



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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TIPS FOR AN ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY HOLIDAY SEASON

RALEIGH—The N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources urges North Carolinians to plan family holiday celebrations that are safe, happy and environmentally friendly. According to the [Use Less Stuff](#) Web site, Americans throw away 25 percent more trash during the Thanksgiving to New Year's holiday period than any other time of year. The extra waste amounts to 25 million tons of garbage, or about one million extra tons per week.

“During this time of year it is important to not only use less stuff, like wrapping gifts with the funny papers, but also buying environmentally friendly products,” said Kelley Dennings with the N.C. Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance. “What would be a better gift during this drought than a rain barrel or a faucet aerator?”

Other environmentally friendly ideas include:

- Give home-baked goodies in reusable containers like baskets, tins or jars.
- Give non-materialistic “green” gifts that do not require wrapping, such as gift certificates for massages, to restaurants, cooking classes, sailing lessons, etc. Theater, sporting event, concert or movie tickets are always appreciated. Experiences are remembered long after other presents wear out or run down.
- Give a gift of time or talent. Take someone to a play, concert or movie. Make gift certificates for a special dinner, pet sitting or house cleaning. Offer your talents at gardening, photography or financial planning — or better yet, teach someone a skill you possess such as knitting, woodworking or playing an instrument.
- Make a charitable donation in the recipient's name or give a membership to a museum, environmental or other nonprofit organization.
- Give fair trade coffee and teas or local and organic fruit and vegetable baskets.
- Give a compost bin, can crusher, water timer, programmable thermostat, rain barrel, house plant, bird feeder, light timers or bat house.
- When gift giving think durable. Consider how long the item will last before you make a purchase.

N.C. DPPEA offers the following waste reduction tips:

- Send holiday e-cards instead of paper greeting cards or make sure the ones you buy have recycled content material.
- When shipping, reuse foam peanuts or other packaging materials.
- Use reusable grocery and shopping bags and make sure to recycle the non-reusable ones.
- Use rechargeable batteries for cameras, flashlights, etc.
- If you have several events or parties in a short amount of time, buy food items in bulk. You will save a trip to the grocery and use less packaging.
- Instead of buying new items (i.e., a dress for a party, more chairs, etc.) consider borrowing or renting things.
- Shop at thrift stores for unique gift items or holiday decorations.
- Compost your leftover food- it's easy and a great fertilizer. Find more information about compost here - <http://www.p2pays.org/compost/>.
- Save all gift-wrapping and decorations to reuse later or wrap gifts in old maps, posters, sheet music, fabric or wallpaper scraps.

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Recycling during this time of year is very important:

- Have clearly marked recycling containers at your holiday party.
- Cook holiday meals in recyclable and recycled content pans such as aluminum.
- If your holiday gifts include new electronic gadgets and you need to discard your older electronics, recycle them instead of throwing them away.
- If a tree is part of your celebration, buy one that can be replanted in your yard. If you can't replant your tree, compost it after the holidays.
- Contact your local recycling office or visit <http://www.p2pays.org/localgov/PAYT/newaste.asp> to find out how to recycle your electronics and trees.

Don't forget to save energy during the holidays:

- Make sure to turn off or unplug holiday decorations when they are not in use.
- Be sure holiday decorations are not placed on or obstructing air vents.
- When cooking, use your microwave oven as much as possible or plan your oven baking to avoid continuously reheating the oven.
- Use LED holiday lights. They use about 99 percent less energy than larger, traditional holiday bulbs and last up to 100,000 hours when used indoors.
- Reduce your light display by one or two strands. You may not even notice the subtle change.

Saving water is also important this holiday season:

- Defrost frozen items in the refrigerator, not under running water.
- Run only full loads in the washing machine and dishwasher.
- When washing dishes keep washing soap usage to a minimum. It helps reduce the amount of rinse water needed.
- Don't run the kitchen faucet continuously while washing dishes.
- Let pots and pans soak instead of letting the water run while you clean them.
- Minimize the number of dishes used at holiday parties.

For additional environmentally friendly holiday tips, please visit the N.C. DPPEA Web site at:

<http://p2pays.org/recycleguys/generalholidaywaste.html>.

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