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HOME



HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

& Garden

Bell ringing, mochi making and family parties signal the new year in Japanese culture



Alexandra Clayton, 21, lived in Japan for several years as a child with her parents and grew to love the customs and tradition of Oshogatsu, which she still celebrates. ERIC LOSE / The Chronicle

AROUND THE HOUSE

By Susan Fornoff

KATY RADDATZ / The Chronicle 2005

LED deals are scarce, but you can recycle

Smart shoppers have already begun hunting down bargains on next year's holiday decorations and goods, and discounts may go a little deeper in the next few days. If you're thinking of replacing your electricity-hogging Christmas lights with LEDs, though, this may not be the time to save, because pickings will be slim.

In a pre-Christmas search, Around the House found a dearth of the energy-saving lights in Bay Area stores; even the shelves at Home Depot had little left in the LED department. (An exception: the net lights that look so pretty on perimeter shrubbery.) A better bet: Local hardware stores that have gotten on the green bandwagon might have some items left at reduced prices.

LED Christmas lights are still on the expensive side, but can pay for themselves in lower electricity bills in just a couple of holiday seasons. Conversion does raise the question, however: What to do with all of the old light strings?

Global-warming experts would argue that sending them to the landfill beats sending them to Goodwill and enabling someone else to burn up the ozone. But here's one other possibility: Pack up the lights and ship them for recycling to HolidayLEDs.com before Jan. 31 for a chance to receive a free set of LED lights or a 10 percent discount coupon for purchases at the site.

Packages should contain the sender's name, address, phone number and e-mail address, and should go to 120 W. Michigan Ave., Suite 1403, Jackson, MI 49201. Visit www.holidayLEDs.com for the scoop.



Enviro Bath's recycled style

Enviro Bath's whimsical Fantasia Lavatory (\$599, as shown at right) comes in 10 colors, but it was the red that jumped out and called attention to the green symbol nearby: "100 percent recycled."

The wavy sink is made of 100 percent recycled solid cast metal — and so are the rest of Enviro Bath's sinks, including the Pond collection (above) — in a small studio foundry in Dayton, Ore. The makers used salvage metals that might otherwise have made their way into landfills for a product line that can be viewed at www.envirobath.com or by calling (866) 701-2284 for a catalog. Local rep: Bath & Beyond, 77 Connecticut St., San Francisco.



MicroCotton towels help save water



Hotels have cut water consumption by asking guests to hang up their towels if they wish to reuse them and to leave a card on the bed if they want to have the sheets changed. Estimates are that 70 percent of guests comply.

Now there's a new towel to help the rest of us save laundry water at home: the MicroCotton towels at Macy's, Bed Bath & Beyond and other stores for about \$7 per washcloth and \$80 per bath sheet. (There are also robes and bath mats.)

MicroCotton, made in India, is probably most notable for its luxurious feel, so these towels — twice as bulky as regular towels — are snuggly and soft. They're also light, which means that 30 towels can fit in washers and dryers that hold just 20 regular towels. That adds up to savings in water use.

Around the House tried them and found that the outer fibers kept more water on the towel surface than one might like after a shower. Seems a fair trade, though, for the soft touch and water savings.