



# The Daily Gleaner

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## **Wishing for Less Willful Waste this Christmas!**

In theory, the holidays are a great time for home cooking, baking treats, and adding that special touch to food and gifts. In reality, the holidays can be quite a hectic time of traveling, and family and friends coming and going for visits and meals. And as we've all experienced, many holiday parties and dinners and last minute obligations often leads to picking up something in a hurry that was pre-made or pre-packaged.

So in the midst of the holiday frenzy in the coming weeks, let us try to consider our consumption, because over-consumption leads to waste – and we all know firsthand how wasteful the holidays are. It can't be disputed – we purchase things that often end up in the garbage or recycling bin.

So this year, why not make a commitment for you and your family to try something different? Instead of buying colored or shiny Christmas wrapping paper, which is *not recyclable* at the Fredericton Regional Solid Waste Commission because the dyes will actually contaminate paper products, try using plain old brown wrapping paper and decorate it yourself. If the gift is for the kids, decorate with stickers of their favorite things. Other wrapping ideas could be with old maps, pictures from old calendars, or favorite pictures printed on scrap paper. Why? Because all of these paper materials can easily be thrown in the grey box once the gifts are unwrapped – just make sure the brown paper wrapping does not have a poly or wax coating.

According the book titled “The Recyclers Handbook” by EarthWorks Group, the annual waste from gift wrap and shopping bags in Canada equals about 545,000 tonnes. If everyone wrapped just three gifts in reused paper or fabric gift bags, it would save enough paper to cover 45,000 hockey rinks!

If you receive presents in gift bags stuffed with tissue paper, be sure to reuse these materials because they *cannot* be recycled. For instance at my parent's house, my mom keeps a big box of Christmas wrapping supplies including different sizes of gift bags and different colored tissue paper that gets reused each year. At least I know I never have to buy new stuff to wrap gifts with!

In the spirit of trying different approaches this holiday season, why not get in the habit of sending your friends and family E-cards as opposed to purchasing paper cards? It is true that paper cards can be recycled (and please do!), but let's be realistic – there are many cards that likely don't make it to the grey box. Hallmark sells 2.1 billion cards at Christmas time – and this is in the United States alone! And if you still have not been bit by the electronic bug just yet, there are many post-consumer recycled material greeting cards you can buy, for instance at Westminster Books on King Street.

So when you ask yourself, “What can my family do to reduce waste this holiday season?” these are just a few ideas but keep in mind the most important thing is to know what can and cannot be recycled, and choose recyclable materials! According to the chapter ‘Less Stuff’ in David Suzuki's ‘Green Guide’: “By reducing your consumption of goods by 1 kilogram, you can save approximately 200 kilograms (440

pounds) of natural resources and prevent 200 kilograms of waste and pollution. By this measure, individual acts of conservation can have a huge effect.”

Merry Christmas to all!

*Jessica Scott is an Environmental Policy Researcher with Fredericton's Green Matters Team. For more information on how to reduce your waste at Christmas check out [www.greenmattersfredericton.ca](http://www.greenmattersfredericton.ca). This is Jessica's final column for Green Matters. Thank you Jessica for your environmental commitment, your insights will be missed!*