



Reduce, Reuse and Plan Ahead: 13 Tips On How To GREEN Your Holiday

For Immediate Release

December 11, 2009 (Northampton, MA)--Between Thanksgiving and New Years, Americans generate about **1 million extra tons of trash per week**, a 25% increase of solid waste. Holiday shopping, gifts and packaging, as well as big meals contribute to a lot of extra waste that is almost entirely avoidable, recyclable, reusable or compostable. Below are some tips and ideas from [GREEN Northampton](#) about how you can reduce your impact on the environment this holiday season.

1.) Wrapping paper is now recyclable!

All wrapping paper is recyclable except wrapping paper with foil, no ribbons or bows and no metallic inks or glitter. Recycle your wrapping paper at the landfill or transfer station this year with your other paper. Also, keep in mind that all cardboard gift boxes, tissue paper, gift cards and paper shopping bags are recyclable, and you can bring Styrofoam packing peanuts to the UPS store for reuse. On the other hand, ribbons, bows, tinsel and photographs cannot be recycled. They go to the landfill.

2.) Reduce and Reuse

Give Used Gifts

It's greener to give used items than to give new green items. It takes a lot of energy and natural resources to make stuff. To be green, give a gift that used no additional energy to create. Antique shops and thrift stores are cheap and often have some really cool stuff. Re-gifts (gifts you received from last year, but never use) can be passed on to someone who will use and appreciate them. Give away the bike, appliance, or gadget that you never use. It will save you time, money and storage space.

If you'd like to stay at home, scour [craigslist](#) or sign up for Northampton's [FreeCycle](#) for heavily discounted (or free) electronics, furniture, books, clothing, toys, or almost anything else.

Re-Use Paper for Wrapping Paper

Reuse old maps, magazines, and gift cards as wrapping, decoration or tags. The Sunday comics or brown paper packages tied up with string are fun, original, virtually cost-free *and* totally recyclable. You can also use old shoeboxes, cloth napkins or gift bags from last year to add flair to your gift-wrapping projects.

3.) Compost Christmas Trees at the Landfill

4.) Buy Quantities of Food that You'll Actually Eat!

Plan your holiday meals and parties carefully to reduce avoidable and costly waste. Package leftovers and distribute them to guests as they leave. COMPOST all food scraps and uneaten leftovers to keep them out of the landfill.

5.) Buy or Borrow Re-Usable or Compostable Cutlery, Cups, Flatware and Napkins

Thrift shops and tag sales have an abundance of reusable plates, utensils and glasses, often at a low price that is comparable to buying disposable items. Buy a whole bunch and then keep them in storage for your next party. You can also call a neighbor and borrow additional place settings for a large party.

If you do use paper plates and napkins, know that they are compostable. Plant-based plastics and biodegradable cutlery and cups are also available.

6.) Minimize Packaging and Vote With Your Dollar

If you buy new gifts, send a message to manufacturers by choosing items with minimal packaging.

7.) Consumable Gifts

Gifts that are consumable such as baked goods, coffee, cheese or wine have minimal, recyclable packaging and are immediately enjoyed, appreciated, and won't go to waste. Buy gift certificates to locally owned stores. Check out <http://www.pvlocalfirst.org/>, they offer a directory of local businesses in the valley.

8.) Shift Away from Material Gift-Giving

Material gifts require resource extraction, transportation, manufacture, distribution, purchase and eventual disposal. Check out the [Story of Stuff \(www.storyofstuff.com\)](http://www.storyofstuff.com) to learn about the hidden environmental costs associated with all of our material stuff. Gifts that are immaterial will last forever. Offer time and services to loved ones such as babysitting, household chores, or a night out.

9.) Donate Charitable Gifts in Someone's Name

Consider directing your money to a service-oriented cause, charity or organization. [Kiva.org](http://www.kiva.org) offers microloans to third-world citizens so that they can start a business that will sustain them and their family. These loans of about \$50 dollars can help make a huge difference in the lives of the world's less fortunate people and they are repaid 98.4% of the time. After it is repaid, they can either be redeemed or revolved back into another loan...it's up to you.

Heifer International (www.heifer.org) provides livestock, bees, and other beneficial gifts that can offer ongoing nutrition and income to the world's poor one family at a time. The gifts are inexpensive, and can be given in someone else's name.

Reminder: charitable donations are tax-deductible.

10.) Be Thoughtful About Your Transportation and Travel Plans

Reduce your carbon emissions by doing all of your shopping at once, rather than in multiple trips. Carpool with family and reduce air travel by taking a train or driving to your holiday destination. Keep your car tuned up, and tires properly inflated to optimize your car's fuel efficiency

11) Pool Resources

Get together, organize and connect with your family to buy one meaningful, durable, fantastic gift for someone. Many hands make light work, and small contributions can add up quickly to get a few great gifts for everyone.

12) Eliminate Junk Mail and Unwanted Catalogues

There are many ways to eliminate unwanted catalogs and junk mail that waste energy, resources and paper. Check out www.obviously.com/junkmail/ or sign up for www.stopjunk.com with preaddressed cards that will reduce your junk mail easily.

13) Give gifts that encourage a green lifestyle.

Last but not least, there are plenty of things to buy that encourage an earth-friendly lifestyle; [Earth Machines](#) (available at [your local DPW](#)) make composting easy and accessible. Travel mugs, canvas bags, solar chargers, plants or gardening tools are all good options too.

GREEN Northampton's mission is to foster Northampton's community bonds and promote environmentally sustainable lifestyles in response to climate change and resource depletion. The organization coordinates the efforts of the GREEN Teams in the public schools in Northampton and advocates for a carbon neutral Northampton and a reduction of Northampton's solid waste stream to the landfill by 90% by 2011. GREEN Northampton is a 501(c)3 non-profit. For more information or questions, contact David Starr 413 584 8785 or at info@GREENNorthampton.org.