



**Blue Ridge SuN is the monthly newsletter from the Sustainability Committee.**

From the Sierra Club ([www.sierraclub.org](http://www.sierraclub.org))

## Green Holiday Tips

Want to make your holidays greener? Here's our list of ideas.

### Make Your Own Wrapping Paper

Most mass-produced wrapping paper you find in stores is not recyclable and ends up in landfills. Instead, here's a great chance to get creative! Wrap presents with old maps, the comics section of a newspaper, or children's artwork. Or use a scarf, attractive dish towel, bandana, or some other useful cloth item. If every family wrapped just three gifts this way, it would save enough paper to cover 45,000 football fields.

### Buy Energy-Saving Holiday Lights

Now you can decorate your house with LED lights that use 90 percent less energy than conventional holiday lights, and can save your family up to \$50 on your energy bills during the holiday season! LED lights are available at many major retailers.

### Add Organic and Local Foods to Your Holiday Feast

Support local family farmers who grow sustainable meat and produce. Not only does it taste better, you'll be doing your part for the planet too. Looking for an organic turkey or ham for Christmas dinner? Find out where to get local green products in your neighborhood.

### Stocking Stuffers: Test Your Eco-Knowledge

A great stocking stuffer is "guilt-free" chocolate! Give the gift of organic, fair-trade chocolate and you can eat your way to a better planet.

### Get a Pesticide-Free Tree

Demand is on the rise for Christmas trees that are not covered in chemicals; some growers use 40 different pesticides, as well as chemical colorants. The good news is that there are now a number of tree-farms that sell pesticide-free trees, so ask your local Christmas tree seller, or search for an organic tree farm near you.

### Recycle Your Christmas Tree

Ninety-eight percent of Christmas trees were grown on farms, not in forests, so at least it's not as if you're cutting down an ancient tree. Each year, 10 million Christmas trees end up in the landfill. While your tree won't fit in the recycling bin with your newspapers and bottles, you can recycle your tree: many cities offer programs to turn your tree to mulch or wood chips. Call (800) CLEANUP or visit [www.earth911.org](http://www.earth911.org) to find the tree-recycling program near you.

### Donate Your Time or Money to an Environmental Group

Get into the holiday spirit by volunteering! There are countless ways to help improve your community - and the planet - from cleaning up a local river to helping inner city kids experience the outdoors for the first time. Contact your local Sierra Club to find out about volunteer opportunities near you. A donation in honor of a loved one can also be a special holiday gift.

## **Do a "Cool Home" Tour with Our Energy-Saving Checklist**

Take a pledge this New Years' to reduce your home energy use by buying energy-efficient light bulbs. Installing only 6 compact fluorescent light bulbs will save the average American family \$60 per year. You can also use our handy "Cool Homes" checklist to see what easy things you can do in your home to save energy. If there's a fire in your fireplace this Christmas, turn down that thermostat! Lowering the temperature even five degrees can take 10% off your energy bill. Check out a complete list of energy-saving tips.

## **Recycle Your Old Cellphone**

Getting a new cell phone for Christmas? Not sure what to do with the old one? Now, you can drop off that old phone at any Staples store, as part of the Sierra Club cell phone recycling program. Each year, 130 million cell phones are thrown out, weighing approximately 65,000 tons. Recycling your old phone prevents hazardous elements like mercury, cadmium and lead from ending up in our landfills.

## **Last but not Least! Get Ready for Dinner-Table Debate**

Are you likely to be the lone environmentalist at the dinner table sometime soon? Win arguments and influence people with our famous holiday survival guide. You'll find ready responses to the predictable dinner table arguments that'll be directed at you. Who knows, you might even make a few converts!