

Outdoor Reception in the

Swan House Gardens

This document compiles some of our Event Guidelines pertaining to outdoor receptions and has some additional topics to be aware of. Be sure to review all our Event Guidelines in the brochure. Let us first start by saying, we define a reception as the dinner portion, after the cocktail hour, that usually extends later into the evening.

Outdoor receptions in the Swan House Gardens are stunning but do require quite a bit more work and expense.  Our Grand Overlook ballroom in the History Museum can be equally magical with its floor to ceiling windows. The barrel-vaulted ceiling can lend itself nicely to a night sky with blue-violet lights and projected pin spotted stars brought in by one of our lighting companies.  Unless you have your heart set on an alfresco dinner, we recommend receptions to be held indoors. However, we are happy to set you up for a spectacular evening no matter what your vision is.

**Noise Ordinance**

Due to the local noise ordinance, all outdoor events must stop at 10:30pm. Any horns part of a band must stop at 10:00pm. Noise ordinance does not apply to indoor events where events may go until midnight.

**Where & Capacity**

An outdoor reception can only be held on the column side of the Swan House with a maximum capacity of 200 guests. The fountain side is reserved exclusively for ceremonies.

**Temperature**

Due to extreme heat and cold, outdoor receptions are only allowed March through June 15th and September 15th through November. Outdoor cocktails or receptions where there is any expected rain, or the temperature index (feels like temperature) will be 50 degrees or lower or 88 degrees or higher during any point between setup and breakdown will need to be setup inside. This is in place to provide a safe and comfortable experience for you, your guests, and vendors.

**Weather Plan**

While we always hope for sunny skies, any outdoor event must have an indoor weather plan. Depending on the extent of setup, some outdoor reception weather plans may need to be called 2 days in advance. This is mainly up to your lighting and décor vendors. Lighting companies will pack their trucks a day in advance, and if the reception is moved inside, they will most likely switch your outdoor lighting plan to a better plan more suited for the ballroom.  At the latest, the decision to move the reception indoors must be made 24 hours in advance, usually at the rehearsal.

**Load In & Load Out**

Due to all furniture and lighting being rented, etc., most outdoor receptions will need at least 6 hours of load in and a minimum of 3 hours of load out. Some load ins may begin as early as 6:00am. Your salesperson will estimate these times until we know exactly how much time your vendors are requesting.  These times can be adjusted up to one month in advance.

**Power Distribution Unit**

There is a $500 power fee for outdoor receptions and includes our power distribution unit. This is to help supply enough power for your lighting and entertainment.

**Lighting**

Any event that will be outdoors 20 minutes past sunset time is required to have additional lighting. To ensure the safety of the historic Swan House and grounds, lighting around the Swan House must come from one of our approved vendors listed in the brochure and cannot come from any other lighting or AV company.

Lighting on the Swan House column side for an event can range from $5,000 for the bare minimum to $20,000+ for more extensive packages. All our AV companies have provided outdoor lighting for receptions and can guide you through this.

Uplights on the Swan House, walls, and trees provide a gorgeous aesthetic and are highly recommend showcasing Swan House features.  However, uplights do nothing to light an area.  Sufficient lighting to light all guest areas must be accounted for.  This is typically done one of two ways, café lights (lights on a wire) or projected lights (sometimes called gobos).  For the safety of guests and staff, lighting on just the tables is not permitted, table lighting must be accompanied by overhead lighting to light walkways. Lighting for guest tables will only light that area. It is very important to be sure you have included lighting for your bars, buffet, food stations, cake, coffee station, dessert table, etc.  A good rule of thumb is to assume a space is dark unless you have lights on it.

**Catering Area**

All caterers on our approved list have provided exceptional service for outdoor receptions and will manage all this for you.

Your caterer will bring a tent, lights, and tables to set up on the north side of the Swan House next to the Swan House kitchen door. Here is where they will prepare the food for service.  There is a single power outlet near the tent available to power their lights in the tent.  Any hotboxes or ovens rented must be sterno or propane heated and cannot be electric.

**Restroom Trailer**

There are no restrooms for events in the Swan House Gardens. Any cocktail hour or reception in the Swan House Gardens requires the rental of a restroom trailer that is self-sufficient with its own power (generator that comes with it) and water (tank). Talk with your salesperson for vendor recommendations.  Restroom trailers can cost around $2,000 for two stalls and must be removed the same night.  A two-stall trailer is generally good for up to 100 guests. A larger trailer will be needed for more guests.

**Tented Outdoor Reception**

The Atlanta History Center Private Events team discourages the use of a tent for an outdoor reception. Almost all our outdoor receptions are open-air to see all the grandeur of the Swan House and the night sky. When a tent is erected, you are no longer outside, you are in a tent and the full allure of the Swan House is unfortunately obstructed.  Tents also do not serve as rain plans.  With electrical cords and support staff working outside the tent, if it is raining and/or lightening, for the safety of guests and staff, everyone will need to move into the ballroom.

There are some couples however who love the look and feel of being under a classic white or modern clear tent on their wedding day.

Tenting Guidelines

* A fee of $6,500.00 is required to set up a tent on the Swan column side or the parking lot next to Swan House. This fee includes up to 24 hours of set up and breakdown time (of tent, lighting, and decor in the area the tent is) on the day before and the day after the event. Additional hours are available at $300.00 each if needed. This does not include any additional hours of setup on the day of the event (billed separately). This also includes the black Model T being removed.
* Tents must be rented from Atlanta Party Rentals and can range from about $35,000 to $45,000. Furniture must come from the same company. The lighting must come from one of our AV vendors.
* Tents must be broken down and completely cleared by 1:00pm the day after the event. Overnight breakdown of tents after an event is not allowed. If the tent fee is not included in the original contract, the events department must approve setup and breakdown schedules 30 days prior to your event. We do not guarantee the day before or after for setup and breakdown, until the reservation is confirmed and this fee is paid.

**Wedding Planner**

While we recommend a planner from our preferred list for any wedding, it is most important to select a preferred wedding planner who has coordinated an outdoor reception in the Swan House Gardens if this is your desire. It is significantly more work than an indoor reception and having someone who has successfully executed it before will give you peace of mind and be to everyone’s advantage.

**Minimum Cost Difference for an Outdoor Reception**

With the added expense of all furniture and lighting needed to be rented, additional costs for catering, additional hours, a restroom trailer, etc. our wedding couples can expect to spend at a minimum $10,000 more for an outdoor vs. indoor reception.

**Inside, outside, under a tent or stars - we will work with you and**

**your vendor team to be sure your wedding day is a dream come true!**