

How to cut back on holiday waste

The holiday season is a joyful time of year. But the weeks between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day also tend to be very wasteful. The U.S. Environmental Protection

Agency estimates that household waste increases by more than 25 percent during the holiday season.

Reducing waste come the holiday season does not mean celebrants have

to forgo big family meals or beautifully wrapped gifts. In fact, there are several ways to reduce waste without spoiling the spirit of the season.

- Give eco-conscious gifts. The environment may not be the first thing that comes to mind when holiday shoppers are looking for gifts for their loved ones. But giving reusable gifts can have a positive, long-term impact on the planet. Reusable coffee mugs or water bottles can dramatically

reduce waste over time, and such items make great stocking stuffers. Shoppers also can look for items made from recycled materials, which run the gamut from home furnishings to calendars to clothing, as eco-friendly alternatives to gifts produced without the environment in mind.

- Reuse holiday-specific items. Many people only use gift wrap, gift boxes and gift bags during the holiday season. Such items are oftentimes

discarded after Christmas morning. But these items can be reused to cut back on holiday waste. Reusing wrapping paper from year to year can be especially beneficial to the environment. That's because wrapping paper tends to be dyed or laminated, and many wrapping papers contain non-paper additives that cannot be recycled. Reusing wrapping paper, purchasing only recyclable paper or wrapping gifts in old newspapers or magazines

can help holiday celebrants reduce their carbon footprints.

- Prepare less food and donate any leftovers. The Worldwatch Institute notes that, during the holiday season, celebrants generate three times as much food waste as they do during other times of the year. Large family meals are a tradition of the holiday season, but hosts who routinely find themselves discarding

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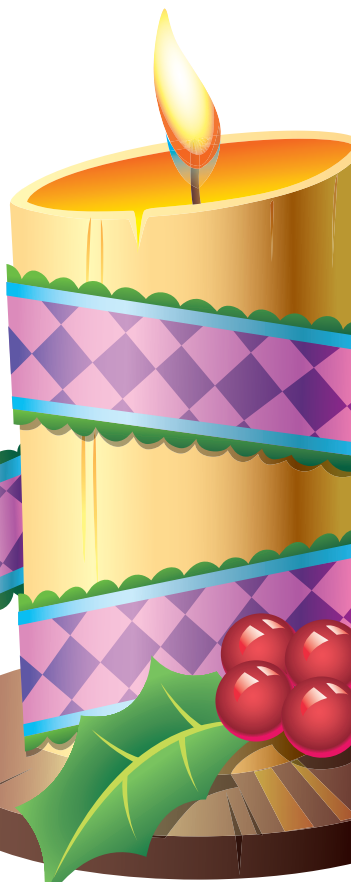
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The benefits of LED holiday lights

Many people put significant effort into their holiday lights. When a bulb goes out, all that effort can seem like it was for naught. Replacing a single bulb or multiple bulbs can be a lot of work. Fortunately, LED holiday lights provide a more user- and eco-friendly alternative to traditional incandescent bulbs. According to the Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy, the following are some of the attributes that make LED holiday lights a superior alternative to traditional incandescent bulbs.

- Safety: LED lights burn a lot cooler than traditional incandescent lights, reducing the risk of combustion. And because they burn cool, they also reduce the risk of burnt fingers, which may make them more appealing to parents of curious youngsters and people who will be hosting family and friends during the holiday season.

- Sturdiness: Because

they're made with epoxy lenses and not glass like traditional incandescent bulbs, LED holiday lights are less likely to break. That can be especially beneficial to people with pets who might bump into the family Christmas tree.

- Longevity: LED lights are initially more expensive than more traditional lights. However, the OEERE notes that lights bought today may still be in use 40 holiday seasons from now. That longevity makes them well worth the higher initial investment.

- Ease of installation: LED lights are easily installed, and the OEERE says as many as 25 strings of LEDs can be connected end-to-end without overloading a wall socket. That can ease the nerves of homeowners concerned about the potential hazards of elaborate holiday lighting displays.

- Energy savings: LED lights consume considerably less energy than incandescent lights, saving homeowners money on

their energy bills, which can skyrocket in December thanks to interior and exterior holiday lighting displays using incandescent lights. In fact, the

OEERE estimates that, by 2027, widespread use of LED lights could save consumers more than \$30 billion at today's electricity prices.



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