

NEWS RELEASE**Top tips for a green Christmas****For immediate
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Manchester Friends of the Earth [1] is urging people to consider the environment when making their preparations for Christmas. It has issued five top tips to guide people to a greener festive season.

Choose cards carefully

When buying Christmas cards make sure they are printed on recycled paper or are Forest Stewardship Council approved. Cut out the stamps from your Christmas card envelopes and take them to your nearest Oxfam store. Charities can sell used stamps to dealers for up to £1.50 a kilo. Once Christmas is over you can also take your cards to Tesco Extra and WHSmith stores, where the Woodland Trust will collect them for recycling.

Be as green as your tree

Buy one of Greater Manchester's sustainable Christmas trees from www.tree2mydoor.com or make sure you buy a tree that carries the Forest Stewardship Council logo. This shows that the forest it has come from is managed with wildlife in mind. After Christmas, take your tree, holly wreaths and mistletoe sprigs to one of the temporary collection points provided by Manchester City Council.

Shop with a conscience

Just one plastic bag takes 500 years to decompose in landfill so remember to go shopping armed with a long-lasting bag so you can say 'no to plastic bags'. Also try to avoid presents that are over-packaged. Consider buying presents from organisations that offer a fair deal to third world producers. The Natural Collection catalogue (www.naturalcollection.com) offers a range of ethical and environmentally sound gift ideas. When choosing toys, go for wind-up versions. Batteries pollute the environment when they spill and leak. If you do have to buy batteries, choose rechargeable ones.

CONTACTS FOR COMMENT**Helen Rimmer: 07940 006783
Lynda Searby: 0161 7189314**

Turn off the fairy lights

According to Envirowise, leaving tree lights on for ten hours a day over the 12 days of Christmas will generate enough carbon dioxide to inflate 12 balloons, so switch them off when you are out.

Eat greener

Reduce food miles and protect the environment by making your Christmas dinner from locally sourced, organic and GM-free ingredients. See our Real Food Guide at www.realfoodguide.org.uk for a list of ethically minded food outlets in and around Manchester. Save energy while cooking your Christmas dinner by putting lids on pots and pans and putting more than one dish in the oven at a time. Where possible, compost food waste.

Helen Rimmer, waste campaigner with Manchester Friends of the Earth, said:

“Sometimes people temporarily forget about the environment at Christmas, but it’s actually the time of year when we can have the most impact. Every Christmas we in the UK send up to a billion Christmas cards, use approximately 83 sq km of wrapping paper and buy 7.5 million Christmas trees. Once the festivities are over, most of this ends up in landfill. With a little bit of thought we can have a great Christmas and a green Christmas at the same time.”

ENDS**Notes to editors**

[1] Manchester Friends of the Earth is a prominent campaign group, raising awareness and lobbying for policy changes at a local, regional, national and international level. The group consists entirely of volunteers, and its campaigns are funded by membership fees and individual donations. Up-to-date information is available on its website:

<http://www.manchesterfoe.org.uk>. Manchester Friends of the Earth is part of a national network of local groups, affiliated to the national organisation (further information can be found at <http://www.foe.co.uk>)