



**Above:** Christmas decorations created from natural materials are very attractive, environmentally friendly gifts.

**Top Left:** Baskets of fruit, baking, and canning make great gifts which can be delivered in person and can include a visit over a cup of tea.

**Bottom Left:** Wooden Toys are durable, earth-friendly gifts for kids that also promote creative play.

# WAYS TO GIFT OTHERS WHILE GIFTING OUR PLANET

By Sally Smid

In this day in age, when environmental awareness seems to have become so very important, it would seem that many are also becoming more concerned about earth friendly Christmas gift choices as well. It is certainly unfortunate when a gift item is not needed or it contributes to pollution and over-consumption.

There are many ideas that can help make our Christmas gift choices Eco-friendlier. When considering any purchase, it is always best to look for bio-degradable materials. Clothing made from a natural material like cotton is a better choice than any synthetic. It is also very important to look for ecological materials when making purchases. Try to avoid over packaging and plastic products. Wooden toys are so much more durable, earth friendly, organic and renewable. Kids also love the idea of following treasure hunts with a gift hidden in the closet. This adds fun and helps eliminate wrapping materials. When gifts are wrapped, reusable cloth or simple paper bags are wiser. Lots of Christmas decorations can also be made out of natural materials.

Seniors are often problematic to shop for, but many would be thrilled with a plant, perhaps from your own garden. A small evergreen "Christmas" tree that could be planted outside later is another great idea. Older folks also enjoy watching their "feathered friends", so bird seed and suet are often welcome gifts. Another valuable gift for a whole family could be a journal. A grandparent could write down their memories to preserve family history. The offer of help with this task would probably be welcome. A gift certificate that could be redeemed for a family meal, household chores, repairs, or snow removal, might be quite appreciated. A certificate might also be one that indicates that a local charity is receiving a donation in the name of the recipient.

"Consumable gifts" are usually welcome by everyone and can be in the form of fruits or baked and canned goods in reusable or recyclable containers.

When it comes down to it, perhaps the greatest gift is the gift of time. It might be offering to go on a special outing, play some games, or teach a new skill.

Christmas cards are becoming less popular it seems, but many still look forward to family newsletters. There is also the possibility of making your own creative cards by using recycled materials from previous year's cards. Many folks also choose to send e-cards, which might also be considered as environmentally friendly.

Many wonderful gifts can be purchased in thrift or "new-to-you" stores, which often support local charities and are a great way to re-purpose items that could end up in landfills.

It is always so easy to get caught up in the consumerism of the holidays and forget the real meaning of Christmas gifts. It was the Wisemen who brought those first gifts to the Christ Child. Perhaps the best way to "gift Him" and our loved ones, is by taking care of His creation in responsible ways. It just may be that in considering a more earth friendly gifting this season, we can experience a truly more fulfilling and joyous holiday, as well as a new year that will hold more promise for the future of our fragile planet! **LH**