

Alternative Christmas Ideas

Gifts

- Wrap your gifts in cloth or newspaper (e.g. comics, articles on green subjects); recycle wrapping paper.
- Make the gifts yourself:
 - Sew, knit, quilt, cook, sculpt, hammer, write, draw, paint, ...
 - Create a gift using materials from others, after asking them for components as your own gifts, e.g. stories to collect in a book, squares of interesting cloth for a quilt.
 - As Chanukah gifts, give little books on being green, a cloth shopping bag, compact foldable nylon bags.
- Shop at eco-friendly stores selling non-toxic products
<http://boywithnoname.com/2006/11/14/eco-friendly-stores-in-toronto/>
 - Ecoexistence, 21 Vaughan Road S of St Clair
 - Grass Roots, 372 Danforth Avenue & 408 Bloor Street West.
 - Toronto Hemp Company, 637 Yonge Street
- Shop for fair trade gifts:
 - Handicrafts from Sue Berlove's CraftsFromBolivia
<http://www.craftsfrombolivia.com/home.htm>
 - Jewellery from Ten Thousand Villages <http://www.tenthousandvillages.com/>
- Especially for families and groups:
 - Mandate "pre-ownership" for some/most/all gifts.
 - For kids especially, leave a series of clues to find the gift(s).
 - Select inexpensive gifts randomly from a "suits anyone" collection.
- Buy an energy audit (which can earn the recipient government rebates if recommended work is done within 18 months, especially good for a new home owner).
- Refrain from giving entirely.
- Regift.

Charitable Contributions "In Honour of ...":

- From World Vision donate animals, clean water, clothing, shelter.
http://donate.wvus.org/OA_HTML/xxwvibeCCtpSctDspRte.jsp?section=10047
- Adopt an OXFAM animal (dolphin, elephant, Orang-utan, panda, polar bear).
<http://www.wwf-adopt-an-animal.org/>
- Restore sight through Operation Eyesight.
<http://www.operationeyesight.ca/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=191>
- The Nature Conservancy: for \$40 buy an acre of land, or for \$80 an acre of owl habitat.
<http://www.nature.org/>
- Shop or donate to the Trans-Canada Trail. <http://www.tctrail.ca/donatenow.php>
- Give food banks what they really need, like beans, and especially money:
 - Daily Bread Food Bank <http://www.dailybread.ca/>
 - Second Harvest
- Donate to a World Accord's Hunger Challenge: \$35 will build an indoor cooking stove, \$75 buys a goat to prevent malnourishment in infants.
<http://www.worldaccord.org/index.php/activities/hungerchallenge>
- Shop at, or give to a campaign at UNICEF: e.g. Stop Climate Chaos, End Water Poverty

Celebrations

- Use local food as much as possible, e.g. Mennonite, STOP
- Deliver unused extra food to shelters and food banks.
- Use cloth instead of paper napkins.
- Limit travel: Don't go too far away; use eco friendly conveyances; stay at home.

Decorations

- Decorate a live, potted tree or bush, then plant outside in the spring.
- A 'reusable' tree will be environmentally friendly (and inexpensive) if used for years; if it's not Christmas without the seasonal smell, buy a pine-scented auto refresher.
- Use LED lights, inside and out, or no lights at all
- Reuse and recycle.

Outreach

- Host a far-from-home UofToronto student for Christmas dinner (International Student Centre. <http://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/~isc/>)

Reject the occasion entirely

- On Christmas Eve go out to dinner and a movie. (Most cinemas and many Chinese restaurants are open the night of December 24th, but you should check first.)