

Toronto Environmental Alliance

HOLIDAY TIPS

TEA brings you Tips On:

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The Holiday Card

Paper holiday cards and envelopes generate a lot of waste, from the products themselves to the wrapping you buy them in. For your friends and family who are comfortable online, consider sending an e-card. There are many e-cards offered online for free, simply Google 'e-card' and you will come up with many options.

Also check out the following:

www.greenpeace.org/international/fungames/e-cards

www.care2.com/ecards/

If you do send paper cards, try to find cards and envelopes printed on [100% post consumer](#) recycled and/or [FSC](#) certified paper. In

Toronto you can contact [Grassroots](#) to find some holiday card options that are more environmentally friendly. Grassroots sells [Grow-A-Note Greeting Cards](#) that are hand-made, recycled paper, embedded with a variety of wildflower seeds that will grow just about anywhere. The card design is printed in soy ink so they can be planted and the paper will recycle into the soil as the seeds grow. Other places to check out include [Carbon Free Cards](#). For every card purchased from Carbon Free Cards, a tree is planted, the paper and printing process is meant to have a minimal environmental impact, and there is a message on the back of the card raising awareness about global warning.

Packaging: In-store packaging

Leave packaging at the store. Why should you lug around the big Dora the Explorer box and then have the city pay to deal with the packaging when all you want is the Dora doll? Leaving it in the store means the store has to pay to deal with their own packaging and also sends a message about the excessive waste generated by their products.

Wrap your gifts with care

The first step in making your holidays more environmentally friendly is to simply **reduce** the amount of waste you create. Once you have reduced as much as possible, begin to **reuse** materials. Last, if you must purchase something new, make sure it is something that you can **recycle**.

Reduce

Avoid gift wrap by turning the wrapping into part of the gift. : Gifts are a pleasant surprise whether they are wrapped or not. You could wrap your gifts in reusable shopping bags, scarves, blankets, bath towels, storage tins, reusable containers, coffee mugs or refillable water bottles, etc.

Avoid stickers or labels for your gifts: Buy a nice refillable gel pen and write their names on the wrapping. Or make a nice gift tag out of scrap paper that can be reused or turned into an ornament.

Avoid ribbons and bows: Limit the amount of materials used in wrapping gifts. Ultimately this creates unnecessary waste.

Try to limit your tape intake! Use twine or yarn, something you would reuse.

*If you must use paper gift wrap...*try to find some made from 100% post-consumer paper. Look for the FSC certification logo – that means it's made from trees that are grown in responsibly managed forests.

If you are sending gifts in the mail... try to use recyclable or compostable packaging. Be innovative! Use popcorn to pack around the gifts instead of Styrofoam.

Leave the packaging at the store so the City doesn't have to pay for its collection and the store gets a message about excessive waste generated by their products.

Reduce gift wrap by turning the wrapping into a part of the gift, avoiding stickers, labels, ribbons, bows, and tape.

Use twine, yarn, newspaper, 100% post-consumer recycled or FSC certified gift wrap, reuse gift bags and ribbons from last year

Reuse

Gift bags can be reused over and over: The best gift bags are those without any holiday specific designs on them – that way you can use it for a birthday or other celebration in the future. Gift bags can be made from a number of materials – try to pick ones that are made from recycled paper or cloth.

Wrap gifts in newspaper: Do a fun craft project by making a stamp, getting out some poster paint and decorate sheets of newspaper. Then use it to wrap your gifts. It can be recycled afterward.

Wrap gifts in other types of re-used paper: Use maps, newspaper, comics, children's art work, posters, etc.

Reuse ties: reuse ribbon, string, and bows year to year. (If you receive gifts wrapped with ribbons, save them to wrap gifts next year.)

Recycle

Chose wrapping that is made from recyclable paper so you can put it in your recycling bin.

Examples of non-recyclable wrapping: plastic and/or foil wrapping, plastic ribbons and bows, waxed paper.

Don't forget to remove ribbons, bows and excess tape when you recycle your gift wrap.

The Living Tree

People often ask if it is better to get a 'real' Christmas tree or re-use a plastic tree over the years. The answer is, it is best to get a Living Christmas Tree. You can purchase an evergreen from a garden centre and plant it in a pot indoors to decorate and keep over the holidays (up to 10 days indoors). When the ground warms in the spring, you then plant it outside and continue to tend to it over the years.

[See a 'how to' video of this online](#) or [read detailed care instructions here](#).

If you are unable to care for a 'living' Christmas Tree, [a real Christmas tree harvested](#) from a tree farm in the GTA is the next best option.

More Tips on Caring for a Living Christmas Tree!

- Living trees can stay in the house for only a brief period, no more than 7 to 10 days.
- Living Christmas trees can be purchased at many nurseries and garden centers and at some retail lots and choose-and-cut farms.
- You can store the tree in your yard until ready to bring inside, if you keep it moist, with the root ball covered with mulch.
- Before moving the tree inside the house, help it adjust by moving it to an unheated but sheltered area such as a garage or porch for a couple of days.
- Locate the tree indoors in as cool a location as possible. Keep it away from heating vents, fireplaces and other heat sources. Use limited numbers of miniature tree lights.
- Provide as much natural light as possible
- After the holidays, readjust the tree to outdoor temperatures by placing it back on the sheltered porch or in the garage for several days.
- Select a planting site that has well-drained soil, full sun and that is appropriate for the mature tree's size
- Plant your tree in a hole that is the same depth but at least twice and preferably five times wider than the root ball
- If the work of bringing a live tree in and out of the house seems excessive, consider planting the tree directly outside and decorating it there. This can become an enjoyable occasion that is less stressful on both you and the tree.
- If you do not have space in your own yard for a living tree, you may be able to donate it to a local school, church or park. Be sure that there are such options in your area ahead of time.

Source: <http://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheets/hgic1751.htm>

See the above site for even more information on caring for a living tree

Decorating your home

Make your own: Go the old fashioned route and make strings of popcorn and cranberries. Not only is it fun, but it can be put in your green bin when you are done with it. Decorate with clippings from local evergreens, trade or reuse ornaments through [craigslist](#) or [freecycle](#).

Time your lights: If you do put up outdoor lights, make sure they are [LED](#) and consider putting them on a timer so that they are only on during peak viewing periods and not throughout the night. Solar powered lights are also now available at Canadian Tire and other major outlets.

After the Holidays: Wreaths, boughs and other plant ornaments can be used in your garden as mulch. Otherwise, they can be placed in your [green bin](#) or put out as yard waste.

Greening your gifts

Reducing, Reusing and Recycling applies to gift giving as well!

Reduce

Reduce the amount of store bought items you give out this year and reduce the amount of packaging waste:

- Give gift certificates, for stores, for favours, or for a night on the town. This means less packaging and it is definitely a sentimental option.
- Consider giving a donation to a non-profit or charity that you know your friend or family member supports. (You can make donations to the Toronto Environmental Alliance [here](#))

Reuse

- Make homemade gifts, such as food or crafts
- Re-Gift: Don't be afraid to give someone something that you received as a gift and have yet to use. Give people items that mean a lot to you that you would like to share with them, such as books and jewellery.
- Give people gifts that are durable and will prove useful for years to come

Recycle

- If you are going to buy something new, think about the packaging of that gift. Can it be recycled? If the gift is disposable, is it recyclable?
- Is there an alternative that might be recyclable?

A few other considerations:

- Does this help with a shift to more environmentally friendly behaviour? Example items that do include: stainless steel bottles and lunch containers, cloth shopping bags, cycling accessories etc.
- How was the product made and how far did it travel to get into your hands?

Looking for an interesting gift for a friend or perhaps a gift that helps the environment and creates no waste?

Make a donation to TEA in a friend or family member's name.

TEA has had many successes in the last 20 years, but it has been a particularly amazing last 12 months!

Thanks to TEA members, TEA was able to get Toronto City Council to adopt the country's first-ever Community Right to Know Bylaw. And members helped us convince Toronto City Council to develop an aggressive local food procurement policy; once again, the best in the country!

Meanwhile, we produced the country's first-ever ethnic food guides that provide information about where Torontonians can buy fresh, locally grown food used in Chinese and South Asian cuisine.

Why not make a special holiday donation to TEA? With your support, we can continue working on making sure Toronto remains a healthy place for you, your family and the natural environment we depend on entirely.

Ways to Donate:

Make an online donation.

Write a cheque to *Toronto Environmental Alliance* and send it to:
30 Duncan Street, Suite 201, Toronto M5V 2C3

Email us at tea@torontoenvironment.org or call us at 416-596-0660

The Dinners

Do your best not to over cook and plan your menu so that leftovers can be used for another meal. Try to avoid buying too much packaged food by buying in bulk and choosing locally-grown options. At this time of year, you can buy seasonal foods like apples, potatoes and squash.

When you do have to purchase packaged goods, do your best to buy something that is easily recycled, such as glass or cardboard containers.

Wash and reuse aluminium foil

Encourage your dinner guests to carpool or take public transit to your dinner.

If you are having a lot of company, why not lower your thermostat? With all of the cooking and guests it will definitely get warmer in your home.

Plan ahead how guests will get rid of waste. Prepare a bin for organic waste, a recycling bin, and a very small trash bin. If you can't resist disposable plates, try to buy [biodegradable](#) ones.

If you'll be sending your guests home with leftovers, put the food in reusable containers.

Links

[Toronto Environmental Alliance's 10 Tips to Greening your Holidays](#)

[City of Toronto](#)

[Environment Canada](#)

[Go Green Online Holiday Guide](#)

[Calgary Green Holiday Guide](#)



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