



## Dreaming of a Green Christmas

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Having a "Green Christmas" can be more than making sure the fruitcake is organic. The roots of a sustainable Christmas holiday start with the Christmas tree and all the gift-giving that takes place around it.

Every year, over 50 million Christmas trees are cut down, according to *The New Green Christmas* by Samm Coombs (Halo Books, 1991). Families can reduce this number and the money they spend by planting their own tree to keep for generations to come.

Cut trees can be recycled at nurseries that have compost facilities. The branches of the trees are good material for individual compost piles, and the trunk can be saved for firewood.

Trees also make good gifts. The Give a Tree Foundation sells two-year-old Colorado Blue Spruce seedlings packaged in recyclable Enviro-Tubes (available at [www.giveatreefundraising.com](http://www.giveatreefundraising.com)). People also can arrange to have a gift tree planted in the state or country of their choice through Tree Givers ([www.treegivers.com](http://www.treegivers.com)).

There are many other ways to give "ecogifts." Eco Express ([www.ecoexpress.com](http://www.ecoexpress.com)) creates and sells environmentally friendly gifts such as candles and baskets filled with food harvested in the rainforest. All the packaging is biodegradable.

"We sell high-quality products to help the earth," said employee Tamar Rafael, who said she has her hands full with orders this season.

Other eco-friendly gifts that last include compost containers, for in the kitchen or in the backyard. A long-lasting gift that might get daily use is a travel mug, perhaps with a package of shade-grown organic coffee, grown by a local collective.

If there's time, green gift-givers also can make their own creative and caring gifts. A garden-starter kit requires seeds and tools in a basket. A good gift for kids is a home-made terrarium. To make this, 1 to 2 inches of potting soil needs to be placed inside of a clear jar. Plants such as ferns are ideal for a terrarium. When this mini ecosystem is sealed with a lid and placed in sunlight, it transpires, or the leaves release moisture, creating "rain" for the terrarium.

Gifts can be wrapped in recycled paper or paper alternatives. These include bandannas, stockings, cookie jars and old egg cartons for breakables. Recycled bows and ribbons can add finishing touches, as do alternatives such as cotton yarn, twine, shoelaces and scarves. Gifts for dogs can be tied with a leash, and electrical gifts can be wrapped up in an extension cord.

Recycling gifts can also be a good way to go green in a sustainable sense. A long-unused piece of jewelry, a cd no longer listened to, or a good used book may be a great gift for someone on a green-giver's list.

Green is a perennial color of the Christmas holiday season. It symbolizes festive Christmas trees and wreaths. But it also may represent money spent by consumers, who plunge a lot of "green" into the economy with money spent on gifts. For the environmentally savvy, however, green means an earth-friendly celebration that will carry on through the New Year.