

## Holiday Waste Reduction

The holiday season is filled with friends and family coming together in celebration. Gifts can be a big part of those celebrations and traditionally, a lot of waste is generated. Here are some easy steps you can take to help reduce the amount of waste generated and energy used.

### Food:

- Reduce the volume of food you make, or guests bring.
- Donate extra food to food banks, soup kitchens, and shelters.
- Compost food waste. Add food waste to your home compost bin or start a bin if you don't already have one. If a guest has a compost bin, ask them to add any waste food to their compost pile.



### Trees:

- Real trees can be difficult to deal with after the holidays are over. Consider an artificial tree which, with proper care, can be used for many years.
- If your preference is a natural tree, consider one that can be replanted. For cut trees, see if your municipality offers mulching or composting options. If you have the proper equipment, you can mulch your own tree for use in your gardens and flower beds.
- Reserve a living, potted Christmas tree from a local service for the season, then return to the service after the holidays (for example, Social Greenery (<https://socialgreenery.com/>)).

### Donate:

- After your children have opened their new toys and clothing, consider donating old toys or gently worn clothing items to local charities.
- Many other items that are in good, working condition can be donated.

### Recycle:

- Much of what we throw away can be recycled – many types of paper, plastics, and, in particular, cardboard. Check with your municipal solid waste department to see if they offer a recycling program and what materials they can accept.
- Many large box stores recycle their cardboard. Contact the store manager to see if you might be able to bring them the cardboard mailing boxes you received. As an alternative, many homeowner associations have their own social media pages or have a presence on various neighborhood apps. Let your neighbors know you have unneeded mailing boxes to give away.

# Holiday Waste Reduction

- When you get a new gaming system or computer, consumers now have convenient options for recycling old electronics. Many computer, TV and cell phone manufacturers, as well as electronics retailers, offer free or low-cost take back programs or sponsor recycling events.
- Try to buy products or send cards made of recycled content to complete the recycling process. You can also buy cards that are biodegradable and impregnated with seeds so that when they holiday season is over, the recipient can plant them in their garden!

DEQ's Recycling Programs webpage has additional information about recycling various consumer products, electronics, and used tires. <https://www.deq.ok.gov/land-protection-division/recycling/>

## Reuse:

- When shopping, take reusable cloth bags with you to reduce the amount of paper and plastic bags that are disposed.
- Gift bags, boxes, ribbons, and tissue paper can frequently be reused. Save them and use them next holiday season.
- Consider alternatives to traditional wrapping paper. Children's toys wrapped in the Sunday comics or an old map are great alternatives.

## Reduce:

- Use washable dishes and utensils, rather than disposable. Compostable items are also a great option.
- Use LED lighting for your indoor and outdoor decorations. They use much less energy than conventional lighting and last far longer. If possible, installing a timer system to regulate when the lights come on and go off can save additional energy.
- Consider giving gifts that require little or no packaging. Homemade treats, gift cards to a favorite establishment, or tickets to a concert or sporting event make great gifts for that relative who has everything.
- Shop second hand. This could be for holiday decorations, gifts, or cold weather garments.

The holidays are a wonderful time of year and with just a few simple steps, you can do your part to reduce, reuse, and recycle while enjoying your celebrations. If you have any questions, please let us know at [AskDEQ@deq.ok.gov](mailto:AskDEQ@deq.ok.gov) or by calling (800) 869-1400.

