

Weddings and Events at The North Carolina Arboretum

FAQs: COVID-19

This is a compiled list of frequently asked questions from clients regarding the effects that current State and County mandated Covid-19 policies may have on their event.

This information is provided with the intention of assisting our clients with event planning during this challenging time. Any and all information is subject to change without notice.

Will the gathering limit apply to my event guest count?

Yes, clients must adhere to all up to date gathering limits and plan their guest count accordingly. Although Governor Cooper's Executive Orders offer exceptions for wedding ceremonies, the North Carolina Arboretum (TNCA) is adhering strictly to gathering limits for all booked events. Arboretum event staff will do their best to assist clients in navigating gathering restrictions as they are announced.

Current Gathering Limits per Executive Order 204 issued March 23, 2021

Outdoor Gathering limit is 100

Indoor Gathering limit is 50 persons, seated except to move to restrooms, buffet, etc.

Please consult with Arboretum event staff before increasing your guest count. While outdoor gathering limits have increased, rain plan availability will impact the total number of guests who can be accommodated.

Who must be included in the guest count?

The guest count, as it relates to gathering limits, should be inclusive of the wedding party, guests (including children), and vendors that are part of the core of the event/will be with the main group for the majority of the event. This includes: officiant, DJ, band, photographer(s), videographer(s), coordinator(s). We are not requiring that the setup staff, venue coordinator, or banquet/beverage service staff be included in the total count as they will primarily operate separate from the main group.

Note: Please refer to your booking agreement or check in with your Venue Coordinator for guidance on official guest count considerations and deadlines regarding alcohol service and setup needs.

Will layouts be socially distanced?

Yes, the Venue Coordinator will work with clients and external coordinators to create socially distanced layouts for ceremonies, cocktail hours, and receptions. Current gathering limits and distancing guidelines will be incorporated.

Do my guests and vendors need to wear masks?

Face coverings are mandatory inside buildings and facilities. All event guests and clients must wear face coverings anytime they enter a building. It is suggested that clients provide face coverings for guests.

The North Carolina Arboretum is requiring vendors to wear a face covering indoors and outdoors throughout the duration of the event while also practicing social distancing to ensure safety for guests and staff members.

Are buffet style meals permitted?

Self-serve buffets and family style meals are strongly discouraged due to the high contact with serving utensils. Buffets that are manned by catering staff are permitted, however, catering staff must plate and serve all food. Plated service or food truck window service is recommended to decrease the risk of potentially spreading the virus or other contaminants.

What happens if it rains and the guest count is over the indoor gathering limits?

Currently, the indoor gathering limit is set at 50 and all guests must be seated for the duration of indoor events. These limitations effectively exclude cocktail hours and wedding receptions from being hosted indoors at this time.

In order to offer our clients a rain plan that allows for celebration within the current guidelines, Arboretum event staff have identified a covered outdoor area that can be used as a rain plan for upcoming events. This location is optimal for up to 50 guests, but should be able to accommodate up to 75. Seating arrangement options will be limited with higher guest counts.

Ceremony-only bookings and receptions under 50 guests that will not include a cocktail hour or DJ may be able to utilize our traditional indoor rain plan location.

We expect guidelines to continue evolving and encourage our clients to revisit rain plan discussions within a month of their event date.

What happens if we wish to reschedule due to the restrictions?

Updated *reschedule* policy, applicable to events scheduled through October 2021: Events may be rescheduled (subject to availability) without penalty with at least two weeks written notice. Weddings rescheduled with less than two weeks notice will be subject to a \$500 change fee.

A new booking agreement must be signed for the selected reschedule date. The North Carolina Arboretum will honor usage fee pricing for the original date, but any and all updated policies and procedures outlined in the new booking agreements will apply, including reschedule and cancellation procedures.

Updated *cancellation* policy, applicable to events scheduled through October 2021: If an event is cancelled at least six (6) weeks or more prior to the scheduled event date: All fees and deposits paid will be refunded. If an event is cancelled less than six (6) weeks prior to the scheduled event date: all fees and deposits are non-refundable.

Is there a discount if my guest count is limited due to the gathering restrictions?

While we understand that the gathering limits may have changed the nature of upcoming events for our clients, our rate structure is not based on the number of attendees. Usage fees for weddings are the same whether the event is 25 or 150 guests.

Can I switch from a full wedding to an elopement package?

Yes, one option that we offer for couples who are looking for a simpler event is our elopement package. The Venue Coordinator would be happy to review that format with you and if it seems like a better fit, we will apply your deposit to that fee and offer a refund of the difference.