

By Margaret Norman

Glad Rags

Fascinators what are they? Take some Sinamay, add some flowers, feathers sequins and lace and what do you have? **hey presto!!** a fascinator.

Fascinators are now the latest fashion accessory and rapidly outselling the hat for weddings and that special occasion.

When were they first worn? From an early age women were expected to have their heads covered with veils etc but it was not until the end of the 16th century that more structured hats were seen. By the mid 1800's straw, paper, grass and horsehair were available along with velvet and tulle. Lace was also introduced, mostly as hair caps underneath large flamboyant hats decorated with feathers. As ladies started to dress their hair in elaborate high styles so hats became hair pieces, or "Fascinators," arrangements of feathers, ribbons and flowers with which to adorn the hair.

How are fascinators made? Fascinators have come a long way in 200 years. Modern fascinators have a more solid base and are made many from Sinamay or Organza embellished with feathers or diamante. Sinamay is a durable, stiff natural fibre that holds its shape extremely well. Its natural appearance, with fibres running through each item, make it both robust and appealing to the eye. On the other hand, organza has a delicate, floaty appearance which exudes elegance. Mounts for fascinators vary from hair combs to clips, from alic bands to elastic loops dyed to match hair colour. These bases provide flexibility and mean that the fascinator can be fitted and removed easily without ruining the hairstyle. The type of fixing chosen depends mainly with what the person involved feels comfortable. Combs feel safer when the hair is backcombed and sprayed with hair spray where the comb will sit and then the comb is secured in the ensuing clump of hair.

Why choose a fascinator? These days many women prefer a fascinator, simply because, unlike their grandma who wore a hat every Sunday when going to church, they are not used to wearing one. Also fascinators are much kinder to every hairstyle; they are light enough and secure enough to wear all day and into the evening, therefore making the perfect alternative to a hat. They can be flighty, flirtatious, chic and elegant and can be adapted to complement any style or colour of outfit.

Many people are uncertain as to when a fascinator is suitable head wear. In fact, they are an adornment for formal attire and are an alternative to wearing a hat. At weddings, they are equally suitable for guests or the bride, instead of a veil. Their use need not be confined to weddings for they are popular at such prestigious events as ladies day at Ascot, garden parties, "Palace investitures" and the like. With many weddings nowadays not being in church a fascinator may seem more appropriate particularly for the less formal ceremonies in hotels, castles or country houses.

So why a fascinator? – Well they are considerably less expensive than the traditional hat and far easier to wear.



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