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LIFESTYLE

TECHNOLOGY

BUSINESS

TRANSPORTATION

HOME

FOOD

FAMILY

BEAUTY & FASHION

BOOKS

ECOLLYWOOD

HEALTH & WELL-BEING

MY GREEN DAY

TRAVEL

PETS & ANIMALS

[MNN.COM](#) > [EARTH MATTERS](#) > [ENERGY](#)

New York hosts naturally sweet, sun-kissed wedding ceremony

20 couples participate in Sun Crystals' Sweet & Solar Wedding event, a low-impact, environmentally friendly ceremony.

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1 DO: The dresses worn by the brides for the Sweet & Solar Wedding were donated to nonprofit groups

Nothing's shocking in New York City. Walk down the city streets, day or night, and you might encounter a man in a pink leotard riding a unicycle, a woman walking a pig on a leash, a guitar-playing cowboy donning nothing but a pair of skivvies, Sarah Jessica Parker. However, it's not every day you see six young women wearing head-to-toe bridal regalia -- from gown to bouquet to veil -- posing for a group photograph next to a solar array as a band plays Every Little Thing She Does by The Police.

This was just one of the refreshingly unusual, matrimonial scenes in Lower Manhattan's Foley Square Thursday as 20 couples participated in an alfresco, town-hall style marriage and vow-renewal ceremony. Sponsored by Sun Crystals — the eco-minded maker of an all-natural, low-calorie sweetener made from stevia and sugarcane — the Sweet & Solar Wedding was orchestrated by none other than Danielle Venokur, event planner, eco-wedding guru, host of MNN's The Green Party and all-around green party girl. And yes, the sun was shining bright as could be on a very big day for the couples involved.



It's not every day, even in a city like New York, that you see a group of people get hitched en masse in public ... just one of the enticements of the Sweet & Solar Wedding. Then, of course, there was the live music and the free cupcakes, cookies and iced tea that added a celebratory, come-one-come-all vibe to the proceedings. This was a particularly big draw for the 9-to-5ers from the surrounding civic buildings passing through Foley Square on their lunch breaks.

But most importantly, thanks to Venokur, the event showed that weddings can be low-impact and still boast all the trappings of traditional nuptials. Weddings — one-off events that involve catering, bright lights, loud music, elaborate, floral-centric décor and extensive transport — consume huge amounts of resources and generate massive amounts of waste. At the Sweet & Solar Wedding, the band, One Love, was powered by a trailer-based solar array; the floral designs were created by sustainable florist Celadon & Celery; the signage was made from Bioflex, a biodegradable vinyl; the Sun Crystals-based iced tea was served in bagesse (sugarcane-based) cups; and the cookies were baked by an organic bakery using Sun Crystals instead of sugar.

At the end of the daylong event, the flowers were distributed to passersby instead of being discarded, excess food was donated to the Bowery Mission and the wedding dresses worn by the "guerilla brides" were donated to nonprofits like the Bridal Garden.

Venokur, whose official role was consulting for the entire event, particularly in the areas of design and sustainability, remarked that even though One Love's equipment was pretty much the only thing being powered by the sun at the Sweet & Solar Wedding, she hopes that the future brides and grooms realize that even more wedding staples like lighting in tents and catering setups can be solar-powered.



And since lifelong commitments were the highlight of the Sweet & Solar Wedding, it's worth pointing out that Sun Crystals has also made an unwavering pledge: The company, through 1% For the Planet, is donating 1 percent of annual sales to the nonprofit American Solar Energy Society. Additionally, the company uses 100 percent recycled paper fiber with a minimum of 35 percent post-consumer content in its carton packaging.

If anything — for the already betrothed, for those who plan on walking down the aisle in the future and for the merrily unattached — the Sun Crystals Sweet & Solar Wedding demonstrated that saying “I do” to throwing an eco-friendly but elegant event is a piece of sugar substitute-based cake.