

Green Holiday Guide

The holiday season is a time to enjoy the company of family and friends, lots of good food, and general peace, celebration, and relaxation. At least that's what most of us would like it to be. Instead, the holiday season all too often exudes a feeling of stressful commercialization at the expense of what really matters. Family, faith, and tradition have taken a back seat to more and more stuff. This "stuff" not only obscures the meaning of the season, it also creates a lot of garbage and wasted energy. In America, the amount of trash picked up between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day increases 25-30%, representing at least 25 million tons of additional garbage. Fortunately, there are plenty of ways to green your holiday season that will not require you to sacrifice the true joy of the season.

Conservation over Consumption

The holiday season is one where consumption is frequently encouraged to the point of overspending. Take a moment to reflect on how you have spent your time and money in the past. Consider those things that have left lasting memories of past holidays. Odds are those pieces of plastic glued together in China are low on your list. Focus your energy this year on those things that fill your holiday with meaning rather than fill it with more stuff.

Many great gift ideas do not require the purchase of goods. We hope this holiday guide inspires you to revisit the simpler days of homemade gifts and memories of time with family and loved ones. Please feel free to contact A.E.R.O. or S.A.V.E. for more information or ways to get your community involved in conservation projects.

S.A.V.E.
Student Advocates
for
Valuing the
Environment
449.6008
Savemobile.org

A.E.R.O.
Alternative Energy
Resources
Organization
443.7272
Aeromt.org

Green Gifts

- **Homemade Gifts:** Knitting or crocheting gifts to help keep your loved ones warm is always appreciated
- Make a donation in someone else's name to a local charity or an organization such as Oxfam International www.oxfam.org.
- Some local and organic gift ideas are found on our local news stations site at [**http://www.montanastation.com/Global/story.asp?S=9434134](http://www.montanastation.com/Global/story.asp?S=9434134)
Or you can check out local craft shows and the Farmer's Market for other locally grown and crafted goods.
- Save money and packaging by donating your time or offering a chore to a loved one.
- Give an energy conservation gift basket full of practical items such as CFLs, window wraps, spray foam, and a copy of *The Homeowner's Handbook to Energy Efficiency*.

SUPPORT THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

- Over the holidays, The S.A.V.E. Foundation will send a free copy of *The Homeowner's Handbook to Energy Efficiency* with each donation of \$100 or more to support expanded recycling and environmental advocacy. Visit Savemobile.org for more information and more tips on Green Holidays.
- Donate to A.E.R.O to support local and sustainable agriculture within the state of Montana.
- Support local art by visiting the gift shop at the Holter Museum
- Buy a CSA membership from Perpetual Farms by contacting Tom and Jackie Fischer 285.0820

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Gift Wrap and Cards

A major source of garbage during the holidays comes from wrapping and packaging of gifts.

- Reuse bows, paper, and bags from previous years when wrapping gifts. Check if your neighbors have extra boxes before buying new ones.
- Consider making the wrapping part of the present by putting gifts in reusable shopping bags, wrapping them in a scarf, or putting them in a flowerpot.
- Purchase reusable cloth gift bags or gift wrap
- When purchasing cards or wrapping avoid anything shiny and sparkly as it cannot be recycled and takes more resources to make.
- Invite neighbors over for a card making party! Encourage each other to bring their craft supplies, old magazines, or pressed leaves and flowers from a hike. This is a great time to also share holiday recipes!
- Re-use old cards by covering with leftover wrapping paper, magazines, or newspapers.

Saving Energy

According to the Energy Information Administration, www.eia.doe.gov/steo “average household expenditures for all space-heating fuels are projected to be \$1,137 this winter, a 15-percent increase over the estimated \$986 spent last winter.” The tradition of holiday lights does not have to be boxed up. Instead, there are many ways to save energy by modifying this, and many other things around the house over the holidays.

- Put lights on a timer so they are on only when people are there and awake to enjoy them.
- When purchasing new, lights buy LED strands. They use 90% less energy and last 50,000 hours. Make sure you recycle your old lights though! Many Christmas light recycling programs will actually give you a coupon for new LED light strands.
- At the end of the season, wrap your lights around a cardboard gift wrap core to keep them organized for next year.

- Replace incandescent light bulbs with CFLs wherever possible.
- When hosting a party turn your heat down a couple degrees before guests arrive. The added body heat will warm up the house.
- Make a commitment to turn the thermostat down a couple degrees. Turning down the thermostat just one degree can save you up to five percent on heating costs.
- Caulking and weatherstripping doorways and windows will make your home more efficient.
- Have party guests bring their own plates and silverware to reduce washing and waste.



The Tree

Bottom line: it is better to purchase a real tree than an artificial one. Real trees are normally harvested from a tree farm, so deforestation is not an issue. Also, manufacturing artificial trees is a petroleum-rich process.

Once you are done with your tree, bring it to a chipper so that it can be recycled into mulch for gardening.

*Another idea that is gaining popularity is the use of live trees that can be planted following its use.