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Digging Deep-Gardening with Cynthia Brian

Sweetheart table dressed simply beneath an elaborate columned pergola with twisting wisteria vines and urns planted with stargazer lilies. Photos Cynthia Brian

Besides the celebrations for grads and dads, June is the favorite month for couples to tie the knot. Getting married is a wondrous event experienced at a variety of venues from the simple backyard wedding to a grand hotel extravaganza, and everything in between. It's one of those rites of passage bringing family and friends together to commemorate the love of two individuals. Sometimes the price for these enchanted "I dos" can be staggering. One way to cut costs while also encouraging a collaborative, meaningful activity is to create your own bouquets, boutonnieres, corsages, and floral arrangements.

For both weddings of my son and daughter, I spent months growing their favorite blooms, then designed and hand crafted the floral components. The vow exchange for my son occurred on a hill on our Napa ranch overlooking the vineyards and Lake David. For that springtime ceremony, the hillside wine barrel tables were festooned with mason jars filled with local wild flowers while the bridal bouquets, boutonnieres, and corsages boasted my homegrown calla lilies, peonies, roses, and forget-me-nots. The dining tables were simply decorated with merlot hued rose petals scattered amongst the private label wine allowing the food to take center stage.

For my daughter's Southern California vineyard wedding, I transported over 50 pounds of my Moraga garden floral fronds via airplane. Because the venue was stunning, she wanted the table décor to be simple and ethereal. A mix of feathery grasses, heather, sage, and flax filled wine bottles painted with the table number for a perfect blend of simplicity and elegance. The day before the nuptials, I hosted a Flower Party luncheon for all the ladies walking down the aisle where I taught everyone how to make their own personal bouquet using a sample I had created as an example. Stargazer lilies, roses, gardenias, freesia, alstroemeria, purple sage, grape leaves, razor grass, and narcissus soaked in buckets. A nearby table included all the necessary tools, ribbons, and adornments for a personalized touch. After the rehearsal dinner, my mother, daughter, daughter-in-law and I enjoyed a final female bonding date as we made the beautiful boutonnieres for the groom and his groomsmen using tiny white roses framed with ferns.

Crafting the flowers for the Big Day or any special occasion produces such joy and camaraderie and is a special way to show your love. There is nothing to fear and so much bliss to savor. It's fun, simple, and extremely rewarding. Allow me to be your guide on the side offering these suggestions for DIY floral success.

First of all, it is important to have a conversation with the betrothed to define what their dreams and goals are for their Big Day. Even if we, as parents, are footing the bill for the celebration, we still have to keep in mind that this event is about them and not about us. It's their day and needs to be their vision. Talk to them and find out their specific wishes. Let them know that if they want you to create or help in creating floral displays, you'd be honored. They may provide you with tear sheets of ideas they have culled from magazines or bridal books. Assuming they are excited that you'll be an active participant and not just order from the professionals, here are the next steps.

Use wild flowers including Queen Anne's Lace and thistle arranged in a jar for rustic or casual displays.

A lush DIY bridal bouquet of duel colored calla lilies flanked by peonies reflecting the color scheme of the wedding.

A dramatic table arrangement of white hydrangeas, blue delphiniums, and apricot tulips.

Holiday bouquet with traditional red and white roses, gerbera, lilies, snapdragons, and gladiolus.

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