

Some suggestions on how to ease off the rampant consumerism – and save the planet's natural resources – without being a Scrooge at Christmas.

Christmas Trees



It's true that fake plastic trees last for years – and nowadays they can look very realistic. But they do take enormous amounts of energy to manufacture. And it's yet more synthetic waste to be disposed of in the future. So let's look at the options in more detail.

1. Artificial trees

If you've got a fake tree already, keep using it – make it last as long as possible. But look into more environmentally-sound options when it eventually comes to replacing it.

2. Real trees

If you want to be reassured that your tree has been grown sustainably, not in a way that's environmentally damaging, look for the FSC-certification logo. If you want a tree that's certified as organic and pesticide-free, get one that's approved by the Soil Association.

3. Grow your own

Buying a potted tree with roots lets you grow it outside and use it again next year, reducing its environmental impact and costing you less. But they do need some looking after, and you'll need a big pot.

Alternatively, if you're feeling a bit radical or non-traditional, get a large perennial indoor plant – like a yucca, palm, fig etc – and just decorate it at Christmas time.

4. Recycling real trees

Far more Christmas trees get recycled now than even 10 years ago. Most councils have allocated locations where people can leave their tree after Christmas. Alternatively you can usually take them to your nearest municipal tip/recycling centre.

The trees are shredded, and then used as mulch on plants in parks, or on woodland paths (for a lovely instant pine-forest smell). Or else rotted down and recycled as compost

Gifts



5. Get creative.

Home-made crafts or foods are lovely alternatives to the usual shop-bought stuff. Or, if you're really trying to cut back on the consumerism, why not offer to do something nice for someone instead?

6. Alternative Ideas

There are increasingly organisations who are trying to produce eco friendly solutions For example “Wool and the Gang”.

Wool and the Gang is a global fashion brand which is powered by the maker movement. Through hand-made garments produced with natural yarn it creates high quality, low impact fashion.

The Gang is all about harnessing the power in your hands – knitting your own clothes is sustainable and satisfying. The gang also believes that harnessing our collective power is critical to tackling climate change.

Just explore different ways of giving gifts!

Food



Why not try cutting down (or out) the meat this Christmas – at least for some days of the festive break? According to the Soil Association, "food is the single most important, everyday way for people to reduce their own environmental impact". Here are some alternative festive food tips to help you shop and cook for an Earth-friendly feast.

7. Vegetarian and vegan recipes

As Benjamin Zephaniah might say, why not be nicer to turkeys at Christmas? And it's good for you too. Nowadays veggie doesn't have to mean predictable omelettes, cheese salads or risottos. Or even necessarily the standard nut roast for vegans at Christmas.

Have a look at the [Vegetarian Society](#), [Jamie Oliver](#) or the excellent [Vegan Food & Living](#) for hundreds of fantastic recipes. And there are some extra tasty festive treats on the [Vegan Society website](#) – including vegan brandy butter, and even vegan eggnog.

8. Organic meat

If you can't get past the meat craving, try choosing organic and free-range, and support small-scale farming wherever possible.

It might be a bit more expensive, but it's better to buy less than more of the cheap and cheerless intensively-farmed meat. Companies like [Abel & Cole](#) run dependable organic delivery schemes, and they offer seasonal vegetables, meat and dairy packages.

If you do happen to indulge in seasonal meaty excesses, why not eat less meat after Christmas to make up for it? Eating less but better meat would be a great New Year's resolution.

9. Cut food waste

When you're food shopping, try and choose things that are light on packaging, or buy loose items.

And if you end up over-catering, don't just bin what's left. Transforming leftovers can be a great way to create new meals, save money and cut waste. Try the [BBC Good Food leftovers recipes](#) for ideas – or challenge your family to suggest recipes with whatever you've got in the fridge. Classic winter dishes like turkey pie and bubble and squeak are perfect for making the most of your leftovers, not to mention Brussels sprout curry.

If you have too many leftovers, see what you can freeze, or why not donate some to a neighbour. Compost any other waste.

Decorations



Most of us love a bit of festive decoration and fancy wrapping, and who doesn't like getting Christmas cards? But research suggests that the paper waste over the Christmas period is equivalent to 5-12 million litres of biofuel – enough to power a bus to go to the moon 20 times.

10. Home Made

Why not recycle or make your own Christmas decorations? It's a great excuse to have fun, and keep kids busy, if there's any around. You can also try getting creative with dried fruit peel, pine cones, Christmas tree offcuts and the like.

11. Cut your card footprint

An unbelievable 1.5 billion Christmas cards are thrown away by UK households each year, according to Imperial College researchers.

You could cut down on cards by signing one of the cards at the back of St Andrews and St Michaels and don't forget to read all the messages in it from your friends!

Any money that you save could be donated to charity – perhaps and Eco-Charity such as Renewable World.

Renewable World is a registered charity which tackles poverty using renewable energy. We support the provision of affordable renewable energy services to improve incomes, health and education in the developing world. <https://renewable-world.org/>

Recycle



Please try to recycle as much as you can but try to ensure that it is suitable for recycling

12. Christmas Cards

The [Forest Stewardship Council](#) (FSC) have taken up the mantle of Christmas card recycling and will be collecting your Christmas cards for recycling with collecting boxes in branches of Sainsburys. They will also be collecting used wrapping paper and defunct fairy lights as well.

But you will have to act quickly - the collecting boxes will only be available from Boxing Day until 8 January 2018.

If you are not able to take your cards to a branch of Sainsbury's you can still recycle them by putting them in your household recycling collection. However you should not place cards that have glitter or embellishments such as bows, jewels, ribbons etc. Either remove these from the cards before recycling or place those cards in your domestic waste.

13. Wrapping Paper

This can be recycled at Sainsbury's – see above or just put in your normal recycling bin.

However, not all wrapping is paper! Try the “Scrunch Test” by scrunching it into a ball. If it springs back into shape then its plastic and will have to go to landfill in the ordinary bin. If it stays crunched then recycle it – removing as much Selotape as possible.

14. Cardboard packaging

Recycle in the normal recycling bin but please remove Selotape, plastic address labels etc.

15. Stamps

Bring them to church and put them in the collecting box