

Idealhome garden party checklist

You'll enjoy the party as much as your guests if you follow these simple steps

TWO WEEKS BEFORE

- Give your outdoor furniture a face-lift** Consider giving tables, chairs and benches a repaint - see www.idealhomemagazine.co.uk/gardenfurniture for tips.
- Think about lighting** If you already have outdoor lights, check and replace any broken bulbs. If you don't want to wire in a permanent lighting system, go to your local garden centre for a solar-powered set that can be placed anywhere in the garden.
- Don't forget the music** Check batteries for portable CD players or make sure you have an extension lead.

Notes



For more advice and ideas visit www.idealhomemagazine.co.uk

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A WEEK BEFORE

- Have a good tidy-up in the garden** Mow the lawn, weed flowerbeds, spruce up paths and sort out any unruly areas.
- Tell the neighbours** If it's going to be a big party or go on late into the night, write a note to your neighbours. A small courtesy now could save complaints later on.
- Check the weather forecast** and be prepared to make alternative plans if it's going to be wet. Consider arrangements for moving the party indoors or hiring a gazebo.

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TWO DAYS BEFORE

- Add last-minute touches to the garden** Water plants and sweep your patio area thoroughly. If your outside space looks really bare, consider making an emergency trip to your local garden centre and buy two or three pots of flowering plants to brighten up the space.
- Tidy your hallway** and make sure you've cleared space for guests' coats and bags.
- Make party ice-cubes** by putting mint leaves or slices of lemon and lime in the water before you freeze it.
- Get shopping** Make a detailed shopping list with everything you'll need. Add on plastic plates and glasses if you don't think you'll have enough and consider buying lanterns and bunting to decorate your garden with.
- Think about the kids.** If your guests are bringing children to the party, consider setting up a play area for them at the bottom of the garden to keep them entertained. A small tent is all you need – put some rugs and cushions inside to create a cosy den.

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SIX HOURS BEFORE

- Sort out the furniture** Give your outdoor furniture a last wipe down.
- Start cooking** If you can cook anything in advance, do it now so the pressure is off later.
- Put the drinks on ice** The white wine, champagne and soft drinks need to go into the fridge or an ice bucket to chill.
- Get rid of pests** If wasps are a problem in your garden, set a wasp trap by putting some jam or sugar solution in an empty wine bottle. Wasps will fly in, but will find it hard to get out.

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TWO HOURS BEFORE

- Decorate your outside area** Balloons don't work well in the garden as they pop easily and tend to blow away, so go for lanterns and pretty fabric bunting.
- Prepare nibbles, drinks** and any food you didn't sort out earlier.
- Light the fire** If you're having a barbecue, light it now so it's ready to cook on when guests arrive.

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ONE HOUR BEFORE

Arrange your furniture and lay the table Place glasses upside down to prevent insects and leaves falling in them. Watch out for gusts of wind – you might need tablecloth weights if it's a breezy day, and weigh down napkins with cutlery. Instead of paper placecards that might blow away, try using large pebbles with names written on in chalk.

Think about comfort If your garden furniture isn't very soft, bring some cushions outside. Old rugs can turn a patio into a cosy seating area with a Moroccan feel, and make sure you have a pile of blankets and shawls ready in case your guests feel chilly later in the evening.

Prepare any last-minute food such as salads.

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FIVE MINUTES BEFORE

Lights on If it's an evening party, turn on outside lights and light any garden candles.

Turn on the music to set the mood.

Fill ice buckets and set out drinks and nibbles.

Have fun!

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