



Environmental Stewardship

Caring for God's Creation

Suggestions for an Earth-Friendly Christmas

During the Christmas season, Americans throw away an additional five million tons of trash (25% more than normal). A lot of the trash comes from gift wrap and shopping bags. In fact, 38,000 miles of ribbon alone is thrown out each year--enough to tie a bow around the Earth!

The words of Bill McKibben written almost 20 years ago still ring true.

We've gotten used to spending more money to make Christmas special, he writes. "But if money's no longer as valuable as time, we're offering each other a devalued currency." Far from asking people to stop giving, McKibben simply asks that they put forth things that matter: **time, attention, memory, whimsy.**

"We run short on these things in our lives, even as we have an endless supply of software, hardware, ready-to-wear," he writes.

Hundred Dollar Holiday: The Case for a More Joyful Christmas

Bill McKibben (Simon & Schuster, 1988)

Alternative Gift Suggestions

- One of the recommended potted house plants that help clean the air (dracaenas, palms, ferns, English ivy, peace lily and spider plants)
- Time is often a bigger gift than money. Create coupons that offer free babysitting, house cleaning, pet sitting, car washing, gardening for a month, cooking a meal, etc. Offer to teach someone a skill you have.
- Re-usable canvas shopping bag filled with earth-friendly cleaning supplies, compact fluorescent light bulbs, etc.
- Instead of exchanging unwanted items with coworkers or extended family, suggest donating to a charity as a group.
- Gift basket with natural face and body products and a low flow or AAA rated shower head
- South Carolina State park passes (half price for senior citizens) or a membership in Brookgreen Gardens.
- Rechargeable batteries and charger (remember to properly recycle old batteries)
- Bird feeders and bird houses (especially those made from recycled materials)
- Home made baked goods in a basket with instant spiced cider, fair trade coffee, cocoa, or tea. Add some of your favorite recipes.

- Make a donation to a local charity in someone's name.
- Put together a photo album full of fond memories
- Make an audio or video family tree. Using a tape recorder or a video camera, interview elderly relatives about their childhood, courtships, and other precious memories.
- Give a membership to an environmental organization such as The Nature Conservancy, Environmental Defense, Sierra Club and National Wildlife Federation. Adopt an endangered animal through a donation to World Wildlife Fund (www.worldwildlife.org)
- Bicycle and accessories (to promote alternative transportation)
- Educational books dealing with nature and our environment make good presents

Don't forget to share your books with family and friends. Not only does it give you a topic of conversation but it is good the environment.

- Help your children develop a love of nature not only through books, but by taking them camping, fishing or hiking. Children are tomorrow's environmentalists.
- Gardeners will love an assortment of seeds, bulbs, gardening books or catalogues presented in a new planting pot.

Christmas Cards

- Americans send over a billion Christmas cards each year. Consider cutting back your list, choosing cards made of recycled materials, or even buying them from a charity that benefits the environment. If we each sent one card less, we'd save 30,000 cubic yards of paper.
- Send e-greetings to family, friends and business associates who are online.
- Maybe a personal telephone call would be more meaningful to that person living far away.

Gift Wrapping

- Use re-useable gift bags or canvas bags
- Select uncoated gift wrap that can be recycled and/or burned safely.
- Save gift wrap and bows for reuse
- Make gift tags from last year's holiday cards.
- Most gifts boxes can be flattened and reused throughout the year for other items. Recycle boxes that can't be reused.

Christmas Lights

- Put outside Christmas lights on a timer and set them to turn on only when it is dark and turn off before you go to bed.

Christmas Trees

Don't forget to recycle your cut Christmas tree.