00:00:03 Announcer

The Missouri State Journal, a weekly program keeping you in touch with Missouri State University.

00:00:10 Emily Yeap

The holiday season is a time of giving gifts and Americans spend a lot on gifts. In 2022, the National Retail Federation reported that the average American plans to spend $826 on gifts, food and decorations for the holidays. Of that amount, around $500 go toward gifts for family members.

With such a large quantity of gifts being given away, it’s important to consider: What’s the carbon footprint of these gifts? How can consumers be more intentional about gifting more sustainably this holiday season? I’m Emily Yeap.

Joining me today to offer some insights about sustainable gift giving is Missouri State University sophomore Sam Wang, a double major in [history](https://history.missouristate.edu/) and [anthropology](https://www.missouristate.edu/SAG/Anthropology/default.htm). He currently serves as the chief sustainability commissioner for the [Student Government Association](https://sga.missouristate.edu/).

00:01:02 Sam Wang

I think it's important that everybody does their part, whether it be large or small. There are 8 billion of us on this planet, and even doing the smallest impact, such as changing what you wrap your gifts in, supporting a local business rather than a chain, can be such a huge difference in the grand scheme of things.

00:01:20 Emily Yeap

What does sustainable gift giving look like?

00:01:24 Sam Wang

So that can mean a lot of different things. It depends on what process that you want to be sustainable. It can be the gift-wrapping process itself, so maybe you want to reuse gift bags, maybe you want to use reusable wrapping paper. It can be the gift itself, so maybe something from a sustainable business, a local business here in town, or something that's recyclable, it’s going to last a while. Or, in a funnier case, it can be something like reusing a gift for, say, white elephant even.

When people think of sustainability, they think of plastic, the environment. But sustainability can be so much more. We can be sustainable in education, in food and our economic system. So, when it comes to gift giving, I would say finance is a good thing to keep in mind, cost. If you're giving someone food for the holidays, you know, keep that in mind. Am I giving someone healthy food that's sustainable for them? So yeah, I would definitely keep in mind sustainability as a broader topic in gift giving.

00:02:17 Emily Yeap

Wang offers some ideas and tips.

00:02:20 Sam Wang

Personally, for me, I will reuse anything possible when it comes to giving a gift. Whether it be a holiday bag that a gift came in, if it's a card even that wasn't written on, I might reuse the card, wrapping paper. Whenever I unwrap a gift, I try not to just rip it open. I don't want to break it. I might want to reuse it in the future.

And then when it comes to the actual gift itself, I try and look at stuff that, you know something that someone's either going to use for a while, maybe if they no longer have a use for it, they'll be able to donate it to somebody else, so clothes can be a good example. People love clothes. It's a great thing to gift during the holiday season. Obviously, size is something you keep in mind. You don't want to get something that's too small, but it's also important when someone's receiving that gift, that if they eventually grow out of that, you know, they don't just simply throw away that clothes.

Because, you know, clothes can take a considerable amount of water to make, lots of resources to make, and there's so many areas that you can donate cloes to. I would say if you've got the skills to make crafts, that's a great way. For a lot of people, if they're making you something from scratch, that's a lot more meaningful to them as well. So, I would say that's a great combo.

00:03:25 Emily Yeap

It's also a good idea to support local businesses or larger ones that genuinely focus on sustainability.

00:03:31 Sam Wang

It can be hard to find that out sometimes. A lot of big companies will say that they have a sustainable mission just to cover up the fact that they're maybe doing stuff that is not so sustainable, so it can be hard to determine that at times. I would say here in Springfield, we've got a really good choice of options.

One of my favorites is probably Soap Refill. It's a business downtown. You just refill your soap. It's super sustainable. You don’t have to keep buying different soap containers, using that plastic stuff like that. So even something that's like a gift card to Soap Refill or gift cards to sustainable businesses is a great choice.

00:04:02 Emily Yeap

If sustainable gift giving is new to you, start small.

00:04:06 Sam Wang

A good example would be a dog toy. So a great thing to do is making a reusable dog toy out of, say, a shirt that no longer fits.

It's very easy to do, even I can do it and I'm not very crafty. I have very little craft skills, but I do love making reusable dog toys. It's a great holiday gift if you know somebody that has someone that would like a dog toy, maybe for their dog or another animal.

00:04:28 Emily Yeap

That was Sam Wang, the chief sustainability commissioner for the Student Government Association at Missouri State. I'm Emily Yeap for the Missouri State Journal.

00:04:39 Announcer

For more information, contact the Office of Strategic Communication at 417-836-6397. The Missouri State Journal is available online@ksu.org.