

Tips for a low-waste Christmas

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Sometimes it can feel like the spirit of Christmas is lost amidst the pressure to buy gifts for everyone – not to mention bins overflowing with wrapping, uneaten food, and unwanted gifts come January. This isn't surprising given its recent consumerist history. Some say that our modern incarnation of Christmas was created in the 1920s and 30s by Coca Cola's advertising campaigns.

There is so much joy in giving and receiving gifts and sharing meals with friends and family at Christmas. And thankfully, there are lots of ways we can create an equally rewarding low-waste Christmas that's focused on quality, rather than quantity.

Presents and cards

- A great option is to source second-hand gifts. We have many local charity shops and online market-places where you can find great quality items that are kind to your wallet as well as the environment. Check out local Facebook buy and sell groups, e-Bay, Vinted and in-person swap events.
- Alternatively, gift an experience, membership, event, meal out, course/lesson, local treatment, or extra quality time with you rather than a physical thing.
- If you do want to give physical gifts, consider buying fewer, higher quality items that will last, or make a thoughtful homemade gift.
- Try to shop from local stores with good ethical and environmental credentials and search for natural, recycled, and biodegradable materials.
- Consider a "Secret (or not so secret) Santa", where each person buys one present for one other person in your group of friends or family. Some groups also buy one combined gift or experience for someone that would otherwise be over their individual budgets.
- Aim to buy gifts with no/minimal or recyclable or biodegradable packaging. You could challenge yourself to avoid single use plastics in your Christmas present shopping.
- Chose recycled and recyclable wrapping paper, cards and ribbons. This usually means avoiding plastic, foil and glitter.
- Use paper tape (or no tape at all) and remember to remove plastic tape before you put wrapping paper in the recycling bin. Any cards with lights or speakers that you might receive contain batteries and electronics, so should be responsibly disposed of in the supermarket e-waste bins.

Food

- Plan realistically to reduce food waste. Use Tupperware, wax wrappers or foil to keep leftovers fresh. Have some great recipes on hand to use up the leftovers.
- If you've bought more than you can use, share your unwanted food with local community members through the Olio app (signup at www.olioex.com) or donate dry/canned goods to local foodbanks (located in the Church and supermarkets).
- Reduce your Christmas carbon footprint by incorporating more plants into your Christmas meals and shopping from local markets, farm shops and organic grocers. You can get a list of locally produced and FairTrade food and drink in and around Tring from www.tringintransition.org.uk/localfood or by calling 07887 980 004.

Trees and decorations

- Reuse the decorations you already have!

- Consider DIY or reusable crackers that you can fill with chocolates or other more sustainable treats.
- Take some inspiration from the Nordics and forage for decorations from our local woods or make decorations from recycled and natural materials – perhaps using last years' cards, paper and ribbons.
- A locally sourced real tree is generally more sustainable than a plastic alternative if you compost it after Christmas. You can also buy potted trees to keep in the garden. Both St Francis hospice and Tring Scouts usually offer tree pick-up and composting services for a donation. Look out for a letterbox drop from the Scouts or contact St Francis hospice at www.stfrancis.org.uk/support-us/events/detail/christmas-tree-collection / 01442 869 555.