



Planning Your Green Wedding

Something Old, Something Green...
Helpful hints to reduce your wedding's carbon footprint.

by Cynthia Swanson

A wedding is a time of great joy and one of the defining events of our lifetime. In today's conservation-conscious climate, there are many reasons and many ways to make this wonderful memory Earth friendly. The eco-savvy bride and groom will be sure to incorporate "green" ideas into their wedding planning which take into account the stewardship of our beloved natural resources.

The Ring

The first step leading to the wedding day is usually the engagement ring. While diamonds are the tradition, they are not environmentally friendly. Mining of any stones or minerals is a dangerous business that often leads to pain, suffering and even death by those who go down into the earth to retrieve them, and some diamonds are a part of social and political conflict and violence.

The green couple will seek a vintage engagement ring. Not only does this eliminate the mining factor, older stones are known to be purer, with better colors and fewer flaws. A good local source is Coast to Coast Antiques Shop in Myrtle Beach, which has a large selection of antique pieces. Also, Eleanor Pitts Gifts and Jewelry in Pawley's Island often keeps a few vintage rings in house.

Other jewelry for your wedding day can also be vintage. A grand inspiration for those of us on the Grand Strand is Dr. Sherri Duncan, a

veterinarian who is also a passionate vintage jewelry collector with designer costume jewelry from the turn of the last century. Visit her website – SherriDuncanJewelry.com – to see just how fabulous jewelry from this epoch can be.

The Wedding Dress

The next step is the fairytale wedding dress. This is a fun item to search for in vintage boutiques. Used designer gowns can often be purchased for a fraction of the price of a new dress, and they usually have been painstakingly cared for. Lady Di's Alterations and Consignments in Myrtle Beach has a small but carefully chosen selection of pre-worn bridal gowns. Consignment shops in Summerville and Charleston offer once-worn wedding dresses. And don't forget the Internet; eBay and Craigslist are great resources. Most second-hand gowns are in perfect shape, having been worn only a few hours at the most, and some have never been worn at all! The green bride, who is also a wise bride, realizes that a large sum of money spent on a dress to be worn for a matter of hours is not a practical way to go.

The Venue

There is nothing as green as the great outdoors. Here on the Grand Strand, we have many picturesque settings for an outdoor wedding, including the most obvious, the beach itself. Weddings are allowed on the beach in North Myrtle Beach, unincorporated

Myrtle Beach, Garden City, Surfside Beach and Pawley's Island. It's best to call the town hall of the area before scheduling a ceremony to ensure all rules are followed. Our city and county parks are also beautiful choices for an outdoor wedding. Once again, be sure to call the municipality which governs the park to obtain details for holding a ceremony there. Additionally, many hotels have lovely lawns where ceremonies may be held. The lawn at the Myrtle Beach Art Museum is a scenic locale overlooking the ocean, and can be rented for weddings at a very reasonable price.

The Ceremony

After choosing your outdoor spot, consider incorporating words acknowledging the beauty of the area into your ceremony, prayer and even your wedding vows. Readings during your ceremony could include literary passages and poems about nature. A small note on the back of your wedding program regarding the wedding site and your green philosophy is also a nice touch.

The area may be decorated with locally grown native plants. Hydrangeas are colorful and plentiful in our area during most summer months. Consider spring and fall flowering bulbs for weddings in those seasons. For winter, beautiful camellias are a lovely choice.

The Wedding Reception

Sustainable, healthy food and drink choices can be incorporated into the menu. Local sustainable seafood and

fresh locally grown produce are available to us on the South Carolina coast much of the year. The better restaurants and catering companies will include these items in a fresh, wonderful menu that reflects the local environment, culture and culinary craft. Jenn Kelly, owner of Beach Catering Company in Myrtle Beach, is a passionate conservationist and chef who understands the philosophy and desire of going green in the food arena.

Gifts

Many brides and grooms give gifts or favors at their receptions. Why not consider the gift of a reusable shopping bag printed with your names and the date of your wedding? Be sure to get locally made bags and not ones shipped from the other side of the planet.

Finally, those who wish to participate in the joyous occasion as gift givers have their own opportunities to make their favorite couple's wedding green. A wedding gift of an antique or heirloom will be one of the most unique items that the couple receives. Silver, glassware, china and all types of collectibles are one of a kind and much appreciated. If you don't know where to start, visit Coast to Coast Antiques, where owner Bryan Wester will provide suggestions for the perfect present to match the particular interests of the bride and groom, including a history write-up to include with your gift. Jeff Weaver of Legacy Antiques in Garden City is another local expert with excellent suggestions and a wealth of knowledge about these treasures of our past.

The possibilities are endless to consciously make your big day a green day.

Cynthia Swanson is a wedding planner in Myrtle Beach. An ardent environmentalist, Cynthia is a board member of the Conservation Voters of South Carolina and of GreenKeepers of Myrtle Beach, and a member of the Coastal Conservation League, Winyah Rivers Foundation, Horry County Pride, and the Environmental Stewardship Team of First United Methodist Church in Myrtle Beach. She was awarded the Sierra Club's Silent Footprint Award for the State of South Carolina. For more info, contact Cynthia at 843-267-1478 and visit MyrtleBeachWeddingsEtc.com. See ad page 25.



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