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Seasons Greenings – Suggestions For A More Eco-friendly Holiday Season

By Ron Askotzky

For those not familiar with the term "green" it refers to an item that is natural, organic or environmentally friendly.

As you can imagine, we produce tons of waste during and after the holiday season. Let us show some compassion on the environment during this season of compassion! Here are a few ways we can reduce waste, help protect the environment and enjoy a "greener" Christmas:

Christmas tree ·Rather than buying a tree to be thrown away, purchase a large potted plant or small tree that can be used each year as your "evergreen" Christmas tree. ·Purchase an artificial tree that can be reused for many years.

·Purchase your evergreen from a tree farm as these trees are renewable.

Christmas décor ·Make a homemade wreath using branches trimmed from your garden. ·Rather than purchase outdoor décor, decorate the trees and bushes in your yard with homemade décor that will survive a few weeks of winter weather. ·Purchase handmade décor made from recycled or eco-friendly materials. ·Fair trade crafts are a great way to support the disadvantaged. While some of these crafts may not be from recycled materials they provide much needed income to needy individuals.

Christmas tree ornaments ·Make homemade ornaments from fruit, dried Indian corn, (painted) pinecones, dough, painted eggshells, crushed (colored) aluminum foil, paper chains, paper snowflakes, small stuffed animals, old CDs and more! ·Decorate a doll as an angel. ·Do an online search for recycled or homemade tree ornaments for numerous ideas. ·Purchase recycled or eco-friendly tree ornaments such as the vegetable ivory - tagua nut tree ornaments.

Gift wrap ·Collect extra photocopies or no longer needed papers from your business for your children to draw on the back side. ·Use colored pictures from your children's coloring books. ·Save the comic section each week to build up a collection of colorful wrapping paper. ·Use leftover pieces of fabric or wallpaper. ·Use recycled paper. ·Put the gift inside another gift such as a piece of Tupperware,

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decorative tin, nice wooden box, baking pan, wrapped in a towel, etc. ·Use last season's gift wrap, gift bags and gift boxes, ribbon and bows.

Greeting cards & gift tags ·Send an e-card. ·Make a greeting card or tag from scrap paper, fabric or wallpaper. ·For short messages use a large leaf or flat stone. ·Make cards or tags from pieces of a tissue or food box.

Packing material ·Use saved packing material such as peanuts and foam wrap. ·Crush up newspaper into loose balls. This is cheap, quick and lightweight! This is our preferred method for box filler. It is also fun for your relatives, friends and customers to see a newspaper from another city. ·Purchase biodegradable peanuts. ·Use dry air popcorn. By the way there is no need to salt it! (Popcorn popped in oil will obviously make a mess and go right through your box!) Include a note for the recipient to feed it to neighborhood squirrels and birds or whatever creatures lurk in the night! ·If you have too many peanuts then give them to a business that can use them. Call 1-800-828-2214 or visit

loosefillpackaging.com for information on businesses willing to take your used peanuts.

Once the relatives go home and the kids return to school... ·Are you overwhelmed with gift boxes and regular boxes? After (breaking down and) putting away as many as you can for future use, give away the rest to friends or a business or tear or cut them up for kindling for the fireplace or for your charcoal grill. ·Find out your township's pick up schedule for trees. They will turn your trees into mulch for use in parks and public gardens. If you need mulch for your own garden check into having your tree and any other cuttings from your yard turned into mulch for your own use. ·Use any wrapping paper that is no longer reusable for shelf liners, scratch paper or craft projects. ·Save boxes, gift bags, wrapping, filler, ribbons and bows for shipping, gift wrapping, craft projects and even storage containers.

Don't forget to share this information with others!

Have a merry green Christmas!

Ron Askotzky is co-founder of Wow! Imports, importing fair trade and earth friendly decor, gifts and collectibles including tagua nut tree ornaments from the rainforest of Ecuador and beaded tree ornaments made by disadvantaged African artisans. Visit

<http://www.wow-imports.com>

How You Can Give Better Holiday Gifts AND Be More Environmentally Friendly

By Mark Jeantheau

It's the holiday shopping season, and Grinning Planet would like to point out that the holiday phrase "Ho, ho, ho!" also relates to being green—it's the Jolly Green Giant's tagline. Well, OK, that doesn't exactly get us to the "eco-friendly" meaning of being green. But when shopping for holiday gifts, there are a number of ways we can be environmentally friendly.

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All manufactured items, including gifts, require material and energy to be produced, and production and transportation of the items results in some level of pollution. Here are a couple of ways to make sure those resources aren't a waste:

1) Useful Gifts --- One of the best ways to ensure the resources related to your gift don't get wasted is to make sure your gift doesn't end up gathering dust in a closet. While "surprises" can be nice, giving someone a gift out of the blue without any clue whether they'll truly like it or use it may get you one of those half-hearted "Um, oh, cool, thanks" responses. A different approach is to ask your giftees for wish lists, which works especially well within families, where social protocols and rituals can be more easily adjusted. This lessens the surprise factor but guarantees that you're giving a gift that the person will use.

2) Drawing Names --- As families and circles of friends grow, the number of gifts being exchanged can increase rapidly. Rather than each person within a group giving a gift to every other member of the group, names can be drawn so that each person gives gifts to only one or two people. This reduces the overall amount of resources related to presents and will reduce your holiday stress level. It may be too late this year to implement such a strategy, but if you'd like to try it next year, suggesting the change to your family/friends just after this holiday season will give people time to think about it and adjust to the idea.

Regardless of how you arrange your gift giving, choosing environmentally friendly products will be better for the planet than buying everyone an economy sized bottle of cloying cologne or some other non-green item. When looking at items claiming to be green, the US Federal Trade Commission advises that shoppers look for quantitative or specific claims, rather than general claims like "green," "eco-friendly," or "environmentally safe," which are open to interpretation. Better descriptions are things like "made from organic cotton," "made from 50% recycled materials," or "manufactured without animal testing."

Here are a few categories of gifts that would be more eco-friendly than some others:

1) Organic --- A gift basket of food is a typical holiday gift that's even better if at least part of the basket is filled with organic yummys. If you know someone who is a coffee lover, they will flip over the bag of organic gourmet coffee you give them. Organic flowers are available, as are flower arrangements that are not organic but whose growers minimize their use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Organic cotton clothing and bedding are also making rapid gains in popularity.

2) Fair trade --- Buying fair-trade items---items typically made by indigenous peoples---often helps the creators sustain themselves without resorting to environmentally unwise practices such as clearcutting forests. Whether it's art, coffee, chocolate, soaps, or carpets, buying items labeled "fair trade" lets you avoid purchasing gifts that were produced by companies that use exploitative labor practices.

3) Recycled --- These days, lots of things are made out of recycled materials---from works of art to clothing. A great holiday gift might be some of the very cool clothes they now make from recycled cotton. Some eco-friendly clothing even includes 50% fibers from recycled plastic bottles.

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4) Honorary Gifts — How much stuff does anyone really need? Once we reach a certain age, getting more "stuff" is as much a storage problem as anything else. Donating money to a person's favorite charity or cause in their name is a nice substitute.

To some extent, a nice holiday get-together with family and friends, full of good cheer and warm conversation, is as good a gift as many of us really need. But for the instances where a gift is appropriate, here's a good starting point for your eco-friendly shopping: Grinning Planet's Green Products and Services page (<http://www.grinningplanet.com/5005/green-products-services.htm>).

(Disclaimer: Grinning Planet does not receive any commission from the companies listed on the Green Products and Services page.)

Finally, we'd like to put in a word for our dear departed Uncle Freeman. When cash got short, he still never skimped on the Christmas gifts—he just sent them C.O.D.

For jokes, cartoons, and more great environmental information, visit <http://www.grinningplanet.com> .

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Mark is a writer, financial analyst, web developer, environmentalist, and, as necessary, chef and janitor. Grinning Planet is an expression of Mark's enthusiasm for all things humorous and green, as well as a psychotic desire to work himself half-to-death. Hobbies include health foods, music, getting frustrated over politics, and occasionally lecturing the TV set on how uncreative it is.

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Ten Awesome Ways To Incease Your Sales In Holidays

4 Strategies For Seasonal Selling – Planning For Retail Cycles

Lightning Season: How to Avoid Data Loss

Is Your Internet Business Ready for Holiday Shoppers?

Palmistry

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30 Powerful Business eBooks

The Ultimate Rose Garden– Neighbors envy, owners pride!



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