

Q&A

Let our experts take care of your wedding worries

Our panel of experts



Nic Cleave
National award-winning
photographer based in
South Wales. Contact:
01792 429 201 or visit
www.niccleave.com



Sarah Holland
Advisor on all aspects of
flowers for the Flowers
and Plants Association.
Visit www.flowers.org.uk



Ruth Hunter
Certified wedding planner
and managing director
of Finesse Planning in
Cardiff. Contact: 029
2065 0702 or visit www.finesseplanning.co.uk



A quality keepsake

WHAT'S THE ETIQUETTE?

Q My fiancé and I are having a quiet, casual wedding reception, and we are not sure whether to have favours on the tables. Do guests always expect to receive favours at weddings these days?

A *Ruth says:* When it comes to favours, it's always nice to give a little thank you gift to your guests, but it isn't always expected. If you're on a tight budget, favours do not have to be expensive, especially if you make them yourself. Why not bake your own cookies, decorate them yourself and double them up as place cards by icing your guests' names on to them? Alternatively, donate the money you were going to spend on favours to charity, and give your guests a charity pin instead.



English country garden

Q How can I decorate my garden for an outdoor wedding reception without spending too much money?

A *Sarah says:* Potted plants will be a much less expensive option than floral arrangements. Go for a 'cottage garden' look with lavender and rose plants, or introduce splashes of bright colour with busy lizzies. Choose classic white for a fairytale theme, pastel pink and peach for elegant wedding chic, or hot red, magenta and orange for a fiery summer style. They are really easy to look after, so you can experiment with getting the exact look you want weeks before your big day. You could even plant up tubs of busy lizzies as thank you gifts for the mothers, best man and bridesmaids.



Q I have heard that we can save money on photography costs by asking our photographer to provide us with all our images on a CD instead of an expensive album. Would you advise this?

A *Nic says:* This all depends on how important your photographs are to you. Some photographers will offer couples a digital package – the opportunity to purchase their photos on a disc – but in my opinion, prints in an album will look far more impressive than the prints you can obtain from a CD at a high street photo printer. Professional pictures will go through extensive digital re-touching and enhancement processes, ensuring that any distracting background elements are removed and minor skin or colour imperfections are corrected. The difference in quality is staggering, so if you want an invaluable record of your big day, a beautiful album is well worth the money.



Big things, small packages

Q With our wedding budget being tighter than we'd like, how can we ensure that in cutting costs we do not compromise on the quality of our photography?

A *Nic says:* That's a question I'm asked quite often at present, but the answer is surprisingly simple. If you're looking to cut the costs of your big day, chat to your photographer about the less expensive packages that they offer. You can always order more prints or a larger album after the wedding if your financial situation changes. Be wary of less-experienced amateur photographers who offer cheap all-day packages. This may seem like a less costly option but you could find yourself disappointed with the end result. It's better to have a smaller album with high quality photos than a big album packed full of poor quality images.



ALL THINGS BRIGHT

Q I love bright colours and strong shapes, and our wedding has a tropical theme. What kind of flowers will fit in without being too overpowering?

A *Sarah says:* This season's flower trend is all about mixing patterned tropical foliage and exotic anthuriums with traditional blooms like peonies, freesias and dahlias. This look would be perfect for you as the garden flowers will balance the strong shapes and colours of the anthuriums and foliage. It creates an arty look rather than a full-on tropical fiesta. The peonies and dahlias have the strong shapes and bright colours you love, but you'll get a subtle, modern twist from the tropical foliage.



Location, location, location

Q The only suitable time for my fiancé and I to marry is in September 2010, as several close friends and family are going travelling. Unfortunately, this is the month of the Ryder Cup in Newport, and most hotel wedding venues are fully booked already. We are looking for our ceremony and reception to be held in one venue. What else would you recommend?

A *Ruth says:* Another option is to hire a cottage or manor house with a licence and grounds that will cater for a wedding. Not only will you have your own little hideaway, but this will provide your wedding party with accommodation and you can extend the celebrations over a few days. Some cottages allow marquees to be erected on the grounds and most will allow catering companies to use the kitchen and facilities. Visit websites such as www.iknow-wales.co.uk and www.weddinggroupaccommodation.com for a list of suitable venues.