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by

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Texas Weddings Today

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Report

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This report is a collection of articles that represent the style, content and idea of what can be found in any bridal magazine. The report consists of five features about individual weddings from different parts of Texas, including a Houston couple's destination wedding in Turks and Caicos. Each of the individual wedding features shows the bride's point of view and explores the planning process, wedding themes and overall feel of the wedding day itself.

As a whole, the report shows the variation of wedding styles, traditions and approaches across different parts of Texas, as well as a current trend in the wedding industry – elaborate elopements. The report is written in a way that allows for each of the four articles to stand alone and possibly gain publication in a bridal magazine, while also following a cohesive style and theme so that they may be viewed as a collection.

This report is representative of what is being published in Texas bridal magazines today and includes photographs from real weddings. Bridal magazines will publish information like this in order to help inspire other weddings and direct couples to different wedding vendors and services.

Table of Contents

Texas weddings are not just the same old song and dance anymore.....	1
Beauty in nature - Amanda and Jason, Log Country Cove, Burnet, Texas.....	2
Classic charm with a twist – Sarah and Trent, Lakeside Country Club, Houston...	9
Destination elopement – Jennifer and Kyle, Turks and Caicos.....	16
Cinematic romance – Anshwa and Stephen, Piazza in the Village, Dallas.....	24
Bibliography.....	31
Vita.....	32

Texas weddings are not just the same old song and dance anymore

Over the last few decades, weddings in Texas have evolved from a simple church ceremony followed by cake and punch in the rectory highly customized and tailored to the couple's personalities and style. As the wedding industry has grown into a billion-dollar operation, couples have found they have a greater variety of options when it comes to planning their weddings.

With the rise in popularity of websites like Pinterest, inspiring wedding blogs, online marketplaces like Etsy and a trend toward do-it-yourself projects, these couples made their weddings their own by choosing a theme or idea and really sticking to it. Amanda and Jason Rienth celebrated their families and drew inspiration from their engagement in a family-style, nature-inspired event. Sarah and Trent Jackson kept tradition alive while adding some modern flair. Jennifer and Kyle Guidry followed a growing trend when they celebrated their elopement with an elegant beachfront ceremony and reception for two. Finally, Anshwa and Stephen Lewis reminisced about their first date with a movie-themed affair.

Through their very unique events, these couples represent today's norm for Texas weddings – limitless possibilities and high level of personalization.

Beauty in nature – Amanda and Jason, Log Country Cove, Burnet, Texas
* Photographs by Knots and Tots Photography



Amanda and Jason Rienth celebrated their Oct. 13 wedding with a soiree inspired by nature.

It's always great seeing a couple truly put their own touches into a wedding. Amanda and Jason Rienth are a perfect example of two people who really did it their way. They were wed at Log Country Cove in Burnet, Texas on Oct. 13, 2012 in a family affair wedding with some natural flair.

Jason proposed to Amanda when they took a little detour on their way to her folks' house in Taylor. He suggested a pit stop at the Botanical Gardens of Fort Worth.

Since their engagement happened surrounded by nature, the couple wanted to continue that theme as they set out to plan their nuptials.

They also wanted it to feel like a big family gathering, like the ones Amanda remembered from her childhood. "I wanted to find a venue that had natural beauty and simplicity," says Amanda. "Another priority I had was somewhere that would allow us to stay the entire weekend to enjoy family, each other, and of course our wedding day."

Amanda's father was the one who ultimately pinpointed the perfect venue. He came across Log Country Cove while searching online and Amanda and Jason agreed it was exactly what they were looking for. "My parents are currently in the process of building their dream home, a log cabin, so of course he would type 'log cabin wedding venue' into the search engine. Luckily he did – because he came up with the perfect location," she says.

When it came to decorating Log Country Cove, Amanda and Jason wanted to keep things basic, yet beautiful. They chose a color palette of navy and white with a few rustic elements to add a twist to their modern style and celebrate the venue's natural beauty.



Amanda and Jason planted a tree together during their ceremony to symbolize their love.

Instead of a unity candle, the couple decided to plant a unity tree during their ceremony – keeping true to their tribute to the beauty of nature. “The tree was an oak tree that my father started from a seed from a tree in my childhood home’s yard – our mothers both added soil to the tree as they were seated and Jason and I watered it to signify nurturing our love & marriage as it grows. “We are going to

plant the tree at my parent's log cabin - a house which I actually helped designed myself - which is sure to stay in our family for generations to come."

At the conclusion of the ceremony, guests threw a personalized mix of fresh herbs at the couple as they walked back down the aisle. Amanda filled jars with different herbs and labeled them to represent specific blessings – patience, devotion and happiness. By throwing the herbs, the guests symbolically bestowed their well wishes upon the newlyweds. "The meanings of the herbs actually stem from the Victorian era where different herbs were used in bouquets or given as gifts to denote specific wishes for the recipient," she points out.

The reception consisted of a casual dinner out in the open. The dining tables were laid out in arcs under the trees and white paper lanterns were placed in clusters over the head table.

"Our florist did an amazing job with the centerpieces," she says. . "I spent quite a few shopping trips hunting for vintage silver containers and she filled them with fragrant herbs, white flowers and succulents."

The meal was inspired by a Thanksgiving feast – fitting with both the fact that it was autumn and the couple's wishes to host a family-style gathering. Guests enjoyed turkey and cranberry sauce, topped off with a fabulous dessert bar which featured beautiful cakes by Lisa's Cakery and other scrumptious treats made by Amanda's mom and grandma.



The floral arrangements incorporated fragrant herbs, flowers and succulents for a very natural look.

As a gift to their friends and family, Jason and Amanda set up baskets full of handmade soaps for everyone to take on their way out. The groom actually made the soaps himself. It was something he had always been interested in doing, but hadn't found a reason to before. "It turned out fantastic and hardly any was left over at the end of the night," says Amanda. "We are even getting requests for more!"



As favors, guests were given homemade bars of soap.

Jason and Amanda stuck to their instincts and planned the perfect wedding to represent their love and personalities while also celebrating their families. The rustic venue combined with a few modern twists helped make the event elegant yet personal. “In the end I was very pleased with the way everything turned out,” Amanda stresses. “I couldn’t have done it without the help of all my wonderful

family and friends. Everyone pitched in helping set up my vision and execute it on the day of.”

Classic charm with a twist – Sarah and Trent, Lakeside Country Club, Houston

*Photographs by Two Pair Photography



Trent and Sarah Jackson put their own personal flair on a classically elegant wedding.

While the Texas ranch wedding has become quite popular in recent years, many couples are still opting for the more traditional church and country club combination. Sarah and Trent Jackson did a great job of adding their own personal flair and touches to put a modern twist on an old classic at their Aug. 11, 2012 wedding at Memorial Drive United Methodist Church in Houston.

When it came time to plan the wedding, Sarah admits it wasn't immediately easy to turn her vision into reality. "I knew the wedding had to be colorful, simple

and classic,” says Sarah. “It was hard to actually stick with one idea! I saw so many cute ideas on Pinterest and elsewhere that I had to remind myself, ‘we need to stick with one idea or this wedding will keep changing every day!’”

Sarah drew a lot of her inspiration from things she found on Pinterest and looked to the online marketplace Etsy when it came to finding little props and finishing touches. She was also sure to take notes at her friends’ weddings whenever she saw something she liked.

Sarah wore a beautiful dress by Rivini. It consisted of multiple layers of all different types of lace and she opted to add a belt to complete the look and had her seamstress build sleeves onto the otherwise strapless gown.



Sarah’s dress and accessories kept with the traditional side of the wedding.

When it came to flowers for the wedding party, Sarah knew she wanted lots of bold color. She chose to use white flowers for her bridal bouquet with some hints of green. In contrast, the bridesmaids carried blue irises with green accents. “The blue, from the irises and the coral, from their dresses, look so good. It really had a ‘pop.’”



The bridesmaids carried blue irises to contrast with their coral dresses and added lots of color to the otherwise traditional wedding.

The couple decided to keep the ceremony décor and florals to a minimum to truly showcase the church’s innate beauty. “The church is gorgeous already with

beautiful stained glass and wood beams, we didn't really need to add any color," she says.

With the help of their florist, Sarah and Trent chose to stick with more neutral tones in the church décor than what was planned for the reception.



Although a great deal of couples today are opting have their ceremony in the same location as their reception, Sarah and Trent kept things classic with a formal church ceremony.

The ceremony was officiated by a friend of the Jackson family, Dix Winston. "It really added a special touch and we loved having someone we knew, and loved, up there with us," she fondly recalls.

After the ceremony, the couple joined their friends and family for a formal reception at a Houston Country Club, which also catered it.

Their guests were treated to a buffet dinner of chicken, steak, salad and few fun and eclectic side dishes and appetizers. “We wanted a lot of options so everyone could find something they liked, which was another reason why we chose a buffet style of dining: everyone could pick and choose what they wanted and how much,” says Sarah, who continued her theme of bold colors into the centerpieces at the reception.



The centerpieces utilized bright colors to add modernity to the formal dining tables.

She wanted to use the entire color palette in the arrangements and ended up with three different types of centerpieces. The florist incorporated irises, orange snapdragons, hydrangea, orchids and other bold florals to bring Sarah's vision to life.

"One item that really showed 'us' was the candy bar. We had eight total vases of candy so Trent and I each picked four candies we liked for the bar," she remembers.



Sarah drew a lot of inspiration from things she saw on Pinterest and Etsy.

Sarah and Trent did a wonderful job of making the day their own. They showed that age-old traditions do not need to be thrown out the window to have the perfect modern wedding. The couple thoroughly enjoyed themselves on their wedding day and that is clear to see in all of the photographs.

“The night went by way too fast,” says Sarah. “I wanted to rewind and go back to the beginning! It was great to be surrounded by all the people who support and love you.”

Destination elopement – Jennifer and Kyle, Turks and Caicos

* Photographs by Brilliant Photography



Jennifer and Kyle Guidry chose to elope, but they still put some careful planning into their wedding – a route that many couples are choosing to go these days.

Imagine yourself walking down the aisle toward the man of your dreams. You've been planning for weeks. The cake is selected. You've found the perfect dress. You're carrying a beautiful bouquet and a photographer is snapping away as you say your vows. You look out for a moment and see none of your family and friends.

That may seem like a horror story about a wedding where the couple forgot to send out invitations, but the truth is, it is exactly what some couples are opting for these days.

“Last year I shot quite a few elopements and small weddings,” says Kelly Cameron, owner of Kelly Cameron Photography and Elope, Texas in Austin, Texas. “I was noticing a trend, which I attribute to so many wonderful wedding blogs and the ever-addictive Pinterest, that brides wanted amazing pictures with high creativity and lots of details, but low-budget and low-stress. They are willing to compromise a large celebration for quality pictures and the intimacy of a small wedding while working with their budgets.”

Through Elope, Texas, Cameron offers photography and day-of coordination to her clients. She has also provided packages in the past that included styling, design, vintage furniture rentals, light catering, florals and cake design.

Today, the idea of eloping has taken on a whole new face as couples are ditching the old-fashioned, City Hall quickie and celebrating in a more elaborate fashion.

Some couples, like Jennifer and Kyle Guidry, even turn their elopement into a destination wedding as well. “Kyle and I love to vacation and love the beach, so we knew right away that we would have a beach wedding in an amazing location,” Jennifer says. “We also knew that we wanted to get married with just the two of us but we wanted to have a wedding. A destination wedding really suited our personalities.”

Jennifer and Kyle were wed on July 9, 2012, exactly four years after they first met in 2008. Their union took place on the beach in Turks and Caicos. The Houston-based couple combined their relaxing vacation with their wedding and honeymoon for what Jennifer coined as their “va-wedding-moon.” The location of their nuptials was especially fitting for the pair as their relationship took root in a “tropical” location.

Jennifer, director of Corporate QHSE at Hercules Offshore, recounts the night she met Kyle in a wedding journal she wrote for him:

You were having dinner in the corner of the bar at Tommy Bahamas in The Woodlands, irritated that they did not have your drink of choice while I was flying back to Houston from the Baker Hughes Motor Coring Plant in OKC. I decided to stop by for one-drink on the way home and appeared on the steps of the Tommy Bahama bar looking for the group of you from Baker Hughes. I was embarrassed to go to Market Street in steel-toed shoes, jeans and a blue polo shirt after a long, hot and humid day in a repair shop but you noticed me standing there ... we were together from that day forward.

A few years later, Kyle asked Jennifer to marry him at the very same restaurant where they had first met.

“I had already planned our summer vacation at the Gansevoort Resort on the island of Providenciales on Grace Bay Beach, Turks and Caicos so we just adjusted the dates and started to plan our wedding.”

Though the traditional idea of an elopement is still in practice today, a great deal of couples, like Jennifer and Kyle, are raising the stakes. They may not want a ton of people, or anyone for that matter, to be there when they say “I do,” but they still want some frills for their big day.

“Elopements have evolved from being a rebellion against society,” says Cameron. “Most of my couples have planned their elopements three to eight months out. That’s a lot of planning for something that used to be done at the spur of the moment. It’s what couples are wanting now.”

When it came time to start planning the wedding, the couple found inspiration in the island’s natural beauty. They chose white and hot pink as their color palette, which made way perfectly for the island’s native flower, bougainvillea. “I wanted white roses and white hydrangeas but they would have had to fly them from Holland and Kyle was worried that they would not make it,” she says. “I am glad that we chose flowers that are natural to the island.”

Their ceremony spot was adorned with a beautiful white arch and the aisle was lined with tiki torches holding the pink and white flowers. Pink bougainvillea petals scattered on the ground and palm fronds completed the perfectly tropical look for Jennifer and Kyle’s ceremony: “Although I thought our beach wedding would be casual it turned out to be sophisticated, elegant and chic and we just happened to be on the beach,” she says.

The bride opted for a more formal gown than most would expect for a beach wedding: “I was planning on wearing a short Sue Wong dress but I did not love any of them.”

She had also found a dress in a society picture in a local magazine that she loved but was a little overwhelmed when she saw its price tag.

Jennifer finally landed on the perfect gown while trying on samples at Casa de Novia in Houston. Although it was a formal gown, the soft ruffles of the skirt complemented the waves of the nearby ocean perfectly and its strapless neckline showed off Jennifer’s sun kissed shoulders.



Although Jennifer’s gown was very formal for a beach wedding, the skirt’s ruffles mimicked the waves of the ocean. Kyle’s more casual look was also a nice contrast.

Kyle and Jennifer worked for months, communicating with vendors via phone to make the arrangements for their special day. When July 9 rolled around, they were more than ready to say “I do,” and begin their life together as man and wife.

After the ceremony, the new Mr. and Mrs. Guidry proceeded to pose for more photos while the resort staff set up their reception. They dined on a gourmet meal alongside a beach bonfire and toasted to their marriage with sparkling lemonade and Grey Goose vodka. After some delicious cake, the couple shared their first dance to Sammy Kershaw’s “You are the love of my life.”



As many eloping couples are choosing to these days, Jennifer and Kyle celebrated with a first dance and a formal dinner for two.

The couple chose to be alone on their wedding day but still got to enjoy the usual pampering a bride and groom experience in a larger wedding. They took their time to plan their Turks and Caicos destination wedding and enjoyed every minute of it.

“Our wedding was for us to celebrate our day together,” says Jennifer.

Jennifer still wore a gown and had her hair and makeup done by a professional. The couple enjoyed a delicious meal, a beautiful cake and a first dance as husband and wife. They had a florist provide flowers and hired a photographer to capture their special day.

Jennifer and Kyle are very happy with their decision to wed abroad and enjoyed the benefit of having their honeymoon built right into their wedding. They also liked the intimate atmosphere of their big day. “We did not chose to have guests but if we did it would have only been the people we really love and want around us,” Jennifer recalls.

“If you *want* a huge party, do it! If you just want to keep it simple, keep it simple,” says Cameron. “You need to do what will make you and your fiancé happiest on your wedding day, no one else.”

Kyle and Jennifer’s tropical getaway is a beautiful example of how many couples are choosing to celebrate their union today. A wedding doesn’t always have to be big to be special and elegant. Even in the casual beach setting, the Guidrys and their vendors pulled off a formal affair that the couple will remember forever.

Cinematic romance – Anshwa and Stephen, Piazza in the Village, Dallas

* Photographs by Lynnca Harvey Photography



Anshwa and Stephen used their first date as inspiration for their movie-themed wedding.

When you're an industry professional yourself, the stakes can be pretty high when planning your own wedding. Anshwa Lewis, owner and lead planner for SwaLaRue Events, had her work cut out for her when she embarked on a wedding journey with her fiancé, Stephen. After 16 months of planning, the couple was able to pull off an event that literally spanned the globe while also staying true to their personalities and the things that define them as a couple.

When it came to choosing a theme, Anshwa wanted to really represent who she and Stephen are as a couple. “I wrote notes about what we like to do together,” says Anshwa.

After making a list of things like their favorite hobbies, possible honeymoon locations, the place of first date, first kiss and favorite date night activity, Anshwa zeroed in on an idea. The couple went to a movie for their first date and had their first kiss there too, so it seemed logical their theme should be a night at the movies.

Anshwa and Stephen were wed Aug. 31, 2012 at the Piazza in the Village in Dallas.

Although the couple and the bride’s business are based in Houston, they decided to keep their options a little more open when it came to choosing a venue. “As a wedding planner, I was more concerned with the feeling I wanted to have and the feeling I wanted my guests to have than the city my wedding would take place in,” she says. “So I researched venues in Houston, Long Island, Austin, Dallas, San Antonio and Atlanta before I settled on the Piazza in the Village. It had the Mediterranean feel I was looking for, only holds one event at a time, and truly caters to the bride and groom.”

After playing around with a few different color combinations, Anshwa landed on a color scheme of platinum, purple and silver and incorporated the scheme into the floral design for the wedding. The centerpieces tied into the movie theatre theme as each of them was placed on top of LED-lighted pedestals to really put them in the spotlight.



The movie motif was carried throughout the reception through details like escort cards and centerpieces.

Anshwa admits she was a little worried about having the wedding out of town and the possibility of some of their loved ones not being able to attend. “What I’ve learned is if you give guests enough notice, if they really want to be there, they will find a way, so do not be persuaded to have your wedding in your hometown because of travel expenses for family members,” she says.

To make the distance issues even less of a problem, their wedding venue allowed for the event to be streamed live over the Internet. The bride’s family in Houston and the groom’s side on Long Island were able to watch the event live.

What made things even more special for the couple was that their military family was able to watch from Afghanistan, Korea and Germany. Stephen's mother was also unable to attend but managed to see the wedding all the way from Jamaica.

In a happy coincidence, the distance issues the couple faced actually added to their theme as the wedding became somewhat of a movie itself.



The invitations were designed to look like movie tickets, admitting each guest to the wedding.



Stephen and Anshwa were sure to put on a show for their guests throughout the night with their quirky antics.

The couple's ceremony was longer than most – about 45 minutes – but in true cinematic form, the pair kept their guests entertained throughout the ritual. They even provided some comic relief by whipping out some Binaca breath freshener prior to the “kiss the bride” moment.

“I'd rehearsed our ceremony in my head over and over again before the big day and planning out every song truly helped me tie everything together and remain calm throughout the process,” Anshwa says.

At the reception, guests were treated to cuisines that represented both the bride and groom's heritages. They incorporated Cajun menu items in homage to Anshwa's father's New Orleans roots and Jamaican fare to celebrate Stephen's background.

"Because we had a nine year courtship, we included a 'memory lane table' so our guests who knew us before we met could catch up on what we've been up to since, so our friends and mentors and co-workers we've met (since we've been together) could learn about what we did before we met," she says.

The guests were also entertained by an interactive slide show throughout the reception. The slides consisted of quotes from movies, asking viewers to guess the movie title, intermingled with photos of the couple and their friends and family.

Anshwa recalls all of the dancing and then the garter toss as some of her favorite parts of the reception. In continuing the theme of entertainment, Stephen pretended to pull money out from under the bride's gown when he went to retrieve the garter.

The couple and their guests continued the party at a local nightclub and then enjoyed brunch the next morning. After a day of fun at Six Flags and a farewell dinner, the two were off to Italy for their honeymoon – a surprise from Stephen that Anshwa describes as "a check off my bucket list."

"My wedding was well worth the 16 months of planning time. Everything I planned for in my timeline happened according to plan, starting with our timely arrival," says Anshwa. "I would recommend to any bride and groom to bring out

their personalities on their big day,” adds the bride. “And that is why I started SwaLaRue Events!”

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VITA

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