

eco tip

'TIS THE SEASON TO SAVE THE PLANET

Eco-Friendly Holiday Ideas

When the holiday classic Jingle Bells starts playing in department stores, Americans deck the landfills with extra trash. According to the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF), garbage increases by 25 percent between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day—or about 1 million extra tons each week—including 38,000 miles of ribbon, \$11 billion worth of packing material and 15 million discarded Christmas trees.

As this waste decomposes, dangerous greenhouse gases such as methane and carbon dioxide are emitted, adding to the climate crisis. This season, include Earth on the gift list by reducing holiday-related waste.

To stop the uptick of mailed catalogs, call stores and request to be removed from mailing lists.

Reusable shopping bags are not just for groceries. Bring them to malls and boutiques to cut down on single-use store bags.

Wrapping paper, ribbons and bows are beautiful, but create waste. Consider eco-friendly alternatives like towels, tablecloths, scarves and even socks.

According to NEEF, an estimated 2.6 billion holiday cards are sold in the U.S. every year. That's enough to fill a football field 10 stories high. Be kind to the planet by switching to e-cards or making personal phone calls.

At the holiday table, use cloth napkins and tablecloths instead of paper. They're festive, elegant and best of all, washable and reusable.

Forgo plastic cutlery, paper plates and single-use plastic cups, too. An extra dishwasher load is better than bags full of trash, plastic being the worst non-biodegradable culprit.

Social-distancing Americans are expected to flock to the internet for gifts. Consider saving the shipping boxes and packing materials for later use or donating them to a mailing center that would be happy to reuse them.

The most environmentally friendly gifts eliminate wrapping and shipping altogether. Here are some favorite low-waste ideas.

Charitable donations

Cooking, music, craft or other lessons

Passes to museums or amusement parks

Gift cards for restaurants or bookstores

Music downloads or spa treatments

Most towns recycle Christmas trees and process them into mulch for use in parks. Contact a local waste management agency for details.

