

# Preparations

## Roses, roses, roses! Local florists keep beautiful weddings blooming

By MILLIE KING



Dave Trouba/Daily Nebraskan

The rose — long a symbol of love — is always a favorite of brides. Roses courtesy Community Floral.

"Hello, House of Flowers. May I help you? ... a wedding? ... Yes ... roses? ... yes ... when? ... 45 minutes? ... Sure, we'll bring them right over!"

Most florist shops in Lincoln prefer at least one week's notice for wedding flower arrangements. Some as long as two months or more. But not at the House of Flowers, 226 S. 11th St., which is within walking distance of the County-City Building.

"We receive calls at least once a month requesting flowers for a wedding ceremony being performed in 45 minutes at the court house," said Sandy Semerena, manager of the House of Flowers.

Two other Lincoln florists contacted said they prefer a little more notice.

"Spring is the busiest season for weddings," said Theresa Hager, owner, manager and bridal consultant at Paradise Floral, 4050 Cornhusker Highway. "Especially the month of May."

All weddings are custom designed, Hager said. Paradise Floral offers no set packages.

A bride-to-be must schedule an appointment with the bridal consultant to discuss what the bride wants, she said.

"I try to help guide the customer and give suggestions," Hager said, "but it's mostly up to the customer."

Paradise Floral, which has been operating for two years, usually requests two months' notice, she said. But the shop has done weddings in just one week.

A very basic bridal bouquet starts at about \$25, depending on the flowers, she said. Lilies and orchids are the most expensive, carnations the most reasonable.

"Ninety percent of the girls choose roses, orchids or stephanotis," she said. "And the hottest color this year is dusty rose."

"We also decorate wedding cakes with fresh flowers, upon request," Hager said.

Lynette Fast, co-manager at Williams Flowers,

1742 N. 48th St., said, "June is bride month."

"When planning a wedding, we ask first that brides make an appointment to speak with one of the two bridal consultants," she said. "We listen to what the brides want and cater to them. It's their wedding."

"We prefer two months notice for a large wedding and one week for a small wedding," Fast said.

"If a bride plans her wedding on Mother's Day or Valentine's Day, we need a three to six month notice, to guarantee the order," Fast said. "Prices almost double."

Floral prices range from \$50 for a very small wedding to \$600 for a large wedding, she said.

An expensive wedding includes aisle carpets, kneeling benches, candelabras, fans and/or parasols for the bridesmaids, the ring bearer's pillow, flower basket, bride's bouquet and all the corsages and boutonnieres, she said.

A large wedding also may include flowers for the reception such as bouquets, table arrangements and cake decorations, she said. Additional consultation for receptions costs \$5 to \$25.

"August and May were our busiest months last year," said Jackie Smith of Community Floral, 1328 South St.

"We work around what the bride wants," she said. "It really depends on the individual. Some have a budget, others aren't limited."

"Community Floral offers services at the wedding. In addition to work we do in the shop, for \$20, a girl will attend the wedding and handle everything pertaining to flowers," she said. "We also will decorate the church, reception hall and wedding cakes," she said.

"Once we had seven weddings in one day," Smith said. "We prepared the bows and ribbons in advance, and all the fresh flower work was done a few days prior to the weddings. When the day arrived, we went to work at 4 a.m. and didn't finish 'til late that night."

## Gold popular, but diamonds still are a girl's best friend

By VICKI RUHGA

The tradition of giving diamonds began Aug. 17, 1477, when Emperor Maximilian of Austria proposed to Mary of Burgundy with a gold ring, decorated with his and her diamond M's. They were married less than one day later, according to *Bride* magazine.

Although Prince Charles slightly altered the tradition by giving Lady Diana a sapphire and diamond ring, most Lincoln couples still prefer only diamonds, said several Lincoln jewelers.

John Tavlin, owner of Nebraska Diamond, 856 NBC Center, 13th and O streets, said about 10 percent of his customers ask to design their own rings. However, most use traditional diamonds in a manufacturer's design.

Only about one of 100 customers uses colored stones, like rubies or sapphires, in the ring, Tavlin said.

Tom Wright, of Wright's Jewelers, 144 N. 13th St., said a round (brilliant) cut is the most popular. The round cut has been used since the 1890s. From a mathematical standpoint, Wright said, the round cut gives a diamond the greatest degree of sparkle, which sets it apart from other cuts.

However, Wright said, people also are buying oval, marquise (an oval pointed at both ends), and pear, emerald and heart-shaped diamonds just to have rings with a different look.

### Single diamond best seller

Bob Fixter of Sartor Hamann Jewelry, 1150 O St., said his best seller is the single diamond mounted on a plain band.

Fixter said the diamond is preferred because of its durability.

Lincoln jewelers estimate the typical couple spends about \$600 to \$1,000 for a woman's engagement set, and about \$100 to \$200 for a man's plain gold band or \$300 to \$500 for a man's diamond band.

Fixter said in the past, nearly all men's bands were plain gold.

Since DeBeers, a company in New

York that sells diamonds to jewelers, began promoting men's diamond bands in its advertisements, about one-third of all men are buying diamond bands, he said.

Although DeBeers recommends couples plan to spend the equivalent of two months' salary on an engagement ring, Fixter said that estimate was slightly above average.

Wright said some couples may spend only \$100 to \$200 for a diamond, but most spend about \$400 to \$600.

"Our customers are almost exclusively college seniors or graduates," Wright said. "Both have careers, and their choice of a ring isn't as dictated by financial ability."

### Financial investment

Although many people consider diamonds a solid financial investment, Wright said, they are not a good money-maker. In the jewelry business, people are selling only, not buying, he said.

However, Wright said diamonds are a good investment because they can be used for 35, 45, 55 or more years because they are durable and often increase in value.

Jewelers say four criteria are used to select a diamond.

- color — The perfect diamond is clear and colorless or faintly blue. As the gem's color increases, the value of the diamond decreases.

- clarity — The diamond should be free from inclusions or imperfections. Although inclusions are not visible to the naked eye, they will bring down the value of a ring.

- cut — The design and cut give each diamond a unique sparkle. The round cut gives the greatest amount of sparkle, followed by the oval, marquise, emerald, single, pear and heart-shaped.

- carat — The size of the diamond also determines the value. One carat is equal to 100 points. The most common diamond size for engagement rings is a one-quarter carat.



Craig Andresen/Daily Nebraskan

The design and cut give each diamond a special sparkle. Diamond courtesy A.T. Thomas Jewelers.

### Bands usually white or yellow gold

The metal used for ring bands usually is white or yellow gold in 14 K or 18K. Pure gold, or 24K, is too soft for rings.

The strongest ring metal available is platinum, a white metal. However because it is most expensive, it is used mainly for the prongs that secure the diamond in place.

Because there is no standard scale for diamond grading, Wright said, potential diamond buyers should deal with a jeweler they trust.

"In the jewelry industry, there is no

top price," he said. "Consequently, it's easy to offer a discount. Ours is a non-comparable product because when you're looking at diamonds, you're not looking at the same thing."

Wright said there are no rules in selling diamonds, and that the market is still "buyer beware."

"If you don't believe and trust who you're dealing with, don't give them the money," Wright said.

Diamond buyers should not hesitate to ask jewelers for a 10-power loop or a gem scope, he said. These can be used to magnify flaws that are not visible to the naked eye.