

“I Do’s” Go Green

By Paula Harris, General Manager, Concord Cooperative Market

The blossoms are out, birds are singing, and love is in the air! If you’re getting ready to plan your wedding – and even if you’re already in the midst of it – don’t forget to incorporate something old, something new, something borrowed, and something... green.

Yes, green! Weddings can be extremely costly events – both in dollars and in their impact on the environment. A green wedding can be planned for any budget, and it’s a great way to express a lifelong commitment to marriage and the environment at the same time. Here are some thoughts for couples to help create an event that’s earth-friendly, socially responsible, and reflective of their personal values:

Location

- 🍯 Consider museums, gardens, orchards and conservatories for both the wedding and the reception. (These venues also require minimal decorations!)
- 🍯 Choose a location with natural light during the day, or use lanterns and beeswax candles in the evening.
- 🍯 Select a location closest to the majority of the guests to minimize transportation and your carbon footprint. (To calculate emissions from your event, visit www.NativeEnergy.com, a carbon calculator that is endorsed by the Sierra Club.)

Invitations

- 🍯 Use web-based evites and allow guests to R.S.V.P. online.
- 🍯 Send cards which are embedded with wildflower seeds and can be planted directly in the soil, or support world communities with handmade, Fair Trade cards.
- 🍯 Use invitations made from 100% recycled materials and soy-based inks.

Attire

- 🍯 Think about wearing a vintage dress or one made from organic cotton, hemp or peace silk.
- 🍯 Purchase a once-worn or sample gown from Brides Against Breast Cancer (www.makingmemories.org), which donates the proceeds to help women with breast cancer.
- 🍯 Support neighborhood businesses and have the dress sewn by a local dressmaker.
- 🍯 Instead of having the members of your bridal party all wear the same dress, give them a color pallet and let them choose something they can wear again.
- 🍯 Suggest that your bridesmaids give their gowns to the Cinderella Project (www.thecinderellaprojectofnh.org), a non-profit organization that donates dresses to financially disadvantaged high school students in New Hampshire so they can attend their formal occasions in style.

Flowers & Decorations

- 🌱 Select wildflowers or flowers that are local, in-season and organic.
- 🌱 If you cannot find local flowers, consider a charity bouquet from Organic Bouquets (www.organicbouquet.com), where proceeds from the sale of each bouquet are used to support non-profit organizations, such as The Nature Conservancy.
- 🌱 Utilize potted plants as centerpieces that guests can take home, or consider edible centerpieces to reduce waste.
- 🌱 Opt for dried or silk flowers as eco-friendly alternatives.

Food

- 🌱 Select foods that are local, fresh, in-season, natural and organic.
- 🌱 When reusable flatware is not possible, use compostable dishes like the ones available from StalkMarket (made from 100% renewable plant materials) or those made from 100% recycled materials, like Preserve Plates.
- 🌱 Donate leftover food instead of throwing it away.

Favors & Gifts

- 🌱 Give saplings to help offset emissions from the event.
- 🌱 Provide guests with favors that won't be discarded – like energy-efficient light bulbs, handmade items from local artists, or bottles of organic wine – all available at *Green Concord* shops.
- 🌱 Instead of buying items, purchase renewable energy credits and support groups like CO2Balance (www.co2balance.com) and TerraPass (www.terrapass.com).
- 🌱 Register for experiences instead of things – like massages!
- 🌱 Set up a registry with the I Do Foundation (www.idofoundation.org), so that when guests do buy tangible gifts, a portion of the cost will support causes of your choice.
- 🌱 Suggest that gifts are wrapped in reusable (and recycled) cloth and ribbons.
- 🌱 Many members of *Green Concord* offer gift registry or wish list opportunities and have a variety of earth-friendly items, including organic linens, recycled glassware, healthy cookware, bath and body products from local manufacturers, and home furnishings.

Final Thoughts

- 🌱 Try to reduce waste, both before and after your wedding, by participating in a “wedding co-op” (immortalized in the *Offbeat Bride*, by Ariel Meadow Stallings). In a wedding co-op, couples pool their resources to buy generic items that can be reused at each of their weddings, such as glasses, vases and linens. It is probably easiest to do a co-op if you are getting married the same year as a number of your friends, but with the Internet, you can establish or join one in almost any community.

Sources: www.thegreenbrideguide.com, www.greatgreenwedding.com, www.treehugger.com