

Something green!

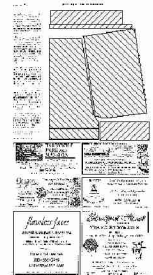
FROM INVITATIONS, A MENDED GOWN TO BACKYARD WEDDINGS
by Stacy Lytwyn Maxwell

Bridezilla, meet Mother Nature. The quest for an over-the-top wedding bash — with nary a thought for your planet or its dwellers — may have hit a speed bump. The green boom of recent years is now the “new white,” with how-to-green nuptial books, articles and blogs all the rave.

Many would agree that the environmentally conscious and socially responsible trend is a welcome one. Wedding revelry can result in massive wear, waste and damage to the planet. An average wedding, for instance, produces about 60 tons of carbon-dioxide emissions, according to Kate L. Harrison, a New Haven resident and author of the newly released *The Green Bride Guide: How to Create an Earth-Friendly Wedding on Any Budget*. Currently, she is finishing her master’s degree in Environmental Policy, Law and Economics at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

Multiply that amount with the approximate 2.22 million couples in the United States who will tie the knot in 2009 (nearly 6,200 weddings a day), according to the Wedding Report, and you do not have to be a math whiz to realize these numbers are nothing to celebrate. Conveniently, Kate, in collaboration with Brighter Planet, has created a Web site for soon-to-be brides and grooms to calculate their own carbon-dioxide impact on the environment at brighterplanet.com/products/event_offsetting.

Clearly, planning a green wedding so future generations may continue to say “I do” is something to celebrate. So where to begin? First, even if conservation is not a strong suit, relax, the task need not be overwhelming.



“To me a green wedding is a one that incorporates several eco-friendly items or ideas. Wedding gowns that are made from natural fibers, like bamboo or hemp or organic cotton, to invitations made from recycled paper,” says Wenona Napolitano, a Flint, Mich., freelancer and self-proclaimed tree-hugger. She is also the author of newly released book, *The Everything Green Wedding Book: Plan an elegant, affordable, earth-friendly wedding.*

No matter how green a couple decides to go, eco-friendly wedding ideas and options — from invitations to favors — are abun-

Green continued on page 10

dant. The question is: How do you narrow it down? Kate's *Green Bride Guide* offers the help she was searching for when planning her own wedding in 2007.

Sans a handy reference guide, Kate and her husband, Barry, pulled off a green-wedding bash, which included finding a central location to reduce their guests' travel time and carbon footprint. The couple also developed a carpooling Web site and encouraged guests to consider public transportation.

A tailor mended Kate's new but damaged dress, and altered a train into a shawl. Later she donated the garments to Brides Against Breast Cancer (makingmemories.org/index.html). To support its mission, the foundation sells repaired and refurbished wedding gowns.

Meanwhile, the wedding party wore what they already owned. Family and friends donated flowers from their gardens, while

Kate and Barry bought \$200 of organic dahlias from a local farm. During the ceremony, instead of a disposable aisle runner, the bride promenaded down an oriental runner owned by her parents. At the reception, everyone enjoyed a seasonal organic menu. Natural ribbon and ferns from the bride-and-groom's garden decorated the cake. In lieu of favors, the couple donated to

environmental causes.

When Wenona was married in 2003, part of the green festivities included borrowing a friend's glass bowls to use as centerpieces. Her friend had used the bowls at her own wedding, and the dishes have made the party rounds ever since.

Another couple, Wenona says, displayed a poster at their wedding, illustrating each green element. Other couples have inserted notes explaining their green wedding strategy in the invitations. Certainly, talking up ecologically sound plans may inspire future brides and grooms.

Economics, especially these days, may also play a part. "You can have a simple green wedding in your backyard, and it could cost a third of what a traditional wedding would, or even less," Wenona says. Green couture gowns, she adds, are nowhere near the cost of traditional gowns.

As far as menus, she says, "If you do go with a completely organic menu that might be more expensive, but you could cut costs in a lot of other areas so it balances out."

With so many wedding vendors and services hopping on the green bandwagon, how do you determine an eco-friendly wedding business is legitimate? For starters, peruse Web sites like the "green" pages of Co-op America (coopamerica.org) and Green Pages, the Global Directory for Environmental Technology (eco-web.com).

For hotels, check the Green Hotels Association at greenhotels.com. Also, No Dirty Gold (nodirtygold.org) provides the names of retailers that fulfill social, environmental and human-rights criteria for more responsible gold production. If you think chic and green aren't a marriage made in heaven, check out Portovert (portovert.com), which caters

to "eco-savvy brides and grooms."

The Green Bride Guide, along with Kate's companion Web site thegreenbrideguide.com, lists hundreds of reputable up-to-date eco-friendly wedding products and services. For additional resources, check out *The Everything Green Wedding Book* and Wenona's blog at everythinggreenweddings.blogspot.com. Both books, available on amazon.com, will help guide you to a dream wedding for both you and your home planet.

For that big day, and beyond, green may just become your favorite color!



The sources are many for green wedding ideas.



Friends and family donated flowers from their gardens for Kate and Barry's backyard wedding.

