

Holiday Waste Reduction and Recycling Tips

HOLIDAY TREE – SO MANY CHOICES...

- A potted evergreen can be planted outside after the holiday (check with your local nursery for planting instructions).
- An indoor houseplant such as a fig tree or a schefflera can be decorated year after year.
- Decorate a bush or pine tree outside in your yard as an alternative.
- Purchase a tree from a local tree farm. Check with your municipality about recycling options once the holiday passes.
- Buy an artificial tree that can be reused year after year.



TREE ORNAMENTS & DECORATIONS

- You can make ornaments and decorations from what you may already have around the house.
- Old holiday cards can be used to make ornaments or gift tags.
- Natural items found outside such as twigs, bark, pinecones, evergreen branches, shells, dried flowers, holly, or berries can be made into ornaments.
- Edible cookie ornaments such as gingerbread or sugar cookie dough with a hole poked through the tip can be hung with a ribbon.
- Making ornaments from items you already have can be a fun activity that can involve children of all ages.
- Garland can be made from popcorn and cranberries.
- Consider switching to LED lights if you haven't yet. These use much less energy than traditional lights.

December 2010

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Americans throw away 25 percent more trash between Thanksgiving and the New Year than during any other time of the year. The extra waste amounts to 25 million tons!

- Timers can be a save energy by allowing you to set it and forget it. Never again will your lights stay on all night because someone forgot to unplug them.

HOLIDAY CARDS

Sending e-cards can save time, money and the environment. There are lots of websites offering free or inexpensive options. An electronic newsletter (which can include pictures) is another great way to stay in touch with family and friends.

www.hallmark.com

www.americangreetings.com

www.bluemountain.com

ENTERTAINING

- Electronic invitations (also available on most social networking sites) are an efficient and free option.
 - Rather than using disposable dinnerware products or buying new, consider borrowing or renting items you will likely only use a few times. This will save you storage space when the items aren't in use.
 - If you must use disposable dinnerware, consider using compostable products now readily available retailers.
 - Make your own centerpieces, placemats, napkin rings etc. from items you already have.
 - Let your guests know where they can place their recyclable beverage containers and where the compost materials can be placed so they do not end up as waste.
- Encourage guests to bring empty food storage containers with them in order to bring leftovers home, donate excess food to a local food pantry, or deliver to a family or senior citizen who could use it.
 - Remember to compost your kitchen organics, even in cold climates. This can reduce waste, by weight, up to 40%.
 - Having a gift swap? Consider home made gifts and treats or support local artisans by asking gifts be made in Maine. Or take the opportunity to re-gift an item you've received but do not intend to use.
 - Turn the heat down before guests arrive. Warmth will be generated by guest's body heat as well as use of the oven, stove, or warmers used to heat food.
 - Role modeling holiday waste reduction, reuse, recycling and composting is a great way to send a message to everyone in attendance that you care about the environment. Not hosting a party, many of these tips will work even if you are not the host.



SHOPPING

- Online shopping grows more and more popular every year. It's tough to top the convenience and relatively small carbon footprint of online shopping. In order to avoid costly shipping fees, it's best to order early.
- Request that mail order retailers ship your merchandise using paper for packing instead of polystyrene packing filler. If that's not possible, reuse the filler or take it to a mailing retailer such as Mail Boxes Etc.
- When making mail order purchases, request that your name be removed from the retailer's catalog mailing list. You can always check the company website when you are interested in shopping.
- For the rest of the shopping, plan an efficient loop that uses the least amount of gas.
- Invite a friend, neighbor, or senior citizen to shop with you. Less fuel will be used and the shopping experience will be more fun. It might even become a tradition.
- Don't forget to bring reusable shopping bags.



GIFT GIVING

Things to consider; What's the environmental impact of the gift you are considering? How durable is it? Can it be reused after the recipient is through with it?

- Sometimes the best gift is one of an experience which creates a lasting memory. Take elderly friends or relatives to a movie, festival or play. They will appreciate the companionship and they generally have all the "stuff" they already need.
- Movie passes, concert or sporting event tickets, gift cards, or seasons pass to a local theater group or museum membership also make great gifts.
- A houseplant is a gift that can be appreciated year round.
- Bird feeder and seed or bird house for the bird enthusiast.
- Reusable items such as tote bags, travel mugs, lunch bags, cloth napkins & rings, books, countertop compost bins.
- Consider giving a month of a diaper service to new parents or cloth diapers and a pail so that they can do it themselves.

- Create a recipe book of your family's favorite recipes to share.
- Create a coupon book to give services such as babysitting, yard work, home repair, special dinner or household chores etc.
- When selecting a gift, consider choosing the one packaged with the least amount of material or one packed in material you can recycle in your local program.
- If purchasing a gift for a child that requires batteries, rechargeable ones are the better choice because they last longer and can be recycled when they no longer hold a charge.
- Make a donation to the recipient's favorite charity
- Open a savings account for a child or add to an existing one.
- Avoid gift wrap with foil on it. Though it's attractive, it's not recyclable.
- Gift wrap and the inner tube are recyclable in most recycle programs.
- Reuse bows and ribbon that are in good condition.

AFTER THE HOLIDAYS

It's common for new gifts to replace items that still have a useful life. Remember to donate these items to your local reuse organization such as Goodwill, Salvation Army, local church, transfer station "swap shop" or homeless shelter.

Remember to recycle the corrugated cardboard you have amassed. It is a valuable commodity that is highly recyclable.



GIFT WRAP & BOWS

- Use gift bags that can be reused (Dollar stores are a great place for inexpensive gift bags)
- Wrap gifts with children's drawings, comic pages, old maps, fabric scraps etc.
- Rather than wrapping gifts of clothes already in a gift box, simply add a tag and a bow (and skip the tissue paper too).
- Give gifts in baskets, tins or jars that can be reused.
- If there is no way around it and you need gift wrap, consider buying recycled content paper.

Maine State Planning office
38 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0038
207-624-7660

Find Maine Recycles on

