Weddings at Matthaei Botanical Gardens

Thank you for your interest in having your wedding here at the University of Michigan Matthaei Botanical Gardens. We are delighted to offer a lovely and picturesque site for ceremonies and receptions, and feel we are unique in Washtenaw County as a premier garden wedding venue.

We have up to four outdoor display gardens that you can reserve for a wedding ceremony from late May through early October. Each space accommodates up to 150 people. Ceremony times on Saturdays are 11:30 am, 2:30 pm, or 5:30 pm. Rental times begin when the wedding party arrives, so a typical arrival time for a 5:30 ceremony would be 4:45 pm, with photos ending and the wedding party departing at 6:45 pm. Fridays and Sundays can be more flexible with ceremony start times. The fee of $1100 for two hours includes an indoor backup space of either the Auditorium or Conservatory depending on the time of the ceremony, up to 75 white folding chairs (chairs set up is the responsibility of the renters), a room for the bride’s party to change in, a rehearsal, and a host from the gardens to assist the wedding party and guests. If you are considering having your ceremony on a Holiday Weekend, our fees are $1400 for the same two hours of time.

Three of our garden areas have differing amounts of bloom. The Perennial Garden, which has hundreds of well-established blooming perennials, is arranged in four long beds with grass walkways in-between. The Perennial Garden is located through the back door of the Conservatory, and your guests will wander through the Conservatory to arrive at your ceremony site. This garden is reminiscent of English cottage gardens. It looks lovely from late May through early October.

The Herb Knot Garden features an interwoven knot of thyme in the center of the garden. It is a garden of sensory delights, with wonderful smells and textures of herbal plants on display. This garden features brick pathways and a curved bench that seats 24. The lavender in this garden blooms from mid June through late July.

The most popular setting for outdoor weddings is our Gateway Garden, planted with a mixture of perennials in the center bed, and thousands of annuals planted in clusters of colors in the four semi circular beds that reaches their bloom potential in late July. This is a garden in the round, featuring two pools with beehive shaped drip fountains in them, as well as a large wooden arched pavilion, and curved sidewalks leading around the blooming areas. There are six garden benches on the outer sidewalks of this garden, and each bench seats four. Our Gateway Garden is available from early June through late September, although the flowering plants don’t fill out and look their best until mid July through mid September.

The fourth garden, Willow Pond Island, is located in a natural grassy setting with large spruces surrounded by cattails and reeds at the water’s edge. There is a stone stage in this garden, and spruce trees form a natural backdrop for the stage. There is a large lawn area in front of the stage for the guests to gather. Willow Pond Island does not feature any blooming flowers. This garden is located off of our large parking lot in a less traveled area of the gardens and you are led to the space via a stone walk.

Our indoor Conservatory can be rented during the fall, winter, and spring for ceremonies for groups up to 100 guests and its fee is $950 for two hours, or, $1250 for a Holiday Weekend. Ceremonies typically begin at 5:30, because we are open to the public until 4:30, daily. The Conservatory has spotlighting available for evening weddings. The Conservatory can seat up to 60 guests. If up to 100 guests are expected, then 38 chairs may be set up and the rest of the space used for standing room for guests. The fee includes the rental of up to 60 chairs. The Conservatory does not have air conditioning, but is heated in the winter months.

Matthaei Conservatory and Auditorium are the two spaces we reserve for your indoor backup. The Conservatory is for all weddings that start at 5:30 in the evening or later, while the Auditorium is for ceremonies that begin up to and including 5:00 pm. An indoor backup is always included in the ceremony.
site fee. Please note that our Conservatory is open to the public until 4:30 daily, and we consider it our public museum, so no ceremonies are allowed to be held in there during that time. Photos may be taken in there, if it is your reserved indoor backup for a 5:30 wedding. Photos may not be taken in the Conservatory for daytime outdoor weddings unless the weather interferes and your ceremony must be held in the Auditorium.

You can also rent our indoor room, Matthaei Auditorium, for a reception. The fee is $1000 for the first seven-hour period between 8 a.m. and 11 p.m. with additional fees for additional hours. The Holiday Weekend rate is $1400. The capacity is 100 for a sit down, dinner-style reception. The Auditorium has a long window wall of 12’ tall glass looking over the terrace and Gateway Garden. There is a terrace that adjoins the Auditorium, with casual outdoor tables and chairs, offering seating for up to 24 people, ideal for the appetizer part of your reception, weather permitting. The Auditorium has air conditioning for your guest’s comfort. We have a list of Approved Caterers for receptions, and you must hire one from the list. We provide up to 19 banquet style tables that are 8’ long, and up to 100 black chair. We own 12 60” round tables, but there is a rental fee of $25 per six tables and the caterer will need to set up and take down the tables. Dishes, linens, flatware and other items must be brought in. Only wine and beer may be served by your caterer, providing they have a licensed bartender to serve. We discourage the use of disposable dishware, plastic water bottles, and other one-time only use items. The University of Michigan became a smoke free campus on July 1, 2011. Smoking will not be permitted on any U-M grounds, outdoors as well as indoors.

Our rental fees for the outdoor gardens include the use of up to 75 of our white wooden folding chairs, or 60 chairs for Conservatory weddings, but the set up and take down of chairs is your responsibility. We will make sure the chairs are delivered to the site of your ceremony, by the beginning of your rental period. At that time, you should have several people designated and ready to set up your chairs. These people should also be available to take down the chairs, once the ceremony is over. We suggest two people for every 25 chairs.

The grounds of Matthaei Botanical Gardens have a parking kiosk system. Each car that parks at MBG will be required to pay a fee of $1.20/ hour, with a maximum of $5 / day, from 8 am to 8pm, seven days a week. Paying this fee will gain admission to the Conservatory during public hours, and all outdoor spaces, for all occupants of the vehicle. A parking fee is not included in the rental of the Gardens for any private activities. We will roll a parking fee onto the rental fee so that guests won’t have to be responsible for using the kiosk and paying a charge. Parking fees vary and can be anywhere from $50 to $250 depending on the length of time and estimated amount of cars.

Please note that all fees for both outdoor and indoor spaces, as well as parking spaces, are subject to change. If you have any questions, please contact me and I will be happy to explain any of our policies, or answer your questions. Photos of the various sites may be viewed on our website, by clicking on “plan your visit” and then clicking on “weddings and rentals”.

Best wishes,

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