

ECONNUBIAL BLISS

Get me to the church on time - in a hybrid**Couples look to innovative ways to shrink their wedding footprint**

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Originally, green-conscious Paul Fehr and his fiancée were planning to "hitch a ride" with a friend from the church to their wedding reception. They didn't want to boost Toronto's smog levels by riding around in a stretch limo, even on their special day.

But their parents would have none of it. Paul's mother, Reet, made it her mission to find an environmentally friendly alternative that still had a bit of pizzazz - and she found Green Limousine.

The tiny start-up company operates two Priuses, Toyota's gas-electric hybrid model. They brought in a third for the Fehr wedding.

"We're looking to grow," said Kirsten Douglas, who co-founded Green Limousine with her husband, Steven Frei.



Weddings are a new angle for the company that was launched in May primarily as an airport shuttle service. Licensing issues, including restrictions that prevent the Prius from being used as a public limousine, keep them from offering airport service in the City of Toronto, though it's available in the neighbouring regions of Pickering and Ajax.

Douglas and Frei are hoping to change that, but in the meantime, they're branching out. Last month marked Green Limousine's first wedding.

"When I called them up ... they said, 'We've never done a wedding, but what a great idea,' " Fehr recalled.

When she pitched the idea to her son and his fiancée, Katherine Martineau - who both "ride their bicycles everywhere rather than drive" - they thought it was a good compromise.

Though her son said decorations were not necessary, Fehr spoke with Douglas about the possibility of putting together some biodegradable adornments for the car.

"They wanted something very minimal and tasteful," Douglas said.

To that end, they wrapped the cars in reusable chiffon ribbon offset with a variety of fresh garden flowers, including ivy, honeysuckle, green leaves, lavender and daisies.

Green Limousine usually collects \$50 an hour for each ride, but in this case, they agreed that Fehr would donate the equivalent sum to the Toronto Environmental Alliance on her son's behalf.

Though Fehr was hesitant to call his wedding entirely green - there was a catered feast and the couple registered at a travel agency even though flying "is one of the worst things you could do" to the planet - he and Martineau took a number of measures to reduce the event's environmental footprint.

The wedding, which took place in the heart of downtown Toronto, was easily accessible by transit, so many of their guests were able to leave their own cars at home.

The reception hall exuded an all-natural theme, decked out with potted ferns and a maypole laden with fresh garlands and wreaths.

And instead of giving gifts to each guest, the happy couple made a plan to donate money to charities that support schizophrenia and multiple sclerosis research.

"I don't like giving out vast amounts of stuff to people," Fehr noted. "Most gets put in the corner and gathers dust. You just get so much clutter you don't want or need."

As for the honeymoon? The newlyweds headed off to camp in Algonquin Park, to spend the beginning of their new life together soaking up Ontario's wilderness. "I wouldn't say either of us are environmental activists," Fehr said, but "we try to make a small difference wherever we can."

MARRIAGE MANUALS**ECO-CHIC WEDDINGS**

By Emily Elizabeth Anderson, Hatherleigh Press, \$16,

ISBN: 1578262402

Don't be put off by the trendy title: The contents are insightful for brides who want to live green from this day forward. With a CV that includes Vanity Fair and Martha Stewart Living, Emily Elizabeth Anderson has been exposed to her fair share of posh perfection, but she's not consumed by it. Instead, her exhaustive list of online enviro vendors (from stationers to chocolate) and bullet-point tips confirm that sustainability and style make good partners.

OFFBEAT BRIDE

By Ariel Meadow Stallings,

Seal Press, \$19.95,

ISBN: 1580051804

Some girls dream about their wedding. Others consider skipping the ceremony altogether. Ariel Meadows Stallings marries tradition with non-conformity by acknowledging that many women face a "bridentity crisis" and that feminist wedding planners do exist. Her tips are very 2007. To wit, don't drive in a corset and top your cake with action figures. Stallings draws from her own wedding experience, making the book more personal. Her biggest worry was how to handle stoner guests. Turns out, they just helped spread the love.

GET MARRIED WITHOUT A HITCH

By Lisa Hemlanis,

Perigee, \$20,

ISBN: 0399533060

British author Lisa Helmanis has divided her book into 52 chapters, which means that if your wedding is a year away, your weekly reading averages roughly five pages. And that's exactly how stress-free she tries to make the big day. Idea No. 1 suggests you identify what kind of bride you are. By No. 10, you're dealing with the "outlaws." Interspersed with advice and frequently asked questions are quotes by such luminaries as Oprah Winfrey and Lord Byron. Idea No. 52 is entitled, "All night long." It refers to dancing.

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