

'Sustain' a green holiday

Here are ways to cut down on the amount of trash we create

During the holidays, the average Californian creates 25 percent more trash than usual. This year, plan a greener holiday that is gentler on our local environment and easier on your wallet.

Before

Celebrations with friends and family are undoubtedly the most joyous part of the season. Set precedence for a greener gathering with your invitation; use an E-vite e-mailed invitation to eliminate paper and mailing costs.

Bring your own bags when you shop and buy local, fresh foods whenever possible.

If a tree is part of your decoration plans, consider whether an artificial, live or cut tree is best for you. An artificial tree can be reused for many years. A live tree can be planted in your yard to enjoy every day. Cut trees benefit the environment because local tree farms offset greenhouse gases. If you choose a

cut tree, ensure that it is recyclable: do not use flocking or tinsel.

During

Using durable and reusable tablecloths, napkins, plates, glasses and silverware will make your guests feel special and save tons of extra waste. For larger parties, rent the service ware or hire a caterer and they'll handle the clean up, too.

Let guests know where to put recyclables. Save plastic containers and use them to send guests home with leftovers if they like, or take extra food to a shelter.

After

A deep-fried turkey is delectable, but what do you do with the leftover peanut oil? If you don't know someone who uses bio-fuel for their car, take your used oil to a household hazardous waste drop-off facility. Never put it down the drain or in the trash.

The day after Thanksgiving is the

biggest retail shopping day of the year. Before you hit the stores, consider those on your gift list and what they really want and need. Gift certificates reduce wrapping and waste, and ensure that your gift is something they'll really use. Is there something you can make or do that will mean more to them than a store-bought gift? Consider gifts of time you share together creating memories they'll cherish.

If you plan to shop the sales, remember to bring your own bags. Buy recycled, Energy Star-rated and locally made goods. For more "green" gift ideas, visit www.protectyourcentralcoast.org/holiday.html and tune in next month for Part 2 of this column.

Happy holidays!

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