

## Greening Your Holidays

When you think of the holiday season, what color comes to mind? For many, it's green. So, it's only fitting to act 'green' during this time of year. Here are a few tips to get you started:

- Use things around the house for wrapping paper – old newspaper comics, magazine pages, or wrappings from items you've already purchased. Or make the wrap itself a gift: scarves, backpacks, purses, robes, and other items can serve as containers or wraps for other gifts. Then you can bind them with a hair ribbon or a belt.
- If you must buy wrapping paper, try buying products that are made from post-consumer recycled material. Cardboard boxes and paper packing material are easily recycled, whereas bubble wrap and molded plastic packaging are not.
- Be practical when gift giving – don't buy something just to buy it. Try unconventional gifts, like tickets to a show or event. Buying gifts online can sometimes be more efficient than driving all over searching for something.
- Try to reduce your shopping trips, or at least plan to make the most efficient use of your time (and your fuel). Buy locally – Shop Camden County: Reduce the shipping miles and help support local craftspeople and producers. For distant friends and family, see if you can order items such as food baskets from your local area. Buy items in bulk, such as fruit, tea, coffee, or chocolate, to use as stocking stuffers or in gift baskets or goodie boxes/tins you fill yourself.
- Buy a tree with a root ball that can be planted when you're done. If you're going to cut a tree, remember to at least prevent it from going into a landfill by composting it. Make sure your local municipality composts or chips trees they collect at the curb.
- Poinsettias, although not toxic as once thought, are not the best choice for everyone. If you're looking for something that will last well beyond January, try a decorated dwarf Alberta spruce. After the holidays, they can be planted outdoors and will last for years. Try cyclamen or Christmas cactus too, which are hardier and can bloom every year.
- When replacing holiday decorations, buy those that use LED lights. They last longer, are cooler to the touch, and use up to 90% less energy than conventional lights. Many hardware stores will now accept your old lights and recycle them. The PCFA, as well as many municipalities, offer free electronics recycling programs as well.
- Although sending cards is often a personal and easy way to acknowledge friends, coworkers, and loved ones during the holidays, they use a great deal of paper and energy to get to their destinations. According to the Greeting Card Association, some 2.6 billion holiday cards are sent each holiday season. Think of other ways to send the same message – use e-cards, get together over lunch or dinner, or just write a note on a gift if you're giving to that person anyway. If you must send cards, skip chlorine-beached paper. Look for the Processed Chlorine Free (PCF) label or choose recycled (look for high percentages of post-consumer waste).
- If you're planning a party, try to buy locally grown food as much as possible. Avoid using paper plates/cups, but if you must, use products made from post-consumer recycled materials. Ensure your dishwasher is filled before running it. Dishwashers work more efficiently when filled to the maximum recommended capacity. Serve shade grown coffee and organic tea.
- On those cold nights around the holidays, remember to add another sweater or blanket and lower your thermostat a degree or two. I love using our wood-burning fireplace in the winter, but they are very inefficient. If you do use one, remember to close the flue when the fire is completely out to prevent heat from escaping.
- Recycle everything you can – paper products, glass/paper/plastic, old electronics (if you get anything new over the holidays, such as cell phones, computers, etc.)

**Be responsible. Be green. But for Goodness' sake, have fun!!**