



Transition
Haslemere

Have a happy and sustainable Christmas

Christmas is a time of joyous celebration and goodwill; a time for families, for giving and receiving and for thanksgiving. It can also mean overindulgence and a time when sustainability gets put on the back burner.

In the UK we will produce and throw away enough gift wrap to cover Guernsey and an estimated one billion Christmas cards will end up in the bin. We will waste food, use 750 million extra glass bottles and containers, discard 500 million extra drinks cans and produce over 3 million tons of extra waste, most of it at the expense of increasing the amount of carbon in the atmosphere and most will end up in landfill.

It does not have to be that way; here are ten sustainable tips from Transition Haslemere that will make your Christmas more sustainable and environmentally friendly.

The Christmas tree

Use a living tree in a pot and plant it out afterwards, or make sure you recycle it.

It is much more environmentally sustainable to use a real tree than a plastic one, but there are some good alternative and ecologically sound options for a non-living tree (e.g. the Woodland Trust's 'eco trees' made out of recycled card). If you have a live tree make sure you buy one grown in accordance with sustainability guidelines (check out www.christmastree.org.uk). Best of all is to get one in a pot and plant it out afterwards, but if you are going to dispose of it make sure it gets recycled – check with local authorities.

Christmas cards

Make sure the cards you send use recycled paper, and recycle them after Christmas.

Christmas cards aren't always the best way to be green at Christmas – approximately 1 billion cards are sent every year – think about sending paper ones only to certain people and use email cards for others. Always make sure that the cards you buy are made using recycled paper and recycle the ones you receive after Christmas – either by saving them for making home-made ones next year, or through the special recycling bins at WH Smiths and Tesco stores to raise money and create new woodland areas for the Woodland Trust. This years' Christmas cards are also great for being creative and making next years' present tags!

Think about 'green gifts'

Buy presents that don't have a negative impact on the environment – think about giving experiences, donations to conservation causes, or make your own gifts.

Look for low carbon options such as giving people a special experience – a trip to the theatre, a new skill or course or just a special day out you have planned for them. Consider donations to good causes or buying something on www.goodgifts.org.uk. Why not make up a hamper of local food and produce, or even make one of your own homemade productions?

Look for locally made gifts

Buy presents from local craft stalls and buy from your local shops.

Each Christmas, 4,000 tonnes of products arrive from abroad and the impact of transportation contributes significantly to greenhouse emissions and global warming. Presents bought at local craft fairs and artisan shops means you will be supporting small suppliers and the local community, while minimising your carbon footprint.

Wrapping paper

Avoid the paper waste of wrapping paper and use old posters, magazines, or reusable scarves to wrap presents.

Wrapping paper generates lots of paper waste, and paper such as shiny wrapping can't always be recycled. Instead make your gifts more unique by using material and scarves to wrap them, or make gift bags from old newspapers. You could even get your children to decorate the bags to add additional originality to the presents. If every family wrapped just three gifts this way, it would save enough paper to cover 45,000 football fields.

Defrost your freezer

Defrost your freezer before Christmas so it will work more efficiently and create more space to store leftover food so it doesn't go to waste.

Save the unnecessary energy used to keep freezers running when they're clogged up with ice by defrosting well in advance of stocking up for Christmas. This will also ensure that you have plenty of space so you can avoid throwing away food.

Buy local and organic food

Use as much food as possible which comes from local growers and producers, and source items such as turkeys from organic providers.

On average we will consume 7,000 calories on Christmas day itself, and a vast amount of our food will end up uneaten and in landfill sites. By the time the ingredients that make up the average British Christmas dinner arrive on our plates, they have travelled an average distance of 49,000 miles. Focus on only getting the food that is really needed, and cut down on the carbon implications by buying as much of it locally as possible.

Green cooking of your greens!

Put the lid on your spuds and sprouts when they're cooking.

Covering pans during cooking cuts the carbon footprint by almost half because the water reaches boiling point more quickly.

Christmas meal leftovers

If you really can't eat any more then use your left overs creatively.

Visit www.lovefoodhatewaste.com for brilliant recipes and cooking tips for left overs such as turkey and ham pie. Turn your peelings & scraps into compost for a blooming marvellous garden next summer! You could reduce the size of your bin by over 20%.

Pass on unwanted gifts

Pass on an unused gift to someone who will appreciate it.

There is much discussion about etiquette behind the trend to 're-gift', that is, to pass on a gift you received but do not need. Re-gifting makes perfect sense. If you receive something you really don't need, look for ways you can reuse this gift by passing it on to someone who can use it. Of course, re-gifting needs to be done with care so as not to offend the original giver, but keeping a gift you don't need is wasteful.