

A gift for planet Earth: Ways to save energy during the holidays

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LED holiday lights last five times longer than regular holiday lights and use 75 percent less energy.

Penn State's Office of Sustainability offers suggestions for saving energy this holiday season.

Use **LED** holiday lights

Lydia Vandenberg, marketing assistant for Penn State's Sustainability Office, said the University's Office of Physical Plant is encouraging students, faculty and staff to turn off their lights when they're not in the room. Additionally, she said, the benefits of LED holiday lights outweigh those of traditional incandescent lights.

"They last five times longer than regular holiday lights and use 75 percent less energy," Vandenberg said. "Plus, when you drop LED

lights, they keep working.”

Creative tree decorating

Instead of using tinsel and other plastic materials, try stringing popcorn and cranberry garlands. These can be put outside after the holidays to feed birds.

Also, Vandenberg added that decorating with “gingerbread ornaments will not only dress up the tree, but add a sweet aroma to the room.”

Give green gifts

When thinking about giving or asking for an electronic gift, the U.S. Department of Energy suggests purchasing ENERGY STAR electronics. Rechargeable batteries also make a good gift for digital cameras and other electronics.

Also, consider making a charity donation in someone else’s name or teaching a loved one a new skill like knitting or playing the guitar.

Buy local

Give gifts from a wide selection of products made locally, such as those created in Happy Valley. Some gift ideas include soup and dip mixes, fruit jams, Berkey Creamery gift certificates, a variety of chocolate delicacies, Amish cheeses and more. Visit www.localharvest.org to find products near you.

Combine errands, reduce fuel use

Holiday shoppers may find themselves making many trips to the mall,

the grocery store and other places around the holidays, which can use a lot of gas. Planning trips more efficiently and combining errands into one trip saves a lot of energy.

Wrap presents while being sustainable

Instead of buying wrapping paper, try being creative with hand towels, newspaper comics, bags, old maps or other used or reusable materials. Vandenberg said, “This creates less waste and can still be just as pretty and fun.”

Provided by Penn State

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