

DO-IT-YOURSELF GREEN WEDDING GUIDE

FOR THE ECO-CONSCIOUS WEDDING PLANNER



Prepared by Green Chair Events
www.greenchairevents.com
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Eco Materials for dresses

Can you green a wedding by the clothes you wear? Definitely. Some fabrics have less impact on the environment than others. Environmentally friendly fabrics include:

- Organic cotton
- Hemp
- Soybean blends
- Wool
- Soy Silk
- Corn Fibres

For the Men, a hemp suit is a good choice, and many suit designers are beginning to include a hemp suit in their lineup.

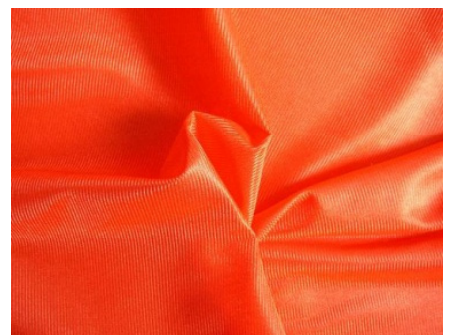
It can be a challenge to find dress made of eco-friendly materials, but a thorough Internet search can usually generate a few leads, or ask designers that you know. Most likely, if you are buying a dress, they are made out of materials such as:

- Taffeta
- Chiffon
- Tulle
- Lace
- Silk
- Polyester
- Nylon

These days wedding dress designers are always trying to switch up designs and fabrics. It is possible to take the less desirable fabrics above and blend them with eco-friendly materials, such as making lace out of organic cotton and using soy-based silks. If you are getting your dress custom made, request these environmentally-preferable fabrics from your dressmaker

Leftover Fabrics

Fabrics left over from dressmaking and from wedding decorations or linen can be re-used or donated. Green Chair Events in Vancouver (www.greenchairevents.com) will accept all used fabric donations.



Eco Flowers Checklist

Consider potted plants instead of cut flowers. The potted plants can double as take-home party favours.

Are the flowers grown locally? – You want to get flowers that are grown locally otherwise, they can travel an average of 2,200 kilometres from where they are cut, which means more greenhouse gas emissions. If the flowers are grown in another country they can be sprayed with potentially harmful and unfamiliar pesticides.

Were they grown in a green house? – Research has not yet determined whether local greenhouse flowers generate less emissions than imported flowers, due to the energy required to keep greenhouses running and warm. Seek out fresh cut local flowers wherever possible.

Are they organic or fair trade? – If your heart is set on a flower that is not available in this country, check if your retailer carries fair trade organic flowers. Fair trade means that the growers receive a fair and just portion of the sales profits rather than being exploited for profits.

Were they sprayed with pesticides? – Pesticides can be harmful to your body, and after the flowers are watered, the pesticide containing runoff water flows into the soil and may make its way into our rivers, streams, and oceans.

Do you have eco-friendly ribbon options? – There are different kinds of ribbons that can be used to wrap your flowers that do not use petroleum-based products for manufacture, such as silk ribbons that are naturally biodegradable, cotton ribbon that is acid free and coloured with soy ink, and plant fibre based ribbons made from grasses and banana leaves. Or, you can re-use cuttings from the wedding dress fitting as ribbons for the bouquet.

Is your tissue paper made from recycled paper? – This should be a yes! Just because you have organic flowers doesn't mean you should stop there! If you want tissue paper around your flowers then make sure that it is made from recycled paper. There is 100% recycled tissue paper available in the market. You are unlikely to find it in the dollar store, consider a premium retailer!



How to Reuse Flowers

Flowers stay fresh for several days! If your wedding takes place over a weekend, arrange to have someone transport the flowers from one event to the next. Used flowers can be donated to hospitals or meal delivery services that service low-income households. For example, the Canadian Flowers for Food Society in Vancouver will take the flowers that are left over from your event and give to homeless and marginalized people who will re-sell the flowers.

This will help disadvantaged people generate income for themselves and their families. It also keeps flowers from going into the landfill.



Eco Venue Checklist

Identifying a green venue is challenging, as sometimes the ‘green’ is in the construction and not necessarily the day-to-day operations.

- For example “**LEED**” certification only certifies that the building construction has a low environmental impact, it does not certify operating practices. Look for LEED Silver, Gold or Platinum ratings.
- Some hotels subscribe to the ‘**Green Key**’ eco-rating rating system. However participation is voluntary, and certification is based on a self-assessment, without third party verification and may not include banquet operations. In our experience, this system is a fairly good indicator of a hotel’s environmental commitment.
- Restaurants in the lower mainland may subscribe to the **Green Table Network** certification. This is a very stringent certification conducted by an outside party. They have 8 specific steps to follow to be considered as green! Ask your restaurant if they are Green Table certified or visit the Green Table Network website www.greentable.net

If your preferred venue is not part of any of these three rating systems, you may wish to ask them what their internal environmental practices are. Remember, everyone will tell you ‘yes we recycle’ but it is not always true, many venues in our experience do not have a recycling system in place or the recycling is so contaminated with garbage that it can’t be recycled. Ask the venue what their waste management plan is. If they don’t know or can’t produce one, they are probably not ‘green’.

Some other questions you can ask the venue representative:

Are your carpets made from recycled materials? New carpeting has a high environmental burden

Does the venue have a lot of windows and natural light? This will reduce the need for energy-consuming daytime lighting

Do you use low energy appliances? There are certain appliances now, that use lower energy resources than older appliances. If buildings are using lower energy appliances it’s a plus!

Are you using LED or other efficient lights? LED stands for light emitting diode, and these lights use significantly less energy per output than normal incandescent or fluorescent lamps.

Do you have a compost bin? - It is very important that the venue composts all of the food waste. If they do not, ask them why not - keep in mind that compost services are not available in all regions. Compost is a great way to reduce waste at a wedding or event!

Is it close to public transportation? - When it comes to getting there it’s always nice if your event is close to public transportation, it can save on gas and then people can toast in your wedding or celebration without the worry of leaving their cars overnight at the venue. And why not ask if secure bicycle parking is available?



The Vancouver Convention Center Ballroom, has a LEED Platinum rating by CaGBC



The Vancouver Fairmont Waterfront Hotel, Mackenzie Ballroom, Given 5 keys on the Green Key scale.

Eco Catering Checklist

When it comes to the catering of your event you will want to have food that you trust and want to put into your body. You do not want to be putting chemicals or bad products into your body at any event, never the less your wedding day.

Is all the food grown/come from local vendors? – Having locally grown food isn't only good for our economy, it's also great for the environment because it reduces transportation related emissions. On average, non-local food travels 2200 kilometres before arriving at the grocery store. A 'green' caterer will know the source of all their ingredients. Seek out organic ingredients whenever possible.

Do they use in season fruits and vegetables? – If yes, that works out great for you! Produce grown in-season requires less resources and energy than products grown in greenhouses or factories.

Is the meat organic? – Meat that isn't organic gets treated with chemicals, antibiotics and hormones, which we may consume in our bodies. Most animal waste is not treated at conventional sewage treatment facilities and usually leaches through the soil into the water table. Consider an all vegetarian meal, with meat available on request. Everybody can enjoy vegetarian cuisine, but vegetarian guests may not enjoy themselves at a wedding where meat is front and centre. Reducing meat served at your wedding will significantly lower your carbon footprint.

If the meat is not organic, seek out free range meat as an alternative.

What happens to leftover food? – Do the caterers donate or compost leftover food? In our experience, more than half of the waste at weddings consists of uneaten food. Make sure your caterer has an eco-sensitive plan to deal with leftover food. A composting system for leftover food scraps is a must when seeking a green caterer. In the Vancouver area, Green Chair Events (www.greenchairevents.com) rents out composting bins and can provide composting and other recycling services for weddings or events.

Remember, unused food, even cooked food, can be donated to organizations who will redistribute the food to needy organizations. Does your preferred caterer practice this? In the lower mainland, we can recommend two groups that will re-distribute leftover food, they are Community Angel Food Runners and Quest.



Candles

The environmentally preferable choice for candles for your wedding would be pure beeswax and vegetable-oil-based candles. Conventional candles are made of a petroleum product called Paraffin, it is a non-renewable and polluting resource. Candle soot (smoke) from conventional candles can cause indoor air pollution and cause discomfort in the lungs. Scented candles create even more potentially toxic soot, and should be avoided in favour of beeswax or vegetable oil candles.

Carbon Offsets

Travelling by plane and car produces a lot of global-warming greenhouse gases. You can purchase carbon offsets in proportion to the amount your wedding guests will be travelling, and the money you spend will be used to reduce greenhouse gas emissions somewhere else. To calculate your wedding 'carbon footprint' visit terrapass.com/wedding/

Rings

Rings are the first step to marriage, there wouldn't be a wedding without a proposal and a ring! If you want to keep your rings as green as you want your wedding, there are some alternatives that are out there to conventional diamonds. Different options for rings are:

- Vintage rings that are passed down in your family or found at a pawn shop
- Melt down old gold into something new, modern and custom created
- Buy lab-created diamonds which can also be set in recycled gold (greenkarat.com)
- Even diamonds mined in Canada may still have a large environmental impact, however the working conditions are much better for these workers than for those in Africa, and the region is also conflict-free (brilliantearth.com)
- Look into fair-trade diamonds from eco-conscious companies (credjewellery.com or leberjeweler.com/earthwise)
- An alternative to diamonds, are wooden bands (touchwoodrings.com) which are very unique

Avoid so called 'blood diamonds'. This refers to a diamond mined in a war zone and sold to finance an insurgency or other war efforts, usually in Africa where around two-thirds of the world's diamonds are extracted. Usually, the workers in the mine are poor and exploited by their managers and by the multi-national companies that own the mine. There are also diamonds that still come from Africa that are conflict-free, and they carry a certification of "Kimberley Process certified"



Sapphire Ring
(www.brilliantearth.com)



Comfort Fit Band
(www.greenkarat.com)

Eco Invitation Checklists

Can you set up electronic invitations, by Facebook, email, etc.? If so that's great, and just think of the paper (not to mention cost) you will save. That said, a printed invitation or thank you card is a sincere touch, so if you still want to do that, you'll want to make sure you do it in an environmentally friendly way.

The invitations, thank you cards, and the envelopes that you use should be:

Made from 100% post-consumer waste recycled paper, or paper from other fibre sources (e.g. hemp paper). Just because they put 'recycled' on the product does not mean that the product is actually made out of once-used paper. If it doesn't say post-consumer waste, or PCW, on the product, it is NOT actually recycled. Only use PCW recycled.

Chlorine free. Most white or clean coloured papers have been bleached with chlorine. Seek out off-white or natural papers with the fibre texture intact, or natural papers that have been dyed with soy or vegetable based inks.

Reusable. Why not send the invitation on seed paper? This is paper with plant seeds embedded inside as part of the texture of natural paper, and it can be composted or left in the garden and the seeds will take root and grow a new plant. Consider affixing the details of your event to the printed card using non-permanent tape, so that the recipient can keep or re-gift the card to someone else.

Consider painting rocks or seashells for use as table number markers

Eco Wedding Favours

There are many options when it comes to giving your guests wedding favours that can be very eco-friendly. Avoid disposable favours, and give them away in reusable cloth bags or fabric or make them part of the decor. Favours can include:

- A friendship bracelet that doubles as a napkin ring at the dinner table
- Personalized seed favours/packages
- Personalized plant-able card favours
- Plant-able confetti
- Natural cotton tote bag
- Eco-friendly photo albums
- Miniature natural bird nests
- Personalized flower pots
- Decorated tree seedling
- Mini woven beach bags
- Bamboo wood salad sets
- Keep it local and low-impact!



Bachelor and Bachelorette Parties

There are some things that you can do that would help keep the green theme even for your parties going. You can make some choices that would be different and green for the location and activities that you do at your parties. Some things to think about are:

- Keep it local
- Serve organic alcoholic beverages at your party
- Attend an organic wine or beer tasting
- Get organic spa treatments
- Bring your friends to workshops on how to make your own flower arrangements or jewelry for your wedding (greenchairevents.com)
- Do something outdoors and enjoy nature by going camping, surfing, skiing, and kayaking

Photographers

Many photographers have switched over to greener practices thanks to the digital revolution.

Ask your photographers to send their proofs by email before deciding which ones to print. A green photographer can post prints online with password protection so that only your guests can view the photos.

There are different chemical processes to print photos, some are better than others. Ask your photographer if they are using the most harmless chemicals available – be aware that many photographers do not do their own developing, and very few developers actually use environmentally safe chemicals.

Honeymoon

You don't need to stop being green once your wedding is over! You can be green all throughout your honeymoon as well. There are different places and ways to get there that are more green for the environment as well. Here are a few things to consider when you start to plan for your honey moon:

- Go somewhere local
- Engage in ecotourism (e.g. www.great-explorations.com)
- Make your trip one that will benefit an environmental group
- Take a romantic train trip instead of a cruise
- Don't rent a car while you are away, rent some bikes or enjoy the scenery while you walk through a new town.
- Try to stay in a family run bed and breakfast or inn, a luxury tepee, or a green hotel to reduce/save resources



Images by Bethany
(www.imagesbybethany.com)



Gulf Islands Bicycle Tour
(www.great-explorations.com)

RECOMMENDED GREEN WEDDING SUPPLIERS

The following Local vendors provide services in the Lower Mainland (Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada)

FLOWERS

Olla Flowers

ollaflowers.com

CATERING

Sweet Naturally Bakery

sweetnaturally.ca

Luscious Creations (peanut and nut free)

lusciouscreations.ca

Marie Antoinette

weddingcakesvancouver.com

LEFTOVER FOOD

Community Angels Food Runners

foodbank.bc.ca

Quest Food Exchange

questoutreach.org

FASHION

Pure Magnolia

puremagnolia.ca

Shoo-Foo Eco Fashions

shoo-foo.com

RINGS & JEWELRY

Bueno Style

buenostyle.com

Spark Jewelry

sparkjewelry.ca

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Dave Bryson Photography

davebrysonimages.com

Images by Bethany

imagesbybethany.com

Sweet Earth Photographics

sweetearthphotographics.com

ECO HONEYMOON

Great Explorations

greatexplorations.com



Luscious Creations Cakes
(www.lusciouscreations.ca)

ABOUT GREEN CHAIR EVENTS

Green Chair provides the following services for weddings and events

- We provide decorations and equipment for rental made entirely out of re-used or donated materials. This includes decor, linens, chairs, tables, cutlery and dishware, centrepieces, floral arrangements and much, much more.
- Visit our rental store to select the perfect decorations and event rentals for your wedding
- We accept donations of leftover materials including fabrics, decor, and flowers.
- We provide green event consulting services and green wedding planning services
- We coordinate compost and recycling services for private and community events

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