

GO GREEN THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Texas Disposal Systems is keeping Central Texas clean by recycling Christmas trees free of charge through Jan. 31.

BY LAUREN JONES

Most likely, recycling is not on the top of your mind during the holiday season. But it should be. During this time of year, waste generation peaks, and bubble wrap, ribbons and other décor create towering reminders of holidays past at landfills throughout the country.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, 23 million extra tons of waste are created between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. That's close to the same amount of food waste Americans produce in an entire year. It's time to make a change. As 80 percent of holiday waste can actually be recycled, let's learn how we can protect the planet this Christmas.

It's refreshing to see organizations and municipalities taking steps to help our environment, especially during the holiday season. For the second year in a row, Wreaths Across America – Austin is focused on making its event a truly green endeavor. The National Wreaths Across America Day ceremony is dedicated to honoring veterans and fallen soldiers by placing wreaths on their graves. After the event, the wreath-shipping boxes and balsam-fir wreaths are sent to Texas Disposal Systems' facility to be recycled and composted.

The City of Georgetown, Texas, has also embarked upon an environmentally conscious project by offering free holiday-string-light recycling for all Georgetown residents. Instead of throwing old lights into the landfill, residents can now recycle them by dropping them off at one of three participating locations. For more information, visit recycle.georgetown.org. Now it's your turn to follow suit.

This year, give Mother Nature a gift. Instead of throwing out your recyclable holiday decorations, turn to Texas Disposal Systems. TDS is one of the largest independently owned waste-collection, processing and disposal companies in the nation, and has been at the forefront of recycling and composting education

for more than 40 years, teaching Central Texans how they can better help the environment. And for the past decade, TDS has done its part by offering Christmas-tree and organic-decoration recycling free of charge throughout Austin and San Antonio. From Dec. 26 through Jan. 31, TDS will accept unflocked (free of artificial snow) trees, holly, pumpkins and other ornament-free living decorations at its Christmas-tree collection sites. TDS will provide curbside pickup for certain neighborhoods as well. So, before you throw out your tree this year, remember TDS is here to lend a hand.

When dropping off your compostables at the collection sites, be sure your items are free of lights, ornamentation, metal and other non-living components, or a cleaning fee will be charged. Also, when bringing loads for drop-off, make sure the material is tied and secured, per Texas law.

So, what happens after items are dropped off at each of TDS' six collection sites? Once sorted, your holiday items will be repurposed into nutrient-rich mulch and compost through TDS' composting division. The finished product will then be available for purchase at Garden-Ville stores throughout Central Texas.

In addition to recycling with TDS, think about ways to reduce your carbon footprint and waste production at home. When wrapping holiday gifts, use recycled paper, save and reuse holiday bows and try making your own packing materials. If we all reused just two feet of ribbon, the miles of ribbon saved would be enough to wrap a bow around the planet. If every family wrapped three presents in recycled or reused materials, enough material would be saved to cover 45,000 football fields! There are many ways to do your part this holiday season. Don't be a Grinch. Get recycling.

**THIS YEAR,
GIVE MOTHER
NATURE A GIFT.**

What Texas Disposal Systems Will Accept

- ✓ unflocked Christmas trees
- ✓ pumpkins
- ✓ holly
- ✓ other living holiday decorations

What Texas Disposal Systems Will Not Accept

- ✗ wrapping paper
- ✗ cellophane
- ✗ bows
- ✗ plastic
- ✗ bubble wrap
- ✗ ornaments
- ✗ holiday lights



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For more information and a list of Christmas tree collection sites, visit texasdisposal.com/christmas-tree-recycling