

Column Name - The Heartland Minute

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“What to do with that Christmas Tree”

Well Christmas 2023 is in the books. You probably aren't ready to take the tree down just yet, but the time is coming and you might be wondering what to do with it. You'd probably just tell me that you'll do what you always do with it, but maybe you might be looking for some different and creative options to utilize it after the holiday season.

Christmas trees bring Christmas glee, but they can bring even more than that once their primary use has been fulfilled. An old Christmas tree can be used to benefit birds, fish, and the landscape by placing it in a corner of your deck, and spreading some birdseed nearby, or tying it to a deciduous tree or post near a bird feeder.

Christmas trees can give birds an escape from hawks or cats and keep them protected from the wind chill on cool nights. Another option is to use your tree to improve fish habitat and fishing by sinking it into a pond. The tree will serve as a miniature coral reef, in that the branches provide substrate for water plants to grow, and cover for minnows and other forms of small aquatic life. Sinking the tree is simple. Tie a cinder block with a short, stout rope to the base of the tree and drop it in. If it is not your pond, be sure to get permission from the pond owner to do so.

Christmas trees can also be allowed to dry and used as firewood. However, take care, as most conifer species tend to spark and pop more than hardwoods, as resin pockets in the wood make tiny explosions. If you burn it inside the home, be sure to only do so if you are utilizing a closed-door wood burner and not an open fireplace. You can also simply burn it outside. As you all have noticed, it hasn't rained much. Many landscapes are covered in dry leaf litter or dormant grass. So, if you do choose to burn outside, be mindful of wind speed, your surroundings, and be sure the fire is out when the fuel source has been burned down.

Another option is that many municipalities will allow Christmas trees to be placed on the curb for pickup, then burned or ground for mulch. It's nice and simple, but gives you a couple options to make the best use of those Christmas Trees.

Happy New Years, everyone!

Information comes from Kansas State University forester, Charlie Barden.

For more information regarding upcoming programs, Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, or K-State Research and Extension call the office at 620-583-7455, email me, Ben Sims, at benjam63@ksu.edu, or stop by the office which is located inside the courthouse. Be sure to follow K-State Research and Extension- Greenwood County on Facebook for the most up-to-date information on Extension education programs and the Greenwood County 4-H program.