

Celebrate the environment this holiday season

- Hamilton County Department of Environmental Services

Music, decorations, an abundance of sweets: while some things about the holidays will never change, there are still plenty of ways to make old family traditions a bit more eco friendly. The Hamilton County Department of Environmental Services would like to offer a few simple and creative suggestions to help you and your family reduce waste and make this holiday season a little greener.

Reduce vehicle emissions by shopping smart

Develop a strategy to keep air pollution down and shopping on track. First, create a list of those you need to buy for and use it to search the Web or Sunday paper for gift ideas. By determining what you need and where to shop ahead of time, you can find the best deals, consolidate trips and skip the unnecessary pit stops that keep you on the road.

Also, try to plan group shopping trips. Carpooling with family and friends is a sensible way to save on gas and reduce air pollution at the same time.

Think outside the gift box

Each year, an extra 25 million tons of waste is produced between Thanksgiving and New Year's. To cut back on your waste this season, consider handmade, vintage or alternative gifts—a gift card, for example, or a membership to a local gym or pool. If greeting cards are your thing, try looking for cards made from recycled materials. You can also send out electronic greeting cards: they are fun, instant and—best of all—waste free.

Creative gift wrapping is another easy way to go green. Use recyclable and reusable materials such as newspaper, magazines or pretty tins and containers to wrap gifts. You can accent the wrapping with reusable decorations such as beads or ribbons, or incorporate a unique artistic flair by drawing your own patterns and designs on recycled paper.

Eliminate waste by giving back

The holidays leave behind plenty of leftovers that can be used resourcefully. If you're hosting a get-together this year, remember to portion food carefully before the party and send guests home with any excess food. You can also recycle bottles, cans and other holiday waste, including wreaths and trees, and compost any other organic materials.

Need a recycling bin or want to learn more? Call the Hamilton County Recycling Hotline at 946-7766 or visit www.hamiltoncountyrecycles.org.

