

Wedding gown styles more slinky and colorful

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Of the countless details there are to attend to when a wedding is planned, few decisions are more personal and important to a bride than what she'll be wearing on the day many consider to be the most important in their lives.

Your wedding is *the* day you want to look your absolute best, and what you wear should not only set the tone for the event, but also reflect your style and personality.

Because there are so many considerations that go into selecting a wedding dress, those who work in the bridal and formal wear industry say that one of the first things a woman should do when she knows she is going to become a bride is to work on her trousseau.

"Rule number one is that from deciding on a wedding dress to getting the last alteration done, the entire process always takes much more time than you expect," said Anita Shepard, owner of Formal Affair, which has stores in Acme and East Jordan.

"There is enough stress that comes with planning a wedding in general and the one place you really don't want it is in picking out the item that is such a focal point for the day," she said. "Everyone thinks that getting a dress takes less time than it actually does, so give yourself plenty of room in your planning."

Shepard said to start shopping for a dress early on, at least two months before the wedding, if you can. You may want to involve your mother, maid of honor, or a close friend, and have some ideas about your price range and the kind of wedding you'll be having. Factors from the date to the location of your event can influence choices for the style and fabric of your gown.

For example, a floor-length gown with a cathedral train and long veil might be perfect for a formal wedding in a stately church, but not for a daytime affair in the backyard.



"This is what we do and we're here to help," said Shepard, adding that most brides seem to have done some research before they actually begin shopping. "A wedding dress can cost as little as \$50 or as much as \$2,000, and while price is important, it's not the only factor. Most brides care much more about looking and feeling good in their dress."



Sleeker and sexier fabrics are a trend for 2004 wedding gowns, said Natalie Johnson of Traverse City's Fashion Formals. Mikado fabric, for example, is a heavier charmeuse, which is very light and slinky.