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Buddling ROMANCE

A young couple embraces their love of nature for their Naples nuptials

BY JUDY MARTEL | PHOTOGRAPHY BY ELAINE PALLADINO

Florida natives Fiona Spahr and Patrick Painter are passionate about the state's abundance of tropical gardens. It's only fitting that some of the area's most picturesque natural settings have played key roles in their relationship.

Fiona, a Sotheby's real estate agent based in Wellington, and Patrick, who serves as general counsel for Hedrick Brothers Construction in West Palm Beach, met through a mutual friend at the Winter Equestrian Festival in Wellington. Fiona grew up in Naples where her father, Stephen Spahr, is senior vice president at Janney Montgomery Scott and her mother, Sharda Spahr, owns the Old Naples Surf Shop. For 15 years, Fiona wintered in Wellington and competed in the Winter Equestrian Festival. It was at a festival luncheon where she first encountered Patrick, who was raised on Florida's east coast. Three years later, on New Year's Day, Patrick popped the question at the Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens in West Palm Beach. While the gardens were actually closed that afternoon, Patrick had a friend who secured him a key, Fiona explains.

"He wanted it to be a surprise, which was very sweet," she says. "I knew we were going to meet his family for an early dinner that evening, but the walk around the garden when it was closed





FIONA PURCHASED HER VERA WANG GOWN AT EVER AFTER IN MIAMI. SHE WANTED A TIMELESS DRESS THAT WAS SIMPLE AND ELEGANT BUT ALSO A LITTLE ROMANTIC, SO SHE REWORKED THE TOP TO INCORPORATE OFF-THE-SHOULDER STRAPS MADE OUT OF THE SAME CHANTILLY LACE AS HER CATHEDRAL-LENGTH VEIL, ALSO MADE BY VERA WANG.



was kind of out of the ordinary, so I wasn't really surprised. It was lovely. We had the entire park to ourselves for about an hour and a half, and he set up a little picnic with Champagne."

For the nuptials, the couple returned to Fiona's hometown and celebrated at the Naples Botanical Garden on April 7, 2018. The lush location houses many venues across its 170 acres, and Fiona and Patrick ended up staging their wedding in four unique spaces. The need for so many locales grew out of a "happy accident," according to Fiona. At the time, the original garden they'd wanted for their reception was dominated by a 40-foot-tall animatronic Tyrannosaurus rex that was part of a special dinosaur exhibit.

"That was a big surprise. At first, I thought, 'Okay, I'm going to have to have a dinosaur-themed wedding,'" she says, laughing. "I even made little silver dinosaurs to hold the table numbers."

In the end, they kept the table-number holders but decided on the progressive garden

reception instead. Luster Designs set the tone from the start by creating a custom watercolor crest and artwork reflecting flora from the Naples Botanical Garden, which appeared on the save-the-date cards, invitations, welcome boxes, napkins, and escort cards.

Although Fiona and her mother were in sync with each other regarding the wedding plans, they realized they could use some expert help pulling it all together. Margaret Short of Margaret Events is a family friend, and the three meshed well. "She is so calm and collected, and I love her outlook," Fiona says. "It seemed like the best natural fit."

When it came to design, Fiona and Margaret let the gardens dictate the decor. "Patrick and I knew we wanted an outdoor wedding, and we wanted it to be natural but elegant with a slight British West Indies island flair," Fiona says. "We tweaked the decor according to which garden we were in."

After attending the early evening ceremony on the Performance Lawn overlooking natural



THE FLOWER ARRANGEMENTS INCLUDED KING PROTEA ACCENTED BY ROSES AND HYDRANGEAS. INSPIRED BY THE FLORA IN THE NAPLES BOTANICAL GARDEN, LUSTER DESIGNS MADE CUSTOM WATERCOLORS THAT APPEARED ON THE INVITATIONS AND THROUGHOUT THE DAY-OF DECOR.

wetlands, the 125 guests strolled to the Lea Asian Garden for cocktails. Dinner was in the Kapnick Caribbean Garden, followed by dessert and dancing until midnight at Kapnick Hall.

While it was a little challenging to plan each part of the reception in a different venue, the various spots reflected the couple's love of gardens and their travels to the Caribbean and Bahamas. Vintage furniture from Unearthed Rentals gave Kapnick Hall the West Indies touch, while floral arrangements by Grace Lakes Florist paid homage to the verdant surrounds. Highlights included a huge driftwood piece overflowing with fuchsia bougainvillea that hung over the dance floor. The wedding party's table was graced with one long arrangement starring pink king protea mixed with blush roses and hydrangeas.

The menu, courtesy of Lurcat Catering, was Floridian with a nod to each garden's identity. Cocktail hour in the Lea Asian Garden, for example, featured spring rolls, beef empanadas, and a spicy fish dip. The signature cocktail was citrus-infused Champagne. Dinner entrées included roasted chicken or mahi-mahi. "I didn't want anything heavy," says Fiona. "I wanted it to be light and tropical." In keeping with that theme, the meal concluded with a banana cake topped with chocolate and caramel ganache.

The couple, both scuba divers, chose the tiny Kamalame Cay in the Bahamas for their honeymoon.



They make their home in West Palm Beach and, although Fiona has put away her riding boots for now, she still enjoys being a spectator. She even occasionally takes Patrick to Wellington Equestrian Festival events at the Palm Beach International Equestrian Center—the site of their first meeting and the beginning of their love story. ◀◀

