



PHOTOGRAPHY • LYNN HADRALL

Versatile & elegant

A scarf can elevate an outfit with a splash of colour and dash of glamour



Lynn Hadrall

We put on scarves most often to defend against the cold. When it warms up, we shed them along with our heavy coats.

Europeans see scarves as more than shields. Women and men wear them to make a fashion statement, indoors and outdoors. And they don't consign them to the back of the closet when warmer weather arrives.

It helps to have the right scarf and to know how to tie it. You can simply loop it around your neck or go with more length for an elongating effect. If you experiment in a store where the help is creative, you will leave with multiple looks. Burberry and Liberty sales clerks will amaze you with the many ways they can style a scarf. You can also find expert advice online.

I like to pack at least one scarf when travelling. It's an easy way to get more out of an outfit by changing its look. I can add volume, texture and flair by simply choosing the right scarf. I can also leave my valuable jewelry at home. When I return from my travels, I often have a new scarf to expand my collection, or to give to a friend.

Sherry Hagerman, owner of Seasons Fine Clothing, is a fan of scarves. When I visited her in Uptown Waterloo, she was sporting a stylishly looped grey pattern version with

trendy fringe.

Seventy per cent of her customers travel to destinations such as Italy and France, where style abounds. Hagerman offers them advice on basics that will pack well and provide maximum style points.

Seasons is more than 25 years old; Hagerman has owned it for about three years. She took over the business after working there. In recent months, she has had to weather rail transit construction right outside her door and is thankful for faithful clientele who make the effort to get past it. She's eager to make it worth their while when they visit.

To update a wardrobe, Hagerman figures adding a simple scarf can be just as effective as purchasing an entire outfit.

"Scarves are functional and they can

change an outfit very easily," she says. "They're so versatile, cost effective, and an easy way to update what we already have. Put on a pair of black pants and a black sweater. Wear a different scarf every day and no one would even see your outfit was the same. Scarves can turn a boring outfit into something stylish and trendsetting."

Hagerman has seen how clothing can transform her customers, making them feel powerful, pretty or confident.

"We all don't have money to burn, so putting on a good scarf over what we already have can do that for us. It adds that element of sophistication or just gives us that self-confidence. The outfit is finished. We feel complete, we feel good and that comes through in our demeanor."

Visiting France recently, I took in the view at outdoor cafes, people-watching and savouring the street chic. Scarves are an integral part of wardrobes there. The French have words for different styles. An écharpe is a thicker version for colder weather; a foulard is a lighter fashion piece for spring or fall. Whatever the weather, the point is to make the scarf look effortless, even if achieving such a carefree look typically takes some thought and work. Most striking is how French men embrace scarves, whether dressed casually or for business.

Hagerman thinks the practice is reaching Canada. "Guys are wearing scarves all the time now. Before it was just kind of a novelty if a guy had a scarf on, but now more and more men are wearing them."

I think some Canadian women shy away from scarves as accessories because they don't feel confident tying them. Europeans seem to pull it off with such ease. You really only need a little practice and some confidence. Don't overthink it.

"There are no rules. No one is going to come up to you and tell you that your scarf is wrong," Hagerman says. "The less you do with it, the better. You could just put a scarf around your neck. People think they have to tie it and mess around with it. You don't. Wrap it around and leave it. Walk away."

If you want more advice, Hagerman is adept at styling scarves, mixing them

with different clothing styles ranging from cocktail dresses to casual sweaters, even wearing them with statement jewelry pieces. She likes to combine textures, using scarves to add another layer to the final look.

There are also easy-to-follow online videos offering tips and tutorials. Two I would recommend are both on YouTube: 25 Ways to Wear a Scarf in 4.5 Minutes, and Seven Ways to Wear Your Scarf Liberty London. Spend just a few minutes watching these videos and you will master scarf styles that range from the "classic drape" and "bunny ear" to the "double rainbow" and the "shell roll." And you will have some fun experimenting.

Hagerman offers a cautionary note about buying scarves: "Don't get something that is out of your comfort zone. If you are struggling to deal with a scarf, then it's not for you. There's nothing worse than having something in your closet that you're not wearing."

Abundant choices make it easier to find a style and fabric that works for you. A colourful cashmere scarf just requires a couple loops around your neck and you're set (think Blake Lively in "Gossip Girl"). A classic silk neck scarf can be tied elegantly with a simple knot (think Grace Kelly). Floral, plaid, fringe, tassels, graphic patterns – they can all say something about your current mood.

"You just have to enjoy it, feel it, touch it. With silk and cotton, or silk and cashmere, they are so soft to the touch and easy to wear. It's got to be fun and it's got to be effortless," Hagerman says.

A scarf is an inexpensive way to experiment with colour and fabric. Use it as the finishing touch as you walk out the door, or the starting point for a unique evening look.

"Once we feel good about our complete outfit, it just puts that smile on your face," Hagerman says. "Don't underestimate the power of a smile. That's what fashion does – it makes us smile."

Maybe this season, all you need to bring that smile to your face is to tie on a scarf and go. ☺

For details about the scarves that illustrate this column, see page 125.



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