



## HOW TO GIVE A GREEN GIFT MARGARET AMBROSE

*The joy is definitely in the giving, when you give a gift that leaves minimal impact on the environment. Here's how:*

### 1. Give a service, not a product

Instead of buying another thing to sit on a shelf collecting dust, why not purchase someone to do the dusting?

The environmental impact of a product goes well beyond the raw materials of which it is made. There are also the carbon emissions, water used in its production, and transportation, which to the planet, is more of a curse than a gift.

Give a gift voucher for a cleaner, a gardener, a massage, a year's pass to a museum. And if you are a little strapped for cash, you can make vouchers for services you will provide yourself, such as child-minding, grocery shopping or dog-walking.

### 2. Buy gifts that keep giving

By giving your friends memberships to an environment group, you ensure your gift goes a lot further than the smile on their face when they open it. Money from memberships allow campaigners to lobby government and big business to make large-scale changes to protect the environment.

### 3. Shop in a green frame of mind

If you do purchase a gift, first consider its green credentials. How much packaging is used? Does it use certified organic (pesticide free) ingredients? Is it recycled and recyclable? Ideally you should purchase an item that is hearty and has a long life so it won't need to be replaced too soon.

### 4. Support your local businesses

There's a huge amount of difference in carbon emissions between a product manufactured overseas and one created locally. Choose gifts that made locally and you'll be reducing the carbon footprint of your gift as well as supporting local industry.

### 5. Reduce paper use

Cards and gift-wrap all add up to excessive paper use, and to what end? Two seconds of excitement before the receiver rips it off to get to the gift. You can still wrap presents and send pretty cards, without

*Recycled wrapping-paper and ribbons are a gift to the planet!*

*PHOTO: Ekaterina Monakhova / iStock photo*



sacrificing our forests by making sure that the wrapping paper you buy is recycled and recyclable. Paper that is labeled 100 per cent post-consumer waste is made entirely of recycled paper, without a single tree being felled.

Better still, keep the wrapping you receive on present and reuse it for your own gift-giving.

### 6. Reduce the number of gifts

Really, the last thing we need in our lives

is more useless stuff. Stuff can accumulate at an alarming rate and only serves to create clutter, cause storage headaches and harm the planet – in its production, its distribution and eventually in its disposal. For almost any celebration – Christmas, birthdays, weddings – you can team up with others and buy one gift. Pooling your money will also mean you will be able to purchase a better quality item that has a longer life, and one the receiver will actually appreciate.