

Published: December 17, 2008 11:00 pm, The Daily Star

## **OCCA's tips for a 'green' holiday**

### **Otsego County Conservation Association**

We at OCCA enjoyed reading Patricia Breakey's Dec. 6-7 article on natural versus artificial Christmas trees. There are many other ways to "think green" during the holidays. Here's what OCCA has to suggest:

Buy gifts and decorations at antique or thrift stores. Make an agreement with friends or family to only exchange gifts that are re-used, re-gifted or re-purposed.

Reduce your carbon footprint by shopping locally, especially at local artisan shops, farmers' markets and health food or fair trade stores.

When buying gifts, remember that inexpensive items are usually made of toxic plastics whose production and disposal cause a threat to soil, air and water. Choose gifts and decorations made from safer, natural materials.

Give "green" gift baskets filled with compact fluorescent lights, rechargeable batteries or organic food, preferably grown or produced locally.

Decorate with light-emitting diodes, or LED lights, which use one-tenth of the energy of conventional lights.

Make decorations from old Christmas cards and ribbons, gingerbread cookies, popcorn or cranberry garlands, or origami patterns.

If you had a natural tree, reuse it as an outdoor decoration, bird feeder or wildlife habitat after the holidays.

If you plan to splurge on a holiday meal, consider giving your family and yourself the gift of a meal prepared, to the greatest extent possible, with local organic food. Also, think about serving organic beverages.

Reuse brown paper bags to wrap presents. Decorate them with last year's cards. You'd be surprised how creative you can be and how attractive the packages are.

Send cards that have been printed on recycled paper, preferably imprinted with soy ink, or send cards by e-mail.

Creativity and resourcefulness are key components of eco-friendly practices, and these qualities abound among Otsego County residents. We would appreciate it if residents would share other ideas for reducing our individual impact on the environment during the holidays. You may contact us at 547-4488 or e-mail us at [director@occainfo.org](mailto:director@occainfo.org). We will include your suggestions in our 2009 list of holiday hints.