



“Green” Gift-Giving: A Holiday—and Everyday—Guide

Two facts are very clear:

1. Americans are thinking more about their relationship with the everyday actions can reduce their use of fossil fuel and the amount of waste they generate; and

2. Most Americans have way too much stuff!

If you put these two facts together, you will find an opportunity to bring a “green” awareness to your gift giving to friends and family, both during the annual holiday season and throughout the year.

Green gifts have many advantages over traditional gift-giving:

- One size fits all!
- You won't have to wonder if your friend already has that CD or your cousin could use a new sweater;
- No wrapping, packaging, or mailing (reducing solid waste and use of fossil fuel); and
- Your “green” gift communicates to the recipient that you want to share your concern for the earth with them, a priceless gift now and for always.

Below are several ways that you can give wonderful, meaningful “green” gifts to your friends and family—and lighten your impact on the environment at the same time:



1. “Adopt” an endangered animal: Would you like to “give” a panda to someone this holiday season? A snow leopard? A pygmy elephant? How about an orangutan? A donation to the World Wildlife Fund will support its efforts to save these and others of the world's most endangered animals from extinction. For a donation of as little as \$25, the recipient of your gift will receive an

“adoption” certificate and a photo of the animal you have helped.
<http://www.worldwildlife.org>

2. “Adopt” an acre of rainforest: The Nature Conservancy's mission is to preserve the earth's diversity of life, much of which lives in the world's rainforests. Their “Adopt an Acre” program supports the preservation of the rainforests of Costa Rica's Osa Peninsula, which is one of the world's most extraordinary yet highly threatened forests. For a \$50 donation, your recipient will receive a personalized certificate commemorating your gift, a photo of the rainforest, and a year's subscription to Nature Conservancy's award-winning magazine.



<http://www.nature.org>, then go to “gift ideas.”

3. Help a needy family out of poverty: For over sixty years, Heifer International has sought to end poverty and care for the earth by giving poor families a source of economic stability rather than short-term relief. They do this by providing appropriate livestock, training, and related services to small-scale farmers and

communities worldwide. A donation of \$20 to Heifer International will supply a needy family with a flock of chicks or ducks; larger donations will buy shares of a llama, goat, or even a water buffalo. A gift card will be sent to your recipient announcing the special gift you have given them. <http://www.heifer.org>

4. Plant a tree: Through the Arbor Day Foundation, you can make a donation to plant a tree in celebration of a holiday, birth, anniversary, or other special occasion. For as little as \$10, the Foundation will plant a tree in an American national forest that has been destroyed by fire, disease or insects. When you plant a tree to mark a special occasion, you contribute to a healthier environment and provide for future generations. For your donation, a certificate will be sent either to you or to the person or family you have chosen to honor. <http://www.arborday.org>

5. Help someone reduce their carbon “footprint”: Each year, the average American car emits about 10,000 pounds of carbon dioxide (CO₂), a major cause of global warming. For as little as \$29.95, you can purchase a carbon-offset product from Terra Pass which will deviate an equivalent amount of CO₂ by funding carbon-reduction projects such as wind farms and other sources of clean energy. The recipient of your gift will receive a decal and bumper sticker stating that their car’s emissions have been offset by a Terra Pass. <http://www.terrapass.org>



If you still want to give a traditional gift, consider purchasing

- an item from a local farmers’ market (where goods have been transported shorter distances than the items in most stores);
- eco-friendly items such as organic cotton sheets and solar radios (e.g., <http://www.realgoods.com>); or
- items made of recycled materials (e.g., <http://www.findgift.com>).*

* Many other companies provide items similar to those above, and can be easily found online.

Here are some websites with lots of great “green” gift ideas, as well as discussions of the environmental impacts of gift wrapping, holiday cards, Christmas trees, and party planning:

- Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) “Great Green Gift-giving” Guide: <http://www.nrdc.org/cities/living/ggift.asp>
- New American Dream, which also has an alternative gift registry for weddings: <http://www.newdream.org>
- Recycle Works’ <http://www.recycleworks.org>, go to “reduce holiday waste.”

There are literally thousands of other organizations that are doing environmental work similar to those described above, so give yourself, and the earth, a gift and find out more about them: and, most of all,

Happy Gift Giving!
12/07

AMC/JET