



GREAT offers tips for 'greener' holidays

By Ginger Danz

For The Fayette Tribune

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— The EPA estimates that Americans throw away 25 percent more trash between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day, resulting in an extra 5 billion pounds of waste going into our landfills each year. Every pound makes a difference, so here are some tips to help you reduce, reuse and recycle this holiday season.

-- Plan ahead. We seem to make the most waste (and spend more money) when we're in a hurry. So take a little time to plan ways to reduce waste and enjoy the holiday season.

-- Compost as much as possible. Keep a big bowl on the kitchen counter to catch vegetable and fruit peelings and scraps, coffee filters and grounds, tea bags and eggshells. Don't have a compost pile? It only takes a tiny corner of your yard to start one, just supplement kitchen scraps with dried leaves, grass or straw. Take the GREAT challenge: try collecting and composting all kitchen scraps for at least one week. Once you see how much less trash you're taking to the curb, you'll be hooked. If you're having a holiday get-together, use cloth napkins and reusable dinnerware. If you're hosting a crowd, you can ask everyone to bring their own dinner service or buy compostable dinnerware. Check out www.treecycle.com, www.verterra.com, www.worldcentric.org, www.greenfeet.com, or www.biodegradablestore.com.

-- Remember to recycle. GREAT regularly lists recycling options in our local papers. Cardboard, plastics #1 and #2 and tin food cans are all recyclable, so you can reduce your trash even if you are using more pre-packaged convenience foods. Holiday wrapping paper is also recyclable, so put it in the recycling bin with your office paper. Cardboard boxes and packaging materials (peanuts and bubble wrap) can be used again and again.

-- Speaking of paper, avoid buying new wrapping paper. Look around the house for creative ways to wrap gifts: scraps of fabric, children's drawings, and newspaper comics all make great wrappings, or give gifts in reusable canvas bags, pillow cases, baskets, decorative tins, dish towels or oven mitts. Use old holiday cards to make gift tags.

-- Make homemade gifts and/or give gifts of your time. Who doesn't love a plate of homemade cookies, a hand-knit scarf or hand-stamped notecards? If you are not inclined to make your gifts, offer to make dinner for someone, provide a few hours of childcare or pet care or help with gardening or cleaning. Or send someone a note about what you admire about them, what they mean to you or how they have inspired you (on recycled paper of course!).

-- Give practical gifts that generate little waste: seeds or bulbs for spring planting, a tablecloth and napkins, a lunchbox, rechargeable alkaline batteries and charger, a houseplant, reusable party dishes, buckwheat or natural fiber pillows, or stationery made from recycled materials. Another option is to contribute to a charitable cause of the recipient's choosing. You could also suggest a "green elephant" gift exchange to family or co-workers. Everyone brings gifts of gently used items from their own homes. One person's trash is another person's treasure, right?

-- Send holiday e-cards to eliminate paper waste completely. If this is not an option for you, look for tree-free cards made from hemp or 100% recycled cards. Go to www.greenyour.com and type "greeting cards" in the search bar to find various suppliers.

-- Bring your own reusable bags when you shop. Try to make this a plastic-free holiday. Hopefully you're getting used to taking your own bags to the grocery store, but it is time to start taking them with you

everywhere! Check out www.reusablebags.com for reusable shopping bags and compostable items such as trash bags.

-- Avoid buying plastic and disposable toys. There are multiple non-toxic toy sites on the internet, some of our favorites are: www.planethappytoys.com, www.nmctoys.com and www.buydirectusa.com.

-- Make a resolution to reduce waste in the new year. Follow these tips all year round!

(Danz is a member of GREAT, which meets the fourth Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Fayetteville CVB in Fayetteville.)

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