

LOVE IS IN THE AIR

Planning The Perfect Back Yard Wedding

By Elana Lancit

If you're looking for a one-of-a-kind wedding site, your own back yard may be just the place. If you are considering holding a wedding at home, there's a lot to think about. For example, do you need a tent? Are you required to have a special events license? Should you get portable toilets for the back yard? These small touches can make or break a back yard wedding.

According to Elana Lancit, founder and president of Vancouver-based Sweet Beginnings, a full-service wedding consulting and event-planning company, "An at-home affair takes a lot of planning. Consider hiring a professional consultant. Although the benefits of a home wedding come with added considerations, if you arrange everything in advance, the day will be wonderful for you and your guests.

- **Weather or Not:** First on Lancit's list is weather insurance. "Plan on renting a tent no matter what," says Lancit. "Weather is just too unpredictable. Tents provide good shade in the heat, and if you are planning a wedding in the fall, heating lamps are good to have on-hand," she says.
- **Be Neighbourly:** To ensure your neighbors don't complain about the noise, invite them along, or at least inform them about the event. If you are not inviting the neighbors, Lancit suggests dropping off a bottle of wine or a gift certificate to a restaurant a few days prior to the event. "This shows appreciation and respect for your neighbours," says Lancit.
- **Menu Planning:** Lancit suggests hiring a catering company to handle the food and bar. Before the wedding day, invite the caterers to your house so they can see what kind of space your kitchen offers. They may decide to bring a tent to provide additional space for prep work. Before signing the contract, make sure to discuss what is included in the cost. For example, will they provide plates and utensils? Also, consider the weather – you want to choose foods that will not perish.
- **Parking:** Parking can be a cause of distress on the big day. Since most homes cannot accommodate 200 cars, Lancit suggests using a valet service, which most guests appreciate. The valet service will handle all logistics and keep your guests from walking a great distance. "If you choose to hire valet, consider having extra staff at the beginning and end of the event," says Lancit.
- **License:** Lancit suggests calling city hall to find out if you are required to have a special license or permit for your event, such as a parking permit or a special event license. Also get information on notice by-laws and inquire about extra insurance.

- **Bathrooms:** Don't forget to think about bathrooms! This is something that people all-too-often forget about. If you don't have enough bathrooms in your house or do not want people trekking through, consider port-o-lets. Have at least two set up not too far from the party. Lancit also suggests hiring someone to clean the bathrooms during the event.
- **Event Logistics:** Lancit recommends creating a complete floor plan and to consider the location of the musicians; head table; guest tables; dance floor; dressing room for bride, groom and attendants; and station for hair and makeup.
- **Power:** Check on getting an extra generator. With all the music and lighting, you want to make sure not to blow a fuse during the event.
- **Flooring:** If you are setting up your dance area on grass, consider ordering a dance floor. If the ground is uneven, work may need to be done in order to lay down the flooring.
- **Lighting:** Guests need to be able to see where they are walking so they don't trip over anything. Make sure everything is well-lit. Consider adding candles, lanterns and mini-lights.
- **Flowers:** Make sure to work with a florist who will provide flowers that can hold up in all weather conditions.
- **Coat Check:** Depending on the time of year, make sure you have a place for guests to hang their coats.
- **Don't Forget The Inside:** Make sure your house is presentable just in case guests take a peek.

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Elana Lancit is founder and president of Sweet Beginnings. Sweet Beginnings is the world's only franchised, full-service wedding consulting and décor provider. Sweet Beginnings currently has 15 locations in Canada. Visit www.asweetbeginning.com for additional information.