



Tackling Holiday Trash!

Suggestions from the TCT Subcommittee

Have you thought about the many ways that the holiday season is a significant source of trash? Americans throw away 25% more trash during the Thanksgiving to New Year's holiday period than any other time of the year. The 2.65 billion holiday cards sold each year in the U.S. could fill a football field that is 10 stories high! This year, as you make your holiday plans, think conservation and trash control. Give yourself credit for taking a moderate approach – find a few conservation-minded ideas that work for you and for your family.

We know you'll come up with your own ideas, but here some suggestions to get you started:

- **Holiday greetings.** Consider email greeting "cards", or split your list and send email greetings to those who do well with paperless messages. If you buy paper cards, make sure they're recyclable (no metallics, glitter, sequins). For photo cards, make sure they're on card stock rather than non-recyclable photo paper.
- **Gifts.** Consider a holiday focus on family activities rather than so much on gifts. Participate together in a Christmas Bird Count! Give a gift of your time, of services or a shared experience instead of a package. Make something special rather than buying a gift. Give an event ticket or subscription – tickets to a movie or play, a ball game or a concert. Create and give a gift certificate for an activity or service (a massage, a car wash – the possibilities are endless!). Buy gift cards or certificates that need minimal packaging. Donate in the recipient's name.
- **Shopping and deliveries.** When you shop, be sure to carry your reusable bags. For online orders, group purchases to minimize packaging and explore the vendor's website for recycling options for the packaging.
- **Wrappings.** Try using alternative wrappings for your gifts such as colorful Sunday comics pages, reusable decorative tins, fabric bags, baskets, or boxes (and add a tag saying, "This holiday bag / tin / box has a LOT more holidays to come – reuse it!"). When you purchase wrapping paper, consider papers made from recycled paper, or make sure the paper you buy can be recycled – no metallics, velvet flocking, glitter, etc. Wireless ribbons made from undyed natural plant fibers like linen, cotton or raffia are compostable. Use greenery as an alternative to ribbons. Or make the wrapping part of the gift – use a colorful scarf, fabric napkins, a kitchen towel, a pretty pillow case.

- **Holiday tree.** Consider acquiring a live, potted tree than can be used year after year, or use an artificial tree. If you buy a live, cut tree, make sure it's composted after the holiday.
- **Entertaining.** Eliminate single use plastics, and whenever possible, choose reusable cutlery, plates, cups, tablecloths, and napkins. If you're not able to use reusable products, then try using recycled products. Offer a water station instead of disposable water bottles. Plan your menu carefully to minimize waste and think ahead about how you'll share or preserve leftovers – at Thanksgiving, you might ask your guests to bring take-home containers.

This list is only a beginning! If we each make a few changes to minimize trash, together we can make a substantive impact on the trash that goes to our landfills.