

Environmentally-friendly Holidays



As we head into the holiday season, each of us will be making many choices about celebrating - choices that put more or less of a strain on our earth's precious resources. Americans throw away 25% more trash between Thanksgiving and New Year's – that's an additional 5 million tons of garbage, much of which ends up in landfills.

Here are some things you can try to have a more eco-friendly holiday season:

Shopping:

- BYOB: Bring Your Own Bags!
- Plan shopping trips and consolidate errands.
- A lot of catalogs are coming. Use this time to get off lists at www.catalogchoice.org, with smartphone apps like PaperKarma, or ideas from my Advice article "Stopping Junk Mail, etc."

Cards:

- Buy cards made from recycled paper.
- Make your own cards. (Use old cards you've kept, childrens' artwork, etc.)
- Send e-cards. Be creative, e.g. integrate family pictures.

Gifts:

- Consider second-hand/recycled gifts or a recycled gift "swap."
- Choose gifts with an environmental theme: cookbook from the sustainable food movement, membership in a state park, children's books (*The Gift of Nothing*, *The Lorax*) and games (*National Parks Monopoly*).
- Buy local or "fair trade" gifts, or ones that won't add to the waste stream, e.g. food, donation in the recipient's name, gift certificates, or tickets.
- Make your own gift wrap from newspaper, the Sunday comics, old calendars, maps, & fabric.
- Make or buy reusable cloth gift bags. Reuse wrapping paper.
- Exchange holiday wish-lists to avoid unwanted gifts.

Entertaining:

- Use e-mail or phone for invitations
- Choose your own china and linens over disposable ones. Consider "compostable" products.
- Turn down the heat if there will be many guests.
- Think carefully about the amount of food you provide, in order to reduce waste.
- Consider locally grown, organic and vegetarian products.

Enjoy your holidays, and when they are over, make a good effort to recycle responsibly!