

# Use Less Stuff

## Holiday Edition

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[www.deq.state.ok.us](http://www.deq.state.ok.us)

## Tips for An Environmentally-Friendly Holiday Season

Are you a waste-wise warrior or merely a waste-wise wannabe? Americans throw away 25% more trash during the Thanksgiving to New Year's holiday period than any other time of year. The extra waste amounts to 25 million tons of garbage, or about 1 million extra tons per week. So, to help trim the trash while trimming the tree, The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) Use Less Stuff Campaign offers a challenging checklist of simple things you can do to reduce waste while you eat, drink, and make merry this holiday season.

### YULETIDE PARTY GUIDE

'Tis the season of parties and festivities, food and fun. From Thanksgiving through New Year's we like nothing more than to eat, drink and be merry, so we need successful

strategies to cut down on the waste we create from our amplified entertaining.

Turn down the heat before the guests arrive. You'll save energy while the extra body heat of your guests will warm up the room. For formal affairs, consider renting seldom worn party clothes or buying them from consignment shops.

You can also rent dishes and glassware, making your party more elegant and eliminating the need to buy special holiday china, or even worse—using disposables.

Walk to neighborhood parties, or carpool (with a designated driver!) with friends if it's too far to walk.

After you throw a party, don't

throw away the leftovers! Put them in plastic containers or bags and send them home with guests, or donate to food banks. Plan meals wisely and practice portion control to minimize waste in the first place.

You could also compost your food waste. Fruits and vegetables and their peels, pits and seeds are all perfect for composting – a great natural fertilizer.

None of us may get any lighter this holiday season, but with a few careful food choices and a little planning we may tread more lightly on the earth and not bust the bank in the process. Use The Green Guide's downloadable Smart Shopper's Holiday (*Continued on Page 2*)



## Getting Rid of Post-Holiday Clutter

Got the post-holiday blues? If there's too much stuff cluttering up your house, the Oklahoma Use Less Stuff Campaign would like to help you find a solution for getting rid of some of it. Your office, school, organization, or neighborhood might want to combine efforts in organizing some of the projects highlighted in this article.

### Christmas Cards

A great way to promote charitable causes is to send your old greeting cards to St. Jude's Ranch for Children. The children cut, trim and paste the fronts of the used cards on to new backings. They are sold as a fundraiser for the non-profit group's program for abused, neglected and troubled children and teens. To order cards or to send your donation of used cards, write or call St. Jude's Ranch for Children, 100 St. Jude Street, Boulder City, Nevada, 89005, (702) 294-7100. Order recycled cards on the web at: <[www.stjudesranch.org](http://www.stjudesranch.org)>.

### Corrugated Boxes

More than 70% of corrugated cardboard is recovered and recycled into new boxes and paper products. The fact is, the fibers from one corrugated box can have up to seven or eight lives. Breakdown and flatten your boxes for easier transporting before taking them to your local recycling center. If you do not have a center available, check with a local grocer, office supply, fast food restaurant or department store such as Staples, McDonald's or Target to see if they will bale your cardboard in their in-house recycling program.

Boxing Days is a post-holiday program for any community in North America that wants to run its own corrugated cardboard recovery event during the post-holiday season. The idea is intended to heighten community spirit as citizens participate in simple activities aimed at recovering the overflow of corrugated packaging generated (*Continued on Page 3*)



## Tips for An Environmentally-Friendly Holiday Season *(Continued from Page 1)*

Companion: [www.greenguide.com](http://www.greenguide.com) - complete with price comparisons (organic vs. conventional) on every item -- to plan your holiday menu and take full advantage of the season's sweetest earthly treats.

***Did you know . . . at least 28 billion pounds of edible food are wasted each year – or over 100 pounds per person. Putting one less cookie on Santa's plate will reduce his snacking by about 2 million pounds.***

### HOME SWEET HOME

There's no place like home, especially during the holidays, so why spend so much time, energy, and money traveling when everything you need is right at home? Pretend you're a tourist visiting your own town. Call the AAA, visit your Chamber of Commerce and visit the local government website. You'll probably be amazed at the attractions you've taken for granted and never visited. Also, by staying home you can:

Reduce the amount of gas used during a heavy travel time. Help keep your local economy strong, making for a vital and thriving downtown.

***Did you know . . . if each family reduced holiday gasoline consumption by one gallon (about twenty miles), we'd reduce greenhouse gas emissions by one million tons?***

### LET YOUR FINGERS DO THE WALKING

E-commerce is the wave of the future. But remember, e-commerce is not necessarily waste-free. Choose items that won't be excessively packed for shipping. For you Web-heads, try giving the websites listed on Page 4 a shot for your on-line shopping needs.

If you're shopping by mail order catalogue, remember to cancel the ones you don't need. (See Page 3 for details).

***Did you know . . . if each household canceled 10 mail-order catalogues it would reduce trash by 3.5 pounds per year? (If every-***

***body did this, the stack of canceled catalogues would be 2,000 miles high!)***

### BYOB

During the nation's busiest shopping season, bring your own reusable shopping bags. Paper, plastic and cloth all work, but cloth bags are stronger and last longer.

Consolidate your purchases into one bag rather than getting a new bag at each store on your shopping rounds.

### FUSS-FREE GIFT GIVING

Plan your shopping in advance. Consolidating your shopping trips saves fuel (and aggravation), and you'll avoid those last minute frenzies when you won't have time to make careful gift choices. Rather than piling up "stuff" under the tree, think about what friends and family really want or need. Try giving gift certificates if you don't know what someone wants, or simply make a donation in his or her name to a favorite charity.

Give gifts that encourage others to use less stuff, like a book about making crafts from reusable items, cookbook for leftovers, or reusable tote bags.

Adopt a needy family and have everyone in your family buy needed items for each person in the adopted family rather than for each other. Or, at least donate unwanted gifts, along with last year's gifts that the kids have outgrown, to charity.

You could set a good example by giving homemade food or something you've made yourself from reused items. Gifts of talents and time are more meaningful than giving stuff people don't need or even want. Why not clean out your mother's garage, give a week-end of babysitting to your sister and organize your best friend's kitchen cabinets? Helping Grandma with gardening or washing windows would certainly be appreci-

ated. Catering a party for your son's family will make your daughter-in-law a fan for life.

For kids, start a savings account or give stocks or bonds. It's fun to watch money grow and it teaches children the value of financial conservation.

Shop for gifts at antique stores, estate sales or flea markets, since one person's trash is another's treasure.

### KID STUFF

When buying electronic toys and other portable items that are used regularly, remember to buy rechargeable batteries to go with them—and a solar battery charger would be a convenient companion as well as a money-saving item.

Instead of wrapping gifts for the kids, hide the presents, plant clues to where they're hidden and make the kids' search into a treasure hunt.

Get the kids to make their own tree ornaments out of things you already have around the house, or from materials they might find in the backyard: twigs, bark, flowers and herbs, pine cones, etc.

Old clothes and jewelry make a great dress-up box for kids. Tools and gadgets make a great idea box for a young inventor.

Don't forget about all of the potential animal adoptions. Start right here in Oklahoma with a Tallgrass Prairie bison from the Nature Conservancy: [nature.org/adoptabison/](http://nature.org/adoptabison/). Other animals waiting for your adoption are wolves, whales, dolphins, big cats, snowy owls, bears and sea otters. See Defenders of Wildlife website: [defenders.org/adopt/](http://defenders.org/adopt/).

### CARD SENSE

Our mailboxes burst this season with membership offerings and fundraising appeals, presents, gift catalogues and cards. What to do . . . Send e-greetings to family, friends and business associates who are on-line. [bluemountain.com](http://bluemountain.com) is a good place to start.

Save yourself time, money, and hard feelings between friends – and reduce mail volume – by updating and paring down your holiday mailing list.

*(Continued on Page 4)*

***Did you know . . . if each household canceled 10 mail-order catalogues it would reduce trash by 3.5 pounds per year? (If everybody did this, the stack of canceled catalogues would be 2,000 miles high!)***



## Getting Rid of Post-Holiday Clutter *(Continued from Page 1)*

during the holiday season. A kit containing an instruction manual, video and other materials is available for potential sponsors and interested communities. Contact the Fiber Box Association at (847) 364-9600 to request a kit.

### Packing Peanuts

Call the Plastic Loosefill Peanut Hotline, (800) 828-2214, for locations of mailing centers such as Mail Boxes, Etc. that reuse the packing peanuts. If there is no location in your community, check with local gift or craft shops, artists' galleries or elementary school art programs for reuse opportunities.

### Catalogues

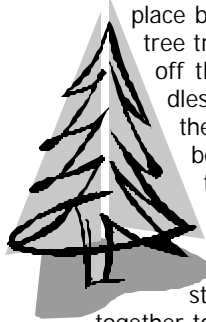
Okay, your shopping days are over for a while, but if you ordered from any catalogues you are now on the "hit list". The best way to get off the mailing list of unwanted catalogues is to call the 800 number listed on them and request to have your name removed. Another option is to order a free mail reduction kit from the Direct Marketing Association's Mail Preference Service, P.O. Box 9008, Farmingdale, NY 11735-9008 or (212) 768-7277.

### Christmas Trees

If you purchased a live tree, all you have to do is plant it or give it to someone who will. Consider donating your live tree to a school, park or nursing home. Dead trees are most often shredded into mulch to be used for re-vegetation projects to prevent erosion or in community parks. Many communities have tree collection programs where you take your tree for recycling and then in the spring return to get free mulch. Fishermen in some areas such as Tulsa volunteer to take the trees to private area lakes and streams for fish habitat.

You can also shake the trees hard over an opened sheet until the needles drop. The needles can then be used to make fresheners for drawers, closets, car trunks, etc.

Phil Mulkins' article in the Tulsa World a couple of years ago suggested a few more unusual uses of dead trees. A couple of sprigs could be used to start a kindling fire, but be careful as a dry tree contains enough pine tar to go up like gasoline. To use as a pet repellent,



place boughs vertically around tree trunks. You can also cut off the branches, with needles still attached, and use them as mulch in flower beds and around bushes to deter roaming pets. For a bird shelter, pick a corner of the backyard where you can stand two or more trees together to form a cat-proof shelter for resident birds.

If you use an artificial tree, and have tired of yours, try using pieces of it in other decorations and craft projects such as wreaths. If it is still in good condition, check with the Christ-

mas Connection or other charitable organizations helping needy families throughout the holidays.

### Food Scraps

Of course, the best idea is to use up your leftover food. It can also be donated to a homeless shelter in your local area. You can also get some redworms and let them turn most of your scraps into fabulous vermicompost for your plants. For more information about how to set up a worm composting bin, contact the DEQ at (405) 702-5166 or your local County Cooperative Extension Service. DEQ also has instructions on building your own backyard compost bins.



## A Green Christmas Poem

*'Twas the night before Christmas and all through my home,  
Efficiency reigned, thanks to our geodesic dome.  
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,  
Warmed by the ceiling fan over their heads.  
Cozy in PJs, a night shirt or gown,  
We saved money by turning the thermostat down.*

*When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,  
I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.  
Away to the thermopaned windows I flew,  
And pushed open lined curtains to have me a view.*

*There in the yard did suddenly appear,  
A low emissions vehicle powered by tiny reindeer.  
The driver was hoping by all to be seen,  
Since he'd gotten new clothes, all warm and bright green.*

*He jumped on the roof and down the chimney he slipped,  
Delivering the gifts he'd been making or shipped.  
And if by sheer magic and out of the vapor,  
Came presents now wrapped in bits of newspaper.*

*For Sally a doll and for Jimmy new socks,  
Each wrapped with old ribbon and in a used box.  
A scarf for dear Mary and a hat for old Rodge,  
Now they could walk and not take the Dodge.*

*With a job well done he got back in his sleigh,  
Ready to travel far, far away.  
But just before leaving he stopped and did tell,  
"Have a Use Less Stuff Christmas and all will be well."*





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Oklahoma Sustainability  
Network:  
<[www.oksustainability.org](http://www.oksustainability.org)>

## ECO-SHOPPING WEBSITES

- ? [Abundantearth.com](http://Abundantearth.com)
- ? [Care2.com/shopping](http://Care2.com/shopping)
- ? [Ecocities.net](http://Ecocities.net)
- ? [Ecomall.com](http://Ecomall.com)
- ? [Eco-store.com](http://Eco-store.com)
- ? [Environmentalhomecenter.com](http://Environmentalhomecenter.com)
- ? [Gaiam.com/greenmarket/](http://Gaiam.com/greenmarket/)
- ? [Greenhome.com](http://Greenhome.com)
- ? [Greenpages.org](http://Greenpages.org)
- ? [Greensense.com/store](http://Greensense.com/store)
- ? [Greenstore.com](http://Greenstore.com)
- ? [Happyhippie.com](http://Happyhippie.com)
- ? [Newdream.org/](http://Newdream.org/)
- ? [Realgoods.com](http://Realgoods.com)
- ? [Seventhgeneration.com](http://Seventhgeneration.com)
- ? [Sociallyresponsible.com](http://Sociallyresponsible.com)
- ? [Tomorrowsworld.com](http://Tomorrowsworld.com)

## Be A Conscious Consumer

Consumption on the North American scale of our own body weight each day is possible only because of chains of production that reach all over the planet. Most of the production, and most of its impacts, are hidden from view in rural hinterlands, fenced-off industrial sites, and far-off nations.

What happens around the world to support a day in the life of a North American is surprising, dramatic, even disturbing. Multiplied by the billion members of the world's consumer societies, it adds up to stresses greater than the world can withstand.

It does not have to be this way. A quiet revolution in our way of life, different technologies, more balanced lifestyles, greener infrastructure, and better laws could give us a future where ordinary life in prosperous societies has only innocuous impacts. Ushering in these changes can seem impossible. It is not. Just like a jigsaw puzzle, all the needed pieces are already there. But it takes some effort to get them into place.

A good place to start would be utilizing the websites listed above for your 2003 holiday shopping needs or better yet, select one of the alternative gifts listed in our "Tips" article. The Center for A New American Dream's Conscious Consumer website is listed above as well.

## Holiday Tips (Continued from Page 2)

Be creative. Instead of buying placemats or table decorations, make your own. Cut old cards into shapes and press between two pieces of clear contact paper. Photographs of family and friends would work well, too.

***Did you know . . . the 2.65 billion Christmas cards sold each year in the U.S. could fill a football field 10 stories high? If we each sent one card less, we'd save 50,000 cubic yards of paper.***

### SHOP RIGHT... AND SHIP LIGHT

When buying gifts you will send by mail, pick items that are easy to ship and won't require excess packaging. Reuse packing cartons and shipping materials such as peanuts, wood shavings, shredded newspaper and bubble wrap. (See Page 3 for information in reusing peanuts.) Stores often offer discounts for returning packing materials like cartons and boxes.

### WRAP IT UP

Or better yet, think of gifts that don't have to be wrapped at all: tickets to concerts, museums, or sporting events, gift certificates, or house plants.

When giving oversized gifts like bicycles or CD racks, instead of wrapping them in paper, just tie a bow around them.

Wrap gifts in old maps, newspapers, Sunday comics or reusable holiday gift bags. Kids' art work is a perfect wrapping for presents to proud grandparents. Or, use brown paper grocery bags to wrap small-to-medium size boxes that have to be mailed.

Make the wrap a part of the gift. Putting cookies in a flower pot or hiding jewelry in a new pair of gloves will keep your gift under wraps and the "wrapping" out of the trash.

***Did you know . . . if every family reused just two feet of holiday ribbon, the 38,000 miles of ribbon saved could tie a bow around the entire planet?***