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More than a Christmas Tree

Every year, 25-30 million real Christmas trees are sold in the U.S. Real trees are sustainable because they are biodegradable, plus Christmas tree farms provide many of the same benefits as community trees and forests – cleaning the air and water, removing carbon, stabilizing soil and more.

Christmas trees can have new “life” after holiday displays. With the annual Christmas Tree Recycling program going on hiatus in 2020, Oakland County Parks and Recreation, together with the Arbor Day Foundation, offers several tips for recycling Christmas Trees:

- Firewood: Because they are sap-heavy trees, evergreens tend to burn hot and fast, making them ideal for bonfires. Trees should be dried out for a few months before burning.
- Mulch: Whether it's with woodchips or needles, mulch is a great way to keep your yard trees healthy and moist during the cold season. Pine needles contain nutrients that enhance the PH of soil.
- Ashes, ashes: Ashes from burned Christmas trees contain potassium and lime, which when spread in the garden help plants to thrive.
- Natural insulation: Cutting off the branches and laying them in a garden bed will protect plants from winter freezes and spring thaws.
- Fresheners: Green pine needles can be stored in paper bags or sachets to use as fresheners around the house.
- Crafty coasters: After letting the tree dry completely, the trunk can be cut into one-inch disks which can be varnished and used as coasters.

“Live trees can be a good environmental choice, especially when they are grown and purchased locally. Since live trees are biodegradable, they can be composted or re-used creatively,” Sarah Cook-Maylen, Natural Resources Coordinator for Oakland County Parks and Recreation, said. “Many local communities also offer tree pickup and recycling,” she added.

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