

Recycling Christmas Trees

Wondering what to do with your Christmas tree after today? If yours is a 'real' tree it can keep on giving long after the holidays.

- Haul it out to your yard, placing it where you can see it from a window. It will protect and shelter songbirds well into the spring. Hang orange slices, popcorn, stale bread smeared with peanut butter and rolled in birdseed from its branches. If you haven't enough snow to keep the tree upright, you could tie it to another tree or leave it in its tree stand.
- Prune the branches and place them over perennial and bulb beds to provide protection from drying winds. Plan ahead and leave lengthy branch stubs so that next spring the remaining tree can become a garden trellis to hold peas, cucumbers, morning glory or pole beans.
- If you just want to be rid of your 'real' tree, look for the City's drop boxes soon to be located around town. Brett Hewatt, Pocatello City Forester, will have a crew chip the trees after they arrive at the landfill. The chips will be composted and used in city and county landscaping projects. Be sure to remove all tinsel, plastic, and ornaments, and do not tie the branches—removing them creates more work for the city crew.

Perhaps you are one of the growing numbers of artificial tree owners. In 2002, 48% of US households had an artificial tree, 21% had a real tree, and the remainder had no tree at all. Artificial trees are increasingly popular, often because folks think of them as more environmentally sound than cutting live trees. But most artificial trees are petroleum based and a burden to the environment. Six to nine years is the average house life of these trees before they are discarded. Because they are not biodegradable, they remain in landfills for centuries.

Real trees are biodegradable—the gift that keeps on giving. Please give your tree a second chance to be useful.