

TUOLUMNE COUNTY RESIDENTS ENCOURAGED TO RECYCLE CHRISTMAS TREES

By Becky Miller-Cripps

Do your holiday decorations include a real cut Christmas tree? When it's time to take it down, what do you do with it?

Central Sierra UCCE Master Gardeners have formulated several principles for foothills-friendly "smart gardening" practices. Two of those principles are: Recycle and Feed the Soil. How can you follow these principles in disposing of your cut, green Christmas tree?

Recycling: UCCE Master Gardeners and Tuolumne County's Solid Waste Division encourage Tuolumne County residents to recycle their real Christmas trees. Residents may wish to chip their Christmas trees and use them at home as mulch or compost, or take advantage of one of the following opportunities to recycle Christmas trees in Tuolumne County. Readers in Calaveras County may wish to contact their local waste hauler or drop-off site for area-specific recycling opportunities. Real, non-flocked Christmas trees can be recycled for free in the following ways in Tuolumne County:

- Take the tree to the Earth Resource Facility (**Free Mulch!** see below)
- Take the tree to the Groveland Transfer Station
- Call your local franchise hauler to make arrangements to have it picked up. This is a limited service and certain conditions apply.
- Or better yet, chip your tree at home and use the mulch on your property


Remember, Christmas trees become a fire hazard when kept too long. Burning Christmas trees in the fireplace is extremely dangerous and burning trees in the open air creates air pollution. Disposing of your Christmas tree by tossing it alongside a street or road is illegal.


Feeding the Soil: Recycled trees have many beneficial uses. Christmas trees can be chipped, shredded and used as mulch for water conservation and weed control, erosion and/or dust control on hiking trails and bridle paths, additives in composting operations, and alternative fuel in co-generation or biomass plants.

Local collection companies, the Big Oak Flat/Groveland Transfer Station and the Cal Sierra/Waste Management Earth Resource Facility are accepting Christmas trees on a limited basis for FREE under certain conditions. Christmas trees should **NOT** be mixed with other trash for disposal or recycling.

DROP OFF LOCATIONS IN TUOLUMNE COUNTY

Please remove all decorations, tinsel, metal tree stands and nails. Also, some trees may have a metal supporting rod in the trunk that must be removed. Please do not bring any Christmas wrapping paper or trash.

 **Big Oak Flat/Groveland Transfer Station** at the end of Merrell Rd (10700 Merrell Rd) will accept clean cut trees **AT NO CHARGE**. The minimum gate fee will be charged for flocked trees of any kind. Drop off during regular business hours, 8:00 am to 3:45 pm, Wednesday and Saturday only, through the month of January.

 **Cal Sierra/Waste Management Earth Resource Facility (ERF)** at 14909 Camage Ave, off of Tuolumne Rd, near Standard will accept clean, whole trees **AT NO CHARGE** during regular business hours, 8:00 am to 3:45 pm, closed 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm, Tuesday thru Saturday, through the month of January.
NO FLOCKED TREES. All other green waste will be at the regular charge.

Trees dropped off at the Earth Resource Facility will be ground into mulch and:

- Taken to a co-generation plant to be burned to generate electricity or
- Used as an additive for compost at a local facility or
- Used as a mulch at local farms and ranches or
- Offered for sale at the Earth Resource Facility

Doing Double-Duty – Recycling AND Feeding the Soil: As a special bonus during the month of January, drop off your cut Christmas tree at the Earth Recycling Facility. They will give you a **FREE** load of mulch to take home to enhance your home landscaping. A win-win situation!

Real Christmas trees are a renewable, recyclable resource. Help reduce the waste stream by recycling or composting your Christmas trees. For additional information please contact Tuolumne County Solid Waste Division at (209) 533-5588 or visit us at www.tuolumnecounty.ca.gov or your local waste hauler.

Rebecca Miller-Cripps is a University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardener of Tuolumne County who chips her Christmas tree branches into mulch and recycles the trunk into firewood.