

TONED ARMS = WEDDING READY

Shopping for a wedding gown is a tradition that follows shortly after the engagement has taken place and the ceremony date is set.

Some women have very clear ideas of which type of silhouette and features they desire in a wedding gown, while others are open to sug-

gestion. Most brides-to-be hope to look their most radiant in this custom-tailored creation.

According to Kim Forrest, the editor of WeddingWire, an online marketplace for wedding-related items, strapless dresses are the standard for wedding attire, and that trend is unlikely to change anytime soon. Style directors for Martha Stewart Weddings agree, saying that roughly 75 percent of wedding dresses are strapless, although some alternative necklines are starting to become more popular. With so much attention directed their way, brides might look for ways to tone their upper bodies in advance of the big day.

Arm-, chest- and shoulder-toning exercises can be part of a strong fitness regimen. The upper arms and the shoulders have no fewer than nine primary muscles that will need firming for brides to make an impact while walking down the aisle.

Tame flabby areas with exercise. According to the University of Connecticut, the upper arms are a part of the female body where fat tends to be stored, along with the hips and thighs. Toning this area may take a combination of diet and exercise.

Begin with the biceps, which are the front muscles of the arms directly above the elbows. Biceps are one of the stronger arm muscles, and bicep curls can help strengthen biceps further. Shape magazine suggests performing 12 repetitions of three hand positions, palms up, palms down and thumbs to the side, to really work this area.

The triceps are a single muscle that have three sections, according to Fitness. Doing triceps kick-backs, bench dips and triangle push-ups can really activate these muscles and cause them to become stronger and more toned.

Strengthening and elongating shoulder muscles may take a combination of exercises that work not only the deltoids (muscles surrounding the shoulders), but the chest and back as well. Arm raises, both with arms extended to the side and in front of the body, can work these areas well.

Brides who want to tone up can speak with a fitness instructor at a nearby gym to learn the various ways to firm their arms, chests and backs in advance of their wedding days.



How to preserve wedding bouquets and arrangements

A bride's gown may garner its share of attention come her wedding day, but floral arrangements also tend to impress guests. Fresh flowers make a wedding and the ensuing reception more inviting and appealing.

According to The Knot.com, couples can expect to spend 8 percent of their wedding budget on flowers. For the average wedding, that equates to roughly \$2,000 for various arrangements and bouquets. That can be a considerable expense for fragile flowers with a shelf life of only a day or two.

But instead of tossing beautiful bouquets and other flowers into the garbage once the wedding day has come and gone, couples can employ various methods to preserve those impressive displays for years to come.

Air drying

One of the easiest ways to preserve flowers is to dry them out. This is best done by hanging blooms upside down so they will remain straight and not warp or wither while drying.

Secure flowers in small bundles and hang from an out-of-the-way spot in a cool, dry area. The flowers may need to remain hanging for up to three weeks before they are completely dried out. After which, gently remove the flowers and arrange them in a vase or another container. Otherwise, reassemble a bouquet how it was and carefully display.

Pressing

Pressing is another way to preserve floral bouquets and arrangements. To press flowers, find a few heavy books to stack or

another weighted object. Place the flowers between parchment paper or waxed paper and lay the heavy items on top. You also can place the flowers in tissue paper between the pages of a book so they are not jostled.

Leave the blooms for a week or two and then check on them before putting them in a shadow box or photo frame.

Chemical drying

Silica gel, borax and regular sand can be used to dry and preserve flowers as well. These can be handy for people who desire to preserve an entire bouquet as-is.

Silica gel is a desiccant commonly found in small packets inside of new shoes and purses. It also can be purchased at home improvement retailers and is used to dry out musty basements and other areas.

Fill a deep container halfway with the silica gel or other drying material. Put in the bouquet and then gently add more product to the top of the flowers so they are completely submerged. Place a snug cover over the top of the container and let everything sit for about a week. Slowly the moisture will be absorbed from the flowers.

Some people choose to spray dried flowers with a sealant to



keep them looking nice longer. An all-purpose craft spray might work. You also can ask for recommendations from the florist who handled your arrangements, and that florist may even preserve the flowers for you for an additional fee.