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PERSONALIZING YOUR WEDDING WITH DIY PROJECTS

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It's tough not to be addicted to Pinterest, especially all those wedding boards with so much bridal inspiration. You can see so many color schemes, décor designs and favor ideas. Some of them even look doable. Still many Do It Yourself projects aren't easy to do, affordable or even worth your time.

Luckily some DIY wedding projects are totally possible. That's why San Diego Style Weddings asked wedding professionals to share their ideas for stylish DIY.

"Brides love the personalization they can create through DIY projects and a lot of family members love to help create items for a couples special day, it allows them to feel very involved," says wedding planner Billie Vollmer of *{BE Coordinated}*.

DeShai Roberson of *Oh So Chic Wedding & Event Planning* agrees.

"Brides want to have a personal touch, not just save money," she says explaining how one of her couples wrote out the wedding's program on a mirrored window.

"In all honesty, there are plenty of ideas and themes out there to create a fabulous DIY wedding," say Jaime Beck and Diane Reichenbach of *Whimsey Florals*. "It can and has been done. It takes a large support system to do it, and lots of time and patience."

PROVEN WINNERS

Some DIY projects really stand out. Vollmer and her team have two favorites.

One was a woodworking project done entirely by the bride – she wood burned each guest's name or nickname onto Birchwood slices. Now that's personalization!

Vollmer's other DIY fave? "Personalized yard games that included Giant Jenga and customized Cornhole."

Some couples incorporate "rustic and shabby chic" items for the wedding including "recycled vintage items" like "family heirlooms, colored glassware, pennants and frames," say Beck and Reichenbach, who also had a recent DIY wedding featuring "a bar sign made out of wine corks and spelled out 'BAR.'"

Haydee Dela Cruz of *Haydee's Creative Flowers & Weddings* says some of her favorites include "cute chalkboard signage or burlap banners for the dessert tables," as well as "handmade jewelry for their bridesmaids to wear on the day of" the wedding.

Many wedding décor touches can be DIY. Wedding planner Diana Romero of *At Your Side Planning* suggests using a typewriter for guests to "sign in." Use the typed sign-ins for your wedding scrapbook.

She also recommends crafting pomander balls; making "handmade picado paper as decor above the room" for a Spanish wedding; clustering candle-filled mason jars on tables or to light up a walkway; a favor CD with the couple's favorite songs; and "glow sticks in bubble water for evening glow and lighting."

Wedding websites are another DIY way to personalize your event, be creative and be "hands on" too.

SAY, CHEESE!

Photos booths are cool but have you considered creating your own? Romero suggests, "creating a photo section with Polaroids, props and a back drop. A couch or comfy chair in front of a backdrop would work nice."

You can finish the look with fun props like fake mustaches, sunglasses, clown noses and even squirt guns.

"Leave chalkboards and chalk for your guests to write you messages and hold up the chalkboard for the photo," says Romero, who also advises hanging a picture frame from a tree for an outside wedding and asking guests to pose "inside" the frame for photos.

FOOD FAVORS

Lots of couples decide to DIY their favors, including food favors.

One of Roberson's couples baked the bride's grandmother's recipe for lemon crumble and sent guests home with the sweet treat.

Romero also suggests, "fresh baked goodies," as well as local honey or jam from regional destinations like Julian or Temecula. Finish the look by adding "raffia and a customized thank you note."

CREATIVE CHALLENGES

Tackling a DIY design isn't always easy.

"The main challenge is being able to create your project and make it look clean, beautiful, and professional," says Vollmer.

Time management is another DIY stress.

"Couples have to be honest with themselves on their limitations for time, budget and energy," say Beck and Reichenbach. "You might not want to do a bunch of wedding projects after a long day's work."

With flowers and many other DIY jobs, the project can't be completed too far in advance because freshness of flowers or food for example, matters.

"Putting it all together can be an overwhelming experience," says Dela Cruz. "It takes a lot of time and it's very consuming."

It can even be stressful getting help to finish the projects.

"You might want to have family and friends help out, but be OK with the way it turns out," say Beck and Reichenbach.

While all these helpers have good intentions, they may not share your vision or your style, which means the DIY creations might not match your expectations.

With or without help, a DIY project could be too much

to handle.

"Often times, the bride is up all night the day before doing flowers while they should be having fun and enjoying the company of their family and guests," says Dela Cruz.

DIY DOLLARS

Doing It Yourself may seem budget friendly but that's not always the case. Still you can find projects that won't ruin your cash flow.

"If you are doing something simple and require very little flowers and NOT much glass vases or vessels, yes, it can be [cheaper]," says Dela Cruz. "However, plan on spending a lot of time making several trips to flower mart, arts and crafts and floral supplies stores. This requires time plus gas and time is money."

For DIY florals with lots of candles and "unique vessels," Dela Cruz says the project won't be cheaper than hiring a pro. "Some vessels can be very costly and many florists can rent this to you cheaper than the cost to buy them."

THE BIG PICTURE

"Think about the execution of a project," says Roberson explaining many DIY designs involve coordinator set-up on the big day.

For example, one of Roberson's brides wanted 80 lanterns strung up throughout the reception site. Even with three staff members helping Roberson, the set-up was a lot more than the bride had anticipated.

Further you need to consider the final design scheme.

"How will it look? And will you like the way it looks?" says Roberson.

Even candy buffets may seem like an easy-to-do undertaking, but think again. You'll have to spend a lot of money buying a variety of candies and candy dishes, as well as signage. Plus you'll have left over inventory. Face it, you don't want to be stuck eating gummy worms for months, do you? The other candy buffet dilemma? You could be stressed out because the table set-up doesn't look the way you want because someone else is setting it up.

PLANNING YOUR PROJECT

Chances are the project you want to do is a little more involved than it may seem at first.

"Plan carefully. You want to avoid feeling overwhelmed by a project," advises Roberson who tells brides to expect to have the project finished at least one month before the wedding. "Start as early as possible."

Romero says many of her brides "are super busy. They don't have time to do things."

That's why you should think things through before you invest in all the supplies.

"Do a trial run," says Vollmer. "Be honest with yourself in regards to time and skill level."

Dela Cruz says creative brides can definitely handle a part of the wedding but not the whole thing. "Do things that can be done ahead of time," she says noting favors and welcome baskets for out of town guests can be done ahead of time. "Leave the flowers to the professional."

Not sure if the DIY project is worth your time and money?

"Get a quote from the vendor that would be providing the detail and see if it matches the cost of DIY," say Beck and Reichenbach. "Again, be honest with yourself and know your limitations."

With so many amazing wedding DIY ideas, now is the time to get started crafting your way down the aisle. Don't forget to share your wedding photos and DIY images on our Pinterest boards: <http://pinterest.com/SDSWCreative/>. 

