

In Fashion: Eco chic

by Sharon_Mosley

April may be Earth month, but any day of the year is a good time to throw on an organic cotton T-shirt and take a few minutes to save our fashion futures. Yes, even fashionistas need to get a conscience. Eco-chic is not a passing fad.

Buying apparel made from organic cotton is one of the best ways fashion-savvy consumers can create an eco-friendly wardrobe. Here, Revenge Is creates stylish organic T-shirts from recycled plastic soda bottles. Photo courtesy of Revenge Is. "Guilt and shopping go hand in hand for most of us these days," says Tamsin Blanchard, author of "Green is the New Black" (Hodder & Stoughton). "It's not just that you are spending beyond your means and are on your second interest-free credit card transfer. The minute you start to consider who has made your clothes, in what sort of conditions and how little they are being paid, impulse shopping can start to feel rather uncomfortable."

Blanchard suggests supporting manufacturers and retailers who are making an effort to go green and reduce our carbon footprints. Read those labels! Her favorites include: People Tree, the Fair Trade clothing company, American Apparel who makes sweatshop-free T-shirts, Nike who is expanding its organic cotton clothing and designer Katherine Hamnett who insists on using organic cotton in her fashion collections.

"As a consumer, you have fantastic power," says Blanchard. "Don't forget to use it. And if you show your support, they will do more."

Christie Matheson agrees that we all need to be more thoughtful about the clothes and accessories we buy. In her book, "Green Chic: Saving the Earth in Style," (Sourcebooks Inc.) she advises fashionistas to begin their green quest with a "less is more" attitude. Her first step to achieving a more eco-conscious wardrobe is to clean out your closet.

"The idea is that if you love everything in your closet," says Matheson, even if you end up with a third of the clothes you had before you started the editing process, "you'll have a much easier time getting dressed in the morning and you'll always look stunning."

Like Blanchard, Matheson is a fan of organic cotton apparel. Her favorite collections include Loomstate (now available at Target), designer Linda Loudermilk — a celebrity favorite, Stewart (plus) Brown and organic denim from Del Forte and Levi's.

Matheson also strongly suggests using reusable shopping bags. "If everyone in New York City alone used just one less shopping bag per year, it would eliminate 5 million pounds of waste and save the city \$250,000 in disposal costs," she notes.

The Sak makes one of the best eco-friendly "bags." The Sakroots line contains trendy hand-woven bags made of bamboo, hemp, milk cotton, azo-free dyes and hardware. Lorae Russo, creative director/vice president of The Sak, was inspired by a friend who introduced her to a diverse website, www.treehugger.com.

"I wanted to change my life in a drastic way to do something that would make a difference in the world," says Russo, "but soon realized that I would be most effective doing what I knew best and that's through the design community." Russo partnered with The Sak to create an eco-extension of their handbag line. "The path to becoming greener can begin in the simple choices we make doing the things we normally do," she says. "It makes learning about green so easy for everyone if we relate it to our own lives, and hopefully learn more about as we go."

Sakroots bags are available at Bloomingdale's, Nordstrom, Macy's and www.thesak.com.

Some other favorite eco-friendly fashion finds:

• **Revenge Is.** Taking George Herbert's famous quote "living well is the best revenge," the founders of RI define "living well" as living green, while planting the seeds of change through social activism. Revenge Is seeks to answer the fundamental question so aptly put by the moniker "Revenge Is" offering slogans on their organic T-shirts to inspire personal activism and to enact positive change for the environment and our society. Visit www.revengeis.com to view products.

• **Essie.** One of the most popular collections of nail products has come up with paraben-free products, which are made with fewer chemicals and more natural ingredients like eucalyptus oil. Naturally Clean harnesses the power of botanicals, glycerin and natural emollients. Go to www.essie.com for more information.

• **Josie Maran Cosmetics.** Josie's latest green-on-the-go makeup kit is housed in a box made from recycled materials and printed with fun green tips. The products contain natural, paraben- and fragrance-free ingredients so you can green your makeup routine with ease. For \$48 at Sephora, the kit includes a deluxe sample of Argan oil and four full-size products: Plumping Lip Gloss in Daring, Sunrise Cream Blush, Black Mascara and Black Eye Liner.

â€” Physicians Formula. In addition to the 10 products already in its organic line that premiered last year, Organic wear expands to five new items: 100-percent Natural Origin Liquid Foundation with SPF 15, Multi-Colored Face Sculpting Trio, 2-in-1 Bronzer & Blush, Mascara and Superfruit Lip Gloss. Also, for the entire month of April, a portion of proceeds from all Physicians Formula Organic wear purchases will be donated to Global Green USA, a nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering a global value shift toward a sustainable and secure future. Visit www.physiciansformula.com for more information.

â€” Born Shoes. Because Born shoes are sewn by hand, they use less adhesives, cements and internal components. Also, nontoxic vegetable dyes are used in place of man-made products. Check out the eco-friendly flower sandals at www.bornshoes.com.

â€” Loomstate. Target is teaming up again with CFDA award-winning designer Rogan Gregory and Scott Mackinlay Hahn to launch Loomstate, an affordable eco-friendly fashion line for men and women. All of the cotton used in the collection is 100-percent certified organic. The limited edition collection launches April 19th and is in Target stores through May 16th (women's) and June 20th (men's only).

â€” Noah's Naturals. A line of natural personal care products that is a part of One Percent for the Planet, which features a unique alliance of companies that give at least 1 percent of their net sales to environmental organizations worldwide. The formulations are paraben- and sulfate-free as well as made with naturally derived, biodegradable ingredients. The packaging is also healthy for the planet, as it is 100-percent recyclable â€” even the labels are created using "clean wind energy." The products are available at Wal-Mart (www.walmart.com).

â€” Revolution Organics. The company is currently introducing its first color line, Freedom Collection. Keeping their trademark certified organic ingredients, Freedom delivers natural and healthy color â€” 85

percent of certified organic ingredients â€” that is free of synthetics, chemicals, parabens, mineral oils, artificial ingredients, petrochemicals and animal testing. The collection is launching to QVC on Earth Day (April 22nd). Visit www.revolutionorganics.com for more information on the products.

â€” TOMS Shoes: A great company who makes stylish canvas and vegan shoes; they give a pair of shoes to a child in need every time you buy their shoes. The company predicts it will give away 300,000 pairs of shoes to kids around the world in 2009. Check out www.tomsshoes.com.

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