

Love is in the Earth

Expecting a proposal this Valentine's Day? Sarah Lewis pulls on a big white dress and goes in search of an ethical wedding



A DAY OF ECO-JOY

You shop at the local farmers' market, you diligently recycle your rubbish and you buy your clothes in a charity shop – but would you think about getting your wedding dress there?

Katie Fewing from ethicalweddings.com says, "People are writing on our forums that the Oxfam bridal shops have a huge choice."

Katie, from Worthing, launched the Ethical Weddings website after finding a lack of information when organising her own wedding in 2004. She says, "I emailed lots of organisations and companies, went through the Good Shopping Guide saying I was having

an ethical wedding and asking for info, but they all said they had never heard of such a thing."

But with a growing awareness of environmental and social issues, ethical weddings are now a rapidly growing market. Katie says when people start organising their big day and they realise just how much there is available, from personalised match boxes to table planning kits (what's wrong with a pen and paper?), they also realise how much waste there is, and how many of the products are made under unethical conditions.

She says, "Around the same time I was reading a short story by Oscar Wilde called *The Young King*. It was about a young man's coronation and he was like a demanding bride, saying he wanted the best of everything. He had a *Christmas Carol*-style dream where he saw a woman weaving his gold cloak until her fingers bled and a boy drowning diving for his pearls. That had a big impact on me."

Eventually Katie's dress was made by a local designer, her husband found her a ring with a 'beach diamond' (one that had been washed in by the sea rather than mined), the flowers were from Holland, greenery picked from friends' gardens, and all the wine was Fairtrade. The only compromises they had to make, she says, were the ones making the day less eco or ethical than they would have liked.

The average wedding now costs nearly £20,000, and although for most things one would expect to pay a premium for organic or eco products, with weddings it is an entirely

different matter.

Katie says, "The magazines say you need all this stuff but you don't really. If you just start thinking about it you reduce the cost straight away. Even just reducing the amount of travelling you do is great for the environment and for your budget. And for those who do want to spend that amount of money, what a great opportunity it would be to really make a difference with it by spending it on Fairtrade items, organic produce, and supporting small local producers. So it can work both ways!"

Top green wedding tips

Dress and outfits

Do it in eco style or charity shop chic and make a big statement to your guests.

Gift list

You probably already have a toaster, so opt for a green wedding list, or even ask guests to donate to charity.

2-in-1 venues

Get your ceremony venue and reception venue close together so people can walk.

Food and booze

Keep it local – French wine rather than Australian. Get your mum to make the cake.

Do you really need it?

Is it vital to mark your love with a 'just married' baseball cap or a set of bride and groom rubber ducks? Never mind the environment, it's just bad taste...

+ Everybody's favourite Brighton & Hove-based cartoon eco-retailer, Nigel's Eco Store, has won the 2007 Yahoo! Shopping Find of the Year, awarded to recognise popularity, innovation and usability.

www.nigelsecostore.com

+ Seedy Sunday is back and it's bigger and better than ever before with a new location at Hove Town Hall. Rage against the seed-licensing machine with this subversive, yet cunningly legal, seed swap.

Sunday 3 February, The Hove Centre at Hove Town Hall, Church Road.
www.seedysunday.org

green-o-meter

- Quit yer whinging about the wind turbines on top of King's House, sketchy Brighton & Hove City Council Conservative administration. They don't cost a lot of money, they don't make any noise that is audible above the wind, they aren't going to "destroy" anyone's life – thank you very much hysterical Councillor Jan Young – and they fit perfectly well within the Carbon Trust Carbon Management Programme's recommended payback times. How is anyone supposed to feel confident investing in any kind of alternative technology if you lot of dithering fools can't get your act together? Seriously, it's like watching a bunch of spoiled kids having a tantrum in the playground because teacher didn't pick their idea. Grow up. Thanks.

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