

Green Wedding

Eco-Style the Momentous Event

It's summer wedding planning season, and couples can save money and conserve natural resources by planning a simpler, more ecological event. Instead of hosting the reception at a pricey hotel or restaurant, consider moving the ceremony and reception to a serene location like a beach, park or nature center. Local park and recreation departments may collaborate on making arrangements at public facilities, and nominal fees help support their ongoing operations. A natural setting at an eco-conscious hotel is equally well suited to serving healthy, organic food from a local or on-site health food restaurant, caterer or specialty grocer. Here are some more tips.

Purchase organic flowers to avoid pesticides and artificial fragrances often containing toxic chemicals. Buying from local growers cuts transportation costs.

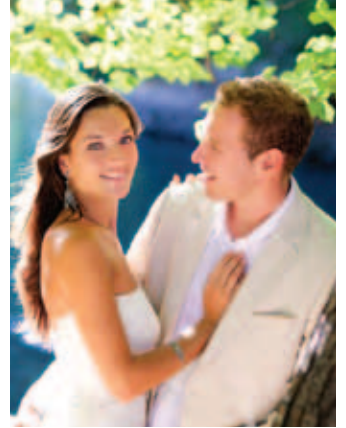
Choose a wedding gown made of organic and sustainable fibers. *Chasing Green.org* points out that organic farming reduces atmospheric carbon dioxide by using 37 percent fewer fossil fuels than conventional methods.

While releasing butterflies or doves may constitute a symbol of love, it can be fatal, especially for the birds, which possess no survival skills in the wild. Also, tossing birdseed over the happy couple, for a time viewed as an improvement on throwing rice, is just as wasteful and messy.

Instead, greet the newly hitched lovers by blowing bubbles—it's inexpensive, childhood fun that won't harm clothes, animals or the environment. Guests can recycle the wands and bottles, which are available in small sizes for weddings.

Show care for other animals by abstaining from balloons. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service notes that balloons that end up in nearby waters or landfills can be mistaken for food and cause stomach blockages for whales, dolphins, turtles and birds.

Rather than pay big bucks for a band that consumes electricity, go with one or two local, unplugged musicians such as an acoustic guitar player and flutist. Guests will relish hearing moving, personal renditions of love songs instead of clichéd tunes.



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