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Green is the new black

Eco stylist Dawn Mellowship reveals the ethical trends setting the fashion world alight.

Now that tree hugging and ethical fashion are officially no longer synonymous, it's possible to be both uber-stylish and right on. In fact, ethical fashion is so hot right now that fashionistas flocking to get their mitts on the I'm Not a Plastic Bag shopper, designed by Queen of Handbags Anya Hindmarch, made headline news earlier this year. High Street trendsetter Topshop is now stocking People Tree ranges and The Clothes Show Live will be equipped with a brand new zone dedicated to eco-fashion brands this year.

As we become ever more aware of the fragile situation of our planet, it's not surprising how more of us are seeking ethical lifestyle alternatives. Worldwide, workers are subject to excessive working hours, forced overtime, low wages, exhaustion, lack of trade union rights and unsafe working conditions. 22,000 workers die each year as a result of their poor working environment. Our reliance on cotton results in the release of two billion US dollars worth of chemicals each year, putting both producers and the environment at risk. Additionally, fashion contributes to our throwaway culture, with the constantly shifting trends and the lack of recycling. According to WRAP, more than a million tonnes of textiles are binned every year in the UK alone. Ethical fashion utilises natural pesticides, ensures a fair price and decent working conditions for producers, and explores alternative fibres and recycled materials to prevent the reliance on cotton and avoid creating more waste.

To see how far eco-friendly fashion has moved on since the days of rainbow coloured sweaters and dungarees, you only have to look at the top ethical fashion labels, which manage to combine catwalk credibility with sound principles. Here my hot picks from each...

TOP ETHICAL LABELS COMBINE

CATWALK CREDIBILITY

WITH SOUND PRINCIPLES



Ciel V-neck Smock Dress, organic hemp silk, £145 from The Natural Store

FOHO FASHIONISTAS

Now that Boho is somewhat of a fashion faux pas and Foho has taken its mantle, Ciel is perfect for floaty summer dresses, which you can team with a pair of washed out jeans or black tights and a contemporary Matt & Nat vegan handbag. The brainchild of Sarah Ratty, who initially brought us 'Conscious Earthwear', garments are beautifully constructed from luxurious fabrics, at least 60 per cent of which are eco-materials, and the production process conforms to the fair labour laws set out at Labourbehindthelabel.com. Sarah designs for fashion conscious folk who care about the planet, attracting the likes of Cate Blanchett, Sienna Miller and Zoe Ball.



1 Sophia Dress in Foxglove, made from organic cotton jersey, £185

2 Bardot shorts, organic cotton, £124

3 Vita Dress, organic cotton, £156

Available at adili.com, my-wardrobe.com and thenaturalstore.co.uk

SUMMER STYLE QUEEN

People Tree is a pioneering Fair Trade and ecological fashion company, working with 50 Fair Trade groups in developing countries. Its stringent fair trade and eco policy promotes traditional skills and rural development and protects the environment by using organic and ethical materials. The incredibly ethical, simple and stylish fashions are perfect to adorn on long sweltering summer holidays in faraway exotic locations. If you want to be on trend, the Richard Nicoll Shirt adds an element of the New Romantic with its fabulous frills. And since every girl needs a maxi dress in her wardrobe this summer, the Delia Summer Dress is a dream.



1 Delia Summer Dress, 100% organic cotton, £38

2 Amazon Leaf Print Skirt, 100% organic cotton, £45

3 Richard Nicoll Shirt, 100% organic cotton, £95

Go to ptree.co.uk; also available at adili.com, thenaturalstore.co.uk, my-wardrobe.com



Thakoon Dress, £95



Pansy Shift
Dress, organic
cotton, £135

FLOWER POWER

Flowery prints are a must for this summer so Enamore's gorgeous summer dresses are bang on trend. If boho or hippy is more than you can bear, Enamore does some stunning prim and proper tulip and A-line dresses that will hide a multitude of sins.

Enamore was founded by Jenny Ambrose in 2004, with funding from the Prince's Trust and Fredericks Foundation. The clothing, lingerie and accessories are all created in the UK from organic and sustainable fabrics and most of them are made to order.

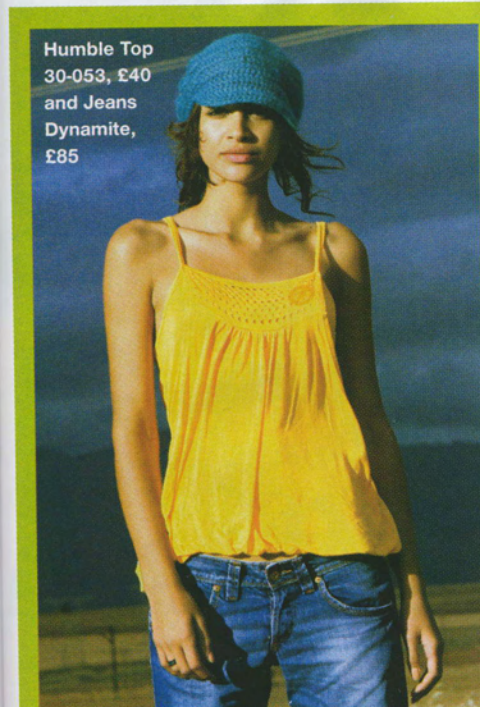


- 1 Organic Cotton Eva Dress, organic cotton, £150
- 2 Tulip Sun Dress, vintage cotton, £125
- 3 Plum and Pansy Day Dress, organic cotton and hemp, £130

From enamore.co.uk

FURTHER INFORMATION

Dawn Mellowship is the UK's first online eco stylist, offering a range of styling services and online ethical fashion resources. No matter what the occasion, Dawn will find some fabulous ethical fashion to suit your style and personality. Her website can be found at www.ecostylist.co.uk or call 020 8367 9158.



Humble Top
30-053, £40
and Jeans
Dynamite,
£85

- 1 Jeans Francine, £90
 - 2 Heman Dress 70-754, £55
 - 3 Hoodoo Top 30-052, £30
- For stockists see kuyichi.com; also available from adili.com and TopShop, Oxford Circus



URBAN DENIM CHIC

If you are in the prime of your youth and want to look like you have just thrown something on whilst simultaneously appearing über chic, Kuyichi is the place to shop. Bang on this season's sporty trend, check out the fantastic jersey racer back dress, plus some superb organic denim jeans and mini-skirts.

Kuyichi was the first denim label to use organic cotton and ecological processes. The name Kuyichi is derived from the Peruvian god of the rainbow who, according to legend, stole the colours of life from the Taquile Indians and later restored the colours after the Indians wove beautiful blankets.

Angelina Almond
Toe Courts, Sui
Generis
Collection, £284



URBAN DENIM CHIC

For the lady who loves a wardrobe full of shoes, ethical footwear label Beyond Skin offers the perfect cruelty-free alternative. Established by Natalie Dean, a make-up artist in the music and fashion industry and a committed vegan, the sumptuous, hand-made, vegan shoes are hand-made in the UK from eco-friendly fabrics.

- 1 Angelica T-Bar Wedge, £307, Sui Generis
- 2 Chloe Summertime Cork Wedge Sandal, £169, New Collection
- 3 Larry B Pointed Toe Kitten Heel Court Shoe, £112, Classic Collection at The Natural Store www.beyondskin.co.uk