

## **Top Tips for a Sustainable Christmas.**

Here are some tips to remind us that the environment still matters at Xmas and that there are measures we can all take to boost our immunity to the consumer frenzy that occurs at this time of year:

- 1. 20% more waste is created at Xmas than at any other time during the year. Make a special effort to sort card, paper, bottles, plastic and foil for recycling and ensure that any houseguests know where you store these items.**
- 2. If you don't already have one, put a composter or wormery on your Xmas present list. Many local councils offer these at reduced prices as household composting reduces their waste bill.**
- 3. When buying presents, give priority to those with a minimal amount of packaging, or packed in recyclable materials e.g. cardboard.**
- 4. Reuse carrier bags when shopping and recycle them when they are no longer fit for use. Many supermarkets now have plastic bag recycling facilities.**
- 5. Make your own decorations. Alternatively, buy a small collection of good quality items that will last many years, sometimes even many generations!**
- 6. Make your own Christmas cards. Alternatively, send ecards. Gabrielle Izen makes beautiful ecards which are distributed via her membership only website. All the e-Cards are drawn by hand taking several hours to create and many of them have an English Victorian style. Yearly membership costs £4.50 and you can send as many personalised e-Cards as you want; great for communicating with friends, family or clients, [www.gabrielleizen.com](http://www.gabrielleizen.com).**
- 7. Buy a locally grown Xmas tree and then recycle it afterwards. Try putting "xmas trees recycling" and then the name of your county into a google search to find local facilities for doing this. Better still, buy a tree with roots, pot it and you can reuse it next year.**
- 8. Use ribbon or string instead of sticky tape to wrap presents. Sticky tape is not biodegradable and also prevents wrapping paper being reused. Each year more than 8,000 tonnes of wrapping paper (50,000 trees worth) is used on Christmas presents in the UK.**
- 9. Xmas food. Buy organic and fair-trade wherever possible. If you are not already vegetarian then consider having some vegetarian days over the Xmas holiday period. There's a free Christmas Celebration Feast recipe book here: <http://www.viva.org.uk/christmas/index.html#>. Rose Elliot's cookery book "Vegetarian Christmas" is also excellent.**

**10. Toys.** Wherever possible use rechargeable batteries. If you have to use non-rechargeable, then buy the alkaline manganese variety rather than those that contain toxic heavy metals (cadmium and mercury). Get a battery charger – another item to add to the Xmas present list if you don't already have one! Rather than throwing old plastic toys away, reuse and recycle them by selling toys no longer wanted or donating them to a charity shop or local hospital.

**11. Energy.** Turn your central heating thermostat down by 1 degree. You will save approximately 10% on your heating bill and reduce greenhouse emissions. If you feel chilly, put on an extra layer of clothing. If you haven't already made the switch, decide to make one of your New Year's resolutions changing to green electricity. There's an excellent buyer's guide to green electricity on the ethical consumer website [www.ethicalconsumer.org](http://www.ethicalconsumer.org).

**12. Give your time and energy or a donation.** For a register of all UK charities and their contact details, go to [www.charity-commission.gov.uk](http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk). Or Timebank can put you in touch with a local volunteering project. See [www.timebank.org.uk](http://www.timebank.org.uk). A great source of ideas for donations as gifts can be found at [www.goodgifts.org](http://www.goodgifts.org).

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Sally Lever is a Sustainable Living Coach who specializes in supporting those who are downshifting or otherwise moving towards a more sustainable way of life. She offers one-to-one coaching, teleclasses in "How to step off the Treadmill" and a free email newsletter.