

DECEMBER 2021

Christmas!

A wonderfully festive time of fun food, mulled wine and presents. Who doesn't love Christmas?

But as we're becoming increasingly aware, there is a darker, damaging side to the season. It is estimated that the UK will throw away approximately 500 tonnes of Christmas lights each year, 400,000 tonnes of paper, card and cardboard packaging, and £42 million of unwanted Christmas presents. This is on top of six million real Christmas trees that will end up in landfill.

But now we know more about the environmental damage of all this, it feels like we must cut back on so much consumerism. But does this mean we have less fun? I would say not at all, it just needs a bit more thought and care.

Take Christmas lights: a simple thing is that one can use LED lighting, rather than the incandescent variety, and it will dramatically reduce the amount of electricity consumed. With presents - maybe we just buy too much. Probably, we've all received gifts that we didn't really want, so wouldn't it be better to do a Secret Santa, so that within a family or friendship group, we each buy, or make, one really nice present that we can be sure is welcome?

Presents don't even have to be things, they can be services, events and treats, such as tickets to concerts, films and plays, or a lovely massage or manicure.

Another way to go is to consider pre-loved toys and household items, like plant pots and vases. These days it's definitely cool to look for good secondhand presents. Children grow out of toys and clothes so quickly, but to have quality items end up in

landfill once a child has finished with them, seems a criminal waste, especially knowing the damage it can do.

Personally, I have lovely memories of sitting with my cousins around the kitchen table piled high with coloured paper, silver sweet wrappers, scraps of fabric, ribbons, buttons and bits of string - it was a sight to inspire creativity in all of us and we had enormous fun making decorations to hang up. By the end of the session there would be a profusion of pretty paper chains, cut-out stars, tree-top fairies and dangling decorations to hang up around all our houses. We loved it - It was the day of the year that felt like the real start of Christmas.

By Sue Rickard