

Suggestions for a More Sustainable Holiday from the PSS Sustainable Living Committee

Consider the 3 pillars of Sustainability: **Environmental, Social and Economic**

Holiday Dinners

- Consider a heritage breed turkey from a nearby farm or a free range turkey (Environmental).
- Buy locally grown organic produce from farmer's market, local chain or co-op. Fresh local fall produce includes squash, pumpkin, apples, broccoli, cranberries, Brussel's sprouts, grapes, mushrooms, onions, garlic, parsnips, pears, peppers, persimmon, quince, radishes, turnips spinach, potatoes, zucchini, leeks, eggplant, cauliflower, artichokes and more. Locally produced jellies, jams and spreads are available (Environmental)
- Serve locally baked breads (bake your own with family and friends!) and cheeses and dairy products. (Environmental, social)
- Bake your own Holiday cookies/desserts with family/friends rather than purchasing. (Environmental, social)
- Don't waste food by cooking too much. (Environmental)
- Choose a natural centerpiece. (Environmental)
- Skip disposable dinnerware; use your fine china, utensils and cloth napkins. (Environmental)
- Avoid individual-serving beverages. (Environmental)
- Serve local water. Rather than bottled, use filtered tap water. (Environmental)
- Eat organic. This means less pollution and is safer for humans and farm workers. (Environmental)
- Compost food scraps. (Environmental)
- Run only full dishwasher loads during cleanup. (Environmental)
- Consider a meatless meal. (Environmental)
- Consider combining family events, rather than have separate events (Social)

Gift Giving

- Select local gifts from nearby artisans or from consignment stores. (Environmental, economic)
- Combine trips when shopping. Choose a few stores, rather than several, shop close to home or on line. (Environmental, economic)
- Don't always buy new — buy something vintage. (Environmental)
- Select a gift of quality vs. quantity for a longer lifespan. (Environmental)
- Select gifts made of sustainable materials, with minimal or recycled packaging. (Environmental)
- Choose a gift that teaches green — gardening book with gardening tools, or a gift that you can work on together (environmental, social).
- Give a gift that stimulates a child's curiosity — like a zoo or museum family membership and enjoy together (Environmental, social).
- Choose a gift that can be enjoyed collectively, rather than individually. (Social)
- Give performance/event tickets that you can enjoy together or as a family (Social, environmental).
- Give a gift in the name of a charity or adopt an animal, in someone's name. (Environmental, social, economic)
- Make the gift yourself or with friends/family — craft, or canned or baked goods (Social, environmental).
- Give socially conscious gifts — Ten Thousand Villages, West Side Bazaar, Global Exchange Fair Trade online store. (Economic, social)
- Donate unwanted gifts or re-gift to friends and family if appropriate. (Environmental)
- Make the decision as a family that each person buys for only one other family member. (Environmental)
- Package gifts in material that can be composted (shredded paper, cornstarch peanuts). (Environmental)
- Choose battery-free toys or buy and use rechargeable batteries. (Environmental)
- Give a bicycle or bus pass subscription instead of a car. (Environmental)

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Holiday Tree Decisions and Decorations

- Choose a potted tree over a cut tree and then plant it after the holidays. (Environmental)
- Choose a cut tree over an artificial tree and have it mulched afterward. Cut your own tree. (Environmental, social)
- Replace burned-out bulbs rather than throwing out the string of lights; (Environmental)
- Use holiday lights in moderation — don't over decorate. (Environmental)
- Turn lights off at the end of the night or use a timer. (Environmental)
- Look for energy-efficient lights/decorations — use LED lights as they use a fraction of the electricity of conventional lights. (Environmental)
- Choose durable and meaningful ornaments that last longer than the plastic or glass ones. Better yet, create your own ornaments with family/friends. (Environmental, social)
- Create decorations from natural materials like pine boughs and cones with family/friends. (Social, environmental).
- Stuff stockings with nuts, fruit and baked goods. (Environmental)

Greeting Cards

- Use e-cards instead. (Environmental)
- Use postcards rather than holiday card, or use greeting cards made of recycled paper. (Environmental)
- Use leftover holiday cards for gift labels. (Environmental)

Recycling tips

- Recycle cookie tins. (Environmental)
- Hard-to-open rigid plastic packaging can be recycled. (Environmental)
- Check with your town/city to see if it will recycle gift paper — use newspaper, fabric or recycled paper instead. (Environmental)
- Ribbon should not be put into recycling; don't use or reuse for multiple years (Environmental).
- Tape should be removed if possible — does not recycle well (Environmental).
- Compost scraps where appropriate — use a composter! (Environmental)
- Recycle your tree or leave your tree in your backyard until spring as a haven for birds & small animals.
Create suet "ornaments" to hang on tree for birds/animals with family/friends. (Environmental, social)

Travel to & from festivities

The choices you make regarding travel affect your total carbon footprint more than anything else. Taking a single plane ride costs the environment more than you can save by installing solar panels and driving an electric vehicle for an entire year. Take a train or bus instead of flying whenever possible. Check the Amtrak site for [deals, discounts](#), and [rewards program](#). If you feel you must drive, drive an electric vehicle (Environmental) or car pool! (Environmental, social)

Volunteer or Give to a Charity

- Volunteer at a Food Pantry, Shelter, Charity or Hospital to bring joy to those less fortunate. (Social)
- Adopt a community member or family and bring them a meal or a gift. (Social)

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