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## Something old, something new, something borrow, something ... green?

Plan your wedding with the environment in mind.

By Natalie Ermann Russell

**More and more couples** are tying the knot with Earth-friendly celebrations, effectively wedding traditional "I do's" with the three R's of sustainability: reduce, reuse and recycle. And, not surprisingly, the wedding industry is adapting to ensure that elegance need not suffer in deference to eco-consciousness. "There are all kinds of ways to have a green wedding without sacrificing style or taste," says Millie Martini Bratten, who is the editor in chief of Brides magazine.

**You don't have to sacrifice style or taste.**

How can you "green" your wedding? Try these ideas:

### ATTIRE

"There are no rules but the ones you make yourself," says Danielle Venokur, the owner of environmental event company [dvGreen.com](#). Vintage or "gently" used dresses are essentially recycled, whether they come from a shop ([PreOwnedWeddingDresses.com](#)) or your mother's closet. Dresses also come in eco-friendly fabrics such as hemp, silk, organic cotton or bamboo fabric (check out the selection at [OliviaLuca.com](#), [Rawganique.com](#) and [Annatarian.com](#)). For grooms, renting (even high-end tuxedos) is a way to get "reuse" in the mix.

### CEREMONY & RECEPTION

"Think about a daytime outdoor wedding and reception -- no need for electricity or lighting," Bratten says. "And if you have your reception and ceremony in the same place, you won't have to decorate two spots or travel from one to the other."

Also, choose locally grown or produced products -- less fuel is needed to transport them. Of course, local flowers and menu items will need to be in season. Or you can opt for pillar candles in glass hurricane lamps instead of floral centerpieces, says Emily Anderson, author of *Eco-Chic Weddings* ([ecochicweddings.com](#)). Or use glass bowls full of seasonal fruit or candies.

To ensure sustainability, work with each vendor. "Ask the caterer: Where does the food come from? How is it raised or produced?" says Kai Robertson of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). "Ask for Marine Stewardship Council-certified seafood, chicken raised without antibiotics, pasture-raised or grass-fed beef and fair-trade coffee." It may cost more, but you can cut back in other ways. "Serve [smaller] bites tapas-style," Bratten says.

### INVITATIONS

"About 500,000 trees every year are used to support weddings in the United States," Anderson says. So opt for invitations that are printed on recycled paper, and buy from companies that use wind power (like [GreenwichLetterpress.com](#)). "And skip the save-the-date cards," she says. "Just send your invites three months in advance." E-mailing your guests about your wedding website (set one up for free at [MyWedding.com](#)) also can be a great alternative to sending out traditional paper invitations.

### FAVORS

"The main philosophy is consumption- and waste-reduction, and there is nothing quite as glaring as a throwaway gift item," Venokur says. She likes favors to be useful beyond the event: custom-designed hats from [in2green.com](#) or raw honey from [BeeRaw.com](#). Even better, "make a donation in lieu of individual favors," suggests Kim Ritch of WWF, which offers an online gift registry for eco-conscious couples. "Then print out a card to communicate this to the guests." Set up charity favors at [worldwildlife.org/weddings](#), [IDoFoundation.org](#) or [ChangingThePresent.org](#).

### HONEYMOON

Consider signing up for eco-tours, or book through eco-travel agencies (such as [GlobalBasecamps.com](#)). "Seek out hotels and resorts that are recycling, supporting local businesses and agriculture, and reducing energy consumption," Anderson says.