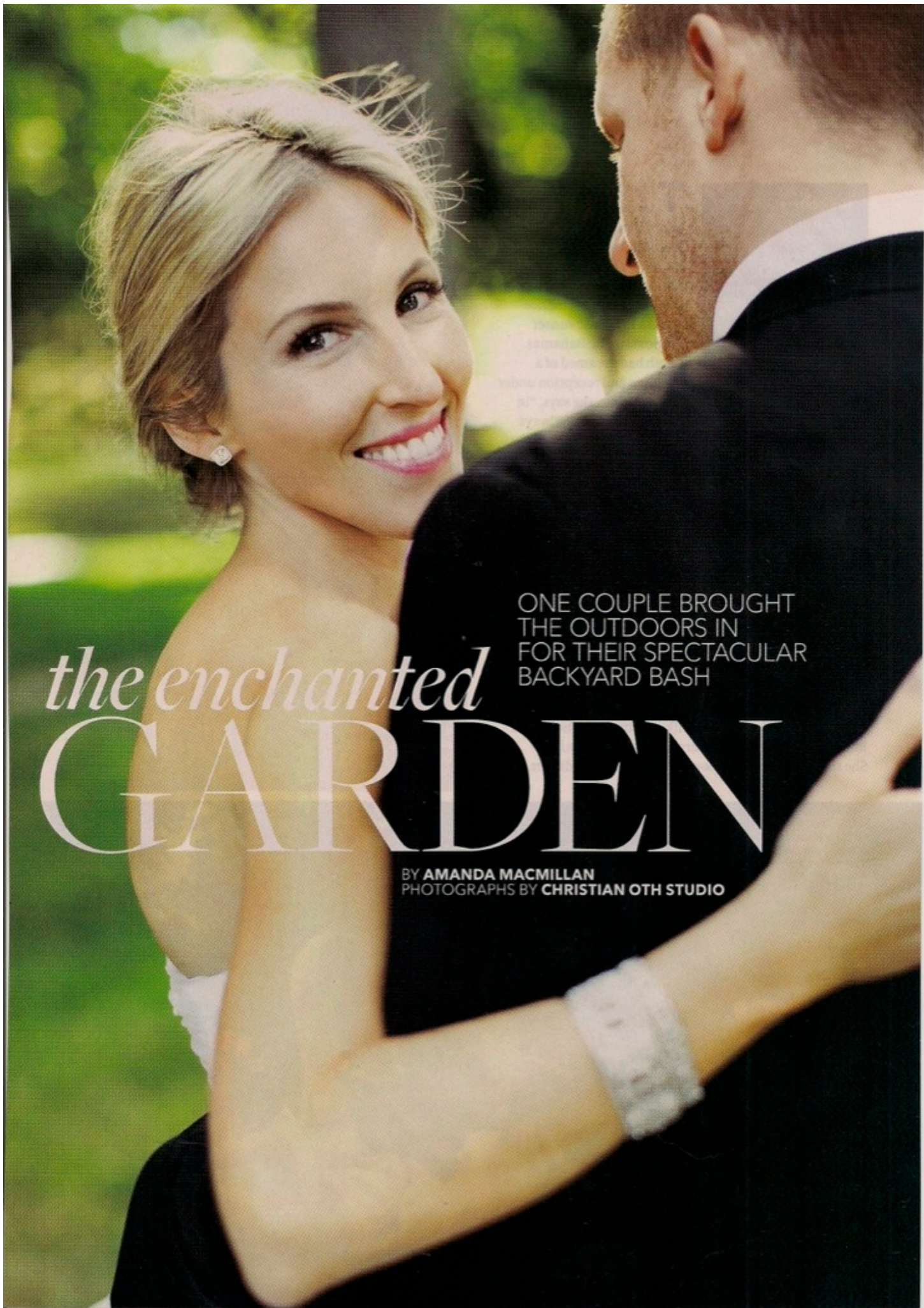




Sarah and Shawn's reception flowers included bright flashes of fuchsia and green, but she wanted to keep her bouquet simple, soft, and monochromatic.



ONE COUPLE BROUGHT
THE OUTDOORS IN
FOR THEIR SPECTACULAR
BACKYARD BASH

the enchanted

GARDEN

BY AMANDA MACMILLAN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRISTIAN OTH STUDIO

THE COUPLE Sarah Van Kirk, 31, design student, and Shawn M. Fay Jr., 33, civil-construction executive

THE WEDDING At the bride's family's home near Pittsburgh on June 23, 2012

HOW THEY MET Through an ex of Sarah's in 2009

THE PROPOSAL On a boat in the Bahamas

HONEYMOON Abaco Islands, Bahamas

Though they both grew up outside of Pittsburgh, Sarah Van Kirk and Shawn Fay didn't meet until their late 20s. The couple made up for lost time: Within a year, their whirlwind romance led to a romantic sunset proposal in the Bahamas. Sarah had dreamed of a wedding and reception under the stars, but, she says, "in Pittsburgh, there's always a chance of rain, so that wasn't exactly an option." Here's how the pair created the next best thing.

MAGIC FOREST Florist Jerry Sibal fashioned oversize chandeliers out of branches,

moss, and flowers and strung up star-shaped lanterns to turn the tents into a whimsical garden fantasy.

THE SUPERSTITIOUS GROOM Shawn adamantly did not want to see Sarah before the ceremony, so the couple took photos during cocktail hour. "Did it make things more complicated? Yes, but it was important to him," says Sarah.

CHANGING IT UP "I wanted something traditional for the ceremony," Sarah says of her silk-and-organza Oscar de la Renta gown, "but it felt too dramatic to wear all night." She slipped into a short Monique Lhuillier after dinner.



The bride's ruffled gown got a bit of bling from a pearl-and-crystal belt.

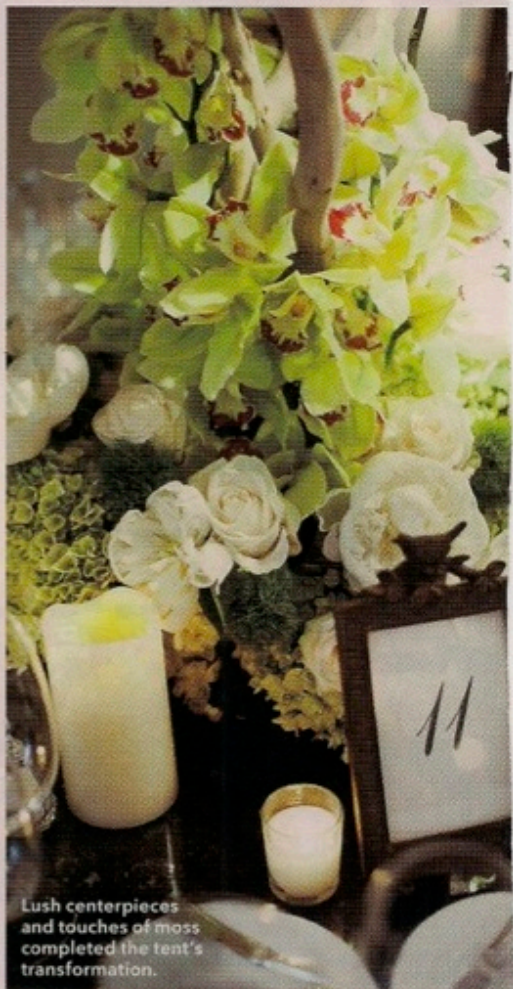
Seven flower girls—daughters of the bride's cousins—carried baskets of rose petals.





It took nearly a week for the tent to be assembled and decorated.

Sugar-paste flowers topped layers of chocolate and vanilla cake filled with chocolate buttercream and raspberry jam.



Lush centerpieces and touches of moss completed the tent's transformation.



Bridesmaids in tow, Sarah hustled to a car waiting to take her to the church.

TAKEAWAY TIPS FROM SARAH AND SHAWN

Use visual aids with your vendors Sarah created Pinterest boards for her florist and planner: "Explaining my ideas was much easier with images."

Get bling on a budget Rather than shell out big bucks for jewelry, the bride rented a diamond bracelet from Adorn.com.

Know when to delegate "I decided, two days before the wedding, that I was done making decisions," says Sarah, who handed all questions to her planner.

Find a quiet moment After the ceremony, Sarah and Shawn took a private car to the reception. "It was our first chance to soak it all in together," she says.

Give functional favors The couple provided guests with pashminas, monogrammed flip-flops for dancing, and umbrellas in case of rain.

Event planning: Bonnie Walker Events; bonniwalkerevents.com.

Bride's dresses: Oscar de la Renta (ceremony); oscardearenta.com. Monique Lhuillier (reception); monique lhuillier.com.

Bridesmaids' dresses: Jenny Yoo; jennyyoo.com.

Flower girls' dresses: Pegeen; pegeen.com.

Catering: Duquesne Club; duquesne.org.

Flowers: Jerry Sibal Design; jerrysibal.com.

Stationery: Alpine Creative Group; alpinecreativegroup.com. More Than Words Fine Papers; 412-343-9673.

Entertainment: Studio-E Entertainment Company; studioe entertainment.com.

Cake: Vanilla Pastry Studio; vanillapastry.com.

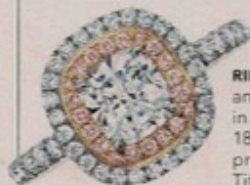
Tent: All Occasions Party Rental; allparty.com.

Photography: Christian Oth Studio; christianothstudio.com.

GET THE LOOK

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S GARDEN PARTY

for the **BRIDE**



RING Cushion-cut and pink diamonds in platinum and 18-karat rose gold, price upon request, Tiffany & Co.; tiffany.com.

EARRINGS Crystal and amethyst, \$220. Janis by Janis Savitt; jsavitt.com.



WEDDING GOWN Tulle, \$6,950. Marchesa; marchesa.com.

all the **DETAILS**



TIN STARS \$36 for four, Lee Carter Company; colors sanmiguel.com.



TABLE NUMBER \$15, Momental Designs; momental designs.com.



CAKE \$12 per slice (serves 70), Sugar Couture; sugar-couture.com.

DINNERWARE "Arcades," \$350 for a five-piece place setting, Philippe Deshoulières; whitecrane.bridge catalog.com.