

TEACHERS' TRAILER – A RECYCLING RESOURCE

Educators and Craftspeople if you are looking for recycled materials for your projects the McKinley Citizens' Recycling Council now has a resource center. In need of cardboard tubes, cylindrical containers, egg cartons, plastic containers and lids, popsicle and chop sticks, tissue boxes, 2-Liter bottles, boxes and tins of all sizes, and much more, see a Volunteer at the Larry Brian Mitchell Recreation Center on Saturdays from 10 am-2 pm, or call 879-2581.

NEED A SPECIAL GIFT?

MCRC 100% Recycled Cotton Totes are \$10 - Two for \$18!

THIS HOLIDAY SEASON -- REUSE, REDUCE, RECYCLE!

From Thanksgiving to New Year's, household waste increases more than 25%. This extra trash — mostly food, plastic ware, shopping bags, packaging, and wrapping paper — sends an additional 1 million tons of waste a week to landfills. Reduce your holiday trash and save some cash!

CHRISTMAS TREES

Live, potted trees are reusable. Plant your tree or leave it potted in your yard to use again next year.

Freshly cut trees are recyclable. Buy a fresh cut tree or cut your own. After the holidays, place it in your backyard for nesting birds, or call 863-1212 for sites where trees can be dropped off, or days Solid Waste will pick up trees. Trees and other evergreens are mulched for parks and public areas. Residents may obtain these materials for free by calling 863-1275.

Tumbleweed Trees are a creative alternative. Look for them rolling by.

NATURAL HOLIDAY DECORATIONS

Instead of buying decorations take a walk in your neighborhood. Look for berries, dried flowers, weeds, pine cones, and evergreens.

Instead of buying new decorations, reuse ornaments or make ornaments from, fabric scraps, old holiday cards, and more. Make snow globes in watertight recycled jars.

What to Do

Use cloth instead of paper napkins, if feasible. Cloth napkins can be washed with other laundry. If using paper look for napkins made from recycled paper.

Use Ceramic or Glass Plates & Metal Flatware. If paper is used make sure it isn't petroleum wax coated. Look for **biodegradable cutlery and plates, or items that can be washed with a little bleach and used again.**

Come party time, keep recycle containers in clear sight to make it easy for guests. Use fiber cloths instead of paper towels for clean up.

Send Green Greetings

After a few weeks most holiday cards will be trashed. **Send electronic greetings** using an online service. Often, you can add photos or a video message.

Buy **cards made from recycled paper.** Some have seeds embedded in the fibers. Recipients can plant these and the flowers will remind them of your care for the planet.

What to Give

Gift giving is a holiday tradition, but minimize store-bought items by making gifts from recycled materials. Many local craftspeople use recycled materials in their paintings, cards, quilts, candle holders, and more.

Consider Alternative Giving. Make a donation to a charity in someone's honor or memory - (Jim Harlin Community Pantry, Habitat for Humanity, Battered Families Services, Gallup Solar, MCRC, Big Brothers-Big Sisters, Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society, World Wildlife Foundation, etc.)

Wrapping It Up

Most wrapping paper is **not** made from recycled paper. Metal fibers and foil can't be recycled! If you buy wrapping paper, make sure it's recycled and recyclable, or use old maps, comic pages, fabric, or towels that can be re-used. Decorate with a sprig of berries or leaves from Nature's bounty instead of ribbon. ***If every family in the United States wrapped just three presents this way, we'd save enough ribbon to tie a bow around the earth. What a great gift that would be!*** When receiving a gift carefully unwrap to use the paper, ribbon and other decoration another day.

Where to Shop

The easiest way to limit what is thrown away is to reduce the amount you bring home. Packaging makes up 30% of America's trash. Package-free may seem impossible, but cut back on unnecessary packaging. Shop at stores where you can buy unpackaged goods, purchase used items from thrift stores, shop at seasonal arts & craft shows and flea markets.

Be a more caring and responsible citizen of the Earth by Going Green this Season.

For more information on how to Green your holidays check out the *Mother Nature Network* and *The Nature Conservancy*.

For more information on how to recycle in Gallup-McKinley County, to volunteer or to purchase a tote, call 722-5142 or go to www.recyclegallup.org.

Getting the Greenest Christmas Tree

Avoid artificial trees that are made from polyvinyl chloride (PVC). Fresh trees have these benefits:

- **Live, potted trees are reusable.** After the holidays, you can plant your tree or leave it potted in your yard and use it again next year.
- **Freshly cut trees are recyclable.** Look for a lot that sells trees grown locally (not trucked in from miles away) and without pesticides. Chopping down a tree at a local organic tree farm is one way to ensure you're getting both.

When the holidays are over, don't put your tree out with the trash where it will end up in a landfill. Instead, see if your community has a tree-recycling pick-up day. Recycling services turn trees into compost or mulch for community parks and other public areas. Visit earth911.com to find a tree recycler in your area.

Natural Holiday Fragrances and Decorations

Instead of heading to the store for decorations, go for a walk. Berries, flowers, and evergreen branches are beautiful decorations and, like a fresh tree, fill the house with *real* seasonal aromas. Incorporate some of the special beauty of your area of the country -- such as seashells or magnolia leaves -- into your decorations.

Add seasonal scents by baking gingerbread cookies. Or make a fragrant holiday potpourri by simmering ingredients such as lemon or orange slices, cinnamon sticks, cloves, cardamom, and nutmeg.

Instead of buying new decorations, reuse vintage ornaments from your family attic or a thrift store. Or help your children make ornaments from homemade clay, scraps of fabric, old holiday cards, and nontoxic paints and glue.

Children can also help make snow globes in watertight recycled jars. Instructions are easy to find online, and several snow globes displayed together on a table or mantel make a winter wonderland.

Our Partners

Green Gift Holidays is The Nature Conservancy's special program that encourages good deeds for your friends, family and the environment throughout the holiday season. We'd love your help in raising awareness. If you're a blog, nonprofit or retailer, join the movement, like our friends at [Engage Green](#). Please [email us](#) for more information.

Think Green, Give Green

The holidays are a time for family traditions, festive cheer... and sadly, a lot of waste. Did you know that household waste increases by more than 25% from Thanksgiving to New Years Day? And in the U.S., annual trash from gift-wrap and shopping bags totals 4 million tons?

This year, [The Nature Conservancy](#) is challenging you to rethink the holidays. Give responsibly, save energy, reduce waste, eat local and be kind to our planet. Because leaving a lighter footprint during the holidays is the greatest gift we can give.

We'd love to hear how you're greening your holidays: post a tip on the right or share your ideas and photos via Twitter and Instagram using #greenholidays. Happy holidays!

Get Social



© 2013 The Nature Conservancy | [Privacy Policy](#)

GREEN TIPS

- [Rethink Gifts](#)
- [Christmas Trees](#)
- [Eat Local](#)
- [Reduce Waste](#)
- [Save Energy](#)

[SHARE YOUR IDEAS](#)

[OUR PARTNERS](#)

LEARN MORE

- [nature.org](#)
- [blog](#)
- [my.nature.org](#)

The Nature Conservancy is the leading conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature a

- See more at: http://blog.nature.org/green-gift-holidays/?src=s._20131120_14610514#sthash.JMshBZfm.dpuf

- *Buy Local, watch for sales, and art & craft fairs.
- *Buy Used at the various thrift stores and flea markets in town.

Great Green Stocking Stuffers

- *Pencils, Pens, Notebooks made from recycled materials
- *Halogen, LED, or CFL light bulbs
- *Crank flashlights (no batteries needed)

Gifts

- *Homemade gifts -- mustard, jelly, cookie - drink - soup mix placed in reused jars.
- *Reuse all wrapping paper & bows from last year
- *Save wrapping paper, bows, ribbon from this year for next year's gift giving
- *Wrap gifts in towels and materials that are functional as well as decorative.
- *Decorate gifts with items from nature's bounty

Entertaining

- *Purchase plates, cups, napkins, paper towels made from recycled paper
- *Purchase plates, cups, cutlery that are biodegradable
- *Purchase paper plates and cups over plastic, unless you plan to wash and reuse.
- *Purchase recycled aluminum foil and then reuse / recycle when possible.
- *Reuse plastic cutlery and plates (add bleach to your wash water).
The heavy duty cutlery washes well in the top section of your dishwasher.

Look for the triangular recycled logo on these products. Local grocery stores carry a variety of these recycled items. If you don't find them, speak with the manager or purchasing agent. Sometimes these items will be a little more expensive so *Look for the Sales!*

Check out these web sites for coupons.

www.mychinet.com
www.marcalsmallsteps.com
www.reynoldsrecycled.com/coupon.aspx
www.safeway.com/IFL/Grocery/Home
www.seventhgeneration.com/coupons

Decorations

When buying new light strands look for the low energy use strands.

Light strands that are Broken or Unwanted can be recycled at the Community Pantry. Rather than tossing them, these lights can be stripped for their valuable metals and recycled, keeping them out of our landfill!

All types of string lights are accepted, including icicles and LEDs. Bulbs are okay. Place them in the box behind the pantry (near the hoop houses) 24/7 along with other recyclables.

Recycle what you can with one of Gallup's recycling businesses, The Community Pantry, or the Recycling Center (Gallup Transfer Station) before adding it to the waste stream.

For questions about what, where, when, and how to recycle your electronics, paper items, plastic, glass in our region contact Betsy (722-9257 / 879-2581 betsywindisch@yahoo.com) or Gerald, Chair, McKinley Citizens' Recycling Council (722-5142 gohactivities@aol.com).

You can find the *Where to Recycle* fact sheet on the City of Gallup and NWNMRSWA web sites. <http://gallupnm.gov/DocumentCenter/View/191> and <http://www.nwnmrswa.com/recycling-update.html>.

'TIS THE HOLIDAY SEASON -- REUSE, REDUCE, RECYCLE

From Thanksgiving to New Year's Day, household waste increases by more than 25 percent. This extra trash — mostly food, shopping bags, product packaging and wrapping paper — adds up to an additional 1 million tons of waste a week that's sent to U.S. landfills, according to the EPA. Luckily, there are many steps you can take that will help you reduce your holiday trash — and even save some cash.

CHRISTMAS TREES

Live, potted trees are reusable. After the holidays, you can plant your tree or leave it potted in your yard and use it again next year.

Freshly cut trees are recyclable. Usually a few stores in our area sell cut trees. Better yet, if you can, chop down your own. Avoid artificial trees that are made from polyvinyl chloride (PVC). After the holidays, your tree can be placed in your backyard for nesting birds, or call 863-1212 for the sites where trees can be dropped off or days Solid Waste will pick up trees. The trees and other evergreens will be turned into mulch for community parks and public areas. Residents may also take advantage of these materials for free by calling 863-1275.

Tumbleweed Trees are a creative alternative. Look for them rolling by outside.

NATURAL HOLIDAY DECORATIONS AND FRAGRANCES

Instead of buying decorations, go for a walk. Look for berries, dried flowers (even weeds), pine cones, and evergreen branches can make beautiful decorations.

Add seasonal scents by making potpourri - simmer ingredients such as lemon and/or orange slices, cinnamon sticks, cloves, cardamom, and nutmeg.

Instead of buying new decorations, reuse vintage ornaments from your family attic or a thrift store. Make ornaments from homemade clay, scraps of fabric, old holiday cards, and nontoxic paints and glue. Children will enjoy making the ornaments and also snow globes in watertight recycled jars. Instructions can be found online. Several snow globes displayed together make a winter wonderland.

Americans generate a lot of garbage during the holidays, and one of the big culprits is holiday entertaining. Plastic cutlery will last in a landfill for thousands of holidays to come, and paper plates aren't earth-friendly if they're coated in petroleum-based wax.

What to do? **Biodegradable cutlery and plates are one alternative.** Better yet:

Use cloth instead of paper napkins. Reusing is always better than recycling, and napkins won't take any more energy, soap, or water to wash because you can throw them in with your regular laundry. If you use paper look for napkins made from recycled paper.

Borrow or Rent plates and silverware. If you're short, ask friends to lend. Come party time, keep recycle containers in clear sight to make it easy for guests. Use microfiber cloths or tea towels instead of paper towels to clean up spills.

Send Green Greetings - Conserve Resources and Reduce Pollution

This is the time of year many will reach out to an extended network of family and friends to send best wishes and give a yearly update. After a few weeks, most of those greeting cards will be trashed. **Send electronic greetings** using an online service. Often, you can add photos or even video to the message.

Buy greetings **cards made from 100% recycled paper.** You can even find options that have seeds embedded in the fibers. Your recipients can plant the cards and the resulting flowers will remind them that you care.

What to Give

Gift giving is an essential part of the season, but minimize the store-bought items. Get crafty - make some presents. Try your hand at homemade candy, fudge, cookies, breads, jams, dry soup mixes, powdered drinks and other holiday treats.

Wrapping It All Up

Most mass-produced wrapping paper is not made from recycled paper, and if it has metal fibers or foil, it can't be recycled. If you buy wrapping paper, make sure it's recycled and recyclable. Better yet, use old maps, newspaper comic pages, or pieces of fabric, towels or other linens that can be re-used. Finish off gift-wrapping with a sprig of berries or leaves from Nature's bounty instead of ribbon. *If every family in the United States wrapped just three presents this way, we'd save enough ribbon to tie a bow around the earth. What a great gift that would be!* And when receiving a wrapped gift carefully unwrap to use the paper, ribbon and other decoration another day.

Where to shop

The easiest way to cut back on what you're throwing away is to reduce the amount of stuff you bring home. A good place to start is with product packaging. Packaging makes up 30 percent of America's trash — the largest portion of municipal solid waste generated. Package-free Christmas shopping (or anytime) may seem impossible, but there are ways to cut back on unnecessary packaging. Shop at stores where you can buy unpackaged goods, purchase used items from thrift stores, shop at the remaining seasonal arts & craft shows and area flea markets, even [craigslist](#).

Be a more caring and responsible citizen of the Earth by Going Green this Season.

For more information on how to Green your holidays check out these sites, among others:
WebMD.com Mother Nature Network The Nature Conservancy

Green Ideas for the Holidays

If the visions dancing in your head this holiday season are of safe toys, minimal plastic packaging, and fewer trips to the mall, this guide is for you. We've put together some eco-friendly ideas to prep your house for entertaining and fill it with seasonal spirit and natural scents. We've also gathered tips for choosing and wrapping green gifts that minimize waste, expense, and stress and maximize your time to enjoy the holidays.

Related Stories

- [Protecting Your Piece of the Planet](#)
- [The Lowdown on Mineral Makeup](#)

Give the House a Green Cleaning

The holiday season is a time of cozying up in the house, so it's also a good time to clear the air inside of toxins as well as dirt and dust. Use mild, biodegradable natural and non-toxic cleaning products. Look for ones that don't contain harsh chemical solvents, chlorine, ammonia, or synthetic fragrances. Baking soda or vinegar mixed with a little water also make good multipurpose cleaners.

While cleaning -- and every day, if you can -- crack the windows a little to let toxins out and fresh air in.

Getting the Greenest Christmas Tree

Avoid artificial trees that are made from polyvinyl chloride (PVC). Fresh trees have these benefits:

- **Live, potted trees are reusable.** After the holidays, you can plant your tree or leave it potted in your yard and use it again next year.
- **Freshly cut trees are recyclable.** Look for a lot that sells trees grown locally (not trucked in from miles away) and without pesticides. Chopping down a tree at a local organic tree farm is one way to ensure you're getting both.

When the holidays are over, don't put your tree out with the trash where it will end up in a landfill. Instead, see if your community has a tree-recycling pick-up day. Recycling services turn trees into compost or mulch for community parks and other public areas. Visit earth911.com to find a tree recycler in your area.

Natural Holiday Fragrances and Decorations

Instead of heading to the store for decorations, go for a walk. Berries, flowers, and evergreen branches are beautiful decorations and, like a fresh tree, fill the house with *real* seasonal aromas. Incorporate some of the special beauty of your area of the country -- such as seashells or magnolia leaves -- into your decorations.

Add seasonal scents by baking gingerbread cookies. Or make a fragrant holiday potpourri by simmering ingredients such as lemon or orange slices, cinnamon sticks, cloves, cardamom, and nutmeg.

Instead of buying new decorations, reuse vintage ornaments from your family attic or a thrift store. Or help your children make ornaments from homemade clay, scraps of fabric, old holiday cards, and nontoxic paints and glue.

Children can also help make snow globes in watertight recycled jars. Instructions are easy to find online, and several snow globes displayed together on a table or mantel make a winter wonderland.

WebMD Health eHome:

How Healthy Is Your Home?



This content is from an [educational collaboration](#) between WebMD Editorial and Healthy Child Healthy World.



Party Without Being Trashy

Americans generate a lot of garbage during the holidays, and one of the big culprits is holiday entertaining. Plastic cutlery can hang around a landfill for thousands of holidays yet to come, and even paper plates aren't earth-friendly if they're coated in petroleum-based wax.

Biodegradable cutlery and plates are one alternative. Better yet:

- **Use cloth instead of paper napkins.** Reusing is always better than recycling, and napkins won't take any more energy, soap, or water to wash because you can throw them in with your regular laundry.
- **Borrow plates and silverware.** If you're short, ask a few friends to bring a set of each.
- **Rent dinnerware.**

Come party time, keep recycle containers in clear sight in various rooms to make it easy for your guests. Use microfiber cloths or tea towels instead of paper towels to clean up spills.

Send Green Greetings

The holidays are often the one time of the year that people reach out to their extended network of family and friends to say hello, send best wishes, and give an update about how the year's been. After a few short weeks, most of those greeting cards end up being thrown away. Conserve resources and reduce pollution by sending green greetings.

- Send an electronic greeting using one of the many services online. Often, you can easily add photos or even video to the message making it more personal.

- Buy greetings cards made from 100% recycled paper. You can even find options that have seeds embedded in the fibers. Your recipients can plant the cards and the resulting flowers will remind them that you care.

Green Gifts for Adults

Consider giving friends or family “experiential” presents -- such as gift certificates for restaurants, movies, plays, concerts, yoga classes, spa services, or even weekend getaways. Or give nature lovers a national parks pass or membership to a botanical garden or aquarium. They’re great gifts, easy to buy, and don’t require shipping or wasteful packaging.

Green Gifts for Kids

Beneath the shiny packaging of new toys (and even *in* the packaging), who knows what toxins or safety hazards lurk? A growing number of toymakers specialize in toys made with recycled and nontoxic materials.

But what if the child on your list is focused on a toy atop this year’s hot list? The Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act has established standards for lead and phthalates (chemicals added to plastic to make it softer) in toys. But watchdog groups say there still may be toxic toys on the shelves come the holidays. Try these tips for avoiding toxic toys:

- Don’t buy soft plastic toys such as bath toys and bath books.
- Check the purchasing guidelines in the annual toy safety survey “Trouble in Toyland” published by U.S. Public Interest Research Group.
- The toy section of healthystuff.org has a database of 1,200 toys that have been tested for health and safety hazards. You can search by toy and also nominate specific toys for testing.
- Print the Healthy Child Healthy World Pocket Toy Shopping Guide so you always have the information you need on hand.

Green Ideas for the Holidays

(continued)

Eco-Friendly Lighting

Candles and holiday lights are part of the season for many people -- after all, Hanukkah is known as “the festival of lights.” But electric holiday lights consume a lot of energy and standard paraffin candles are made from petroleum products.

To conserve energy if you are stringing up lights:

- Turn them on only at night.
- Use LED lights. They are brighter than standard mini-bulbs and use one-tenth the energy, so you'll also save on your energy bill.

When it comes to lighting a menorah or a tabletop, buy candles made with natural ingredients such as palm oil, soy, or beeswax. Electric menorahs are another option.

Party Without Being Trashy

Americans generate a lot of garbage during the holidays, and one of the big culprits is holiday entertaining. Plastic cutlery can hang around a landfill for thousands of holidays yet to come, and even paper plates aren't earth-friendly if they're coated in petroleum-based wax.

Biodegradable cutlery and plates are one alternative. Better yet:

- **Use cloth instead of paper napkins.** Reusing is always better than recycling, and napkins won't take any more energy, soap, or water to wash because you can throw them in with your regular laundry.
- **Borrow plates and silverware.** If you're short, ask a few friends to bring a set of each.
- **Rent dinnerware.**

Come party time, keep recycle containers in clear sight in various rooms to make it easy for your guests. Use microfiber cloths or tea towels instead of paper towels to clean up spills.

Send Green Greetings

The holidays are often the one time of the year that people reach out to their extended network of family and friends to say hello, send best wishes, and give an update about how the year's been. After a few short weeks, most of those greeting cards end up being thrown away. Conserve resources and reduce pollution by sending green greetings.

- Send an electronic greeting using one of the many services online. Often, you can easily add photos or even video to the message making it more personal.
- Buy greetings cards made from 100% recycled paper. You can even find options that have seeds embedded in the fibers. Your recipients can plant the cards and the resulting flowers will remind them that you care.

Green Gifts for Adults

Consider giving friends or family "experiential" presents -- such as gift certificates for restaurants, movies, plays, concerts, yoga classes, spa services, or even weekend getaways. Or give nature lovers a national parks pass or membership to a botanical garden or aquarium. They're great gifts, easy to buy, and don't require shipping or wasteful packaging.

Green Gifts for Kids

Beneath the shiny packaging of new toys (and even *in* the packaging), who knows what toxins or safety hazards lurk? A growing number of toymakers specialize in toys made with recycled and nontoxic materials.

But what if the child on your list is focused on a toy atop this year's hot list? The Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act has established standards for lead and phthalates (chemicals added to plastic to make it softer) in toys. But watchdog groups say there still may be toxic toys on the shelves come the holidays. Try these tips for avoiding toxic toys:

- Don't buy soft plastic toys such as bath toys and bath books.
- Check the purchasing guidelines in the annual toy safety survey "Trouble in Toyland" published by U.S. Public Interest Research Group.
- The toy section of healthystuff.org has a database of 1,200 toys that have been tested for health and safety hazards. You can search by toy and also nominate specific toys for testing.
- Print the Healthy Child Healthy World Pocket Toy Shopping Guide so you always have the information you need on hand.

Wrapping It All Up

Most mass-produced wrapping paper is not made from recycled paper, and if it has metal fibers or foil, it can't be recycled either. If you do buy wrapping paper, make sure it's recycled and recyclable. Better yet, use old maps, newspaper comics pages, children's artwork, or pretty bits of old linens for wrap.

Finish off gift-wrapping with a sprig of berries or pretty leaves instead of ribbon. If every family in the United States wrapped just three presents this way, we'd save enough ribbon to tie a bow around the earth. What a great gift that would be

[WebMD Home](#) [Health eHome](#)

[Email a Friend](#)

[Save](#)

[Print Article](#)

WebMD Health eHome:

How Healthy Is Your Home?



This content is from an [educational collaboration](#) between WebMD Editorial and Healthy Child Healthy World.

 **Listen**

Green Ideas for the Holidays

(continued)

Wrapping It All Up

Most mass-produced wrapping paper is not made from recycled paper, and if it has metal fibers or foil, it can't be recycled either. If you do buy wrapping paper, make sure it's recycled and recyclable. Better yet, use old maps, newspaper comics pages, children's artwork, or pretty bits of old linens for wrap.

Finish off gift-wrapping with a sprig of berries or pretty leaves instead of ribbon. If every family in the United States wrapped just three presents this way, we'd save enough ribbon to tie a bow around the earth. What a great gift that would be.

[< Previous Page](#)

[1](#) | [2](#) | [3](#)

WebMD Medical Reference

[View Article Sources](#) 

Webmd.com/health-chrome-9/green-holidays

Related Topics:

[Sustainability](#), [Christmas](#), [Eco-friendly Products](#), [Waste](#)

And if you come across an item that's excessively packaged, don't hesitate to tell the company. "When consumers send the message that sustainability matters, companies listen," Gendell says.

What to give

Gift giving is an essential part of the holiday season, but that doesn't mean you have to stuff stockings with store-bought products. Get a little crafty and make some presents yourself — we've got some great [DIY gift ideas](#) to get your started. Or head into the kitchen and whip up one of these [scrumptious holiday treats](#).



Remember that presents don't have to be material goods. Have a friend that loves your homemade bread? Invite her over and teach her how to make it herself. Has your son always wanted to go horseback riding? Sign him up for a trail ride. Gifts like classes, museum memberships, charity donations and movie or concert tickets are great ways to show someone you care without adding to the landfill.

“Gifts of time and experience don't have any packaging and can be really meaningful, but if you want to give material gifts, think about choosing quality, locally made or fair trade items that will last a long time,” Rustemeyer says. Check out some of her other [ideas for waste-free giving](#).

Gift-wrap alternatives

GREEN HOLIDAYS: Don't let the day after Christmas look like this. (Photo: wjarrettc/flickr)

From Thanksgiving to New Year's Day, household waste increases by more than 25 percent, and this extra trash — mostly food, shopping bags, product packaging and wrapping paper — adds up to an additional 1 million tons of waste a week that's sent to U.S. landfills, according to the EPA. Luckily, there are many steps you can take that will help you reduce your holiday trash — and even save some cash.

Where to shop

The easiest way to cut back on what you're throwing away is to reduce the amount of stuff you bring home in the first place, and a good place to start is with product packaging. After all, packaging makes up 30 percent of America's trash — the largest portion of municipal solid waste generated.

It might seem overwhelming (perhaps even downright impossible) to do package-free Christmas shopping, but there are ways to cut back on unnecessary packaging. Look for retailers that offer package-free products, such as [Lush](#), which sells handmade vegetarian soaps and cosmetics that come wrapped in paper instead of bottled in plastic. Shop at local stores where you can buy

unpackaged goods, purchase used items from thrift shops, or check out listings on sites like [craigslist](#) and [Freecycle](#).

Jen Rustemeyer of [The Clean Bin Project](#), a self-taught expert when it comes to less-wasteful shopping, says avoiding excessive packaging just takes practice. "I tend to shop at local shops and craft fairs, and I keep an eye out in secondhand shops for new condition items. There are some great eco shops like [LifeWithoutPlastic.com](#) that sell cool eco-alternatives, and you can get like-new secondhand books from Amazon. I also look for items that I can get just wrapped in paper — and I always shop with a cloth bag."



Amazon Frustration-Free Package™



Traditional Retail Package

Prefer to do all your shopping online? Before placing an order with a company, find out what kind of packaging it uses. If the website doesn't provide that information, contact the retailer — the company might be willing to ship your items in a more eco-friendly way if you ask. Buying online might even be the greener choice. For example, Amazon.com offers [frustration-free packaging](#) (pictured) on some of its products, which means the item is sent to you in a recyclable box that's free of materials like plastic clamshells and wire ties.

"Online retailers offer an interesting sustainability opportunity because they do not need to rely on packaging to market a product, and therefore they may be able to forgo some packaging without any loss of benefit," says Adam K. Gendell, project associate at the [Sustainable Packaging Coalition](#).

The packaging dilemma



GREEN HOLIDAYS: Don't let the day after Christmas look like this. (Photo: wjarrettc/flickr)

What to give

Gift giving is an essential part of the holiday season, but that doesn't mean you have to stuff stockings with store-bought products. Get a little crafty and make some presents yourself — we've got some great [DIY gift ideas](#) to get your started. Or head into the kitchen and whip up one of these [scrumptious holiday treats](#).



Remember that presents don't have to be material goods. Have a friend that loves your homemade bread? Invite her over and teach her how to make it herself. Has your son always wanted to go horseback riding? Sign him up for a trail ride. Gifts like classes, museum memberships, charity donations and movie or concert tickets are great ways to show someone you care without adding to the landfill.

“Gifts of time and experience don't have any packaging and can be really meaningful, but if you want to give material gifts, think about choosing quality, locally made or fair trade items that will last a long time,” Rustemeyer says. Check out some of her other [ideas for waste-free giving](#).

Gift-wrap alternatives



Annual waste from gift-wrap and shopping bags totals 4 million tons in the U.S., according to the Use Less Stuff Report, and half of the paper America consumes is used to wrap and decorate consumer products, according to The Recycler's Handbook.

“It would take quite a Scrooge to say that we should forgo wrapping our gifts and eliminate the surprise and joy of unwrapping presents,” Gendell says, but just because you want to eliminate unnecessary waste doesn't mean you're going to have a bunch of unwrapped gifts sitting underneath that organically grown Christmas tree. There are a variety of wrapping options out there that are both festive and sustainable — you just have to get a little creative.

If you have newspapers, paper bags, magazines or old maps, you've got gift-wrap that's not only green, but will also going to save you a lot of green. You can also think outside the realm of paper wrapping and use scarves or scrap material — better yet, put those old tablecloths and

fabric swatches to good use and create gift bags you can



use year after year.

“My family uses reusable Christmas-themed cloth bags when wrapping gifts. They close with drawstrings or fabric ribbons, and we pass them back and forth among the family each year,” Rustemeyer says. “I skip plastic bows and aim for biodegradable raffia or twine or reusable cloth ribbons.”

You may not have the same Santa-and-snowflake-print gifts as everyone else, but with a little bit of creativity, your gift-wrap can be just as festive — and not nearly as wasteful.

Food waste

This is an ideal time for the family to gather around the dinner table and indulge in some holiday treats, but too often our food goes to waste. Americans waste 96 billion pounds of food each year, according to the USDA, and all that waste really adds up — in fact, the EPA says that food waste losses account for about \$100 billion annually.



Luckily, you can reduce your family's food waste this season — and always — by following a few simple rules.

- Plan your menu and figure out exactly how much food you need. Then make a shopping list and stick to it.
- Store leftovers safely and get creative with the odds and ends of a meal. For example, store leftover vegetables, rice and beans in the freezer and use them later for soup. Keep a bread bag in the freezer and defrost slices later to make breadcrumbs.
- Start a compost pile so that uneaten food can nourish the soil to grow more food. Here's [how to start a compost pile](#) in four easy steps.
- Donate excess food. Some charities will accept food donations, so check with your local food bank or use Feeding America's [food bank locator](#) to find one in your area.
- Check out these other great [tips on reducing food waste](#), or visit [Love Food Hate Waste](#)'s website for more information.

Christmas trees



Approximately 25-30 million real Christmas trees are sold in the U.S. every year, and regardless of where you stand on the [real tree vs. fake tree debate](#), if you're going the real-tree route, be sure to recycle it when the holidays are over.

Recycled Christmas trees are used for everything from generating electricity to preventing beachfront erosion, and preparing your tree for its afterlife is as simple as removing the ornaments and checking the collection or drop-off dates in your area. To locate Christmas tree [recycling](#) centers and services in your neighborhood, type in your ZIP code at [Earth 911](#).

Learn more about [Christmas tree recycling](#).

Also on MNN:

- [5 ways to fight retail overpackaging](#)
- [7 things you can make instead of buying](#)
- [Wasting away: Our garbage by the numbers](#)
- [Wrapping paper and the recycling bin](#)
- [Get on board the non-consumption train](#)



Click for photo credits

You might also like:



[Scientists invent not 1, not 2, but 3 new 'invisibility cloaks'](#)



[Bras don't actually work, says French study](#)



[What your poop says about your health](#)



[Mars rover photo teeming with 'UFOs'](#)



[Weird skin color illusion can reduce racism](#)



[6 ways to feed 11 billion people](#)



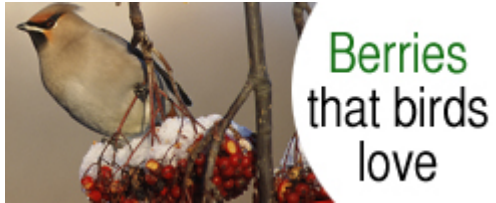
[10 items you didn't know were made in America](#)



[Stephen Hawking to receive a voice upgrade, thanks to Intel](#)

All Comments
No items at this time...

EDITORS' PICKS



[The Nature Works Everywhere program kicks off in Curtis Bay giving kids from urban schools a hands- more...](#)



Promise of Tomorrow





tb read [Walmart has more solar capacity than 38 states.](#)
3 hours ago