

## HOW I'VE CHANGED THE WAY I PLAN EVENTS IN THE DROUGHT ERA

Four of California's leading green-conscious event planners share their strategies for saving H2O.

**AS TOLD TO DANI HEINEMEYER**



*Left to right: Greg Jenkins, Corina Beczner, AJ Pell, Sandra DiDomizio.*

PHOTOS: BRAVO PRODUCTIONS; PAGE BERTELSEN; JENNA HESS PHOTOGRAPHY;  
COOKES PHOTOGRAPHY; (OPPOSITE) VIBRANT EVENTS

**AJ PELL** owner, *Peridot Events | San Rafael*

On a very basic level, at all events we encourage people to bring their own water bottle. Then we look at what we need that requires water, and ask ourselves if we can live without it. How can we recycle water for plants when we're having

a drought? We look for somewhere with water stations where leftover water can be recycled with live plants in the area and not just dumped. It helps to just try to be more conscious.

With tented outdoor events, tents are often held down with big water barrels because it's the most cost-effective. It's worthwhile inves-

tigating alternatives that don't waste all that water, such as using stakes or concrete weights.

We're trying to stay mindful and consider all the little steps we can take to save water. We're conscious of not putting out extra dishes that will need washing. On the floral and design end, we're looking at what takes less water, what's in season and what's native; aloe plants, for example, are a good, water-conserving choice.

When it comes to sustainability, you have to get whatever facts you can. Are the products you're using being flown in? How much water does it take to wash all the dishes? And how much water does it take to grow the materials that make compostables? I will lean on past clients, like the Bay Institute, when I have questions about eco-policy and science.

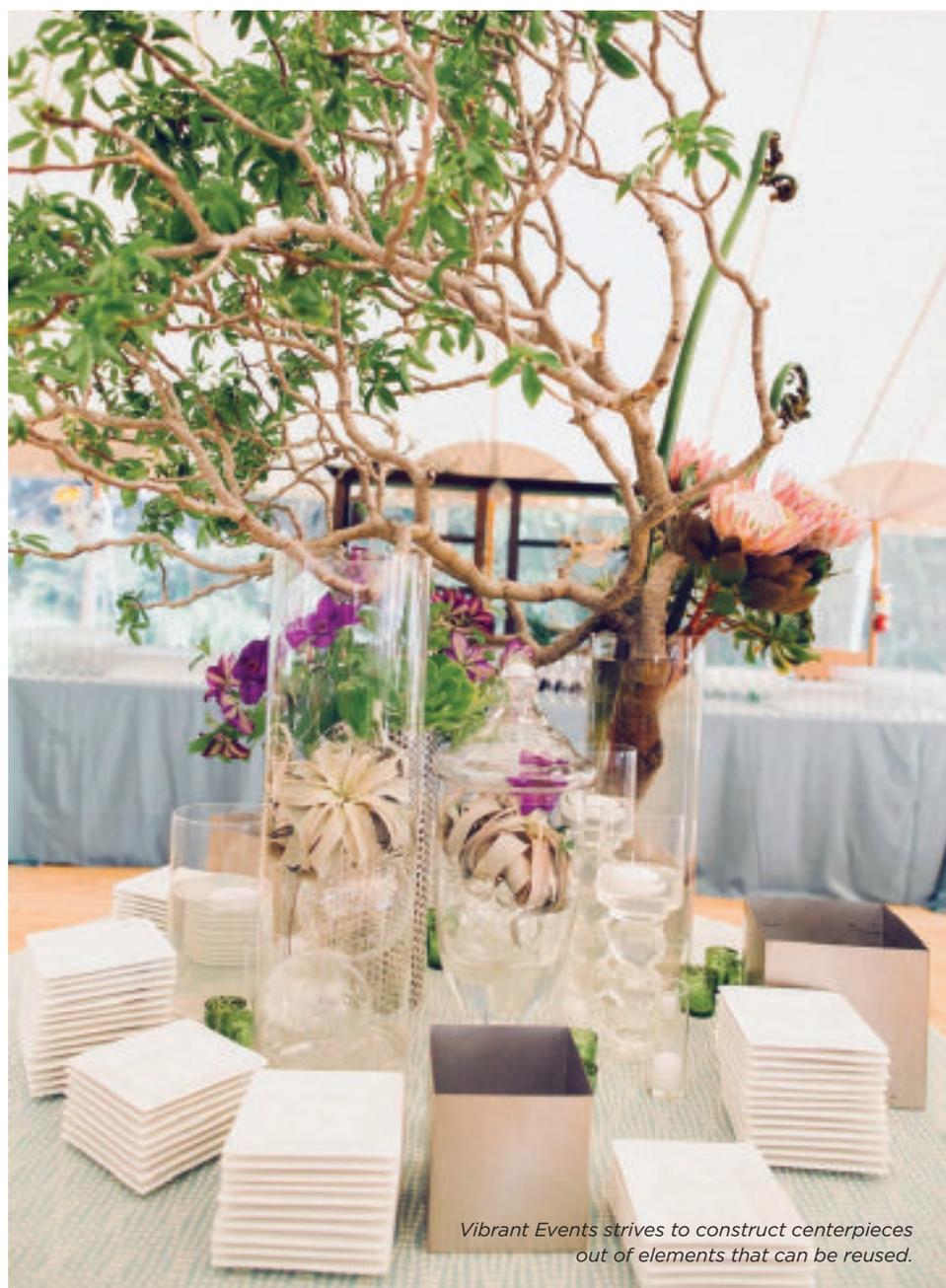
We need to think of the big, holistic picture and look at every aspect of an event, including menu, rentals, décor, floral, paper trail, registration material and signage. Everything you're using should be making the smallest footprint as possible.

**SANDRA DIDOMIZIO** owner, *Green Fox Events & Guest Services | Mammoth Lakes*

With any kind of event, you're only as good as your partners—the venues, caterers, vendors, whoever is chosen. If they're not following certain eco-conscious approaches, we'll try to educate them or do it for them. With caterers who don't compost, for example, we will facilitate as much as possible to make sure they do that.

We also encourage the selection of venues that are conscious of water use. For outdoor spaces, we're partial to artificial lawns and venues that have a landscape that doesn't require much water. A site inspection is always a sure-fire way to see firsthand what a venue's practices are. More and more properties now are abiding by green standards, and implementing certain measures to reduce consumption.

When we do an event in an outdoor venue, very little water is used. We fortunately have a lot of venues that we work with that have



*Vibrant Events strives to construct centerpieces out of elements that can be reused.*



*Green Fox Events uses colorful paper lanterns as a no-water-needed way to dress up an event.*



*Bravo Productions finds inventive substitutes for the traditional floral centerpiece.*



*Green Fox Events uses drought-tolerant plants such as succulents to add green in a mindful way.*

a dry, rocky landscape or natural-looking faux grass. When properties here do water their landscape, they're using reused water that the district makes available.

We're located in a high elevation, so we want guests to stay hydrated. Instead of water bottles, you can have a handsome water station and people can hydrate whenever they want. Leftover water can water the plants.

We just went through a certification process for green weddings. As part of it, we identified partners that follow the same measures that we do: vendors that would go out of their way to work with organic local farmers, like a local lavender farmer who provides them with all the lavender for the season; succulents you can throw in the yard after an event and it will reroot and thrive. You can also donate flowers after an event; even if they are flowers that require water, they'll get a longer shelf life and get reused. We donate flowers to local hospitals, day cares, school officials and the police and fire departments.

You can also dress up an event with natural items from your surroundings, like river rocks, driftwood, wood pinecones, leaves, boughs and feathers. Curly willow can be really pretty and can be painted. Once it's cut, it's not alive but it can last forever. It has such a versatile rebirth.

In terms of food, a lot of herbs and edible flowers are becoming a presence. Consider dandelions, chicory and fennel. They might be more expensive, but you can get them at local farmers markets or from local flower groups. Dandelions are very, very good for you. Stinging nettle is also very good for

## GOING GEOTHERMAL

Reno's Peppermill drills deep for energy and water savings.

you and you can make soup, stew, or tea from it. Medicinal and edible herbs and flowers are a great way to not use harvested produce and also be health-minded. Edible petals and flowers can also be used in dessert displays.

It's difficult to do green events because you're only as good as your partners. You have to be careful that no one is green washing. If your print company isn't using recycled paper, it's not a green event. ♻️



**R**eno, Nevada's Peppermill Resort Spa Casino has invested some \$600 million in upgrades, expansions and improvements over the past decade. In the face of the ongoing drought, none of its financial bets have paid off as handsomely as its \$9.7 million geothermal energy system, completed in 2010.

Drilling down 4,400 feet to tap the earth's geothermal aquifer, engineers hit pay dirt, and enough natural energy to handle 100 percent of the resort's hot-water needs, from showers in 1,632 guest rooms to mechanical systems to swimming pools and spas throughout the 2.1 million-square-foot building. The savings: a cool \$2.2 million annually over conventional natural gas, according to Katie Silva, the resort's manager of corporate communications.

The closed-loop system works by heating steam from the bowels of the earth with volcanic rock. That, in turn, heats copper tubes circulating with water from Reno's municipal supply. The city water is pumped into the building while geothermal water goes back into the aquifer to be reheated and recirculated by Mother Nature.

The Peppermill claims to be the only resort in the country heated by geothermal energy produced on the immediate prop-



erty, and its green initiatives don't stop there. Many measures have been implemented to mitigate effects of the ongoing drought, Silva notes, including replacement of 40,000 square feet of grass with artificial turf, saving approximately 5.2 million gallons of water per season while eliminating chemicals and pesticides.

### Get Connected

PEPPERMILL RESORT SPA CASINO  
Reno, Nevada  
peppermillreno.com  
866.821.9996



### Get Connected

BRAVO PRODUCTIONS  
Long Beach  
bravoevents-online.com  
562.435.0065

GREEN FOX EVENTS & GUEST SERVICES  
Mammoth Lakes  
greenfoxevents.com  
760.709.6744

PERIDOT EVENTS  
peridot-events.com  
San Rafael  
510.410.7651

VIBRANT EVENTS  
Oakland  
vibrantevents.net  
415.613.3778