

ASK THE MASTER GARDENER

Ways to dispose of your holiday greenery

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By Valerie Rose



The evergreen tree in your living room is part of a tradition older than Christianity. Many ancient cultures believed that having evergreens indoors protected against ghosts, evil spirits and illness.

In the 16th century, German Christians brought decorated evergreen trees into their homes. It is said that the tradition of lighting the Christmas tree began with German Protestant reformer Martin Luther. Inspired by a starry winter sky, he wired candles to the branches of his indoor tree.

His bright idea was, unfortunately, the source of many tragic house fires. We now have safer technology for adding sparkle to our indoor greenery — and strings of electric lights can be reused for years.

Be sure to remove them, along with tinsel and ornaments, before you give your tree back to the earth where it once grew — flocked or treated trees are the exception.

And it's only fair to return the gift of evergreen fragrance and beauty by properly disposing of your trees and wreaths.

Use any of the disposal options listed below and your greens will be chipped and mulched or composted.

Did your household enjoy a living tree this year? Perhaps a small evergreen in a pot, even a rosemary plant?

You'll want to plant it outside in the next month or so. Find an area with well-drained soil, where winter rains won't puddle and drown the roots of your new planting.

If you have an aluminum tree that's too tattered for re-use, the aluminum parts can be recycled. Be sure it's not any other type of metal or shiny plastic.

Numerous opportunities exist for recycling holiday greens — after removing all lights, wires, tinsel and ornaments.

Remember: Flocked trees and those treated with fire retardant cannot be composted. However, Mount Vernon residents can bring flocked or treated trees and wreaths to the City Sanitation Yard for disposal.

Curbside yard-waste pickup

Trees can be cut into pieces to fit into your yard waste bin. Contact Waste Management at 360-757-8245 or 800-592-9995.

Recycling and Transfer Station

When you dispose of your tree at the Transfer Station, 14014 Ovenell Road, you will be charged a fee. \$5 until Dec. 31, \$10 starting Jan. 1.

The county's transfer stations at Sauk and Clear Lake do not accept trees or wreaths. The Ovenell recycling station is open from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily, except holidays. Info: 360-424-7817.

Skagit Soils

- Drop your trees off for free at the local commercial composting facility, 13260 Ball Road, next to the Skagit County Recycling and Transfer Station on Ovenell Road.
- Skagit Soils accepts trees or wreaths without metal backing or decorations. Hours: 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday. Info: 360-424-0199. *Curbside yard-waste pickup*
- Trees can be cut into pieces to fit into your yard waste bin. Contact Waste Management at 360-757-8245 or 800-592-9995.



Ralph Schwartz / Skagit Valley Herald
Tomorrow is the time to plan where to recycle your Christmas tree — before it drops all its needles.

Anacortes residents:

The Anacortes High School Key Club will pick up your tree and wreaths on a Saturday in early January — call for exact date. Be sure to have your tree and wreaths out near the street by 8 a.m.

The Key Club encourages you to make a donation for the food bank at the same time. Put a check for \$5 (made out to the Key Club) or nonperishable food items in a plastic bag and clip it to the tree or wreath. Info: 360-293-2166 ext. 738.

Burlington residents:

City residents may take their Christmas tree or wreath for free to the Burlington City Shop, 951 S. Section St. Daily: Dec. 25 to Jan. 15. Info: 360-757-3450.

Mount Vernon residents:

Mount Vernon curbside pickup

The Boy Scouts Troop 100 at Salem Lutheran Church will pick up your tree at your house. No set fee is charged for this service, but donations are greatly appreciated.

Your tree should be out near the street by 7 a.m. Saturdays, Dec. 26 or Jan. 2. Info: Contact Laurie at 360-848-5275.

Mount Vernon dropoff

Mount Vernon City residents can take their trees to the City Sanitation Yard, 401 W. Fir St. Disposal is free.

Flocked or fire retardant treated trees and wreaths also will be accepted. They cannot be composted, but will be properly disposed.

Winter hours: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday. Info: 360-336-6218.

Sedro-Woolley residents:

During the first three weeks of January, city residents and people living in Sedro-Woolley's urban growth areas can deposit trees and wreaths in the large evergreen pile at the Sedro-Woolley City Shop, 315 Sterling St. Disposal is free. Hours: 6 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Info: 360-855-0929.

Valerie Rose is a Washington State University/ Skagit County certified Master Gardener. Questions may be submitted to the WSU Extension office, 11768 Westar Lane, Suite A, Burlington, WA 98233. 360-428-4270.