

## WISHING FOR A GREENER HOLIDAY

I'm wishing for a greener holiday season this year. No, I don't wish that the snow will disappear. By "a greener holiday season" I mean one that is environmentally friendly. Here are some ideas that we can all use to make this holiday season more "Earth-Friendly."

Recycled paper products and newspaper comic pages make unusual gift-wrap. You can also re-use your last year's holiday wrappings and save them for next year's wrapping and decorations. Last year's holiday cards make unique gift tags and homemade cards for this year. If every family reused just 2 feet (0.6 meter) of holiday ribbon, we would have 38,000 feet (61,000 kilometers) and could tie a bow around the entire planet. Even if you don't want to reuse your holiday papers, you can shred old gift-wrap and use it for colorful packing material. Every year, Americans throw away a million extra tons of garbage, including packaging materials, each week between Thanksgiving and the December holiday season. Anything we can do to reduce this waste would certainly help the environment.

When selecting a Christmas tree, keep in mind that nearly all the trees sold at seasonal Christmas tree lots are grown on tree farms, and meant to be harvested. If you want a potted tree, it is best to leave it outside and decorate it there, since potted trees do not thrive in unseasonably warm homes. One negative issue concerning natural trees is that they do require several applications of chemicals to control pests and speed growth as they mature. These chemicals do have the potential to end up in streams and groundwater supplies.

If you do choose an artificial tree, however, you will save on fuel used in traveling to pick out a tree for future holidays, but artificial trees also consume a great deal of energy during their manufacture.

If you choose a freshly cut pine, refrain from decorating with artificial snow, and please remove all tinsel, because these items cannot be recycled, and you will want to recycle your tree. The National Christmas Tree Association and Earth 911 have a joint website where you can enter your zip code to find one of the 3,800 tree recycling centers near you. Go to <https://earth911.com>, to get more information. Our Summit Metro Parks system also has a tree-recycling program for wildlife habitat. The trees are chipped and the chips distributed on the trails. There are six areas set up in the parks, where you can drop off your trees. To find out where these areas are, call 330-867-5511, or go to <https://www.summitmetroparks.org/park-initiatives.aspx> for more information and locations.

You can purchase gifts made from recycled items by checking on-line at home, or on-line at your local library. Simply bring up your favorite search engine and enter "environmentally friendly gifts." Also check your local news media for "greener" choices. There are also many worthy charities where you can protect and sponsor wild and domestic animals, plant a tree, or even provide a goat or a small flock of chickens for a family half way across the world. These can be

purchased as a gift in someone else's name and will have a positive ecological impact. Most of these groups can be found on-line, and include such organizations as "The National Wildlife Federation," "The World Wildlife Fund," "The Humane Society of the United States," "The Fund for Animals," "Heifer International," "The National Arbor Day Foundation," "The Nature Conservancy," "The National Audubon Society," and many more, as well as many local organizations dedicated to helping people, animals, and plants.

These are just a few suggestions but with a little imagination, you can find a lot more. These ideas will help our planet and improve the quality of life for all who live on it. With a little shared effort, we can all have "Greener" holidays and all the days thereafter.

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