

It's so Easy Being Green

HOW TO HOST AN ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY WEDDING OR SPECIAL EVENT

As one of Toronto's LEED Silver Certified and environmentally friendly venues, TBG receives a lot of questions about hosting green events. Just putting a little extra thought into your event can go a long way to greening your wedding, but we think it is well worth the effort! Here are some tips on how to have a beautiful wedding without sacrificing your green ideals.

VENUE

Start by selecting a venue that demonstrates a commitment to the environment through green building design or environmentally-friendly practices. Here are some questions to ask:

- > Do they use environmentally friendly cleaning products and do they adhere to organic gardening practices in their outdoor spaces
- > Are they accessible by public transit, have dedicated spaces for carpooling drivers or bike racks
- > What energy saving measures have they incorporated eg. green roof, natural light or waterless urinals.

INVITATIONS

Is easy to understand why many are turning away from the traditional invitation and moving towards web-based invitations. Here are a few tips for keeping your wedding invitations environmentally healthy.

- > If you are sticking with traditional printed invitations, use paper made from 100% post-consumer fiber. You can also get paper manufactured using green energy sources – look for Green Seal Certified paper.
- > If you have chosen printed invitation, consider using a website for your RSVPs or you can also save paper by doing postcard RSVPs (eliminates the envelope for reply cards).
- > If you're ready to go all the way, send your invitations by email. You can always print a few invitations for guests who are not internet savvy and for your own scrapbook. Several websites now provide easy to use packages that help you create and personalize your wedding website. You can also use it to post directions, schedules and guest information – it will save you time and money!

TRANSPORTATION

It can be hard to avoid cars entirely, as many guests will be traveling from out of town and it seems unfair to ask guests to use public transit or bikes when they are dressed in their best for your wedding!

- > Make sure your guests are aware of the alternatives to driving to your wedding including public transit and carpooling or provide an alternative by having a bus pick guests up at a central location that is easy to reach on foot and return them there afterwards.
- > Have the ceremony and reception at locations within walking distance of one another.
- > If you're renting a car for the day make it a hybrid, and encourage guests who are also renting to visit Discount Car Rentals (www.discountcar.com) to rent hybrid Toyota Primus and Ford Escapes.

WEDDING FAVOURS

Favours are easy to green. Today people regularly customize their wedding favours to suit their wedding theme and their personal taste.

- > Stick with tradition! Give your guests five sugar-coated almonds symbolizing fertility, happiness, health, wealth and longevity. Use organic almonds in honey or make your own!
- > Consider a table favour that is useful, consumable and eco-friendly like local organic honey, wine, flower seeds or tree seedlings. You could also consider experiential gifts such as spa visits or gift certificates for a local restaurant.
- > Thank your guests with a donation in their name to an organization that promotes environmental responsibility, such as the Toronto Botanical Garden.



GIFT REGISTRY

The key here is to be practical. Don't register for things that you don't need and make sure your registry offers a variety of gift options and price ranges.

- > If you are already settled into a home, offer guests the option of donating to a non-profit organization as a wedding gift to you. The Toronto Botanical Garden is a great 'green' charity to consider.
- > If you need to outfit a home, consider registering with an eco-conscious retailer (Lee Valley, Gaiam, or Mountain Equipment Co-op) to minimize unwanted, environmentally unfriendly or unusable gifts.
- > Find or create a green project to support – volunteering for a tree planting project or park cleaning project and your guests can contribute their time to the project in lieu of a wedding present.

AT THE TABLE

If local organic is the rule at home, make it a rule for your wedding too! Not only does locally grown food taste better but farming with organic methods replenishes the soil and reduces water and air pollution.

- > Find a caterer who uses local organic meats and produce and/or would arrange for a local food bank to collect leftover food or compost food waste
- > Serve local organic wines and locally brewed organic beers. Consult the LCBO for help.
- > Avoid disposable dishes and cutlery, instead use rented china and silverware

DÉCOR

Décor has an impact on the environment too – consider the amount of energy consumed in the growth and transport of flowers alone. Here are a few easy alternatives:

- > Grow your own flowers for centerpieces, use potted plants or herb, or find a florist who uses local, organically grown flowers. Make sure the flowers go to a friend after your event and compost flowers and greens once they have faded.
- > You can make terrific centerpieces with no flowers at all – how about a glass bowl filled with pretty beads, seeds or bright limes or lemons.
- > If you're using draping or other fabric decor, make sure the fabrics are re-useable or better yet, rent what you need for the day. One innovative couple decided to use an exhibit of a friend's photographs. By projecting images onto a plain wall they turned something dull into a very personal and unique conversation piece.

HONEYMOON

You don't have to compromise the romance of your honeymoon by being green.

- > Honeymoon locally! Consider a cottage rental, a local eco resort, or a spa getaway.
- > Purchase carbon offsets to reduce the impact of air travel – www.zerofootprint.net offers a simple exchange market that will help negate the carbon you create by contributing money to projects that restore the environment, such as tree planting programs.
- > The train is a hassle-free and romantic way to travel, and a scenic trip to Quebec City, Montreal or as far as New York, Churchill (brr!) or Jasper can be a great start to a romantic holiday.

DRESSES, HAIR & MAKEUP

Don't fall apart here – there are lots of ways to green your wedding day style!

- > Consider a vintage wedding dress, or a new dress made from organic silk, hemp or cotton
- > Donate your dress to a charity after your wedding – For details visit www.thebridesproject.com.
- > Ask your bridesmaids choose their own dresses or to wear a dress they already own – it's more likely that if they choose their dress themselves, they'll choose something that will be worn again!
- > Use products that are 100% natural such as Aveda's line for hair, body & makeup.

SHOUT IT OUT!

You have worked hard to make your event green, so tell your guests all about it. Not only will it make you look good, but it will make your guests feel good!

- > Ask your MC to make a point of highlighting what you have done to be green.
- > Include a section on your website that tells guests about your green theme.
- > Write out your environmental 'mandate' and place it in a central location for your guests to read.

