



Greening Your Holidays – 2009 Edition

Some Hints from Annapolis Green

Gifts

- Give gifts that can either be eaten or otherwise used up (like food, wine, theatre tickets or even carbon offsets).
- Buy local first! Did you know that for every \$100 you spend at a local, independent business, \$45 recirculates right here in our local economy. If you buy from a chain store, only \$14 stays here. If you want Annapolis to remain the uniquely charming place that it is, support the local businesses that make it so. It's part of living sustainably. For more information on this see our website (annapolisgreen.com/buylocalfirst.html),
- Give charitable gifts in your recipient's name, particularly to local charities. For example, buy a plank at the Annapolis Maritime Museum or a membership in the Spa Creek Conservancy, the South River Federation, the Severn Riverkeeper, the South River Association, the West and Rhode Riverkeeper, or any of the many other environmental groups in town. This is a prime example of think globally, act locally. If you want to act globally, Heifer International (heifer.org) teaches people to grow their own food in a sustainable manner. For as little as \$10 you can buy a share of a dairy goat (\$120 for an entire goat) that will provide milk, cheese, butter and yogurt ... and manure for crops for a poor family. Gifts of cows, llamas, ducks, and even water buffalo are available too.
- When you are tempted to buy something for the holidays, ask yourself honestly, "Will my recipient really want this and use it?" or will end up in the landfill?
- Give a gift that discourages waste, such as a reusable water bottle to "take back the tap" and stop the waste of plastic bottles filled with filtered water. Annapolis Green's stainless steel water bottle fits the bill. See www.annapolisgreen.com/shop.html.
- Give antiques as gifts – the mining and manufacturing has already been done.
- Shop in thrift or consignment stores – it's very chic these days!
- Carpool, bike or take public transportation to the stores; do all your shopping in one trip to save on fuel.
- Shop online or by phone and have the gifts delivered to you or directly to the recipient.
 - Shop with Annapolis Green! See www.annapolisgreen.com/shop.html.
- Select gifts that have minimal packaging or recycled or recyclable packaging.
- Take reusable bags with you! Tell the store clerks you don't want their plastic bags.
 - Buy one of our handy bags in a pouch! See www.annapolisgreen.com/shop.html.
- Don't buy kids' toys made with PVC plastic. One of its ingredients, vinyl chloride, is a known human carcinogen. And additives such as lead and cadmium are sometimes added to it making it even more dangerous for the little ones.
- PVC is also found in gift cards and it's the least recycled type of plastic. Some stores are using other materials, but be sure to ask. Also ask the retailers if they recycle those plastic cards when they are redeemed.

- **Shipping Gifts**
 - Save boxes for gift-giving. The US Postal Service will accept them if all previous markings are covered up. The Postal Service's Ready-Post brand of boxes is made of mixed paper and can be recycled.
 - Box fillers: Insist on cornstarch-based packing peanuts, not the ones made of polystyrene (Styrofoam). Staples has recycled packing peanuts. Or, use paper in your shredder! If someone sends you a box packed with Styrofoam peanuts, save them to reuse in a gift box later.
 - Recycled Paper Packing tape: Yes, it exists! The World Wildlife Fund in the UK sells it. See: http://shop.wwf.org.uk/recycled_paper_products/recycled_paper_packing_tape. They also sell recycled brown wrapping paper and biodegradable sealing tape.
 - Have the gifts sent directly to the recipient so they don't have to be shipped twice.
- **Make a Gift**
 - Cut up old sails (or ask sailmakers for free unwanted scraps) and wrap gifts, or make them into something else. For example, just a couple of seams on a home sewing machine, some "small stuff" excess line, and voilà, you have a wine sack to use as a gift*
 - Put together a basket or bag of environmentally friendly cleaning products or personal care products to introduce your unaware friends to living sustainably. Including a how-to book is good too.
 - Bake! Who doesn't love a homemade pie, for example, particularly if it's made with organic ingredients?
- **Wrap your gifts:**
 - in old, outdated charts*
 - in holiday fabric; even the fabric from flannel pajamas bought at a thrift store work; tie with ribbon made of fabric rather than paper
 - in the comics pages from the newspaper – especially good for kids
 - in a 99-cent grocery store reusable bag
 - in one of Annapolis Green's handy reusable bag in a pouch
 - use scraps of "small stuff," small diameter line, instead of ribbon*
 - turn the brown paper bags from the grocery store inside out and decorate them with rubber stamps, paint, or cut-outs from last year's holiday cards
 - Recycle bows! We have several that have been given and regiven in the family for more than 20 years.
 - Make "to-from" tags from cuts-outs from last year's holiday cards. Punch a hole in the top attach a string, and you're done.
 - Buy a "to-from" rubber stamp and use that instead.
 - Open gifts carefully so you can save and reuse the wrapping paper. Don't burn it up in the fireplace.

Ornaments

- Make ornaments from old crab mallets, painted (with no-VOC paint, of course) or plain*
- Cut up pretty images in last year's cards, punch a hole in the top, add a string and hang
- Collect pine cones, add a string and hang. They can also be used to start a cozy blaze in the fireplace.

- Buy a plantable ornament from Annapolis Green! The star-shaped ornament hangs cheerfully on the tree, and then can be planted, as is, to produce a thyme plant! It's two gifts in one! See www.annapolisgreen.com/shop.html.

Decorating

- If you want a real Christmas tree, why not buy a local, living tree (roots and all) and then plant it after the holidays.
- If you buy a cut tree, buy it locally and recycle it. (Trees sprayed with fake snow or sparkly stuff can't be recycled.) Annapolis and Anne Arundel County have collected trees in past years and recycled them along with other yard cuttings. Better yet, put the tree outside, on its side, as a haven for birds.
- Make a door wreath from large diameter line (Bacon's has lots of line, inexpensively priced.)*
- Use soy or beeswax candles. They are non-toxic and burn cleanly, with little soot and smoke and they last longer because they burn more slowly. Soybeans are a renewable resource, grown in the United States. Paraffin candles are made from petroleum. Soy wax is easier to remove from fabric than paraffin. Pure beeswax candles help rid your home of toxins by emitting negatively charged ions as well as burning away positively charged particles that float toward the burning halo flame.
- Friendly Christmas tree salespeople may give you branches cut from trees for free to use as decorations
- When replacing holiday lights, buy the LED type. Use a timer so they don't burn all night.
- Recycle old holiday lights. Read more at
 - holidayleds.com/articles/holidayledscom_2009_christmas_light_recycling_program
 - or earth911.com
- Yes there are solar holiday lights. Amazon sells them
- Put that oh-so-evil Styrofoam to use. If you have old Styrofoam cups or plates cut them up into snowflake shapes and use for ornaments. They can be decorated with no-VOC paint or sparkles. At least that will delay the time when material finally hits the landfill.
- Use nature for decoration, not man-made imitations. For example:
- Pinecones (spray painted or plain) make lovely placecard holders when on their sides; they will also hold small holiday cards for display
- Use branches from evergreens for decorations (and they smell good too)
- Donate unwanted or unused ornaments and other decorations to the local thrift store or nursing home.
- Buy a plantable ornament from Annapolis Green! The star-shaped ornament hangs cheerfully on the tree or anywhere, and then can be planted, as is, to produce a thyme plant! It's two gifts in one! See www.annapolisgreen.com/shop.html.

Greeting Cards

- Greeting cards and ornaments made of seed-impregnated paper are available. The recipient enjoys the card or ornament and then plants the whole thing in the spring! Annapolis Green is offering star-shaped ornaments that contain thyme seeds for sale. See www.annapolisgreen.com/shop.html.

- Send e-cards for the holidays instead of paper or pick up the phone instead.
- If you do buy new cards, make sure they are made of recycled paper or from hemp or other non-tree sources.

Entertaining

- Instead of buying new paper invitations, recycle last year's holiday cards and write on the back. If they are sturdy enough and the right size, you can mail them like postcards.
- Turn down the thermostat before your guests arrive. As more people come in the room will become warmer and you won't be tempted to leave a window or door open to cool things down while your furnace is running.
- Use e-invitations (such as e-vites) instead of mailing paper.
- Use reusable, glass glasses for your parties. A trip to a yard sale or a thrift store can yield mix and match glasses for as little as 10 cents each. Buy 50 for a party and you've only spent \$5 and there's no wasteful trash! The same goes for flatware and plates.
- Ask your guests to bring their own glasses, plates and flatware. Make it a game telling them that they'll be trading what they bring with other guests.
- Use cloth napkins and tablecloths instead of paper products. If you have to buy paper ones, try Seventh Generation's recycled, unbleached brown napkins and paper towels. They are available at some Whole Foods stores and online.
- Use bio-based plates, forks, and cups available from some stores in the area and online. Many can be composted right in your garden.
- Serve local food to reduce the miles it has traveled to get to your table and to support your local farmers.
- Serve organic or fair-trade food.
- Buy loose rather than packaged produce to cut down on packaging.
- Serve organic or biodynamic wines.
- Put recycle bins out for your guests and encourage their use
- Instead of commercial air fresheners, put some cinnamon sticks in a pot of water on the stove and simmer. Of course, nothing beats the smell of a house with an apple pie baking in the oven
- Save your wine corks! Collect enough and you can make a trivet or a wreath or make that a project for your local Cub Scout Pack, Brownie troop or elementary school art class.
 - The City of Annapolis will accept your corks for recycling at City Hall.
- Compost all your kitchen scraps (a mini-composting bin for the kitchen is a nice gift, as is a worm composter... and no, neither of them are smelly)
- Car pool to parties.
- **Important:** If you serve shucked oysters, don't throw away the shells! Oyster spat (baby oysters) need them to attach to and grow. Recycle them with the company that sold you the oysters (If THEY don't recycle, give them a lecture on why they should) or call the Chesapeake Bay Foundation or the Oyster Restoration Project for help.*
- Make sure your guests take leftovers home so no food is wasted. Send the food home in glass containers that can be returned (or kept if you've bought them at yard sales or thrift shops for next to nothing) or in containers that take-out food came in that you've kept just for this occasion. If they brought their own plates they can take the leftovers home in them.

*Uniquely Annapolis holiday greening ideas