



Recycled Holidays: More than just re-gifting the fruitcake

If you're looking for ways to help your family do a better job of recycling this holiday season, there are plenty of opportunities. Recycling is critically important because it helps control waste disposal problems and preserves our natural resources for future generations. You can easily help protect the world around you by doing a few simple things:

Tree Recycling

Last year, nearly 93 percent of Christmas trees in the United States were recycled. That's a fantastic number, but there's still some room for improvement. Recycled trees put natural resources back into the environment and reduce waste. Check with your local municipality for a tree recycling center near you, or visit Earth911.com to search its database of more than 4,000 centers. Remember that burning your tree is not recycling – it can lead to dangerous creosote build-up in your chimney. If you can't find a recycling center, consider putting your tree outside as a haven for birds or other animals or compost it for your garden.

Reuse, Re-think Your Wrapping Paper

An easy way to be recycle-conscious with wrapping paper is to use recycled paper for your holiday gifts. If you've received gifts, consider smoothing out the paper and re-using it. You could also cut it into pieces to use as tags for next year. Use parts of it for homemade cards. Or give it to your children for craft projects. Another great way to recycle with paper is to make your own out of other things. Look around your house for other sources of paper such as the pages from old children's books, magazine covers or tissue received in a mailing box. You can also easily make your own paper using recycled brown paper, paint, stamps and a little imagination.

Consider Party Containers

Despite what you may think, virtually all plastics can be recycled at least a few times before they break down. So, before you toss your used party containers into the trash, look at the bottom and find the recycle number inside the triangle. The number is the resin identification code and represents the type of resin contained in the plastic (there are seven). Check with your recycling provider to find out which types of plastics they will take. If your center does not take a certain number, think about washing out the party container and re-purposing it. Need some storage for loose things in your desk? A place for doll clothes? A tray for your plants? Be creative and you'll be surprised how handy that plastic tub can be.

Re-Gifting

Although it sounds terrible and no one wants to admit to it, passing along a gift that you really don't need or want is actually a good idea. You don't need to secretly re-gift it and hope that no one finds out. Donate to a charity or other organization in need instead. If you do happen to wind up on the wrong end of a fruitcake, remember that it can make great compost for next year's garden.

Keep it Minimal

One final way to go green this holiday is to simply remember that it's the spirit of the season that really means the most, not all the things.

Additional information on Christmas Tree Facts can be found here: <http://urbanext.illinois.edu/trees/facts.cfm>

