

ECO-FRIENDLY FORGET CHRISTMAS CONSUMERISM. ANNA-BELLE WOOLLCOTT LOOKS AT LESS WASTEFUL WAYS TO CELEBRATE

Giving something back

On the first day of Christmas, my true love gave to me... ah yes, Christmas. It's all about the receiving, isn't it? Well, this year, we decided the home is a place to give back. Follow these steps to reach domestic nirvana.

The popularity contest

According to a report by the Royal Mail, we send 750 million Christmas cards each year in Britain. Fortunately, the Shropshire Fair has set up recycling points at Telford Mall, Walsingham and Mass stores. If we recycled 120 million cards, it could plant 24,000 trees. See www.ecofirstfruit.org.uk/ for details.

Getting into the Christmas spirit(s)

One of the main differences between organic and non-organic wine is sulphur. On average, organic producers use at the most a quarter of the legal maximum for conventional wine, which, according to the Soil Association, may lessen the chances of a hangover. *Winesapientia.co.uk* has Fairtrade and organic alcoholic beverages from bottles to barrels. By Cuvée Robert Pinay Champagne 2005, £28, which took a silver medal at the International Wine Challenge this year.

Trees are green

A real tree isn't necessarily eco-friendly. They're often made from materials that are harmful to produce and will eventually decorate a landfill site for decades of years. For next year, try growing a tree from seed. www.eco.co.uk sells a grow-your-own kit for £2.50. Alternatively, try a fern-growing tree from www.metrohome.co.uk. Each tree converts 27% of CO₂ into oxygen and keeps away 25% year. Get a tree with roots and repeat it to offset some of your own carbon emissions.

Sustainable giving

This year Christmas before plastic, select eco-designer Oliver Heath, founder of EcoDesign.co.uk. Consider his multi-packaged gift sets. Aided, 100,000 pairs of gloves added in the festive Christmas. EcoDesign's eco-friendly products such as the Grow Your Own Cyster Mulberries Kit, £10.

Light up your garden life

Outdoing the neighbours has become a bit of a national obsession. Why not compete over the greenest efforts instead? Think about how much energy you're wasting leaving lights on. Use www.lightson.com, founder of the Green Light Project, which stocks Eco-Powered Christmas Rope Lights (right, £22.45) for your tree, outdoor displays,



Kitchen consideration

The Soil Association estimates a typical Christmas dinner could have travelled up to 49,000 miles, twice round the world, before reaching your plate. Check out www.fairtrade.org.uk for your local market and try to buy locally grown organic food. And also take a look at www.ecofirstfruit.org.uk/ for more ideas on organic eating, making sure you compost all your waste.

DIY deco

Make your children (or making your own decorations) from paper chains, snowflakes or origami. Clear health's wife describes this tree with wreath and cheap shop costume jewelry set on with Nature. You could even buy a Fairtrade recycled wreath kit. www.borninbritain.com offers one made from reclaimed tin, which benefits an African co-operative and helps food banks, for £25.

Keeping easy inside

Feeling chilly? Wrap your guests up in luxurious Fairtrade softwear items from www.greenfibre.com. They look great draped over sofas and beds. The cable-knit softwear fleece socks (£10), if that's a little chilly, go to www.fairtrade.co.uk also offers a great selection of organic socks and shoes made from chemical-free wool or artificial cottoning.

Make the best of the rest

The Government wants to cut the amount of waste going to landfill by 25 per cent by 2010. The odd string of notices, re-use and recycle is especially hard during the festive season," says Andrew Wines, managing director of GreenCo.com, which encourages local Christmas tree recycling points which will sell your tree become mulch and compost, set your local authority for details. Think about recycling your gifts to the bottle bins as demand will be higher at the time of year. Unwanted gifts can be given to charity shops so that other people can benefit.



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