

Living Clean & Green!

Seasons “Green”ings: It’s a Wrap!

This year, let’s wrap our holidays in more meaning and less stuff!

‘Tis the season for living rooms around the country to be covered in a sea of crumpled paper and tossed-aside bows. In fact, according to the EPA, wrapping paper from holiday gifts is largely to blame for a 25 percent spike in curbside trash volume between Thanksgiving and New Year’s Day. And if Grandpa is just tossing everything into the fireplace, that’s even more harmful. Many inks and foils contain chemicals that are toxic when burned.

What is the eco-minded gift-giver to do? If every American family wrapped just 3 presents in re-used materials, it would save enough paper to cover 45,000 football fields. Here are some ways to give a thoughtfully wrapped present and give back to the Earth too.

Holiday wrapping can be much more fun than just covering a gift with colored paper. Delve into the options below for exciting green alternatives to store-bought wrapping.

- Give a gift in a gift: A set of canisters, a towel, a sheet, a cup or mug, a hat or cigar box can all wrap or hold gifts without contributing to landfill problems. Visit a garage sale for more container ideas.
- Select pictures and stories from newspapers, magazines, and old calendar pictures to make creative wrapping that thoughtfully suits your gift and/or its recipient.
- Wrap a travel related present with an out-of-date road map.
- Wrap a present in old sheet music.
- Use flowers or reusable hair ribbons instead of plastic bows.
- Instead of wrapping gifts for the kids, hide the presents, plant clues to where they’re hidden and transform the search into a holiday treasure hunt.



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Encourage all members of your family to participate in alternative gift wrapping. One way to do this is to challenge them to a little friendly competition. Come up with the most inventive, resourceful, brilliant wrapping paper alternative using natural, reusable, recycled or repurposed raw materials. Then, before present-opening commences, take a vote on the best idea. Award the winner a special treat- an extra pecan pie to take home, a spa massage, a restaurant gift card ... use your imagination! The experience will add to the great memories you create together this holiday.

If you cannot resist the lure of dozens of brightly-wrapped and ribboned gifts piled under the tree, then opt for recycled or environmentally-friendly alternatives, such as gift wrap made from recycled paper. The EPA has found that making paper from recycled materials results in 74% less air pollution and 35% less water pollution than making paper from new materials. It’s a little more expensive to buy recycled wrapping paper initially, but a lot less expensive in terms of environmental impact, and worth every penny.

Another earth-friendly option is to choose tree-free paper, which is manufactured without the use of tree fiber. It is made from plant fibers obtained from quickly renewed annual crops such as kenaf, tobacco, cotton, hemp, flax, cereal straw, corn, sugar cane, banana, garlic, bamboo, tea, and coffee. Tree-free papers are also made from recycled denim and currency. An internet search, using the phrase “tree-free paper,” will yield several options. Select a vendor that is closest to you. The shorter the distance a shipment has to travel to your home, the less harmful emissions are put into the atmosphere.

After the holidays are over, be sure to recycle all recyclable materials. If you are looking for reasons to recycle, you should know that recycling one ton of paper saves the equivalent of 17 trees, 4 barrels of oil, enough energy to power an average home for six months, and 7,000 gallons of water. It even keeps 60 pounds of pollutants out of the air!

