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Repurposing Christmas Trees and Holiday Greens

There are many useful ways to repurpose your Christmas tree and holiday greens instead of placing them on the curb for disposal. If you live in an apartment, many cities offer tree recycling programs that turn trees into mulch. If you have a backyard or garden, here are some practical ideas to put your greens to good use.

Protect Plants Through Winter

Cut branches from the tree and lay them over perennials, ornamental grasses, newly planted shrubs, or roses. This adds insulation during fluctuating winter temperatures and protects plant roots from repeated freezing and thawing. The branches also help hold snow in place, providing valuable winter moisture. As the needles decompose, they become pH neutral rather than acidic. Be sure to remove the branches in spring as temperatures warm.

You can also cover container plantings or spread greens across the vegetable garden to slow soil warming and help prevent early spring weed growth.

Create Wildlife Habitat

Place the entire tree in your yard—either upright or on its side—to provide shelter for birds and small animals during cold weather. You can also cut branches and lean them against a sunny wall to create a warm, sheltered spot. Another option is to place cut greens in a tree and cover them with peanut butter and birdseed to attract wildlife.

If you have a pond, sinking a few branches into the water creates habitat and protection for fish.



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Make Compost or Mulch

Cut the branches into smaller pieces and add them to your compost pile or use them as natural mulch throughout your landscape.

Use the Trunk for Stakes and Trellises

After removing the branches, save the trunk to use as a natural garden pole. If you save a trunk each year, you can create a sturdy tripod for climbing plants such as beans, cucumbers, and peas.

Get Creative with Crafts

Cut wood slices from the trunk to make coasters or to turn into ornaments for next year's holiday season. Branch stems can be wrapped along a fence or fashioned into a simple garden trellis. Small pieces of dried greenery can even be used for future fire starters.

Enjoy an Outdoor Fire

Cut the trunk and branches into lengths that fit your fire pit and enjoy a cozy outdoor fire on a cool winter night. Afterward, you can use the cooled ash in your garden.