Green Ideas for Greetings

Turn this year’s greeting cards into next year’s holiday decor. Pop cards with your favorite designs into inexpensive frames to dress them up for a seasonal display. Another green idea for greeting cards is to cut off the fronts and reuse them as gift tags.

‘Bells’ Is One

How many words can you come up with using the letters in “holly berries”?

Put Puzzle Pieces on Plates

When you’re working on a jigsaw puzzle, it helps to separate the pieces by similar colors and patterns. Use trinket dishes or saucers to hold different groupings so they will be easier to see, won’t get mixed up with other pieces, and can be quickly moved around your workspace as needed.

Welcoming Wreaths

Wreaths made of greenery have been used since ancient Greece, symbolizing victory, strength and honor. Later, as people decorated their homes in winter with evergreen trees, they used the trimmed branches to weave a wreath, in an effort to reduce waste. Wreaths became a symbol of welcoming, as well as a sign of new life to come in the spring.

Basketball Is Born

Winter weather couldn’t stop famous P.E. teacher James Naismith from keeping his students active. Instead, he created a game they could play indoors. With two peach baskets nailed at opposite ends of the gym, he gave them soccer balls to shoot, marking the birth of the world’s “basket” ball craze on Dec. 1, 1891.

Jingle All the Way

The jolly sound of sleigh bells ringing is a sign that winter’s on its way. Bells have long been placed on horse harnesses as good luck charms, and before cars were invented, sleigh bells signaled that a horse-drawn carriage was coming down the street. This was especially important when snowy paths softened the sound of the animals’ hooves, linking the jingle of bells to the winter season.

Winter Is Coming

The coldest season will begin Dec. 21.

Winter Hydration

Staying hydrated is important year-round. If drinking ice water doesn’t sound appealing in the winter months, replenish your body with herbal teas, decaffeinated beverages, soups, and fruits and vegetables.

A Fruitful Future

“Let us learn to appreciate there will be times when the trees will be bare, and look forward to the time when we may pick the fruit.” —Anton Chekhov

Brainteaser

Question: Turn me on my side, and I am everything. Cut me in half, and I am nothing. What am I?

Answer: The number 8.
A Handful of Facts About Gloves

As temperatures dip with the changing seasons, you may pull on a pair of gloves to keep your fingers warm. But this simple wardrobe staple has had dozens of other handy purposes throughout history.

- The earliest known gloves were found in King Tut’s tomb.
- Medieval blacksmiths, woodcutters and masons wore gloves made of leather, metal or wool to protect their hands from injury.
- You may have heard the phrase “throw down the gauntlet,” meaning to challenge someone. This saying refers to the heavy metal gloves worn by knights, which could be tossed at the feet of an opponent to begin a duel.
- Long gloves became fashionable for ladies in the 1500s. Queen Elizabeth I of England loved gloves so much that she owned about 2,000 pairs!
- Why do cars have a glove box? Because leather driving gloves were once must-have accessories that protected the hands from a hot or cold steering wheel and provided better grip.
- From baseball to boxing to billiards, gloves are used in many sports for both safety and skill.

In With the New

In America, New Year’s Eve celebrations are a time for singing “Auld Lang Syne,” watching the ball drop in Times Square, sharing a kiss at midnight, and eating black-eyed peas. But the rest of the world celebrates in many different ways:

- **Denmark.** In this country, it’s customary for pals to throw old plates and glasses at each other’s front doors. A heaping pile of broken dishes on a home’s doorstep is considered lucky, because it shows those inside have many friends.
- **Philippines.** Filipinos wear polka-dotted clothing and eat round foods during their New Year festivities. The circular shapes represent coins and are meant to bring prosperity.
- **Spain.** At midnight, people in Spain eat 12 grapes, one for each chime of the clock, to bring good luck for the coming year.
- **Japan.** Among the many Japanese New Year’s customs is osoji—a “big cleaning” of the entire house to prepare for a fresh beginning. Folks also eat long noodles, which represent a long and healthy life.

A Merry Mint

Sweetening candies, cookies and coffee, while adding a cool, fresh scent to soaps, scrubs and lotions, peppermint is an iconic flavor of the holiday season.

The peppermint plant is a natural hybrid of water mint and spearmint. It blooms in July and August, sprouting tiny purple and white flowers.

Due to its calming and numbing effect, peppermint has been used to treat several conditions. When applied to the skin, peppermint oil can treat headaches and skin irritations.

Peppermint has also been known to relieve digestive problems and nausea, as well as congestion and other cold symptoms. Eating a peppermint candy or sipping on peppermint tea are tasty ways to enjoy these benefits.

The herb is a good source of manganese, vitamins A and C, fiber, folate, iron, magnesium and calcium. Fresh or dried leaves can be added to salads, soups and beverages for a refreshing and nutritional boost.
## Sending Season’s Greetings

Mailing a greeting card may seem old-fashioned and quaint. But the tradition continues to thrive, with around 1.5 billion holiday cards sent every year in the U.S.

An Englishman named Sir Henry Cole created the first holiday card in 1843. A government worker and activist, Cole had just helped to reform the British post office, lowering postage to a penny so more people could afford to send mail. Cole was also very popular, and struggled to find time to respond to the many holiday letters he'd received. Motivated to solve two problems at once—promote the postal system and send quick greetings to his friends—Cole commissioned artist John Calcott Horsley to design a holiday postcard. The card's front showed scenes of a festive family dinner and people doing charitable deeds.

Improved printing methods helped popularize holiday cards in the following decades. By the turn of the century, companies in both the U.K. and the U.S. were printing millions of greeting cards each winter.

## Hooked on Needlework

The cozy hobby of crafting with yarn is a favorite among all ages.

Any artistic endeavor results in a feeling of satisfaction when the project is complete. The same is true when somebody finishes knitting or crocheting a hat, scarf, blanket or other item. Being able to use their creation, or see someone else use and appreciate it, makes this happy glow even stronger.

But even while a project is still a work in progress, the benefits of knitting and crocheting are huge. Many yarn crafters say the process itself is a form of therapy that distracts them from anxious thoughts and bad habits, soothes irritability and stress, eases boredom and reduces insomnia. The repetitive motion of the needles and texture of the yarn results in a relaxing and meditative experience.

Those same movements help build and maintain strength in the hands, and the calming activity can lower blood pressure. Since stitching involves counting and concentration, it’s also a brain booster, with studies showing the hobby may reduce the risk of dementia.

## Wit & Wisdom

“It is only when the cold season comes that we know the pine and cypress to be evergreens.”
—Chinese proverb

“Thank goodness for the first snow. It was a reminder—no matter how old you became and how much you’d seen—things could still be new if you were willing to believe they still mattered.”
—Candace Bushnell

“A good way to remedy a cold morning is to have a warm heart.”
—Keith Wynn

“Silence can always be broken by the sound of footsteps walking over frozen ground.”
—Merrill Moore

“Winter, a lingering season, is a time to gather golden moments, embark upon a sentimental journey, and enjoy every idle hour.”
—John Boswell

“Snowflakes are one of nature’s most fragile things, but just look what they can do when they stick together.”
—Vesta M. Kelly

“If flowers can teach themselves how to bloom after winter passes, so can you.”
—Noor Shirazie
Memorable Melody: ‘Jingle Bell Rock’

Turn on the radio or enter a shopping mall this time of year, and you’re bound to hear this hoppin’ holiday hit, released by Bobby Helms in 1957. Written by two admen, Joseph Carleton Beal and James Ross Boothe, and featuring guitarist Hank Garland, the song mixes elements of the classic carol “Jingle Bells” with trendy tunes of the era, including “Rock Around the Clock.” Within two days of its debut, “Jingle Bell Rock” became a top 10 single, and continues to dominate the airwaves every holiday season.

A Popular Plaid Pattern

The iconic uniform of lumberjacks and other outdoorsy types, the pattern known as buffalo plaid starts popping up everywhere as soon as cooler weather sets in. The black-and-red checkered motif has origins with Scotland’s MacGregor clan, who wore a similar pattern called Rob Roy tartan that was brought to the U.S. during the 1800s, becoming a favorite of folks on the frontier. Still a fashion staple, buffalo plaid now covers a variety of home goods, from bedding to wall decor and wrapping paper.

Popular Pages:

‘The Shadow of the Wind’
This bestselling novel by Spanish writer Carlos Ruiz Zafon has been called an ode to the love of reading. The title is the name of a book discovered by a young boy named Daniel, who devours the pages and sets out to learn more about the story’s author, Julian Carax. But Carax has disappeared, along with all of his works. Determined to solve the mystery, Daniel enlists the help of friends and fellow book lovers, spending years unraveling the layers of Carax’s life and discovering truths about himself along the way.

“This Month In History”

DECEMBER

1901: With a goal of setting rules and safety standards, representatives from over 60 universities meet to form the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States. In 1910, the organization was renamed the NCAA.

1924: At age 2, Judy Garland makes her stage debut at her father’s movie theater in Grand Rapids, Minn.

1948: The United Nations General Assembly adopts the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Defining fundamental freedoms of all human beings, the document has been translated into more than 500 languages.

1973: Astronauts on NASA’s Skylab 4 mission take a 7-hour spacewalk, the longest at the time.

1987: Ron Hextall of the Philadelphia Flyers becomes the first NHL goalie to score a goal by intentionally firing the puck into the other team’s net.


2007: At 81, Queen Elizabeth II becomes the oldest ever monarch of the U.K., surpassing her great-great-grandmother, Queen Victoria.

2016: Global retailer Amazon makes its first delivery by drone. The package arrived at its destination 13 minutes after it was ordered.