Top 10 Tips for a Sustainable Christmas

Hertfordshire County Council

1. Make your own Christmas decorations

- Each Christmas, approximately 12,500 tones of Christmas decorations are discarded into landfill.
- Many plastic decorations cannot be recycled due to the glue and glitter on them.
- Why not make your own decorations and/or use natural materials such as dried fruits, pinecones or even recycled paper. You could even make edible decorations!
- When buying new decorations, look for those made from sustainable materials such as glass and wood.
- **More festive tips:**
  - [8 easy hacks to make Christmas more sustainable this year – Bower Collective]

2. Reduce festive food waste

More festive tips:

- Sustainable Christmas | Soil Association
- Christmas Leftovers Recipes | Good Food

Every Christmas, millions of tonnes of food are wasted, including approximately 5 million puddings, 2 million turkeys and 74 million mince pies.

Most of this food waste ends up in landfill, thereby creating methane and other greenhouse gases as it decomposes.

Reduce your food waste by planning your Christmas menu carefully. Think about portion sizes and using seasonal and locally grown ingredients which have a lower carbon footprint.

Dispose of any leftover food in a food waste collection and/or compost it, instead of sending to landfill.

3. Going crackers for a sustainable Christmas

- Crackers contain excess plastic packaging, along with a large amount of single use plastic ‘toys’.
- Each year, more than 100 million crackers get thrown away. Many of these cannot be recycled and end up in landfill.
- Why not consider plastic-free crackers? Look out for the forestry logo on the packaging to recognise sustainable sourcing of materials.
- You could also try making your own sustainable Christmas crackers and fill them with home-made paper hats and plastic-free gifts! Don’t forget to include a tree-mendously funny joke in each cracker too!

More festive tips:

- Eco-Friendly Christmas Crackers | Love Your Footprints
- Christmas Cracker Kit (set of 6) | Planet Friendly Living

4. Sustainable gifting

More festive tips:

- Top tips for a sustainable Christmas | WWF

- Giving gifts is a key Christmas tradition but can also lead to over- consumption and waste.
- The manufacture and transportation of products also create greenhouse gas emissions.
- Why not consider sustainable gifting by:
  - Giving fewer gifts that are more meaningful.
  - Choosing items that are useful, or experiences, rather than material gifts.
  - Thinking about the materials used – avoid single-use plastics, look for organic food and clothing.
  - Why not consider pre-loved gifts?

5. Greening your gift wrap

- Each year, wrapping paper is often used only once, and approximately 200,000 miles of gift wrap is thrown away.
- Furthermore, Sellotape cannot be recycled, and ribbon contains harmful synthetics.
- Why not try using the following alternatives for wrapping:
  - Fabric wraps (e.g. furoshiki - Japanese wrapping cloth).
  - Foil-free and glitter-free paper, brown kraft paper or old newspaper, all of which can be recycled.
  - Natural decorations, such as twine, dried flowers, compostable brown tape and/or compostable garden twine.
  - Avoid gift tags and write names on the presents instead.

More festive tips:

- 15 Eco-Friendly and Zero-Waste Gift Wrapping Ideas - Mindful of the Home

6. Lighting the way to sustainability

- When selecting Christmas lights try to use LED lights as they use less energy and last longer.
- Choose lights that are powered by a plug rather than batteries.
- When using batteries, use rechargeable batteries rather than buying new batteries each time.
- Make sure that Christmas lights are turned off at night. Not only is this much safer for you, but it will also save you money and electricity.

More festive tips:

- Top tips for a sustainable Christmas | WWF

7. Dress to impress, both stylishly and sustainably

This party season we know you want to dress to impress!

But when selecting your party outfits, choose sustainably.

Choose pre-loved clothing from second hand shops and/or clothing apps or borrow from your friends and family!

Why not donate an old item for someone else to find or try to sell some items.

Remember … You definitely CAN wear the same thing twice!

More festive tips:

- Top tips for a sustainable Christmas | WWF

8. Christmas cards, cards and more cards

- Did you know that in the UK, over one billion Christmas cards are thrown away every year.
- In the UK, each person sends and receives an average of 17 Christmas cards. However, around 75% of these cards are usually not recycled and end up in landfill.
- Why not send your loved ones cards that can be recycled or reused.
- You can also send E-cards rather than paper cards.
- Plantable cards are a great way of helping the environment and not contributing to landfill.

More festive tips:

- [Christmas Waste Facts: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle This Holiday Season]

9. The perfect Christmas tree

There are many options for Christmas trees, some more sustainable than others.

An artificial Christmas tree is only sustainable if it has a life span exceeding 10 years. They are usually made from plastic or PVC, which are non-biodegradable and often have a larger carbon footprint than real trees due to the manufacturing process.

Locally sourced real Christmas trees are 100% recyclable and biodegradable. If purchasing a real tree, then make sure it is a Forest Stewardship Council (FSC®) certified tree.

Why not consider a wooden Christmas tree to add something unique and sustainable to your home.

More festive tips:

- [Choose a sustainable Christmas tree | Soil Association]

10. Sustainable Secret Santa

- Secret Santa is great fun and is a great way to save money and the environment.
- Setting a budget for Secret Santa helps buyers be precise and think of useful gifts.
- Try and source gifts in recycled packaging, or gifts that have a long lifespan.
- You could also consider pre-loved or second-hand gifts too.

More festive tips:

- [Sustainable Christmas - Secret Santa | Plastic Free and Sustainable Living Blog]

Season the Day! There's snow better time to talk about these Top 10 Tips!

Merry Christmas!

Use the festive season as an opportunity to talk and share ideas with friends and family about how everyone can contribute towards making Christmas more sustainable.

Why not share each of these **Top 10 Tips for a Sustainable Christmas** with your family and friends and encourage everyone to adopt one or more of these sustainability actions.

No action is too small. If we all play our part, then we can create a sustainable Christmas, which is kinder to our planet. Let's continue the sustainability journey all year round too.

Why not watch The Good Life - Silly, but Its Fun - BBC iPlayer for inspiration on how a low cost and sustainable Christmas can still be merry and fun!

Hertfordshire