

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR PRIVATE EVENTS AT THE GARDEN AT ELM BANK



There are so many moving parts, imperative details and checklist items that go into creating the most flawless event experience possible. These FAQ's will hopefully assist throughout the planning process to ensure that your special celebration is planned and executed flawlessly! Are we missing something? Please tell us so we can continue to revise this list to be a great resource for all our present and future clients!

General Questions

Q: Can we do our engagement pictures on the property?

A: Absolutely! If you have your wedding secured with us - we waive our photography fee. If you do not yet have an event secured, please [visit our website, here!](#)

Q: Do you permit dogs on-site for weddings?

A: We gladly allow your furry friend to join you for your wedding in the gardens! Well-behaved pups are permitted for portions of the event taking place outside, including photography and ceremony. Pups must always be on a five-foot lead; retractable leashes are not permitted. They must have a designated caretaker ensuring they are not in garden beds or digging anywhere on-site. They must be always picked up after. Reach out to our friends at [Doggy Dates](#) if you need someone to pick up your pup and keep them for the night!

Q: Who is my primary contact throughout the planning process from The Garden at Elm Bank?

A: At your time of booking, you will work with one of our designated Event Sales Associates. They will remain as your primary contact until about 6 months prior to your event. As your event approaches, you will be introduced to one of our Event Producers who will then help step in to coordinate final logistics, your on-site walkthrough and develop your Banquet Event Order to share with your Event Manager who will be on-site the day of the event.

Q: What does the Event Manager from The Garden at Elm Bank do during my event?

A: Your Event Manager from The Garden at Elm Bank will have a variety of responsibilities which are specific to the safety and security of the property, and your guests. I have listed some of their many duties here for you!

- Unlock and monitor all gates. Monitor the site.
- Receive and welcome all vendors (catering, entertainment, florals, bakery, alcohol, ice, etc.)
- Open and get the bridal party rooms ready for arrival.
- Troubleshoot and support vendors with access, unloading, and setup.
- Enforce visitor policies when closing to the public at 5 PM
- Operate the golf cart for photos, bridal party, handicap, and elderly guests.
- Assist and answer questions guests may have.
- Welcome and guide guests to different areas of the property.

- Once all guests have settled into the Hunnewell Building for dinner and dancing, the on-site staff members will clear the Education Center rooms, so all bridal party belongings are safe and accessible within the Hunnewell Building.
- Ensure the buildings and grounds are cleaned up and inspected once all guests are inside and out of the gardens.
- Support catering and other vendors throughout the execution of entire event.
- Monitor breakdown, cleanup and inspection of the buildings and grounds once the event is complete.
- Lock all gates, securing buildings, and final inspections that the site is cleared, safe and secure.

Q: Do you offer coordination or event planning in-house?

A: Unfortunately, we do not however we do have an amazing list of trusted vendors we're happy to recommend for you! A day-of coordinator's responsibilities would be more in line with taking care of your specific needs throughout the evening – think of it as a personal assistant who's entirely focused on YOU. This can include detailing, décor, enforcing the timeline, working with the photographer to ensure all requested photos are done, coordinate with entertainment for introductions, toasts, dances, etc.

Q: When a planner is required?

A: The only time a planner is required is when you are hosting a custom, tented reception in the Maple Grove. This is due to the many complicated logistics required throughout the planning process, and during the installation, event, and breakdown times.

Buildings & Gardens

Q: What is the maximum capacity for the Hunnewell Building?

A: The Hunnewell Building alone can accommodate up to 150 guests for a seated dinner with dancing, or a standing reception up to 200. If you are using the attached tent (included in all Peak and Shoulder Season Dates), the Hunnewell Building can accommodate up to 230 for a seated reception with dancing, and 400 for standing reception.

Q: Is the tent attached to the Hunnewell Building heated or air conditioned?

A: The tent does not include heating or air conditioning however we do work with companies that can provide these services for you. If having heaters brought in, a permit must be obtained from the Dover Fire Department and a staff member from the rental company must always supervise the equipment.

Q: What is included in the rental of the Hunnewell Building?

A: Below is our current inventory as of March 2023:

27 - 60" Rounds

7 - 6' x 30" Rectangular Tables

24 - 8' x 30" Rectangular Tables

230 - Chocolate Chiavari Chairs with matching cushion

Q: Is the property handicapped accessible?

A: Yes! Each of our buildings are equipped with ramps and separate handicap-accessible restrooms. The garden spaces we utilize most often are either paved, compressed stone dust or low-grade grass.

Q: Is a dance floor included in the rental fee?

A: No, it is not. In-house we do offer a portable, 20' x 20', mahogany vinyl dance floor that can be placed in either the main hall of the Hunnewell Building, or the attached tent. The rental of our dance floor is \$1,000. If dancing in the Hunnewell Building, a dance floor is required over the carpet. There are many different options for various sizes and styles that our rental partners can certainly provide at a separate cost.

Q: Is there a golf cart available to transport my elderly or handicapped guests?

A: Yes, your on-site Event Manager from The Garden at Elm Bank will operate a golf cart throughout the duration of the event. This can absolutely be utilized to transport guests to and from the gardens and parking areas.

Q: Is there lighting in the gardens?

A: We do provide beautiful bistro lights on shepherd's hooks between the Hunnewell Building and the entrance to the Education Center. Upgraded and custom lighting designs can be provided by one of our preferred lighting companies. Please ask your Sales Associate or Event Producer for more information!

Q: Can glassware be used in the gardens?

A: There is no glassware permitted in the gardens. If having a tented reception in the Maple Grove, glassware may be used but must remain within the tent.

Q: Peonies are my favorite flowers, when can I find out when they're in bloom?

A: Although we don't have a detailed guide for our property. Please follow [this link](#) to a great New England Guide for what is in bloom at various times of year!

Q: How many garden chairs are included for my garden ceremony?

A: We have 230 resin, folding white garden chairs for ceremony in gardens.

Q: Can my bridal attendants toss flower petals?

A: Unfortunately, no rice, confetti or flower petals may be thrown in the gardens or buildings. Birdseed may be thrown, or bubbles may be used, outside only. Helium balloons are not encouraged and must be weighted down.

Q: Do you allow balloon or lantern releases in the gardens?

A: We do not allow balloon or lantern releases on the property, I'm sorry.

Q: Is there electricity in the gardens?

A: Yes, there is! All our gardens except for the Bressingham Garden are equipped with electricity ample for sound systems, musicians, or minor specialty lighting. We always recommend vendors to bring extension cords, or battery-operated equipment if they have requests for placement in the gardens.

Q: Are generators required in the gardens?

A: For most events on-site, generators are not needed however this will vary based on the needs of your vendors. For tented events in the Maple Grove, generators are highly recommended to ensure plenty of electricity for all vendors including catering, lighting, entertainment, etc.

Q: Are there restrooms in the gardens?

A: The closest restrooms once guests are in the gardens, are located on the first floor of the Education Center. Aside from that building, there are also restrooms located in the Hunnewell Building. There are five stalls in the ladies' room, two stalls and three urinals in the men's room, and a separate handicap-accessible restroom as well.

Q: Is their signage the day of the event that can direct guests to the parking areas?

A: Yes, we provide signage that will direct your guests from the entrance bridge to the main garden parking area. You are also welcome to bring your own personalized signage if you prefer! Please note we do not allow balloons or décor to be affixed to our event signage.

Q: What happens if it rains the day of my event?

A: A thorough inclement weather plan is always created with your caterer and vendors at your final walkthrough and we make the final decision the day of the event.

Q: Are there any chemical bug sprays or pesticides used on the property?

A: No, we do not use any sprays or pesticides in the gardens due to the potential harm it may have on our plants. You are allowed to bring bug spray for your guests if you wish to.

Q: Can we cut / use flowers from the gardens as part of the event?

A: To ensure that everyone can enjoy the seasonal beauty of our property, flowers are not available to be picked or cut for use.

Décor, Design & Vendors

Q: Do I have to use a caterer on your Catering Collection?

A: Yes, we do have a closed list of 13 Full-Service Caterers that each event must work with.

Q: Do we have to work with Gordon's Fine Wine & Liquor for our alcohol?

A: Clients have two great options for the alcohol for their event! They can either opt to have alcohol provided by their caterer if their caterer has an active 12C license. If their caterer does not have a 12C license, Gordon's Fine Wine & Liquor must provide all alcoholic beverages.

Q: Where can I order linens and rental items from?

A: Linens, tableware, barware, and custom furniture will all be managed by the caterer that you chose to work with. Each of our exclusive caterers are required to manage your rental coordination to streamline that major element of the planning process for you.

Q: Where can my caterer setup outside for cocktail hour?

A: There are several designated areas on the property where caterers can setup prep areas for cocktail hour. This will be dependent on the location of your cocktail hour and be discussed at your final walkthrough.

Q: Are there candle restrictions on the property?

A: Any candles used on-site must be of tea light or votive size. The flame and one inch above the flame must be enclosed in glass at all times. Any size larger than a votive must be battery-operated.

Q: Who is responsible for obtaining a liquor permit?

A: Your caterer is responsible for obtaining a liquor permit through the Town of Dover. They will also provide MHS with proof of insurance and TIPS certification. This is a requirement of each of our exclusive caterers.

Q: Do you have exclusive tenting companies that we must work with?

A: Yes, we work exclusively with [Sperry Tents](#), [Atent for Rent](#), and [PEAK Event Services](#). For more information about their tent styles, pricing, availability, and more – please visit their websites above.

Q: Do I have to select all my vendors from The Garden at Elm Bank's Vendor Collection?

A: No. You are not required to use vendors from our [Vendor Collection](#) however we highly recommend that you do as they are more familiar with the property, and come with glowing reviews from our previous clients! There are no fees to go off-list for these vendors. Our exclusive categories are our caterers, liquor supplier, and tent companies.

Q: Are sparklers or fireworks allowed on-site?

A: Unfortunately, we cannot permit the use of sparklers, fireworks, or any type of pyrotechnic.

Q: Is it possible to share décor and rentals with other clients for the Hunnewell Building?

A: Of course! With permission, we can connect you with clients who may be having an event directly before or after yours. You will work directly with them as well as your / their vendors to coordinate. This is especially common with alternative lighting designs, custom flooring, or upgraded tables and chairs.

Q: Are there any restrictions for décor in the Hunnewell Building or Attached Tent?

A: Yes, we ask that nothing be taped, pinned, or stuck on the walls. Doing so may require additional charges for repair after your event. Confetti is not permitted. Candy bar(s) and candy centerpieces are not permitted.

Q: What lighting is included in my reception rental for the Hunnewell Building?

A: Overhead in the Hunnewell Building, there are five runs of elegant, white draping with simple, glowing bistro lights running between each drape. These dimmable bistro lights will allow the space to transform from lively and bright during dinner service to dim and dreamy as guests hit the dance floor! These beautiful bistro lights are also carried out to the attached tent and courtyard area.

Q: Can we decorate the trusses in the Hunnewell Building on our own?

A: We do not allow clients to bring in their own décor for the trusses of the Hunnewell Building. An insured and licensed lighting professional, such as one of our [preferred companies](#), must do any work in the trusses due to their height. If machinery is being brought on-site, please have your vendor contact your Sales Associate or Event Producer for special coordination including proof of insurance and liability.

Q: Are there any restrictions for décor outside?

A: Yes. We do not permit any décor to be hung from any trees or plants in any of the gardens unless installed by one of our professional and insured [lighting partners](#).

Q: Can we have bands and live musicians on the property?

A: Absolutely!

Q: Can Chuppahs, Mandaps, or arbors of any kind be brought in for the ceremony?

A: If specialty items are brought in such as chuppahs or staging, this will need to be coordinated with your Event Producer to ensure that delivery, installation, and breakdown of these structures is within our designated time windows. We highly recommend these items be provided by your florist and installed immediately before the ceremony and then taken down immediately thereafter.

Q: Are there transportation limitations for the property?

A: The bridge to enter Elm Bank Reservation has a 12-ton (24,000 lbs) weight restriction. Vehicles cannot exceed this weight limit and there is not an alternate route into the property. Typically, these are vehicles that are 30 passengers and under though each company has different options in their fleet. Our recommendations for transportation companies are [Knights Limousine Service](#), [A & A Metro Transportation](#), and [Local Motion of Boston](#).

Timing

Q: How much time do I have included in my rental?

A: This timing will always be detailed in your contract. Vendor arrival times begin 3 hours prior to event start time. During that 3-hour window, bridal parties are also permitted to access the Education Center for staging and photography. From there, you have five hours of designated event time and one hour for breakdown, cleanup, and removal of personal items. If you're hosting an on-site ceremony, our Ceremony Fee extends timing by an additional half hour.

Q: Are there multiple events on the property at the same time?

A: We pride ourselves in offering exclusive rentals for The Hunnewell Building and the Maple Grove spaces. Smaller professional rentals such as classrooms in The Education Center or The Putnam Buildings may overlap with other groups on-site because these spaces have a maximum of 40 guests.

Q: When do the gardens close the public?

A: Please [visit our website](#) for open hours as they will vary based on the day of the week. Exclusivity for private events on the property begins at 5:00 PM unless noted otherwise in your individual contract.

Q: When can I begin photography on property? Is there a place to leave our belongings while out in the gardens?

A: Access for both vendors and bridal party begins 3 hours prior to the ceremony. At that time, the Dearborn and Cheney Rooms in the Education Center are reserved for bridal parties to store personal items and relax between photography and the start of the event.

Q: Is it an option to add more time to a rental for dancing, or an extended cocktail reception?

A: Of course! We offer timing extensions in 30-minute increments which can be perfect for a ceremony that may need longer than 30 minutes, an extended cocktail reception, or more time at the end of the night for dancing! Please inquire with your Sales Associate or Event Producer if you're considering adding this in so we can confirm availability and the rate for your specific date.

Q: Is there a curfew on the property?

A: Yes, on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sunday's events and entertainment can take place until 11:30 PM. Monday – Thursday events must end by 10:30 PM.

Q: I have a vendor that needs to access the site more than 3 hours prior to the start of the event. Is this possible?

A: Just like extending timing for a portion of the event, we can factor in additional 30-minute increments for any install or breakdown needed beyond our standard 3-Hour Setup, and 1-Hour Breakdown windows. Please inquire with your Sales Associate or Event Producer as far in advance as possible if you're considering adding this in so we can confirm availability and the rate for your specific date. Time changes are subject to approval and can be added up to 30 days prior to the event. This time includes but is not limited to, time for vendor arrivals, deliveries, setup, installations, bridal party, personal, or vendor access, pickups, or breakdown. Final rate is based on the function date and time needed.

Q: When can my rehearsal take place on-site?

A: Please inquire with your Sales Associate or Event Producer for ceremony rehearsal availability. Rehearsal times are established based on our event schedule and property availability.

Tenting on the Property

Q: Do you have exclusive tenting companies that we must work with?

A: Yes, we work exclusively with [Sperry Tents](#), [Atent for Rent](#), and [PEAK Event Services](#). For more information about their tent styles, pricing, availability, and more – please visit their websites above.

Q: What are some things to consider when having a tented reception in the Maple Grove?

A: With tented receptions in the Maple Grove, special coordination is always required. The tent, tables, chairs, flooring, HVAC, and all additional rentals are to be coordinated through a rental company. Inventory from the Hunnewell Building **cannot** be brought outside. Tent companies must have a thorough understanding of irrigation lines that run through the Maple Grove as not to cause unintentional damage to the property. Electrical access in the Maple Grove is limited; please work with the property to ensure the proper electricity is available for your tent or if generators may be needed.

Q: Does the Garden at Elm Bank have specific tenting considerations?

A: We certainly do! Please see below!

- The Garden at Elm Bank requires a tenting fee of \$1,000 in addition to the rental rate and ceremony fee.
- We can only permit one tented event/installation per weekend due the demanding timeline and toll that it takes on our grounds. If there is already a tented event contracted for an adjacent day for your event, it is not guaranteed you can host a tented event.
- Tents must be installed on the day of the event from 6:00 AM – 10:00 AM and must be taken down the following morning during the same window. Rentals must be delivered and picked up in the same window as well by one of our exclusive rental partners.
- All rentals including tables and chairs must be brought in by the client as the items in the Hunnewell Building are not to be used out in the Maple Grove. The caterer will not have access to the Hunnewell prep kitchen, and a catering tent must be provided by the caterer or Tent Company.
- A generator might also be needed depending on the electric needs of your event and vendors.
- An event planner is required when hosting a tented event due to the additional logistics and coordination for a successful tented event!

Q: Can I switch my reception plans from the Hunnewell Building to a tent in the Maple Grove?

A: You will need to be in touch with your Sales Associate or Event Producer to ensure availability of switching from the Hunnewell Building to a tented reception in the Maple Grove however it is unlikely because your timing is set when contracting.

Q: Can stakes be used on the property for tents?

A: Stakes are required on grass surfaces however placement of these is mapped out according to our irrigation lines. Weighted barrels must be utilized when tents are being placed on paved surfaces.

Billings, Payments & Contract

Q: What is the payment schedule?

A: Detailed terms are outlined in your individual contract. At the time of contract, a 50% non-refundable deposit is due. This including your Ceremony Fee, Reception Rental, as well as staffing, membership, and any additional time or rentals you wish to include at the time of booking. 90 days prior to the event, another 25% is due, and 30 days prior, the final 25% is due.

Q: Do you accept credit cards?

A: For all initial bookings and deposits, these must be paid via Check, ACH Bank Transfer or Cash. For 90- and 30-day payments, these may be applied to a Visa, MasterCard, or Discover card. We do not accept American Express. A valid credit card must be on file at the time of the final payment for incidentals, overtime charges, or damage to the property.

Q: When does my membership to Massachusetts Horticultural Society become active?

A: Your Dual Level Membership to Massachusetts Horticultural Society will become active once your contract and deposit have been received and processed.

Q: What if my membership expires before my wedding/ event date?

A: You are not required to renew your membership; however, we encourage that you do and sincerely appreciate your support of Massachusetts Horticultural Society.

Q: Is my rental rate tax deductible?

A: Your membership and any additional donations to Massachusetts Horticultural Society are tax deductible however your ceremony and reception rental, or additional timing and rentals are not.

Q: Do you have any administrative fees? Require gratuities?

A: We do require a minimal 5% administrative fee for all events on the property. We do not require any tipping or gratuities for our staff.