Give the Gift of Experiences:
- Concert or movie theater tickets, local memberships, gift cards to local restaurants, special interest classes (yoga, language, etc), summer camp at a local nature camp, a National Parks pass

Buy Less:
- Make some decadent edibles to share
- “Adopt” a star or an endangered critter
- Make a charitable donation in someone’s name
- Organize a secret gift exchange with your friend/family group
- Set spending/present limits with your family/friends

Buy it locally:
- Shop used: Habitat ReStore, Goodwill and Craigslist
- Shop local (including gift cards)
- Make it yourself! How much more local can you get? 😊

Wrapping it:
Use reusable or recyclable materials:
- paper bags and newspapers
- old road or nautical maps
- sheet music
- magazines or old calendars
- reusable paper or cloth bags
- colorful fabric and “real” ribbon (store them to reuse next year)
- new towels (make them part of the gift)

Cleaning up:
Make sure you recycle, repurpose, and pass along:
- Check our local recycling guide for what and where you can recycle locally: www. RockbridgeConservation.org/library
- Find new uses for items that were replaced over the holidays
- Trash to Treasure: donate items that you no longer need/want for someone else to find
- Sell your unwanted items online
Get Creative!

No matter what holiday you celebrate, find joy in creative rituals that celebrate nature and people throughout the season:

- Gather with friends to swap ornaments, make decorations, or just enjoy good company
- Bake cookies, cakes, or some savory treat – baking warms you up.
- Sing! Dance! It makes you feel good.
- Make a photo album to celebrate the year behind
- Participate in or create a family- or community-wide service event. (e.g., collecting items needed by Lisa’s House or RARA)

Go Outside

- Count birds… with the Rockbridge Holiday Bird Count.
- Get outdoors at night for a moonlit walk, hanging out around a fire pit, or holiday star-gazing.
- Enjoy the beauty of Rockbridge by hiking one of our many trails.
- Get out in the snow: sledding/snow tubing/snow angel-making… and then warm up with a hot beverage.
- Clean up your street, road or park: grab some friends and make it a party!

Stay in Touch

- Consider sending postcards instead of traditional cards in envelopes to save paper & postage.
- Buy holiday cards made of 100% recycled paper: some companies make cards that have seeds in them, so your card can be planted.
- Skip the physical cards and send your friends and relatives e-cards.*

* there are greenhouse gas emissions from both snail mail and e-cards
**Trees and Holiday Greens!**

Is it better to buy a fake tree, wreath, etc. that you use for years or a real tree/wreath/etc? The answer: real trees and greens are better! Here’s why:

- Real trees and the trees/bushes used for other holiday greens store carbon while they’re growing
- They are recyclable/compostable
- They are renewable. 😊
- Tree farms preserve open land
- Most artificial trees are made of petroleum-based plastics (not talking about ceramic trees or felted wool trees here). Plastics do not break down in the environment, so while you may use it for a number of years, it will be on our Earth forever.

Other options: Decorate a large house plant, fashion a tree out of items in your home – get creative! – or move your decorations outside and decorate an outside tree with goodies for birds and local wildlife (i.e., peanut butter coated pinecones rolled in bird seed).

If you use a cut tree, don’t forget to compost your tree after the holidays! They make great habitat for birds and small critters.

And if you must use an artificial tree, buy it used, and make sure to keep it in good condition so you can use it for many years!! And when you’re done with it, donate it!

**Other decorations:**

- Invest in LED lights (and save up to 90% of the electricity to power your holiday lighting)
- Make your own wreaths and table centerpieces using materials from your yard or around your home
- Conserve energy by turning on holiday lights for a limited period of time each night; consider using a timer so you don’t forget.
- Swap ornaments with friends instead of purchasing new ones
- Use soy candles instead of paraffin (petroleum) wax candles