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Recommended Citation

Georgia Southern University, "Newsroom" (2007). *Newsroom*. 120.
<https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/newsroom/120>

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Department of Biology encourages holiday shoppers and hosts to think “green”

DECEMBER 11, 2007

Many people may be dreaming of a white Christmas, but a group of faculty members and graduate students in the Department of Biology at Georgia Southern University is encouraging shoppers and party hosts to think ‘green’ during the holiday season.

‘If you love the holidays and love the planet, there are lots of easy ways for you to celebrate the season in an eco-friendly manner,’ said instructor Elizabeth Congdon, who gathered a long list of suggestions from her colleagues in the department.

For example, when decorating your home, consider LED lights, which use less energy and last longer than traditional Christmas lights.

When it’s time to buy gifts, to cut down on fuel emissions, purchase them at local shops and boutiques instead of driving out of town. If the gifts you want aren’t available locally, buy them online.

‘Don’t forget that there are lots of Web sites that specialize in ‘green’ gift ideas,’ Congdon said.

Once you’ve got the gifts, don’t cover them in wrapping paper that can only be used one time. Instead, you can: –

- Wrap gifts with old newspapers. For a personal touch, the papers can contain articles that are relevant to the recipient, or the comic section can be used for a child’s gift.
- Deliver gifts in re-useable gift bags.
- Send postcards instead of cards inside of envelopes.
- Better yet, send e-cards instead of paper cards.

‘E-cards are guaranteed to be delivered on time,’ Congdon said. ‘But whatever you decide to use, remember to re-cycle.’

Of course, gifts don’t have to be ‘things.’ They can be things to do, or a charitable donation.

‘Rather than a consumable gift, give something service-oriented, like a spa day or massage, or tickets to a concert or sporting event,’ Congdon said. ‘You can also donate money to a cause on behalf of someone special. Many organizations have links on their Web sites for such donations, and some of them will even send a token gift.’

Here are some tips for people who will be hosting holiday get-togethers of any size:

- Serve your guests with non-disposable plates and utensils.
- Use cloth napkins and towels instead of disposable ones.
- To cut down on transportation costs and fuel emissions by producers, prepare meals with local and/or organic foods.
- Tidy up your home for guests by using environmentally friendly cleaning products that can be found at local health food stores.

'When everybody's finished eating, instead of putting leftovers down the garbage disposal, stir them into your dog's bowl to give him a treat, or add the food to your compost pile,' Congdon said.

'Rotting food now means fertilizer for the spring.'

Finally, when it's time to take your Christmas tree down, don't throw it away. Many communities around the state participate in the 'Bring One for the Chipper' recycling program sponsored by Keep Georgia Beautiful. Mulch from the Christmas trees is used for playgrounds, local government beautification projects, and individual yards.

'If you take your tree to the Bring One for the Chipper' project hosted by Keep Bulloch Beautiful, you'll get a dogwood seedling in return,' Congdon said.

Georgia Southern University, a Carnegie Doctoral/Research University, offers more than 120 degree programs serving nearly 17,000 students. Through eight colleges, the University offers bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs built on more than a century of academic achievement. The University, one of Georgia's largest, is a top choice of Georgia's HOPE scholars and is recognized for its student-centered

approach to education. Visit: www.georgiasouthern.edu