

The Gift of Sustainability: Why Waste Reduction Matters During the Holidays

As the holiday season approaches, many of us look forward to joyful gatherings, thoughtful gifts, and festive meals shared with loved ones. But amid the celebrations, it's easy to overlook the environmental impact that often comes with this time of year. From excess packaging to food waste and disposable decorations, the holidays can generate up to 25% more household waste than any other time of the year.

Caring for our environment is a gift that benefits everyone, especially those with Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS). Reducing waste not only protects natural resources but also contributes to cleaner indoor and outdoor air, fewer toxic exposures, and a healthier community overall.

1. Rethinking gifts

Instead of store-bought items wrapped in layers of plastic and glitter paper, consider giving gifts that create memories rather than waste. Experiences such as local art workshops, homemade crafts, or donations to a meaningful cause can leave a lasting impression without contributing to landfills. If you do purchase physical gifts, look for locally made, low-toxicity, or secondhand options, and use recycled or reusable wrapping materials like cloth bags, paper maps, or old magazines for a creative touch.

2. Conscious Cooking and Composting

Food plays a central role in holiday celebrations, yet much of it goes uneaten. Plan your portions carefully and store leftovers properly to reduce spoilage. Composting food scraps is another simple but powerful way to divert organic waste from landfills, where it would otherwise release methane, a potent greenhouse gas. For those with Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS), keeping composting outdoors and using non-toxic containers helps maintain a healthy indoor environment.

3. Decorating with the Planet in Mind

Festive doesn't have to mean wasteful. Reuse decorations from previous years or opt for natural elements such as pinecones, branches, or dried citrus garlands. Avoid

aerosol sprays, scented candles, and plastic décor that may release volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which can trigger symptoms in people with MCS. Simple, natural, and sustainable décor not only looks beautiful, but it also supports clean air and a toxin-free home.

4. The Ripple Effect of Small Choices

Every small act of sustainability adds up. By choosing to reduce waste, we conserve energy, minimize pollution, and protect the health of our communities. Sustainable holiday practices remind us that true celebration is not about consumption, it's about connection, gratitude, and care for one another and the Earth.

This season, let's give the most meaningful gift of all: a healthier, more sustainable future for generations to come.