



# Shades of Green

Whether you consider yourself "the queen of green" or you've only dipped your toe in the "eco-chic" pool, brides have an endless number of options for creating a wedding that is not only beautiful but is also kind to the environment.

Almost every aspect of a wedding can be executed in an environmentally-friendly way, either through small changes or a big commitment. Here are a few ideas to inspire all you brides-to-be, no matter how green you want to go.



By Melissa Tydell

## Location and Transportation

**Green:** Hold your ceremony and reception in one location.

If you're looking for an easy way to cut down on carbon emissions, choose a venue that will accommodate both the wedding and the celebration. Guests will simply have to walk between the two events, reducing the need for driving from one place to the other.

**Greener:** Offer eco-conscious accommodations and transportation for your guests.

Erika Piquant of Eco-Posh Events refers her clients to The Q Hotel, a green hotel in Kansas City's Westport/Plaza area, for overnight hotel accommodations. She also notes that there is a recent movement to make transportation greener. She has seen couples who have provided bikes or rented hybrid vehicles to help guests get around on the big day.

**Greenest:** Find facilities and vendors that truly believe in going green.

For example, Piquant has worked with caterers such as Magnolia's KC who are willing to create custom menus that feature local and organic foods. Janay A. Handmade specializes in organic bridal gowns and also manufactures the hemp-silk chair covers that Eco-Posh Events provides. As for facilities, "Boulevard Brewery has an event space and they are 'green extreme.' They have solar panels and plug-ins for electronic cars, and they require all their caterers to go through composting and recycling of food scraps," Piquant says.

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## Invitations and Paper

**Green:** Forgo extra envelopes that will only end up in the trash.

Megan Ibarra, graphic designer and owner of Little Yellow Leaf says, "Using RSVP postcards is one of the easiest ways to not only lower the overall cost of your invitation set but also reduce waste. 98% of the sets I complete use RSVP postcards! And while inner envelopes have been a traditional part of invitation set in the past, times are changing and people are much more conscience of paper waste. I have yet to produce a set that uses one."

**Greener:** Take your invitations to the next level with a more eco-friendly paper choice.

"Several paper suppliers are very conscience of their recycled content. Paper Source in particular offers several papers and envelopes with at least 30% post-consumer waste," Ibarra says.

Beyond that, Piquant suggests considering biodegradable and tree-free products or even paper made with seeds that can be planted after the event.

**Greenest:** Be completely paper-free by utilizing electronic communications.

It may buck tradition, but instead of sending paper invitations, consider using email or an online service such as Evite or Paperless Post to communicate all the wedding details. You can also request that guests RSVP through a form on your wedding website to cut down on waste and make the process of aggregating responses a little easier.

## Photography

**Green:** Go digital.

Sure, photographs taken with film or snapped with disposable or Polaroid cameras may lend a vintage or retro feel. But these days, a majority of photographers use digital cameras rather than film. Tricia O'Connor-Baska of SNAP Photography recognizes the benefits. "Wedding photography switching largely to digital has had a huge positive effect. Less film, less prints, less overall waste. We can take 5,000 pictures at a wedding and it requires no more use of materials or waste than if we took half that."

**Greener:** Review your proofs online.

Traditionally, photographers provided proof books with thumbnail or low-res images of all the pictures they captured. With the capabilities of the Internet, the printing of proofs is becoming a thing of the past. SNAP Photography, for one, no longer gives proof books and has instead transitioned to only online proofing to eliminate a lot of unnecessary paper waste.

**Greenest:** Store your memories in a DVD format and print only those special photographs you want to display.

Creating a wedding album requires time, patience, and a lot of materials, such as paper, ink, plastic or even leather. SNAP Photography offers an eco-friendly alternative. "We've added an option where couples can choose to get a DVD of all of their images instead of an album. This eliminates even more paper and gives the couple flexibility in what they decide to print."

## Favors

**Green:** Give the gift of something collected, homemade, or natural.

You can promote sustainability through your choice of favors. For example, Piquant has worked with couples who gave favors that can be planted, including small trees or packets of seeds. She has also seen brides who have enlisted the help of their families to bake homemade pies and cupcakes, rather than offer a more formal dessert table.

**Greener:** Pamper your guests.

A new trend on the favor front: couples giving favors that are service-based or meant to pamper guests. For example, one of Piquant's clients treated wedding guests to ten-minute massages from a massage therapist, and another couple gave their guests credits for iTunes.

**Greenest:** Donate to a charity or purchase carbon offsets.

In recent years, many couples have chosen to donate to a charity or local organization, rather than give individual favors. Or you can decide to purchase carbon offsets through websites that help calculate the impact of your event on the environment and offer various options. "You can purchase carbon offsets where [a number of ] trees will be planted in honor of your event or it will go towards the building of so many windmills. There are different things you can choose [to do] to offset the carbon footprint of your event," Piquant says.

As these examples demonstrate, there are many shades of going green. The good news? You don't have to expand your budget or sacrifice your vision in order to be eco-conscious.

Forgoing certain details can cut costs, while choosing organic products or purchasing carbon offsets can be more expensive. But with all the elements and choices available, it's possible to go green at any budget level.

As Piquant points out, "I always try to show brides that you can have a green event without sacrificing the quality or caliber. I think a common misconception is that people assume having a green wedding means you have to have that 'shabby chic' aesthetic... A lot of greening your event is behind the scenes. I like to challenge brides to think outside the box."

So consider all the options, then decide whether you want to take a step—or a leap—towards being more eco-friendly. With these inspiration and ideas as a start, the sky's the limit. How green will you go?

