



Money makeover

Have yourself a merry eco-Christmas

Have all the fun of the festive season without any of the guilt, with the help of our green and ethical present and decoration ideas

It's easy to cut down on commercialism without taking the spirit out of Christmas. Simply reduce the amount of festive waste that ends up in a landfill and buy presents and decorations that are greener or give something back. We've found loads of Scrooge-free ideas for the McAnaw family – mum Liz, dad Peter, and their children Alice (12), Ellen (18), Andrew (23), Teresa (26), and Peter (30).

A season for giving

A great way for the family to cut clutter is to buy each other experiences – for example, theatre tickets, a meal or a day out.

Alternatively, they could consider charity gifts. The Island Farm Donkey Sanctuary (www.donkeysanctuary.org.uk) lets you sponsor a donkey – it's within driving distance of Alice's home. The McAnaws could also buy, say, schoolbooks for people in a developing country. Try www.oxfamunwrapped.com (0870 410 5030) or www.goodgifts.org (020 7794 8000) for more ideas.

This type of gift won't suit everyone, but there are plenty of pressies that will look great under the Christmas tree and are ethical, too. Websites like www.peopletree.co.uk or www.traidcraftshop.co.uk and high-street stores, including Marks & Spencer, Monsoon and Topshop, sell fashionable Fairtrade or eco-friendly clothes, accessories and jewellery. For funky footwear that Ellen might like,

www.wornagain.co.uk (020 7407 3758) sells shoes that, although pricey, are made from reclaimed materials like old prison blankets and recycled rubber.

Andrew, who's severely disabled, might appreciate a gift from www.specialneeds.toys.com. If Liz rings the company (01299 827820) and mentions the Contact a Family charity – a UK charity for families with disabled children – when she buys, it gets 10 per cent of the purchase price.

You can help gadget-lovers like Liz be greener with solar-powered devices. For instance, a portable Solio mobile charger (see *Which?*, October 2006, p40) costs about £50 from www.amazon.co.uk. For more solar-powered products, see www.cat.org.uk (01654 705993) – the site also stocks recycled and Fairtrade goodies.

O, Christmas tree

A real Christmas tree is a greener option than a plastic one, as producing a fake tree uses more energy and it won't be biodegradable. The McAnaws always get real trees and recycle them via the local council.

To reduce the carbon footprint of transporting the tree, www.christmas-tree.org.uk (0131 664 1100) will help them find a local grower – get a British-grown tree if you shop at a garden centre. Look for a potted tree with intact roots if you want to reuse it next year or ask your council about its Christmas tree recycling facilities.

When the McAnaws' tree lights need



We helped the McAnaws look forward to a greener, more ethical Christmas



This year, celebrate Christmas with a real tree

replacing, they should get LED versions. These last longer than conventional lights, use 90 per cent less energy and are widely available on the high street or from websites such as www.lights4fun.co.uk.

For decorations, check out the Fairtrade options at www.theindiaishop.co.uk, and www.revolve-uk.com sells tree ornaments made from recycled CDs and circuit boards. Recycled and recyclable cards, wrapping paper and tags (metallic or glittery ones can't be recycled) are available from www.naturalcollection.com – which also sells raffia paper made of regenerating mulberry tree bark – or charities like shop.wwf.org.uk (0870 750 7023) and www.woodlandtrust.org.uk.

Reusing their tree, switching to LED lights and avoiding panic-buying presents that are destined to end up in a cupboard will also help the McAnaws save money.

Would you like us to give your savings a makeover? If so, please get in touch with Cathy Neal at helpwanted@which.co.uk