



HOW TO PLAN A SUSTAINABLE GREEN WEDDING

Weddings are exciting and romantic. But did you know they're also notoriously wasteful? The average nuptial produces 400 to 600 pounds of waste. In the U.S., with roughly 2 million weddings every year, that creates 800 million to 1.2 billion pounds of waste from weddings annually.

Going green for a wedding requires a set amount of balance. Practical things a couple needs to provide their guests (food/snacks, napkins) have to work with the expected details of a modern wedding (flowers, décor, party favors), not to mention everything needs to meet the budget.

There's a ton of information on the internet about how to make eco-friendly choices for your wedding. But consider a few ways to consider *all* the details for your big day. By shifting your approach to decision-making for your event, you'll find there are plenty of opportunities to substantially cut down the waste produced at your wedding.

Here are three simple ways to plan an environmentally friendly wedding:

1. Work with sustainable vendors whose values align with your own. Only work with vendors who prioritize sustainable practices. These vendors have tons of creative and practical solutions for reducing waste, and you'll find partnering with like-minded companies often makes it easier to meet the vision you have for your wedding. With any vendor, there will be many opportunities to make sustainable choices. When choosing a venue, for example, consider locations that are beautiful and interesting on their own, whether it's in nature or designed architecture. The more beautiful a venue, the less you have to provide (or pay for) decorations that typically get tossed after the event. Many venues that take sustainability seriously have integrated that into every aspect of the facility, from lighting to AC. Directories like the LEED Project Database can help identify which buildings take on these initiatives. Many catering companies have also made concerted efforts toward reducing waste, such as composting food scraps and recycling. And decorators or florists may compost flowers after use or employ recyclable materials for décor. Making sure to only hire

companies that act responsibly gives you one less thing to worry about. Plus, it feels good to work with companies that champion the same causes you do.

2. Consider what can be upcycled or reused for your wedding.

For many weddings, all the items are used only once. This is especially true for decorations and table settings. Instead of purchasing all your items new, visit local thrift stores, vintage shops, even your own cupboards for creative ways to decorate your venue. Upcycle glass bottles for an eclectic assortment of vases. Ask your vendor if people hosting an event prior to yours would be willing to donate any decorations, table numbers or flowers. Shop vintage for your wedding dress. Paint an old mirror with chalkboard paint and write table assignments on it rather than paper cards. Use vintage frames to display pictures of your family and engagement photos. Decorate with potted plants that can be replanted after the wedding rather than tossed.

3. Recycle, donate or sell as much as possible.

No matter how environmentally conscious you are, a large event like a wedding is going to mean things are left over after your big day. Aside from the food and paper waste, which will be disposed of properly by choosing the right vendors, decorations, flowers and miscellaneous items need to be considered. If you have a friend or family member getting married shortly after you, donate your leftover candles, table numbers, vases, tablecloths, etc. For cut flowers, consider donating them to a hospital, another event or a cemetery. Most houses of worship are willing to use cut flowers as décor for worship services as well. Encourage your wedding party to sell their day-of wardrobe if they don't think they'll wear their attire again. Better yet, look into rental options for your wedding party.

Regardless of the wedding style, size or budget, there are many small steps you can take to significantly reduce the amount of waste produced. By shifting how you think about the vendors you work with or where you source decorations, you'll ultimately end up with a wedding that is much more representative of who you are as individuals and as a couple.

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