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Ethan and Katelynn Hunter had an 'elopement' wedding at the High Rock Lookout in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest.

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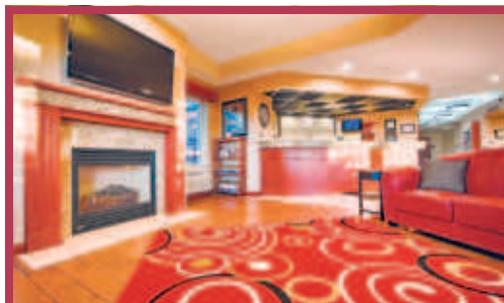
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Courtesy Photo / Benj Haisch

Ethan and Katelynn Hunter had an 'elopement' wedding at the High Rock Lookout in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest.

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ADVENTURE WEDDINGS: *More and More Couples Skip Tradition and Head to the Woods to Exchange Vows*

By **Alex Brown**

The Chronicle

On a clear autumn night in a few years ago, Cassi Spencer went on a run in Capitol State Forest with some friends. Part of that group was Craig Emerson, who Spencer had been getting to know during their regular runs with the Oly Trail Runners club. The two had been getting close, but had yet to discuss their feelings.

"I remember coming through a clear-cut on this night run under the harvest

moon," Spencer said. "I remember being very overwhelmed in this moment. ... I saw his silhouette in the moonlight, and I knew in that moment that he was someone I wanted to have in my life forever."

In October 2017, after the pair had been dating for awhile, they organized another run with the Oly Trail Runners, venturing to the same clearing on the Mima Falls Trail, once again under a harvest moon. When the group came around the corner, they found a small cluster of the couple's family and friends lingering by a stump, holding lanterns.

"Cassi and I have decided to get married," Emerson told their running buddies, "and you're all guests."

The unwitting wedding party may have been shocked, but they quickly got in the spirit.

"I remember hearing some gasps and

Continued on **PAGE 6**

Courtesy Photo / Benj Haisch

Ethan and Katelynn Hunter walk toward High Rock Lookout at their 'elopement' wedding in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest.



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Courtesy Photo / Benj Haisch

Ethan and Katelynn Hunter had an 'elopement' wedding at the High Rock Lookout in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest.

Continued from **PAGE 4**

some sounds of glee and excitement,” Spencer said. “Everyone stepped into formation, and they created this circle.”

Neither Spencer nor Emerson were very interested in a traditional wedding, and Spencer said that if they were to get married, she wanted it to be “sacred and personal.” After talking it over, the plan made sense. Who better to witness their commitment than the group that had fostered their relationship from the beginning?

“It was really special to have all the people there who had seen our relationship develop and who had shared this common interest and knew us as a couple the best,” Emerson said. “While it was unconventional, it was perfect.”

So there in the forest, in sweaty running clothes, Emerson’s hat on backward, shocked friends standing around, Spencer’s brother officiating from atop a stump, the couple said their vows.

“Once we came up the hill on the last switchback and the lanterns were glimmering, and all the people who have been a part of Craig and I’s friendship and our relationship — just to see their faces and the harvest moon, it was the most perfect moment ever,” Spencer said. “It felt like a dream.”

Thinking it was just a regular weeknight run, another member of the running club had posted earlier on the Facebook event, suggesting that the group gather for post-run beers at the Littlerock Saloon. So they did.

“Dave inadvertently planned our reception,” Emerson said.

The wedding reflected the couple’s shared passion, but it was also made special by the people who were there — even if they had no idea it was coming.

“Everyone wanted to share something about Craig and I,” Spencer said. “That setting allowed for everyone who was present to share a story. That’s probably what I treasure most.”

The couple lives in Tenino, and Emerson — who grew up in Morton — said looking back on the wedding only reinforces the way they approach life.

“The overarching thing that always

Continued on **PAGE 7**

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sticks out to me is how awesome it is to do things that are spontaneous and a little bit unknown,” he said. “I don’t think the best wedding planner could have designed a more perfect event.”

Emerson and Spencer are part of a growing number of people who choose to have their wedding in non-traditional places — and in Washington, that often means the forest or the mountains.

“The Pacific Northwest has become a destination for this kind of stuff,” said Benj Haisch, a Tacoma-based wedding photographer. “I end up having people from other parts of the country come out here.”

Haisch specializes in “elopement” weddings, where couples bring a small party to a special location — often a scenic vista — to hold their vows. It’s not the run-off-to-Vegas elopement most people envision, but a deliberate choice to avoid the logistical headaches and massive costs of a wedding in a traditional venue with a triple-digit guest list.

After growing up hiking and camping, Haisch had been disappointed when he found himself spending his summers shooting photos in churches in downtown Seattle. Surely, he thought, some people would want have their special moment amid Washington’s natural beauty.

In 2013, Haisch shot a couple who opted to get married on the stunning overlook from Rattlesnake Ridge in the Cascades. The photos went viral, and suddenly Haisch found himself booking more and more couples who wanted to go somewhere epic for their wedding.

Katelynn Hunter had seen Haisch’s work on Instagram, and when she and her fiancé Ethan began planning their wedding, she knew she wanted an elopement.

“I know how much planning and energy and money goes into (a traditional wedding),” she said. “I want this day to be what it’s supposed to be about — just me, you and God. I didn’t want any other distractions.”

It didn’t hurt that the couple share a love for the outdoors, so why not



Courtesy Photo / Madison Hystek

Continued on **PAGE 22**

Craig Emerson, left, and Cassi Spencer, right, got married with an impromptu ceremony on a trail run with a group of friends in Capitol State Forest.

Growing Seasons a Concern of the Past for Today's Bride

BOUQUET: *Many Flowers Are Now Available Year-Round*

By Megan Hansen

Nisqually Valley News

With the conveniences that come along with being a modern bride, the idea of having to choose flowers that are “in season” is a thing of the past.

“There’s only a few flowers we can’t get year-round,” said Heidi FitzGerald, of A Moment in Time Floral Design.

Most flowers are grown in greenhouses and with access to state wholesale companies, the possibilities for your bridal bouquet are endless all year long.

There’s nothing wrong with keeping your flower options local, just be prepared for the unknown and always have a backup plan.

“The problem with keeping things local is unpredictability and seasonality,” FitzGerald said.

There are some flowers that can make things more tricky than others. Not all flowers are created equal.

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Photo by Longnecker Photography

Bride Katelyn Lindberg holds her bouquet made by florist Heidi FitzGerald.

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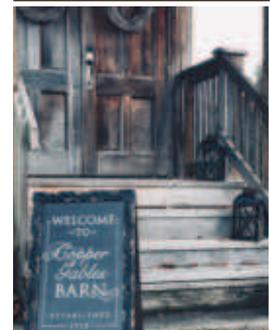
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Photos by Sarah Gonia

At left, floral arches can offer whimsical or dramatic effect to a wedding, but be prepared for a hefty price tag. At right, The small white flower shown in this bouquet is the wax flower, an example of a more modern filler flower that can be used instead of baby's breath.

Continued from **PAGE 8**

Dahlias, for example, can be a flower choice that may not be right for the particular bride.

"Dahlias have a very tight growing season," FitzGerald said. "And you don't know what the growing season will be like. Dahlias are beautiful in the garden, but

they're temperamental, they don't transport well and they don't like to be touched."

And for that budget-conscious bride, FitzGerald offers some tips and tricks to planning out your dream floral experience.

"Buying local does not equal less (cost)," FitzGerald said. "I'm all for both, they both have their place."

But she advises brides to have no more

than 25 percent of their flowers locally grown, especially if they're picky about their colors.

"Ideally a bride would come with a palette that's flexible," FitzGerald said. "Some colors are subjective. What's peach to me might not be peach to you. Peach can go from more of the pink end to a more orange color."

When meeting with a florist, FitzGerald advises the bride to always bring a fabric swatch because they're more accurate than a paint swatch.

According to brides.com, the average bride spends 8 percent of her wedding budget on flowers.

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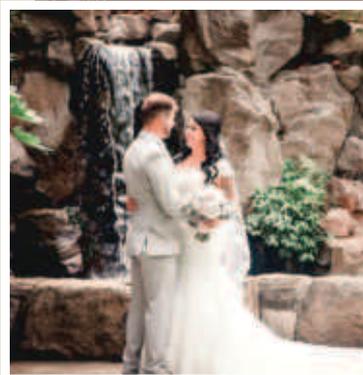


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Photos by Sarah Gonia

At left, succulents paired with roses and a variety of other textured flowers provide a unique reception display. At right, snow white peonies offer a clean and classic look to this winter wedding bouquet.

Continued from **PAGE 9**

When it comes to cost, flowers have also modernized in price. Wholesale companies have fine-tuned the industry to a point where the type of flowers have balance in cost and what people used to think were super expensive aren't anymore.

Roses for example, are now one of the least expensive flowers you can use, FitzGerald said.

Brides can also be more budget conscious by choosing larger flowers that will fill up a bouquet but require less quantity.

Garden roses for example, are double the price of a regular rose, but they are triple the size so you use less of them.

"They're a good use of your money and come in thousands of colors," FitzGerald said. "You can really utilize them.

Hydrangeas are a great way to add

volume, she added. "Those with roses are one of the least expensive bouquets you can do."

Another thing to watch out for that may surprise a bride is that adding a large number of filler flowers or greenery can add up.

The more flowers in a bouquet, the more texture it brings and makes the piece more interesting and beautiful, but it's more expensive, FitzGerald said. "It's a catch-22."

If you ask about "cheap" fillers you're going to get baby's breath and status, which are kind of overdone, FitzGerald said. Ask for "less expensive" and you'll be shown fillers like the wax flower.

Ultimately though, having your bridal flowers done by a professional is going to cost more than going to a warehouse or grocery store, as the bride is paying for the labor and design element.

FitzGerald recommends having a set budget prior to meeting with the florist.



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TRENDS: *From Venues, to Cakes to Fuzzy Special Guests, Couples Are Going All Natural in 2019*

by **Kaitlyn Baker**

The Reflector

Organic, locally sourced, farm to table, natural.

As opposed to what you may think, these phrases describe the oncoming 2019 wedding season, not the newest restaurant in town. In 2019, couples are bringing the outdoors in through foliage instead of florals, and llamas are quickly becoming the most-wanted mammal on the guest list.

Although the year is still young, wedding aficionados are already seeing a uniquely environmental approach take hold of these romantic affairs, throwing traditions out the door.

THINK PINK

Or to be more specific, think “Living Coral.” The 2018 wedding scene saw the bloom of “blush” through florals, linens and dresses, but with Pantone naming Living Coral as the color of the year, Matt Ferris with Elemental Events PDX out of Portland anticipates coral will make a bold entrance and liven up its softer pink counterpart. He also predicts its vibrancy will bleed into last year’s trendy pastels, deepening a smoky lavender into a rich eggplant purple and transforming dusty mints into saturated evergreens.

GILDED BURLAP

Where 2018 capitalized on burlap and doilies, 2019 is emboldening the rustic theme with metallic accents and

elevating it to rustic chic.

At the Clark County Wedding Expo in January, Couve Booth out of Vancouver featured a gold sequin backdrop for guest photos with Classy Camelids’ Rojo the llama; Country Garden Tables of Vancouver showcased gold chargers, chairs and geometric candle holders.

Not even food is safe from the Midas Touch as Nicole Tiffany at Mom & I Cakery out of Vancouver says orders are pouring in for rose gold and silver accented cakes and pastries.

Yes, metallic accents have been popular in the past, but trends tend to circle back, and now the reemergence of copper, bronze and iron are being used to highlight nature’s more glamorous elements. It’s the one component essential to obtain a rustic chic wedding, and acts as an eye-catching contrast for the rise of one of Mother Nature’s other elements: foliage.

PAMPAS PARTY

Succulents were the first step away from traditional floral centerpieces, but as a new year dawns couples are taking it a step further by incorporating foliage and grasses more often than blossoms.

Flowers will always have a special place in the wedding scene, but brides have found that adding foliage to bouquets and centerpieces is a cheaper way to bulk up arrangements while adding a natural, outdoors feel to their event. Eucalyptus bunches spread across family-style tables, pine needle crowns on perfectly coiffed curls, and altars and aisles adorned with pampas grass are not only showing up in arrangements, but in accessories as well.

More often than not, linens are being left behind as bare wooden



Keani Bakula Photography

Couples are taking advantage of affordable foliage and natural decor in 2019.

tables laden with foliage carry a heavier appeal towards the rustic chic trend, and crystal chandeliers, Swarovski or otherwise, are replaced with lanterns hung from vine-laced wires for a temporary Eden.

OPT OUTSIDE

Couples are also taking advantage of outdoor spaces, sometimes finding

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it easier to tie in the outdoor element if their event is simply held outside. Whereas rustic barns were trending in years past, venues framed with trees and shrubs such as wineries, natural parks and backyards are becoming more popular and allow for focus to be placed on more important aspects of planning such as food and alcohol.

One unexpected business that has indicated towards this trend is Luxury Restroom Trailers by Kasey Salvetti. Based out of Portland but serving all of the Pacific Northwest, Salvetti notes she doubles in clientele each year. As these weddings become increasingly rural there's a lack of running water, mirrors and soap dispensers. To keep these weddings "chic," couples are shelling out money they've saved on decorations for Salvetti's trailer restrooms, most of which come equipped with crown molding, picture-framed backlit mirrors and an actual toilet seat. She also has shower and changing trailers available for the situations in which facilities are

inconveniently absent.

Ferris points out that not all weddings are trending toward outdoor spaces. He's begun to see a number of weddings being booked at industrial warehouses and event spaces where brides benefit from surrounding metallic features such as iron piping or reclaimed wood flooring. In these darker themed venues, the addition of foliage and florals stand out from its manufactured frame and provide the romantic symbolism that nature and love will continue to grow even in desolate spaces.

FARM TO WEDDING

Couples genuinely want to celebrate these outdoor venues and features that have meaning to their partnership, so while location and decor still carry weight in first impressions, they've extended the theme into deeper aspects of their wedding.

Guest gifts used to range from

monogrammed glasses, personalized candies, and custom coasters, but newlyweds want to shower their guests with practical gifts that represent their special day but still carry use in the future. For destination weddings, native flower seeds bottled and topped off with a cork and love note are increasingly favored for they showcase the region of the venue and serve as a seasonal reminder in the garden of past celebrations. In the Pacific Northwest, where beer, wine and spirits are integral, samples from local distilleries or tiny jars of locally-sourced honey aged in bourbon barrels are trending treats.

Even regional herbs and berries, like Marionberries, are appearing more often in cocktails. Julie Rosequist, owner of Bottoms Up Bar & Events based out of Oregon, says couples are wanting more organic, fresh, and herbal components in their "his and her" handcrafted cocktails and opt for open bar experiences as opposed to cash bars.

Ferris even pointed out that the buffet trend is dying out and being replaced with family-style meals for a "breaking of bread feel." It's a change that's mirrored in what used to be a tradition left untampered — the wedding cake.

TREAT YO SELF

Brides were already beginning to grow weary of fondant if 2018's naked cake craze was anything to show for it. Naked cakes have yet to depart from the scene but are making less of a presence on the table as they decrease in size and act more as a decorative



Keani Bakula Photography

Prepare to snack on an array of cupcakes, donuts and macarons as dessert stations are becoming a popular fixture in the wedding scene.

centerpiece for stations laden with cupcakes, donuts and macarons instead.

Vancouver's Simply Sweets by Jen has noticed a surge in dessert bar and smaller cake orders as couples want guests to have the option on how they fulfill their sweet tooth. It's a way to nail down the 50 percent that may prefer chocolate over vanilla while providing an interactive and unique experience not previously seen at traditional affairs. These bars aren't just stopping at cake, though. Charcuterie, cheese and popcorn bars are another trend from 2018 that will continue to grow and expand to other flavors this coming year.

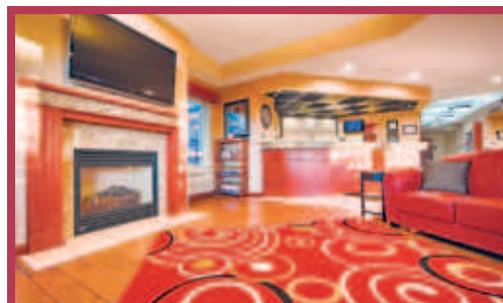


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Behind the Lens

Q&A with a Pacific Northwest wedding photographer

By Jennifer Urban

Photos of a couple's special day can help keep the memories of their wedding alive for many years to follow. But in the day of photography being at everyone's fingertips, choosing the right person to capture special moments can be an overwhelming task.

Katie Harding, owner of Arrowcreek Portraits in Battle Ground and mother of three, captured her first wedding on camera in 2014 and hasn't slowed down since.

"Back then I thought for sure weddings just weren't my cup of tea," she said. "I was so wrong. Weddings today are actually my absolute favorite."

She recently set her camera down for a moment to field questions about life as a wedding photographer.

Editor's Note: This conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

Did you go to school for photography?

Believe it or not, no. I did take photography in high school and have attended conferences since, but I didn't go to college for photography. I have always had a creative side and photography has been one that I started to love as a child.

So what inspired you to get into photography?

I am a sucker for love stories: sappy, short and sweet, romantic, high school sweethearts, you name it. Everyone's love story is different and the fact that I get to catch a glimpse of a couple's personal love story and be a part of their wedding day is so special to me.

Beyond your inspiration, what makes you a good wedding photographer?

Interesting question. I honestly don't like talking about my own strengths. It is one of my weaknesses, but that just goes to show that I am human. All

weakness aside, I think that I have the ability to connect with the bride and groom on a personal level that makes it less intimidating to have a photographer follow them around all day. They are able to let loose and open up with me, allowing for all of us to just have a fun time.

How would you describe your personal wedding photography style?

I keep my style consistent with connection and warm/earthy tones.

What are some of the top questions you get asked when you are being interviewed for a potential wedding shoot? How do you respond?

There are a handful of popular questions I get asked such as budget, travel/location of wedding, hours I spend on location, etc. Every wedding is so different and I try to work with any and all of the bride and groom's wants and needs.

When shooting a wedding, how much of it is instinctual versus planned?

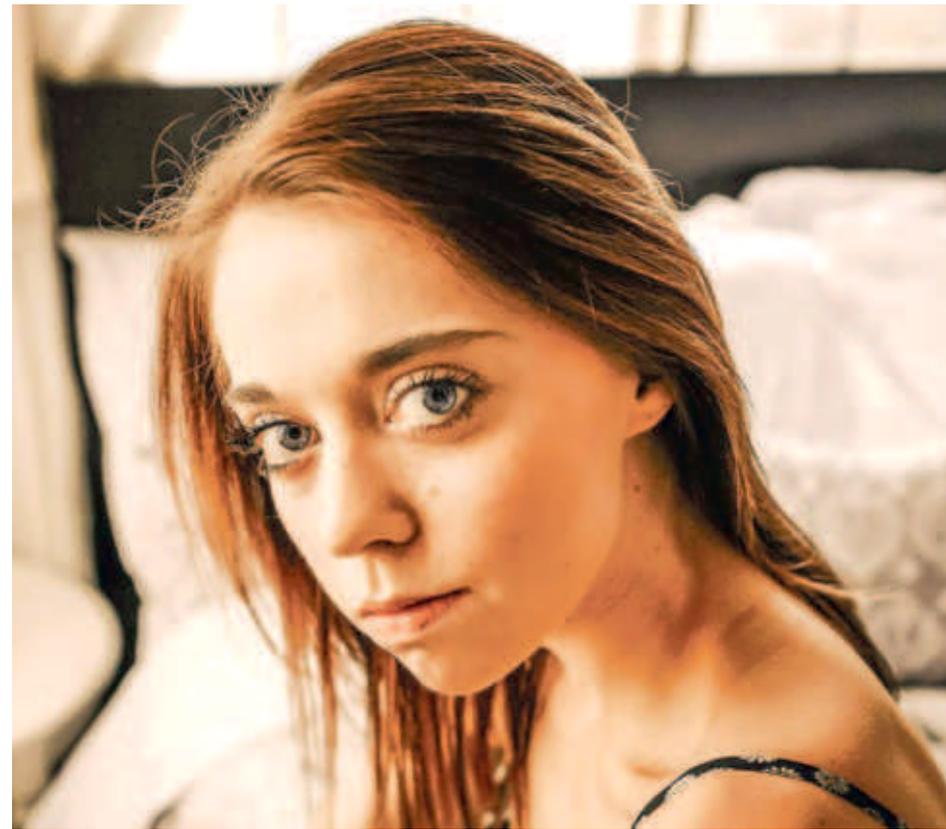
My first year or so of weddings were planned and structured in many ways but today it is a second nature. Each wedding (or session in general) just flows naturally for me.

Describe your photography in three words.

Life filled moments.

Tell us some of your most memorable moments photographing weddings/ anything to do with weddings. What is your most memorable wedding shoot?

I absolutely love wedding vows. Some couples go with the traditional vows which is great too, don't get me wrong. But getting to hear couples personal vows written just for one



Courtesy Photo

Katie Harding, Owner and Photographer of Arrowcreek Portraits, began photographing weddings in 2014.

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another is something so special. All of the weddings I photograph are then instantly made memorable in their own unique way.

What are some of the latest trends regarding photography?

There is always a variety of current trends for photographers. One that I love is lifestyle/documentary sessions. So often we all look at images that have us second guessing ourselves, our appearance, life status, parenting, etc. Yet lifestyle/documentary is a style that can be so transparent and real.

How does lifestyle/documentary sessions apply directly to wedding shoots?

This just means that I will ask the couple to do something, such as running hand in hand while only looking at each other and try to keep a straight face, for example. The point of me doing this isn't to get the couple looking unhappy, but actually the opposite. Without fail



Photos Courtesy Katie Harding

One of Katie Harding's all time favorite photos. She says it captures the essence of love and the beginning of life together.

it will get to be this moment that makes them both genuinely laugh and have fun with one another. Sessions to me are a chance to bring out real life moments.

What is the worst experience you have had shooting a wedding?

Hands down one of my very first weddings. I didn't have anything to eat a few hours prior and by the time the ceremony came around my stomach would not stop growling. Not even just little noises, but loud and noticeable ones. So embarrassing on my part. Now I never leave for a session without eating something prior!

Weddings are such a happy time in a couple's life. What advice, not as a

photographer but as a human being, can you give them going forward?

Just take in every moment. This is something that couples will hear from so many family members and friends, but it is so, so true. Whether your big day is at the courthouse, a small gathering or an elaborate event, take a breath and take it all in.

What do you feel makes the most memorable wedding photos?

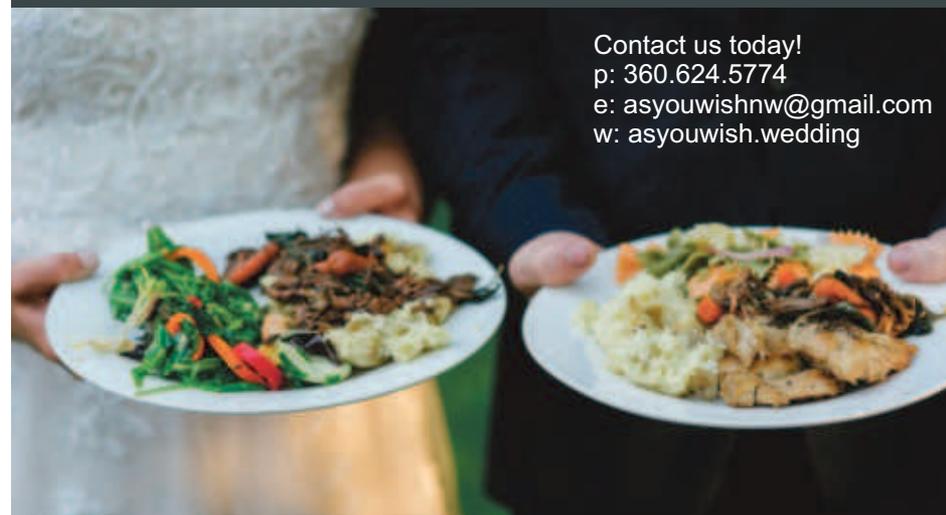
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According to Katie Harding, a simple photo, such as this, can draw focus to the beauty of a special moment.

From the Traditional to the Unusual, Southwest Washington Has Many Options for Wedding Venues

By Daniel Warn

dwarn@yelmonline.com

The South Sound region has some celebrated and unique wedding venues. Here is a guide of just a few of them:

GENERAL STORE WEDDING & EVENT CENTER

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Roy's General Store Wedding & Event Center's historic building boasts original fir wood flooring and 14-foot ceilings with stately pillars to be used for weddings.

There are second-story dressing rooms and a staircase for the bride to descend upon, "perfect for charming your guests and making your event a success," states the venue's website.

Wedding themes like rustic, vintage, romantic, historic, elegant, shabby chic, country barn and more would feel at home in the space, giving couples maximum creative input, according to the website.

Outdoor weddings are available in the venue's tree-lined and flowered courtyard at no additional cost.

The General Store Wedding & Event Center offers amenities that include a main floor with more than 6,000 square feet; seating for 170 people indoors for dining; a stage for ceremonies; a dance floor for the reception; dressing suites for the bride and groom that includes attendants and a courtyard with a tent and pergola.

Also offered are a solid wood bar with two pour stations; in-house catering and beverage services including a no-host



Photo Provided by General Store Wedding & Event Center

The General Store Wedding & Event Center's main main room can fit with an assortment of wedding themes like rustic, vintage, romantic, historic, elegant, shabby chic, country barn and more.

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Copper Gables Barn wedding venue is a two-story, 10,000 square foot barn built in 1915, in downtown Roy.

"Originally constructed as the H.L. Wolf Feed & Implement Warehouse, the barn has also served as a general store, the Roy post office in 1934 and a dance hall

for the Roy Rodeo beginning in 1965," the venue's website states.

Now more than 100 years old, Copper Gables was recently added to the Washington Historic Register.

Year round, it is capable of seating 250

people indoors. The fully-heated structure features both a 250-guest and a 100-guest reception area, a dancing space, restrooms for both men and women and a bridal suite.

Continued on **PAGE 16**



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Copper Gables invites all to enjoy its barn's rustic charm.



Photos Provided by Copper Gables

Now more than 100 years old, Copper Gables was recently added to the Washington Historic Register.

Continued from **PAGE 15**

Outside, there is a covered deck for the guests and a 100-year-old oak tree for photo opportunities. There is free onsite and offsite parking as well as WiFi.

The upper floor is 5,000 square feet with 26-foot timber and beam ceilings. There is a lighted band and stage area; an altar area; a custom bar; coat check; a wooden dance floor; and 20 crystal chandeliers. For flavor, vintage wagon wheel lights can be used alone or along with the chandeliers, according to the website.

Copper Gables features a full kitchen for catering professionals and refrigeration for cakes and food storage.

Contact the owners for a walkthrough of the venue.

ALBEE'S GARDEN PARTIES

4127 20th Lane N.W.,
Olympia, WA 98502
360-866-4683
www.thealbees.com

Albee's Garden Parties is all about creating the most distinctive and memorable experience for the bride and groom while keeping their the stress

down to a minimum, according to the venue's website.

"Having your wedding at the Albee's is a relaxing way to enjoy your big event," the website states. "Reducing the stress of your special event is a priority for Marty and Bob. We host a complementary workshop in the spring for our creative, do-it-yourself brides."

The Albees have been running the venue for more that 12 years and make it their mission to provide a unique experience for guests and renters alike, according to the website.

Some of the amenities include a garden kitchen, sound system, dance floor and separate wings for the bridal party and groom's preparations.

"The Albee's Garden Parties welcomes groups of 200-plus outdoors, with indoor seating for 40," the website states. "We can host any event you may be planning at the Albee's and there are a wide variety of amenities included with your rental."

Other features include seven restrooms, a children's play area and an outdoor sound system, along with ample parking and outdoor photo opportunities.

All events include tables, chairs and linens to dine on the cuisines that comes out of the garden kitchens outside catering.

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PUGET VALLEY FARM

13210 Morris Road S.E.,
Yelm, WA 98597

Phone: 360-878-5745

www.pugetvalleyfarm.com

Puget Valley Farm provides a quiet country setting amidst a backdrop of tree-dotted grounds, making for a wedding venue that aims for the rustic charm of a rural setting, according to the venue's website.

"The grounds are nestled among wooden fences and rural pastures, which creates the perfect quiet country setting for your event," the website states. "There is plenty of space to play yard games, place a tent or (to) select a special spot for your ceremony. There are a variety of areas to use on the grounds for your special day."

Amenities include two arbors; two patio areas; a barn with a large deck; an indoor bar area with a large draft cooler; and a propane fire pit.

There are also 20 eight-foot wooden tables; 40 eight-foot wooden benches, two church pews, two wooden pub/cocktail tables, two six-foot rectangular banquet tables; two 42-inch round tables, two deck heaters, a bridal lounge and changing area; a groom's lounge and changing area; two portable restrooms —



Photo Provided by the Longmire Barn

The spacious Longmire Barn looks out on a tended garden lane in Yelm, Washington.

one ADA accessible; and an onsite facility coordinator, among other offerings.

THE LONGMIRE BARN

16105 Longmire Road S.E.,
Yelm, WA 98597

360-259-4601

www.longmirewedding.com

The Longmire barn was built in 1901 and is located on a historical piece of farmland in in Yelm.

The facility is capable of holding up to 250 guests with plenty of parking, according to the venue's Facebook page. There are currently three vow exchanging areas that will allow the bride and groom the freedom of choice.

"I think what makes our venue unique is it is rich in history," said owner Kathy McClarrinon. "This barn was built in the early 1900's and sits on the old James

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The firepit outside of Longmire Barn, available for guest use, crackles on a cloudy Yelm day.



Lights strung from the silo set the mood for an intimate occasion.



Photos Provided by The Silo on 74th

Baked goods are arranged in one of the silo's openings, making sure the wedding guests are fed.

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Longmire homestead. This old barn has been a lot of things to a lot of people — always standing strong and bold, protecting everything from the elements.”

McClarrinon trained horses from the barn for multiple years, trying to make a difference in their lives.

“I specialized in problem and troubled horses,” McClarrinon said. “For many years I helped humans be better with their horses. Using a very old approach to handling horses, I was able to really make a difference in their lives.”

But the day came when McClarrinon had her neck fused in two places, promoting a change of occupation.

“I really don’t remember how I got the idea of turning the barn into a wedding barn, but I did,” she said. “After researching and visiting many other venues, my decision was made. My husband Mike and I just got on the tractor one day and started moving dirt. He tore out all the stalls and put in a beautiful wood floor and some windows.”

All weddings are individually priced to

accommodate the unique needs of each event. Be sure to arrange a tour of the facility to become acquainted with the amenities this venue has to offer.

RIVERBEND RANCH

2840 184th Ave. S.E,
Tenino, WA 98589

Oldcountrybarn@gmail.com
www.rb-ranch.com

The Riverbend Ranch in Skookumchuck Valley — right outside of Tenino — offers the Old Country Barn as a rustic choice for a wedding space.

The barn, surrounded by fields of hay and a backdrop of old growth trees, becomes it an “amazing space both inside and out,” according to the venue’s website.

The Old Country Barn serves as a backdrop to the other work being done at the ranch.

“Riverbend Ranch today is the

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forefront of a family's expansion into all natural grass finished locker beef," the website states.

Working with state-endorsed projects like Thurston County Agritourism, the Riverbend Ranch is committed to all the work that it gets to facilitate, the website states.

Those that would like any more information about the Old Country Barn's wedding rates, amenities and availability, can go to the website and fill out the inquiry form, complete with an event date.



Photo Provided by Rurup Farm

At Rurup Farm, wedding receptions can be held under a big white tent, the perfect color for the occasion.

THE LITTLE WHITE CHURCH OF ELBE

54206 Mountain Highway E.,
Elbe, WA 98330
twothechutes@comcast.net
or revmeoneal@comcast.net
www.elbehistoricchurch.com

The Little White Church of Elbe is a 18-by-24 foot church that sits west

of Mount Rainier. The church, like the town of Elbe, is full of German heritage, bearing the name of the Elbe River valley which is near Hamburg, Germany, according to the venue's website.

"As it has since 1906, the church signifies peace and tranquility to residents and tourists alike," the website states.

"Beginning in 1893, worshipers met in homes and the town hall until the church was constructed."

The town's first blacksmith forged a four-foot cross, topping the church's 46-foot steeple — a structure that holds the building's original bell.

In addition, the original altar and

elevated pulpit are still in use, along with a single surviving hand-carved pew and an original Farrand & Votey bellows organ. According to the website, these amenities are often used for weddings.

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THE SILO ON 74TH

3330 74th Ave S.E.,
Olympia, WA 98501
360-292-3645
www.facebook.com/The-Silo-on-74th-203869713501334

The Silo on 74th offers an outdoor wedding experience in Olympia, centered around a unique Silo/grain bin bar, according to its Facebook page.

A covered pergola will greet guests with shade from the sun on a hot summer's day, and a wrap-around porch will be a welcome place to relax and socialize, according to the Facebook page.

The intimate venue offers 10-foot farm tables for the reception. Wine barrels and antique furniture pieces can provide character to any wedding's backdrop.

The venue also offers china and



Photo Provided by The Rurup Farm

Rurup Farm's tent can be open-air or closed, all depending on the preference of the guest.

silver for dinner use, along with serving pieces and crystal chandeliers.

SOUTH SOUND MANOR

455 North Street S.E.,
Tumwater, WA 98501
360-236-0395
www.southsoundmanor.com

The South Sound Manor is currently offering a 10-hour full building rental for wedding ceremonies and receptions, according to the venue's website.

Located in Tumwater, the mansion hosts all sorts of events in its spacious rooms. These rooms include the Logan Room, Sylvester Lounge, Bridal Suite, Groom's Room, McElroy Room, kitchen and outdoor reception area on the patio, according to the website

The website states that amenities include five-foot round tables; eight-foot rectangular tables; padded chairs that are not for lawn use; tablecloths and cloth napkins of various colors; microphones and a sound system.

The staff at South Sound Manor will set up tables, chairs, dishes, linens, and napkins prior to weddings and will take care of cleaning when they're over. All the wedding party has to do is take down its decorations at the end of the night.

Among other features, the venue boasts a CAD program that can help design the optimal layout for the entire guest list.

Caterers chosen by the bride and groom should have no trouble fitting into South Sound Manor's full commercial kitchen, the website states.

Complimentary facility features include: An on-site staff member during the event; Wi-Fi; a manor that is fully ADA-accessible; and ample free parking, among other accommodations.

THE RURUP FARM

19333 161st Way S.E.,
Yelm, WA 98597
253-961-2002
www.theRurupFarm.com

The Rurup Farm functions as a destination venue for special occasions, but can only accommodate 160 guests, according to the venue's website.

The farm promises a unique and memorable experience for wedding guests, not to mention the bride and groom.

At the Rurup farm, everything is taken care up regarding that special day.

"Let the Rurup family coordinate everything from the venue set up, to catering, photography and music," according to the website.

Gary Rurup said that baby pygmy goats and roaming free-range turkeys add priceless charm to the farm.

As for its history, "Gary and Kristin Rurup built their 1940's inspired farmhouse in 2005, nestled in the base of Mount Rainier and the Bald Hills in Yelm, WA," the website states. "Over the next several years they expanded their family of seven by adopting four more children and welcoming seven (almost eight) grandchildren into their hearts. Their love of rural living naturally transformed into the farm life with the addition of chickens, goats, turkeys and an apple orchard."

The Rurups welcome all to check out the rural charm of their farm for their big day — just give them a call.

Flowers, Check. Venue, Check. Officiant?

By Will Rubin
The Chronicle

Just about anyone can officiate a wedding. For a little bit of cash and a few minutes spent filling out an application, online monasteries such as Universal Life Church will ordain a family member, friend, colleague or complete stranger.

Whether or not a couple chooses to entrust a spiritual outsider with the responsibility of leading their wedding ceremony is a different issue. Some people prefer the traditional comforts of a religious figure such as a pastor or rabbi at the helm, while others seek a more unique experience.

Mark Fast, lead pastor at the Centralia Community Church, is not a fan of having just anyone lead what is a cornerstone moment in the lives of a couple. He figures church staff performs about 20 weddings a year, the culmination of a process that includes premarital informational sessions with the couple and an online assessment by a group called “Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts.”

“I think that as we view the covenant of marriage as something designed by God, we see that decision and commitment as inherently a spiritual one,” Fast said. “We recognize scripture as wanting God in the center of a marriage partnership and that principally serves as our reference point. It’s something we want to reinforce.”

Then there’s Bill Moeller, one of the most prolific masters of ceremony in Lewis County.

Moeller, formerly the mayor of Centralia and a regular columnist for The Chronicle, has officiated more than 1,000 weddings since 1990. He became ordained by sending \$10 to the



Courtesy Photo

Bill Moeller, center, marries son Matthew Moeller and Lanita Grice.

Universal Life Church in 1971. An extra five dollars would have bought him the title of bishop.

His experiences as a self-proclaimed Marryin’ Sam — a character from the Li’l Abner comic strip who specialized in performing \$2 weddings — have run the gamut. He’s presided over ceremonies on the track at the South Sound Speedway and at a hippie-themed affair for which he claims to have leaned into the attire far more than most of the guest list.

Moeller retired from the wedding game in October 2017, but plans to return to the role next month for a man who used to frequent a bookstore Moeller owned.

“I was talking to the county auditor back in 1990, and he said I should just put my (business) cards on the counter by his desk at the county office,” Moeller said. “That’s really how it started. Sometimes I’ll be walking down the street and someone will say I married them off, and I have to ask how long ago it was. Having done so many, there are some that stand out, but I don’t often

remember one from another.”

Though there are significant differences between the routes a couple can take to find an officiant, there are a number of core similarities as well.

Fast and Moeller both tend to work from a template they’ve created over the years. Moeller said he will often read from a portion of the Bible, Corinthians 1:13, that talks about the importance of love in a non-denominational fashion. Fast keeps to a more traditional format

that can include songs carrying a spiritual emphasis.

Both men also recognize the gravity of the role and how universal it is.

“It’s a privilege,” Fast said. “It’s something within a pastoral role that people sometimes assume is just part of the mix with the whole commitment, but it’s truly an exciting time. It’s one of the more important decisions a person will ever make, and it’s an honor to be a part of it.”



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Courtesy Photo / Benj Haisch

Ethan and Katelynn Hunter had an 'elopement' wedding at the High Rock Lookout in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest.



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incorporate that into their wedding?

"We wanted to hike a mountain we'd never been to and have a whole new adventure," she said. "We wanted to come out West, because we wanted a honeymoon out there anyway."

The couple formally got their marriage certificate in New Hampshire, where they were living at the time, with a small gathering of close family and friends. Then they got on a plane to Seattle. Haisch took them to the High Rook Lookout, the jaw-dropping Gifford Pinchot National Forest icon with an up-close view of Mount Rainier.

"When I saw Mount Rainier right up close for the first time, I was like, 'Oh, my word,'" said Ethan Hunter. "I thought a lot of the views around New Hampshire were really cool, but this was my first time hiking out in the West Coast."

Katelynn Hunter, who hiked the whole way up in her dress, said she wanted her wedding to be a new experience — and not a large,

overwhelming affair — because she wanted the day to stick out in her memory.

"It's definitely a day where I remember every detail," she said. "The whole day was just what we wanted."

The Hunters — who now live in Nashville — said the wedding was largely free of stress, and even the challenges like getting lost on the way to the trailhead made it a fun adventure. They recently bought a van they plan to live out of as they travel, and they noted that they could have spent almost as much on a wedding as they did on the vehicle. Instead, they spent a memorable week traveling around the Pacific Northwest, and getting wedding photos that made all their friends gasp.

Haisch said that financial reasoning motivates many of his clients.

"The cost ends up being a quarter of what a traditional wedding would be," he said. "You get this really amazing looking experience for a fraction of the cost. ... I think people are just sort of

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realizing more and more, they don't have to do it the same way their parents and grandparents did it."

About half of Haisch's clients — like the Hunters — approach him based on his reputation, hoping he'll help them find the perfect spot. For that, he has a "secret Pinterest board" of locations where's he never shot, a list of epic spots where he hopes to one day shoot a wedding. For those weddings, he becomes the "default wedding planner," often organizing logistics and arranging other facets of the wedding for people unfamiliar with the region. Others, more often locals, already have a location in mind, often one with special personal meaning.

The elopement option isn't without its challenges. Sometimes Haisch tries to schedule weddings for Tuesdays, just so they can be moved to Wednesday if the weather doesn't cooperate. Sometimes people prefer to just venture out into the rain, all part of the adventure.

At times, couples will want to bring

family or friends who aren't up to a hike, and he'll choose a location with parking lot access. Some spots, though, have become so crowded (for which Haisch notes his Instagram posts may bear some responsibility) that they're better off avoided.

"I'm often just trying to find a spot where no one's been before," he said. "It's not like you can reserve these places."

Though most people are understanding when couples opt for an elopement, Haisch advises explaining the choice to family and friends who may be expecting a wedding invite. It's also good to check ahead on entry permits for public lands, and to obtain a wedding permit for marriages within a national park.

For those considering an elopement wedding, Katelynn Hunter said it's not worth worrying about the opinions of others.

"Do whatever you want, because it's your day," she said. "You have to trust your heart and what you want. It turns the focus more toward what the day's really about — each other."



Courtesy Photo / Benj Haisch

Ethan and Katelynn Hunter one of the growing number of couples who opt for an unconventional, outdoor wedding venue.



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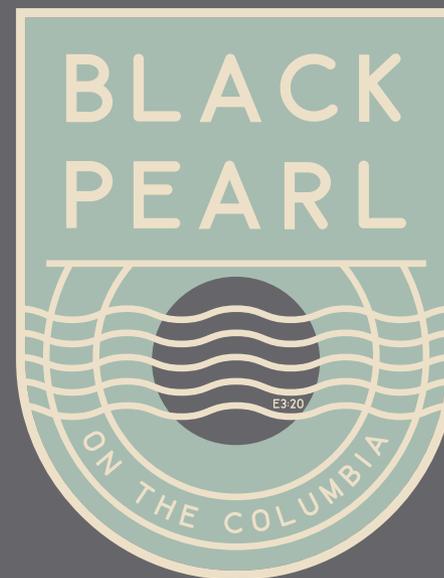
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