

Minimize the waste that often comes with Christmas

By Mandy Kendall

Christmas can be expensive enough with all the gifts and food without the added cost of decorating and gift-wrapping. The more eco-conscious of us might balk at all the waste that goes on with gift-wrapping because it is just torn off and thrown away. However, with a little thought and creativity, wrapping can be as much fun as the gifts themselves and decorations can help you do your part in helping to protect our wonderful planet.

So here are a few more holiday *Qwik-e tips* on different ways to get your house and your gifts ready for Christmas:



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Have kids help out – Entertain the kids and get them to help out at the same time. Recycled paper can be turned into unique wrapping paper by young hands and some crayons, glue and glitter. Homemade plastic bag bows are a great way to re-use plastic bags, are easy for kids to do and make for great looking gifts. Check out this website.

Multipurpose wrapping – Putting gifts in boxes or containers that can be used again and again helps reduce the amount of wrapping waste that so often happens at Christmas. I still have a beautiful box my aunt gave me years ago which was the

container for her gift to me. I don't remember what the gift was, but I use the box for my jewelry and I still think of her every time I see it. Get creative. Fill a watering can or sturdy basket with gardening items for the gardener on your list. Fill pretty glass jars (hand painted perhaps) with unusual soaps or bath salts for someone who needs a little pampering. A bucket can be filled with useful gifts for that handyman in your life. You could use a pashmina or large scarf as part of the gift and it's wrapping too. Furoshiki is Japanese gift-wrapping that uses material as the wrapping paper. Here for some nifty wrapping ideas.

Recycle gift bags – Our family has recycled and r-circulated the same few gift bags for a few years now. It has become a competition to see how long we can make them last. We each bought large sturdy gift bags and each year our gifts are given in those bags (no matter what size the gift is). We now recognize each other's gift bag designs, which helps in knowing who the gift came from too! If you end up with wrapping paper to recycle, just ask the family to peel off the tape before it goes into the recycle pile. Lots of recycling plants won't accept paper with tape on it.

You could have a competition with your family to see who can come up with the most creative, eco-friendly wrapping with the winner being awarded a special gift from the rest of the family, or maybe even a trophy to be kept until next year's competition.

Decorating

Go green on lights – LEDs are by far the most economical and environmentally friendly lights. They don't burn out and use much less electricity than conventional bulbs. Electric candles can look pretty authentic and also take care of any concerns over health issues and accidental fire dangers.

Trees – Let's face it, Christmas trees are lovely but they are

really only a foundation upon which to hang all our treasured baubles and decorations. With all the artificial options these days, there is no reason to chop down a tree to decorate your house anymore. As well as the huge array of realistic looking artificial trees that can be used year after year, there are many other options you could try for something a bit different. You could go very environmental and use a large herb bush as the basis for your tree. If you do decide to have a natural tree, try and make sure it comes from a sustainable source and find out where it can be recycled.

Keep it natural – You could bring a little of the outside inside to help decorate. Pine cones (sprayed silver or gold) make for great centerpieces and fireplace decorations. Dead twigs and small branches can be twisted together for the basis of garland and wreaths. Obviously, the idea is to pick up stuff that is already lying around and not to start chopping live foliage down... just make sure you shake off any live creepy crawlies that might be attached. Fresh fruit and nuts make very festive additions to table decorations, piled high in a bowl or on a cake stand around a large candle. Tied bundles of cinnamon sticks and dried candied fruits can add a festive scent to your designs too.

Happy Holidays!

Until next time.

Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe, which aligns wellness seekers with their ideal wellness provider. If you have questions, would like some advice, or would like to request some Qwik-e tips on any health and well-being topic, drop her an email at connect@healthconnective.com or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a time.