



Media Release

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Have Yourself A Greener Kind of Christmas

The holiday season can be the most wasteful time of the year. Giving gifts, decorating your home and entertaining your friends and family can create additional waste, which can overburden our landfills.

Why not use less this year and celebrate Christmas with the good feeling that you contributed to the protection of our environment? Your friends and relatives will appreciate your effort and will be pleased about the thoughtful and original “green” gifts they receive from you.

Here are some ways you can easily reduce waste, save energy and money *and* help the environment:

“Green” Christmas trees

- Decorate the outdoor tree nearest to your window rather than purchasing an indoor tree.
- Consider buying a potted tree that can be transplanted into your garden after Christmas.
- Buy a locally grown, pesticide free tree and, after the holidays, compost it or bring your tree to a charity tree-chipping event.
- Choose to decorate your favourite houseplants instead of buying a Christmas tree; you will save time, money and the environment while still having a festive home.

Holiday Decorations

- Purchase handmade durable and reusable decorations from a local charity.
- Instead of spending money on decorations, create them yourself. String popcorn and dried cranberries to use as garland or collect feathers, pinecones or twigs to create your ornaments.
- Children will love creating decorations. Paper chains, paper snowflakes, images from old Christmas cards or dried flowers will work wonderfully. Just make sure that there is no danger of any materials catching fire on the tree.

- Edible decorations such as gingerbread cookies, candy canes, dried apple rings and cinnamon sticks would make a very tempting Christmas tree. Just be sure to hang them high enough so the family dog can't be tempted!

Be Energy Smart this Season

- Purchase LED lights. They last 7 times longer and use up to 80% less electricity than standard incandescent seasonal lights! They are available for both indoor and outdoor use and you have several colours to choose from.
- By using a timer for your Christmas lights you can reduce your energy consumption by 30-50%.
- When purchasing lights, make sure they have a safety listing from Underwriters Laboratories (UL symbol), and use lights only as intended
- Ideally, the outside lights should only be run for 4 to 6 hours in the evening and the inside lights maybe twice that on holidays. However, seeing Christmas lights on the next morning is, unfortunately, not uncommon.
- Use rechargeable batteries rather than disposable batteries. They can be used many times and are collected by numerous retailers for recycling.

Light Safety

- Hot bulbs can ignite dry branches. Avoid fire by keeping your natural tree well watered and keeping extension cords and light sets away from the water.
- Light the tree only when you are at home and awake to enjoy it. Keep a fire extinguisher handy.
- Before you decorate, check light sets for frayed wires, damaged sockets or cracked insulation. If you find defects, replace the entire set.
- Remember to unplug tree lights before watering the tree
- Carefully inspect your electrical decorations. Cracked or frayed sockets, loose or bare wires and loose connections may cause a serious shock or start a fire.
- Be careful not to nail or staple through light strings or electrical extension cords, this may damage the wire or insulation and could lead to a serious shock or a fire.

Alternative gift ideas:

- Use the skills you have to make a present. For example, give your own personal gift certificates for cooking, baby-sitting or garden and housework.
- Choose gifts that do not require wrapping such as theatre, concert or movie tickets or gift certificates to a favourite spa, store or restaurant.
- Homemade gifts are always appreciated. If you are good at cooking, try baking cookies or muffins or making homemade jam. All these things can be placed in reusable or recyclable containers. Your extra effort will be appreciated.
- Make personalized mixed CDs for friends and family choosing a unique mix of music for each person and using photos you have taken as cover designs.
- Be creative! Instead of buying plastic toys for your kids, make your own. Gloves and socks can easily be morphed into puppets and a big cardboard box can be cut and decorated as a puppet theatre. For the young gardener give a starter kit consisting of a pot, soil and some seeds. You and your kids will enjoy watching your plants grow.

- Create your own Christmas cards and gift tags out of last year's wrapping paper, and cards or try using other materials from around your home, such as beads, earrings, dried flowers or pictures from a magazine. Better yet, send electronic cards or call your friends and relatives.
- Give a truly "green" gift - a compost bin, bicycle, transit pass, reusable lunch bag, cloth napkins or a reusable picnic set.
- If you buy toys that require batteries, why not give them together with rechargeables and a charger?

Wrapping:

- Make the wrapping part of the gift: Use cloth gift bags, tea towels, bandanas, baskets, face cloths, pillow cases, towels, scarves, tins or bowls.
- Old shoeboxes, cardboard boxes or jars can be decorated with fabric, poster paint or magazine cut-outs and used to wrap gifts. Best of all, they can be reused again each year.
- Reuse wrapping paper, ribbons and bows from last year.
- Use the coloured comics section of the newspaper, colourful magazine sheets or wrap your present using pictures from old calendars.

After Christmas:

- Save and reuse boxes, wrapping paper, decorations, ribbons, and bows.
- Remember to reuse, recycle and compost as much as possible.
- What to do with your Christmas tree:
 - Donate your live Christmas tree to a bird/wildlife sanctuary. Remember to remove all decorations, tinsel and lights.
 - Cut the branches off your tree and put them into your composter or use them to cover your garden.
 - Contact your local municipality or recycling organization to find out when Christmas tree chipping events will be held in your area or call the RCBC Hotline at 604-RECYCLE or 1-800-667-4321

And once your kids have outgrown them, don't forget to donate reusable toys or clothes to charities, or list them on the Vancouver, Surrey or Okanagan Reuse web sites.

This list was compiled by the Recycling Council of B.C., a multi-sectoral non-profit organization promoting the principles of Zero Waste through information services, the exchange of ideas, and research. Businesses, governments, non-profit-organizations and concerned citizens from across B.C. make up our diverse membership.

Founded in 1974, RCBC is Canada's longest-serving recycling council and has earned the reputation of being one of the most widely respected multi-sectoral environmental organizations in the province today. RCBC has played a major role in the establishment of the many groundbreaking product stewardship programs in the province, which are emulated around the world. Further information can be accessed at www.rcbc.bc.ca or by calling the RCBC Recycling Hotline at 604RECYCLE or 1-800-667-4321.