

Reducing Your Holiday Waste Conservation Corner – December 2016

For most of us, the holiday season represents a magical time of togetherness, giving, and celebration. Holiday gatherings and celebrations are a wonderful reason to bring loved ones together for good times and memorable bonding. But these events also come at a cost beyond the average \$800 each American spends on gifts alone.

From Thanksgiving to New Year's Day, household waste increases by more than 25%. Did you notice that your trash cart already seems fuller than it usually does? According the EPA, the added food waste, shopping bags, packaging, wrapping paper, bows, and ribbons all add up to an additional 1 million tons a week in our landfills. That's an awful lot of trash for the sake of good tidings.

So what can we do to reduce the amount of holiday waste produced while we're doing all that eating, drinking and being merry? We shouldn't have to skip celebrating altogether to enjoy this time of year, but we should consider the impacts of our traditions, and choose less wasteful options when we become aware of them. Make your holiday season even greener by following some of these 5 environmentally friendly holiday season tips!

Buy Rechargeable Batteries. Did you know that about 40% of all battery sales occur during the holiday season? Consider trimming your holiday wasteline by choosing rechargeable batteries instead. Rechargeable batteries produce less waste because they can be recharged with a simple battery charger and reused hundreds of times. An added benefit to choosing rechargeable batteries is that they are surprisingly easy to recycle. And, because these batteries can be recharged and reused numerous times, they contribute less waste to landfills.

Party Responsibly. Go Green! 'Tis the season for entertaining! Instead of relying on disposable plates, napkins, cups, and utensils during for your holiday parties, this year, throw a fun party and keep it green at the same time. Impress your friends and loved ones with a creative, low-cost and environmentally conscious holiday bash and skip the disposables. Try using reusable plates, cups, utensils, and cloth napkins instead, and let your guests know why - maybe they'll be hosting their next get-together the same way!

Green Shop 'Til You Drop. Maximize your cheer and minimize your waste during all your holiday shopping! Pass on plastic bags which are not easily decomposed and contribute towards the degradation of the environment. A plastic bag can take from 15 to 1,000 years to break down, depending on environment. Moreover, the cost to recycle plastic bags outweighs their value. Opt to take your reusable cloth bags along with you on shopping trips instead of relying on a store to contain your purchases in bags they provide.

That's A Wrap. Unfortunately, most wrapping paper is high in clay content and low in paper content which makes it difficult to recycle. There are all kinds of ways to wrap holiday gifts without using up and throwing out new wrapping paper each year. Consider using earth-friendly gift wrapping alternatives, such as newspapers (comic sections work great!), scarves, handkerchiefs and bandanas, or old posters and maps.

Don't Trash Your Tree. After the holidays, instead of throwing your Christmas tree in the trash, consider having your tree picked up at the curb. Real Christmas trees are biodegradable, which means they can be easily reused or recycled for mulch and other purposes. On January 6th, if you place your Christmas tree at the curb, Ashland and Talent Boy Scouts will pick it up the next day

and chip it for use on Parks and Recreation trails. Recology will start collecting trees at the curb the week of January 9th. There is no charge for Christmas tree collection until January 23rd when the fee will be \$5 per tree. Please visit RecologyAshland.com for more information on tree pickup.

During the holiday season, and all year, each of us can make a huge difference, and give mother earth the gift that keeps on giving, by limiting the amount of waste we produce each holiday season. So please consider taking on some new green traditions this year. Happy holidays!

Written by Jamie Rosenthal, Conservation Commissioner and Waste Zero Specialist with Recology Ashland.