

House Dressing Options

A note from Ellie, our wedding stylist:

Wedding styles or themes fall roughly into one of these categories:

Contemporary – makes use of props such as mirrored plates, square or goldfish bowl shaped vases, giant Martini glasses: flower choices tend to involve plenty of foliage and vibrant contrast colours

Traditional – makes use of props such as candelabra, storm lanterns & votive tea lights; flower choices often involve ivory or white and where colours are used they will complement each other

Vintage – makes use of vintage crystal vases and jugs, silver & vintage china: flower choices are typically ‘cottage garden’ in feel; variants on this theme include **Modern Country** – which will use retro glass in colours such as grey, plum and green, **English Country** – which uses props such as terracotta or galvanised plant pots and antique seed boxes and **Summer Country** - which will use lots of glass and pastel/blush coloured flowers

Romantic – makes use of props such as antique white bird cages, silvered votives, lace and candelabra; bird and butterfly motifs are often incorporated into the design plan as well whilst flower choices tend to be chosen from the pastel spectrum

Colour Themed – makes use of a colour or colours as the unifying theme; examples of ‘colour focused’ weddings can be found on my mood boards on the wedding planning pages – in particular ‘Black’, ‘Red’ and ‘White on White’

Eclectic – makes use of whichever props take the bride and grooms fancy; sometimes with a strong underlying theme so a wedding styled around the ‘Mad Hatters Tea Party’ would be described as eclectic as would a wedding where the bride and groom like props from every wedding style and declare that they have no ‘theme’ whatsoever!

With a house the size and scale of Brympton though it pays to concentrate on certain key areas – so whatever style or theme you go this is what I have found works best:

Great Hall

A central floral display on the refractory table as your guests walk in for impact; and/or a foliage display over the Elizabethan Fireplace; In winter the foliage display can be dressed with candles/storm lanterns/LCD lighting, perhaps with the addition of berries; in summer the foliage can be decorated with flowers. Summer weddings often question the necessity of ‘dressing’ the Great Hall and the answer is always the same – you can never guarantee that it won’t rain – even at the height of summer! – and the Great Hall

provides a focal point for display of your guest book and gift box, so needs to be dressed in any event.

Castle House

There are 8 windowsills in Castle House plus the alter window to dress and whilst these sills are nowhere near the size of the ones on the Great Stairs or in the Ballroom that's still an awful lot of space to decorate if you opt to dress it with flowers alone! My styling solution for Castle House therefore is to provide a base of greenery – summer or winter – on the sills and then add a top dressing of flowers and props as the mood of the wedding dictates. In winter the greenery could be dressed with glass storm lanterns or my giant handmade wrought iron ones with the addition of LCD lighting and tea light votives whilst in summer traditional hand tied flower arrangements in jugs or vases look spectacular. The alter window needs to be styled with either props or flowers that add height whilst the registrars table should be traditionally styled with a low central floral arrangement – which is always re-used for the top table in the Ballroom.

Dressing the pillars with greenery and either ribbons/flowers/LCD lighting is fun and adds a layer of opulence to the design whilst pew ends, particularly if you select the round willow ones, can often be reused in the Ballroom to dress the bases of the giant candelabra

Another popular dressing idea for the sills is to use vintage wooden bird cages – which can be filled with either flowers or candles – and which can fit the mood of any wedding theme or style

Ante Room

Gibbon's masterpiece should be left to speak for itself – the only slight tweaks that can be added being a foliage display over the marble mantelpiece for a winter wedding or a simple hand tie during summer but you can get away with omitting both

Great Drawing Room

Decoration is only really necessary if you plan to make extensive use of the room during your wedding and in this case add nothing more than a giant foliage display over the 1680 fireplace in winter (again with props such as LCD lighting and perhaps silver candelabra to reflect the grandeur of the room) or a floral display on the William III pedestal table in summer

Great Stairs

The 1680 staircase is one of the glories of Brympton and as the earliest, continuous wooden staircase in the UK is of national importance! The treads are made from English elm whilst the panelled 1680 walls would have originally been painted [only mahogany

was left in its bare state]. In styling terms it is important to introduce as much light as possible to the stairs – so props should be reflective/light coloured with extensive use of LED lights and candles in either summer or winter.

Newel Posts; a floral display on every post although lovely is prohibitively expensive; far better to interlace the posts with foliage and thread flowers of choice through them. In the winter you can add in LCD lights and glass storm lanterns with candles on the newel posts themselves using Brympton's specially designed safety caps

The treatment of the window sills is again very similar to that suggested for Castle House – e.g. providing a base of greenery for props and flowers; if finances allow add a floral swag to the entrance pillars at the base of the stairs. Good props in styling terms are the vintage wooden bird cages – they are painted an 'antique white' and filled with either candles or flowers lift the eyes upwards to the ballroom.

Ballroom Passage Window

A key area although often overlooked by florists not used to working in the house! In summer a floral arrangement is needed, in winter you can use foliage; LCD lighting, staggered height candles/storm lanterns and some well-chosen props

Ballroom

Tables

The size of the room demands height on the tables and the giant candelabra work particularly well here; they can be wrapped in foliage, interlaced with flowers/ribbons/lace/LCD lights depending on your theme

An alternative is to use giant mirrored stands with the addition of selected accessories e.g. silvered votives, single flowers in bud vases, goldfish bowl floral arrangements, glass storm lanterns etc

For the windowsills for reasons of economy always reuse the window displays from Castle House (a member of my team will move them for you during your drinks reception) likewise the low floral display used for the registrars table in Castle House will be moved to the top table in the ballroom, to which additional props can then be added

Greening of the curtain poles, perhaps with the addition of LCD lighting, is fun but should only be considered when you have opted to use the giant candelabra; otherwise all you are doing is emphasizing the enormous scale/height of the room

Star Chamber

It's nice to decorate the breakfast/tea tables with simple arrangements in both summer and winter

Outside

In winter the outside really does need to be lit either using jam jar lighting/shepherds crooks or giant storm lanterns as the Grade 1 listing of the house makes permission for more permanent lighting problematic – as it would have to be fixed to the structure.

Further lighting fun can be had with battery powered LCD lights which can be draped around the topiary trees, the gate piers, outline the arch of the bell tower etc

Orangery

Summer or winter fire pits with hay bale seating are great fun and in winter at least means that the guests can use the outside!

In decoration terms I never advise trying to decorate the whole of the Orangery but to tweak it slightly.

Perhaps my best advice to you would be to think BIG wherever you decorate; so go for oversized candelabra in the ballroom/giant sized storm lanterns in Castle House etc for impact and to compensate for the fact that the rooms in Brympton are huge!

Candles

The only candles that can be used at Brympton for insurance purposes are made by Prices and contain a very high percentage of beeswax. They have to be ordered through the house and will form part of your final invoice.