



DECEMBER REDUCE

***How to be green? It's very simple:
Consume less; Share more.***

As the winter holidays approach, so advances our frenzy of consumption – with the holidays becoming more about stuff than relationships and generosity of spirit. Against this backdrop, December is the ideal time to reflect on how we celebrate and how this impacts our environment, our children and ourselves.

Over the past few years, companies have become greener, responding to consumer demand for less toxic products and more sustainably produced goods. But with this has come the idea that we can somehow shop our way to a healthier planet. The truth is that global warming, deforestation and other environmental problems are not going to be solved by switching brands.

Resources are needed to manufacture and transport all products. From the special trucks needed to pick up recyclables, to the fuel needed to power those trucks, to the energy used to reprocess waste products back into something useful. Of course recycling is better than production of new products from raw materials – it's better to recycle a can than strip mine a mountain for more aluminum. But still better is to find ways to reduce consumption of that resource, so that it never enters the waste stream.

When You Shop . . .

- ❖ **SHOP THOUGHTFULLY AND AVOID IMPULSE BUYING.** Look for things that will last; not just in durability, but in design. Buy things you will like for a long time.

Use this approach for gifts as well. Trinkets purchased simply to fulfill gift giving obligations often end up in the trash. For kids, consider one special gift, instead of many little toys. For others, perhaps a donation in their name, or something homemade (baked goods in reusable tins are a terrific gift).

- ❖ **CHOOSE PRODUCTS WITH MINIMAL PACKAGING.** Look at the packaging of a product. How much trash will it generate the moment it is opened? What are your alternatives?
- ❖ **RE-GIFTING – IT’S A GREEN WORD.** Confer with family and friends over the idea of re-gifting. Younger children often covet an older relative’s toys. Why not make those actual gifts? Does it really need to be brand new with a lot of packaging (often frustrating to open) to make it a cherished gift? Is that what we want our children to believe? Used toy cars, pre-owned dolls, pre-loved trading cards all make great holiday “filler” (for those gigantic stockings, or over those eight long nights).
- ❖ **WRAP GREEN.** You know that big black plastic bag into which you throw all the wrapping paper and packaging? Instead, try reusable gift bags that can be given back and forth each year. If you must wrap, try decorated newspaper. Another alternative is using fabric squares that can be tied with a ribbon. The brightly colored fabric can be used year after year. Best yet – don’t wrap.
- ❖ **RULE OF THUMB ALL YEAR ROUND: USE WHAT YOU HAVE.** In general think before you buy any product. Do you really need it? How long will it last (*i.e* will it be in the trash inside of six months)? If it’s from the dollar aisle, chances are you don’t need it.
- ❖ **AND FINALLY REMEMBER . . .** Reducing your consumption will clearly save you money, which is a pretty nice thing in these tough economic times.