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Writing Sample #2

What if Al Gore showed up to your holiday party?

Well, if you're anything like me, you probably would receive a stern (if somewhat robotic) lecture from the man who has become the icon of environmental awareness. The only green thing about my holiday season is my tree. That is, before I forget to water it for a week.

So, how does the average person "green" their holiday season?

Let's start with the holiday season's icon – the tree. Cutting down a tree to have it wilt and die in your living room probably isn't going to earn you environmentalist of the year. Try using a living, potted one. Or, if that fails, contact your local public works department to see if your town recycles holiday trees.

Energy-efficient LED (light-emitting diode) lights can add pizzaz to your holiday decorations. They use significantly less power than regular lights and last longer. (Turn them off at night for even more savings.) Finish your tree off with homemade or eco-artware's recycled ornaments.

Mounds of wrapping paper and cards are not half as bad when they are made from environmentally-friendly materials. Paporganics' offers wrapping paper made from a hemp blend and printed with 100% vegetable inks. Add that final touch with Global's Exchange's fair-trade holiday cards or Recycled Paper Greetings' 100% recycled cards.

Of course, what you give is just as important as the package. If you're looking at that latest gadget, make sure to check out Greenpeace's 'Guide to Greener Electronics' to see how the manufacturer's policies on toxic chemicals and recycling stack up to the competition. Homemade gifts, such as baked cookies or breads, are an excellent option for smaller gift items.

Take these small steps to make sure that the aftereffects of your holiday season cheer don't stretch far beyond the holiday season.