREL TUOHY

Special to the Citizen

After the question is popped and the answer is settled, often the next question on a brides' mind is: what kind of dress should I wear?

The looks on the 2013 bridal fashion runways featured two strong trends: dresses with pockets and non-white gowns.

If you are looking for something less than traditional, top designers such as Vera Wang offered dresses in cherry red while Lazaro sent water-hued and peach sherbet-colored confections down the catwalk. Reem

Acra offered gowns in the color that Pinterest has declared "The #1 Wedding Trend for 2013" — mint green. And every designer from Monique Lhuillier to Badgley Mischka had at least one pink dress in their collection.

In the real world, this rainbow of dresses might translate to a bride wearing pale gray, champagne, watery blue or "a touch of pink," as Wedding Planner

Kate Bentley said she preferred this season. The Swivel Group's Kristin Artz agreed, saying, "Color is coming back into the mix for bridal gowns, whether it is a soft and romantic pink or bold and chic statement of color."



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inspiration from the past.

## Dresses

“What I see changing in

From page 10

the wedding industry is that

it doesn't have to be so by-Dresses with pockets are

the-book,” said Star Grace, another key look for 2013.

co-owner of Key West's Gracetrend led by designers Wang

Boutique, which offers new and Carolina Herrera. While

they give a more casual air to and vintage looks for brides,

Maids/Matrons of Honora dress, they are also highly

and Mothers of the Bridefunctional. A dress with

pockets means a bride's hands and groom at their Truman

can be free from a fussy purse Avenue shop. She and co-

ownerYenisey “Jenny” Gomezwhile her phone and lipstick

love to mix old and newcan still be nearby. Bentley

pieces and vintage piecesalso noted that a dress with

from different eras. They notepockets lends a laid-back

that most vintage brides aredestination wedding feel to

searching for pieces from theyour dress.

Another wedding trend that '20s through '50s.

Mixing pieces might meanis sweeping everything

wearing a new dress with arings to fashion to music is

lacecapelet from the 1800sa return to classic looks and

over it (as their model doesstyle. For fashion this means

here) or a pillbox hat from thetwo things: true vintage

1950s with a freshlypurchasedor new clothing that takes

gown.

For the bride shopping for vintage, it can sometimes be

“the luck of the draw” since the perfect piece may appear

on the rack only to not be

in her size or have some

imperfection. When a dress

is 30, 40 or 50 years old, the

chances of it having a stain,

hole or other irregularity

may be great. If you love the

dress, Grace suggests finding

a work-around. She suggested

pinning a brooch over a small

mark or taking it to an expert

tailor who may be able to take

in a full skirt to hide a larger

imperfection.

Grace offers tips for brides

shopping for vintage: “Have

fun with it, make private

appointments and bring

a bottle of wine, do your

research, look through old

and new pictures, try it all on.”

Gomez added, “It always looks different on.”

The boutique owners are

also seeing bridal trends

moving away from traditional

accessories. Fancy barrettes

and hair feathers have

replaced traditional veils for

many Keys brides.

The women have also

started making one-of-a-

kind tulle cuffs to replace

traditional gloves in the warm

climate of Southern Florida.

“They show off your ring,”

said Grace of the unusual

accessories.

Another idea to consider:

purchasing a dress that

doesn't reach the ground if

you will wed on a Keys beach.

“Consider that the dress will

pick up debris at the beach,”

said Bentley.

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