

# Fifty couples to say 'I do' in Pinellas group wedding on Valentine's Day

By [Piper Castillo](#), Times staff writer

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Does Cupid have his heart-shaped arrow aimed for Largo? At least 100 men and women hope he does. In honor of St. Valentine's Day, a group wedding coordinated by Pinellas County's Clerk of the Court will be Sunday at the Pinellas County Botanical Gardens off Walsingham Road. Clerk Ken Burke will officiate the civil ceremony.

The program, started four years ago on the steps of the Pinellas County Courthouse, first began with about 25 couples. Last year, after the Botanical Gardens staff offered the Wedding Garden as a host site, the group wedding relocated.

Burke thinks the event has doubled in size this year because word has gotten out about the setting amidst the formal gardens.

"It is a way for people to get married in a beautiful place while avoiding high costs," said Burke. "Last year, I remember seeing so many different types of people. Some came in formal attire, like tuxedos and gowns, but I also saw a couple in matching tie dye shirts."

If you've walked through the Botanical Gardens this week, you might have noticed master gardeners from the Pinellas Extension, along with county park staffers, sprucing up the area in the center of the 30-acre facility.

"Because of the freeze, they needed to clear out debris," said Vernon Bryant, horticulture manager for Pinellas County Parks and Recreation.

And although roses are not in bloom this time of year, visitors can expect plenty of newly planted flowers.

"We've been keeping in line with the general maintenance budget for the Botanical Gardens, but since we knew the group wedding was coming, we've been planting fresh annuals, including impatiens, begonias and geraniums," Bryant said.

Spectators are free to walk through the gardens during regular hours. But be aware that on Sunday the Wedding Garden just might be a little crowded. With the friends and family of each bride and groom, more than 300 people are already expected to be on hand, according to Karin Case, communications coordinator for Ken Burke's office.

The Charominizers, a barbershop quartet, will serenade the crowd. Wedding cake will be served just as soon as the grooms kiss their brides.

Because it is a civil ceremony with so many people participating, Burke plans on keeping it on the simple side.

"But even though it is a civil ceremony, that doesn't mean I'm not joyous," said Burke. "It's a day for everyone in love."

**Fast facts: Valentine's Day group wedding ceremony, 2 p.m. Sunday, Florida Botanical Gardens, 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo. Information: [www.mypinellasclerk.org](http://www.mypinellasclerk.org) or call (727) 464-7000. Note: The clerk's office has capped the number of participants to the 50 already registered couples.**

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