

Homes & Real Estate

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Go green at home this gift-giving season

Green gifts for the home include products that conserve energy and water, reduce waste or have fewer toxics than similar products. They may also be made locally, which reduces transportation impacts.

By Tom Watson

Special to NWhomes

The “greenest” gift is one the recipient will actually use.

This holiday season, increase your odds of successful green-gift giving by choosing eco-friendly items for the home.

Green gifts for the home include products that conserve energy and water, reduce waste or have fewer toxics than similar products. They may also be made locally, which reduces transportation impacts.

These attributes in a gift may sound great to the giver, but the givee needs to be on board with the green thing, too. A green gift that never gets used just adds to the excessive consumption and waste that plagues modern-day holiday celebrations.

Practical gifts make sense environmentally when they consist of useful items the gift recipient would buy anyway, but those also don't work for everyone.

Giving a spouse a vacuum cleaner, for instance, might not be well-received, even if it's a high-end, dust-busting model that will improve indoor air quality. Some spouses or partners might really appreciate it, however. When in doubt, ask.

For those of us who enjoy giving gifts to ourselves as well as others during the holidays, green home gifts also make an ideal choice.

The list of appealing green gifts for the home is nearly endless. Here's a sampling:

Organic cotton bedding. As one example, Holy Lamb Organics (holylamborganics.com) handmakes its wool-filled sustainable bedding at its plant in tiny Oakville, southwest of Olympia. Several retailers in the Puget Sound area carry Holy Lamb products, which include comforters and pillows.

Solar-powered chargers for devices and batteries. These handy products have entered the mainstream, with many versions now available to meet various needs. REI (rei.com) carries more than 15 models of solar-powered chargers, priced from \$25 to \$300.

LED energy-efficient light bulbs. Light-emitting diode bulbs have gotten less expensive, and many retailers offer utility-supported discounts (check seattle.gov/light/conserves and pse.com/rebates for details). You can easily find LEDs under \$10 now. The quality has gotten better as well, and they should last a lifetime. Someone on your list might love to try out one of these, especially if they don't love the more-common CFL (compact fluorescent lamp) energy-efficient bulbs.

Rain barrels and tanks. These collect water from your downspout. The greenest choices are repurposed plastic barrels previously used to ship food products such as olives. The Seattle Conservation Corps (seattle.gov/parks/scc) sells these for \$80.

A gift card or certificate. Not all green home retailers or used-building-materials stores offer these, so call first to check. Greenhome Solutions (ghsproducts.com), a building-products retailer located near the Ballard Bridge in Seattle, offers gift certificates for any amount.

Those suggestions just scratch the surface, of course. You can now find at least a few green gifts at most home-products and hardware stores, though you may need to do a little research to make sure the items are in stock and are truly green.

Expand your green gift options and support local small businesses and individual crafters by checking out community holiday craft fairs; these abound in our region. Another promising place to find green gifts for the home and beyond is the Urban Craft Uprising (urbancraftuprising.com), which bills itself as "Seattle's largest indie craft show." It takes place next Saturday and Sunday (Dec. 7–8) at the Seattle Center Exhibition Hall.

If online shopping is more your style, search major retailers websites for green home gifts, or find area residents selling their green home products by visiting the Etsy.com crafts marketplace.

Try searching Etsy for "Seattle recycled home décor" or similar terms.

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