

I'm dreaming of a green Christmas

Forget festive reds and golds, Lisa DuBois has only one colour on her mind this December...

This year, when I start wrapping all the Christmas presents, I won't be surrounded by multicoloured paper or red ribbons and gold bows.

Because the colour our family is most interested in this year is green. We've been doing our best to cut our carbon footprint and make more environmentally friendly choices in our day-to-day lives.

So we're replacing our usual glittery wrapping paper with recyclable brown paper – and that's just the start of how we're having a green Christmas.

It all began when my

husband Dave, now 45, and I sat down to watch the Netflix documentary *The Game Changers* in Autumn last year.

It focused on an athlete who wants to eat the best foods to give himself the best chance of performing in his sport, and famous names like Arnold Schwarzenegger and Lewis Hamilton, who talked about how they've moved to a plant-based diet.

It showed just how much damage humans are causing to the environment – and it was a real lightbulb moment for me.

'We need to make some changes at home,' I said to Dave, who was in full agreement.

The next day, we sat down with our children – Lucy, now 14, Becca, 12, and Arthur, nine – and told them about the film.

The kids were right behind us. Becca and Arthur had been learning about climate change at school, while Lucy had already made the switch to reusable make-up pads and natural skincare.

Together, we came up with a family plan to do our bit for climate change. Christmas was round the corner, so we

began by looking at our festive dinner.

I was already ordering fruit and veg boxes from our local greengrocer in Bolton, Greater Manchester, and we decided to ask for more seasonal, UK-grown products. As we stocked up on sprouts, carrots and potatoes, the greengrocer had another handy hint.

'Try this cranberry sauce,' he encouraged us. 'It's made by an independent business just a few miles away and it's delicious.' We popped it into our box.

Next, the turkey...

After watching the documentary, we'd decided to eat more plant-based food. At first, we started with one meat-free day a week, and eventually moved to eating plant-based food during the week, with meat at weekends.

'But we have to have a turkey, Mum!' the girls insisted, and I agreed. But instead of buying our bird at the supermarket, I went to our local butcher to order one from a nearby farm.

Our dinner was delicious. It tasted far nicer than any I've had from the supermarket and the price wasn't much

different. Plus, it wasn't wrapped in plastic!

Christmas trees might already look green, but next I looked into how we could make ours more environmentally friendly.

Dave and I bought a plastic tree when we first got together more than 20 years ago, but when it had started to look a bit tatty a few years ago, we'd swapped to a real tree.

All our decorations are either homemade – lovely mementoes which the children have made over the years – or ones we've inherited from relatives. It's a lovely way to share special memories, and we reminisce about that person when we hang their decoration.



The DuBois family Christmas shows you don't have to skimp on



Dave, Lisa, Becca, Lucy and Arthur all agree on the need to take action

A special part of Christmas morning is opening presents together, but I realised how much paper goes straight into the bin. Wrapping paper with glitter or foil can't be recycled, so I did some research and came up with a solution.

Instead of the usual wrapping paper, along with plastic bows and ribbon, I bought brown parcel paper, which is completely recyclable.

'It's a bit boring, Mum,' Arthur commented on seeing the plain packages under the tree – and he was right.

So... 'Why don't you and Becca draw some Christmas patterns on them?' I suggested.

Older relatives were delighted to see the kids' art on their presents – and it could go straight in the recycle bin.

Of course, it didn't just stop at Christmas – over the year, we've turned a section of the garden into a vegetable patch and have chickens who give us all the eggs we need.

We installed four water butts in our garden to save on the tap water, as Dave put guttering up

around our shed and attached one of the butts to there. It means we can use those to water the garden.

We also invested in two compost bins, so our potato peelings and garden waste go in there, and we used it on the vegetable patch in Summer.

As for this Christmas, I'm going even further, by choosing to do all of my online shopping at once and selecting the box to have them all delivered on one day – thus not as many delivery drivers turning up and fewer harmful exhaust emissions.

It's only a small thing, but I really believe that if we each made small steps, then together we could make a big difference.

I've also researched some eco-friendly family websites to find presents for the children. I've already spotted a mascara for Lucy. It's a solid block, a mascara cake, with a wand and bristles made from bamboo. A perfect stocking filler.

After seeing tips online, I've even swapped my usual sticky tape to a green version, which is plant-based and contains zero plastic. It's a simple change, but one that's much better for the environment.

In fact, all my swaps have been simple, and they haven't cost a great deal. If anything, I've saved money, which is always welcome.

So, now 44, I won't be dreaming of a white Christmas – instead, we'll be celebrating our greenest one yet.

Go green this Christmas...

...with tips from scientist Angela Terry, founder of onehome.org.uk

1. Reuse Christmas stockings, by choosing a cloth one.
2. Recycle wrapping paper by picking brown paper or old newspapers or magazines, or checking that your Christmas paper is recyclable.
3. Rechargeable batteries. Everything from decorations to toys need batteries and investing in rechargeable ones means you can use them again and again.
4. Rethink gift ideas. Why not give experiences, like cinema or theatre tickets, not stuff?
5. Repack fridges and freezers. They're stuffed full, meaning they have to work overtime. Save energy by moving booze outside or into the garage.



Angela Terry has top tips for a green Christmas