

Luxuriously Green

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Extravagance may not be first thing that comes to mind when you're thinking about doing your part for the environment; but the fact is, the "green" movement is finding its way into even the poshest corners of our lives.

Though the move to reduce our collective carbon footprint may have started as a no-frills, even fringe, movement, a number of companies are proving that going green doesn't necessarily mean giving up life's oh-so-crucial amenities. Some eco-conscious designers and entrepreneurs are producing environmentally mindful indulgences that span the realms of home interiors, fashion, beauty, travel, wine and even flowers.

Eco-Luxury, at Home

Arizona-based design company Interior Motives produces high-style furniture that also embodies sustainability. Founder and principal designer Anita Lang makes certain that her staff of designers abide by the company's philosophy of working with nature rather than against it. To that end, modern pieces are custom crafted to be individual and timeless enough to outlast trends. "We try to make designs that people aren't ripping out every few years," Lang says.

Lang realizes that one of life's biggest luxuries is the ability to give back, and Interior Motives' line of furniture does that too. Pieces are made from materials harvested using responsible forestry methods, like the wood of trees that have already fallen and completed their life cycle. In addition, the company shuns mass production. Each piece is made by skilled artisans, and the actual fabrication of the furniture in turn provides sustainable social, economic and environmental benefits to the disadvantaged community of Ndola, Zambia.

In (Sustainable) Style

You may be surprised to discover there are a number of budding ecologically sensible fashion designers. Bay Berteau, founder and designer of the Form & Fauna shoe line, says her line started as a selfish endeavor: "I could not find any attractive, eco-friendly, and vegan shoes that met my style criteria. They were either too casual, too hippy-ish or [they were] vegan shoes that utilized cheap polyurethane and did not concern themselves with true eco-friendliness" she says. Her line, Form & Fauna, resolved all these issues. The stylish shoes have an original look that will have trendsetters stopping you in your tracks to find out where you got those adorable turquoise peacock kicks.

"Form & Fauna is [one of the brands] pioneering a new form of eco-luxe, meaning high-end looks [that don't compromise] the environment," Berteau says. The shoes are fashioned from high-quality Italian synthetics, which are biodegradable and free of noxious substances and toxic gases. They incorporate other alternative materials too, like hemp, bamboo and water-based glue. Talk about erasing your carbon footprint.

Now, any fashionista knows that her shoes should match her bag. Enter Vegan Queen handbags, the perfect complement to your eco-friendly soles. This classic line is designed with the keen attention to detail and well-conceived silhouette typical of high-end bags. But the best part about VQ purses is that you don't have to feel any of the guilt that might come with your typical leather carryall—these bags are sustainable, eco-friendly and functional to boot. Best of all, they're made in the United States from organic, nontoxic and recyclable materials.

Finally, your repertoire of eco-friendly accessories wouldn't be complete without a few pieces of jewelry. The pieces from Nügaard Designs sport delicate details and bold designs. But it's the environmentally friendly concept behind the line that really sets it apart. From Brazilian founders and designers Alessandra Feio and Erica Pacey, the innovative line consists of four collections, each with a specific appeal. The Nügaard Camp collection features pieces made from golden grass from northern Brazil, while pieces in the Elemento series are made from seeds from a native Brazilian tree. Our favorite though is the Flora collection, which boasts jewelry formed from real leaves dipped in precious metals. The company also gives consumers an opportunity to give back through its alliance with "Trees for the Future," whereby it has a tree planted for every piece sold from the Flora collection.

Stylishly Organic

As the founder of Pangea Organics, Joshua Onysko made it his mission to develop a line of body-care products that use the highest quality organic and natural ingredients and still lavish you in luxury. The Pangea Organics line of skin care and body care consists of products ranging from toners and scrubs to lotions and oils—all of which are carefully formulated to be efficacious, but healthy, for the body. "Beneficial, never artificial," Onysko says. "You can plant our packaging." He's serious: The company recently created a packaging for their products that can be planted to grow flowers. Furthermore, all of Pangea body care products start biodegrading within 48 hours. How's that for sustainable?

Outstanding not only in principles but in practices as well, Pangea Organics uses fair-trade sourcing and provides a living wage to all its employees. "Pangea is constantly striving to make things that make things better, from our packaging all the way to our nonprofit, which will be funding women-owned cooperatives to produce our ingredients."

In Tucson, aesthetic salon Face Me offers exclusive cosmetic, skin-care and hair-care lines including all-natural skin care products from England native and Hollywood favorite Tracie Martyn. Martyn's all-natural botanical skin-care line will regenerate your skin, with absolutely no petrochemicals. Even the packaging shows consciousness—it's printed with soy ink.

The ultimate luxury, aside from lavishing yourself in quality body care, is having it done for you. Yes, we're talking about the spa. Plenty of spas use organic products, but leading the movement in Arizona is Moss Wellness Spa in Scottsdale, the first eco-luxury spa in the state seeking LEED certification. From its products to the insulation (which, incidentally, is made of recycled denim), Moss strives to meet the highest environmentally friendly standards. All products used are free of preservatives, and even the cleaning supplies are nontoxic. Reinforcing the serene natural environment, a Banyan tree anchors the yoga room.

Travel Well, Tread Lightly

Luxury is often found in the most exotic of locations; however, jetsetters aren't always aware of the effect their travels could have on the

environment. Ecotourism.org, the site of the International Ecotourism Society, the biggest and longest established of such societies, provides travelers with tips for adjusting their habits to make a more positive impact.

And choosing the right hotel is an important aspect of traveling responsibly. Voted one of the world's top earth-friendly getaways, The Mauna Lani Resort in Hawaii holds the distinction of having the most solar electric generating capacity of any luxury resort in the world, a half-megawatt photovoltaic system. This setup spans three acres and supplies a large portion of the resort's daytime water pumping requirements. By maximizing the sun's emitted energy, this ingenious system saves the environment from thousands of harmful emissions. And that's not all. Since 1989, the Mauna Lani Resort has also been caring for juvenile honu (turtles) that are raised in saltwater ponds on property. Once they reach a certain age, the honu are released into the wild. The resort also plants native vegetation that is endangered.

A Green Remembrance

The holidays, for all the memories they create, also have the potential to create a decidedly un-green blight on the environment, what with all those formerly glorious wrapping, gift cards and envelopes to dispose of. A new business, Ecosaurus LLC, aspires to change that. Offering cute and earth-friendly gift wrap, bags, note cards, greetings and even calendars, the company is making a difference one present at a time. As it states on its Web site, "Ecosaurus is defined by the following principles: sustainability, stylish creativity, positive messaging and creative giving." The company's greeting and note cards, envelopes and calendars are printed on 100-percent post-consumer fiber papers that are processed without chlorine and certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). Its wrapping papers are printed on 100-percent-recycled, 50-percent-post-consumer-waste, Green-e-certified papers using a chlorine-free process. Vegetable-based inks are used across the product line allowing you to give the gift of green.

For everyday well-wishing, express yourself with organic flowers. In 2001, Organic Bouquet had the foresight to enter the organic flowers market; since then, the company has blossomed into an industry leader. But wait. Organic flowers? We were confused too. In this case, the term organic refers to pesticide-free farming techniques that are friendly to farm workers, the environment and others in the food chain who might digest the flowers.

Parent company Organic Bouquet actually pioneered new standards for organic floral farming that include certifications in biodynamic (a sustainable system guided and enriched by contributions from soil, animals, the atmosphere and the cosmos), veriflora (a rigorous eight-step certification process that guarantees flowers and potted plants have been produced in an environmentally and socially responsible manner) and wildcrafted (flowers that are naturally harvested—meaning collected after naturally detaching from their origin).