

Skagit Valley Herald  
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Ever Green: Recycling Your Christmas Tree in 2008

Although it goes unnoticed some of the time, the first gift of the season to be opened is one between trees. In a flurry of color, the evergreen is unwrapped by autumn's leaves. During this exchange, nothing goes to waste. The leaves that fall blanket and nourish the soil much like your compost pile at home. Being well fed, the evergreen is able to symbolize everlasting life by remaining green and bearing fruit throughout the winter. With this in mind, it may be valuable to practice being ever green yourself this season by choosing a Christmas tree that can benefit the environment year round. Here are some ideas to get you started.

#### ❖ **Live, Plantable or Bulb Trees**

Give the planet a breath of fresh air this season by choosing to decorate and plant a live Christmas tree. The tradition of a real tree won't be lost and you'll help fight global warming while also providing wildlife habitat! Purchase your tree from a local nursery a week or two before Christmas, bring it indoors to adorn with lights, gifts and decorations and then do as my family's tradition has always done by planting your live evergreen on New Year's day. Even if you don't stick to that promised resolution in 2009 you'll still have done something marvelous for all who breathe. If you live in an apartment or don't have room in your yard to plant trees see if you can donate it to a local rest home or children's center.

An outdoor tree is probably the cheapest option, which gives you an opportunity to save money for more gifts and perhaps save resources. Strung with popcorn and cranberries, peanut butter pinecones and sprays of millet your tree will attract more than the citizen. From native [squirrels to](#) woodpeckers, choosing to decorate an outdoor tree will be the wildlife delight of the season.

#### ❖ **Make Your Own Tree**

My coworker passed this idea onto me when we were out for a winter walk: gather wind fallen evergreen bows from the ground, shake them off and bring them indoors for decorating. You can stand them up in a clear vase filled with colorful baubles or pinecones, or do as my coworker and I did by posting them to an empty bulletin board. Leave a few branches free to hang ornaments or lights and you're set! You won't contribute to any new resource use and it gives your creativity a chance to flourish.

#### ❖ **American Made Artificial Trees**

The one time purchase of an artificial tree can save gas otherwise used for annual trips to a tree farm. They are also convenient and require no pesticides. If you choose this option, try to purchase a tree that was made in the U.S. which greatly decreases the chances of contamination from lead and other toxins, preserves domestic manufacturing jobs and reduces overseas shipping. If you are getting rid of an artificial

tree please try donating it to a local charity, shelter or church before you dispose of it. Unfortunately, most recycling programs don't take artificial trees.

❖ **The Spirit of Christmas is Alive in Compost!**

If you do choose to purchase a cut tree for Christmas, be sure to return its beauty to the earth by composting it rather than burning it or throwing it out. Remember to remove all decorations, lights and wire from your tree before composting and that flocked trees or trees sprayed with fire retardant can not be composted.

**Options for Out of Town Residents**

❖ **Skagit Soils**

Drop your tree off at the local commercial composting facility. Located next to the Recycling and Transfer Station on Ovenell Road, Skagit Soils will accept Christmas trees for free.

❖ **Skagit County Recycling and Transfer Station**

When you dispose of your tree at the Transfer Station, you will be charged the regular rate of a minimum \$5.00, but the tree will be set aside for chipping and composting.

❖ **Curbside Yard Waste Pickup**

Trees can be cut into pieces to fit into your yard waste bin. Contact Waste Management for service at 1-800-592-9995.

**Options for City Residents**

❖ **Anacortes**

The High School Key Club will pick up your tree and wreaths on Saturday January 3<sup>rd</sup>. Key Club encourages you to make a donation of canned food for the Food Bank or make a \$5.00 donation by check (made out to the Key Club). Be sure to have your tree and wreaths out near the street by 8:00 a.m.

❖ **Burlington**

You may take your Christmas tree to the City Shop located at 951 Section Street. Disposal is free.

❖ **Mount Vernon**

The Boy Scouts will come to your house and pick up your tree Saturday December 27<sup>th</sup> and Saturday December 3<sup>rd</sup>. Be sure to have your tree out near the street by 7am. There is no set fee for this service; however donations are greatly appreciated. For additional information please contact Laurie at (360)848-5275.

If you are a Mount Vernon City resident you can take your tree to the City Sanitation Yard located on Fir Street on the Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday following Christmas between the hours of 9:00am to 4:00pm. Disposal is free.

❖ **Sedro-Woolley**

You can deposit your tree and wreaths into a large evergreen pile during the first three weeks of January at the Sedro-Woolley City Shop, located at 3<sup>rd</sup> and Sterling Street Monday through Friday between 7:00 am to 3:00 pm. Disposal is free.