Backyard Wedding Checklist

Everything a backyard needs that a venue usually provides.

Rules, permits and timing (start 6 to 12 months out)

- [ ] Check city or county rules for events, tents, noise and alcohol.
- [ ] Ask your homeowner's insurance whether you need event coverage.
- [ ] Set an end time for music that your neighbors have agreed to.
- [ ] Pick your date with the weather season in mind.

Rentals (make one list and check it against every quote)

- [ ] Tent, with sidewalls if wind or rain is possible.
- [ ] Tables, chairs and linens, plus a few spares.
- [ ] Dance floor, if the ground is uneven.
- [ ] Fans or heaters for the season.
- [ ] Lighting, bars and serving tables.
- [ ] Glassware, plates and flatware if the caterer does not supply them.
- [ ] Confirm delivery, setup and pickup times in writing.

Venue preparation

- [ ] Measure the yard and sketch where tents, tables, dance floor and bar will go.
- [ ] Check local rules about events, noise and street parking.
- [ ] Mow, trim and fix uneven ground a week early.
- [ ] Tell neighbors about the date and the music end time.
- [ ] Check that sprinklers are off.

Weather contingency

- [ ] Choose a rain plan: tent, garage, or indoor backup.
- [ ] Set a decision deadline for the rain plan (many planners use about 48 hours before; ask your tent company what it needs).
- [ ] Have umbrellas, fans or heaters available.
- [ ] Ask the tent company about wind and stakes.
- [ ] Plan how to protect power and electronics.

Seating and layout

- [ ] Seats for every guest plus a few spares.
- [ ] Clear paths wide enough for chairs and wheelchairs.
- [ ] Shade for daytime events.
- [ ] A quiet corner for older guests and kids.

Power and lighting

- [ ] Count the outlets and check which circuits they share; a caterer, DJ and lights together can trip a breaker.
- [ ] Use outdoor-rated extension cords.
- [ ] Rent a generator if the load is too high.
- [ ] Cover cables where guests walk.
- [ ] String lights or lanterns for after sunset.
- [ ] Light the paths, steps and restrooms.

Restrooms

- [ ] Decide whether your home restrooms are enough.
- [ ] Rent portable restrooms for larger guest lists.
- [ ] Stock supplies and add a light and a sign.
- [ ] Provide an accessible option.

Parking and arrival

- [ ] Count available parking spots.
- [ ] Arrange nearby parking or a shuttle if needed.
- [ ] Signs and a helper to direct guests.
- [ ] A clear drop-off point for older guests.

Food service

- [ ] Confirm the caterer's needs: water, power, prep space.
- [ ] Plan a kitchen or tent for food service.
- [ ] Arrange refrigeration and trash.
- [ ] Check alcohol rules and licensing.

Vendor access

- [ ] Share the address, gate code and load-in route.

- [ ] Tell vendors where to park and unload.
- [ ] Walk vendors through the yard before the day.

Cleanup

- [ ] Assign trash and recycling bins.
- [ ] Book a cleanup crew or friends for the next morning.
- [ ] Schedule rental returns.
- [ ] Plan how to protect the lawn.

Safety and accessibility

- [ ] A first-aid kit and a fire extinguisher.
- [ ] Stable ground for wheelchairs and walkers.
- [ ] Keep pets and pools secured.
- [ ] Mark steps and uneven areas.
- [ ] List emergency contacts and the nearest hospital.

Notes