



Ecoholic

Dressing green on a dime and saying goodnight to bedbugs

|By Adria Vasil

Q: I want to wear green clothes, but they're really expensive. Any idea where I can stock up on organic outfits on a budget?

A: Sticking to a strictly organic closet can definitely lighten your wallet if you're not rolling in it. But in all honesty, we've gotten so used to the idea of buying a top for \$29 bucks that we ignore the fact that most of those items will fall apart within a season.

Not to sound like your grandmother, but what happened to durability, longevity and old-fashioned quality? Back in my day (okay, fine, more like my father's day), you spent a pretty penny on a sweater (or knitted it yourself) and expected it to last.

Bottom line is, having a cheap, disposable wardrobe isn't doing landfills or the workers who have to sew garments at cutthroat rates and breakneck speeds any good.

Your homework for the next fashion season, boys and girls, is therefore to **buy less but invest in timeless, sweatshop-free, local, earth-friendly pieces (of good quality)**.

That doesn't mean you can't find clothing that meets all of the above criteria at a decent price. The key is to **check out the sale section of organic stores halfway between seasons**, like right about now.

Green Is Black (greenisblack.com) has some kickass high-waisted bamboo gauchos and recycled dress shirts for \$59, and a sexy organic pleated pencil skirt for just \$67.

Although not locally made, Twice-shy.com has a great sale section where guys can scoop up organic graphic polos for \$30 and snappy ladies can snag organic terry jackets for a mere \$48.

Snoop through stores like Nathalie-Roze on Queen East, Heart on Your Sleeve on Bellevue and Organic Lifestyle in Hazelton Lanes for more discount tags.

Of course, these days you can also **track down organic items at mainstream shops** like H&M, Levis, Aritzia, Guess – hell, even Sears has organic V-necks and Ts. Are they all sweatshop-free? No guarantees.

Really, the cheapest way to stock up on the greenest of apparel is to **raid second-hand stores**. No new fabric has to be grown, woven, sewn and shipped in to get you looking good on a budget, so it's a win-win for earth-loving fashionistas like you.

Q: Recently, the regular pest-spraying guy in my building brought in bedbugs! Any suggestions for keeping them at bay?

A: Whether you live in the soaring heights of luxury or the pits of a crusty roach motel, no one is immune to love bites after dark.

If you're finding tiny dots of blood on your sheets and itchy ringed bites on your skin, you've got vampires, baby – lentil-sized ones. And let me warn you right now: expect a prolonged military engagement.

The last several years have seen a serious resurgence of bedbugs, according to exterminators and public health officials. Not that they're anywhere near as common as, say, roaches, and some say the media are stirring up a panic. But if you find these buggers on your turf, you have good reason to freak.

Now that DDT is a big no-no (thank friggin' god), our chemical defences against the nibblers are, well, limited. Word is, bedbugs have built up resistance to the pyrethroid family of pesticides we've been using on them, and many exterminators won't guarantee their work, often having to spray two to three times.

Trouble is these land-based piranhas are way too good at hiding. Beside making themselves at home in box springs and mattresses, they lurk behind electrical plates and loose wallpaper, in the tiniest of cracks or crevices. So getting them all is tough. But there are ways to tackle them without resorting to toxins.

First things first: **steam-clean your mattress** (heat kills these creeps), then **body-bag it in a tightly woven barrier sheet**. You can find polyester microfibre ones online for a decent price, or invest in organic cotton barrier sheets (which also keep dust mites out) from Grassroots on Bloor or Danforth or Organic Lifestyle.

And fire up that washing machine. All **drapes, bedding and removable upholstery need to get sudsed up in hot water** (one of the few times this energy-hogging practice is justified), and do this often. Same goes for **vacuuming** (and ditch the bag right after). Remove clutter. **Caulk all cracks**, even the tiniest ones.

Some U.S. companies will blast your home with extreme heat or cold to kill the bugs and eggs, but good luck finding that here.

The only hope for health- and planet-conscious residents is a product that doesn't yet have approval to make bedbug claims (though it's waiting on it). It's an **all-natural enzyme-based liquid spray** called Kleen Green, carried by licesquad.com.

Testimonials from Brooklyn to New Brunswick attest to its ability to kill bedbugs dead when sprayed everywhere. Even BC's public housing is using the stuff. Just don't expect Kleen Green's label to say so until it gets clearance to make claims.

I can't make any promises, but if you're rigorous with your spraying, maybe, just maybe, Kleen Green will be the pesticide-free solution.

P.S. you'll want to carefully inspect curb finds and antiques before taking them home from now on.

Got a question?

Send your green queries to ecoholic@nowtoronto.com

