Recycle Your Holiday Trees and Wreaths

By Valerie Jean Rose

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Returning the gifts: let holiday greenery feed the soil.

To celebrate the holiday season, you may have decorated by bringing in a bit of the forest into your home: a wreath, an evergreen tree, some fragrant pine boughs. Now that you've opened the presents, what do you do with the greenery?   If you brought a 'living tree' indoors, don't let it get too comfortable inside, according to James E. Johnson, Extension Forester at Virginia Tech. "Living Christmas trees are fairly sensitive and should not be kept inside for more than 10 days. Exposure to the warm temperatures may cause the dormant tree to break buds and start to grow." Move the tree to an unheated garage or barn for a few days; then it's ready to return to the outdoors.

Johnson notes, "If the ground is frozen, or the tree cannot be planted immediately, it should be placed in a sheltered area, and the root ball heavily mulched." Any outdoor potted plant must be protected from winter's chilly breath. Mulch around the pot with thick bunches of straw, leaves or other mulch. Secure the mulch so it doesn't blow away.

If you're ready to plant the tree, Johnson says you won't see any growth soon. "The tree will remain dormant for the rest of the winter, then start to grow normally with other vegetation in the spring."

If you got a cut tree for Christmas, be sure to return its beauty to the earth by composting. **Remember to remove all decorations, lights, tinsel and wires.** Flocked trees or trees sprayed with fire retardant cannot be composted!

Options for composting holiday greenery vary, depending on where you live in Skagit County.

Living in a Rural Area? Here's Your Options:

You can cut the limbs off your tree and saw it into logs for a fireplace or wood stove. Let the logs dry and season before burning.   If you have land, place your tree outside where it will slowly turn to compost. Birds and other wildlife will welcome the shelter. Don't do this if your tree is flocked or treated with fire retardant. Look carefully for any hidden ornaments you can repack and use again next year.

If you prefer, you can let someone else compost your greenery:

Skagit Soils
Drop off your tree and other greenery at this local commercial composting facility. Located next to the Recycling and Transfer Station on Ovenell Road, Skagit Soils accepts trees or wreaths

without metal or ornaments. Cost is free. They are open Monday through Friday 8 AM – 4:30 PM and Saturday 9 AM – 2 PM. (Note: They are closed December 25th and January 1st.) For more information call 424-0199 or visit online at: http://skagitsoilsinc.com/5073.html .

Skagit County Recycling and Transfer Station, 14014 Ovenell Road location only
There is no Tree/Greenery disposal service at the Sauk or Clear Lake Transfer Stations.
At the Ovenell Road location, trees and greenery without flocking, ornaments or metal, are set aside for chipping and composting. There is a minimum $10.00 fee for the first 200 pounds. Your tree is probably not that heavy, but that 200 pounds could include the tree and a bunch of non-recyclable waste. Recyclable materials (bottles, cans, etc.) are accepted for free.

The Skagit County Recycling and Transfer Station is open every day 8:30 AM – 6 PM, even on county furlough days. (Note: They are closed December 25th and January 1st.) For more information call at 424-7817 or visit online at:
www.skagitcounty.net/Common/Asp/Default.asp?d=PublicWorksSolidWaste&c=General&p=main.htm .

Curbside Yard Waste Pickup – Shelter Bay residents
Currently Shelter Bay is the only area in unincorporated Skagit County where Yard Waste pickup is available. If you pay for this service, and are handy with a handsaw or small chainsaw, cut your tree and other greenery into pieces that fit into your big green yard waste bin. Waste Management hauls it away at no extra charge on the normal pickup day. For more information call Waste Management at 1-800-592-9995 or visit online at:
www.wmnorthwest.com/skagitcounty/service.html#yardwaste

Options for City Residents:

If you live in Anacortes, Burlington, Mt. Vernon or Sedro-Woolley and have Waste Management's Food and Yard Waste Collection service, remove any ornaments, metal and tinsel, cut up your tree, and put it in the green yard waste bin.   For more information call Waste Management at 1-800-592-9995 or go online at:
www.wmnorthwest.com/skagitcounty/service.html#yardwaste.

Anacortes
The Kiwanas Club tree pickup returns on Saturday, January 8, 2011. To use this service have your tree on the curb by 8:30 AM.   Please make a $5 donation to the Anacortes Key Club, or leave a canned food donation with your tree. Snow on January 8th will shift the pickup date to January 15. Remove all ornaments, wires and tinsel. Trees with flocking will not be picked up. For more information contact Bob Yerby, Kiwanas Club at 360-333-5578.

Burlington
Take your Christmas tree and/or wreath to the City Shop at 951 S Section Street. Please, no flocking or fire-retardant-treated greenery and be sure to remove ornaments. This self-serve disposal is free, available 24 hours a day, from Monday, December 27 – January 25. The facility may be open later if bad weather causes delays. For more information call 360-757-3450.

Mount Vernon (East of I-5)
Boy Scout Troop 100, Salem Lutheran Church, will pick up your tree on Sunday, January 2 or Saturday, January 8. Have your tree at the curb by 7 AM. There is no set fee, but donations are appreciated. For more information call Laurie at 360-848-5275.

C.J. Tveit, 13, of Mount Vernon Boy Scout Troop 100, unloads a Christmas tree from his father's pick truck Saturday for recycling at the Mount Vernon city yard. Troop 100 scouts scoured the city December 27, 2009, and January 3, 2010, for trees placed on the curbside so they can be chipped and composted. The scouts welcome donations for the service to help fund summer camp fees. **Photo by Scott Terrell / Skagit Valley Herald.**

Another option for Mount Vernon residents
You can take your tree to the City Sanitation Yard. Flocked trees are accepted, but cannot be composted. Remove metal and ornaments. Drop of your greenery at 401 W Fir Street on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays following Christmas from 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM. Disposal is free. For more information about this service call 360-336-6218 between the hours of 8 AM – 4:30 PM Monday through Friday.

Sedro-Woolley (and surrounding urban growth areas)
From Monday, December 27th through Friday, January 21st, put your tree and other greenery on the large evergreen pile at the Sedro-Woolley City Shop, located at 3rd and Sterling Streets. Remove ornaments, lights, tinsel and wire. They are open the hours between 7 AM – 3 PM. This service is free. For more information call 360-855-1884.