

# Healthy Indoor Environments

*Where We Live, Learn and Play*

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Georgia Healthy Housing  
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## Healthy Gifts

This year give a gift that promotes health and safety.

- ◆ Reduce the risk of lung cancer with a radon test. (Order a kit at [www.UGAradon.org](http://www.UGAradon.org).)
- ◆ LED flashlight
- ◆ Handybar to assist in getting out of the car
- ◆ Talking smoke & carbon monoxide detector
- ◆ Fireproof & waterproof document case for important documents.



## Furry Festivities: Keeping Your Pets Safe During the Holidays

*Written by Candace Tucker, FACS Extension Agent, Coweta County*

The holiday season is a joyous time to gather with family and friends. It can also be a busy time of gift shopping, preparing your infamous green bean casserole, or hosting extended family and friends. With the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, your pets may be unintentionally forgotten. By keeping your furry friends (or family) in mind during the holidays, you can avoid hazards that could cause harm to your pet.



*Image Source: Pexels*

Whether you are traveling across the country or enjoying the holidays at home, here are four tips to keep your pets safe during the holidays.

- 1) **Keep toxic foods and plants away from your pets.** These include mistletoe, poinsettias, holly, chocolate, onions, grapes, macadamia nuts, yeast dough, alcohol, and xylitol – an ingredient found in sugar-free gum, candy and baked goods. They can cause vomiting, diarrhea and even death in high doses.
- 2) **Trees need to be securely anchored to a base** to prevent them from falling onto your pet or spilling water. Keep pets away from tree water, which may contain fertilizer and bacteria that can cause stomach upset if ingested.
- 3) **Holiday decorations easily catch the eye of your pets.** Some pets may see your holiday decor as toys they can chew on, eat, or play with. Keep lights, candles, tinsel, wires, batteries, and glass or plastic ornaments out of your pet's reach. If ingested, these can cause burns or damage to your pet's digestive tract.
- 4) **Hosting guests this year? Plan with your pet in mind.** Set house rules for your guests if they choose to interact with your pet. Give your pet a room or "safe" space to relax while you have company. Give your pet space away from fireworks or other noise-causing devices, which can scare or damage the ears of your pets.

These proactive tips are not foolproof, because things happen. Always contact your local veterinarian if you suspect your pet has put themselves in a harmful situation.

**Wishing you and your pets safe and happy holidays!**

## Less is More This Holiday Season: Tackling America's Holiday Waste Problem

Written by Dana Carney, FACS Extension Agent, Lanier County

Every year, the holiday season brings joy, fellowship, and an extra 1 million tons of waste per week to our landfills. Yes, you read that correctly: Americans create an additional 1 million tons of waste *per week* during the holiday season. No matter what your holiday season may look like, you can help tackle this problem head-on in your household by following some suggestions under the old adage of reduce, reuse, recycle.

### **Reduce**

Reducing waste during the holiday season (and year-round) is one of the most effective and environmentally-friendly ways to tackle unnecessary waste.

- ◆ **Reduce the number of gifts that are quickly forgotten or thrown away by thinking long term.** Consider giving items that can be used for years to come, subscription services that can be enjoyed the whole following year, or experiences that can always be remembered fondly.
- ◆ **Be selective when sending greeting cards.** Unfortunately, the family photo you spent hours getting just right will likely be thrown in the trash a few weeks after the holidays. Send physical cards to those it would mean the most to, and send e-cards to everyone else.
- ◆ **Reduce food waste by letting go of the idea that you need an over-abundance of food for a nice-looking spread.** Take time to plan out your meals and estimate how much food is actually needed before ever stepping foot into a grocery store. [Savethefood.com](http://Savethefood.com) provides an excellent tool (*Guest-Imator*) to estimate how much food you need for your guests. If it feels like there's too much empty space on the table, fill in empty spots with decorations you can reuse.
- ◆ **Think of food items you regularly end up throwing away and ditch them ahead of time.** For example, does anyone eat the Waldorf salad, or do you end up throwing most of it away a week later? This might be a sign that it's time to stop purchasing or making that food.
- ◆ **Reduce energy waste** by buying Energy Star energy-efficient lighting and putting lights on timers.

### **Reuse**

After you've successfully reduced potential waste as much as possible, try reusing what you already have. One of the most talked-about forms of reusing during the holiday season is re-gifting, or passing along gifts.

- ◆ **Barely-used items can be given a new life beyond just being extra clutter in your home.** For example, pass along toys or activities that your children have outgrown by re-gifting them to a family with younger children. This also works well for home décor that no longer matches your style but would work well in someone else's home.
- ◆ **Reuse items like gift bags, bows, and holiday decorations for years.** When purchasing holiday decorations and paper goods, choose décor that does not include the year so you can reuse it multiple years in a row.
- ◆ **For gift wrapping, use old comics, magazines, paper bags, and newspapers.** Also, save boxes from online orders to make hard-to-wrap items a breeze. Alternatively, forego the gift wrap altogether and hide presents. Create a treasure hunt map or leave clues around the house, so children young and old can search for their presents.
- ◆ **Get creative with leftover food** instead of just throwing it all away a few days after the main event. Mashed potatoes can become a delicious breakfast casserole, diced turkey or ham can be added to salads for lunch the next week, and leftover rolls can be used as the buns for sliders.



Image Source: Pixabay



**Recycle**

Unfortunately, most traditional gift wrap is not recyclable, especially if it has tape or stickers on it. This is why reducing and reusing should be the first steps in tackling your holiday waste. However, you can recycle plastic bags and stretchy plastics from shipping materials with the recycling symbol #2 or #4 on them. Make sure to take them to appropriate drop off sites – often outside of grocery stores – because these plastics cannot go into most single stream (curbside) recycling processes. Additionally, recycle old and broken electronics with [e-stewards](#), who can dispose of and recycle electronics properly for you.

All in all, putting even a few of these suggestions into practice will help alleviate some of the additional waste created during the holiday season. Try one or two this year, and add in a few more next year – before you know it, you might have a waste-free holiday season!



*Image Source: Pixabay*

**Gifts for Aging Adults**

*Written by Alexis Roberts, FACS Extension Agent, Bartow County*

Gift giving is an uphill battle that only seems to intensify with age, especially when shopping for older adults. Buying for those who are not able to buy for themselves takes some creative thinking.

Here are some ideas to get you started.

- ◆ Connect them to a local senior center and financially contribute to their outings or activities. There are many resources to help adults stay active as they age. Senior centers often organize trips and outings that your loved ones may find interesting, such as a trip to the beach or Vegas. It is a great way for them to stay active and travel safely with a group of their peers.
- ◆ Weighted blankets are becoming more popular, and are designed to provide a warm, gentle pressure that helps people sleep better and feel secure. It can also decrease anxiety and create a calming sensation.
- ◆ Gift baskets are a classic for a reason. Who does not love a box of their favorite things? Skip the generic baskets and get personal. Buy a basket or box, and fill it with their favorite candy, snacks, drinks and comfort items. Help create a small special experience that will bring them joy.



*Image Source: Pamela Turner*

**Give with joy this holiday season!**



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EXTENSION

## Extension Cords Everywhere!

Written by Becca Stackhouse, FACS Extension Agent, Crisp County

Have you thought of the importance of safety when using an extension cord? Extension cords deliver power right where we need it— if the lamp isn't close enough to the wall or floor outlet, we just plug it into an extension cord. It's important to remember that convenience should never overrule safety. Extension cords are a temporary solution and should be used sparingly and with caution. The continued use of an extension cord over time can deteriorate the cord, creating an electric shock or fire hazard in your home or work environment. When an extension cord, or any cord for that matter, is damaged, it should be disposed of. When using an extension cord it is important to follow some safety tips.



Image: Wikimedia Commons

- ◆ Do not run an extension cord underneath rugs or carpets.
- ◆ Do not use them in high traffic areas, where they create a tripping hazard.
- ◆ Do not place furniture or other heavy objects on the cord. This can cause fraying wires or uneven heat distribution.
- ◆ Do not run extension cords through walls, doorways, ceilings or floors because heat buildup can become a hazard.
- ◆ Do not use them to connect household appliances to outlets. This could result in voltage drops, and if the wrong cord is used the risk of fire and electric shock increases.
- ◆ Buy only cords approved by an independent testing laboratory, like Underwriters Laboratories (UL)
- ◆ Do not overload the cord. Select cords that are rated to handle the electronic devices you are using it for.
- ◆ Never unplug it by pulling or jerking out the cord.
- ◆ Be sure the plug fits the outlet. If the cord has three prongs, do not cut off the ground pin to force a fit. Making such changes defeats the purpose of the three-prongs system created to keep the cord grounded.
- ◆ When an extension cord is marked for indoor use, do not use it outdoors.
- ◆ Never plug an extension cord into another extension cord.

## Healthy Home Hacks

**Seasonal scents** can fill your home. Simmer a pot of water on your stove, filled with sliced apples, orange rinds, cinnamon sticks, and any other spices and fruits you enjoy. ~ Pamela Turner

**Clean your refrigerator gasket** with 1 quart of warm water and 1 tablespoon of baking soda. Scrub with an old toothbrush or microfiber cloth. Clean gaskets keep the door sealed, meaning your refrigerator cools more efficiently. ~ Pamela Turner

**Water marks** on wood furniture can be removed with a dab of toothpaste and a soft cloth. ~ Pamela Turner

**Remove candle wax** from furniture by hardening it by placing a plastic bag of ice cubes on it. Once it has cooled, lift the wax off of the furniture. If the wax is on carpet, put a paper bag over the wax and lightly go over the area with a steam iron. The steam helps to lift the wax and transfer it to the bag. ~Pamela Turner

**Declutter** your home by donating or recycling at least one item each day. ~Pamela Turner



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