

Make your Christmas Count! Go Green!

DID you know that every year we produce 30 % more waste during the holiday season; **binning around 1.5 billion cards and 277,000 miles of wrapping paper, 100 million black bags, two million turkeys, 74 million mince pies and five million Christmas puddings** and where does it all go, to the landfill or to the tip or polluting the ocean. All it does at the landfill is putting toxins into our soil and releasing harmful greenhouse gasses.

Let's not lose all hope, three quarters of us are now more concerned about our impact on the environment than we were in 2014. However, by making little changes we can have a more environmentally-friendly festive season and save money too.

Here are some great tips to make your Christmas green with all of us doing our bit to reduce the negative impact on the environment.

Trees

CUTTING down a tree or using a plastic tree. Not straight forward, it depends how you get rid of a real tree after use or how you keep reusing a plastic tree.

Recycling a real tree into mulch means a two-metre tree has a low carbon footprint of just 3.5kg of CO₂, compared to it decomposing in a waste dump, which produces more than four times as much carbon dioxide.

You decide which option is the best for you buying a plastic tree that can't be recycled but can be reused or buying a real tree and recycling it into a mulch.

Crackers and Secret Santa

IF you must have crackers, avoid those with plastic toys. Even better make your own with your family and friends and create some happy memories at the same time. Instead of a present inside write a special message for everyone. You can almost certainly write funnier jokes, too!

And if doing a Secret Santa, don't buy plastic gifts that are looked at once at the Christmas party then chucked away. Make everyone buy the gifts come from charity shops so they are sustainable – and you have to put a bit of effort into picking them.

Cards and Decorations

WOULD anyone notice if you didn't send them a card? Probably not. If e-cards is not an option, why not phone your friends and family instead and make their day. They will always remember!

But if you don't want to stop sending cards, go for ones that are made from recycled material, and *avoid glitter* so they can be recycled afterwards. Even better make your own and cut down on packaging.

For decorations, go natural, Blue Peter-style. Make your own wreath with an old coat hanger, some ivy, holly and pine cones. Paper pom-poms and honeycombs look stunning hung from the ceiling and are also cheap, reusable and recyclable. *Avoid tinsel and plastic that can't be recycled.*

If your festive lights are more than ten years old it will be more efficient to replace them with newer LED ones. They can save up to 90 per cent on power costs and last longer than traditional bulbs. Alternatively buy solar lights and turn the lights off or set them on timer.

Dinner and drinks

BUY YOUR turkey and veg that is local or at least British, avoid anything that's been shipped for miles. Buy vegetables without packaging. Reuse any leftovers or freeze. Afterwards, compost unwanted food rather than binning it.

With drinks, recycle your empty cans and bottles

SWEETS that are wrapped singly require loads of foil and plastic that is not usually recycled so they're not great for the environment. Why not buy Maltesers that come in a cardboard box.

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL