

ECOWATCH

Strive for an eco-friendly Easter

BY DELORES SAVAS

“Enjoy Easter, but please do not buy an animal such as a rabbit chick or duck for your children. Animals should never be given as gifts at any time”

Activist Quote

Easter is said to be a time to celebrate new life, the joy and fragrance of spring in the air, and the return of chirping and singing birds.

However, it seems that every holiday has a debilitating effect on the environment: excesses in shopping for items that will soon be thrown away after the celebrations are over, along with throw-away animals used as Easter gifts and the waste of food.

According to the Washington D.C.-based National Retail Federation, Easter spending is expected to reach \$24 billion this year, a \$3.2 billion increase from 2022 and the biggest one-year increase on record.

Households with children are expected to spend an average of \$250 on the holiday for Easter egg tints, Easter baskets filled with toys and candy, family gatherings, new spring outfits, and the purchase of a rabbit, chicks, or ducks as special presents for the children in the family.

However, the choice of giving animals as gifts does not compare to an Easter basket gift, which is enjoyed for a little while and then discarded. Rabbits, chicks and ducks are alive and often suffer a bad ending to what is supposed to be a celebration of life.

If you are thinking of buying a live animal as a surprise gift, please rethink this idea. Every year rabbits,

chicks and ducks are thrown out like trash once the newness has worn off. Many people may think that because these creatures are animals, they can survive in the wild. Not true. What is true is that a high percentage of these animals will die from exposure or become the victims of predators such as coyotes, dogs, feral cats, hawks and owls.

Many buyers of these animals just do not realize the problems that lie ahead for them when they are brought home. They must be fed regularly and treated for minor injuries such as bites and scratches. There is also clean-up for the messes they make.

If you do buy a duck, rabbit or chick and cannot cope with it, please do not release it into the wild. Do the humane thing and bring it to an animal shelter.

Before making an animal purchase, consider going to your local animal shelter and inquiring about the possibility of adopting a pet for a long-term commitment. That is the only way to bring an animal into your house. They should be considered part of your family, to be protected and cared for until they die.

There are other ways to have an eco-friendly Easter. Consider the following:

- Instead of plastic eggs, why not hunt for real eggs and let the kids enjoy the fun of coloring them and having a real Easter egg hunt. Look for all-natural plant-based dyes to make colorful Easter eggs. Or make your own dyes instead of using synthetic ones. If properly handled after the eggs are found, they could be used for salads or other mixes.

- Instead of cheap chocolate, choose locally made chocolate at a farmers market or a local grocery store that sells such treats. Try to buy candy that does not include a lot of excess wrapping or packaging. Try to buy in bulk, which reduces extra packaging.

- Try making your own Easter basket and bypass plastic baskets that many times are thrown out after they are used only once. Or look for natural baskets, which can be found at many second-hand shops. You can then pack them away and reuse them for many years.

- Instead of buying fake Easter grass that is said to contain harmful petrochemicals, consider alternatives such as rice or wheat grass to fill the baskets. Natural raffia ribbon would look amazing; just make sure to choose something that can be recycled, or better yet, reused.

- Limit or avoid the use of aluminum foil to wrap your Easter basket or its ingredients.

- If you plan on buying flowers or a plant for Easter, consider purchasing bulbs to plant or packages of seeds to be enjoyed when they are in full bloom. Four-o'clock seeds that will only open in mid-afternoon will be a pleasure for kids to watch, and sunflowers are plants that are sure to please everyone. Plus, you can harvest the sunflower seeds for a healthy snack when prepared.

- Try not to buy any item that is for one-time use and then disposed of.

And if you are planning a special outing to the beach, please be mindful of shore birds on area beaches. Do not scare them while when they are on the shoreline, and do not



chase them or allow your dogs to do so. Please cover up any holes you may dig in the sand, and be especially sure to flatten any sand castles you make before leaving the beach. Avoid having anyone in your beach party “buried” in the sand, as there have been accounts of collapses that were fatal.

If you are planning on boating or fishing over the Easter weekend, please watch out for manatees and slow down. Be aware that it is illegal to feed dolphins offshore.

In short, enjoy your Easter weekend at the beach, but be mindful of all the creatures that share the area with us. Happy Easter!

email: gaiasvigil@gmail.com

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