The Arboretum at Penn State
Rental Venues

There are several outdoor event spaces for rent to University departments and the public in the
H.O. Smith Botanic Gardens. Our primary rental season begins May 16 and ends September
30. The rental venues may be used for gatherings such as wedding ceremonies, graduation and
retirement celebrations, family reunions, and academic or business functions, such as
conference receptions. The Arboretum does not rent venues for wedding receptions. All rental
clients are required to abide by our garden rules and event protocols as outlined in the rental
agreement. An on-site logistics meeting is held within 30 days of the event with the event and
marketing coordinator.

Because the Arboretum cannot provide furnishings, tents, or catering and bar-tending services,
rental clients must hire professional rental companies and approved caterers. They may apply
through the Arboretum for permission from the University to hire a bar-tending service.

To reserve a venue, a client must sign a rental agreement and submit a non-refundable deposit
equivalent to one-half of the rental fee. The balance of the fee is due thirty days before the
date of the rental event.

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The Venues (Listed in order of popularity with rental clients)

Overlook Pavilion/Joan Milius Smith Esplanade/Rose Garden Bower/Oasis Garden
Terrace/North (Conservatory) Terrace/Bigler Road Lawn/Birch Overlook/Hawthorn Entry/Event
Lawn

1. Overlook Pavilion

The Overlook Pavilion, which sits at the highest point in the gardens, provides views toward the
Bald Eagle Ridge in the northwest and across the Event Lawn towards the fountain and campus
in the southeast. The pavilion consists of two stone structures bridged by a soaring roof
structure and connected to terraces facing roughly east and west.
Over the larger terrace is a custom-designed white canopy that is anchored to the masonry buildings. From mid-May until the end of September, white side walls are attached to the three exposed sides. When not zipped closed, the white material is gathered at intervals to frame the view. The complex is flanked by ornamental plantings to the north and south. Immediately adjacent on one side is the Ridge and Valley Sculpture.

The Arboretum’s parking lot, which is adjacent to the Overlook Pavilion, holds approximately 55 cars. On weekends and on evenings during the week, overflow parking can be accommodated in the nearby parking lot behind the Penn State School of Law’s Lewis Katz Building.

**OVERLOOK PAVILION CAPACITY**

- Seating Only (e.g. wedding ceremony): 200 – 220
- Dinner (tables): 85 – 95
- Informal Presentations/“Standing” Receptions: 250 – 300

2. Joan Milius Smith Esplanade

Not far from the Overlook Pavilion is the Joan Milius Smith Esplanade, a long, gradually widening lawn flanked by temporary, seasonal displays. The narrower end (which features an arch covered by vines) makes a lovely setting for ceremonies. The section of the Esplanade close to the Strolling Garden and Event Lawn features a large-scale sundial sculpture.

**ESPLANADE CAPACITY**

- Maximum Tent Size: 30’ x 60’
- Seating Only (e.g. wedding ceremony): 250 – 300
- Dinner (tables): 95

3. Rose Garden Bower

The Rose and Fragrance Garden features roses and complementary perennials and herbs, all selected for their fragrant blooms or foliage. The Rose Garden Bower is a landmark and focal point at the center of this cottage-style garden. Covered by wisteria, this wood and steel garden structure with a weathered bluestone terrace is the perfect place to hold a small garden wedding. Clients may seat guests on the garden bench and chairs that are in this venue.

**ROSE GARDEN BOWER CAPACITY**

- Standing (e.g., wedding ceremony): 25
*Clients may use the garden furniture that is in this venue for guest seating but may not bring additional seats to the site.

4. Oasis Garden Terrace

Within the Oasis Garden, the Oasis Garden Terrace is slightly raised and off to the side of the main walkway so as to provide a view towards the Lotus Pool in the middle of the garden. Situated near a stucco wall and surrounded by plantings such as magnolia and bamboo, it forms a small garden room or gathering space. In its center is a large, circular planter that features seasonal displays. Clients may seat guests on the garden benches that are in this venue.

**OASIS GARDEN TERRACE CAPACITY**

- Standing (e.g. wedding ceremony): 25

*Clients may use the garden furniture that is in this venue for guest seating but may not bring additional seats to the site.*

5. North (Conservatory) Terrace

The North Terrace event space, which is defined by tall, yellow stucco walls, can be used (tented or un-tented) for semi-private gatherings. The walls are an armature for trellises for displaying vines so that the total effect is one of lushness. Because this terrace will lead into the conservatory someday, the theme of the plantings is tropical.

**NORTH (CONSERVATORY) TERRACE CAPACITY**

- Maximum Tent Size: 40’ x 80’
- Seating Only (e.g. wedding ceremony): 300 – 375
- Dinner (tables): 200 to 320

6. Bigler Road Lawn

This rental venue is specifically for events requiring one or two large tents, at least one buffet tent, and a cook tent, and is rented for tented events only. It lies adjacent to the Arboretum’s parking lot and just outside the eastern entrance to the H.O. Smith Botanic Gardens. This area provides convenient access for guest shuttles and catering vehicles.

**BIGLER ROAD LAWN CAPACITY**

- **Single-Tent Option**
  - Maximum Tent Size: 40’ x 120’
  - Dinner (tables): 300 to 400

*In addition to the large tent, one buffet tent and one cook tent may be erected.*
Two-Tent Option*
2 Tents – Maximum Tent Size: 40’ x 120’
Dinner (tables): 800 to 1,000
*In addition to the two large tents, two buffet tents and one cook tent may be erected.

7. Birch Overlook

The Birch Overlook venue encompasses the half of the Event Lawn that is immediately adjacent to the Overlook Pavilion and the Children’s Garden.

BIRCH OVERLOOK CAPACITY

Maximum Tent Size: 40’ x 40’
Seating Only (e.g. wedding ceremony): 180
Dinner (tables): 85

8. Hawthorn Entry

The Hawthorn Entry venue, which offers a view of the fountain through the Bamboo Allée, encompasses the half of the Event Lawn that is adjacent to the walled gardens. Its name refers to the landscape plantings at the entrance to the allée from the Kathryn Bower Smith Strolling Garden.

HAWTHORN ENTRY CAPACITY:

Maximum Tent Size: 40’ x 40’
Seating Only (e.g. wedding ceremony): 180
Dinner (tables): 85

9. Event Lawn

The largest event space is the Event Lawn, which occupies slightly more than an acre at the center of the Smith Botanic Gardens. The event lawn is a beautiful, green, open space surrounded by a 5’ hedge of attractive plantings. The lawn can be set up for public events such as festivals, plant sales, garden shows, and academic or business gatherings such as conference receptions. The event lawn is not far from the parking lot for ease of service and access when transporting materials.

EVENT LAWN CAPACITY

Maximum Tent Size: 100’ x 300’
Seating Only (e.g. wedding ceremony): 2,200
Dinner (tables): 1,300