

Eco-friendly gifts on many wish lists

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It's getting easier to have an eco-friendly holiday season.

Specialty stores have been offering recycled and fair-trade products, while mainstream and big box stores have added more environmentally sound products. Even Target and Wal-Mart sell organic cotton T-shirts and bedding sets these days.

There also are social ways to do some green shopping while mixing and mingling.

"There are clever and thrifty ways to go about it," said Lynne Forsman, who is planning a gathering this week, Green Drinks, an informal networking and social group focused on green holiday shopping.

Green Drinks will meet at the Annapolis Maritime Museum at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday. Everything will have a green aspect, including even the organic wine and appetizers made from "sustainable" food. Some



TOP: At Mixed Greens, old license plates also can be transformed into purses. The shop offers several items that can be reused as gifts and collectibles as a way to help be eco-friendly this holiday.

BOTTOM: These purses were hand-made by local women who collected the junk food wrappers, cleaned them and made them into purses.

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environmentally friendly items will be for sale, too.

"We're trying to make it a green event," she said. "There's going to be a variety of different things going on."

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Likewise, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation will promote the idea of giving environmentally themed books with a special event at its Bay Ridge headquarters at 2 p.m. Dec. 14, featuring three authors signing their books.

The authors include Deacon Ritterbush, "A Beachcomber's Odyssey;" Richard LaMotte, "Pure Sea Glass;" and Margaret Carruthers, "Beach Stones." Some of the profits will go to the bay foundation and the Light House Shelter in Annapolis.

From food to gifts and from wrapping to shopping, here are some tips to enjoy the season while going green:

Use LED lights for illuminating your tree or home. They cost more up front, but use 80 percent less electricity.

Buy a real tree. Trees at tree farms use up harmful nutrients that otherwise might wash into the Chesapeake Bay, and they suck carbon dioxide from the air. Be sure to recycle your tree.

If you can, buy a live tree with roots and plant it after the holidays. Find a locally grown tree at www.marylandchristmastrees.org.

Recycle gift wrap - even the shiny stuff is recyclable. Or reuse gift bags. Better yet, wrap your gift in old newspapers, comics, maps or charts (and then recycle) or give gifts in reusable shopping bags.

Give gifts that help people waste less: reusable shopping bags, travel coffee mugs or water bottles.

Giving gift cards ensures your gift won't end up in the trash - the recipient will get exactly what they want.

Skip regular candles, which are made from paraffin, a petroleum product that is a limited resource. Opt for soy or beeswax candles instead.

Likewise, look for natural cosmetics and bath items. Try Burt's Bees, the Body Shop

or Lush Natural Handmade Cosmetics.

Give the gift of a service or an entertainment experience, such as a restaurant gift cards or tickets to the theater or a concert.

Buy a loved one a membership in an environmental organization that they support. This time of year, organizations often offer free gifts for new members, too.

Give the gift of knowledge. Buy a book or movie about the environment or the Chesapeake Bay. Try "Hot, Flat, and Crowded" by Thomas L. Friedman.

For kids books, look for authors such as Priscilla Cummings (creator of the Chadwick the Crab series) or Jennifer Keats Curtis.

Support a local artist or craftsman. You'll be helping the local economy and your gift won't be shipped halfway across the world, wasting fuel. There are scores of local holiday bazaars and craft fairs featuring local artisans. Plenty of shops and galleries in downtown Annapolis sell the work of local artists.

Plant a tree. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation will plant a tree in someone's honor for \$25 (www.cbf.org/trees) or the Department of Natural Resources will do it for \$35 (www.dnr.state.md.us/giftshop).

Serve local foods that are in season at your holiday parties and dinners. There are several Maryland turkey farms listed at www.mda.state.md.us/md_products/md_turkey_farms.php.

Or try local seafood - oysters are in season throughout winter and fresh local crabs will be around for a few more weeks. Pasteurized local crab meat also is available.

The farmers market at the corner of Riva Road and Harry S Truman Parkway in Annapolis is open from 7 a.m. to noon Saturdays through Dec. 20.

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