

# WEAR & Care

A loving way to treat the earth is to carefully cultivate a tiny corner of it: your closet. We've got smart ideas for doing just that, plus planet-friendly fashion as gorgeous as nature itself.

PHOTOGRAPHS  
BY RUVEN AFANADOR  
on location at Serenbe

Dress, \$595, and pants, \$375, Mara Hoffman (100 percent woven Tencel sourced from the pulp of sustainably harvested trees and manufactured in a mill that primarily uses renewable energy). Hat, Hat Attack. Rain boots, Alice + Whittles.

**OPPOSITE:** Dress, Rochas, available to rent from Armarium. (For more rental sites and other ways to expand your wardrobe sustainably, see "New to You," page 109.) Earrings and ring, Pippa Small. Handbag, Brunna.Co. Rain boots, Roma Boots.



*"As a brand, we believe in uniform dressing, taking a step back and understanding need versus want, buying less and wearing more, wearing more and washing less. We want each piece of clothing to be seen as special, to serve a purpose, to bring happiness, to have the power of transformation."*

**MARA HOFFMAN, PRESIDENT AND CREATIVE DIRECTOR, MARA HOFFMAN**

# Though we've embraced

meatless Mondays and reusable straws, we may still balk at the idea of eco-fashion. (Isn't that for hippies happy to shroud themselves in burlap?) But sustainable clothing is casting off its sackcloth-and-ashes reputation. Celebrities are swanning about in upcycled couture at the Green Carpet Awards. Julianne Moore has rocked a Salvatore Ferragamo gown made of recovered sea plastic; Emma Watson, a custom Louis Vuitton dress made out of recycled bottles. Designers are using discarded fish scales instead of sequins, turning algae into sneaker insoles, producing jackets in "luxury" pineapple leather.

That may sound bizarre, but so, not long ago, did cars powered by battery packs, says Danny Seo, green lifestyle expert and host of the TV series *Naturally, Danny Seo*:

"Once, we needed Cameron Diaz to tell us what a Prius was, but these days they're everywhere. There was a time when organic food was a niche thing. Fashion seems to be one of the last areas to make the shift, but it is happening."

And not a moment too soon. The clothing industry is one of the biggest global polluters, says environmental scientist Linda Greer. It produces around 20 percent of the planet's wastewater and 10 percent of its carbon emissions, beating the airline business and maritime shipping combined, according to the UN. The rise of cheap, plentiful "fast fashion" has fueled the crisis: Since 2000, global clothing production has at least doubled. Compared with 19 years ago, the average person now buys 60 percent more items annually and keeps them about half as long. Every second, the equivalent of one garbage-truckful of textiles is put in a landfill or burned.

"The issues have become so urgent that we can no longer turn a blind eye to the problem," says Amanda Hearst, cofounder of the ethical retail site Maison de

Mode. In 2009, Walmart and Patagonia joined forces to create the Sustainable Apparel Coalition—which now includes such brands as Nordstrom, JCPenney, and H&M—to promote more responsible practices and develop tools that measure environmental impact.

But while we can and should educate ourselves about retailers and materials, the most important thing we can do is buy mindfully, says Livia Firth, cofounder and creative director of Eco-Age, a consultancy that advises companies on ethical business practices, and executive producer of *The True Cost*, a 2015 documentary that examines the environmental and social perils of fashion. "When you find something in a shop, stop and ask yourself, 'Will I get a minimum of 30 wears out of this?'" You'd be surprised how many times the answer is no," Firth says. "Consumers need to change how we think about our wardrobes. And by the way, I hate the word *consumer*, which implies consuming is all we should do. I prefer *citizen*, which makes us responsible to each other."



Coat, \$670, and dress, \$395, Nanushka (a company committed to sustainable practices). Sandals, Sseko.

## JEAN MAPPING

Those innocent-looking bootcuts may be your wardrobe's worst offender. Consider the life of an average pair.

### Cotton is cultivated and spun into yarn.

Growing cotton involves a lot of water. Conventional cotton farming also makes use of fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides, which can contaminate soil, rivers, lakes, and groundwater.

### The yarn is dyed and woven into fabric.

Synthetic indigo dye (it gives most jeans their color) requires a substantial amount of toxic chemicals, which produce wastewater that can harm marine life and water supplies.

### The fabric is "finished."

That means it's brushed and washed to eliminate post-purchase shrinkage, which means using more water. From start to finish, manufacturing a traditional pair reportedly takes about 1,500 gallons of H<sub>2</sub>O.

### Next, it's stitched into jeans.

They may then be treated for a worn-in look (yes, more water and chemicals). Distressing can use pumice stones—which flake off and combine with fibers and dust to form an unsavory by-product: sludge.

### Then, you buy, wash, and, sooner or later, get rid of them.

The one way in which jeans are more eco-friendly than other clothes: They can be washed much less often. Opt for cold water, and air-dry.

### Some of the forward-thinking companies piecing together better ways to do denim:

**TOMMY HILFIGER** ([usa.tommy.com](http://usa.tommy.com)) uses energy-saving techniques throughout the entire manufacturing process, including nebulization

technology to reduce water and chemical consumption by up to 70 percent. The brand will launch a line of 100 percent recycled cotton denim this spring.

**EVERLANE** ([everlane.com](http://everlane.com)) recycles 98 percent of the water used to manufacture its jeans, which are 85 percent air-dried, saving electricity.

**MADEWELL** ([madewell.com](http://madewell.com)) and **J. CREW** ([jcrew.com](http://jcrew.com)) encourage consumers to bring old jeans (any brand) to their stores; eventually they're made into housing insulation instead of being thrown in landfills.

**LEVI'S** ([levi.com](http://levi.com)), which is a member of the Better Cotton Initiative

(BCI), a consortium of companies working to develop more sustainable farming practices, intends to use only responsibly sourced cotton by 2020.

**DL1961** ([dl1961.com](http://dl1961.com)) jeans are made in partially solar-powered factories, using natural indigo dye, with less than ten gallons of water per pair.



Top, \$550, and jeans, \$550, Zero + Maria Cornejo (100 percent organic cotton denim certified by Cradle to Cradle, a nonprofit that supports environmentally and socially ethical practices). Slides, Brother Vellies.



**MODEL CITIZEN**

*Grace*  
**MAHARY**  
@GRACEMAHARY

When she's not modeling, experimenting with vegan recipes, or doing yoga (that's her, supporting the goat and balancing on yoga teacher Heather Ruth), Grace Mahary is on a mission. During a visit to her parents' native Eritrea in 2011, Mahary saw how many people live with little to no access to electricity and wanted to help. Her nonprofit, Project Tsehigh, focuses on renewable energy solutions for emerging communities. "Our goal is to empower and enable them to further develop," she says. In Tigrinya, one of Eritrea's languages, *tsehigh* is pronounced "sah-hi," which translates to "sun"—so when the shoe brand Suns proposed collaborating on a design, with a portion of the proceeds helping fund Project Tsehigh's solar power projects around the world, the partnership felt like a natural fit. "We thought it was a fun way to spread awareness," Mahary says. "We're currently working to equip a primary school in Tanzania with solar power."

**ON GRACE (LEFT):** Top (recycled nylon), \$79, and leggings (recycled polyester), \$89, Athleta.

**ON HEATHER (RIGHT):** Top (recycled nylon), Athleta, \$79. Leggings (79 percent recycled polyester made from water bottles), Girlfriend Collective, \$68.

## The Fabrics of Our Lives

*Tara St James, sustainability consultant and production coordinator at the Brooklyn Fashion & Design Accelerator (which nurtures up-and-coming fashion professionals in ethical design), on the textiles we should be buying—and banishing.*

**BEST IN CLASS:** Linen is excellent, because it typically requires less water and pesticides than cotton. If you're buying cotton, buy certified organic, since it's not grown with synthetic pesticides. I'm also a big fan of recycled denim and leather—brands take the scraps that would otherwise go into landfills, pulverize them, and make new textiles, almost like a fabric version of particle board. Wool is great because it's biodegradable, though it's not an option for vegans, obviously.

**SMART SUBSTITUTES:** Natural fibers just can't achieve certain qualities, like waterproofing, so sometimes synthetics are necessary. When buying items like bathing suits, veer toward recycled polyester or nylon.

**THE NO-GO'S:** Avoid traditional polyester or virgin nylon. Resources like crude oil are used to manufacture these fibers, and of course that's not sustainable long-term. Workout gear that's 100 percent Spandex is also a no-no. It can't be recycled, so it ends up in landfills or is incinerated. Fleece is problematic because the microplastics it releases in the washing machine end up in our water supply. To minimize that, wash fleece in a mild detergent (try Ecover, Method, or Seventh Generation) and use the gentle setting on your machine—the less harsh and abrasive the wash, the fewer microplastics will be released.

**UP AND COMING:** I'm excited about bioengineered fabrics like Orange Fiber, which Salvatore Ferragamo used in a 2017 capsule collection. The company makes the silky, cellulose-based fiber (similar to Tencel or modal) using organic waste from the citrus industry in Sicily. It's the future.



Sweater (hand-knit with 42 percent cashmere and 40 percent virgin wool), Alejandra Alonso Rojas, \$1,195. Skirt (hand-dyed silk), Alejandra Alonso Rojas, \$1,695. Hat, Greenpacha. Earrings, Beck Jewels. Rain boots, Roma Boots.

## NEW TO YOU

### Wise ways to mix up your wardrobe.

It's been estimated that we wear only 20 percent of our wardrobe regularly—so why do we still want more? "When we buy something, we get a dopamine-infused feeling of novelty in the brain," says Anabel Maldonado, founder of The Psychology of Fashion (tpof-thepsychologyoffashion.com). Here are sustainable ways to get that high.

**SHOP YOUR CLOSET:** In the #10X10Challenge on Instagram, participants wear

only ten different items—in ten different combos—for ten days. Check it out and get inspired by how little you need to make a big style impact.

**BUY FROM SECONDHAND SITES:** You'll find gently used clothes, bags, shoes, and accessories for a fraction of the cost. For designer goods, try The RealReal or Tradesy; for a range of low- to high-end, go to Poshmark or ThredUp. For new pieces, shop ThredUp's line Remade; when you've had your fill, the site will buy them back for 40 percent of the retail value. If every garment were returned to the circular economy, the clothing industry would

reduce waste and emissions by 73 percent, according to a 2018 ThredUp report.

**TRADE OR BORROW:** Purge your closet, then host a clothing swap with friends (visit [globalfashionxchange.org/](http://globalfashionxchange.org/) toolkit for tips). Or cruise rental sites like Armarium (for luxury goods), Gwynnie Bee (for plus sizes), Rent the Runway, or Le Tote; you'll find a rotating selection of items that can be temporarily yours, usually with the option to purchase. "These resources are a godsend for our need to experiment," says Maldonado. "If you like a style, you can buy it, confident that it'll be part of the 20 percent of your wardrobe that you love."



Cardigan (100 percent organic cotton), \$448, and camisole (74 percent Tencel, made from responsibly harvested trees, and 24 percent recycled polyester), \$148, Eileen Fisher. Cropped pants (100 percent organic cotton), \$550, Zero + Maria Cornejo. Hat, Hat Attack. Slides, Ancient Greek. Sandals, Basket, Medina Mercantile.

## Nice Outfit

Meet the queen of green fashion.

Eileen Fisher, who launched her beloved line 35 years ago, was thinking about sustainability long before it was a buzzword. "My mother was from the Depression era and saved every scrap," she says, "so the idea of not wasting anything is in my blood."

In 2016, Eileen Fisher became a B Corporation, a certification that recognizes social and environmental performance, transparency, and accountability. The company's initiatives range from the big picture—by next year, it intends to offer 100 percent organic cotton and linen, as well as merino wool from ethical farms, and to use cleaner dyeing methods and alternative energy sources—to the small: At its Tiny Factory in Irvington, New York, workers sort through clothes gathered via the Renew program, which allows customers to return their worn Eileen Fisher items and receive a \$5 credit for each one. Gently used garments are sold at Renew shops, select Eileen Fisher locations, or online ([eileenfisherrenew.com](http://eileenfisherrenew.com)); the rest are refashioned into limited-run lines or turned into pillows or wall art. "I love to see the creative solutions that emerge when you lean into a difficult problem," says Fisher.

To help launch the next generation of fashion troubleshooters, Fisher established the Social Innovator Award, which offers students a year-long residency to work on sustainable-design challenges. "We need more advanced technology, like waterless production methods, and everyone in the industry has to share what we learn—otherwise, we'll be out of business," she says. "In this world, we can't do anything alone anymore."



Dress (created from textiles woven by artisans in India and manufactured with ecologically responsible methods at a zero-waste facility), Ace & Jig, \$464. Cuff, AUrate. Basket, Indego Africa. Rain boots, Roma Boots.

*"Understanding the patience and painstaking care that go into the craftsmanship of artisans gives us a fresh perspective on the market, and on our closet. We prize these items more and will be much more inclined to take care of them, and not throw them away."*

CARMEN BUSQUETS, FOUNDER OF CARMENBUSQUETS.COM, HUMANITARIAN, AND WWF COUNCIL MEMBER



**MODEL CITIZEN**  
**Summer Rayne OAKES**

**@HOMESTEADBROOKLYN**

With a name like that (“Yes, it’s real”) Oakes was almost destined to be an advocate for the earth. Holding degrees in environmental sciences and entomology from Cornell University, she aims to help people become more attuned to nature with gardening ideas, healthy recipes, and outdoorsy travel tips on her site, [HomesteadBrooklyn.com](http://HomesteadBrooklyn.com). Her fourth book, *How to Make a Plant Love You*, is due out in July. “Most people think of potted plants as decorative objects, but they bring psychological benefits,” she says. “Tending them is a path to greater mindfulness.”

Dress (34 percent organic linen and 36 percent silk), H&M Conscious Collection, \$299. Cuffs, Anndra Neen. Slides, Brother Vellies.

**MAKE IT RIGHT**  
**Who really pays for cheap clothing?**

When activist Livia Firth walked into a Bangladeshi clothing factory, “it was one of the most shocking experiences of my life,” she says. “There were barred windows and an armed guard. Every floor was packed with women working in production lines.” Workers told her of 12-hour days with no bathroom breaks; for generating 150 pieces an hour, they earned \$48 per month.

“I thought, *Who made the clothing I’m wearing today?*” says Firth, who

adds that at Eco-Age, the sustainability consultancy she cofounded, social responsibility and environmental responsibility are intertwined. “The environmental impact of fast fashion is ginormous, but that level of output is only possible because these companies use slave labor.” In America, 97 percent of the clothing we buy is imported, mostly from developing countries where unsafe working conditions and unfair wages are commonplace.

“Consumers have to vote with both our wallets and our attitudes,” says designer Orsola de Castro, who cofounded the movement Fashion Revolution after the Rana Plaza building collapse that killed more than 1,100 Bangladeshi garment workers in 2013. During Fashion Revolution Week each April, the organization invites people to post photos of themselves using the hashtag #WhoMadeMyClothes and tagging the brands they’re wearing.

“A lot of companies can’t even answer that simple question—that’s how complicated the supply chain is,” says de Castro. “But each year we get more responses. As consumers, we have to keep asking. That’s our motto: Be curious.” (Ask your favorite brands #WhoMadeMyClothes—or check out #IMadeYourClothes, posted by workers and manufacturers worldwide—during this year’s Fashion Revolution Week, April 22–28.)

*“I grew up on a ranch in Uruguay where living sustainably was a given. Being in contact with nature from a very young age makes you understand her power and why we need to have respect. It’s very important for us to create with that respect in mind.”*

**GABRIELA HEARST, FASHION DESIGNER**



*Fashion editor: Kym Canter. Hair: Italo Gregorio using Kérastase Elixir Ultime. Makeup: Matin using ChapStick. Props: Stephen Brown for Glitterville.com.*

**High-End Hopes**

When Stella McCartney launched her ready-to-wear line in 2001, her proudly vegan designs—no fur, leather, or feathers—were on the fashion fringe. Since then, lots of big-time designers have bid farewell to fur, including Gucci, Burberry, and Versace. And that’s just one way luxury labels are doing right by our natural resources: In early 2019, it was announced that the international fashion conglomerate Kering—which has 14 luxury brands under its umbrella, including Saint Laurent and Alexander McQueen—was ranked the second most sustainable corporation in the world. Kering is committed to reducing its overall carbon emissions 50 percent by 2025 and eliminating the use of hazardous chemicals among its companies. Sure, not all of us can afford a straight-off-the-runway creation, but it’s encouraging to see that those who set the trends are taking their influence seriously. New York City designer Maria Cornejo has been a leading force in eco-conscious fashion for more than two decades; her spring 2017 collection featured fabric made from wood pulp. “Sustainable design can still be interesting, sensual, exciting,” Cornejo says. “We need to make it desirable and undisposable. We want to create pieces you can pass down to your kids.”

Dress (90 percent virgin wool and 10 percent cashmere, manufactured with environmentally and socially responsible methods), Gabriela Hearst, \$2,700. Hat, Lola Hats.