

Extension Tip of the Week

The holiday season is a time for celebration and for getting together with family and friends. As we enter the holiday season we search for that perfect gift, that one card that says it all, that tree to end all trees. But as we feast, give gifts, decorate and travel, we also consume lots of resources and generate lots of waste. Here are some tips for conserving these resources while celebrating the joys of the season!

- Look for ways to recycle your tree instead of sending it to a landfill. Check with your community to find out if they collect and mulch trees.
- Decorate with more efficient mini-lights. Turn on only when someone's around to appreciate them.
- Tear off the fronts of old holiday cards and send them as postcards. Also, consider sending electronic cards.
- Save energy associated with transportation by patronizing shops in your local area, combining several errands into one trip – or travel with friends.
- Try to buy items with minimal packaging and/or made with recycled content.
- Consider the durability of a product before you buy it as a gift. Cheaper, less durable items often wear out quickly, creating waste and costing you money.
- Bring reusable cloth bags for holiday gift shopping.
- Give gifts that don't require much packaging, such as concert tickets or gift certificates.
- Give the gift of "time".
- Prepare and package homemade food gifts in reusable and/or recyclable containers.
- Buy rechargeable batteries to accompany your electronic gifts, and consider giving a battery charger as well.
- Wrap gifts in recycled or reused wrapping paper and gift bags, material, old newspapers or decorated brown paper bags. Avoid foil and plastic-embossed paper because it uses more resources in the manufacturing process.
- Reuse the fronts of old holiday cards as gift tags.
- If you host a party, set the table with cloth napkins and reusable dishes, glasses, and silverware.
- Put leftovers in recyclable containers - glass and plastic jars, milk jugs, coffee cans, dairy tubs, and other similar containers that would otherwise get thrown away - and share them with family, friends, or others. Donate whole, untouched leftovers from parties to a local food bank or homeless shelter.

Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (<http://www.epa.gov/>)

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