

How to have a sustainable Christmas

Charmaine Ng draws up the ultimate guide to a greener holiday season

Gifts

Shop locally

Scrap the online shopping – the first step you can take towards sustainable gifting is choosing to support small, Hong Kong-based businesses. Handicraft fairs and artisan shops are good sources for gifts without the added costs of transportation, which contributes to greenhouse emissions and global warming.

Pick a gift that lasts

Who says presents have to come in the form of a toy or utensil? We recommend the gift of life – that is, gifting someone with a houseplant! If properly cared for, it will last forever and ‘spark joy’ time after time.

Battery-free gifts

Did you know that 40 percent of all battery sales occur during the holiday season? That little robot dog may be fun for a week or two, but keep in mind that it needs plenty of



Finding the perfect Christmas tree

batteries to run and that discarded batteries are an environmental hazard. Choose a naturally-powered toy instead.

DIY your gifts

Young children may prefer store-bought toys, but most adults are happy with anything that shows thoughtfulness. And what better way to show thoughtfulness than with a homemade gift? Make your own edibles, like dehydrated fruits or sundried tomatoes!

Gift an experience

Concerts, spa treatments and even

weekend getaways have become popular gifts in recent years. Experiences can bring laughter, learning and memories that last forever. If your friend has a particular passion, another great idea is to donate to a charity that provides service for a cause he or she cares about.

Eco-friendly wrapping

Metallic wrapping paper looks pretty but is difficult to recycle since there are heavy metals in the foil. Instead, choose wrapping paper made using fibres or recycled content. Better yet, go for fabric gift bags, furoshiki or even old newspaper.



Christmas dinner celebrations

Regifting is okay!

As long as you're not regifting something super undesirable you received 10 years ago, we say that regifting is fine! It saves you money and the gift finds a new home where someone will love it and put it to good use.

Christmas trees

Buy a live tree

Many people think that fake trees are more eco-friendly since they can be reused year after year, but actually, the more sustainable option is going with a live tree. Plastic trees are made of PVC and use up resources in both manufacturing and shipping, whilst live trees are renewable, easily recycled into mulch and contribute to air quality while growing. They are also grown locally and give off the scent of Christmas!

LED Christmas lights

Lower the impact of holiday lighting by swapping to LED lights, which use up to 95 percent less energy than traditional bulbs

and can last for 100,000 hours.

Recycled ornaments

Setting up the tree is one of the best ways to get into the holiday spirit! Try to reuse last year's decorations, but if you must get something new, look for ornaments that are made with sustainable and recycled materials.

Hosting a party

Sustainable groceries

During Christmas, a lot of time is spent in the kitchen cooking and baking. To lessen your impact on the environment, choose organic and locally sourced produce whenever possible and be conscious of the amount of food you make to avoid wastage. We suggest shopping at the wet market – remember to bring your own cloth grocery bag – and avoiding the excessive plastic packaging in supermarkets.

Non-toxic cleaning products

It's not just about your dinner – it's the

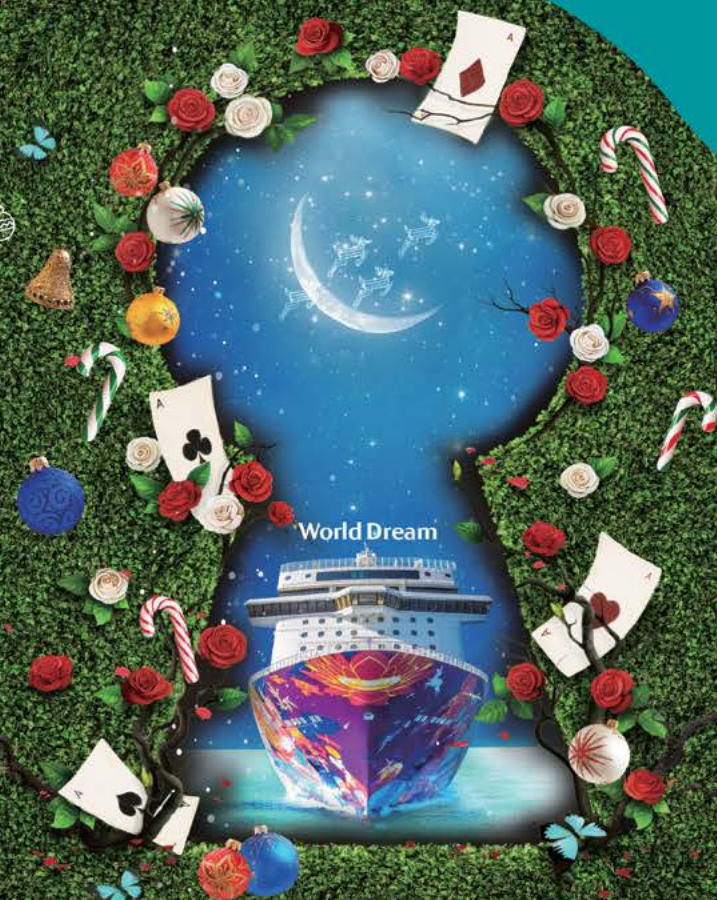
clean-up that comes with it, too. Consider switching to natural and non-toxic cleaning supplies. You can even go down the DIY route and use lemon juice!



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Ethically-sourced clothing

Christmas is all about parties and dressing to impress. But before you go out and try on that dress, consider a more ethically sourced option. Why not go second hand or organise a clothing swap with friends?

Activities

Boxing Day hike

At its core, Christmas is a time for connecting with family. One of the most popular things to do on Boxing Day in Hong Kong is going for a hike. Make it an annual, earth-friendly tradition to hit Dragon's Back with your kids, reconnect with nature and walk off your holiday meal!



Dragon's Back is perfect for a Boxing Day hike

Beach clean-up

Do even more this Christmas by joining a beach clean-up. Many non-profit groups organise events for the local community to get together to make the environment a better place. Keep an eye out on the Hong Kong Cleanup (hkcleanup.org), Clean Shorelines (epd.gov.hk) and Plastic Free Seas (plasticfreeseas.org) websites.

Plogging

One of the newest exercise trends is plogging, a combination of jogging and picking up litter. It began as an organised activity in Sweden and has since spread to other countries following increased concern about plastic pollution. You don't have to join a group to get started – just lace up your shoes, grab a trash bag and get out there! 📺



Plogging

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