

Consider a Low Carb(on) Christmas

The media is full of information about COP 26 and global efforts to lower the carbon in the atmosphere that causes greenhouse gas emissions, and climate change. The solutions are not only “out there” - they are right here and now in our little burg with you and me. Let's start by considering a Low Carbon Christmas.

Fossil fuels are the highest source of carbon – like exhaust fumes from cars and airplanes. Might consider your holiday travel plans with this in mind. What creates carbon beyond fossil fuels? Electricity generation results in a huge amount of emissions, so putting your Christmas lights on a timer saves energy – and money. Maybe turn the thermostat down a notch. A great gift to honor the earth might be energy efficient light bulbs to replace the older ones that use a lot more energy.

Put the “C word” Carbon together with Christmas and Consumerism. No pointing of fingers here. Hey, we all have been in this overconsumption game. According to a [2015 study](#) in the *Journal of Industrial Ecology*, household consumption of manufactured products and food accounts for nearly 20% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Wealthy countries (that's us or the US) consumption has a carbon footprint up to 5.5 times greater than the world average. The amount of residential waste generated from November through Christmas is 25% more than any other period during the year, according to Waste Management.

The place to start is to RETHINK purchases to REDUCE the source of the waste. Think *need* relative to desire with the needs of our planet and our personal health in mind. Air, water, and plastic pollution affect human health. Let's put our heads together to redefine generosity to lower the potential negative effects of gift buying this year.

Reduction is the first R – followed by *recapture* of material like plastic bags to be reprocessed, and then *reuse*, and *refill*. How about re-gifting? Do some early spring cleanout of things you do not use to pass on all, prettily wrapped. Too many gifts are just thrown away into the landfill where they cause greenhouse gases that add to the carbon footprint. At the least, they could be regifted to others who need them, or to a charity to resell. Remember, fossil fuels are involved in the production and transport of all those well-meaning gifts. Buying local is a good thing to reduce the amount of gas burned by delivery trucks, and your own car.

Perhaps the best gift to give for the climate is no "thing" at all - just YOU and your sincere caring for the Earth, like a service project. Or an experience to do together – a tree to be planted by a charity - a promise of some work to be done. Use your creativity here. There are lots of ways to give authentically when we give from our hearts. All we really need is love.....

Merry low carbon Christmas!

Shirley Freriks lives in Grass Valley and is part of the local WasteNOT team working to reduce waste and emissions in accord with the California mandate to divert 75% of our waste from landfill.