

## Greening the Season

Submitted by Alexis Baker, Environmental Programs Coordinator

The holiday season is when we have renewed hope for peace on earth and are reminded to show goodwill towards our neighbors. We donate our time and money to help those in need. On New Year's Eve, we celebrate with our friends and family and look back on our past actions, making promises to improve on ourselves. This season, perhaps, becoming a better environmental steward is on your list. It not only helps our neighbors, it helps to make a difference in our world.

While, it seems, everyone makes a New Year's resolution to lose that holiday weight, thinking about how we steward our resources and protect our environment is a great way to improve ourselves. Through good environmental stewardship, we begin to see ourselves as part of the solution to air, water, and land pollution rather than just part of an unsolvable problem.

There are hundreds of ways to improve our environment without spending enormous amounts of money or cutting into our valuable time. Some of these ways have been talked about in prior articles and, in future articles, more ways to save money and protect the environment will be discussed. However, since, it is the holiday season, here are some tips to "green" the season and become better environmental stewards.

1. **Save Paper.** Children, honestly, are not all that interested in paper. Instead of buying expensive wrapping paper, wrap their presents in the comics section of the newspaper. For adults, be creative. Gift bags are a good alternative and can be reused again. A person with sewing skills could create a beautiful bag out of fabric which would make the gift all that more impressive. Calendars and magazines have beautiful pictures that can spruce up a package and are often more interesting than wrapping paper. If you insist on wrapping paper, look for recycled paper or paper that is not foil. Foil paper, unfortunately, is not recyclable. Also, keep a bin handy for paper. It helps with the awful mess that ensues after all the presents are open and serves as a reminder that the paper should be recycled.
2. **Have a "green" Christmas tree.** My parents have always treasured my crudely made childhood ornaments. These are often cheaper than store bought ornaments and may have more sentimental value. It's also a great way to keep the kids busy for an hour or two. Also, buy local handmade decorations or American-made ornaments to support the local economy. String up the tree with energy efficient LED lights. You could also consider using a live Christmas tree or planting a new one. By planting a tree, it can cut a ton of carbon dioxide in the air over its lifetime. Plant it with a child or grandchild, and use it as a reminder decades later of a Christmas long ago. If you decide to cut a tree, have it mulched and recycled into your landscape.
3. **Give gifts that count.** Rather than buying meaningless presents that will be thrown away or left unused, give homemade gifts, gifts of time, or gift certificates for vacations, massages, restaurants, classes, or for tickets to shows or plays.

Gifts that offer new experiences are always more memorable than the newest gadgets that will be left in a drawer. For those gifts that leave you less than impressed, donate them to a local charity. Just be careful that the gift giver doesn't find out!

Have a great holiday season and a prosperous New Year!

Alexis can be contacted at 694-6524 or by email at [alexisbaker@hendersoncountync.org](mailto:alexisbaker@hendersoncountync.org)