



Shop Better By Knowing Your Fabrics: 6 Fabrics To Look For When Purchasing A Sustainable Garment

AUDREY STANTON FASHION



SHARE ON:

Facebook 318

Twitter

Email

Pinterest 375

More 22



Conscious fashion can mean a lot of different things, but one way to know for sure that you are making the right choice with your purchases is to search for the right fabrics. Many popular fabrics today are man-made and full of chemicals, using up natural resources, or fossil fuels.

Although there is an exciting amount of innovation happening in the world of conscious fashion, here are six fabrics that are growing in popularity and are helpful to have on your shopping radar.

Organic Cotton

Traditional cotton takes an exorbitant amount of water and chemicals to be produced. Organic cotton is the alternative to this harmful process and still creates a comfortable product. Organic cotton means that the crop is harvested without any toxic pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, or genetically modified seeds. If a company, fabric, or clothing item uses GOTS-certified organic cotton, you know that it has been traced from start to finish, and highly regulated.

How will you know you're getting the good stuff? Always check the label, and know that organic cotton will feel a bit better than conventional due to less damage from chemicals in the production process. Lastly, look for pieces which were made using low-impact dyes or none at all. If there are nasty chemical dyes used to create your organic cotton t-shirt then, unfortunately, it defeats the purpose.



Organic Cotton Jumpsuit from People Tree

Hemp

While hemp has been used for centuries to create all types of goods, the plant is most often associated with the hippie subculture prevalent during the late 60s and





specific type of cannabis plant is fast growing, does not exhaust the soil, and does not require pesticides. Hemp creates a strong, durable fabric which doesn't irritate your skin. This is unlike many man-made fabrics found in most fast fashion stores.

Hemp feels a lot like linen, and can wrinkle easily like the breezy fabric. The natural product is not colorfast, which means it doesn't produce vibrant colors unless harsh chemical dyes are used. Undyed or naturally dyed hemp can produce beautiful, although, muted tones.



Hemp Top from Thought

Recycled Polyester

Virgin polyester is known as one of the least sustainable fabrics out there. While, that might not be entirely true, there is an incredibly harmful process used to make the synthetic material. Polyester is man made and uses a large amount of chemicals, water, and other fossil fuels. However, like cotton, there is an alternative gaining popularity.

Recycled polyester uses PET (the chemical used to create polyester) from plastic water bottles and breaks them down into fibers. This process uses nearly half the amount of energy that creating virgin polyester does! The recycled fabric keeps plastic out of landfills and can be recycled many times over. Surprisingly, recycled polyester can feel very soft and lighter than virgin polyester, but it's never a bad idea to double check that fabric label!



Recycled Polyester Leggings from Threads For Thought

Linen



hemp, but is made from flax, is linen. Sadly, the way that conventional linen is produced pollutes waterways and uses harmful chemicals. However, the crop does not need to be harvested this way! In certain environments flax can be grown without fertilizer and planted in areas where other crops are unable to thrive. Organic linen helps to differentiate between those leaving an impact on the environment, and those avoiding it.

Overall, the fabric has the benefit of being warm in the winter and cool in the summer. While clothes made out of linen often get the bad rep of being scratchy at first, the fabric soon becomes very soft and comfortable. Along with hemp, it is biodegradable—as long as harsh chemicals are left out of the process.



Linen Jacket from Ode To Sunday

Silk

While silk is a natural fiber, and can inherently be cultivated sustainably, there are ethical questions about the luxury product. Silk originated in the 27th century, BCE, in China. Since ancient times the fiber has been cultivated from silkworms which subsist completely on the leaves of mulberry trees. This process can have a low impact because mulberry trees are resistant to pollution and easy to grow. However, many criticize the production of silk for its harsh treatment of the silkworms. Most traditional manufacturing processes boil the silkworms alive to gather the cocoons, which create the fiber.

Ahimsa, or Peace Silk is a great alternative to this! Instead of killing the worms, Peace Silk produces wait until the cocoon has been shed naturally. Lastly, it is again important to be wary of companies that take the





Don't be fooled by shiny objects!

Reclaimed

Recycled fabric and reclaimed fabric are often confused or lumped into one category, yet the definitions are very different. Recycled fabric consists of used fibers which have been broken down and turned into a new fabric. Reclaimed, or deadstock, fabric is material leftover from manufacturers, vintage fabric, or any other unused fabric that is bought secondhand.

Most manufacturers and large brands end up with relatively small amounts of fabric which they can't use anymore. Designers who choose reclaimed fabric are helping to save these rolls of fabric from landfills, especially those utilizing zero waste techniques. Creating clothing with reclaimed fabric is a great way to combat more textile waste, but it is not decreasing the overall demand for new textiles. Therefore, while it is great to support companies using reclaimed fabric, it is also important to seek larger change!



Flora Pants made from deadstock from Whimsy & Row

So what's the takeaway? Checking out the fabric label is key, and you can't always take people at their word. **A truly conscious company will make transparency their top priority and have a section or page on their website dedicated to the fabrics they use.** However, many brands don't, and that's where this background information comes in handy. You'll know the imposters from the real-deals in no time!