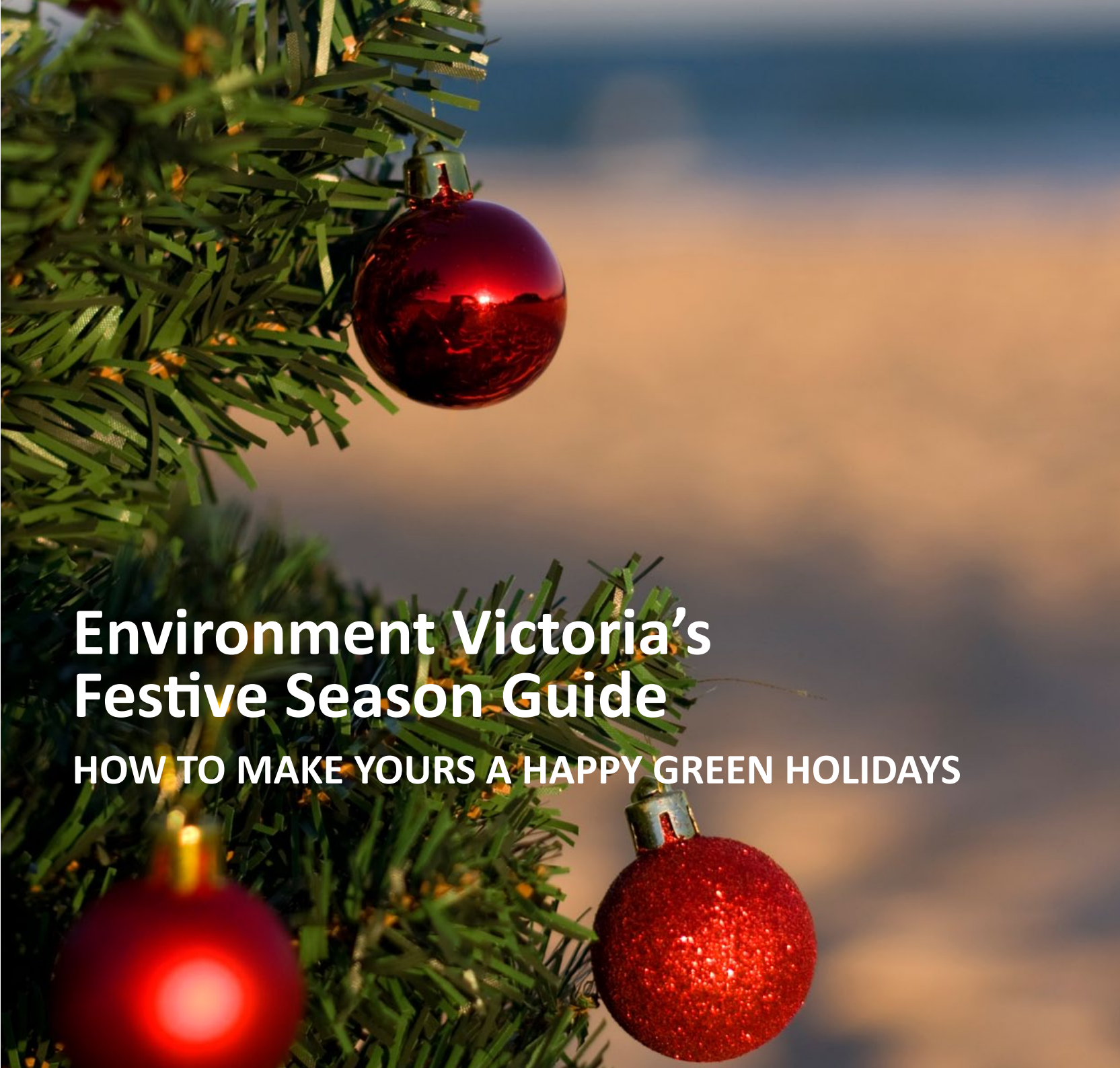




Environment Victoria's Festive Season Guide

HOW TO MAKE YOURS A HAPPY GREEN HOLIDAYS



It really is the season to be jolly. It's the rare time of year where after a long year of slogging it out we enjoy kicking back, spoiling others and eating ourselves silly! And we deserve to. But with all the waste that goes along with it, it's not such a joyous time for our environment.

So this handy guide will help you hold onto the good bits of the silly season, while being a little gentler on the planet. It's still about having a great time with plenty of food and presents, but without all the waste. Because when you remember what your priorities are, it's actually surprisingly easy...



Decorations

Lets kick off with some handy decorating hints. Because there's nothing like a chrissy tree or a splash of sparkle to get you into the spirit!

THE TREE

We know.. it's hard to imagine a Christmas without the tree. So here's a few tips that will help you have your tree and love it too:

- Instead of buying a fresh pine tree, why not use a large potted plant that you have around the house. These can make great Christmas trees which you can use year after year. And if they do get old and tatty, you can recycle them into compost, unlike plastic trees
- How about buying a native plant from your local nursery. They're better for the eco-system than pines grown in plantations and sprayed with chemicals. Plus, you could plant it when you're done, and keep the local birds happy
- What about a tree made from an old paperback book? OK.. so this will be teeny-weeny, but cute all the same!
- Or of course, if you must have a real tree (no judging eyebrows here!) then make sure you get one from a sustainable grower. And after the big day either replant it in your own garden (see tip one!) or recycle it. Many local councils run recycling schemes so keep a look out for yours

LIGHTS

We all like a little sparkle around this time. So here's our tips for keeping your energy use and power bill right down:

- If you have lights from previous years obviously check them to see if they're still working and safe. But if you're in the market for new ones buy good quality LED lights. They'll use heaps less electricity than conventional globes and last ten times longer
- Make sure you turn them off before hitting the hay or use a timer. Don't worry kids – Santa will still know where to deliver the prezzies!
- Sign up for 100% GreenPower. Getting government accredited GreenPower will cut the greenhouse gas emissions from your home's electricity use to virtually zero for only a couple of dollars extra a week. Now that's one good deal!

DECORATIONS

Get your craft on and try your hand at these fun and easy projects:

- Make your own wreath out of an old book or wrapping paper – oh so pretty! Or use branch trimmings, pine cones or gum nuts from your garden
- Create your own table decorations and tree ornaments by collecting items from around the home. A simple tennis ball wrapped in colourful

paper and wrapped in twine or holly would make a gorgeous bauble. Or try your hand at making your own salt dough ornaments. They keep very well and if you use food dye instead of paint, you can compost them if they break. How good. We've also found some spunky paper cut outs that you can download. Too easy!

- Instead of the old tinsel, why not display your Christmas cards along a string instead. It's a nice personal touch and will come up a treat!
- If you a serious DIYer why not give an old shirt or cushion a new life by transforming it into a Christmas stocking
- In the way of table decorations why not try simple candles (soy, beeswax or vegie based of course), amongst springs of evergreen from the garden and colourful baubles or ribbon
- And if you do buy decorations, go for classic styles that you'll love forever and that will last the years

Green gifts

There's nothing worse than giving your friends and family things they don't need or want or will be broken come Boxing Day. Get them some of these much more awesome things which of course, have a lighter impact on the planet.

GIVE AN EXPERIENCE

These are great for that person who has everything. (There's always one!):

- A voucher for your time i.e. cooking them a nice meal, mowing the lawn or babysitting the kids. A top one for time poor mum's and dads!
- Buy tickets to a movie or a show or even a sporting event they'd be keen on
- How about a massage or a cooking class. Whatever you can possibly think of can probably be found [right here](#)
- A gift voucher to [itunes](#) or a local book supplier so they get what they really want
- Encourage them to get out into nature by taking them camping, buying them swimming gear or a ticket to the zoo
- And for a warm and fuzzy feeling, donate to a good cause! We think [Environment Victoria's](#) pretty damn fine, but there are lots of options out there

GIVE GREEN

Why not spread your love of all things green to others. Because we could all do with a little green thumb sometimes:

- Plants or seeds to start a veggie patch or some herbs for the window sill
- A [KeepCup](#) so they have their beloved take away coffee without using a disposable cup
- Give them jewellery a bag or wallet made from recycled objects or materials
- Go vintage and buy an antique or collectable. All very chic right now!
- Green gadgets like wind-up torches and worm farms
- If you're buying kids toys, [Eco Toys](#) has toys that are made from sustainable materials and are non toxic (so safe to suck on!)

GIFTS TO DEVOUR

Ah, a gift that won't clutter the house, gather dust and will be mighty delicious too!

- [Organic and Fairtrade chockies](#) are always a winner!
- Organic wine or champers for that impending New Years Eve celebration
- Bake some homemade treats such as lamingtons or good ol' Anzacs. For

more ideas [hop here](#). YUM!

SPUNKY GIFTS TO MAKE YOURSELF

We all love to receive homemade gifts because they ooze that special heartfelt touch. So get creative!

- For the little ones, how about crocheting an Amigurumi dolls. A what.. you say? They're ridiculously cute tiny dolls you can make in one evening, or two after a quick [teach-yourself-to-crochet](#) lesson. They're really not hard we promise. You can find free patterns all over the internet like [here](#)
- How about collecting some drift wood to create a [coat rack](#) or sanding back a fallen tree to create a [cheese board](#)
- You can easily make [coasters and place mats made from old corks](#)
Disclaimer: A smidge of wine drinking necessary!
- A mixed tape or cd. Always a winner for the lovebirds
- Brew your own beer with basic equipment from a brewing shop and ingredients from your local supermarket
- [Pinhole art](#) is pretty and lets you create framed pictures even if you're not an artist
- A home made [terrarium](#) is pretty retro but we like them!

WHY NOT DO A KRIS KRINGLE

Kris Kringles or Secret Santas are the answer if your family's not that into presents or if there's a million of you but you still want to give something special. Here's how it works.. each person is nominated one person to give a gift to which means there's no fuss over hunting for prezzies and no need to spend a fortune giving everyone a gift. How good!



Cards and wrapping

There's no reason why your wrapping can't look beautiful while being super green:

- There's plenty of recycled paper Christmas cards available, especially from shops specialising in sustainability. You could also make your own, send an eCard or just scrawl on the wrapping paper
- There's plenty of options on the wrapping front. You could reuse wrapping paper from last year, used printing paper with your own design on the blank side or even use an old magazine or calendar
- A touch of ribbon or a pretty flower from your garden can give your wrapping a bit of class and plenty of originality. For other wrapping alternatives [hop here](#)
- And remember to save all the wrappings that others use for next year! Re-used gift bags are a good find and often scrub up well the next time.. and the next! And either save, reuse or recycle all of your cards



Food, glorious food

You can make a big difference to your environmental impact by making some smart food choices. Here are some tasty ideas:

- Where you can, go for local, organic food that is in season. Check out our guide to [what's in season in Victoria](#)
- To make it more affordable buy your goods from your local market or farmers' market. If you're not sure when and where to find a farmers' market [hop here](#)
- If you're keen on your seafood go for calamari, octopus, whiting or oysters. They have less of an impact on our oceans than if you were eating flake, prawns, lobster or most types of tuna. Want the details? Check out the [Australian Marine Conservation Society](#)
- Eating a bit less meat will make a big difference to your impact on the planet too. Maybe include some vegetarian options alongside your meat. Taste has some [recipes for festive feast without meat](#) to get you thinking.
- [Make your own ice cream!](#) If you haven't got a recipe here's a few to get your mouth watering
- And how bout all those dishes you say? Here's an idea.. get your guests to help out and bring their own dishes instead of using plastic plates. Or if this is a terrifying idea, go for biodegradable disposables like the ones

[Going Green Solutions](#) provide

- And finally, lots of food is great at special occasions, but there's no need for overkill. Composting your leftovers or chucking them into a worm farm will cut down on their carbon emissions, and if you haven't got a compost or worm system up and running, now's a great time to start. Check out our [easy compost / worm farm / bokashi tips](#) here



And that's a wrap from us here. We truly hope you have a magical, relaxing, rejuvenating time that's full of love, laughs and green cheer. Love, Environment Victoria

Making the festive season green is just a tiny bit of what Environment Victoria gets up to. As the state's peak independent environment group, we believe our future depends on all Victorians. That's why we're asking all 5 million Victorians to safeguard our environment. We're calling it Green Action.

So what do you say? Are you in?

Visit www.environmentvictoria.org.au to count yourself in and hunt down more great green resources.

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