

Joyful & Sustainable



Sustainable Decorating this Holiday Season

December 2024



Holiday Waste: The Shocking Numbers



The Holidays are a festive season, filled with celebration, gatherings, joy, and tradition. However, what is often forgotten around this busy time, is the unexpected environmental cost that this season brings. Around the holidays, Zero Waste Canada, estimates that every Canadian produces 50 kilograms of waste in the month of December, 25% higher than any other months in the year (CBC, 2022). In the same report, Zero Waste Canada, estimates only 1% of everything the average person buys around the holidays is still in use after six months (CBC, 2022). In total, Statistics Canada estimates that 25 million tonnes of waste end up in Canadian landfills around the Holiday Season each year (Levitz, 2017).

Holiday Waste: Environmental Impact



The landfills overflow around the holidays because of the excessive waste, which causes significant environmental harm. While in landfill, the waste releases multiple greenhouse gases, such as methane. These are potent gases that trap heat in the atmosphere, which contributes significantly to global warming, and the impacts of climate change felt globally. In addition, ecosystems are contaminated, and natural resources are strained by the growing production and disposal of packaging, decorations, and single-use items used during the holiday season. Decorations are a major contributor to this waste, with single-use or non-recyclable items like tinsel, plastic ornaments, and synthetic garlands thrown out each year. Many decorations are made from materials that cannot biodegrade or be recycled, which then persist in the landfills for years. However, choosing more sustainable options, such as reusable, biodegradable, or upcycled decorations, we can reduce waste and lessen our environmental footprint significantly, while still enjoying all the traditions of the holiday season.

Combating Holiday Waste: Tips For Sustainable Decorating



As the holiday season approaches, many of us look forward to decorating our homes. This year, consider adding sustainability to your celebrations with these environmentally mindful tips:

Reuse what you already have: The most sustainable decorations are the ones you already own. Reuse ornaments, wreaths, garlands, and lights year after year, and store them carefully to extend their lifespan.

DIY homemade decorations: Try making your own decorations as a fun and more personal way to be sustainable during the holidays. Try crafting ornaments from natural or recycled materials. Homemade garlands, wreaths, and ornaments help to reduce waste. Pinterest is a great place to start for DIY ideas.

Be mindful of energy usage: Try switching to LED Christmas lights. They consume significantly less energy than traditional bulbs and can reduce your electricity usage during the festive season. To save even more energy, consider using a timer to turn them off automatically at night.

Shop Sustainably: If you do need to purchase new decorations, look for high-quality items made from sustainable materials, or check out second-hand stores.

Less is More: Embrace the "less is more" philosophy by focusing on a few meaningful, high-quality decorations that can be reused year after year. Opt for natural elements like greenery, pinecones, or candles to create a festive and elegant atmosphere without contributing to unnecessary waste.

Society for Conservation Biology wishes you a joyful, safe, and sustainable holiday season filled with love, laughter, and mindful celebrations! 😊

Sources

- CBC. (2022, December 18). Tips for reducing your carbon footprint over the holidays. CBC. <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/whatonearth/holidays-recycling-christmas-tree-composting-1.6688865>
- How to Reduce Holiday Waste: 50+ Eco-friendly Tips. (n.d.). Greenpeace Canada. <https://www.greenpeace.org/canada/en/story/61582/how-to-reduce-holiday-waste-50-eco-friendly-tips/>
- Hubbart, S., & Blount, S. (2023). Give a Gift to the Planet by Reducing Holiday Waste. The National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF). <https://www.neefusa.org/story/sustainability/give-gift-planet-reducing-holiday-waste>
- Levitz, S. (2017, December 29). How much Christmas wrapping paper, tape and gift bags do Canadians throw out each year? Global News. <https://globalnews.ca/news/3936851/how-much-christmas-wrapping-paper-tape-and-gift-bags-do-canadians-throw-out-each-year/>