

TEN IDEAS FOR AN EARTH FRIENDLY HOLIDAY SEASON

1. Instead of wrapping paper, use gift bags. They are just as festive and can be used many times over. You can always make the “wrapping” part of the gift by using baskets, jars, fabric, or reusable shopping bags.

2. Opt for a locally grown Christmas tree. Artificial trees can be reused, but are material intensive and difficult to recycle once they need replacing. Ultimately, trees from a farm are a renewable resource. Many communities now have composting or wood chipping programs for Christmas trees. Call your local parks department or recycling center to learn more. You can also buy a live Christmas tree, but, before choosing this option, think about where you'll plant the tree after the holidays are over.

3. Try thrift shops like Goodwill and the Salvation Army for holiday decorations instead of raiding the local craft store. Get creative and find items that you can clean up or repurpose for creating a holiday atmosphere.

4. Use natural items for decorating – popcorn garland instead of tinsel, cinnamon sticks instead of plastic air fresheners. Use real pine boughs, pinecones, holly, ivy, cranberries, etc. Check out your own yard as well as local garden shops. When the holidays are over, everything can be composted.

5. If you're hosting a holiday party, ask your guests to bring a donation for your favorite environmental group in lieu of a host/hostess present. You'll support good work and won't have to re-gift that fruitcake.



6. Shop with the environment in mind. Look for items that have recycled content and limited packaging. How about rechargeable batteries for those toys or electronics?

Consider eco-friendly products: clothing made with organic cotton, chemical free beauty products, locally produced food, handmade items, etc.

7. Buy used. It may not be shiny and packaged in plastic, but you can save things from heading to the trash and save money. Check out the many online options for free-cycling

and buying used items. As a bonus, you won't have to fight the crowds.

8. Cut back on the light display. Be conservative with those strings of lights and ten-foot-tall lawn ornaments. Replace old light strands with newer, more energy-efficient versions – miniature bulbs and LED lights use less energy. Use a timer to shut lights on and off automatically, and don't keep the lights on all night long.

9. Carefully plan out meals and portions for your holiday company to minimize leftovers. Don't overcook, and send any extras home with guests. If you do end up with leftovers, compost them.

10. Cut back in general on all the shopping and the “stuff.” Instead, focus on family, friends and quality time. Make the holidays about making memories and enjoying the natural beauty of the season.

