

GARDEN GATHERINGS

Natural beauty abounds at these botanical venues, where butterflies, blossoms, and dreamy vistas are sure to wow your guests—and free up some of your floral budget.

TEXT BY SARAH L. STEWART



1. Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden Richmond, Virginia

Old-world charm pervades this 82-acre public estate, from cobbled paths and quaint gazebos to a striking glass-domed classical conservatory. Exchange vows in a restored Victorian-style garden planted with peonies, tulips, and daffodils, or on a hillside terrace perfumed by more than a thousand rosebushes during peak bloom in late May and early October. Up to 250 guests can revel on the tented lawn of the property's stately Craftsman-era manse, one of several reception options. Not ready for the night to end? You can relive the romance with a yearlong garden membership, included for newlyweds in the cost of booking. **Top Tip:** Serve regional sips from Richmond's own Legend Brewing Co. or nearby Barboursville Vineyards, both available from venue caterer Meriwether Godsey.

THE DETAILS: Venue rental for ceremony and reception from \$1,800, lewisginter.org.

2. Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden Dallas

Choose from lakeside lawns, shaded grottoes, and more than

a dozen other picturesque ceremony sites at this 66-acre urban oasis. For an awe-inspiring aisle, it's hard to top the Cape Myrtle Allee, an otherworldly tunnel of intricate branches covered in bright-pink blooms each summer. An equally impressive reception awaits at the DeGolyer House, one of two historic on-site properties that can accommodate parties of up to 300. Guests can dine beneath stately oaks and magnolias, then dance the night away on the Spanish-style loggia. **Top Tip:** Snag a sunset photo op in the arboretum's new edible garden—featuring vegetables, fruits, herbs, and flowers—with downtown skyline views across White Rock Lake.

THE DETAILS: Venue rental for ceremony and reception from \$3,600, dallasarboretum.org.

3. Butterfly Rainforest Gainesville, Florida

A thousand winged witnesses join up to 80 human guests for ceremonies inside this lush screened enclosure at the Florida Museum of Natural History. At the center of the rainforest, a wooden bridge over a calming cascade doubles as the altar, surrounded by tropical blooms and butterflies floating by. Afterward, head indoors for a lively reception in the main museum gallery, presided over by a 14-foot-tall fossilized mammoth skeleton, which can even be spotlighted in the color of your choice.

Top Tip: Organize a pre-wedding stroll for your guests along nearby Lake Alice for waterfowl-watching and all-but-guaranteed alligator sightings.

THE DETAILS:

Venue rental for ceremony and reception from \$3,000, floridamuseum.ufl.edu.

4. Desert Botanical Garden Phoenix

Stately cacti, spiky succulents, and a red-rock backdrop lend a distinctly southwestern sensibility to soirées at this desert outpost, which can accommodate parties of up to 250. Larger shindigs may use the saguaro-studded terrace or airy event hall. Weddings of 100 or fewer can choose between an earthy amphitheater overlooking the garden's impressive cactus collection and a circular pavilion situated along a wildflower trail, which erupts in a kaleidoscope of color each spring. Once the sun drops behind the Papago Buttes to the west, watch for stars twinkling through the pavilion's center skylight—and if you're there during the holidays, you'll also be able to bask in the glow of hand-lit luminarias flickering on the surrounding paths. **Top Tip:** Stay and play poolside at the new Mountain Shadows, a hip,

retro-style resort at the foot of nearby Camelback Mountain.

THE DETAILS: Venue rental for ceremony and reception from \$1,000, dbg.org.

5. The Oregon Garden Silverton, Oregon

Rustic meets refined at this 80-acre jewel in Willamette Valley wine country. You'll find ambience and amenities in equal measure: Adjacent to the garden's tidy green spaces and looming forests, a 103-room lodge offers cozy cottages equipped with fireplaces and patios, a hair and makeup studio for day-of pampering, and a full-service spa (couples' massage, anyone?). Get hitched at the base of a vine-clad grape-and-hop arbor, in an intimate forest meadow, or on an elegant emerald lawn. Then celebrate beneath a ceiling of twinkling white lights in the Grand Hall (a refurbished barn with a capacity of up to 450 guests), or outside on a 200-person plaza featuring fiery-orange maples.

Top Tip: Head to the comfortable Fire-side Lounge, located adjacent to the garden, for a dressed-down after-party with live music and drink specials nightly.

THE DETAILS: Weddings from \$3,500, oregon.garden.org.

