

Low Impact Holidays! Halloween through Christmas made sustainably easy!



The leaves are falling, the air is getting cooler, the days are getting shorter and we all know what this means...

The holidays are approaching. From Halloween through New Years, we buy costumes, gifts, food, decorations and fill up garbage bags and recycling bins and compost bins as we rapidly move from one holiday to the next. Whether you consider yourself to be a greenie or not, the holidays can be overwhelming for our wallets, trash cans, and mental state. So what can we do to make this season easier on ourselves and the planet? Here are a few quick tips to help you celebrate to the fullest and still have time to kick back with some organic apple cider, put your feet up, and feel good when January rolls around!

Halloween

We are lucky to live in the Portland region, which has a plethora of second-hand and vintage stores, locally grown pumpkins and apples, and stores with healthy treats. Check out some of these options:

Clever Costuming:

- Go Vintage and reused! No need to be a Pinterest superstar, many local secondhand stores have Halloween sections, which not only give you great ideas for a costume, but also make your creative costuming faster and easier. [Value Village](#), [The Red Light](#), [Goodwill](#), and [Buffalo Exchange](#) all have clothes and accessories to help you do halloween in style. And when the holiday is over, you can re-donate your threads.
- Facepaint and other ghoulish makeup: Stay toxin free, and keep your kids healthy with less toxic makeup. [Inhabitots](#) has some great recommendations.

Decorate without the Danger:

- Gourds, pumpkins and corn are all festive fall decor that can be bought locally and then go right into the yard debris bin when they start looking a little droopy and sad. Unless carved, these items can stay out through Thanksgiving. And don't forget about those pumpkin seeds when carving your pumpkins! Check out some [delicious pumpkin seed recipes](#) even the little ones will like!
- Be crafty! Have any stockings laying around with runs in them? You now have perfect spider web making

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material! What to do with those Amazon Prime boxes? Get some non-toxic paint and make some gravestones and tombs. Egg cartons, milk jugs, and trash bags can all be turned into Halloween decorations and make for a fun family art activity. [Check out some ideas on the Care2 website!](#)

Tricks for your Treats:

- You don't need to be ashamed of your love of candy. Trying to make the right choices for halloween candy doesn't have to mean depriving yourself of delicious treats. Here in Lake Oswego, head over to [New Seasons](#) and have your pick of local, organic, fair-trade, low-sugar, gluten free, paleo....whatever your needs, they've got it! A locally produced delicious option for Halloween and well into the holidays are [Seely Mint](#) products from Clatskanie!
- Trick-or-treat bags are a great opportunity to add to your costume with a reusable receptacle. Pillowcases, reusable buckets, canvas bags, are all great options that are sturdy enough to hold all those treats and not fall apart in the annual Oregon Halloween Rain.

Thanksgiving and Christmas Dinners

Thanksgiving is the ultimate local food holiday and the original "sharing economy" celebration. As we race around to the supermarket, here are a few tips to keep Thanksgiving delicious, local, and low impact so you can feel good about your holiday as you gather the family around to eat and spend time together.

The Foodening

- Focus on filling up your plate with veggies and hit up the Farmers Market! Yes, that's right. The Lake Oswego Farmers Market has a [reunion market](#) the weekend before Thanksgiving. Saturday, November 19, head to Millennium Plaza and get all the delicious vegetables you need to make a healthy Thanksgiving dinner and tell all your out of town family members that the delicious sweet potato they are eating was grown right here in the Willamette Valley!
- Choose your meat wisely. If you do in fact eat meat on Thanksgiving, pick a turkey or ham that not only had a reasonably happy and healthy life, but was grown using fewer chemicals and byproducts that pollute not only the animal, but our dirt and our waterways. You are also making a tasty choice when you pick a healthy bird, as the meat is often more flavorful. [New Seasons](#) and [Whole Foods](#) offer a range of free range, pasture-raised, and grass-fed turkeys. [Nicky USA](#) butchers offer Oregon-raised organic and free range turkeys. [Zupan's](#) has free range and organic Shelton's turkeys.
- Don't forget about dessert! Order your cakes and treats from local shops, like [Kyra's](#).
- When you are all done with your meal, be sure to scrape all those food scraps into your green yard debris bin. Remember that even bones, dairy, meat, and gravy can all go right into your bin for collection.

Setting the table

- Break out the china. Always use durable dishware. Remember: compostable dishware cannot go in your yard debris bin in Lake Oswego. So bring out the dishware and glasses! If you have more guests than you have plates, consider renting dishes from a place like [Barbur Rentals](#).

Fight the Food Coma

- Get some fresh air! While it's always tempting to crash on the couch after a big meal, and NFL is beckoning you to give into the tryptophan coma, put on a coat, grab some family members and head out for a walk or a romp in the yard. Not only does a little bit of exercise help the digestion, the fresh air will improve your mood on what can be a stressful holiday. Get your day started on the right track by participating in a Turkey Trot! The Oregon Road Runners Club puts on the [Turkey Trot at the Oregon Zoo](#), with a run, a walk, a kids trot, costumes, and free entry to the zoo. It's a great way to get out into the community and start your holiday on a healthy note!

Stay Mentally Strong

- The holidays can be taxing on anyone's patience. Keep your alcohol consumption in check, avoid politics and other controversial topics at the dining table, and take 10 breaths when you feel yourself getting overwhelmed. It's always ok to take some time for yourself when you feel your patience running a bit thin.

Christmas, Hanukkah, and New Years

Many of the above suggestions apply to the December holidays. Clever homemade holiday decorations are always popular and make fun keepsakes. Follow the same suggestions for Thanksgiving when it comes to big holiday dinners and add in some locally made eggnog and you're all set! There are a few helpful tips out there for dealing with Christmas trees and everyone's favorites: parties and gifts.

Bringing a Tree into your Home:

- If you're going with a cut tree, consider sourcing it locally. This isn't hard, considering Oregon exports more Christmas trees than any other place on earth. Chopping your own tree down at a farm supports your local economy and has a much smaller footprint than buying a tree that has been trucked in from elsewhere.
- Get a Living Tree. This means buying a tree, roots and all, that can be replanted after the holidays are over and will continue to keep giving back throughout its life span. If you do not have the space on your property to plant your tree, consider donating it an organization like Friends of Trees. Some tips about buying a living tree can be found [here](#). You can even order a living tree online and have it delivered to you through the [Original Potted Christmas Tree Company](#) in Portland!
- And as always, be sure to recycle your tree! There are a few groups that will pick up your tree for recycling, and keep an eye out for tree recycling at George Rogers Park. Please be sure to remove all your ornaments beforehand! **Republic Services will charge you between \$15 and \$65 to pick up your tree if you leave it curbside. There will be additional fees if your tree has ANY ornaments or decor on it.**

Gifting and re-gifting:

- Give an experience. For the middle school and older humans, think about giving an activity instead of an object. Massages, museum memberships, skydiving trips, summer camps, wine clubs, etc. Consider an experience that will create new memories for the recipient and still support the economy. Donations to microfinancing organizations like [Kiva](#) are a great learning experience for kids, who can re-donate the original gift year after year.
- Stay local. No one likes going to the mall during the holidays. The traffic, the long lines, the carrying around a coat in an overheated mall...so why not just stay in LO? Enjoy a nice walk down A Avenue, Lakeview Village, around Lake Grove, or Mountain Park and get your holiday shopping done without the stress. Support our many local shop owners and pop into a shop you've never visited before- who knows what you might find!
- Get crafty. Not everyone has crafty skills to make homemade gifts, but if you do, then go wild! Show off your skills! Don't let Pinterest intimidate you, but it does have some fun ideas if that process won't just add more stress to your holidays.
- Wrap creatively. To avoid the Christmas morning bags full of discarded wrapping paper, you need to get clever. There are some wrapping papers that are recyclable, but check out fabric wraps, use gift bags, or check out some of these [clever gift wrap ideas](#).

Party!!!

- In 2016, it's not a revolutionary idea to send e-invites. Save some postage, save some paper, and get quick responses by sending electronic invites.
- As tempting as it is to have to avoid doing mountains of dishes, do mountains of dishes. Compostable dishware cannot be composted here in Lake Oswego, and few disposable dishes, cups, or cutlery can be recycled. Again, if you need extra dishes, considering renting some for your event.
- Make your house party friendly with some festive friendly decor! LED string lighting sets the mood without breaking the bank (or power meter). Use real plants- fir branch centerpieces, poinsettia, pine cones, fresh

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garlands, etc. instead of plastic trinkets (note: poinsettia plants are toxic to domestic pets). Candles always add some coziness to the party, so used soy-based or LED candles instead of petroleum-based candles that give off scents and odors that can be both toxic and inflammatory for guests with allergies.

- Make party prep a fun family time! Get kids, friends, and family to make ornaments and decorations from found objects and art supplies. Don't underestimate the power of an edible ornament! Cookies, popcorn, cranberry strings, can all lend a creative spirit to your decorations. Check out some [ideas](#) online!

Sustainability includes health and wellness, so don't let the holidays overwhelm your mind, your wallet, and your family. Keeping events small and manageable not only decreases their footprint, but also allows you to have the downtime we all need to reflect upon our year. Get out and enjoy the many parks and pathways Lake Oswego has to offer and give yourself some nature therapy! With kids on school holidays, take time to get outside, head to the Holiday Market, and spend time in the community!

And don't forget the pets! Candies, plants, and other unusual objects around the house can be startling to pets, and in some cases, toxic. The [Oregon Humane Society](#) has some helpful resources for getting our furry family members through the holidays.

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