

RECYCLING YOUR CHRISTMAS TREE

As cut evergreens retain most of their needles all winter, you can put used Christmas trees and other green cuttings to good use after the holiday.

Evergreen boughs make excellent mulches for perennials and other tender plants. Evenly-layered branches collect and hold snow, providing good cover, preventing plants from thawing too quickly during winter warm spells.

Trees make excellent screens for tender broadleaved evergreens such as rhododendrons, azaleas, boxwoods, and firethorn. Laying Christmas trees down or staking them upright on the southwest side of plants prevents much winter damage by keeping the sun and wind from reaching the plant.

You can wire Christmas trees to stakes or an existing fence as wind screens to control snow drifts or to prevent the wind from striking window walls and other exposed areas. They are particularly useful in areas that are too shady to grow a permanent windbreak or as pinch hitters for permanent windbreaks while the plants are still too small to be effective. As it is relatively easy to move a row or 2 of rootless trees, cut conifers give you the flexibility to experiment by moving the windbreak every year until you discover the most effective placement.

Of course, 1 tree does not provide much protection. If you cannot beg, borrow, or steal the neighbor's trees, check at local Christmas tree sales lots. After the holiday, they will usually be thrilled to give you any trees that are left over.

Christmas trees can also be used to provide cover for many types of wildlife. If bird feeders fail to attract desirable birds it may be because they are too exposed. Christmas trees provide shelter and a sense of security for many shy birds and animals.

The **Master Gardener Hotline** is open from April to October, Monday through Friday. Lines are available 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at 888-678-3464

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