

THE COMBROKE EC_hO

MAKING COMBROKE EVEN GREENER!



CCCC becomes the CCCCC! (temporarily)

Thank you to everyone who joined the latest meeting of the (Christmas) Combroke Climate Change Club on 6th December. We zoomed through the main elements of Christmas that can have the biggest impact on the environment. We learnt about garden cones and wormeries (more on this next year) and shared ideas on planet friendly



gifts...from goats to providing clean water for those in need. We shared ideas for plastic-free gift wrapping, and learnt how to choose and look after our Christmas tree. And just like buses, we waited months for the second newsletter, then another one arrived just a couple of weeks later! The plan is to produce more regular newsletters in 2021 so you won't have to wait so

long for your eco-fix! **We want to hear from you!** Let us know about the changes (big or small) that you have made to help the planet. What would you like us to discuss at future meetings? What would you like to know more about?

Drop an email to parish-clerk@combroke.co.uk

HOW TO LOOK AFTER YOUR CHRISTMAS TREE
CHRISTMAS EXCESS (MINCE PIES AREN'T THE ONLY PROBLEM)
BEER AND CRISPS TO HELP TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE



WHAT IS AN ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY CHRISTMAS?

When we think about having an environmentally friendly Christmas, we immediately think about how we choose to wrap gifts, and what type of Christmas tree is best. But there are lots of things that we do (unnecessarily in many cases) at Christmas that dramatically increase the size of our carbon footprint even more. So by changing our behaviour in one or more carefully chosen areas, we can make a real difference.

Mike Berners-Lee (of 'How Bad Are Bananas?' fame) has calculated that in the UK, the average adult generates an extra 280kg of CO₂e (carbon dioxide or equivalent) of Christmas excess. That's heavier than one cubic metre of snow (230kg if you were wondering).

This Christmas excess is made up largely of these elements:

Avoidable Travel Wasted Food Unwanted Presents Fairy Lights Christmas Cards

Avoidable Travel

Like the rest of 2020, we will all be travelling a lot less this Christmas, saving a lot of carbon emissions. Heathrow reported an 88% drop in traffic in November 2020 compared to the same month last year. In a 'normal' year, the average person would travel an extra 50 miles by car during the festive season. By catching up with friends and family on video calls rather than driving the length of the country, we can save ourselves time, stress, fuel and carbon emissions!



Fairy Lights

Each adult on average will use an extra 45kWh on powering their fairy lights over the Christmas period.

In a household with 2 adults, this would power an electric car for 350 miles, run an electric shower for 9 hours non-stop, boil a kettle for 30 hours, or power an LED spotlight for 268 days.

Unwanted Presents

The average adult spends £600 on presents – of which it is estimated that 20% will be unwanted – destined to be donated to next year's Christmas raffle, to a charity shop, end up at the back of a wardrobe, or worse, in landfill.

Think carefully about your choice of gifts. Would a donation to a favourite charity be well received? Many charities now sell vouchers for you to support their work in some way. For example a donation to Oxfam could provide seeds, tools and training for farmers to help them grow more crops, or help to dig wells and install water pumps and taps for families facing drought. A donation to WWF could help to save animals from extinction.



Wasted Food

You may have heard this before, but it's worth reminding ourselves that **one third** of all food produced in the world is lost or wasted, and Christmas is one of the worst times of year for food waste.

Try to make the most of your leftovers, as always, and try to stick to a list when you do your Christmas food shop!

Home composting is a great way to make good use of kitchen and garden waste. There are various products available to help with this including wormeries and garden cones which break down kitchen waste in various ways. We will be looking at these in future meetings so keep your eyes 'peeled'!

Greetings Cards



On average, each person in the UK will send / receive between 17 and 24 Christmas cards. These will also be discarded once the festive period is over. It takes 1 tree to make **3,000** Christmas cards.

It is interesting that the majority of the CO₂e created by cards is down to the fact that they are generally delivered using vehicles, and it is the carbon emissions of the vehicles that is the problem. A little reminder to try to choose cards that don't have glitter on them – these can't be recycled and so will end up in an incinerator or landfill.

In summary, try not to go over the top with presents and food, wrap responsibly, make sure you've got LED fairy lights, and ditch the glitter!

So, artificial or real? Rooted or not?

There is always plenty of debate about whether a real or artificial tree is best. Firstly, if you've got an artificial tree, keep using it – make it last as long as possible.

If not, get a real tree with an FSC logo or one approved by the Soil Association. Rooted trees are best – if you can manage to keep it alive from one year to the next... or you could decorate a large perennial indoor plant like a yucca!

How to look after your tree

Saw 2-3cm off the bottom of the trunk. You can also score the bark roughly at the base of the tree, to maximise water absorption.

Never peel off the bark or the tree will dry out – water is only taken up through the tree in the layers just below the bark.

Choose a cool spot indoors away from radiators and choose low-heat fairy lights.

Keep it inside for as short a time as you can – it's a big shock for a tree that has spent most of its life outdoors to suddenly be brought in to a warm house.

Keep watering your tree – they're always thirsty!

If it has roots, keep in a sheltered spot in the garden, they like cool and moist conditions.

Consider taking it out of its pot and planting in the ground until next year, it will be much happier! Christmas trees grown on in pots may only live for a few years, as they are not naturally suited to ongoing pot cultivation.



Oh Christmas Tree!

Tips for buying a real Christmas tree

Try to buy locally grown trees – they will have a smaller carbon footprint and are likely to have been harvested more recently.

Select a healthy-looking tree – it should have a good shape, and bright, shiny needles, then pick it up. The heavier it feels, the fresher it will be as it will have lost less moisture since being cut. Tap the base of the tree

on the ground to check for needle retention – if it drops a lot of needles, don't buy it. Look at the base of the

tree where it was sawn and ensure it is pale. This means the tree is freshly harvested and will last longer than a tree which has been off its roots for

a while. If it has to travel on your car roof, make sure the base faces forward to protect the foliage from any more moisture loss.

No roots? Recycle your tree by putting out with your green bin, or shred the branches and use as a weed-suppressing mulch under shrubs. Cut the larger branches into shorter lengths and stack in undisturbed areas of the garden to create wildlife piles. Use the thickest part of the trunk to create bee hotels by drilling holes into the end of the trunk.

DO YOU KNOW YOUR TREES?

There are several types of conifer that can be brought indoors for decorating at Christmas. For the gardeners, here's a quick guide to your cultivars from the RHS:

***Picea abies* (Norway spruce):** Traditional Christmas tree with a good scent, but quick to drop its needles.

***Abies nordmanniana* (Nordmann fir):** Dark green needles that are very slow to drop, but more expensive than Norway spruce.

***Picea pungens* Glauca group (Blue spruce):** Blue needles, more prickly than other trees, holds its needles better than the Norway spruce.

***Abies koreana* (Korean fir):** Dark green, slightly curling needles. Excellent needle-holding quality.

***Abies fraseri* (Fraser fir):** Good needle-holding properties, a lovely pine fragrance and the regular shape of a Norway spruce.

Friends of the Earth are celebrating our native tree species that work year-round fighting the climate crisis, providing homes and food to wildlife, and giving protection from extreme weather such as floods and heatwaves. Broadleaf, deciduous trees and mixed woodlands will support many more wild species than conifer forests and plantations comprising just a few species.

If you're looking for a less Christmassy Quiz for your next Zoom get-together, you could do worse than having a go at this one from Friends of the Earth - Can you identify these native trees from their description?

12 Trees of Christmas – can you identify them?

- | | |
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| 1. This tree lives for hundreds of years, storing the most carbon and supporting more wild species - birds, insects, plants and fungi - than any other British tree | Common Oak |
| 2. This rare tree loves to grow near rivers and can reach heights of over 100 feet. | Black poplar |
| 3. A fast-growing tree, especially near rivers, and its wood was used to make the best gunpowder | Alder |
| 4. An ancient tree able to grow for thousands of years, often found in churchyards and once used to make longbows | Yew |
| 5. The wood of this tree is famously used to make cricket bats and its bendy cuttings can be driven into damp ground to make living dens, wigwams and tunnels. | Willow |
| 6. Known for dark blue berries which are used to flavour an alcoholic favourite, this native conifer with thin silvery-green needle-like leaves has been in decline and needs special conservation action to thrive. | Juniper |
| 7. Found on south-facing chalk and limestone hills and also in urban areas where it copes with heat and pollution. | Whitebeam |
| 8. Popular for woodwork, including making harps, thanks to its very fine-grained wood. Syrup can be extracted in the spring. | Maple |
| 9. Some people say the golden leaves of this tree quiver and rustle in the autumn as an apology for being the wood used for the cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified. | Aspen |
| 10. A common fast-growing tree with silvery-white bark and a sap used by some people to make an early springtime drink. | Birch |
| 11. If you find this rare, slow growing tree you may find that you are standing in an area of very ancient woodland that has not been affected by built development and timber production. | Wild service |
| 12. Has spiky, shiny leaves that deter creatures nibbling the low branches, but look up to see leaves without spikes which animals can't reach. Known for bright berries on female trees. | Holly |



PERILOUS PLASTIC

Christmas is a time when plastic sneaks into our lives at every opportunity, mainly in packaging. It's also therefore an opportunity for us to make a difference and drastically reduce our plastic consumption by making a few small changes. At the last meeting we discussed a few of the options...

Think about your wrapping!

Those lovely sparkly wrapping papers, tags, bags and cards are – unfortunately – not very friendly to the planet. Glitter and foil coated papers do not biodegrade and can not be recycled, so try to steer clear.

Do the 'scrunch' test – if it stays scrunched up then it can be recycled.

Re-use wrapping if possible - don't write names on gift bag labels, this way they can re-used time and again – or at least until they look too well-travelled to gift again!

Use fabric to wrap a gift, perhaps a pretty scarf, or a lovely Christmassy tea-towel that can form part of the present.

Have a go at this method of wrapping a bottle in the Japanese art of Furoshiki.



Companies make a lot of money at Christmas time by packaging their goods 'ready to gift'. This packaging often includes planet unfriendly materials. Jazz up your gifts yourself by adding a paper ribbon or gift bag.

Homemade is Best!

Christmas is an incredibly busy time so it's no wonder that many of us turn to ready made options, especially if we are entertaining or dashing off to an after-work drinks party (remember those days...?)

However, ready-prepared meals and food – in order to ensure that they arrive at their destination looking as good as possible – often travel in excessive packaging. Think mince pies, oven-ready canapes etc.

If you can make your own, not only will you be helping to reduce the (often plastic) packaging, but you can feel extra smug when you present your small gathering of guests with your homemade delights.

Remember your bags when you go Christmas shopping!

It's become clear that bags for life aren't working as we wanted them to, as the average household is still buying quite a lot - 54 every year according to Greenpeace.

Consider alternative present ideas

There are lots of options now available to buy gifts that not only help the planet by reducing plastic, but also do a lot of good in the world – from helping to support endangered species to providing clean water to communities in need. Have a look at Oxfam for ideas. Apparently gifts to Combroke residents in the past have included a leopard and a goat (thankfully they are being cared for somewhere more appropriate than a back garden).



NO MORE SNOW!

Snow on the ground could disappear in the UK thanks to climate change, Met Office warns.

You may have heard in the news this week that the Met Office has predicted that snow will become less and less likely in Britain in the future due to climate change.

Projections by weather experts suggest snow settling on the ground in winter may disappear if global greenhouse gas emissions are not reduced. © Evening Standard

NO MORE PLASTIC NOSES



Comic Relief's red noses will no longer be plastic with next year's noses to be made out of a plant-based material instead. Comic Relief and long-standing partner Sainsburys have created the new nose from bagasse, a natural and sustainable by-product of sugarcane. The new noses will launch early next year for Red Nose Day 2021.

A ROUND-UP OF ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS - LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL

BEER AND CRISPS TO HELP TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE



The much-loved combination of beer and crisps is being harnessed for the first time to tackle climate change.

Crisps firm Walkers has adopted a technique it says will slash CO2 emissions from its manufacturing process by 70%. The technology will use CO2 captured from beer fermentation in a brewery, which is then mixed with potato waste and turned into fertiliser. It will then be spread on UK fields to feed the following year's potato crop. Creating fertiliser normally produces high CO2 emissions, but the technology adopted by Walkers makes fertiliser without generating CO2. (BBC website)

ECO TAPE



Plastic-free Sellotape!

Yay! a plastic-free alternative to that Christmas essential! Made from plant based materials so biodegradable.

BYO BOTTLES

Milk fresh from the farm!
Take your own clean empty containers for milk (and eggs) to
Ridgways Farm, Epwell Road
(just outside Tysoe) OX15 6LP
and reduce your plastic usage.
Open every Saturday and Wednesday
8-10am.
Their ice cream is delicious too!

LANDMARK DECISION

On Monday 30th November the European Court of Human Rights announced its decision to green light a 'first of its kind' climate case against 33 countries. It now requires each one of them to respond to the complaint filed by six Portuguese youth applicants. The four children and two young adults from Portugal who are behind this case are asking the court to hold 33 countries accountable for fuelling the climate crisis. Their complaint centres on the rising threat climate change poses to their lives and to their physical and mental wellbeing. If successful the defending countries will be legally bound not only to ramp up emissions cuts but also to tackle overseas contributions to climate change, including those of their multinational enterprises.

Please note this newsletter is the editor's best attempt at presenting accurate information. Not definitive, all E&OE. No products or companies mentioned in this newsletter are endorsed by CCCC or the Editor.

Last word. Hope you have enjoyed this third edition of the Combroke Echo. If you are reading this on paper, please remember to re-use - pass it on to someone else to read, or use it to make a paper aeroplane. At the very least, please put it in your recycling bin.

Thanks for reading, and Merry Christmas!

