

Making Ripples

Green Wedding Tips

by Amanda Bancroft

Planning a green wedding, but not sure what to do? You have plenty of options and don't need to be perfect. Here are a few tips from personal experience that may alleviate some stress.

First, invitations need to spread the love, not kill the trees. Consider digital invites or mail sustainably sourced paper ones. If this isn't possible, at least consider minimizing the extra paper inserts that are merely aesthetic instead of functional. Recycled paper cards are easier to come by these days.

If you have venue flexibility, and are not concerned about the weather or the outdoor tolerance of guests, support the local Parks & Recreation department by having an outdoor ceremony. You might be able to support environmental education, such as at a botanical garden. If not, is there an indoor location that supports a non-profit organization which does great work in the community, like a church or community center with environmental programs? Indoor wedding fees can boost their financial health and allow them to do more good.

Feeding all those guests can be a nightmare. But it can also be a tragedy for the environment if every guest receives a steak dinner. Vegetarian options like lasagna are a much better choice for a green wedding and are probably going to be cheaper. Or, plan ahead and ensure that vegetarian and vegan meals are provided to guests that want them, reducing the number of meat meals you purchase. Finger foods and hors d'œuvres are certainly less expensive, and are often meatless: think fruit and veggie trays with dip, and cookies. It's even possible to find vegan and alternative grain wedding cake or cupcakes right here in Northwest Arkansas from great bakeries like Wild Grains Gluten-Free Bakery in Bentonville! Their options are seriously scrumptious.

Some people like to give small gifts to their guests to thank them for attending. Lavender packets are a lovely choice. Or you might want to make the gifts yourself by painting recycled glass bottles for flower vases or tin cans for candle holders. Gold and silver paint makes them sparkle, and they double as table decorations. It's also possible to give away tree seedlings for people to plant in their yards and remember you with love as their trees grow year after year! These can be mail-ordered and are quite tiny. They do need caring attention, and many guests will not have anywhere to plant them.

Blowing bubbles is a fun alternative to throwing rice, and they create rainbows everywhere. Don't forget about the honeymoon! Ecotourism is a booming business, and there are wilderness adventures within the Natural State too numerous to mention here. Foreign ecotourism options are great too, especially since they fund biodiversity projects, education, and sustainable forestry as well as (sometimes) providing jobs to indigenous people. Pick whatever green options work for you, and congratulations!

Amanda Bancroft is a writer, artist, and naturalist building an off-grid cottage for land conservation on Mt. Kessler. She and her husband Ryan blog about their adventures and offer a solar-hosted online educational center on how to make a difference with everyday choices at: www.RipplesBlog.org.