

WEDDING *workbook*

Tips and tools to make your Big Day your best day ever



Farm Fresh Florals

Put a lush, local spin on your wedding with petals plucked straight off the farm

IMAGE BY TAKEN BY SARAH PHOTOGRAPHY

Tip
Follow your favorite flower farms on social media to hear of upcoming workshops and classes. Ask about private sessions, as well. "We've hosted bachelorette parties making flower crowns and bridal parties where everyone made her own bouquet to carry in the wedding the following day," says Niki Irving of Flourish Flower Farm in Candler, North Carolina.



Tip
Think outside of the bouquet. "One of my favorite trends right now is floral jewelry," says Niki. "Floral bracelets are very popular, especially with mothers and grandmothers, as they're more comfortable than corsages. And floral necklaces are becoming popular for bridesmaids or maids of honor."

Venue, florals: Flourish Flower Farm **Images:** Taken by Sarah Photography **Bride's attire:** RCB Fashion (gown); Rachel Mae Designs (jewelry) **Beauty:** Hair by Natalie Webb **Ribbon:** Honey Silks & Co.

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Wild or tailored, neutral-hued or colorific, likely you're leaning toward one of these when it comes to your wedding flowers.

But have you pondered where those perfect petals will be grown? Lucky for Asheville brides, this corner of the world is rife with vibrant, prolific flower farms, which means you have easy (and likely less pricey) blooms at your fingertips. And these homegrown offerings not only tend to stay perky longer than those ordered from out-of-town (or even international) growers, but also they tend to be more fragrant.

"About 85 percent of the flowers that florists buy come from outside of the U.S.," says Niki Irving of **Flourish Flower Farm** in Candler, North Carolina. "Often that means those flowers were harvested weeks before your wedding to travel thousands of miles." Past the practical bonuses, there's simply something special about dressing your Big Day in blooms snipped within miles of where you swap your vows. Read on for tips to work locally grown flora into your celebration.

Tell your team local is a priority. Many flower farms offer full-service floral design for weddings and team up with outside florists and planners. If you've chosen a vendor unaffiliated with a farm, tell them you want to source flowers and greens locally.

Keep growing seasons in mind. Do you dream of a bridal bouquet filled with peonies grown right down the road? You'll be looking at a springtime wedding then. "May is peak peony season here in Asheville and dahlias are the queen of fall flowers," says Niki. Ask local farmers for a list of blooms typically available in the month you plan to wed.

Understand pricing. While buying local can save dollars ("A peony grown here in May will certainly cost less than a peony imported from across the globe in December," says Niki), don't overestimate the



price cut. "Just because you are getting flowers from a local farm doesn't mean they are cheaper or that you should expect them to be less expensive," she says. "Growing high-quality flowers takes a lot of work and expertise."

Be flexible. For the freshest (and most budget-friendly) flowers, choose a palette or vibe, then hand the reigns over to the farmers, who will harvest in-season blooms that suit your vision and accommodate your budget.

Buy in bulk. One guaranteed price buster is to order in bulk and do the arranging yourself. Some farms (such as [Lady Luck Flower Farm](#) and [Full Sun Farm](#)) are U-pick, while others, like Flourish, do the harvesting. "A good rule of thumb is that one of our buckets, which contain 75 to 100 stems, will fill about five to seven quart-size Mason jars," says Niki.

DIY half. To ensure freshness, bulk buckets are typically available for pick up one to three days prior to your event. Translation: Time for arranging is limited. A popular option? Let experts tackle your bouquets, boutonnieres, and so on, then do reception arrangements yourself.

Head to a farm for portraits. Talk about Instagram gold! Many local flower farms welcome photo shoots for a small fee. "Try June through October, when the plants are taller and when dahlias are blooming," says Niki.



local flower farms

BLUE RIDGE BLOOMS (828/216-4175;

BlueRidgeBlooms.com)

FLOURISH FLOWER FARM (828/808-9775;

FlourishFlowerFarm.com)

FULL SUN FARM (828/683-1607;

FullSunFarm.com)

LADY LUCK FLOWER FARM (828/515-1854;

LadyLuckFlowerFarm.com)

LOVE LANE FLOWER FARM (828/335-3135;

LoveLaneFlowerFarm.com)

THE NEVER ENDING FLOWER FARM

(828/713-4046; TheNeverEndingFlowerFarm.com)

URBAN FARM GIRL (828/989-0824;

UrbanFarmGirlFlowers.com)

WILD MOUNTAIN BLOSSOMS (828/357-7852; WildMountainBlossoms.com)

For more farms, visit CutFlowers.ces.NCSU.edu.