



## ENVIRONMENT

### Christmas Strategies©

by Valentine Rinner

Hi everyone! Welcome to this week's episode of Ten Minutes for the Planet. Christmas is coming up and with it numerous Black Friday ads, also what seems like entire forests are being sold on our sidewalks, all the decorations, the wrappings, the festive foods, etc...

I don't know about you but I'm always a bit torn when such a consumer-oriented time of the year comes up. I absolutely want to join in the Christmas fun but every time I see people coming out of stores with massive amounts of triple layered gift-wrappings and Christmas trees with fake snow - all of which will end up in the trash in a few weeks time - a part of me doesn't actually find it 100% fun.

So over the years I've come up with a few strategies to have a more planet-friendly Christmas, without sacrificing or spoiling the fun, and even increasing it! I'll share a couple of them with you today.

My first strategy concerns the Christmas tree. In France each year we buy over 5 million natural trees and over 1 million artificial ones. The good news is that in France there has been legislation for 15 years concerning Christmas tree production - mostly 'Épicea' trees - and production is now more respectful. However we are seeing an increase of imported trees mostly 'Nordman' trees from Northern or Eastern Europe. This means more pollution from transportation and variable levels of production transparency. Artificial trees are not much better as they are made out of highly polluting materials and are usually imported from East Asia.

So can I suggest two options, the first one is to buy your natural French Christmas tree in a pot, spend Christmas with it and replant it in your garden or a relative or friend's garden after New Year. It's actually really fun to do this, especially if you leave the decorations on it while you replant it. The second option, which I have opted for this year, is to buy a large Christmas tree branch. They are usually available for only a few euros everywhere that sells trees. When you turn the branch upside down it really does look like a full tree and smells like one, with the advantage of taking up less space in my small apartment.

My second major planet-friendly Christmas strategy relates to gifts. With an average of almost 300 euros per person spent on Christmas gifts the market is huge and companies know it: ads are everywhere prompting us to buy more and more things. And when we

do it is often without thinking, just because we feel like we have to, and it's more stuff, wrapped in even more layers than usual – think Rowan Atkinson style in Love Actually.

My strategy to get out of this craziness is to make my own gifts. Hmmm I can already hear you muttering... but no it doesn't take more time than navigating through 5 or 6 different shops in the middle of a crowd, lining up and recuperating shopping, and it doesn't mean ugly homemade scarves or painted pasta necklaces either.

There are lots of beginner DIY ideas and tutorials on the web. There is also a whole bunch of ideas in your own head. It simply requires you to take an hour off, close your phone and laptop, put some nice music on, make yourself a hot chocolate, sit on the couch and start a little list.

My strategy here is to settle on a basic gift theme that I customize depending on the recipient. This year's Christmas Eve will see customized bath salts and all sorts of massage oils. Once I have the right idea for the right person it just takes 10 minutes to make each one and most of the ingredients are already sitting in my kitchen or bathroom cupboards: olive or almond oils, oatmeal flakes, vanilla pods, glass jars, etc... I then get my craft box out for eclectic decorations and up-cycling wrappings.

Now it's your turn to dig out the creativity in you! But first start with that cozy hot chocolate...

Bye everyone! Merry Christmas! And see you next week for a new episode of Ten Minutes for the Planet.