



Sustainability @ Smathers

UF Libraries Green Team Newsletter 2012 Holiday Special Edition

The cluster of winter holidays we celebrate are generally times of rest, fun, and generosity. Unfortunately, these holidays can also take a tax on our environment: shopping from big box stores can hurt our local businesses, and lots of non-recyclable products like giftwrap and plastic decorations enter our landfills. The members of the Libraries Green Team have put together a list of suggestions for ways to make all of our holidays more sustainable.



Sustainable Holiday Trees



While a plastic tree may seem more sustainable because it can be used forever, the truth is most fake trees are discarded after several years' use. The plastic in fake trees mean that they will last forever in a landfill. You can still be sustainable while decorating your home with greenery though!

If you buy a live tree with a root ball, the tree can be kept inside in a decorative pot for several years, and can be re-planted outside when it grows too big to be kept indoors.

If you can't commit to re-planting a tree, a cut tree is still a more sustainable option than a plastic tree. Cut trees are replaced by tree farms; for every tree cut, up to three new trees are planted. We even have a local tree farm here in Gainesville, and several others nearby; you can select and cut your tree yourself and support a local business!

- [Unicorn Hill Farm](#)
- [BK Cedars](#)
- [Neilson's Christmas Tree Farm](#)
- [Gibbs Christmas Tree Farm](#)
- [Nicholas's Christmas Tree Farm](#)



Image by [Chiot's Run](#)

Cut trees can also be "treecycled" into mulch. In Gainesville you have two options for recycling your tree: [Wood Resource Recovery](#) and [Phifer Solid Waste Collection Center](#). If you are willing to cut your tree into smaller pieces, [Alachua County](#) will also collect and recycle your tree as yard waste.

Handmade Holiday Decorations

Homemade ornaments and decorations can go a long way toward reducing our carbon footprint and helping us become more sustainable. Here are some ideas and links to resources that may spark proactive projects to keep your holidays green and sustainable.

- Recycle bottle caps into [ornaments](#), flair for your ribbon bows, or even this [wood and bottle cap tree](#).
- Make a holiday wreath from recycled materials. Instructions can be found [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).
- Use cut evergreen garlands, swags, and centerpieces. While the fake variety can be used for multiple years, they are not recyclable like the real thing. Add nuts, acorns, pinecones, and twigs. Add fruit, berries, holly, flowers, etc. for color and flair.
- Dehydrate citrus fruits like lemon, lime, grapefruit, and orange and use as adornments, or to make garlands, or ornaments for your tree.
- Reuse old candles into new ones by melting them into new ones using cans, paper jugs, or old teacups. Add ice to your mold before pouring in the wax to create a lattice effect for your candle.
- Reuse cards by making them into ornaments, gift boxes, gift tags, or bookmarks.



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Alternative Holiday Cards and Gift Wrap

While gift-giving comes from a place of love, the truth is that gift wrap and decorations are one of the more wasteful aspects of Western holiday culture. Gift wrap is generally non-recyclable due to the dyes, laminates, glitter and plastics included in the paper, and the general low quality of the paper. Fortunately a few simple steps can ensure that this aspect of your holidays is more sustainable.

- Use e-cards instead of paper cards. E-cards are available at [Care2](#) and [The Nature Conservancy](#).
- Use fabric to wrap your gifts instead of using wrapping paper. Check out this [tutorial](#) for some instructions.
- Make reusable gift bags from old clothing. Tutorials can be found [here](#) and [here](#).
- Repurpose old holiday cards into gift tags or decorations. Or, buy gift tags that grow; [Botanical Paperworks](#) and [Bloomin](#) sell stationery that can be planted after the message has been read.
- Wrap gifts in reusable shopping bags, which can be used again after the gift is open.
- If you do give or receive a gift in a bought gift bag, consider keeping the gift bag to reuse next year.
- If you really want your recipient to have the experience of tearing off paper, use old newspapers, magazines, or paper shopping bags. Who doesn't love brown paper packages tied up with string?
- Place your gift inside of useful or decorated recycled containers such as baskets, coffee or cookie tins, plant pots, canvas totes, old jars, etc..



Image by [Mrs. Jenny Ryan](#)



Image by [Chiot's Run](#)



Alternative Gift Giving



Think outside the big-box gift box this holiday season and buy locally - buy differently.

- Chocolates are always great gifts! Buy [Armadillo Chocolates](#). Small batch and handcrafted chocolates and confections made in Gainesville.
- Give an edible plant from the [Edible Plant Project](#) – Second Wednesday of every month – 4-7pm plant sale at the Union St. Farmer's Market in Gainesville.

Edible Plant Project ... Promoting edible landscaping and local food abundance in North Central Florida

- Give some organic soap from [Moksa Organics](#) – a carbon neutral local soap company.
- Buy Fair Trade gifts from around the world at [Alternatives Global Market Place](#), a veritable treasure trove of artistry of all types from the furthest reaches of the globe. Not to be missed! Gifts for all ages and tastes.
- Give an [Angie's List](#) Gift Membership. Angie's List is a 100% consumer generated review site that gives you peace of mind!
- Attend [Blue Oven Kitchen's Winter Gift Fair](#) at the Jones B-side, 203 SW 2nd Avenue, December 8 – 2-5PM. Get your holiday gifts and goodies from local artisans, farmers, vendors, and independent businesses!
- Give the gift that keeps on giving and has the potential to change lives— give a Kiva Card. [Kiva](#) cards lets individuals lend as little as \$25 to help create opportunity around the world. The recipient of your gift will be able to choose a borrower to support. When the loan is repaid, they can use the funds again and again to make even more loans!

