

It's a wrap - green choices for holiday gift wrapping

If your holiday halls are decked with stacks of paper bags, mounds of crumpled wrapping paper, an array of random ribbons, and a gaggle of gift tags that are destined for the local landfill, it's time to add a little "green" to your gift-wrapping regimen.

Given that the average household's waste jumps by more than 25 percent between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day, and that holiday debris adds an additional one million tons per week to landfills, there is a lot that everyone can do to recycle, reuse and reduce during the holidays.

According to Eco-Chick.com, "If every family reused just two feet of holiday ribbon, the 38,000 miles of ribbon saved could tie a bow around the entire planet. If every American family wrapped just three presents in re-used

materials, it would save enough paper to cover 45,000 football fields. The 2.65 billion Christmas cards sold each year in the U.S. could fill a football field 10 stories high. If we each sent one card less, we'd save 50,000 cubic yards of paper."

Here are some ways to go green and even save green on gift packaging this year:

Recycle: Conventional wrapping paper typically cannot be recycled since it is often coated in metal foil or is plastic laminated. But if the paper rips and doesn't glitter or shine, it can -- and should -- be placed in the recycle bin along with other paper products. Check with your local recycling provider to find out which types of wrapping paper they accept. The good news is that recyclable wrapping paper is increasingly available from both online and brick-and-mortar

retailers such as Amazon.com, Office Depot and UncommonGoods.com.

Reuse: Before the opening of the gifts begins, set aside a box for collecting reusable boxes, wrapping paper, gift bags, bows, ribbons, and other decorative items. Even if wrapping paper is torn, it can be used for craft projects, packaging filler or to enclose smaller gifts the following year. Gift bags are also great candidates for reuse. If the surface of the bag is marred from removing ribbon or a bow, the spot can be covered with other decorative items or scraps of used wrapping paper.

Reduce: Recycling and reusing boxes, wrapping paper, ribbon and gift bags is a big step in the right direction. But the best way to avoid waste is to reduce the use of these items in the first place. Rather than wrapping gifts in paper, consider using scarves,

old tea towels, cloth napkins, or leftover fabric. If you're crafty, consider creating your own simple fabric sacks that can be easily sewn by hand or machine. If you're not, try painting an old pillowcase and tying it up with fabric ribbon, string or even shoelaces. And don't forget newspaper! The comics make colourful giftwrap any time of year, particularly for kids.



PARADE READY: Just before they hopped on the Salvation Army's float in Saturday's Santa Claus parade, Acton's Jennifer Daamen (left), an angel, and Elisabeth Armogan, who played Mary checked out their costumes. — Frances Niblock photo

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