

From the heart, not the store: Your ultimate guide to eco-friendly DIY holiday gifting

Amidst the winter holiday hustle, it's easy to forget our low-waste goals for the convenience of an item grabbed at the last minute. This year, let's pause to think about consumption habits and the impact of our choices. Instead of adding to excess holiday waste, why not reduce your environmental impact? To help you get started, we have compiled our favorite DIY holiday gift ideas for everyone on your list.

Whether you are a DIY enthusiast or just beginning to dabble, you are in the right place. Many of these homemade ideas are not too time or resource-intensive and align with low-waste living. From reusing and repurposing materials you already have and sourcing supplies locally, you can give gifts that are heartfelt, unique, and easier on the environment.



Why DIY gifting?

Part of the thrill of DIY gifting lies in its benefits for both the giver and receiver. The gift will be unique and made with intention. It also reduces the need for packaging and transportation of resources, which results in less waste and carbon emissions. DIY gifts show personalized thoughtfulness for your friends, loved ones, and the planet. Keep in mind that DIY items can't be returned to a store or may not be easily regifted so create gifts that you KNOW the recipient will want. It may require a little more research and probing, but you'll end up giving a gift that's truly appreciated.



Crafted DIY gifts

No-sew tie blankets — Put your leftover fabric to work! These cozy blankets only require two pieces of fleece fabric cut to the same size, a ruler and a pair of scissors. As an added benefit, they are also easy to make with kids. If you are low on fabric, check local thrift stores, [ArtStart](#) in St. Paul or surplus stores like [Ax Man](#) for used crafting materials.

Homemade bath and body items — Craft homemade bath and body products to customize your ingredients and create personalized spa-like items that fit your recipient's skincare regime. Don't forget to include a tag with your list of ingredients. Check out two of our [simple recipes](#) to combat dry winter skin.

Give the gift of your time! — Make an eco-friendly choice to give the gift of your talents and time. This low-waste gift minimizes packaging and consumption while providing a friend or loved one with a meaningful service. Whether you offer a day of babysitting, a music lesson or a cooked meal, these gifts can create lasting memories. Create a ticket, homemade coupon or something tangible to give your recipient, and be sure to schedule your experience within a month or two so your gift doesn't lose its excitement or become a burden.

Crocheted or knitted outerwear — Let's face it, the Minnesota winters are downright cold. Handcrafted items from natural and organic fabric and yarn provide an extra layer of warmth and comfort against the chill. Also, crochet is trending with tons of free patterns to choose from online. Made with love, these gifts also eliminate the need for transportation and packaging of store-bought goods.

Upcycled and repurposed DIY gifts

Repurposing and upcycling everyday items into gifts is a sustainable way to celebrate the holiday season. Repurposed materials from your home often carry a bit of nostalgia, evoking memories and making them more meaningful for your recipient, such as a quilt made from favorite outgrown baby clothes or a picture frame adorned with pieces of accidentally broken pottery.



Upcycled planters — Give new life to discarded or broken objects while promoting low-waste gardening. Craft unique pots from teacups, tin cans, or other vintage containers. These gifts are an eco-friendly, air-cleansing addition to any home.

DIY holiday gnomes — Just like the expensive versions found in stores, make your own DIY holiday gnomes out of upcycled fabric scraps, such as socks, and hot glue. These gnomes are trendy, add whimsy to holiday decor and can be easily regifted.

Metal can lanterns — Illuminate the holidays with sustainable charm by repurposing metal cans into lanterns. Use a hammer and a nail to carefully punch holes into the side of the can to create intricate designs. Place a candle inside and shine a light on your unique eco-friendly DIY gift. This minimalist decor piece can be recycled when it's no longer needed.

Fresh spice mixes — Homemade spice mixes are a great way to cook without the preservatives, but only some have time in their busy schedules to DIY their spice mixes. That's where you come in! Create flavorful, [fresh blends](#) at home and control what goes into your mix. Calculate the required amount and buy precisely what you need in bulk to reduce waste. Package your spices in reusable, resealable containers to make a savory gift for the chef in your life.

Natural and sustainable DIY gifts

Your choice of materials plays a role in the environmental impact of your DIY holiday gift. Consider using sustainable and natural materials such as seeds you collect from your garden or sticks, logs and pinecones gathered from the forest floor.



Pinecone bird feeders — Pinecones, nut butter and birdseed make a DIY eco-friendly gift for your favorite nature lovers. Care for the environment and its inhabitants during the cold Minnesota winter months while providing wildlife viewing for your recipient.

Gift experiences — Instead of a physical gift, offer the [gift of experiences](#) to create memories without producing waste. Whether it's movie tickets, a memorable hike, cooking classes or a spa day, these gifts emphasize quality time over material goods and hopefully encourage others to do the same. Again, give your recipient something tangible to represent your experience and schedule it within a month or two so your gift doesn't lose excitement or become a burden.

Zero-waste starter kits — You may have a friend or family member who is curious about a low-waste lifestyle but has yet to have the opportunity to adopt any green habits. Assemble a zero-waste starter kit using reusable stainless steel straws, upcycled cloth napkins made from leftover textiles and bamboo or secondhand utensils from a thrift store as an alternative to single-use plastics.

Seed starting kit — Encourage low-waste gardening and sustainability by gifting seed starting kits. Include your recipient's favorite fruit and vegetable seeds, some soil and seed starting trays so when spring rolls around, they can hit the ground running. Or skip the seed trays and display your gift items in a pot that your recipient can use.

Delicious edible DIY gifts

Craft some tasty, heartfelt treats to show you care this holiday season. Homemade cookies, fudge, canned goods, and pickles make appetizing DIY gifts. Use locally sourced, organic and seasonal ingredients to elevate your creations when possible. Make sure you are aware of any potential food allergies before giving edible DIY gifts.



Easy microwave fudge — Give the gift of indulgence when you make easy, delicious fudge in your microwave in under five minutes. Experiment with different flavors and use locally sourced and organic ingredients. Package your fudge in reusable containers or [beeswax wraps](#) for an easy, eco-friendly gift.

Vegan soup mixes — Layer your ingredients in a mason jar or other reusable container. Don't forget to include the cooking instructions! These eco-friendly gifts allow recipients to savor homemade while trying sustainable plant-based meals.

Chai tea mix — Craft some DIY chai tea mix for a warm, comforting, eco-friendly DIY gift. Buy in bulk to minimize waste and create a customized brew. Use glass jars or other reusable containers to store your gift, reducing the waste of store-bought tea.

Homemade DIY sausage or jerky — Gifting [homemade sausage](#) or [jerky](#) during the holiday season is a flavorful and nourishing alternative to giving store-bought objects. Select sustainably raised meats to support responsible hunting and farming practices. A grinder can be reused throughout the year to grind veggies, nuts and more for burgers, sauces, pastas and salsas. If you don't have a dehydrator, you can make jerky in your oven. Or borrow supplies from a friend. Use a vacuum seal to make your gifts last longer, minimizing food waste. Homemade sausage and jerky is a perfect DIY gift for the meat lover on your list.

Decorative DIY gifts

With some eco-friendly creativity, crafting a decorative DIY gift is a heartfelt gesture for your recipient and the environment. Reduce waste by repurposing discarded materials, such as reclaimed wood, old glass bottles, or leftover fabric scraps, into unique decorative works of art. Here are a few ideas to get you started:



[DIY stovetop potpourri](#) — Adorn your recipient's home with seasonal aromas using potpourri that you simmer in water on your stove. Made from items you likely already have on hand such as fresh pine sprigs, vanilla extract, pumpkin pie spice, cinnamon sticks and citrus slices, create a custom blend and package it in reusable containers for gifting. You may need to probe to discover scent preferences, however, these recipes are made from natural ingredients that won't overpower or fill your home with chemicals. These mixes can also be easily regifted.

[Brilliant DIY paper snowflakes](#) — Use scrap paper or paper bags, glue and a pair of scissors to craft intricate handmade holiday decorations. Hot glue bags together facing the same direction, and cut them all in a stack when dry. Unfold the bags to reveal your one-of-a-kind snowflake. For younger kids, try this simple [folding technique](#) on paper scraps to create sustainable works of winter art. When spring rolls around, the snowflakes without hot glue can be recycled.

[Handmade cinnamon apple ornaments](#) — Mix up this dough recipe, roll it out and use seasonal cookie cutters to create aromatic ornaments. Don't forget to make a hole in the top before you bake them to string up your finished, cooled DIY ornaments. Infuse the season with delicious, memory-evoking smells that warm your recipient's home.

Don't forget the zero-waste gift wrapping

When you finish creating your DIY holiday treasures, it's time to think about your gift presentation. There are many sustainable and [creative ways to wrap your gifts](#). Reuse cloth or burlap bags year after year and begin a new family tradition. Try out [furoshiki](#), a Japanese zero-waste method for wrapping gifts in pieces of cloth. Also, [book jacket gift bags](#) transform book covers into beautiful bags that can withstand repeated use. Add even more creativity and sustainability to your DIY holiday gifts by embracing zero-waste gift wrapping.



The environmental impact of the holiday season

It is no surprise that our holiday festivities come with an increased environmental impact. But that shouldn't keep us from the spirit of giving to loved ones, friends, neighbors and those in need this season. Giving experiential or edible gifts, volunteering your time, using zero-waste wrapping solutions and diverting reusable materials from the waste stream are all eco-friendly ways you can gift this year.

Create, craft, upcycle and repurpose this year to reduce the environmental impact of the holiday season. Happy Holidays!