



Reduce, Reuse & Recycle This Holiday Season!

The holiday season with its accompanying buying, wrapping and celebrating substantially increases the amount of solid waste we generate. However, there are many opportunities for the consumer to reduce, reuse and recycle the remnants of holiday cheer. Listed below are some tips for reducing your household's waste during the holiday season.

Tips for Holiday Shopping

When shopping, bring your own reusable tote bag rather than accepting a separate bag for each purchase (be sure to get your sales slip so you can verify your purchases). Say "I don't need a bag" for small purchases. Ask for the box the product came in or get a clothing box for the item instead of collecting both a box and a bag. Choose products that are minimally packaged. Shop through the Internet for holiday gifts. You'll avoid the crowds and conserve gas.

Gift Giving

For adults and teens, think about giving tickets to a hockey game, movie or other entertainment event instead of giving them more stuff. For elderly relatives, consider giving a book of "coupons" promising that you'll have them over for lunch, repaint their kitchen, take them on outings or shovel snow. For friends, you might give them "coupons" they can redeem for free baby-sitting services to enjoy a night out. When buying electronics or small appliances, purchase those with an "Energy Star" label, which signifies that they save energy.

Trees and Lights

Consider buying a potted Christmas tree (found at nurseries) that can be planted after the holidays. You can recycle your Christmas tree at one of the City's drop-off sites, or recycle tree trunks for firewood or split for kindling. Use branches as mulch under acid-loving bushes and shrubs, such as rhododendrons or evergreens. Don't use tinsel or spray your tree with fake snow, as tinsel and white trees cannot be recycled. Put up the Christmas lights, but put them on a timer so they aren't on more than six hours a night.

Compost

Compost your kitchen food scraps from holiday dinners and parties. Remember compost fruit and vegetable wastes only, not meat or grease.

Batteries

Whenever possible, invest in rechargeable batteries to go with electronic toys and gadgets.

Donate Old Things to Charity

New gifts will often replace toys, appliances and clothes that still have a useful life. Collect these items and donate them to Goodwill, Salvation Army, local churches, day care centers or charity groups.

Recycle Cardboard and Boxes

The holiday season creates a tremendous amount of cardboard and paperboard (gift boxes) waste. Both corrugated cardboard and paperboard can be taken and recycled at the Larimer County Recycling Center drop-off located at 5887 S. Taft Hill Road, Monday through Saturday, between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., or the City's recycling drop-off site located at 1702 Riverside, Monday through Sunday, during daylight hours. Be sure to separate the corrugated cardboard and paperboard materials and put into the proper recycling containers.

Reduce, Reuse and Recycle Gift Wrap

- Don't use wrapping paper. Just add bows to holiday shopping bags or gift boxes.
- Only use the amount of wrap that you need. Loop string around gift boxes, then lay it out on paper to determine how much to cut. If you buy gift-wrap, look for recycled paper with the highest post-consumer content you can find.
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- Recycle your children's artwork into wrapping paper.
- Wrap gifts in brown paper bags or newspaper. Use the cartoon section for brighter colors.
- Wrap gifts in festive holiday fabric, dish towels or bandannas, which can simply be washed and reused.
- Give gifts in baskets, tins or jars.
- Save bows, ribbons and paper to reuse next year. If every household reused just two feet of ribbon each year, it would save 38,000 miles of ribbon – enough to tie a bow around the Earth.
- Shred used wrapping paper to use as filler or instead of tissue.
- Write recipient's name on reusable wooden ornaments and use as a gift tag.
- Wrap the gift in a drawstring bag and use an inexpensive luggage tag for the gift tag.

Trim the Waste

- Trim your holiday card list to include just close friends and relatives. If everyone sent one fewer card, it would save 50,000 cubic yards of paper. You might send e-cards to some friends, and reuse a decorated bag for gifts.
- Give your unwanted gifts to charity, along with last year's gently used toys and too-tight clothes.

Reduce, Reuse and Recycle Greeting Cards

Buy holiday greeting cards made from recycled paper or make your own. Three of Hallmark's lines have recycled content – Shoebox Greetings, My Thoughts Exactly, and Comedy Club. A lot more are available in drugstores, card shops or online. Use postcards to eliminate envelopes and excess paper. Clip holiday cards to make gift tags for next year. Jot down your favorite recipe on the back to include with a hostess gift. You can plant the cards from Green Field Paper Company and grow the seeds embedded in them. These cards can be found at Alfalfa's and Wild Oats Market, or online at www.greenfieldpaper.com.

Reuse Holiday Decorations

Save your holiday decorations for reuse next year. Donate decorations to local schools, churches or non-profit organizations. Use natural ornaments such as pinecones, shells, dried flowers or berries.

Tips for Mail Order Shopping

Ask mail-order companies who ship your holiday gifts not to use polystyrene packing "peanuts," but to use paper instead. Save bubblewrap or peanuts for reuse. Recycle those peanuts at businesses like Mail Boxes Etc. or Pack Rat Freight Company. After you have completed your mail shopping, remove your name from catalogue mailing lists by writing to:

Direct Marketing Association
P.O. Box 9008
Farmingdale, NY 11735-9008

Tips for Gift-Giving

Be prudent and practical as well as thoughtful and creative. Purchase gifts that are long lasting

or that can be reused and later recycled. If an item has several layers of paper and plastic packaging, choose a similar product that leaves less waste. Purchase items made of natural materials like wood rather than plastic. Better yet, choose items made from recycled materials. Second-hand or antique shops are great places to do holiday shopping. Consider giving gift certificates or tickets for services or special events, rather than purchasing an item that may not be used or needed.

Tips for Holiday Parties

Use cloth napkins, silverware, glass drinking cups and ceramic coffee mugs, and reusable plates rather than disposable plastic, styrofoam or paper at holiday parties. Rent party furnishings rather than buying things you will only use once a year. Reuse plastic margarine tubs or yogurt containers to store holiday leftovers. Send the leftovers home with friends and family instead of throwing them out.

Environmentally Friendly Stores and Products

For serious green shopping, there are online directories of environmentally friendly stores and products. Web sites include: www.greenpages.org, www.eco-mall.com, www.ibuydifferent.org, www.newdream.org/consumer, and www.thegreenguide.com .

Happy Holidays!

