

ECO-FRIENDLY FASHION

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It used to be that “eco fashion” meant rustic, itchy fabrics and earthy, drab colours. But today’s Green fashion is high quality, luxurious, soft fabrics in cutting edge, designer styles – and usually with superior characteristics and a lower cost than traditional fabrics!

What is Eco-Friendly? Here are some definitions that can help you navigate through environmental consciousness.

Eco-conscious Being concerned for the environment.

Ecological footprint: The amount of natural resources required to sustain a plant or animal to full growth.

Fair Trade: People that make the textiles and clothing are paid a fair price and have decent working conditions.

Organic: Fibres that are grown and produced without chemically formulated fertilizers, pesticides, insecticides, herbicides, growth stimulants, etc.

Reclaimed: Textiles or garments that have been discarded and are suitable for re-use.

Recycled: Textiles that have been manufactured from previous products, such as bottles.

Renewable: Resources that can be replenished within a few years.

What are some eco-friendly fabrics?

The following fabrics are in alphabetical order, and not by level of eco-friendliness.

Bamboo

Bamboo is a grass, so it is biodegradable and has the ability to breathe. As the fastest growing plant in the world, it is also highly renewable. It has antibacterial and anti-fungal properties. The fabric is soft, luxurious, stretchy, comfortable, and strong – great for daily wear and active wear.

Corn Fibre

The starch and sugars are extracted from corn, and processed to make a fibre called Natureworks PLA. This process is currently being done by Cargill Dow Polymers, and the resulting fabric is called Ingeo. The fabrics are comfortable and can resemble cotton, silk and wool, but with a lower cost, easier care, higher durability and superior wicking capabilities.

Cotton - Organic

Non-organic cotton accounts for approximately 10 percent of the world's pesticides, and 25 percent of the world's insecticides. These chemicals are associated with health consequences such as cancer, birth defects, and asthma. Non-natural bleaches and dyes release further toxins. Organic cotton is grown chemical-free, and the textiles are often dyed with natural dyes.

Hemp

Hemp plants grow quickly and densely. They require only an average amount of water and are pest-resistant. They do not require herbicides, pesticides, or fertilizers. Hemp

can be spun into yarns with minimum processing. The fibres are more durable, absorbent, and insulating than cotton.

Milk Silk

Goats' eggs are mixed with genetic material from spiders, so that the female goats produce milk that contains silk fibres. The resulting fibre is biodegradable and durable. The downside: it's genetic engineering, and kind of gross.

Recycled Polyester

The polymer from recycled soft drink bottles is melted and extruded as a new fibre. It reduces energy consumption and saves raw materials. The polyester is more fire-retardant, easy to clean, and inexpensive. A particular brand of polyester (EcoSpun™) is a warm and durable fleece popular among back-packers.

Soy Silk

Soy silk is made from the by-products of tofu. The liquid is extruded into fibres, which are dried and then spun into yarns. The high protein content allows it to easily absorb natural dyes. The fabric is soft, luxurious and breathable, as well as durable and washable. It is often referred to as "vegetable cashmere".

Wood Pulp

Lyocell and Modal are two fabrics produced in a solvent-spinning process from wood pulp. The resulting fabric is very smooth and supple, which is good for sensitive skin. It also has very good wicking properties, keeping moisture away from the skin.

Wool - Organic

The downside: 1. Sheep manure leaches into the water supply. 2. Bleaching and dyeing creates toxins which are released into the air and water.

The upside: Wool is a renewable resource, and natural dyes can be used. For organic wool, the livestock's food is organic, and no growth hormones or synthetic insecticides are used.

How can you clean fabrics in an environmentally friendly way? Here are some products:

- Baking soda
- Borax
- Eucalyptus oil – to remove grease
- Hydrogen peroxide – to remove fresh blood
- Lemon juice and sunshine – to remove stains
- Rubbing alcohol – to remove grass stains
- Sunshine – to bleach
- Tea tree oil – to disinfect

When we go Green in our fashion, we can help contribute to the healthy life and quality of both our planet and ourselves. Check out the new eco-fashion! You won't need your Birkenstocks...

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