

HOLIDAY TIPS FROM THE CFS STAFF!

1. It takes years for anything, even organic things like Christmas trees, to breakdown in a landfill. Since most landfills are compacted so tightly, there's usually not enough air for trash (including trees) to biodegrade. Tree recyclers turn trees into wood chips, which can be used to prevent erosion on beaches and in parks, hiking trails and playgrounds. Charlotte operates a seasonal curbside tree-recycling program. Or, enter your zip to find a nearby recycling program through the National Christmas Tree Association website -

<http://www.christmastree.org/home.cfm>

2. Five strings of standard holiday lights burning 24 hours x 30 days could cost over \$150 on your power bill. To save energy during the holidays, power down when possible, use a timer or use solar or LED lights. Be safe: lights left on all night cause about 150 Christmas tree fires per year in the USA.

3. Christmas cards: save them to use as package tags next year. Simply cut off the personalized back and then laying the whole card on the front of the package with to/from info written somewhere and the whole thing secured with the ribbon.

4. Rapping about wrapping: eco-conscious package wrap ideas. Use old maps (you know the one you got from AAA when you drove during vacation last year). Sew handy: make your own gift bags from fabric (Christmas fabric goes on sale after the holidays!) or old pillow cases. Plain old' newspaper or brown grocery bags can be decorated by kids with paint or crayons and tied with a colorful ribbon (to re-use, of course). If you won't give up traditional wrapping paper, buy recycled gift wrap. If every American family wrapped just three gifts in 100% recycled wrap, we'd save enough paper to cover 45,000 football fields. After all the presents have been opened, save all your paper gift wrap scraps, run it through the shredder and use it in your shipping or storage boxes (bye, bye Styrofoam)!

A better Gift Box. In all likelihood, your family already reuses boxes when mailing packages to relatives. Make them more festive by gluing or taping scraps of saved wrapping paper to the inside flaps of the box.

A new life for old cards. What's the perfect way to recycle Yuletide greeting cards and keep your kids busy on a wintry day? Have them cut their favorite images and details from the cards and then turn them into gift tags or tape to a window for a cherry display.

Brown paper packages. Show your green holiday spirit by going brown with holiday wrapping paper. Simply stamp the paper with a cookie cutter dipped in paint. When the paint is dry, wrap the present and tie it with a ribbon. Or, have children color their favorite holiday image on the paper!

Greener Christmas decorations:

Pine cones can be "improved" with a little paint, glitter or artificial snow. (**Artificial snow** can be made with a mixture of talc and granulated sugar - mix 50:50) If you are a bit more ambitious you can hang them on the tree. Just attach a bauble and small piece of looped ribbon with some hot glue or bonding glue. An easier thing is to set them into a small display together. Plasticine does quite well for this. Add liberal dusting of artificial snow.

Homemade Christmas decorations such as stars and moons can be made for your tree with standard play dough. Mix together flour and salt (4 measures of flour to one of salt). Add water and knead to make a smooth dough that does not stick to the sides of the bowl. Use cookie cutters or model pieces individually. Bake your creations on greaseproof paper. You can cook them in a microwave or conventional oven. Pricking them gently before baking makes for a more even result (releases gases). Add a little cream of tartar if you want a harder product - about 2 teaspoonfuls per cup of flour. You can also add food color but don't be too generous as it may impair the strength of the dough.

Six Simple Tips for Inexpensive and Eco-Friendly Tabletop Decor

Need a last-minute centerpiece for your holiday table? Everything you need is already at your fingertips, says party-planning expert Marcy Blum.

1. Think outside the table. Incorporating decorations typically used other places on the table is refreshing and cool. Pick up leaves off the ground outside and place them on your table to bring a fall-feeling into your home. Filling clear bowls with cranberries, sticks, or even Christmas lights (LEDs recommended!) can make for a bold centerpiece.
2. Use traditional things in a non-traditional way. Use small gourds, pumpkins, or tree ornaments as name cards by writing the name with a sharpie and setting it down on top of each person's plate.
3. Things don't have to match, even if you think they do. Mix up plates or dining ware that you have in your house in a color theme of the holiday—browns, reds, oranges, yellows, or ivory work well for a Thanksgiving or autumn setting, for example. You don't have to buy new stuff or have complete sets to have a beautiful table.
4. Use food as part of your decor. Huge bowls of apples, lemons, or pomegranates are beautiful, edible, and compostable.
5. Use common scents. Don't underestimate the old trick of making your house smell good with everyday-ingredients potpourri. A pot of cinnamon sticks on the stove or chestnuts in the oven can go a long way. You can create seasonal ambience without artificial fragrance or expensive candles; it's better for your health and your pocketbook, too.
6. Behold the power of the potted plant. Plants can be much lovelier than dried or cut flowers, are typically grown locally, and don't have to be flown-in or disposed of after your event, like cut flowers do. Mums, for example, are inexpensive yet festive, and will last for months to come or can even be planted in the ground. Talk about reuse!

Finally:

- Reduce the size of your outdoor lighting displays, or shorten the time they are on
 - Use environmentally friendly wrapping paper
 - Give "battery-free" gifts
 - If you buy a Christmas tree, buy a live balled one to plant after the holidays
- Use metal flatware and glass dishes instead of plastic or paper for holiday parties.
- If you haven't already, begin the New Year by replacing at least three regular light bulbs with the more energy efficient compact fluorescents (CFLs).
- Use those holiday sweaters and lower the home thermostat to 68 degrees. Or even better, replace your thermostat with a new, energy efficient programmable thermostat.

Happy Holidays from the Center for Sustainability



**CENTRAL PIEDMONT
COMMUNITY COLLEGE**