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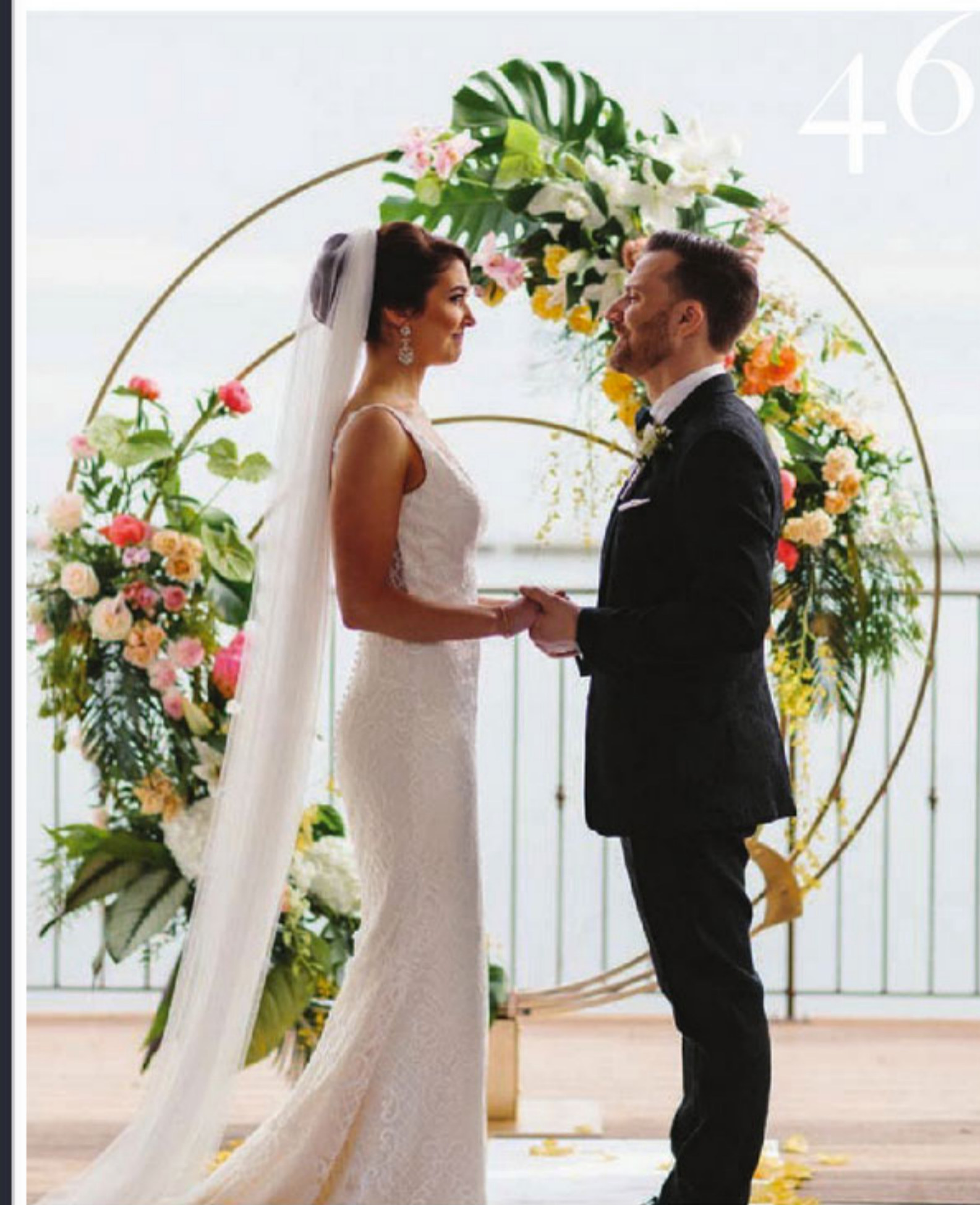
- SMART AND SAVVY BUSINESS TIPS -

AMERICAN FLORAL TRENDS FORECAST
WEDDING EDITION

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Beata Kaas, EMC; Kaas Floral Design
Photo by Mango Studios

Wedding Trends

THROUGHOUT THE INDUSTRY

Throughout all the business models in retail floristry today, some wedding trends are universal, and some are specific to the niche. Here's a look at trends in five types of floral operations.

By Julia Marie P. Schmitt, AIFD, PFCI, EMC, ICPF

For years, brides and grooms have been walking down rose-petal-strewn aisles exchanging “I dos” and entrusting their big days to professional florists and event companies. Today, more than ever before, couples are breaking with convention and doing their weddings in ways that represent their personalities and interests. With help from Pinterest, they have, at their virtual fingertips, every source of inspiration needed to make their special days picture perfect. Even with a rich diversity of options couples have today to create their dream weddings, certain trends are emerging across all sectors of the industry.

BRICK-AND-MORTAR RETAIL FLOWER SHOPS

Traditionally, retail flower shops have provided flowers for every life event for residents of local communities, many for generations. For example, Sandi Sniff, AIFD, AAF, general manager of Lafayette Florist, Gift Shop & Garden Center in Lafayette, Colo., shares, “Our family has owned and operated this flower shop and greenhouse since 1949, and we are doing weddings today for brides for whom we also did their parents’ wedding flowers.”

Michele Feld, AIFD, owner of Evans Flowers in Peabody, Mass., explains that new niches in retail floristry have changed the landscape for traditional retail florists. “Our brides today have medium-size budgets,” she says. “Brides with higher-end budgets normally work with studio florists who specialize in weddings and events.”



Sandi Sniff, AIFD, AAF
Lafayette Florist, Gift Shop & Garden Center



Sandi Sniff, AIFD, AAF, Lafayette Florist, Gift Shop & Garden Center



Michele Feld, AIFD, Evans Flowers



Emily Watson, Wood Violet
Photo by Bibury + Row



Emily Watson, Wood Violet
Photo by Bibury + Row



Emily Watson, Wood Violet
Photo by Dana Duke Photography

Another trend among brides today is “garden-style” bouquets that are loose, nonstructured crescent cascades with greenery and temperate flowers – and that might sometimes include *Protea*. Some florists, however, suggest that this style is on its way out.

“Brides are seeing ‘trends’ that are two years behind, I believe because of social media,” observes Thaddeus Servantez, AIFD, owner of Westminster Flowers & Gifts in Westminster, Colo. “They bring in pictures of whatever they are seeing on social media. We, as florists, know the forward trends, but our brides are seeing last year’s weddings, and they think that’s what’s trending now.”

With more and more couples choosing distinctive event venues or outdoor locations for their ceremonies and receptions (rather than churches, hotel ballrooms and country clubs), dual-purpose pieces such as arches, chuppahs, moon gates, ceremony circles and pedestals with urns are becoming even more commonplace. Often incorporating a strong garden feel mixed with wood elements, these pieces are used first for the ceremony and then moved to the reception.

“Couples are doing everything at one location,” Servantez explains. “We are flipping an arch from the ceremony to the backdrop of the head table or using it for a photo-op location.”

> **TIP** “Sell brides an emotion attached to a color,” suggests Servantez. “She’ll fall in love with the idea, and you’ll possibly save money by not having to buy specific flowers.”

WEDDING AND EVENT STUDIOS

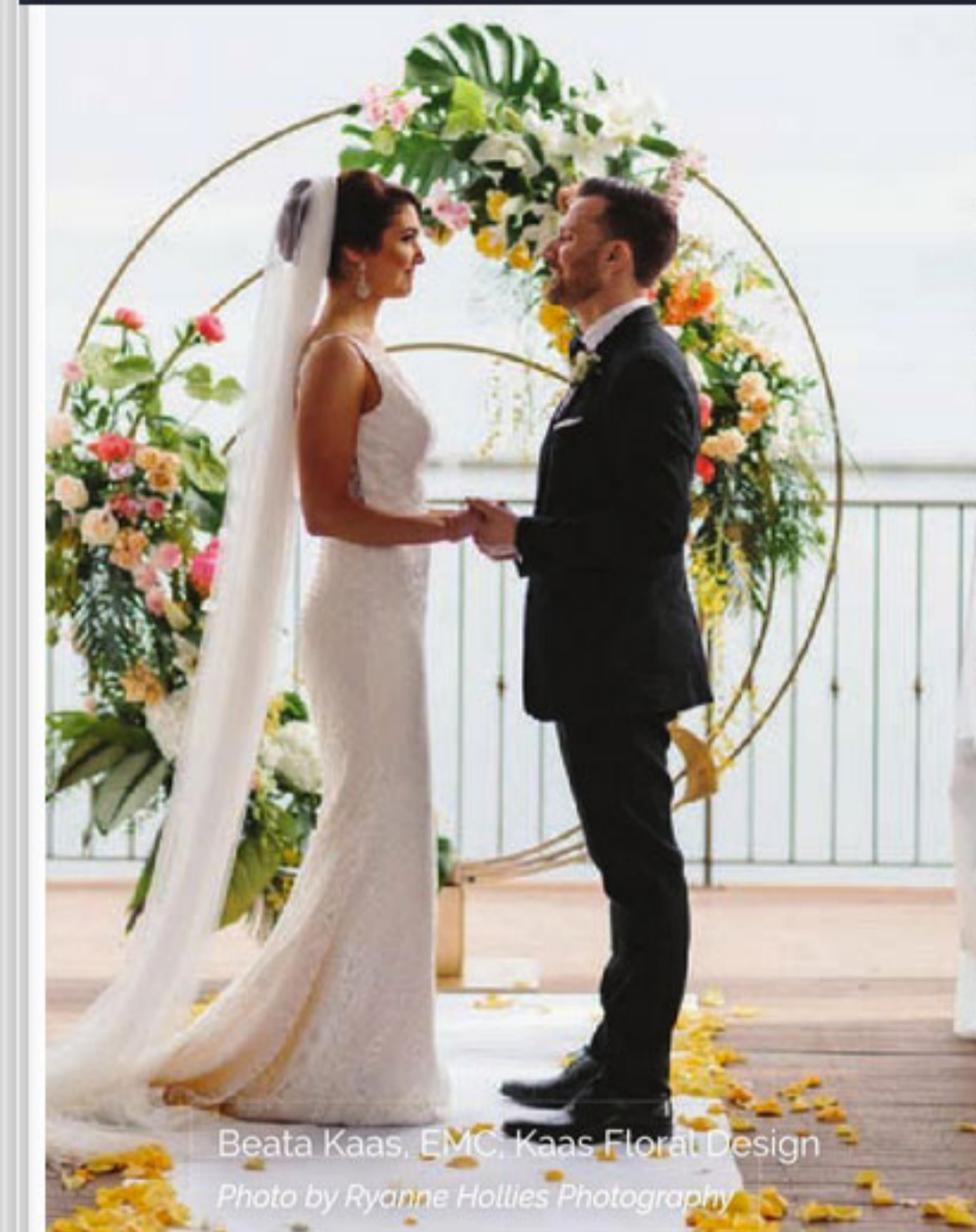
For wedding and event studio florists, it is the floral designers’ signature creations that oftentimes attracts a more style-forward clientele. “Couples use me because they like the ‘garden look’ I create,” says Emily Watson, owner of ecofriendly Wood Violet in Milwaukee, Wis. “I am managing people’s expectations and creating an experience. They want their weddings to be interpretative of their interests.”

On the other hand, Beata Kaas, EMC, owner of Kaas Floral Design in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, focuses on diversity as a key to her business success. “In Toronto, our population is 55 percent immigrants, and there are many intercultural weddings,” she informs. A Pakistani groom with a German bride. A Muslim marrying a Catholic. I also do many Italian weddings. No two weddings are ever alike. All couples are carving out their own looks and asking for customized elements.”

With studio florists, slightly different trends are emerging, such as minimalism. “The new generation does not want to spend a lot of money, and they are worried about their ‘footprints’ and sustainability,” comments Kaas. “They are happy with a few stems in vases on tables.”

Watson adds, “Twenty-five percent of my clients come to me because they are concerned with the environment or want locally sourced flowers. They are looking toward more minimalistic looks such as terrariums, compotes, touches of greenery and, of course, what they are seeing on Pinterest and social media.”

As it is in most of the floral industry, bouquets are departing from the classic round and are more soft, pleasant and



Beata Kaas, EMC, Kaas Floral Design
Photo by RYANNE HOLLIES PHOTOGRAPHY



Beata Kaas, EMC, Kaas Floral Design
Photo by MANGO STUDIOS



Beata Kaas, EMC, Kaas Floral Design
Photo by PURPLE TREE PHOTOGRAPHY

unstructured. “Bouquets are loose and natural, with trailing greenery for a different type of cascade,” Watson reports. “And couples are wanting the fall color palette year-round.”

> **TIP** “Know your market,” Kaas suggests. “Only then will you know how to position yourself within the industry to attract clients.”

EVENT COMPANY WEDDING FLORISTS

For some brides with unlimited budgets and the desire for one company to handle all aspects of their big days, event companies are becoming their “go-to” options. “Our clients want us to manage every aspect of their weddings,” explains **India Rhodes, CSEP, of Wilkinson Rhodes** in San Antonio and Dallas, Texas.

Nicholas St. Clair, AIFD, floral designer with Shawna Yamamoto Event Design in Brea, Calif., adds, “Everything we do is custom to each couple, and we do it all from ceiling installs and backdrops to stages and reception tables.”

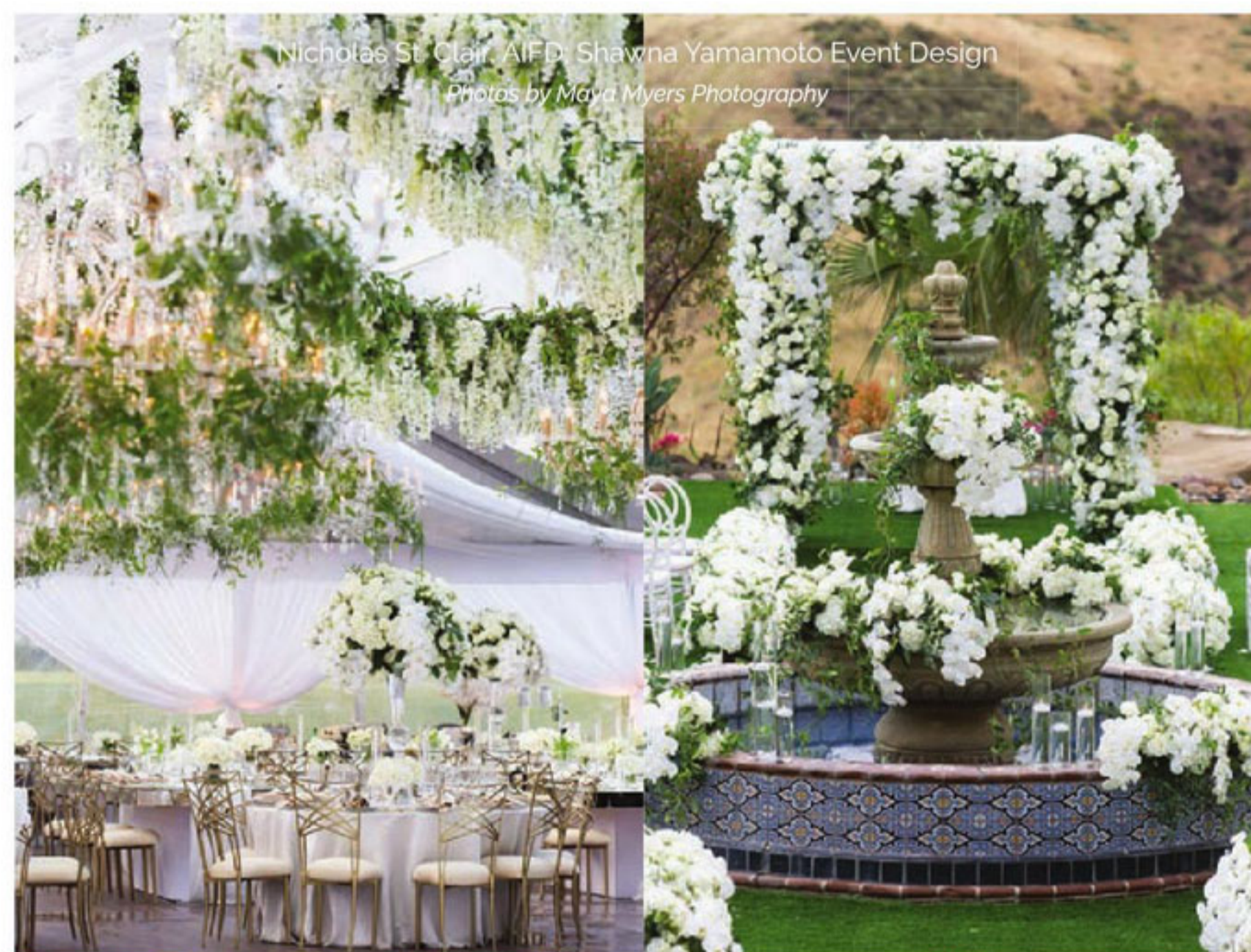
These florists often create massive garden-style designs with sprawling movement and lots of texture within a specific color palette. Outdoor weddings with heavily floral-adorned arches, moon gates and chuppahs remain popular with these nuptial couples while their receptions tend to be more classic.

“There are a mixture of composites, urns and modern metal structures on the tables,” St. Clair informs. “Traditional elements are still being commonly used on the tables, with a lot of these clients preferring to incorporate high arrangements, with three or four different looks.”

Rhodes’ wedding and event clients are trending away from composite centerpieces. “We are definitely seeing bigger, bushier arrangements and not as many small groupings,” she reports. “We are also still doing a lot of greenery walls.”

Because the personalized nature of the weddings these types of companies do, no one trend that is emerging. “We do modern garden weddings to garden tropical weddings to Indian weddings. The locations can be in Greece or at an outside venue at a client’s home,” shares St. Clair.

> **TIPS** “Get to know each client. If you do not know them, you do not know where you can take liberties,” says St. Clair. Rhodes suggests separating out the labor from the project. “Bill your clients hourly for labor, and list it separate from the flowers and hard goods,” she advises.



Nicholas St. Clair, AIFD, Shawna Yamamoto Event Design
Photos by MARY MYERS PHOTOGRAPHY



Wilkinson Rhodes

SUPERMARKET FLORAL DEPARTMENTS

Full-service floral departments within supermarkets are emerging as viable options for a range of today’s bridal couples. From “DIYers” to those with large budgets, many brides are now choosing this alternative for their nuptial floral needs.

“I work with brides from all over because Cape Cod is a destination wedding area,” explains **Audrey Waterfield, floral designer at Roche Bros.** in Mashpee, Mass. Fortunately for Roche Bros., which operates 17 stores in Massachusetts, Waterfield brought her flower shop clients with her when she went to work for supermarket chain 14 years ago.

“I design wedding flowers in the floral department where shoppers can watch,” Waterfield remarks. “The common comment is that they can’t believe a grocery store can do what we are doing. We get a lot of interest in our flowers this way. Plus, we do everything from delivery and set-up to breakdown.”

Like Roche Bros. and many other supermarket floral departments today, **Schnuck Markets** – a 123-store chain in the Midwest – provides full-service weddings, from start to finish. **Michael Schrader, director of floral, shares,** “Our design center in St. Louis does an average of three to five weddings per weekend. Some bridal clients come in for personal flowers the same week as their weddings while others book a year in advance.”

Another supermarket floral business model, for companies that mostly offer pick-up only, is catering to brides who want just personal flowers or are buying stems. “We sell a lot of bulk flowers for DIYers who typically do backyard weddings,” reports **Teresa Dick, floral sales manager for the Seattle Division of Albertsons Companies.** (Albertsons Companies operates more than 2,200 stores, under 20 banners and across 34 states.) “Our full-service departments can do it all, but not all of our departments are full service or offer delivery, which limits what they can do.”

In general, bridal customers of supermarket floral departments tend to choose either loose, flowing hand-tied bouquets or natural cascades with trailing foliage. Popular flowers among these bridal customers are similar to those preferred by brides who choose other types of florists: peonies, *Hydrangea*, *Ranunculus*, garden roses and other form flowers that provide a romantic aesthetic.

Of course, there are some exceptions. **Lynnette Probst, floral manager at Lin’s Fresh Market** in Cedar City, Utah, offers, “Because I am in a college town working with budget-conscious brides, my No. 1 request is simple compact bouquets with roses, baby’s breath and seeded *Eucalyptus*.”

With the trend of bridal couples using the same location for both their ceremonies and receptions, supermarket florists, too, are being asked to design reusable pieces. “We sell a lot of garlands,” Dick notes. “The couples use them at the wedding ceremony and flip them to a table runner for the reception.”

Waterfield adds, “I am creating big urns and arches that are being used for the ceremony and then moved to the reception to create a backdrop.”

> **TIPS** “If you can educate your brides and grooms on what is in season rather than focusing on what they ‘must’ have, it is easier to work within their budgets,” shares Dick. Schrader emphasizes the need for floral designers to be flexible. “Today, couples are bringing in containers they are buying from third parties instead of renting or buying from us,” he shares. “We need to be aware of what is happening in our industry in order to stay connected to the customers.”



Audrey Waterfield, Roche Bros.



Teresa Dick, Albertsons Companies



Teresa Dick, Albertsons Companies



Sue Yamaguchi, AIFD, EMC, Su-V Expressions
Photos by Aria Studios



Kris Bennett, KRISanthemums
Photo by Misty C Photography

DESTINATION WEDDING FLORISTS

With destination weddings continuing to trend upward, florists who specialize in this niche are seeing the possibility of designing weddings 365 days a year. For Sue Yamaguchi, AIFD, EMC, owner of Su-V Expressions in Honolulu, Hawaii, the East-meets-West location, tropical climate and natural beauty are ideal for international couples.

“We have private estates, scenic locations, beach locations and hotel venues at which people get married,” Yamaguchi points out. “People come here from Asia, the Mainland, Australia and Europe. There are also those who have moved away and come back home to Hawaii to get married.”

In the wine country of Oregon, Kris Bennett, owner of KRISanthemums in Hermiston, works with medium- to high-budget couples who are traveling to the vineyards for their big days. For more budget-conscious brides, Bennett offers her five-acre flower farm, landscaped by her husband, as an alternative.

Each destination frames the preference of florals. With 80 percent of Bennett’s weddings and receptions being outside, this ecofriendly designer is creating mostly loose garden-style bouquets although some brides request the traditional round but with a relaxed feel.

“The brides aren’t adventurous,” Bennett notes, “but I try to personalize their flowers by adding a piece of their mother’s wedding dress or a grandpa’s flannel shirt who might have just passed away. My brides ask still for the three- or four-vase look, with a few blooms and layers of greens on their tables, like they see on Pinterest.”

Yamaguchi’s brides prefer a mix of garden roses with tropical flowers. “They want more compact bouquets that are still organic, that move with the curve of the flowers,” she notes. “They love cascades but not tear-drop shapes.”

For ceremonies, preferences include simple arches covered with asymmetrically placed floral designs to frame the local scenery. “Some request moon gates, but geometric shapes in the ceremony and receptions have largely gone away,” observes Yamaguchi. “Couples are wanting footed vases with textural greenery, white orchids and roses. There is a trend emerging of mixing flowers and fruit; they love incorporating pineapples.”

But getting married in paradise comes at a cost – and the cost is not just monetary. “We live on an island,” Yamaguchi explains. “There are extra fees for shipping flowers to us: care and handling, dry charges, shipping processing charges – so the flowers cost more. Plus, we can’t bring in specific things, like Southern *Smilax*, in order to protect our native flora.”

In the end, no matter the challenges, for the brides and grooms, the pictures which last a lifetime from destinations weddings are priceless.

> **TIP** “Get to know your numbers, and stick with them and your recipes” Bennett urges. “Don’t overbuy because one reason you are in business is to make a profit. ■

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David Vagstad and Jim Martin

Wedding WISDOM

Smart and savvy tips you can put to work for your floral enterprise.

By Debra Prinzing, PFCI

How do you build and nurture your wedding business? If you’re like most studio or retail florists, the weddings and events niches offer both the potential to express your aesthetic and capture a nice influx of revenue. But weddings can also be stress inducing and less lucrative than one might think. In my recent conversations with wedding and event designers and farmer-florists who offer wedding packages, I discovered a wealth of great ideas you can employ immediately.

ENGAGING WITH BRIDAL CLIENTS

Maura Feeney, owner and principal designer at Philadelphia’s Maura Rose Floral Design & Events, told me about her creative way to engage with wedding clients. “Two weeks each year, we bring in all our wedding clients for a custom ‘Design Workshop,’” she explains. Clients who have spring and early summer ceremonies attend the “Design Workshop” each March, with late summer and fall wedding parties attending during July.

This program is a fully immersive floral experience for couples, she adds. “We order thousands of blooms – American or locally grown, as possible – for each one-week period, and we schedule each client for a one-hour time slot. During their hour, a couple meets the design team, sips champagne and views all our rental inventory, and we create mockups of their bouquets and centerpieces.”

The complimentary session is offered to clients who have paid deposits to secure their dates. Typically, Maura Rose can accommodate three to five participants per meeting. “I started offering the ‘Design Workshop’ in 2017 because we were spending a lot of time designing [future] weddings in the midst of our busy wedding season,” Feeney says. While the “Design Workshop” is a long week (the studio sees five to six clients a day for seven days straight), and