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Green Christmas

The holiday season is a wonderful time of year to celebrate tradition with family and friends and to savor the contentment that comes from giving. It can also be a time when we fritter away precious hours, angling through stores to find that perfect gift for someone - who has everything - only to end up empty-handed and feeling wretched.

The CPA Canada's 2020 Holiday Spending Study (<https://www.cpacanada.ca/en/news/holiday/2020-11-25-holiday-spending-survey>) indicates that despite all the uncertainty in the economy created by COVID, the average Canadian spent \$588.00 on holidays gifts last year, an increase from \$583.00 the previous year.

Even while we are spending more and more, we lose-lose. It seems Santa needs a performance review. As reported in a survey by Finder (<https://www.finder.com/unwanted-gifts>) Americans throw away \$15 billion worth of unwanted gifts during Christmas. One in two people dislike at least one received gift. The average cost of an unwanted present is \$49.95 USD and while its next destination should be the returns shelf, it is more often than not, the landfill.

Canadians are not kinder to the planet than their neighbors to the south. According to Zero Waste Canada, (<https://zerowastecanada.ca>) household waste tends to increase as much as 25% in the holiday season.

A greener approach to the holidays can reduce environmental impact as well as the anxiety of receiving one's January credit card statement.

Its easy being Green:

Prepare your shopping list and holiday budget to align with a specific store while avoiding impulse shopping or excess purchases.

Buy local items when possible: Jeff Bezos, after all, has more money than he can ever spend.



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A gift from the heart: Bound books of family photos throughout the previous year(s) are precious. Home movies from 8mm or 16mm film digitized to MPEG or JPEG formats will re-animate family memories from decades ago and bring pure joy to the filmmaker.

Gift an experience: Theatre tickets, pre-paid dinner for two or movie passes.

The giving pledge: make a charitable donation to someone on your list for a cause that is dear to their heart – two parties will simultaneously benefit from this gift.

Less is more

Considering that all Christmas wrapping-paper ends up in landfills, wrap presents using used gift wrap, bags and boxes from previous years.

Reuse Christmas cards to make gift tags. This is both personalised and a cost-saver.

Consider digital, seasonal missives or a group email that enlightens dear ones on the highs or lows of the calendar year that is coming to a close.

Tinsel town

Choose a locally harvested Christmas tree and give your tree new life come January. Many municipalities offer a mulching or composting program for real trees.

Use natural decorations like berry stems, garlands and wreaths made of boughs that can all be composted.

Often my own Christmas centerpiece is created with branches from my gardens, including holly bushes that are very festive.

Plan for the 2022 holiday season

After the presents have been unveiled, sort recyclable items and store all reusable packaging including gift wrap, boxes and bags for use next year.

Above all, have a safe and joyful holiday.