

Top Tips for a Green Christmas



Christmas can be an expensive time of year – don't let this be the case for your energy bills or the environment!

Lighting and decorations

Simply switching to LED lighting when decorating your tree or house could knock £20 off your electricity bill over the Christmas period, reducing energy consumption by 90% (Good Energy). Use timers on your lights for further savings. Decorating the outside of your house? Why not invest in solar-powered lights which won't cost a penny to run.

For decorations, try using or making your own ornaments from natural materials such as holly, pine cones, ivy and mistletoe. You could also use edible decorations for your tree such as candy canes, dried fruit and gingerbread – a great activity for the whole family. We also love the idea of decorating a tree outside for the birds with seed bells, suet and pine cones with peanut butter to attract a wide variety of birds and provide an important food source during the winter.



Oh Christmas tree



Consider investing in a pot-grown Christmas tree. You can plant it back outside and reuse it the following year; effectively lasting longer, absorbing carbon dioxide and overall having a lower environmental impact. If you can't use a potted version, try to purchase one from a local, sustainable forest, you can search for retailers on the [British Christmas Tree Growers Association website](#). Make sure your tree isn't one of the 90% which go to landfill (Forestry Commission) and recycle it after Christmas – check with your local council for recycling points.

Ensure you don't obstruct radiators with your tree, decorations or furniture as this can reduce the amount of heat radiated around the room and means your radiators will be working harder. A close source of heat can also cause pine needles to drop off!

Cards and wrapping

Shockingly, Brits throw out around 83 square km of wrapping paper every Christmas and over 900 million cards were bought in 2013. Wrap presents in recycled paper or use re-usable bags or stockings and add natural raffia instead of plastic frills and bows to gifts. Why not save your old Christmas cards to create gift tags or your own cards for the following year? Another card alternative would be sending E-cards; cutting your carbon footprint, saving trees and costing less.



Recycle cards and wrapping after Christmas – many supermarkets offer collection points and schools often collect as well.

Food

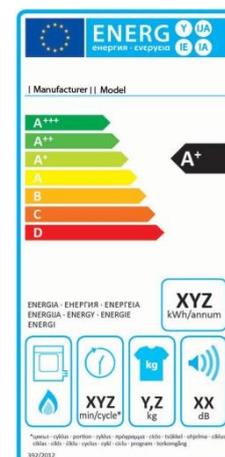
What would Christmas be without indulging in lots of delicious festive foods? However, try to keep it green and source ingredients from local producers and farmers. Visit the [Big Barn Turkey Map](#) to find organic, free-range turkey suppliers in your area.

Save energy whilst cooking Christmas dinner by using the right-sized pan and ring on the hob, also keeping lids on pans will reduce heat loss. Use just enough water to cover your veg to prevent wasting water, and keep any veg cuttings to compost for free fertilizer. Freeze any leftovers, a full freezer will also work more efficiently!

Gift smart

Stuck for ideas? Shop locally at craft fairs and artisan shops for a great source for gifts, or support businesses which develop great products using recycled materials – you can check out some of the [gift ideas here](#). If buying appliances, don't forget to also look at the [energy efficiency logo](#). Gift experiences are also a great way of giving something a little more memorable and will save on wrapping.

Look for gifts which don't need batteries to have less of an impact on the environment. If you want to get a battery-powered toy, try to purchase rechargeable batteries. Not only will these use less energy (recharging batteries is more energy efficient than the cost and energy of making new batteries) and save money in the long term, but will ensure the toys don't lose power when the shops are shut over Christmas!



Other tips

- ★ Wrap up – this is the perfect time of year for shops to be stocked with cosy clothing and blankets. Layer up in Christmas jumpers instead of turning the thermostat up, for every one degree you reduce the thermostat, you could save up to £90 and 360 kg of carbon dioxide a year (Energy Saving Trust).
- ★ Drive Smarter – under-inflated tyres increase your fuel consumption and can be dangerous on the road, check them before long journeys and travelling over Christmas. Keeping your tyres inflated all year can save £30 a year on fuel costs (Energy Saving Trust)
- ★ Take advantage of public transport for Christmas shopping trips avoiding traffic and battling for a parking space in the busy season – many coach companies offer special deals on coach trips to cities and park and rides often run later during the festive period.
- ★ Make the switch – you shop around for Christmas presents, who not shop around for your energy? Many households could save £200 each year on a better energy tariff or with an alternative supplier. Use an impartial switching service, such as [Energy Helpline](#), to see if you could save.

