Rental Venues: Frequently Asked Questions

1. Do you rent space in the Arboretum?

   Yes, we have several outdoor rental venues in the H.O. Smith Botanic Gardens. Our primary rental season is from May 16 through September 30 due to the prevalence of strong winds before and after these dates. The rental rates are lower during April, the first half of May, and October because the weather is frequently chilly and wet during these transitional months. We do not rent garden venues from November through March.

2. Are there any indoor rental venues?

   No, there are no indoor facilities for rent. We, therefore, strongly recommend that you procure an alternate indoor site in case inclement weather threatens your comfort or safety in the gardens.

3. Are the venues ADA-accessible?

   Yes.

4. What parking is available for guests at rental events?

   Guests may park in the Arboretum’s lot, which holds approximately 55 cars. Overflow parking is available on weekday evenings and on weekends in the nearby lot of the Lewis Katz Building.

   On weekdays, one may also pay by the hour (for up to four hours at a time) to park in the Lewis Katz Building lot by using an automated pay station which is located in that lot on the end adjacent to the intramural fields. The station accepts only coins or a credit card.

   If your event will occur on a weekday, you can consider hiring a shuttle to transport your guests or contact the University’s Parking Office to make arrangements for parking.

5. Do you rent venues for weddings and wedding receptions?

   We do not rent venues for wedding receptions, but we do frequently rent them for wedding ceremonies.

6. How far in advance should reservations be made?
In general, we recommend that you reserve a venue a year in advance. For Saturdays in June, which is the most in-demand time, it is best to reserve a venue one-and-a-half to two years in advance. Regardless, you should always check with the event and marketing coordinator because there may be an alternative venue or time that would suit your need.

7. If I am renting a venue for my wedding ceremony to be held in the Arboretum, will I be able to have a rehearsal there?

You may bring your wedding party to the gardens for an informal walk-through prior to the day of the ceremony but if an Arboretum event, tour, or rental event is occurring in the venue when you visit the gardens, you would not be able to enter the venue until that event ends. You should contact the event and marketing coordinator well in advance to ask whether any other activity has been scheduled.

If the rental venue itself is not available for a walk-through, you can meet your wedding party at another location in the gardens to discuss the itinerary and staging of your ceremony.

8. How do I reserve a venue?

Contact the event and marketing coordinator (kkr1@psu.edu) to discuss the scope and type of event you wish to host and to ask about venue availability. You may also complete and submit the Rental Inquiry Form.

If the venue is available, the coordinator will send you a short form to complete. The form provides contact information for the person who will be signing the rental agreement and describes your event. The event coordinator will use this information to create your rental agreement.

You will have two weeks in which to review, sign, and return the agreement to the coordinator, along with one-half of the rental fee which serves as a non-refundable deposit.

4.5.9. What does it cost to rent a venue?

There are three categories of event and nine rental venues. Pricing depends on the venue, date, time, and type of event. Please refer to the first page of the Rental Fee Schedule.

10. What amenities are included in the rental fee?

Amenities include restrooms, drinking fountains, and (at the Overlook Pavilion only) a covered event terrace and portico. The Arboretum cannot provide furnishings or tents.
(other than the canopy at the Overlook Pavilion), but if garden furniture is present in the rental venue, you may use it for your event.

11. May I provide my own chairs and tables?

No, you must hire a professional rental company to provide furniture. Several companies in the State College area that rent tents and other event furnishings may be found online by searching for “wedding and party rentals state college pa” and “wedding and party rentals mill hall pa.”

12. What kinds of decorations and furnishings other than tables and chairs may I have at my event?

In general, you can bring free-standing props such as pillars, podiums, and arbors, as well as floral containers and planters, but you may not use adhesives or otherwise attach decorations to an Arboretum building, pillar, pavement, or plant. You are responsible for gathering and removing all event-related materials. It is a good idea to ask the event and marketing coordinator specific questions in the early stages of planning your event.

13. May I bring food into the Arboretum?

Picnicking is not permitted in the Arboretum. If you wish to serve food to guests at a rental event, the University requires that you hire a professional catering service such as Penn State Hospitality Services, Penn State Campus Catering, or a caterer from Penn State’s list of non-University caterers.

14. Does the Arboretum provide catering services?

No, the Arboretum does not provide catering services.

15. May I serve alcohol?

You may only serve alcohol if the type of event you are hosting is permitted by the Arboretum (such as a business or conference gathering), and if you obtain written permission from the Arboretum and University officials via the procedure described at http://guru.psu.edu/policies/Ad18.html. Alcohol may not be served in the gardens in conjunction with weddings or wedding receptions.

16. May I hire musicians or play music at my event?

Yes, but the volume of the music must comply with local ordinances which are provided to you in the rental agreement.

17. Are there other events scheduled on the grounds at the same time as the rental events?
Only one rental event is scheduled at any given time, but there may be more than one rental event occurring on the same day. There may be educational activities or tours occurring in other parts of the gardens or on Arboretum land outside of the gardens during rental events.

18. Will someone from the Arboretum be on site for my rental event?
   Yes. Either the event and marketing coordinator or another staff person attends each rental event to address any facility-related questions that arise and to alert the public that a private event is under way in the rental venue.

19. What is the street address of the Arboretum for directing guests?

   H.O. Smith Botanic Gardens  
   The Arboretum at Penn State  
   Corner of Park Avenue and Bigler Road  
   University Park PA 16802

20. Are there University or community events that could affect access to the Arboretum?

   Yes. If you are interested in renting a venue on a Saturday afternoon in the fall, you should check the Nittany Lion football schedule first [http://www.gopsusports.com/sports/m-footbl PSU-M-Footbl-body.html] because accessibility to the gardens is affected by one-way traffic patterns before and after home games due to the proximity of Beaver Stadium. You could also contact University Information at 814-865-4700 to ask about public events that might be occurring in the vicinity of the Arboretum on a given day.

21. What is your cancellation policy?

   You must notify the event coordinator at the Arboretum about your intent to cancel the reservation. In addition to the initial, non-refundable deposit (50% of the rental fee) that is paid upon signing the rental agreement, you would pay the following amounts, depending on when you gave notice:

   * **Cancellations three (3) months or more in advance of the scheduled date:** No additional charge will be imposed.

   * **Cancellations from one (1) to three (3) months in advance of the scheduled date:** 20% of the total rental fee

   * **Cancellations between fifteen (15) days and one (1) month in advance of the scheduled date:** 40% of the rental fee
*Cancellations between fourteen (14) days or less in advance of the scheduled date: 50% of the rental fee