

# Birmingham home & garden

INSPIRED LIVING FOR BIRMINGHAM AND BEYOND

## Let's Celebrate

Birmingham's  
guide to planning  
the perfect soirée

extra!  
DISH  
RECIPES

Media room stars  
Appetizing appetizers  
Wedding planning secrets

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www.birminghamhomeandgarden.com

by ALICE L. ELMORE   photography by SYLVIA MARTIN   floral design and styling by CHRISTOPHER REED

# masterpieces *in* bloom

DAZZLE GUESTS AT YOUR  
NEXT PARTY WITH THESE  
TIPS FROM AN EVENT  
PLANNING PRO





ONE EVENING IN MARCH, MEMBERS OF THE SERVICE GUILD OF BIRMINGHAM HOSTED INTIMATE DINNERS THROUGHOUT THE CITY FOR THE 23RD ANNUAL GUILD GALA.

The theme for the 2008 fundraiser was “Masterpieces” and one lucky group dined in the midst of works of art—some painted, some sculpted, and for that evening, many made of flowers and candles.

The now-closed NorDys Gallery was the backdrop for this particular dinner. In addition to the expected works in paint and clay, guests were also treated to artistic floral displays, shimmering candlelight, and elegantly appointed tables, courtesy of Christopher Reed and Confero Productions, his event production company.

“My role in the event was to take what could have been an ordinary fundraiser dinner and turn it into something extraordinary,” says Christopher, whose business serves clients throughout the Southeast. “What better setting than an art gallery to let your creativity run wild?”



**FACING PAGE:** A pair of simple glass bowls are the foundation for this centerpiece. Christopher filled one bowl with flower heads (carnations for the pink tablescapes and alstroemeria for the yellow version), then angled another bowl on top. Pink or yellow tulip stems were then curled into the upper bowl. A tip: only certain flowers tolerate being bent in this way, and most do best at room temperature. **THIS PAGE, TOP LEFT:** Christopher adds a finishing touch—blossoming cherry branches suspended before a vibrant red backdrop in the gallery’s front windows. Small candles lit the entry. **THIS PAGE, TOP RIGHT:** A few tulip stems were twisted into hydrangea petals for instant impact. **THIS PAGE, BOTTOM RIGHT:** A potted tulip, complete with roots and bulbs, is submerged in a tall glass container for each cocktail table. “This was a terrific frame to the bar, and added so much height and drama,” Christopher says. Pairs of glass cubes sat at the table corners, the bottom cube filled with carnation heads and the top with a floating candle.

## Resources:

### CONFERO PRODUCTIONS

#### Christopher Reed:

205.435.0634

[www.confero productions.com](http://www.confero productions.com)

e-mail: [christopher@confero productions.com](mailto:christopher@confero productions.com)

[confero productions.com](http://confero productions.com)

### THE SERVICE GUILD OF BIRMINGHAM:

[www.theserviceguild.org](http://www.theserviceguild.org)



## party pointers

MAKE YOUR NEXT GATHERING AN EXCEPTIONAL EVENT WITH THESE TIPS FROM CHRISTOPHER.

- **“Planning, planning, planning,”** Christopher says, pointing out the importance of thinking through the logistics of your decor. Consider how long it will take you to light dozens of candles, or what might happen if those same candles burn for several hours.
- **Lights out.** Turn off all overhead lights, install a dimmer switch or two if you don't already have them and use lighting to create a mood that will transport your guests. “I lined the entire perimeter of the gallery with votives which gave the space a sparkle. I spotlighted tabletops and turned off harsh lights that weren't needed,” Christopher says.
- **“Don't be a flower snob,”** Christopher adds. Use inexpensive blooms—such as carnations—en masse for eye-catching displays of color and texture. Pile flower heads into clear containers and submerge them in water for a simple arrangement.
- **Go grocery shopping.** Amazing arrangements can be made with a little time and a trip to a high-end grocery store. “The average homeowner has access to an amazing assortment and variety of flowers at these stores,” Christopher notes. And don't forget the produce department for creative fodder: lemons, limes, apples and a number of other fresh foods can easily be transformed into colorful tablescapes.
- **No frills.** Focus on simple containers that can be used in creative ways. Glass bowls, cubes, and cylinders can be filled with blooms, branches, fruit, dried peas or just water and a floating candle for a fabulous centerpiece. Stack containers on top of each other. Group glass bowls with flower petals or tinted water (a few drops of food coloring can do the trick), place a piece of glass atop the bowls, and serve hors d'oeuvres on the glass.
- **Respect boundaries.** “Whether you are hosting an afternoon tea for 10 or an engagement celebration for 50, you should always be true to your space whether it's your home or a larger venue. Plan appropriately and be realistic about what you can accomplish in your space,” Christopher says.
- **Dramatic details.** A stunning centerpiece doesn't have to be complicated. Pick a single color or texture and repeat it. Buy a dozen of the same bloom, place each bloom in a single vase, then line the vases down the table's center.

## Guild's good work:

THE SERVICE GUILD OF BIRMINGHAM celebrated its 50th year in 2008. Members volunteer hundreds of hours working with the children at The Bell Center for Early Intervention Programs, located in Homewood. The center serves children (from birth through three years of age) in Central Alabama who are at risk for developmental delays. The Guild also coordinates fundraising and special events that benefit The Bell Center. For more information about The Service Guild, go to [www.theserviceguild.org](http://www.theserviceguild.org) or call The Bell Center at 205.870.0081.

While his company does coordinate weddings and other special events, Christopher focused strictly on centerpieces and floral arrangements for this dinner. Three different styles of centerpieces—all with the common tulip motif—adorned the main tables. Other striking arrangements graced the front windows, the entry and favors table and the cocktail area.

“Christopher did a wonderful job with our flowers and assisted us in arranging and placing the tables for the best effect,” says Guild member Lori Cork. “His arrangements were a huge hit and the talk of the evening. Everyone commented on how unique and beautiful they were, which made the evening so much more special!” ●



LEFT: A single cylinder gives height to this centerpiece. Christopher artistically arranged tulip stems and curly willow branches inside and filled each container with water. RIGHT: Alongside the party favors sits a simple arrangement of hydrangeas and tulips. A moss orb tops the tall glass cylinder.