



OUTDOOR WEDDINGS

Enhancing Mother Nature

Creating spectacular events in the out-of-doors can be a challenge and requires special skills and knowledge. Here is a look at florists who do it best, as well as important factors you must consider when preparing floral décor for events in nature.

By **Brenda Silva**

With today's brides more socially conscious than in times past, many are foregoing churches or courthouses as the settings for their special wedding days, choosing outdoor venues instead. These locations, including beaches and lakes, mountains, vineyards, forests and more, serve as host for ecofriendly weddings often complete with recycled paper invitations that inform guests the ceremony will consist of food and flowers grown locally.

As outdoor wedding plans get underway, brides who wish to be married outdoors come to realize quickly all the details involved in a wedding – just like brides who plan indoor weddings. However, with outdoor weddings, there are additional details that need to be taken into consideration by designers, planners and brides – including one important guest that can ruin a picture-perfect day: Mother Nature.

Here are some of the top items for you and your “outdoor” bridal customers to be aware of so that their weddings don’t end up memorable for all the wrong reasons.

Permits and Plan B

Brides often choose beautiful outdoor locations that make for the perfect backgrounds in wedding pictures, but they sometimes forget to find out if they need a permit or permission to have their ceremonies held there. Floral designers and wedding planners can help save the day by getting this information in advance. In addition, certain historical locations may prohibit extensive floral décor, so you need to learn what you can and cannot do at various venues. You should also encourage outdoor brides to consider an alternative location in case the required permits cannot be arranged or secured by the desired wedding date.



1) Floral design by Trish Fjeldsted, AIFD
The BloomBox; Brandon, Manitoba, Canada
Photo by Charmaine Mallari
Location: Valley Gate; Brandon, Manitoba, Canada

2 & 3) Floral design by Elena Damy Destination Events; Los Cabos, Mexico
Photos by Anna Gomes Photo
Location: Esperanza Resort; Los Cabos, Mexico

4-7) Floral design by Elena Damy Destination Events; Los Cabos, Mexico
Photos by Chris+Lynn Photographers
Location: Esperanza Resort; Los Cabos, Mexico



Weathering the Weather

Once the outdoor location is established, it's time to take Mother Nature's temperature to find out if the weather will be favorable. As important considerations for ceremonies held during spring and summer, planners should have tents available, for unexpected or seasonal thunderstorms, that can comfortably accommodate the wedding party and guests. This is a must because unpredictable weather has interrupted, postponed or completely ruined the weddings of far too many unprepared bridal couples. So as the bride's trusted





advisor, you have a responsibility to make her completely aware of the reality of the uncertainty of the weather and the chaos it can cause. It's better for everyone involved to be prepared for all possibilities than for you to appear unprofessional by being caught off-guard by inclement weather, wind, or other tricks and tantrums of Mother Nature.

In addition, caution brides who want midday outdoor weddings about temperatures at that time of day and heat's effect on floral décor. For ceremonies taking place in the afternoon or at sunset, guests should not be facing the sun, and all florals should be temperature-friendly, if possible. Designers should also consider the potential for wind to topple floral displays and structures and use appropriate security techniques to ensure designs remain upright.





11

Entrance and Egress

For outdoor weddings being held on the beach, near a lake or at a vineyard, the ease of guests to arrive and depart is pretty straightforward. However, brides looking to say “I do” under a canopy of trees in the forest or in snow-covered vistas can present accessibility issues. In these scenarios, the ease with which guests – as well as florists, caterers, bakers and other service providers – can access and depart the wedding site is of monumental importance. Impress the importance of this on your outdoor brides, and check out the sites personally prior to the events.

Hydrangeas and Hydration

When choosing wedding flowers, brides frequently choose based on a favorite color(s) or favorite flowers. But if the wedding is being held at the beach in summer or on a mountaintop in winter, some flowers may not be as well suited as others for that time of the year. In these situations, steer the bride toward the hardiest flowers for each season, and have a list of overly thirsty and/or wilt-sensitive flowers that you refuse to use for outdoor weddings in extreme conditions. Be sure to adequately and accurately inform each bride why you make the recommendations you do. (See “*Make Your Outdoor Wedding Flowers Truly Outstanding*” on Page 22.)

Food and Florals

The common denominator among food and florals at an outdoor wedding is that they both have to last throughout the ceremony, regardless of season and location. For example, summer beach brides should know that fondant can be a better choice than regular icing for their wedding cakes. By the same token, you should keep florals refrigerated as long as possible before displaying them. After the flowers are out of refrigeration, have plenty of water handy with which to replenish containers and mist the flowers.

An Affair to Accessorize

While the key to success in real estate may be location, location, location, the key to bringing an outdoor wedding together is, arguably, accessories, accessories, accessories. By incorporating décor that complements the location, theme, and flower choices, an outdoor wedding can be as beautiful

(and lavish, if that’s the goal) as any held at a grand hotel. Whether it’s under a tent or under a covering of nature, key pieces of furniture, decorative accessories (lanterns, pillows, rugs, linens, etc.) and lighting can enhance a theme or even the most beautiful nature spot on Earth.

Extras for Everyone

When attending an indoor wedding, guests rarely find themselves in need of anything they didn’t bring with them. But with an outdoor wedding, guests may not know what to expect, so florists and planners who go the extra mile can make an outdoor wedding extraordinary. For example, offer to provide (for a fee, of course!) inexpensive flip-flops, hats or sun visors, sunscreen, fans, and/or bug spray.

The bottom line is that when preparing for an outdoor wedding, the most important thing you can do is meet the bride’s wishes for her special day – and that means being prepared and advising your outdoor bridal clients of all possibilities and scenarios. And remember that your preparation for and knowledge of every eventuality will be witnessed by guests who could possibly become new clients. ■



12

8) Floral design Nisie’s Enchanted Florist; Los Alamitos, Calif.
Photo by Jana Williams Photography

9) Photo by Victor Sizemore Photography; Southern California

10) Floral design by Rachel Stevenson
EverAfter Floral Design; Myerstown, Pa.
Photo by Char Co.
Location: Moonstone Manor; Elizabethtown, PA

11) Floral design by Elena Damy Destination Events; Los Cabos, Mexico
Photo by Sara Richardson Photography
Location: One&Only Palmilla Resort; Cabo San Lucas, Mexico

12) Floral design by Bridgette Arnold
Posey Peddler Flowers & Emporium; Jonesboro, Ark.
Photo by Melanie Rusnick
Location: Stan Jones Mallard Hunting Lodge; Alicia Ark.