

GIVE A GIFT TO THE EARTH THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

The holiday season is fast approaching, and whether you and your family celebrate Christmas, Hanukah, Kwanzaa or the winter solstice it is an exciting and busy time of celebration.

The good news of the holiday season includes the expression of love and appreciation for each other, shared time and traditions, and the general kindness and spirit of goodwill so many experience at this time of year. The bad news is that the way that many of us have been celebrating is very hard on our little part of the planet. The Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) waste management centres experience a significant increase in garbage in December – it is the biggest waste month of the year!

But it **is** possible to preserve the good news and reduce or eliminate the bad. Consider planet-pleasing options when selecting gifts for loved ones:

- ◆ **Give gift certificates** – they always fit, reduce the need for wrapping, and the recipient has the experience of selecting exactly what they want.
- ◆ **Shop locally** – the choice to purchase locally will reduce the carbon-footprint of your gifts. Remember to take your reusable bags when you shop!
- ◆ **Gifts of time or talent** - make a one-of-a-kind gift certificate to be redeemed for baking a special treat, an afternoon of help with gardening or a night of child-care or pet-sitting
- ◆ **Think quality** – picking gifts that will last in the long-term versus one use. For example, include rechargeable batteries instead of disposable single-use batteries
- ◆ **Discover fun eco-options** – many people would love to receive an eco-friendly item they could use every day such as a travel mug, water bottle, reusable cloth bags, counter-top composters, windup flashlights, and other unique items made from ecologically friendly or recycled materials
- ◆ **Give twice** – for the person who has everything, give a donation to a cause or charity in their name
- ◆ **Experiential gifts** – use your creativity to find a shared experience that can be a memory and a gift such as event tickets, leisure passes for the recreation centre or classes.

When wrapping gifts, remember that traditional wrapping paper cannot be recycled – it must go into the garbage. What a costly waste; better choices for wrapping alternatives include:

- ◆ **Find or make decorative tin cans, or baskets** – these can become part of your tradition or are part of the gift
- ◆ **Use gifts as the package** - wrap in hankies, scarves, tea towels or t-shirts, even tuck a special treasure into the traditional pair of socks!
- ◆ **Pick reusable gift bags** - perhaps created for each person specifically
- ◆ **Wrap with recyclables** - pick materials that can be recycled afterwards such as computer paper or newspaper or colorful comics, then finish off with ribbon that can be used again and again, or a special ornament

When decorating for the holidays there are several options for sharing the fun and creating memories while crafting unique decorations made from natural or recycled or recyclable materials. How about creating garlands from cranberries and popcorn, which can become gifts to the hungry birds outside when decorating time inside is done?

If you are thinking about changing how you celebrate the holiday season, discuss your thoughts and plans with your family and friends in advance, so that they understand and will have realistic expectations. Many people now ask each other for a wish list and that is an excellent time to express your desire for change.

Most importantly, this year, when expressing love or friendship for each other consider the environmental impact of your celebrations.

Together we can make “Better Choices for a Better Future”.