

I'm Dreaming of a Green Christmas

While you may think the holidays put a big dent in your wallet, the season of giving puts an even bigger dent in our environment. The Center for a New American Dream estimates that the average U.S. consumer plans to spend \$817 on holiday-related shopping, and these purchases add up to 25% more trash sent to the landfill this time of year! Here are a few easy tips to make the holidays more eco-friendly and to reduce the impact on our environment and your pocketbook at the same time:

Leave the Gas Guzzler at Home

For most of us, driving our cars is our biggest environmental impact year-round, so the #1 act we can take to minimize our holiday environmental footprint is to find ways to cut back on the quick, around-town trips we tend to make at this time of year. Shop locally and plan your outings in advance to reduce your number of trips. Carpool and catch up with friends, or, even better, ride the bus, ride your bike, or walk when you can.

BYOB

Paper or plastic? How about "Neither!" This year bring your own bag on all your shopping excursions. Many supermarkets will credit your bill a nickel for every bag you reuse, and these reusable bags also make a great gift. Also say "no" to the tissue paper and ribbons that often accompany even the smallest holiday purchases. Read on for do-it-yourself environmental wrapping options.

Stop the Junk Mail Glut when Catalog or Online Shopping

Junk mail is an unwanted gift any time of year, so every time you order over the phone or online, make sure to request, "Please do not rent, trade or sell my name or address." You'll avoid the 34 pounds of junk mail that we receive every year, and you'll also save the time you would have spent sorting through all that wasted paper. If you do find an unwanted new catalog in your mailbox, call the company's 1-800 number to have your name removed or visit www.catalogchoice.org, a free service that allows you to decline all the catalogs you no longer wish to receive. You can find more tips on avoiding the junk mail monster at www.ecocycle.org.

Eco-Wrap

Wrapping paper is difficult to recycle because of the high ratio of clay and ink to the low fiber content. Rather than spending money on paper that goes straight into the recycling bin, explore wrapping alternatives as simple as the Sunday comics or old maps, or as easy as cloth gift bags or reusable gift boxes. Looking for more ideas? Come to Eco-Cycle's workshop, "Tips for Enjoying a Waste-Free Holiday Season," on Dec. 6 at 4:30 p.m. (RSVP 303-404-2839) and hear fun holiday suggestions from the Eco-Elf. You'll also be able to purchase unprinted endrolls of newsprint perfect for wrapping and decorating, and ultimately recyclable as newspaper. If you end up receiving wrapping paper over the holidays, Eco-Cycle will accept wrapping paper for recycling from Dec. 26 to Jan 31 only, and only in the Paperboard container.

Zero Waste Partying

Planning a holiday soirée? Rather than disposable cutlery and plates, serve your guests on real dishware, including cups and glasses for beverages and reusable cutlery. You'll save the money

on disposable plates and utensils, and you'll also notice how empty your trash can is at the end of the party. When reusable tableware isn't an option, choose Eco-Cycle's Zero Waste Event Kit which provides everything you need to throw a waste-free celebration for 25 to 150 guests, including compostable tableware, a compost collection box and educational signage. Order your kit online at www.ecocycle.org/zwevents.

Stop the Waste Before it Starts

You can reduce waste before it starts with smart holiday and everyday shopping that avoids unnecessary and non-recyclable products and packaging. For more on this and other tools and resources for a green holiday season, check out Eco-Cycle's Zero Waste Holiday Guide. You'll find "Tips to Avoid Holiday Waste in the First Place," the complete "Green Guide to Gifts," holiday recycling guidelines, short instructional video clips and much more. Read the guide online at www.ecocycle.org or stop by the Broomfield drop-off center to pick up a copy today.

May your days be merry and bright!

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