

(EARTHWISE)

Be My (Green) Valentine

THOUGH WE CELEBRATE romance on February 14, our well-meaning gifts of chocolate and flowers may have a toxic backstory. The International Labor Organization estimates that West Africa's cacao plantations employ nearly 300,000 children (many of them sold into forced labor). Some

South American flower farms use harmful pesticides and herbicides; one report from Ecuador found that flower workers suffer higher-than-average rates of miscarriages, birth defects, and asthma. Plus, that adorable greeting card from your soul mate was likely made from virgin trees. What's an Earth lover to do?



For chocolate

Go to globalexchangestore.org to find organic and fair-trade goodies from small, sustainable farms, such as the heart-healthy Dark Chocolate Minis Gift Box (\$11) or the Sweetheart Chocolate Trio package (\$12) from fair-trade company Art Bar.



For flowers

Consider a native potted plant from your local nursery, or nudge your sweetheart toward organicbouquet.com, which offers VeriFlora-certified blossoms (grown using sustainable techniques). Our pick: the dazzling Cherry Love Roses (\$50).



For cards

The simple yet elegant V-Day cards at pancakeandfranks.com are made from 100 percent recycled card stock and use only nontoxic inks. Or forget the card: Just flip out the lights and tell your honey how much you care, face-to-face. —LOUISA THOMAS

