



Green Christmas Tips

from the Eastern-Midlands Waste Region

Gifts

Many gifts, while lovingly bought go unused, particularly gift sets and novelty items. Giving doesn't always mean buying. So for a greener Christmas and some smarter gift giving, why not try some of the following ideas.

Click on the links for even more ideas!



IT'S ALL ABOUT EXPERIENCE

Buy your loved ones tickets or vouchers for theatre, cinema, books, a concert or gig, a dance class, a yoga retreat, wine tasting, a massage or a swanky restaurant they've always wanted to try.

GO QUIRKY AND UNIQUE

A hand-crafted, home-made or upcycled personalised gift speaks volumes about the thought you put into selecting it, where possible choose local crafts people or organisations. For an extra green twist try a **Reuse organisation**, your local **Men's Shed** or go for a vintage pre-loved piece.

PRACTICAL MAGIC

Buy something you know will be used like a window box or a beautiful plant, such as an aromatic herb. Or if you're lucky enough to be creative, home crafted items, such as decoupage jewellery boxes, a knitted scarf, Christmas tree decorations or home-made body scrub, all make wonderful gifts. Another nice idea is to put together a photo album of memories for someone you love (the possibilities are endless).

THE GIFT OF TIME AND SKILL

For a low-cost but high-impact gift, design a voucher offering to babysit, paint a room, build a bookshelf, cook a meal etc. for an appreciative and time-pressed loved one.

FOODIE TREATS

Artisan or homemade cakes, jams, pickles, chutneys, sweets and cookies all make wonderful gifts – or why not go totally Christmassy and make some (beautifully presented) mince pies or a Christmas pudding-shaped chocolate biscuit cake. Alternatively, a beautifully presented basket of fresh fruit makes a welcome and healthy gift.

SECRET SANTA/KRIS KINDLE

Doing a Kris Kindle with friends, family or work colleagues cuts down on unwanted gifts, it's really worth a try.

SHOPPING RULES

When you do shop for gifts, try to stick to some basic rules to make your shopping trip easier and more environmentally friendly: make a list and check it twice! (Santa knows what he's doing), just buy what you need, shop locally, buy gifts with minimal and recyclable packaging, avoid gifts that require batteries, look out for **Fair Trade** gifts.

ECO-BROWNIE POINTS

Why not give a gift that helps your loved ones stay eco-friendly all year round such as a battery charger and reusable batteries, a home composter, a reusable coffee cup or a solar powered radio or flash light.

UNWANTED GIFTS

If you receive a gift you don't want, take it to a charity shop or organisation that can pass it on to someone who would be happy to have it – do this sooner rather than later and avoid clutter in the process.

All the Trimmings

Gift-wrapping and cards can be so expensive and wasteful. By engaging your imagination and thinking outside the box you can revolutionise these Christmas trimmings. Click on the links for even more ideas!



Gift wrapping

TIED UP WITH A BOW

Many gifts are so pretty they don't really need wrapping, a simple ribbon tied in a **bow** can be an elegant adornment to a gift; and it can be reused by the person receiving the gift, of course.

DUAL PURPOSE

Why not make your wrapping part of your gift, by using **scarves**, tins or pretty boxes that can be reused as your wrapping.

GET CRAFTY

If crafting and sewing are your thing, then make reusable **gift bags** from textiles or **strong paper**, or by customising paper carrier bags. You could even re-purpose that itchy jumper you never wear to make cute, cosy gift wraps or have a go at some easy **origami boxes** for extra kudos with your loved ones. There is a host of wonderful **ideas** online for novel ways to use what you have for gift wrappings.

HEADLINE ACT

Newspaper or magazine pages can make quirky and cool gift wrappings. Add the personal touch by using specialist publications or supplements, like cartoon, music, gardening, food pages and so on that match the interests of the person receiving your gift (eg. Style magazine pages for those fashionista friends).

DOUBLE JOBBING

Reuse wrapping paper you receive on your own gifts. Resist the urge to tear it off - instead remove it carefully and keep it safe until you can reuse it. Also, if you use wrapping paper yourself, try to use little, or ideally no, sticky tape – use bows or string instead and you've created a totally reusable wrapping!

TAG AN OLD FRIEND

Cut out pretty motifs or shapes from old Christmas cards to make clever gift tags for this year's gifts.

AVOID, REUSE OR RECYCLE

Steer clear of buying over-packaged gifts or gifts with packaging that cannot be reused or recycled. If you can't reuse wrapping materials you receive, make sure you recycle them in your mixed recyclables bin or at your local recycling centre.

Cards

GO DIGITAL

Why not dress up the family or pets and take a quirky photo to email or post on social media wishing all who love you Season's Greetings, donate the money you would have spent on cards to a homeless charity - what's not to love about that gesture!

MAKE AND DO

Small children love giving cards to their classmates and it can be difficult to persuade them otherwise. For a greener, cheaper alternative, reuse last year's cards by making them into cards for this year's class.

REUSE BOX

Make a reuse box and store cards and wrappings you receive this year to use again next year as wrappings, cards and gift tags.

Decorations

Christmas décor has become an art form in itself but with a little thought and imagination you can have a stylishly decorated home with little waste and a reasonable price tag. Click on the links for even more ideas!



WISE AND KIND

To ensure they last year after year, wisely buy sturdy decorations and be kind to them, storing them carefully to keep them looking well.

REVAMP

Decorations that are looking shabby or sad can be revamped with some paint or glitter. Alternatively, you could **bling them up** or **re-purpose** them by displaying them differently, for example a bowl filled with colour- coordinated baubles makes a lovely centre piece.

KEEP IT NATURAL

Charming rustic and natural-looking Christmas decorations never go out of fashion, materials such as wood, sacking, pine cones and so on are more eco-friendly and evoke Christmas better than plastic or foil. While they can cost a lot to buy, these decorations are often **easy to make** and some of the materials can even be gathered on a winter walk!

SILENT NIGHT

Kids might love dancing, singing Santa decorations, but maybe steer them away from anything requiring a constant supply of batteries and in doing so keeping your décor a bit less wasteful and a little more peaceful.

OH CHRISTMAS TREE

The Christmas tree is centre-piece of most homes during the Yule festivities. The nicest option is to use a planted living tree which can be kept outside most of the year and taken in for Christmas – it's real and reusable – the best of both worlds.

IN THE NEW YEAR

If you do buy a real tree, you can recycle it – most local authorities provide collections and facilities for recycling real trees and turn them into compost in the days after the holiday season, check out your local authority website for details. **DO NOT BURN YOUR REAL TREE**, under any circumstances.

LIGHT UP WITH LEDS

Once you have your reusable tree and your eco-friendly DIY decorations, why not top it off by using LED lights (using rechargeable batteries of course) for extra eco-effect cutting down on energy usage as well as waste!

REMEMBER TO RECYCLE

Collect up all your recyclables, including non-rechargeable batteries, and pop them into your green bin.

Food

Christmas is all about wonderful, indulgent food - and lots of it - so it's no surprise that food waste peaks at Christmas time when about one third of what we buy ends up in the bin. Armed with a few simple strategies you can reduce your Christmas food waste. Click on the links for extra tips and advice.



FREE-UP YOUR FREEZER

Before you even begin to think about turkeys, hams or cranberry sauce, make space in your freezer for all those Christmas leftovers. Spend early December using up whatever is in there, treating your family to pot luck meals and yourself to a roomy fridge and freezer.

SHOP TACTICS

Make a list of what you need and stick to it. An excellent shopping short cut is to take a photo of your fridge and your cupboard to remind yourself of what you already have and what you need. For more tips on surviving your Yuletide shop and for preventing food waste see stopfoodwaste.ie

IN THE BAG

Make sure you have take lots of reusable bags to do your Christmas grocery shopping and avoid having to pay for plastic bags in the shop. Watch the amount of wrapping and packaging on the food you buy.

PARTY TIME

Christmas is the party season and it can be difficult to get the balance right between having enough nibbles and having a mountain of uneaten goodies. The secret to getting it just right is smart planning. Limit the amount of quickly perishable food you serve and where you do serve food that won't last past the party, serve it early. Once it has been depleted replace with non-perishable snacks that will keep if leftover.

DINNER TIME

Christmas dinner is the high point of the holiday season and there are a few things that can help reduce waste. Don't be afraid to break with tradition and cut out a menu item no-one particularly enjoys. Serve small portions to children, they are unlikely to eat adult portions. Use serving bowls for vegetables and other items to make it easier to save and use the leftovers.

SECRET MENU

Soups, stock, pies, curries, desserts - there's a myriad of recipes out there that transform Christmas leftovers into sumptuous meals. Check the websites of [celebrity chefs](#), [food waste prevention campaigns](#) and so on for fabulous ideas. Christmas pudding ice-cream anyone?

FREEZE YOUR ASSETS

You've got that roomy fridge and freezer remember, so use it to freeze leftover food and also any cakes, biscuits and other items that you feel you won't get through over Christmas.

MISSION COMPOSTABLE

If you have a home compost bin (or you've received one as a Christmas gift!), ensure all your vegetable peelings are composted. Otherwise, pop them into your **brown bin** along with plate scrapings and out-of-date items.

TREATS FOR TWEETS

Feed the birds! Leftover cakes, puddings, mince pies and roast potatoes are filled with fats and nutrients making them perfect winter treats for our feathered friends.