

So, you're getting ready to tie the knot - congratulations! While this is indeed an exciting time for you and your husband or wife-to-be, it's important not to let your values get thrown out the window in all the commotion! Wedding planning can be stressful so hiring a planner who shares your passion for living ethically could be the first step toward an unforgettable day that doesn't rob you of your sanity or leave a massive footprint.

As you might have guessed, there are ways of greening virtually every step of your big day, from the invitations and choice of location to floral arrangements and catering — not to mention the dress. By being considerate of the world around you, you can not only feel great about marrying the love of your life but rest assured you started things off on the right foot, no matter how much your dance skills may leave to be desired.

Venue + Travel

It's tempting to escape from Canada to a distant, tropical destination but keeping your nuptials as central to most guests as possible ensures you keep carbon emissions in check while also saving your guests some cash in the process. Double points for purchasing carbon offsets for necessary air travel! Remember, the size of your wedding counts; the more intimate, the better from an environmental standpoint.

Once you've settled on the number of guests and location, you can either choose a lovely natural outdoor setting or opt for a [LEED](#) (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)-certified space if your wedding will be indoors. This certification indicates the space is sustainable and conserves water, energy, and electricity using solar power, insulation panels and other state-of-the-art technology. Make sure the venue has ample recycling and composting capabilities.

Encourage guests to carpool between accommodations and wedding-related events; try to keep distance in careful consideration during your planning stage. You can also arrange a shuttle-bus if suitable, or better yet, host the ceremony and reception at the same venue.

Invitations + Communications

Using tree-free materials like bamboo, hemp, banana stalk, sugarcane and kenaf or recycled, chlorine-free papers are your best bet besides going digital and sending e-vites. You can also

set up your own wedding website or blog to keep up with all your wedding communication — this option makes life a little easier and allows for easy photo-sharing after the event. [BH Consulting and Design](#) even has a line of eco-invites called Love Blooms. The invitations are 100% hand-made in Canada using paper with 100% post-consumer waste and can be planted to grow beautiful wildflowers!

Cake + Catering

Source food as locally and organically as possible to reduce energy use and your menu's toxic load. This showcases the abundance and flavours from your specific region; of course, a vegetarian menu will have the lightest footprint. Source [MSC-certified](#) fish and free-range meats. Using food from local, organic CSA (community supported agriculture) not only sets a great example, it tastes fantastic!

Serve your guests [organic and biodynamic wines](#) and beer as locally sourced as possible. You can also donate leftovers to a shelter and feel good ensuring nothing goes to waste — that is, of course, if your Uncle Dan doesn't want a doggy-bag. Nix disposable plates, cups, cutlery and linens and opt for rentals or reusable items instead. Go with [compostable/biodegradable materials](#) if this is not an option.

Decor

Wedding decor can often be purchased second-hand or rented, so don't be afraid to look into it. The biggest element of wedding decor tends to be of the floral variety; unfortunately, the beautiful tropical flowers found in many shops year-round usually come from Latin America and have a toxic backstory. Don't support further social and environmental devastation! Again, keeping things local and organic is the best way to go — you are cutting carbon emissions from travel and lessening the toxic load of your event.

Potted plants are a great option as they can double as keepsakes that will be fondly remembered. Opt for soy or beeswax candles as they do not produce any toxins or carcinogens

as they burn and are also biodegradable. The less “stuff” used to decorate your event, the friendlier it will be! Like most things in life, it is often better to keep it simple. Vases and accessories can be rented instead of purchased to avoid extra cost and waste. Also, consider suppliers that use minimal or reusable packaging for transporting rented items.

Gifts, Keepsakes +Favours



Your gift registry can serve to reflect your green wedding, lifestyle, and values; it is the best way to let your guests know what types of gifts you’d like to receive and I

ets you choose companies that encourage ecologically sound and fair trade practices. You can even select stores that carry locally-made merchandise, supporting your local artisans and designers in the process. Instead of knick-knacks with a short shelf-life, give your guests live wedding favours that are sustainable and renewable such as seed packets, bulbs, or tree seedlings. Local treats like handmade soaps and candles are also a great favour. For your hardworking wedding party you can splurge responsibly on earth-friendly gift baskets like the ones from [Saul Good Gift Co](#) . Organic wines, organic fair-trade coffee and chocolates or local eco-spa treatments are other gifts your loyal posse are bound to enjoy.

If you already have enough material-wise, consider having your guests donate to an environmental organization or group of your choice, even a charity you believe in. You can also opt to donate a couple of dollars on behalf of each guest rather than have favours at all. These

are the types or gifts that can truly last a lifetime.

Rings + Attire

Ah, perhaps one of the most exciting parts of any wedding: the gear and the bling! With a little resourcefulness, you can shine on your crazy diamond — with your values in check. It's well known that mining is a resource-intensive industry that can have serious environmental and social consequences. The production of a single gold ring can generate 20 tonnes of mine waste and traditional diamonds can have a blood-drenched past. It's best to keep your eternal symbols of love as conflict-free as possible; certification under the [Kimberley Process](#), an effort to change how diamonds are mined in Africa, can help assure you of this.

Opt for faux diamonds like the synthetic stone Moissanite, or choose diamonds mined in more peaceful places such as Canada or Australia — [Brilliant Earth](#), [Cred Jewellery](#), or [Leber Jewelry's Earthwise](#)

offer such options. You can also choose from beautiful vintage jewellery, or if the piece isn't quite right, companies like

[greenKarat](#)

can melt down the gold and have it recycled — minus the “dirty” abusive mining practices and high waste output. Having your engagement ring serve double-duty as a wedding band is also a wise choice. If you fancy yourselves non-traditional, there are beautiful wooden bands out there that will definitely set you apart. Check out

[Touch Wood Rings](#)

or

[Billy Would Designs](#)

for some ideas.



As for wedding attire, grooms and best men get off rather easy here since it is traditionally de rigueur to rent these items. This gets the eco-thumbs-up without too much effort! The ladies don't have it quite so easy as the typical wedding dress can take 15 metres of fabric or more and is often manufactured in China using child labour and/or environmentally harmful processes. The average cost for a gown is in the neighbourhood of \$1,200. Instead, buy a gown made by a local designer or have it custom made by someone like [Caroline Calvert](#) . You can also choose a dress you can wear more than once, like something from

[Isadora Bridal Wear](#)

. A "recycled" or reworked vintage gown is also a gorgeous option, or you can always simply rent the dress! If you do choose to buy, consider donating the dress after your wedding or passing it on as a heirloom so someone else can treasure it as much as you did on your important day.

Honeymoon

Greening your honeymoon doesn't necessarily translate to "missing out". While it may not have the glamorous ring to it as a tropical, far-flung locale, a "stay-cation" just might be the friendliest option for green honeymooners of all! Renting a cottage, staying at a cozy B&B, taking a train trip or visiting a local eco-retreat can make you feel miles away without a heavy carbon footprint. The average amount spent on a honeymoon is \$3,700 and nearly two-thirds of those trips are to foreign destinations. Keeping your money in your own community is great for many reasons. If you do plan on skipping town, why not investigate green hotels or eco-tourism? Bon voyage!