

## **MDEQ PROMOTES A “GREEN” HOLIDAY SEASON**

(JACKSON, Miss.) – The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) encourages Mississippians to remember the environment this holiday season through waste reduction, reuse and recycling practices to "green up" the holiday season. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the amount of household trash increases by 25 percent between Thanksgiving and the New Year. MDEQ recommends considering the following green practices:

### **Decorating Ideas**

- Consider having a potted Christmas tree that can be replanted in the wild, in your yard or kept and re-used the next year as your Christmas tree.
- Recycle your Christmas tree if the service is offered in your community or consider using an artificial tree that can be used year after year. Christmas trees can be used for fish spawning habitats, for mulch for public landscaping projects and homeowner use, for boiler fuel, and for lake, river, and beach front stabilization.
- Use trimmed branches from your Christmas tree for wreaths or hearth or table decorations rather than discarding them immediately.
- Decorate your home, tree and centerpiece with holly, cedar, berries, cranberries, popcorn, fruits and nuts - some which can be consumed and all of which can be composted.

### **Gift Shopping and Wrapping**

- When you do your holiday shopping, bring your own re-usable canvas tote bags and avoid using plastic bags, particularly for just one item.
- Consider re-using wrapping or other reusable paper when wrapping Christmas gifts. If every American family wrapped just 3 presents in re-used materials, we would save enough paper to cover 45,000 football fields.
- Have children make their own wrapping paper by designing and coloring brown paper grocery bags, using old homework pages, old Christmas cards, or handdrawn pictures to wrap gifts in. Grandparents in particular will appreciate the special touch of a grandchild to any gift.
- Consider using commonly discarded paper items for wrapping gifts such as Sunday comics, old posters, maps, discarded sheet music, and wallpaper scraps.
- Use and re-use gift bags instead of wrapping paper.
- Avoid using metallic gift wrapping paper because this paper is generally not recyclable.
- Give your gifts in canvas re-usable shopping tote bags rather than gift bags.

- Choose products that use less packaging material when selecting gifts.
- Look for products with the U.S. EPA's Energy Star logo. These items have been evaluated and rated for their energy efficiency.
- Use postcards for greeting cards or send electronic greeting cards. Postcards generate less waste and require less energy to manufacture and mail. Electronic greeting cards can be whimsical and entertaining and generate no wastes that require disposal.

### **Gift Ideas**

- Look for gifts that have an environmental or health message theme such as a nature book, a refillable thermos bottle or coffee mug, a canvas tote bag, or items made from recycled content.
- Give home-baked cookies, bread or jams or a plant or tree that can be planted in the recipient's yard.
- Consider gifts that keep on giving such as a compost bin, battery charger, rechargeable batteries, compact florescent light bulbs, a perpetual calendar, or an erasable message board.
- Give two gifts in one by using baskets, scarves or pillowcases to wrap gifts.
- Give gifts that don't create wastes such as passes to the zoo or an amusement park, music lessons, tennis, golf or other sports lessons, memberships to an environmental or community organization, tickets to a concert or movie, dinner at a restaurant, a subscription to an online magazine or newspaper, an IOU to help rake leaves or repair a leaky faucet.
- Give gifts that get "used up" such as candles, soap, seeds for the garden for the upcoming planting season, etc.
- Give durable toys for gifts that are made from wood or metal so that they can be passed down to others, even becoming collectible items.
- If purchasing electronic items such as a computer, television, cell phone or gaming station for gifts, find a retailer that will take back the outdated or obsolete item being replaced and will recycle the obsolete item.
- If you can not find retailers with take back programs, recycle the obsolete electronic devices through local community recycling programs or donate computers or televisions that have useful life to community groups, local schools, or nonprofit organizations. Be careful though not to burden these organizations with extremely old or non-functioning electronic items.

### **After The Holidays**

- Clean out your closets and donate used toys and clothing to charitable organizations.
- Save wrapping paper, bows, and ribbons to use for the next holiday season. If you can't re-use these

items, try to recycle as much of the scrap wrapping paper, gift boxes, bags, gift packaging materials, as possible.

- Make a New Years resolution to start a recycling program at home or at work. Call your city or county

to find out more information about recycling opportunities in your area.

- Consider having yourself removed from the mailing lists for Christmas catalogs and other similar mail

order circulars. Most of these catalogs and retail items can be found and ordered from the retailer's

website. Shopping electronically does not create much waste.

- Compost leftovers such as fruit and vegetable trimmings.

For more information on waste reduction, re-use and recycling programs or ideas, contact your local

solid waste department, a Keep Mississippi Beautiful affiliate, County Extension Service agents or the

MDEQ.

Simple, common sense steps can provide an inexpensive and enduring gift to our natural resources as

well as leave more "green" in your checkbook. Executive Director Trudy Fisher and the staff of MDEQ

wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a safe, enjoyable holiday season.

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