

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a white off-the-shoulder wedding dress with a beaded waistband, stands on a balcony. She is holding a single pink rose. The balcony has a white balustrade and is decorated with hanging purple wisteria flowers and greenery. A large terracotta pot with pink flowers sits on the balcony floor. The background shows a lush green garden.

SPRING BRIDES

Spring Bridal Showers

The spring is the most popular time of year for weddings for a number of reasons. The weather gives you options not available during the potentially hot summer months or unpredictable winter and fall.

For the most part, you can count on spring's mild temperatures and its steady weather patterns — especially in late spring.

The spring also gives you flexibility when it comes to planning a bridal shower. Friends of the bride have long put their heads together to pull off a memorable shower experience that all involved parties remember for years to come.

Here are some of the most important things to remember when throwing a shower:

- Decide on a date that is ideal for all attendees — usually a weekend day when getting off of work isn't an issue.

- Choose your venue and make sure you book it months ahead of time.

There's nothing worse than having to go to your backup plan just because you didn't plan ahead.

- Plan (and stick to) your budget. Set a budget for the entire event and make sure you follow it during both the planning and execution phases. Your fellow bridesmaids will likely pitch in to help you avoid over-spending on this special event.

SHOWER IDEAS

Below are some ideas for what kinds of spring bridal showers you can plan for your friend or family member. Don't forget to incorporate the bride's likes

and dislikes into the festivities. For example, if the outdoors isn't really her thing, a daylong event filled with lawn games probably isn't your best bet. Be creative, be practical and most of all be fun.

SPA PARTY

A spa bridal shower is a great way to relax the bride during this anxious time. Consider booking your local spa or hiring a couple of professionals to come to you. A DIY spa station could include a massage table, a facial space and a mani-pedi seat. Be sure to play relaxing music and deck your place out with soothing decorations.

FOOD PARTY

What bride doesn't love food — especially healthy food to help her stay trim and fit for her special day? Set up a food-themed party to let your guests indulge on deli sandwiches, cheese and crackers, vegetables and fruit salads.

PERFUME BAR

If your venue allows it, a perfume bar is a unique addition to your bridal shower. This is a great complement to a spa location.

Ask the company's management if they would permit you to put together a table area full of perfumes for sampling throughout the shower.



Lawn Games

Let's face it. You want your wedding to be the most amazing experience in the history of weddings. The entertainment of your guests is paramount to you, and you'll do anything to make sure they're having the time of their lives.

Lawn games let your guests wind down after your formal ceremony. They also make for great conversation and friendly competition that bring out the best in your friends and family members.

Lawn games are not only fun but inexpensive, as well. You can even build them yourself. Decide which lawn games you're hoping to incorporate and head to the hardware store for lumber and other necessities.

Some of the most popular lawn games include bags, Frisbee golf and lawn darts. Make your own scoring systems and rules to make things more interesting. Here are a few more ideas:

HORSESHOES

Horseshoes is a time-tested lawn game perfect for all ages. Minimal equipment is needed for setup, making it the perfect DIY lawn game for your reception.

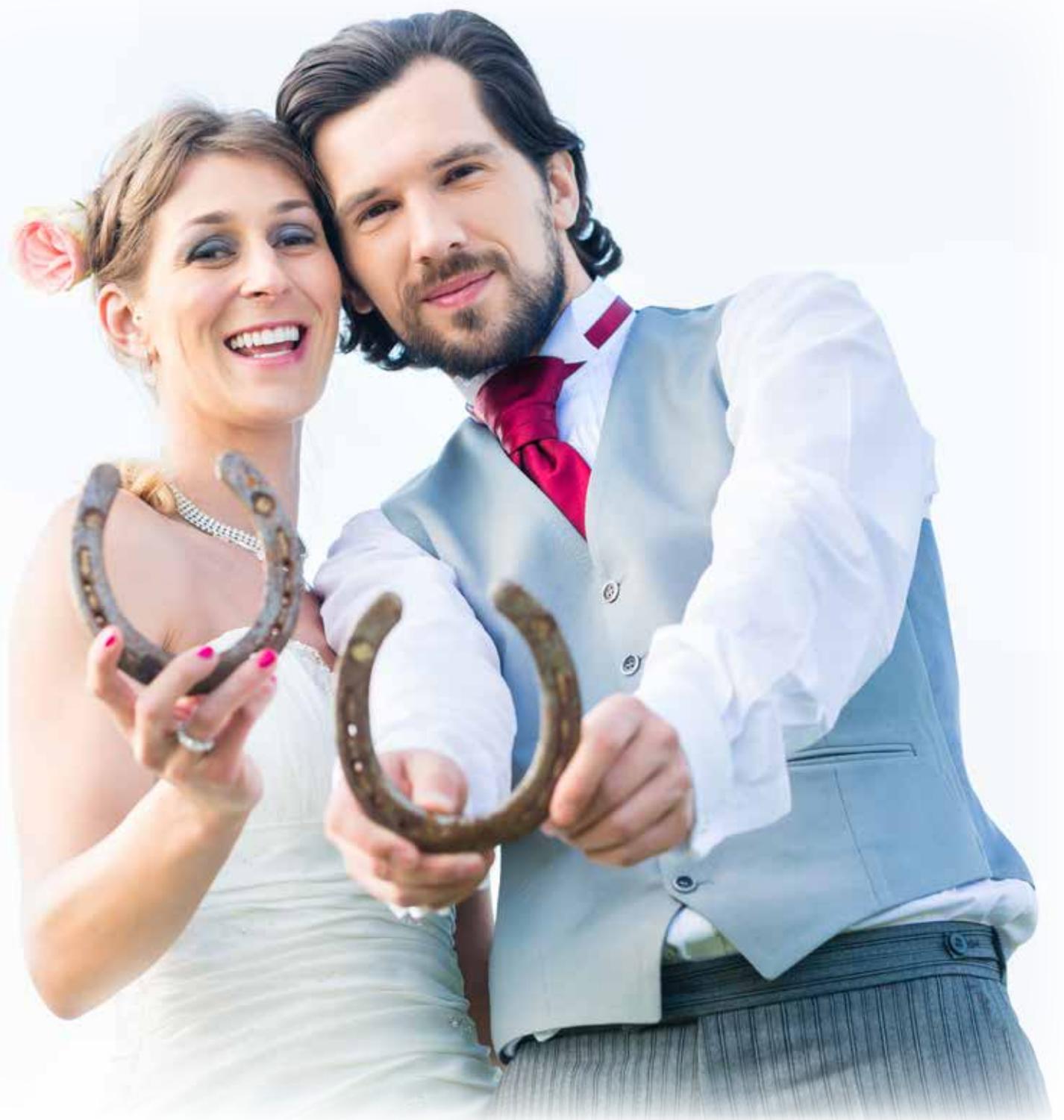
You can likely find a horseshoe set at your local hardware or toy store. Or you could make your own by purchasing a few steel rebar rods about 1 inch thick and getting your hands on some actual horseshoes. Check in with family members who have horses or even your local horse veterinarian to see if they have any extras lying around.

You'll have a legitimate horseshoe lawn game set up in no time.

FOR THE KIDS

Let's say you plan on having four or five lawn games set up for the adults at your reception. This is a good number that allows rotation between games and includes plenty of guests in the fun.

But what about the kids? Children's lawn games can include pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey, potato sack races or simply smaller versions of the adult games you have set up. Whatever you choose, be sure to assign someone to supervise the activity to ensure optimal safety.



Add Hanging Decor

From flowers and lanterns to everything in between, hanging decorations can add a special touch to any church, hall or reception area. The best part is that you can find — or make — a hanging decoration to match any theme.

Consider the space you have to work with when coming up with hanging decor ideas. If your banquet hall is on the large side, it may be difficult to make enough pieces to fill it. On the other hand, you don't want to overwhelm a small, cozy room with too many materials hanging from the ceiling. Find a balance to pull off the perfect look.

FLOWERS

Fresh or dried flowers make for the perfect touch suspended upside down from the ceiling. They provide vibrant colors and distinctive smells, perfect for an entryway or spaces between tables.

Mix them with ribbons, strings and other garnishes to make them even more attention-grabbing. A colorful mix of flowers and ribbon can help you pull off the perfect soft design complement to nearly any theme.

HANGING BACKDROPS

If you're looking for a stunning yet practical backdrop for reception photos, consider hanging a backdrop made of a combination of paper cut-outs and other special touches that complement the color of your wedding.

You'll enjoy seeing guests flock to capture their own



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memories of your wedding in front of your spectacularly designed backdrop.

CHECK OUT BRIDAL FAIRS

The greatest benefits of

attending a spring bridal fair involves being able to ask professionals what they can offer in the way of your unique wedding wishes. If you have an idea for a hang-

ing decoration that you haven't seen at weddings in the past, you can find out the possibilities of pulling it off by asking a designer or planner at a bridal fair.

They also may come up with additional ideas that you hadn't considered. This kind of collaboration is key in exploring all options for your perfect hanging decor.

Wedding Party Bonding

Coming up with the final roster of wedding party participants can seem like one of the biggest chores of planning your wedding.

You don't want to leave out anyone, and you also want to pair the right groomsman with the right bridesmaid to match your vision for photos.

Once you select your party, it's up to you to help them form a bond ahead of your wedding. That way everything from the rehearsal to the reception can go that much smoother. You want your wedding party feeling relaxed and able to have a good time, so do your best to bring them together.

Ways to do so can range from throwing a party at your home or inviting everyone out for a fun evening on the town. Whatever you decide, be sure to include everyone to make sure you create the strongest bond possible.

HIT THE WATER

The springtime provides beautiful weather for outdoor activities. Take advantage by inviting your wedding party out for a day of fishing, boating, swimming or lounging. If you have a local marina, consider renting jet skis or large rafts for the afternoon and spend the day getting to know each other in the water.

You also could choose to simply spend the day at the pool. What's more relaxing than laying poolside with a cool drink in your hand? The laid-back atmosphere is perfect for fostering communication between those in your wedding party.

PLAY SPORTS

One of the best ways to build a bond is through a little friendly com-



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petition. Set up a half-day of fun on your local golf course, your local bowling alley or even your local paint gun range.

Make sure everyone can attend well ahead of time and consider splitting teams strategically, so people outside of your normal social circle can easily

get to know those who aren't. Your wedding party will appreciate your efforts in trying to bring everyone together before the big day.

Choosing Performers

Music is one of the most important parts of any wedding celebration. Finding the perfect musical act or DJ can be a frustrating exercise if you're not prepared for the search.

Before deciding on your final choice for music, make sure to ask some basic questions — along with any others specific to your wedding — to make sure you find the one most aligned with your nuptial needs.

Do you perform original music or play cover songs?

This is a question for a band you are consider hiring. You want to make sure their musical preferences match what you're looking for. Weddings are generally an atmosphere where cover bands may be a better fit, but this is up to you.

What is your price range, and can I get a quote on paper?

Making sure you have a written quote will help resolve any confusion come payment time.

How many weddings have you performed for in the past couple of years?

This answer may be one of the most important, as you want to make sure the company is experienced and up to the challenge.

Will you be providing the equipment and song list? Can you take requests?

A “no” answer to any of these questions could lead to more work for you as you try to coordinate what will be played during your ceremony.



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Do you only play one event per day?

You want to make sure you have the full attention of the musical act or DJ during your wedding.

Are you easy to get in touch with if I have questions throughout the music planning process?

A good musical act or DJ will surely answer “yes.” A

good follow-up question is for a list of references just to make sure you can conduct a little follow-up research.

Do you also do announcements?

It's a great bonus to have your wedding band or DJ make announcements throughout the night. That's one less thing for you to worry about.

Go Green for Your Big Day

A new wave of brides and grooms are redefining the way weddings are planned and executed — and the environment is at the forefront of their efforts.

According to a poll by the Clinton Global Initiative and Microsoft, 66 percent of millennials believe there is solid evidence of global warming, and about 75 percent say it is because of human activity.

In turn, these environmental advocates are taking action by planning weddings that rely less on disposable products and fossil fuels and more on sustainable practices that can lead to a healthier environment.

Follow our suggestions below to integrate a little of this approach into your spring wedding.

CHOOSE EARTH-FRIENDLY VENDORS

One of the most meaningful steps you can take is to enlist the services of Earth-friendly vendors. These businesses are committed to following environmentally sound processes when producing and delivering their products, which can range from paper flower bouquets to sustainable invitations.

There are card companies that print their materials on 100 percent post-consumer recycled paper or alternative non-tree fibers. Some businesses pledge to plant a tree for every order you make with them. Knowing you had a posi-



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tive impact on the environment in your wedding planning will give you that extra feeling of satisfaction.

CHOOSE LOCAL VENUES

The less distance you put between your church and reception hall, the less pollution you are inviting into the atmosphere through the burning of gasoline in the vehicles

of your wedding party.

This seems like a small step, but consider how many cars will be traveling around town on the day of your wedding. Inviting 200 guests means you're probably also inviting 50 to 100 vehicles onto your community's roadways. That's a large carbon footprint you could lessen by keeping things confined to the same building

or ones that are close in proximity.

RECYCLE YOUR FLOWERS

Many companies across the country collect flowers after weddings and repurpose them for delivery to nursing homes and shelter facilities. By choosing to participate in such an arrangement, you are passing along some of the beauty of

your wedding to even more people around you.

These companies also keep your flowers out of landfills by composting them into usable materials for gardens and other uses.

Look around in your area for these types of services or offer to do it yourself in collaboration with your local nursing homes or shelters.

Tips for Perfect Nails

One of the finer details of the perfect wedding day look is in your nails.

You will be showing off your new wedding ring to all of your guests at the reception, so you want your nails to look their best.

As you know, the options for how to prepare and design your nails are endless. Choosing the right color of polish is just the beginning.

PREPARE YOUR NAILS

Since you know your nails will be near the center of attention when the focus is on your ring, start taking care of them months ahead of time. This means stop biting your nails and cuticles. It also means moisturize your hands often to get them ready to shine on your special day.

You can't expect a nail technician to be able to fix damage caused by improper care. This comes down your effort in maintaining healthy hands and nails today and beyond.

KNOW YOUR PREFERENCES

You probably already have a favorite nail look from past formal events you have attended, such as other wed-

dings or your prom. If it's not broken, don't fix it.

This day is all about you, so the more familiar you keep these kinds of details, the more relaxed you will feel throughout the day. There's nothing worse than experimenting with a new nail application only to find it makes your hands feel clunky and awkward when you want them to feel comfortable and natural.

HAVE A BACKUP PLAN

Nails break and paint chips. Will you be prepared if something like this happens on your wedding day? It's a good idea to keep extra bottles of polish in multiple locations.

If you will be sporting artificial nails, be sure to pack a repair kit comprised of extra nails, glue and other items that will enable you to make a quick fix in the case of a nail breaking.

Consider having one in the room where you will be preparing, as well as one in your purse or the purse of your bridesmaid — that way you'll be prepared to handle an emergency situation without stress.

